

# **The National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) Review, 2009**

## **Introduction**

This document is intended to provide information on the Review of the National Register of Public Services (NRPSI) Ltd being carried out in 2009, commencing in June with a target completion date of November.

The document represents the “terms of reference” for the review, as information for the members of the Review Panel and the stakeholders and other interested parties, including interpreters on the National Register (RPSIs) and members of the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), wishing to contribute to the discussion. The CIOL hopes that a wide range of interests will be represented in the debate, through written and oral submissions.

This document will be published on the websites of the CIOL and NRPSI, together with guidelines for submissions to the review – format, deadlines, etc. Stakeholders and other outside organisations will be contacted directly to invite their contribution to the review, with relevant guidelines for submissions, including this document.

The purposes and methodology of the review are described below, together with some background information.

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## **Acronyms**

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
CACDP	Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People [renamed Signature in January 2009]
CIOL	Chartered Institute of Linguists
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
HMCS	Her Majesty’s Court Service
LSP	Language Service Professional
NHS	National Health Service
NRPSI	National Register of Public Service Interpreters
OCJR	Office for Criminal Justice Reform

## **1. Purpose, operations and management of NRPSI**

**1.1** NRPSI Mission Statement: *“To ensure that public services and their clients throughout the UK have access to qualified public service interpreters through the NRPSI”.*

**1.2** Established in 1994, the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) is a register of qualified and CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked Public Service Interpreters (PSIs) in the United Kingdom. The Register is operated and maintained by NRPSI Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Institute of Linguists (IOL).<sup>1</sup> NRPSI Ltd is located at Saxon House, 48 Southwark Street, London SE1 1UN. The company shares staff and services with the Institute of Linguists (IOL) and the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL). See Appendix I for a brief account of the development of NRPSI.

**1.3** NRPSI is managed by a Board of Directors appointed by the CIOL’s Council (through the IOL). The Board has three members: the Chair (normally a member of Council), the Chief Executive (of the Institute and of NRPSI), and the Registrar of NRPSI.

**1.4** The Board is advised by the NRPSI Committee, established in 2008 and consisting of the three Board members, two additional members of Council, two interpreters on the National Register, and three persons from relevant public services. The Committee is appointed by the CIOL’s Council (and also reports to Council).

**1.5** Registration on the National Register is by a combination of professional qualification and verified public service interpreting hours. Annual re-registration is required and is contingent on demonstration of a minimum number of verified public service interpreting hours in the preceding year. (For full details of criteria for registration and re-registration please refer to the NRPSI website at [www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk) > Criteria for Entry).

**1.6** By registering on the NRPSI the registered interpreter agrees to abide by the code of professional conduct governing their professional practice and to be subject to disciplinary procedures in the event of an allegation of unacceptable practice and/or conduct. (For full details of the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures, please refer to the NRPSI website at [www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk) > Code of Conduct/Disciplinary Procedures).

**1.7** Since its inception in 1994, the NRPSI has grown steadily in size. Registration statistics as at 1 June 2009 are as follows:

Total Registered Interpreters:	2,098
Language listings	2,432
Full Status listings	1,841
Interim Status listings	465
Rare Language listings	102
Breakdown of language listings	
All three areas (Health, Local Government and Law)	695
Law and Local Government	329
Law and Health	269
Health and Local Government	8
Health only	25

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<sup>1</sup> NRPSI Ltd is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the IOL. When the CIOL was formed, with the award of Royal Charter in 2005, the IOL remained in existence and is still the holding company for NRPSI. Members of the CIOL are also members of the IOL and there is, in practical terms, no distinction.

Law only	1085
Local Government only	21

**1.8** The National Register is currently financed by a combination of subscription fees paid by public services (32%) or their chosen intermediary agencies (commercial and not-for-profit specialist companies, and charities) (4%) and annual registration fees paid by interpreters on the Register (64%). (For full details of registration and renewal fees for interpreters, please refer to the NRPSI website at [www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk) > Interpreter Applications > Fees).

**1.9** The day to day operation of NRPSI is administered by a small staff, which is responsible for maintaining the National Register; dealing with registration applications and renewals, and with subscription applications and renewals; handling complaints received about Registrants and administering the committees which scrutinise such complaints, including disciplinary hearings; and providing management information to the NRPSI Committee and the NRPSI Board.

**1.10** Under the terms of their licence, subscribers access the National Register online. The office produces a CD-ROM containing the Register for the use of licence holders, which acts as a back up to the online Register.

