



**AGO**

Attorney General's Office

Attorney General

20 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0NF

Emily Thornberry MP  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

020 7271 2460

[www.attorneygeneral.gov.uk](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.uk)

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012

Dear Emily,

### COURT INTERPRETERS

Thank you for your letter dated the 15<sup>th</sup> March. The provision of interpreters to the courts and the management of their employment are matters which fall within the purview of the Ministry of Justice - I have therefore passed a copy of your letter to them for consideration.

You have also raised the issue of the cost to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) of the new scheme. As indicated in the Solicitor General's written answer of the 15<sup>th</sup> March, drafted in response to your Parliamentary Question (Official Report, Col. 355W) it is not practicable to provide an estimate of any additional costs which may have been incurred. It is worth noting that the CPS is only required to provide interpreters in a limited number of cases, primarily for prosecution witnesses, and is therefore a relatively small user of interpreting services.

In relation to contempt, my role is limited. I would most likely become involved in cases of individual contempt, in which an interpreter failed to interpret either fully or accurately and therefore broke the oath to '*well and faithfully interpret and true explanation make*'. Such a failure could potentially amount to a contempt of court, although it is most likely a contempt which would be addressed summarily by the presiding Judge or Magistrate. The failure of a firm to provide an interpreter to a court does not seem to me to fall within the law of contempt; rather this is an administrative issue best addressed by wasted costs and, ultimately, those who arrange such services for the courts.

Yours ever

RT HON DOMINIC GRIEVE QC MP