

Campaign lobbying for improvements in NHS language service delivery

Template letter to download and send to your MP

You can **download and use the template letter/email on the next page** to ask your MP to raise questions at a local and national level about the use of unregistered interpreters by the National Health Service.

To find the contact details of your MP, visit:

<https://members.parliament.uk/members/Commons>.

We would be interested to know which MPs are contacted for future reference as part of our ongoing lobbying activities. So, please do let us know if you make use of the letter and the name of your MP by emailing mike@nrpsi.org.uk.

We would also be delighted to hear about any response you receive to your letter. If you are happy to share this, please email a copy to mike@nrpsi.org.uk.

And don't forget to have a look at:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7031538557366214656/>

Please remember to 'Like' and 'Share' this if you agree with continued lobbying of the NHS.

Dear _____,

Re: Raising questions about the ongoing risk to life posed by the NHS's use of unregistered interpreters

I am writing to you about the recent media coverage (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-64496514) of the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch's (HSIB) inquiry into the death of a mother who tragically died shortly following childbirth. The HSIB's investigation highlighted that poor interpreting services were in part to blame for her death.

While this horrendous event occurred in Gloucestershire, it could easily have happened anywhere in the UK. It is also likely that occasions that put the public and our health services at risk will continue to happen without the necessary steps taken to ensure that only Registered Public Service Interpreters are engaged to work with the public services.

You may have seen this related BBC story (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-64559105), also published recently, about an ongoing court case at The Old Bailey concerning the part an unregistered "hospital interpreter" played in trying to persuade doctors to approve an illegal kidney transplant.

There is no excuse for vulnerable members of the public or our already stressed health service and NHS workers to rely on deficient interpreting services.

I speak as a professional public service interpreter who has had their expertise and skills accredited by the National Register of Public Service Interpreters (NRPSI) (www.nrpsi.org.uk).

Established in 1994 on the recommendation of a Royal Commission, NRPSI is a commercially and politically independent organisation that regulates the UK's public service interpreting profession and manages a free-to-access online register of public service interpreters – all of whom meet its requirements in terms of the level of qualifications, experience, security vetting and professional accountability needed to work in public service settings.

NHS England's own guidance for commissioners regarding the use of interpreting and translation services (www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/guidance-for-commissioners-interpreting-and-translation-services-in-primary-care.pdf) states that "spoken language interpreters should be registered with NRPSI and hold a Diploma in Public Sector Interpreting (Health)". However, this is only a recommendation, with the word *should* being used instead of *must*. Consequently, those ill-equipped to interpret, including family members, are engaged by our healthcare service.

What seems particularly unfair and unjust is that when it comes to engaging a sign language interpreter the guidance becomes mandatory, stating that "organisations must ensure that the communication and language professional holds relevant interpreting qualifications and, in the case of British Sign Language (BSL), has achieved BSL level 6 or an honours degree in their second language in line with the The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) registration requirements".

What I would like to know, and I am sure you would like confirmation of, is whether local constituents who do not speak English are safe in the hands of the GP surgeries and hospitals in this area.

More specifically, it would be good to have answers to the following questions:

1. Do NHS trusts and GP surgeries in your constituency adhere to NHS England's guidelines to commissioners regarding the use of interpreting and translation services?
2. Are the health services in your constituency engaging with non-regulated and unregistered spoken word interpreters?
3. Do they knowingly use unregistered spoken word interpreters?
4. If so, how frequently would they say they use them (e.g., rarely / occasionally / most of the time)?
5. When engaging a spoken word interpreter, do they check to see if they are registered against the free-to-access online register of public service interpreters, or by asking to see the interpreter's NRPSI Photo ID Card?
6. Are they aware that if they are the victim of poor spoken word interpreting practice that they are unable to launch a complaints or disciplinary investigation with the public service interpreting regulator (NRPSI) if the interpreter is not registered?
7. Why is it not mandatory for the health service to only engage registered spoken work interpreters (i.e., NRPSI Registered Interpreters)?

NRPSI has been calling for some time for the mandatory use of Registered Interpreters by the public services, which are often dealing with life and death situations. Following this recent tragic event, it has written an open letter to the Health Minister, Minister of the Cabinet Office, Shadow Health Minister and CEO of NHS England on this subject.

I hope you are able to raise the questions outlined with the relevant organisations on a local and national level to ascertain the reality of this situation and the extent to which the public, health service and healthcare professionals are at risk – so that the necessary steps can be taken to make the use of Registered Public Service Interpreters in healthcare settings mandatory.

I am keen to hear about any responses and your views on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Contact details:
