

Date: 5 October 2020

To: All Firms with Duty
Solicitors on the Brentford,
Ealing or Uxbridge Police
Station Schemes

Dear Sir / Madam

Response to Consultation with Brentford, Ealing and Uxbridge Police Station Scheme members following Metropolitan Police Service decision to make Hounslow Police Station a contingency suite from 26 October 2020.

On 4 September 2020, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation regarding possible changes to the Duty Solicitor scheme(s) affected by the Police's decision to make Hounslow Police Station a contingency suite.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was 25 September 2020 and the timetable for the consultation exercise indicated that, following consideration of any responses, all affected parties would be notified of the outcome of the consultation no later than 5 October 2020. Therefore, this letter is intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

A. Summary of Responses

Only 1 response was received to the consultation on proposed changes to the Duty Solicitor Scheme(s) as a result of Hounslow Police Station becoming a contingency suite. Thank you to that respondent for taking the time to provide feedback on the proposals.

The low response rate is likely to reflect the current challenges facing firms as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. It is entirely understandable that a firm's priorities might well lie elsewhere.

There is no decision that can meet the needs of everyone and a decision has been made which provides the greatest fairness to all scheme members that are affected by this change and also to detainees arrested in the Hounslow/Brentford area.

The options consulted on were:

Option 1 Maintain the Brentford Police Station Scheme rota.

- Option 2 Merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with the Ealing and Uxbridge Police Station Schemes.
- Option 3 Merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with just the Ealing Police Station Scheme.
- Option 4 Merge the Brentford Police Station Scheme with just the Uxbridge Police Station Scheme.
- Option 5 Close the Sutton Police Station Scheme.

B. Summary of Feedback

The sole response received came from a firm which has members on all 3 of the current Brentford, Ealing and Uxbridge schemes. They are therefore directly impacted by any changes arising from this consultation.

The sole respondent supported Option 2 which was also the LAA's favoured option.

No respondents supported Options 1, 3, 4 or 5 and no alternative options were put forward by the sole respondent.

C. Decision

After careful consideration of the response received, the Legal Aid Agency have decided to proceed with **Option 2, namely merging the Brentford, Ealing and Uxbridge Schemes to create a single larger Scheme.**

We selected Option 2 because:-

- 1) It will ensure that all members of the current Brentford, Ealing and Uxbridge schemes will continue to be able to assist detainees from any station within the enlarged scheme boundary;
- 2) It means that detainees arrested in the Brentford Scheme area can continue to see local firms where possible.
- 3) It is the option most likely to ensure an equitable distribution of slots amongst current Brentford, Ealing and Uxbridge Scheme members.
- 4) There is likely to be less chance of Brentford Scheme members struggling to meet the 14 hours requirement.

The LAA will continue to work closely with police custody leads to ensure that custody staff inform the Duty Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) allocate calls correctly.

D. Next steps

- Option 2 proposed in the consultation document will take effect from 26 October 2020.
- New rotas will be issued to cover the period 26 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.
- The relevant changes to the postcode tool will be made to reflect the above change(s).

Yours faithfully,

Mike Forrester - Area Contract Manager