



Legal Aid Agency

Birmingham Regional Office

Cannon House, 18, The Priory Queensway

Birmingham, B4 6BS

To: All Scheme Members of the Solihull,
Birmingham and Coventry Scheme Areas

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to Consultation with scheme members of the Solihull, Birmingham and Coventry Scheme Areas following the West Midlands Police decision to close Solihull Custody Suite for a period of 6 months from Monday 16th July 2018.

On 18th May 2018, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation under paragraph 6.6 of the 2017 Standard Crime Contract Specification - Duty Solicitor Provisions, which states we may consult on a proposal to change the postcode boundaries in respect of a scheme following the closure of a police station/custody suite. Although this is not a confirmed permanent closure, a consultation was deemed appropriate given the significant impact on the current Solihull Police Station rota.

The consultation was regarding possible changes to the membership of the Duty Solicitor schemes affected by the closure of Solihull Custody Suite.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was the 1st June 2018 and the timetable for the consultation exercise indicated that following consideration of responses, all affected parties would be notified of the outcome of the consultation in the week commencing 11th June 2018 at the latest. This letter is therefore intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to respond to the consultation.

21 responses were received, some from individual Duty Solicitors and some a combined response reflecting the views of a firm overall. The majority of respondents ultimately favoured **Option C** over any other option.

Many respondents expressed concerns regarding the travel time and costs both for the defence and other users of the Criminal Justice System in each of the options under consideration. Respondents sought to minimise any additional costs.

No decision can meet the expressed desires of all those who provided feedback to the consultation, whilst also meeting the needs of clients and the LAA. A decision has therefore been made which will provide rationalised, efficient and effective Duty provision across the schemes under review, having given due consideration to the feedback received.

It has been decided that the following arrangements will be implemented:

From Monday 16th July 2018 the membership of the Solihull and Coventry Police Station rota will be combined. There will be no changes to the current Coventry duty solicitor rota apart from the addition of the Solihull members. There are currently 2 duty solicitor's on the rota for the period 9am to 6pm with a further 2 duty solicitors covering the period 6pm to 9am, 7 days a week and this will not change.

From Monday 1st October 2018 the membership of the Solihull and Coventry Court Duty scheme will also be combined and again the current rota will not change apart from the addition of the new members from the Solihull scheme.

Also, there can be no amendments to Remuneration Regulations or Contract arrangements – remuneration for Court Duty work will remain unchanged – travel and disbursements can only be claimed on a non-business day or when the solicitor is called back to court.

Please ensure that you work from the updated rotas when they arrive.

Next steps

- ☐ A new combined Coventry and Solihull Police Station rota will be issued shortly to cover the rota period 16th July 2018 to 30th September 2018.