**1.11** In 1998 the first “*National Agreement on the use of interpreters by criminal justice agencies in England and Wales*” recommended that by the end of 2001 those agencies should engage spoken interpreters from the National Register only. In 2006 the Home Office OCJR (Office for Criminal Justice Reform) led a project resulting, early in 2007, in a revised National Agreement ([http://frontline.cjsonline.gov.uk/includes/downloads/guidance/race-confidence-justice/National\\_Agreement\\_on\\_Use\\_of\\_Interpreters-August\\_2008.pdf](http://frontline.cjsonline.gov.uk/includes/downloads/guidance/race-confidence-justice/National_Agreement_on_Use_of_Interpreters-August_2008.pdf)). The revised National Agreement states (para 3.3.1) “*the standard requirement is that every interpreter/LSP [Language Service Professional] working in courts and police stations should be registered with one of the recommended registers, i.e. the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) at full or interim status (with Law Option) for non-English spoken languages [and, as full members, with CACDP for communicating with D/deaf people]*”. Future developments are likely to include means of assessing demand (as well as assessment of what interpreters are engaged where, in which languages and whether registered) and increasing the number of registered interpreters. There is no corresponding national agreement for the other main areas of professional specialism, health and local government.

## **2. Origins and purposes of the Review**

**2.1** At its meeting on 7 February 2009, the Council of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, recognising the failure over a number of years to achieve a common understanding on the relationship between the Chartered Institute and the National Register of Public Service Interpreters, or on the organisation and management of the same, decided to initiate a process whereby the particular and general issues could be confronted and explored, mutual understanding of the factors involved achieved, and a common way forward found.

**2.2** Council agreed that a meeting or meetings should be organised:

- to explore the differences over the function, management and policy of the NRPSI that have emerged in recent years, seeking to establish mutual understanding of the facts and informed recognition of the positions of the parties involved;
- to discuss and understand the aspirations of the various parties;
- to map out areas where differences can be resolved, with a view to further constructive development, and to identify areas where differences persist.

**2.3** In a parallel development, the AGM of the Chartered Institute, on 14 March 2009, considered and approved the Resolution set out below (referred to as “Resolution 3”), proposed by an individual member:

*“That the Council shall put in place a mechanism to resolve within six months the differences concerning the National Register of Public Service Interpreters”*

**2.4** At its next meeting, on 4 April, Council agreed the procedures proposed to it, including the appointment of a select Panel, and the terms of reference for the Panel. Council authorised its Working Group to continue its work to make the necessary arrangements.

### **3. The Review Panel**

**3.1** The Review Panel is to consist of five members as follows:

- three independent, “non-aligned” members (i.e. having no direct personal or professional involvement in the matters under discussion) appointed by Council;
- one member of Council, appointed by Council;
- one NRPSI registrant, elected by and from among the NRPSI registrants.

One of the non-aligned members will chair the panel.

**3.2** The opportunity has been set up for a representative range of views to be presented to the Panel, through written and oral submissions. Contributions will be invited from principal stakeholders and interested bodies, and also from the generality of NRPSI registrants and of CIOL members.

### **4. Procedures**

**4.1** It will be up to the Panel to decide how best to carry out its remit. These and other procedural suggestions are intended as guidance only:

- The Panel will receive and consider written and oral submissions;
- The Panel will be serviced by CIOL/NRPSI administrative staff (Mr Alan Peacock, CIOL Director of Membership and NRPSI Registrar, will be Secretary to the Panel);
- The Panel will meet in a venue to be arranged by the Chartered Institute. All practical arrangements will be made by the CIOL.

**4.2** Written submissions

- Written submissions (max. length 2,000 words) will be invited from stakeholders in the public services, interpreters on the National Register and members of the CIOL and other interested parties and organisations. Information and instructions for submissions, including format, length and deadlines, will be published on the NRPSI and CIOL websites.
- The Panel will receive all submissions. The Panel may, where the recurrence of common themes makes this appropriate or for other reasons, ask for a précis document or documents to be prepared. The Working Group, if asked to do so by the Panel, will be responsible for the preparation of such précis, with the assistance of the Secretary to the Panel.

**4.3** Oral submissions

- The Panel may invite, as it sees fit, stakeholders and individuals who have made written submissions to an oral session (or sessions) to add to and discuss their submissions. Bodies and individuals who have not made written submissions may also be invited to

contribute in this way if the Panel considers this useful. The Panel may seek advice and assistance from the Working Group in organising this.

#### **4.4 Outline timetable**

- Members of the Panel will be invited to a briefing session with the Working Group to discuss procedural and substantive details.
- The Panel will determine its own timetable and way of working, but the following timeline is suggested, with the aim of submitting its report for consideration by the Council at its meeting on 28 November.
- The deadline for written submissions will be 1 September, and submissions will be forwarded to the Panel in the following week.
- The Panel will convene to discuss submissions and decide on invitations to make oral submissions. (Discussions can of course take place via email or through teleconferencing. The Panel's Secretary would organise this facility if desired.)
- The oral evidence session (or sessions) will be organised at the request of the Panel, and should take place as soon as possible.
- The Panel will reconvene at its convenience to discuss its conclusions and recommendations, and provide guidance on the drafting of the report.

