

From the WhatsApp Group of Court Interpreters or the Court Interpreters

We would like to announce our withdrawal of services as court interpreters through The Big Word (TBW) for the week 23rd-27th September 2024. Join us!

Many of us stopped accepting work from the provider since June 2024 and many more are now ready to do so.

The week in question would aim to raise the awareness in all court settings that the lack of interpreters is not app-based as the maintained misinformation stated.

Unfortunately, whichever agency takes on a contract to provide court interpreters, they never factor us in. The poor terms and conditions over the past 12 years have put us in a situation where we would only find it more viable to work under the MOJ terms and conditions set out in 2005 or 19 years ago (with some updates to reflect the economic changes over these past two decades). That itself says enough.

At present the Language Service Provider:

- does not liaise with interpreters
- owes outstanding payments to interpreters for June, July, August 2024
- operates a flawed app
- uses unqualified individuals to replace those unpaid and refusing to accept bookings interpreters
- as of 9th September 2024 implements a rule where interpreters have to cover more than one bookings in courts at no additional charge showing how TBW is struggling to fulfil bookings and consequently further burdening the interpreters in attendance.

All these are signs of failing performance.

Leaving the financial aspect aside, the model which has ceased to function properly has led to numerous flaws in the justice system where defendants, victims and witnesses are provided with:

- unqualified individuals
- poor CVP performance due to either sound related or technical issues (as travelling to the court venue for £20 or £26 guaranteed is not financially beneficial due to also unpaid travel time and inadequate travel expenses)
- adjournments of trials and hearings (as travelling to the court venue for £20 or £26 guaranteed is not financially beneficial due to also unpaid travel time and inadequate travel expenses)

The issue is becoming more aggravated by the prison overcrowding which is additionally aided by the lack of interpreters where prisoners travel back and forth for days in a row.

As long as bookings continue to be outsourced by agencies at inadequate rates offered to qualified and regulated interpreters, the current backlog which is the second biggest since COVID, will continue growing.

We, as a preventive measure, have voiced out our position on many occasions starting back in 2012. Since June 2024 we have been sending letters to our respective MPs and submitting evidence in relation to the Parliamentary Probe for the House of Lords Committee which is due to take place from the end of September 2024. The Committee has invited written evidence to be submitted **by 30 September 2024** and expects to report on its findings towards the end of the year.

Due to the lack of open financial and fulfilment analysis of this flawed model it has continued to operate.

We are at the stage where we are withdrawing our services. We hope and trust that attention is appropriately drawn to this extremely serious matter that urgently needs to be addressed and remedied.

ENDS
16th September 2024