

To: All Firms with Duty Solicitors on the Highbury Corner Youth Court and Inner London Youth Court Schemes.

Dear Sir / Madam

**Response to Consultation with Highbury Corner Youth Court and Inner London Youth Court scheme members, operating out of Highbury Corner Magistrates Court, following HMCTS request to reduce the number of attending duty solicitors.**

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation regarding possible changes to the Highbury Corner Youth Court and Inner London Youth Court Solicitor schemes affected by the HMCTS decision to reduce the number of duty solicitors in attendance.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was 9<sup>th</sup> September and the timetable for the consultation exercise indicated that, following consideration of any responses, it was our intention to notify all affected parties of the outcome of the consultation by Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September. Therefore, this letter is intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

**Summary of Responses**

A total of 10 responses to the consultation on proposed changes to the Highbury Corner Youth Court and Inner London Youth Court Solicitor schemes, affected by the HMCTS decision to reduce the number of duty solicitors in attendance, were received.

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

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.

The 10 responses received came from 9 firms and 1 individual.

All 10 respondents had members on the current schemes, therefore, all respondents are directly impacted by any changes arising from this consultation.

6 of the 10 respondents were in favour of option 2, that is to continue to operate separate Highbury Corner Youth Court and Inner London Youth Court schemes. This would mean splitting the available slots equally between the two schemes.

Of these 6 respondents, 4 made no notable additional comment, however the following were recorded as part of the remaining 2:

- These firms commented on the importance of the geographical location of the firm attending the client and the importance of this being as local to the client as possible for travel.

4 of the 10 respondents either did not indicate a preferred option or specifically stated neither option.

Of these 4, the following points were raised:

- 4 firms commented on the need to allocate firms that are local to the client's home and changes to the schemes could impact on this.
- 2 firms raised the issue with client safety should a non-local firm act for a client. The example of 'crossing postcodes' was given and relating this to 'postcode gang conflict'.
- 1 firm added 'as the Court and Youth Offending services are aware youths often are reluctant to attend Youth offending appointments which are far away from their homes and involve them crossing postcode borders'.
- 1 firm indicated that profitability would be impacted by a non-local client's matter then being referred to a court more local the client.
- It was suggested that separate courts operated on different days.
- A further suggestion that for Inner London Youth Court, HMCTS should 'hear cases at Westminster, City of London or even in the under used court rooms in Inner London or Blackfriars CC'.

## **Decision**

After careful consideration of the responses received, of which 6/10 respondents agreed with the preferred approach of retaining the split between the two schemes, and the points raised within the same, the decision is to continue to operate two schemes with the proposed reduction in duty attendance. Our initial proposal was to

split these evenly, however further information from the court has meant we will split these along the following lines:

Highbury Corner - Tuesday (Islington), Wednesday (Camden), Thursday (Haringey) and Friday (Enfield).

Inner London – Both Monday slots (Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington, Chelsea & Westminster)

As indicated above, this is in line with the court operation and the boroughs served (in brackets above) each day. This outcome also serves to ensure as best as possible that clients are assisted according to geography and reduces the potential impact on client safety.

The LAA will keep this under review and will consider amending the rotas if it proves necessary.

### **Next steps**

- Option 2 proposed in the consultation document will take effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019
- New rotas will be issued to cover the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019- 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

Yours faithfully,



Abbie Lane  
Area Contract Manager