

Court Reporter

Court reporters make a word for word record of court proceedings, or other official committee meetings or hearings, on a stenography machine which is linked to a computer-aided transcription (CAT). This translates typed shorthand into English text immediately.

They are also called verbatim reporters or shorthand writers.

The Work

You could be:

- attending court hearings in a Sheriff Court, the High Court or Court of Session
- taking down a complete word for word account of all the evidence, the judgements and the speeches of counsel, using a stenograph machine, which is linked to a computer-aided transcription (CAT) system
- digitally recording proceedings and typing out transcripts using a computer
- proofreading the transcript, checking all references, quotations or legal authorities cited during the proceedings
- producing an accurate transcript (a written copy which can be referred to in subsequent legal proceedings) either immediately through 'real-time' recording or at the end of the day's proceedings
- reading back recorded passages in court
- editing and proof-reading the judgements, allowing for the individual judges' own styles
- sending a copy to the judge for amendments or approval before making the final copy
- working for other organisations, public or private, to record other types of meetings, inquiries or hearings.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- whether you are freelance or on a salary
- the demand for the job.

Starting pay for court reporters is around £12,000 a year rising to between £17,000 and £20,000 a year.

Freelance rates are generally between £150 and £250 a day. It may be possible to earn more working in the private sector for commercial businesses.

Conditions

- You would work in a courtroom and would have to remain seated for long periods.
- Court hours are usually 10.00am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.
- You might have to work other hours for special hearings or if you carry out work for other organisations.
- The court reporter must be sitting down and ready to start recording before the hearing can begin.

- You may have to work in the evening to finish transcripts of proceedings.
- You may be able to work part time.
- Many court reporters purchase their own stenograph machine and laptop.
- You may have to travel between different courts or clients' offices taking your equipment, so you would need a driving licence.

Getting In

- Employers may ask for at least 4 subjects at Standard grade or National 4 or 5, including English; many expect one or more Highers. Some court reporters have a degree.
- You must have excellent shorthand skills - a minimum of 140 words per minute and 100% accuracy.
- You must have excellent knowledge of and skill in using the English language - punctuation, spelling and grammar.
- You need to be computer literate.
- It helps if you are interested in law and current affairs.
- Sorene Court Reporting and Training Services offer court reporter training by distance learning. Visit www.sorene.co.uk for further details.

Court reporters are not employed by the Scottish Court Service, they are employed as needed from specialist firms of shorthand writers. There are only a very few firms, which cover the whole of Scotland. Work may also be available with other organisations, such as the NHS, Trade Unions, Government departments and professional bodies.

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- able to concentrate well over long periods
- patient
- an accurate and speedy worker
- able to pay close attention to detail
- willing to work long and irregular hours, often alone
- punctual.

You need to have:

- good hearing, in order to understand speech which may be mumbled or in an unfamiliar accent or dialect
- a good understanding of legal terms and jargon
- confidence, in order to read out recorded passages in court.

Training

- Training for verbatim reporting has changed considerably because of computerised shorthand machines and CAT.
- The two machines generally used in the UK are the Palantype or Stenotype machine; shorthand code is entered into the machine which is processed by CAT software and converted into plain English. This can

then be output to a laptop computer, screen/monitor or projector.

- Before you decide which machine to learn you should try out the machines to see which suits you best and if you will be able to gain the finger skills needed.
- You work with an experienced court reporter, taking regular tests to check your progress.

Getting On

- There is no promotion structure specifically for court reporters, but with experience and further skills, you may be able to do freelance work. You would have to own your own equipment.
- You may also work at public enquiries and political conferences.
- Some court reporters are bilingual and work outside Britain.
- You might do some work in the private sector, for business conferences and corporate meetings.
- There are also opportunities to transcribe parliamentary debates (Scottish Parliament, House of Commons, House of Lords, foreign parliaments) and script texts and subtitles for television.
- Registering as a member of the British Institute of Verbatim Reporters (BIVR) can enhance your reputation and may lead to more work.
- You could progress to be a speech to text (STT) reporter. They take notes for deaf and other people with hearing difficulties in conferences, courts, lectures and meetings. They use a special keyboard to type every word spoken, as they are spoken, and they then appear on a computer screen.
- To be a registered STT reporter, you must pass the Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People (run by Signature) or pass the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD) Level 3 Certificate and the NRCPD professional competence assessment. You then register with the NRCPD. You can also register with the BIVR.

