

People and Processes in the Post-Qualification Supervision and Coaching of Signed Language Interpreters in Police Settings

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In the United Kingdom, it is standard practice for signed language interpreters to refrain from working in legal setting for two years after qualifying. This experience-gathering period, combined with research which continues to show that newly graduated sign language interpreters do not feel ready to work in legal settings (Walker and Shaw, 2011, p. 102), has created a resource gap. Alongside this is anecdotal evidence which suggests that even the more experienced interpreters often decide not to work in legal settings. The Scottish Government has sought to address the general shortage of qualified sign language interpreters by funding a full-time undergraduate degree in signed language interpreting at Heriot-Watt University, beginning in 2012. Keen to ensure that graduates remained in the country after qualification, the Scottish Government Equality Unit subsequently funded the Promoting Equal Access to Services: Reducing Barriers to Participation for BSL Users (PEAS) project. This multi-disciplinary project, in partnership with Heriot-Watt University, Police Scotland and the National Health Service, aimed to provide paid, supervised and coached full-time internships for graduates of the programme. This presentation will discuss the results of the police interpreting section of the PEAS project. We will refer to existing work on the use of mentoring to help ease graduate interpreters into the workplace (Pearce and Napier, 2010). Additionally, we will argue that the PEAS experience underscores the need for legal interpreters to be trained in partnership with legal institutions and vulnerable communities. This is especially important if research on legal interpreting is to follow the example of Angermeyer (2015) in viewing legal interpreting as an essentially situated activity, whose performance is determined by both organisational and socio-political factors.

References

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