



Legal Aid
Agency

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE BRENTFORD, EALING & UXBRIDGE
POLICE STATION SCHEMES**

Introduction and Background

This consultation is in response to the **West Area Borough Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police's** decision to make Hounslow Police Station a contingency suite from 26 October 2020.

This Police Station is currently served by the Brentford Duty Solicitor Scheme although it has already recently closed for remedial works.

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(s) and Duty Solicitor Scheme(s) 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 **4 September 2020**.

Responses should be sent by email to: Adrian.Burke@justice.gov.uk by **5pm on 25 September 2020**.

Our intention is to respond to the consultation by **5 October 2020**.

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

In the West Area Borough Command Unit, the following Police Station will become a contingency suite from **26 October 2020**:

- Hounslow

In addition, the following changes will apply:

- Detainees will be taken to either Acton or Heathrow Police Station.

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

- Brentford Police Station Scheme

All postcode sectors are mapped into at least one Duty Scheme.

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 West Area Borough Command Unit.

Proposed Changes

We set out explanations, where appropriate, of how each of the approaches will affect the different scheme(s).

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.

Brentford Police Station Scheme (West Area Borough Command Unit)

The Metropolitan Police force has recently confirmed that **Hounslow Police Station** will become a contingency suite from **26 October 2020**.

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

Until **26 October 2020** we will be maintaining a Brentford Police Station Scheme rota.

Consultation Options

Our proposals are as follows:

Option 1:

We maintain the Brentford Police Station Scheme rota notwithstanding that detainees will be dealt with at Acton or Heathrow Police Station.

This option would in theory enable the existing Brentford Scheme solicitors to retain their existing rota slots, albeit that the matters would now be dealt with at Acton or Heathrow Police Station rather than Hounslow.

However, the effectiveness of this option relies on the Police correctly informing the DSCC of which scheme a call should be allocated to and the Police have confirmed that they cannot reasonably be expected to assign the scheme with reference to where the detainee was picked up. Consequently, Ealing or Uxbridge Scheme members may be allocated matters rather than Brentford Scheme members.

Option 2:

We merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with the Ealing and Uxbridge Police Station Schemes.

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

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

Option 3:

We merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with the Ealing Police Station Scheme only.

This would ensure that existing Brentford Scheme members would not lose out on access to all matters arising from the area currently covered by the Brentford Scheme. Instead they would obtain access to matters now being dealt with by the

Ealing Police Station Scheme including those being dealt with at Acton Police Station.

On the other hand, existing Ealing Scheme members might feel that they stand to lose work due to the inclusion of current Brentford Scheme members onto their rota(s).

For the sake of clarity, this option would not give current Brentford Scheme members access to the current Uxbridge Scheme.

Option 4:

We merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with the Uxbridge Police Station Scheme only.

This would ensure that existing Brentford Scheme members would not lose out on access to all matters arising from the area currently covered by the Brentford Scheme. Instead they would obtain access to matters now being dealt with by the Uxbridge Police Station Scheme including those being dealt with at Heathrow Police Station.

On the other hand, existing Uxbridge Scheme members might feel that they stand to lose work due to the inclusion of current Brentford Scheme members onto their rota(s).

For the sake of clarity, this option would not give current Brentford Scheme members access to the current Ealing Scheme.

Option 5:

We close the Brentford Police Station Scheme.

Since there are no other Police Stations remaining open in this area after Hounslow closes and there are also no Magistrates' Courts in this area, arguably, closing the Brentford Scheme could be considered the most appropriate option.

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 Brentford Scheme members have the benefit of maintaining Duty work on an enlarged/merged Brentford, Ealing & Uxbridge Scheme.
- Unlike Option 1, the effectiveness of this arrangement is not dependent on the Police providing the DSCC with the correct information about where detainees were picked up.
- Options 3 and 4 are not the Agency's preferred options because detainees which are currently being dealt with at Hounslow Police Station could be dealt with at either Acton or Heathrow Police Station. It would seem odd that Option 3 would only allow current Brentford Scheme members to pick up

new matters if the detainee was dealt with at Acton but not if they were dealt with at Heathrow. It would also seem odd that Option 4 would only allow current Brentford Scheme members to pick up new matters if the detainee was dealt with at Heathrow but not if they were dealt with at Acton.

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