More Information

Although this is a small profession there is a shortage of skilled real-time reporters in the UK.

Contacts

British Institute of Verbatim Reporters (BIVR)

Tel: 020 8907 8249

Email: sec@bivr.org.uk

Website: www.bivr.org.uk

National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)

Tel: 0191 323 3376

Email: enquiries@nrpcd.org.uk

Website: www.nrpcd.org.uk

X: @NRCPD

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Tel: 0131 444 3300

Email: enquiries@scotcourts.gov.uk

Website: www.scotcourts.gov.uk

Website (2): www.scotcourts.gov.uk/about-the-scottish-court-service/recruitment

X: @SCTScourtstribs

Signature

Tel: 0191 383 1155

Website: www.signature.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SignatureDeaf

Skills for Justice

Tel: 0117 922 1155

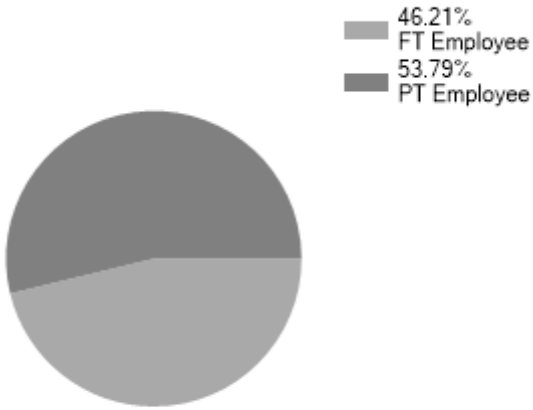
Email: info@skillsforjustice.org.uk

Website: skillsforjustice.org.uk

X: @Skills_Justice

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

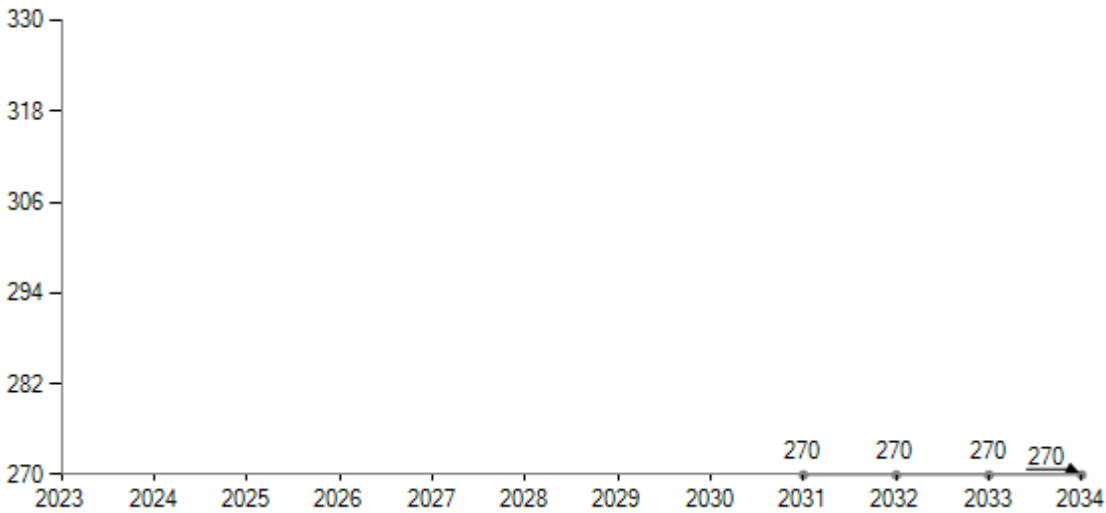


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)