



Legal Aid
Agency

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE SUTTON, BROMLEY & CROYDON POLICE
STATION SCHEMES**

Introduction and Background

This consultation is in response to the **South Borough Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police's** decision to make Sutton Police Station Custody Unit a contingency only suite as from 21 January 2019.

This Police Station is currently served by the Sutton Police Station Duty Solicitor Scheme.

We have tried to keep changes to schemes to a minimum, whilst taking into account the likely impact on levels of service to clients from solicitors whose offices will no longer be local to the police station dealing with their matter.

This Consultation

This consultation paper comprises two sections:

Section 1 outlines the Police Station change and Duty Solicitor Schemes affected.

Section 2 outlines the options identified to change the Duty Solicitor Schemes affected within your local region.

We are consulting on these proposals for **3 weeks**, from **8 January 2019**.

Responses should be sent by email to: paul.benjamin@justice.gov.uk **by 5pm on 29 January 2019**.

Our intention is to respond to the consultation by **13 February 2019**.

Section 1 – Police Station Closures and Duty Solicitor Schemes affected.

In the South Borough Command Unit Area, the following Police Station will be made a contingency only suite as from **21 January 2019**:

- Sutton

In addition, the following changes will apply:

- All detainees will be taken to either Bromley or Croydon Police Station.

As a result of this change, we need to revise the following scheme:

- Sutton Police Station Scheme

All postcode sectors are mapped into at least one Duty Scheme. The changes proposed here will not affect this.

Determining Eligibility for revised Schemes

To assist providers in determining which Scheme(s) they are eligible to join, the postcode sectors providing access to work within each scheme, which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-solicitors-rotas-information-and-guidance> will be updated in accordance with this consultation.

Section 2 – Proposed revisions to schemes in the South Borough Command Unit Area.

Proposed Changes

We set out explanations, where appropriate, of how each of the approaches will affect the different schemes.

At the end we indicate the option we favour.

Where schemes only require minor adjustments, we set these out and invite any comments or feedback you may have on these changes.

It may be the case that you consider different approaches appropriate for different schemes. Please make it clear in your response which Option(s) and scheme(s) you are referring to, and indicate your reasons for preferring these alternatives.

Sutton CJS Area (South Borough Command Unit Area)

The Metropolitan Police force has recently notified the LAA that **Sutton Police Station** will be made a contingency only suite as from **21 January 2019**.

As a result, the Legal Aid Agency would like to consult with relevant scheme members on proposed revisions to duty solicitor schemes in the South Borough Command Unit Area. We have set out below the options we are consulting on.

We recognise that there is limited time available to conduct a consultation on proposed changes to duty scheme eligibility before the change to Sutton Police Station's use. Therefore, as an **interim approach** until **28 February 2019** we will be maintaining a Sutton Police Station Scheme rota whilst we run a consultation and consider the responses. As part of this interim approach the Police will inform the Duty Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) where the detainee was picked up and if it is from the area currently served by Sutton Police Station, the call will be allocated to whoever is on the Sutton Scheme rota and they will cover the matter, attending at Bromley or Croydon Police Station as appropriate.

Consultation Options

Our proposals are as follows:

Option 1:

We maintain the Sutton Police Station Scheme rota.

The Police will inform the Duty Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) where the detainee was picked up and if it is from the area currently served by Sutton Police Station, the call will be allocated to whoever is on the Sutton Scheme rota and they will cover the matter, attending at Bromley or Croydon Police Station as appropriate.

The effectiveness of this option relies on the Police correctly informing the DSCC of which scheme a call should be allocated to.

This option enables the existing Sutton Scheme solicitors to retain their existing rota slots, albeit that the matters will be dealt with at Bromley or Croydon Police Station rather than Sutton.

Option 2:

We merge the Sutton Police Station Scheme with the Bromley and Croydon Police Station Schemes.

This would ensure that existing Sutton Scheme members would not lose out on access to matters arising from the area currently covered by the Sutton Scheme.

On the other hand, existing Bromley and/or Croydon Police Station Scheme members might feel that they stand to lose work due to the inclusion of current Sutton Scheme members onto their rota(s).

Option 3:

We close the Sutton Police Station Scheme.

The Court has already closed and the Police Station is now due to change its status to a contingency only site.

Closure of the Scheme would mean that existing Scheme members would lose Duty Solicitor work.

Our Preference:

Option 2 is preferred by the Legal Aid Agency. The reasons for this are:-

- It ensures that existing Sutton Scheme members have the benefit of maintaining Duty work on an enlarged/merged Bromley, Croydon & Sutton Scheme.
- Unlike Option 1, the effectiveness of this arrangement is not so dependent on the Police providing the DSCC with the correct information about where detainees were picked up.

Respondents are invited to comment on these proposals and, if not in support of the proposals, to offer alternative suggestions.