



Legal Aid Agency

Birmingham Regional Office

Cannon House, 18, The Priory Queensway

Birmingham, B4 6BS

31st October 2016

To: Scheme Members of the Burton on Trent,
Cannock and Rugeley, Tamworth and Stafford
Scheme Areas.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to Consultation with the Burton on Trent, Cannock and Rugeley, Tamworth and Stafford Scheme Area members following HMCTS announcement to close Burton on Trent Magistrates' Court

On 23rd September 2016, the Legal Aid Agency issued a consultation under paragraph 6.5 of the 2010 Standard Crime Contract Specification. The consultation was regarding possible changes to the eligibility rules for membership of duty solicitor schemes affected by the HMCTS decision to close Burton on Trent Magistrates' Court.

The deadline for responses to the consultation was 21st October 2016 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 4th November 2016. Therefore, this letter is intended as formal notification of the outcome of the consultation.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to respond to the consultation.

16 responses were received, the majority of which ultimately favoured Option A over Option B. Many firms, however, also put forward detailed alternative suggestions, particularly with regard to police station duty work, all of which have been fully considered as part of the consultation process. Many firms expressed considerable concerns regarding the travel time and costs and potential delays that could result from a fully combined police station scheme.

No decision can meet the expressed desires of all those who provided feedback to the consultation, whilst also meeting the needs of clients, HMCTS and the LAA. A decision has therefore been made which will provide rationalised, efficient and effective Duty provision across the schemes under review, having given due considered the feedback received.

For clarity, the number of duty solicitors required at each session has been agreed with HMCTS in line with their listing arrangements and is not subject to amendment. Also, whilst the consultation was ongoing, from 1st October 2016 transitional arrangements have been in place whereby Burton on Trent Scheme Members had a temporary rota to attend at Derby Magistrates Court on a Monday only. This is not Burton Court sitting in Derby, but is part of the Derbyshire bench. It is ultimately the work of Derby Court will be absorbed within Duty provision at Derby Magistrates Court. As stated in the Consultation documents, this arrangement will cease from 5th December when the new rota comes into force. Burton on Trent Scheme members are not eligible to join the Derby rota.

It has therefore been decided that the arrangements below will be implemented.

Arrangements for 5th December 2016 Staffordshire South Court Duty Rota:

Duty Solicitors who are currently members of the Burton on Trent, Cannock and Rugeley, Tamworth and Stafford Scheme Areas will all become members of the Staffordshire South Court Duty Rota for Cannock Magistrates Court.

All sessions are attendance.

2 Duty Solicitors will be on rota to attend each day Monday, Wednesday and Friday, one for bail cases and one for custody cases. 1 Duty Solicitor will be on rota to attend for Tuesday and Thursday. 1 Duty Solicitor will be on rota to attend for Saturday and Bank Holiday Courts.

Arrangements for 5th December 2016 Burton on Trent Police Station

Duty Solicitors who are currently members of the Burton on Trent and Tamworth Police Station Schemes will all become members of the Burton on Trent Police Station Scheme. The hours of the scheme will be 17.00 to 17.00.

Arrangements for 5th December 2016 Cannock (Watling Street) Police Station

Duty Solicitors who are currently members of the Cannock and Rugeley and Stafford Scheme Areas will all become members of the Cannock Police Station Scheme. The hours of the scheme will be 17.00 to 17.00.

Please note that all Courts and Police stations are in undesignated areas.

There is no change to the current arrangements with regard to the claiming of travel and disbursements.

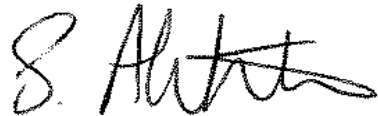
All scheme members should be aware that the duty solicitor rota team will be re-issuing new rotas for the Staffordshire South Court Duty Scheme and the Burton on Trent and Cannock (Watling Street) police station schemes beginning from the 5th December 2016.

Please ensure that you work from the updated rotas when they arrive.

Next steps

- The changes detailed above will take effect on 5th December 2016.
- New rotas will be issued to cover the period 5th December 2016 to 31st March 2017.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Akhtar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shameem Akhtar
Area Contract Manager

