



Legal Aid
Agency

To all Duty Solicitors on Northallerton & Richmond and York & Selby Schemes

Date: 23rd August 2019

Dear Duty Solicitor,

Response to Consultation – Duty Solicitor Scheme

This letter is the Legal Aid Agency's response to the consultation in respect of changes proposed to Duty Solicitor Schemes in the North East for the Northallerton & Richmond and York & Selby Schemes, as a result of the closure of Northallerton Magistrates Court by HMCTS.

Background

The consultation ran for 4 weeks from 19th July 2019 to 16th August 2019.

The proposals outlined in the consultation attempted 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 court dealing with their matter, alongside maintaining fair and reasonable access to Duty Solicitor work for all firms whose offices are located within the affected Scheme boundaries.

In the event that you have any queries regarding the contents of this response, please address the same to karl.ford@justice.gov.uk

Summary of Responses

A total of one individual response was received to the consultation on proposed changes to the Duty Solicitor Schemes as a result of the closure of Northallerton Magistrates Court.

The one respondent was in favour of Option 1, although suggested Option 2 could be suitable with a revised catchment area.

Decision

After careful consideration of the response received, and the points raised within the same, the Legal Aid Agency have decided to proceed with Option 1, and as such Northallerton & Richmond will become a Police Station only scheme. Northallerton Postcodes will be subject to an amended boundary to allow access to York & Selby scheme (an additional 1 member

added to York). All Darlington postcodes on the Northallerton scheme will continue to cover Northallerton Police Station only and their own home Court scheme of Darlington.

The Legal Aid Agency consider that clients should continue to have the choice to instruct a Solicitor of their choosing, and the client's ability to instruct a solicitor from their local area will not be affected by this decision.

In considering the lawfulness of the consultation, providers are directed to the 2017 Standard Criminal Contract Specification 6.60, which states:

6.60 We may, by prior consultation for at least three weeks with the relevant Providers who are members of affected Schemes, change the postcode boundaries of Schemes if a magistrates' court closure or a Police Station closure (whether temporary or permanent), or reduction in membership of a Scheme necessitates such a change.

Next Steps

New rotas to reflect the changes to Northallerton & Richmond and York & Selby schemes will be drawn up by the rota team, to take effect 1st October 2019, and sent via email to all members. Any queries around allocation can be forwarded to the issuing team once the rotas are received.

The Northallerton Scheme boundary will be merged with effect from 1st October 2019 to allow access to York & Selby Scheme. 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> , and will be updated in accordance with this decision.

Yours faithfully

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

Karl Ford
Area Contract Manager