



# Legal Aid Agency

Contract Management  
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To: All Duty Solicitors on Hartlepool and Teesside Magistrates' Court Duty Schemes

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Response to Consultation with Hartlepool and Teesside scheme members following HMCTS announcement to close Hartlepool Magistrates' Court**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation under paragraph 6.5 of the 2010 Standard Crime Contract Specification. The consultation was regarding possible changes to the eligibility rules for membership of duty solicitor schemes affected by the HMCTS decision to close Hartlepool Magistrates' Court. Hartlepool Magistrates' Court will close on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 and in the covering letter issued with the consultation document, the timetable for the consultation exercise indicated that following consideration of any responses all affected parties would be notified of the outcome of the consultation by 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. Therefore, this letter is intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

### **Consultation responses**

Within the published deadline, the Legal Aid Agency received written responses from two firms operating within the affected schemes.

### **Outcome of consultation**

Having carefully considered the responses received, the Legal Aid Agency has determined to proceed in accordance with **Option 1** proposed in the Consultation (the inclusion of Hartlepool Duty Solicitors on the Teesside Magistrates' Court Rota).

Both respondents favoured Option 1.

Additionally, one respondent put forward a proposal for Hartlepool cases to be listed separately on specific week days at Teesside. However, HMCTS have confirmed that

the listings cannot accommodate separating out any Hartlepool cases and they will be subsumed within the overall case listings.

There are currently no proposed changes to the Police Station arrangements in Hartlepool and changes to the Police Station Duty Scheme boundaries is not something that is being considered at this time.

In making this decision the Legal Aid Agency is, of course, aware that the stated preference of all firms cannot be accommodated. It is the unfortunate nature of any consultation process that not all respondents will be satisfied with the outcome, however it is the Legal Aid Agency's view that, in the given circumstances, to proceed with Option 1 proposed in the consultation is the best course of action.

**Next steps**

- Option 1 proposed in the consultation document will take effect on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017.
- New rotas will be issued to cover the period 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karl Ford', written in a cursive style.

Karl Ford  
Contract Manager