



To all Firms with Duty Solicitors on the Harrow Scheme

Dear Sir / Madam

Response to Consultation with Harrow Scheme members following Metropolitan Police announcement to close Harrow Police Station Custody Suite

On 8 October 2018, the Legal Aid Agency requested opinions regarding possible changes to the Harrow Duty Solicitor scheme affected by the Metropolitan Police decision to close Harrow Police Station.

From 12th November, those arrested under the Harrow scheme will be taken to either Wembley (603 Harrow Road) or Colindale (Grahame Park Way, Hendon) Custody Suites depending on availability of cell space. As a result, no police station duty solicitor work will be available at Harrow police station. Please note the Harrow Custody Suite will remain as a contingency suite and will open only when required should Wembley or Colindale have to shut for a period of time or for times when a particular police operation would require a separate custody suite.

The options set out in the consultation were

Option 1 - Merge the schemes. This would mean one large merged area covering all schemes, all members of the current schemes would automatically have their membership transferred over to this new larger scheme. Please note that Providers cannot join schemes that they are not currently already eligible for. Or;

Option 2 - Eligibility remains the same and the Harrow Scheme closes. The Harrow scheme will close and rotas will no longer be provided. Those on this scheme will simply lose the slots that they would have had. Or;

Option 3 - The schemes remain unchanged. The Met Police have confirmed that the relevant Custody Units will be able to identify and flag Harrow cases when contacting the DSCC. The DSCC call handlers will be asked to double check incoming Wembley or Colindale cases to flag for Harrow cases. This will ensure the appropriate Duty Solicitor is deployed. We can review this arrangement in the future should it appear that this process is not being successfully followed.

Summary of Responses Received

One hundred and sixteen responses were received, with a majority preference for Option 3 – the schemes remain unchanged.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback proposal.

Consultation Outcome

There is no decision that can meet the needs of all those that have fed back on the scheme changes and a decision has been made which provides the greatest fairness to all scheme members that are affected by this change.

As detailed above, the consultation responses received expressed a preference for Option 3 The schemes remain unchanged. We will therefore take the necessary steps to implement this option.

Impact on affected Duty Solicitor Schemes

There will be no impact. From 12th November 2018, Wembley and Colindale police stations will be instructed to ask for the relevant duty solicitor on the point of talking to the DSCC, members of the Harrow duty scheme would still be awarded their Harrow duties.

Rota Publication

No change to the Rota will arise as a result.