



Dear Colleague,

As linguists, language professionals, course and qualification providers, as well as members of the public, we are all deeply concerned about the standard of linguistic knowledge and interpreting skills, which some public service interpreting candidates present with.

This is especially worrying when we are told that they have been actively working as interpreters for a number of years, albeit without a formal qualification. Unfortunately, it seems that very often rather than their interpreting experience helping them succeed in their exams, the opposite is true, and in reality it hinders exam performance.

As you will be aware, in recent months numerous articles have been published in the mainstream media highlighting the failings, and subsequently the consequences of using unqualified bilinguals or family members in place of properly qualified interpreters. These consequences can often be serious, on occasion fatal and have been detailed across a variety of settings.

You can find a few examples here:

- [Poor interpretation services in part to blame for mother's tragic death](#) (BBC News, 7 February)
- [Pseudo interpreter's role in securing a private kidney transplant](#) (Daily Mail, 7 February)
- [The NHS frontline: Recognising the need for professional interpreters](#) (Derbyshire Live, 16 February)
- ['Interpreting for Mum and Dad'](#) (BBC Radio 4's 'Word of Mouth', Listen now)

We do understand the pressures under which LSPs operate. We know that you are committed to languages, to public service work and want to deliver a professional service of the highest standard. We are also aware that rates of pay, and terms imposed by public service contracts, mean you are under enormous pressure to ensure that assignments are fulfilled.

We do however believe that appropriate training and a formal interpreting qualification are an absolute essential prerequisite for any public service interpreter. At a basic level, it ensures that interpreters possess key linguistic skills, have successfully demonstrated different interpreting techniques, and have in place a proven level of understanding, ensuring that they do not accept assignments which are beyond their individual capabilities - precisely to avoid the types of situations that sadly hit the headlines recently.

There is currently a strong and concerted push from all the main public service language stakeholders to clarify, and indeed to raise standards. As you will be aware, the police are leading the way with very clear interpreter qualification requirements for PAIT registration.

The MoJ is also looking to follow suit and has recently published its Draft: Agreed in Principle *Interpreter Qualifications and Experience Requirements* (shared by NRPSI [here](#)),



When this document is compared to the current MoJ *Languages Framework* [here](#) it is clear that future expectations are both clearer and the standards required, higher.

Recent failings within NHS settings have triggered a growing campaign to strengthen guidelines on the use of interpreters in health settings, and we feel that this is an issue which will only grow in the public consciousness.

We understand that as an LSP, you are not able to fund formal qualifications for public service interpreters. What we would ask however, is that you push harder to insist that all interpreters become formally qualified.

Attached you will find an extensive list of languages which are currently offered at Level 6 and Level 3 across three independent qualification providers - ISL, DPSI Online and CIOL.

Whilst once it may have been the case that the lack of availability of qualifications for particular languages would have been a barrier for many of your interpreters, that is now highly unlikely.

We are always open to further discussion and would be happy to help should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions. Having qualified interpreters on your database will support you in supplying a quality service as part of any contract you secure and ultimately it will ensure the public's safety.

We appreciate you taking the time to engage with this letter and hope you will find the attached list of languages useful for future reference.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Davis'.

Nikola Davis
Learning and Quality Director
International School of Linguists

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena El Masri'.

Helena El Masri
Interpreter Trainer,
DPSI Online Founder

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Worne'.

John Worne
Chief Executive
The Chartered Institute of Linguists



Languages available for Level 6 DPSI, Level 6 DCI and Level 3 CIC

(across ISL / DPSI Online / CIOL as of May 2023)

1. Albanian
2. Amharic
3. Arabic
4. Bengali
5. Bulgarian
6. Cantonese
7. Czech
8. Dari
9. Farsi
10. French
11. German
12. Greek
13. Gujarati
14. Hindi
15. Hungarian
16. Italian
17. Japanese
18. Kurdish
19. Latvian
20. Lingala
21. Lithuanian
22. Mandarin
23. Mirpuri
24. Nepalese
25. Pashto
26. Polish
27. Portuguese
28. Punjabi
29. Romanian
30. Russian
31. Serbian
32. Shona
33. Slovak
34. Somali
35. Spanish
36. Swahili
37. Sylheti
38. Tagalog
39. Tamil
40. Tetum
41. Thai
42. Tigrinya
43. Turkish
44. Twi
45. Ukrainian
46. Urdu
47. Vietnamese
48. Yoruba