



Legal Aid
Agency

Leeds Regional Office
2nd Floor
5 Wellington Place
Leeds
LS1 4AP
DX No 12068

Date: 24 March 2020

To: All Firms with Duty
Solicitors on the Beverley &
Bridlington and/or Hull Court
Duty Schemes

Dear Sir / Madam

Response to Consultation with Beverley & Bridlington and/or Hull Court Duty scheme members following the HMCTS announcement to operate Beverley & Bridlington Magistrates' Court as a trial centre from 1 April 2020

On 17 February 2020, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation regarding possible changes to the Court Duty Solicitor scheme(s) affected by the HMCTS decision to operate Beverley & Bridlington Magistrates' Court as a trial centre, and transfer move Court Duty work to Hull Magistrates' Court.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was Friday 6 March 2020 and the timetable for the consultation exercise indicated that following consideration of any responses, our intention was to respond to the consultation by Friday 13 March 2020. Therefore, this letter is intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

Summary of Responses

One response was received to the consultation on proposed changes to the Court Duty Solicitor Schemes as a result of Beverley & Magistrates Court being used as a trial centre.

There is no decision that can meet the needs of all those who may be affected by 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 well as to clients whose cases will be dealt with at Hull Magistrates' Court after the transfer of work there.

The options consulted on were:

- Option 1 Merge the Beverley & Bridlington and Hull Magistrates' Court Schemes.
- Option 2 Remove the Beverley & Bridlington Court Duty Rota, apart from the need to cover Youth Courts on days trials are listed.
- Option 3 Remove the Beverley & Bridlington Court Duty Rota as outlined above in Option 2, but with only Hull Duty Scheme Members eligible to cover Youth Courts at Beverley & Bridlington.

Summary of Feedback

The single response was from a member of the current Beverley & Bridlington scheme who is therefore directly impacted by any changes arising from this consultation.

The one response received supported Option 1.

C. Decision

After careful consideration of the response received, and the three options proposed in the initial consultation, the Legal Aid Agency has decided to proceed with **Option 1, namely merging the Beverley & Bridlington and Hull Court Duty Schemes.**

This option will ensure that members of the Beverley & Bridlington Scheme will continue to be awarded rota slots on the newly-merged scheme.

We selected Option 1 because:-

- 1) It ensures that clients can continue to instruct relatively local firms where possible.
- 2) It impacts less on members of both existing schemes.
- 3) It ensures members who were on the Beverley & Bridlington scheme only, will continue to have access to work from that scheme as a result of the merging of both schemes.

We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the merged scheme including any concerns raised by clients about having to travel to providers in Hull and/or to a more distant court than previously.

All Duty Scheme members currently on the Beverley & Bridlington Rota will be expected to continue to cover the Youth Courts listed at Beverley Magistrates Court when required.

D. Next steps

- Option 1 proposed in the consultation document will take effect from 1 April 2020 when rotas commence at Hull Magistrates' Court. The last duty sittings at Beverley & Bridlington Magistrates' Court will be on or before 31 March 2020.
- As the rotas have already been published, amended rotas will be issued to cover the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.
- The postcode tool will be amended to take into account the above changes.

Yours faithfully,

Padraig Enright
Area Contract Manager