

ALS not well

MPs are still being prevented from seeing the true extent of the court interpreters contract fiasco (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*) – even after taking the unusual step of creating an anonymous online forum to enable whistleblowers to contribute to the inquiry being held by the Commons justice committee.

The committee had found “that some stakeholders may be reticent to provide formal written evidence” with their names attached – particularly court officials, lawyers or members of the judiciary and magistracy who either work for or have to deal regularly with the courts service. Hence the forum.

Magistrates in Peterborough, however, revealed that they were forbidden by the Courts Service from providing the actual number of problems they have had with Capita Translation and Interpreting (formerly ALS).

In written evidence, the aptly named bench chairman Peter Beeke told the MPs: “I receive a monthly report of ALS failures. Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service have specifically forbidden me from passing that data to this inquiry! However what I can tell you is that the initial service was truly appalling. Day after day interpreters did not arrive.”

Many problems are still happening, he added. “We still get cases where no interpreter is present and we are not permitted to use local contractors which might get round the poor level of service provided by ALS. Many of the previous excellent interpreters will not work for ALS and will not substitute for them when they cannot provide their own contractor. The blanket ban is unnecessary as that would in certain circumstances provide an acceptable solution.”