### **5. Questions for the Review**

**5.1** As set out in 2.2, the review responds to a diverse range of objectives, some of which fall within the immediate brief of the Panel, some of which are consequential. The purpose of the review is not to address management issues but questions of structure and the extent of the remit of NRPSI. The key topics are shown below – though the Panel should be aware that they are likely to receive submissions across the range. It will be up to the Panel to determine what is actually dealt with, and to advise the Council accordingly in its report.

**5.2** The National Register was established to enhance, ideally to ensure, the provision of qualified interpreters to the public services, and therefore to the community at large. It performs a public service and is designed to operate in the public interest. The scope of the National Register is one of the principal subjects of disagreement between the CIOL and some interpreters.

**5.3** The Panel needs to be aware that different and opposing views have been expressed in recent years in regard to aspects of the policies and governance of NRPSI. The Panel may expect to receive written and oral submissions in relation to the ownership and governance of the NRPSI; the relationship of the National Register to its stakeholders and to the Chartered Institute of Linguists; the composition and method of appointment of the Board; the National Register's mission and its management policies; how public services gain access to the National Register; and its role in regard to promotion of and advocacy for the public service interpreting profession.

**5.4** The Panel is, with reference to the interests of stakeholders, beneficiaries, users of the National Register (the Public Services) and other interested parties, invited to consider and advise on:

- the appropriate role and future direction of the National Register, within the wider context of the developing profession and the needs of consumers of language services in the public services;
- issues of regulation and representation;
- the appropriate ownership and model of governance of the National Register;
- how the various stakeholders can participate in the governance and strategic direction of the National Register, in the public interest, including forms of participation of listed

interpreters along with stakeholders such as OCJR, ACPO, HMCS, NHS, Social Services, Local Councils;

- the role of NRPSI in matters such as promotion of and advocacy for the Register;
- the relationship of the National Register to the Chartered Institute of Linguists (the Panel may wish to give a view on alternative models of governance and/or ownership).

**5.5** Aspects of the operations, management and governance of NRPSI that may be addressed in submissions by stakeholders, listed NRPSI interpreters and members of the Chartered Institute include:

- whether the National Register should be purely regulatory or whether a hybrid model comprising both regulatory functions and advocacy for the profession and for the Register should be considered;
- whether the Public Services (and the public) would be better served if the National Register were other than solely managed by the Chartered Institute;
- which stakeholders would most usefully play a role in the management of the National Register;
- whether the National Register would be more effective if it were to list Criminal Justice interpreters only – i.e. with separate registers for Health and Local Government; the advantages and disadvantages of the National Register being publicly available, free of charge to public services;
- how the National Register should respond to the development among some public services of outsourcing to commercial agencies the provision of public service interpreting;
- how the National Register should be funded.

## **6. Report**

**6.1** The Panel's report and recommendations will be drafted by the Secretary, on the basis of instruction by the Panel, and will be subject to comment and amendment as necessary by the Panel. (The report may include dissenting views if appropriate.)

**6.2** The final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Council of the Chartered Institute. The target date for conclusion of the review is the Council meeting on 28 November 2009. (The final report should be ready, if possible, two weeks before that date, i.e. 14 November. In the event that the report is likely to be delayed, the Panel should inform the Secretary, and, if possible, give a revised date for delivery.)

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Background and Development of NRPSI**

The NRPSI was established in 1994, with support from the Home Office and the Nuffield Foundation. The Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in 1993 had recommended that there should be national and local registers of qualified interpreters, with the aim of “*using only interpreters with proven competence and skills, who are governed by a nationally recognised code of conduct*”. The Nuffield Foundation responded by inviting a number of interested organisations to assist them in implementing that recommendation.

The first issue of the National Register appeared in December 1994 and, with the conclusion of the Nuffield Interpreting Project 1996, the Institute of Linguists was selected to manage the Register. The development work in the early years included training, assessments and codes of conduct and good practice for the public service sector and led to what is now the principal entry examination to the Register, the Diploma in Public Services Interpreting (DPSI). In 2000, the National Register and its administration became a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Institute of Linguists.

The aim was and is to provide a professional register of those who meet the criteria to work as interpreters in the public service context. These criteria are published on the web – [www.nrpsi.co.uk](http://www.nrpsi.co.uk) and include:

- Qualifications ([www.iol.org.uk/qualifications](http://www.iol.org.uk/qualifications))
- Experience
- References
- Security clearance
- Regular re-registration to ensure continuing competence

There are now more than 2,400 language listings (currently 2,098 registered interpreters, who may register in more than one language) in more than 100 languages with English. The majority are registered to work in the legal services, the sector the development work usually leads with, and the rest in health and local government services. Some are qualified to work in a range of services. Registrants may be members of any language professional body such as the Chartered Institute of Linguists, the Association of Police and Court Interpreters (APCI) or the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI).