



Legal Aid
Agency

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE ROMFORD COURT DUTY SCHEME
AND BARKINGSIDE COURT DUTY SCHEME OPERATING OUT OF
BARKINGSIDE MAGISTRATES COURT.**

Introduction and Background

This consultation is in response to court's request to reduce the number of Duty slots operating from Barkingside Magistrates Court.

This Magistrates Court is currently served by both the Romford Court Duty Scheme Members and the Barkingside Court Duty Scheme Members. We have tried to keep changes to a minimum.

This Consultation

This consultation paper comprises of two sections:

Section 1 outlines the future duty solicitor requirements.

Section 2 outlines the options identified to change the Duty Solicitor Schemes affected within this location.

We are consulting on these proposals for **2 weeks**, from **Wednesday 4th September 2019**.

Responses should be sent by email to: laura.fernley@justice.gov.uk by **5pm on Wednesday 18th September 2019**.

Our intention is to respond to the consultation by **Friday 20th September 2019**. We appreciate that this does not provide you with much notice, this is unavoidable due to us only recently being made aware of this request from the court to amend future rotas.

Section 1 – Amendment to the Romford Magistrates Court and Barkingside Magistrates Court Rotas operating from Barkingside Magistrates Court

A request has been submitted by the court to reduce the overall number of duty solicitors serving Barkingside Magistrates Court. This will affect:

- Romford Magistrates Court scheme
- Barkingside Magistrates Court Scheme

Currently two rotas operate from Barkingside Magistrates Court. These are the Romford and Barkingside rotas, the former of which has sat at Barkingside Magistrates Court since 2012. This has resulted in multiple duty solicitors attending each day, from both the Romford and Barkingside rotas:

- 4 slots from Barkingside, and 1 from the Romford rotas on Mondays
- 4 slots from Barkingside, and 1 from the Romford rotas on Tuesdays
- 2 slots from Barkingside, and 2 from the Romford rotas on Wednesdays
- 4 slots from Barkingside, and 2 from the Romford rotas on Thursdays
- 2 slots from Barkingside, and 1 from the Romford rotas on Fridays
- 1 slots from each rota on Saturdays

The current position has been identified as exceeding the court requirements and as such the court is to reduce this to a total of:

- 3 slots each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday
- 4 slots each Thursday
- 2 slots each Friday
- 1 slot each Saturday

As a result of this, we need to revise the current arrangements in place at this location.

All postcode sectors are mapped into at least one Duty Scheme. The changes proposed here will not affect this.

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

Proposed Changes

We set out explanations, where appropriate, of how each of the approaches will affect the different schemes.

At the end we indicate the option we favour.

Where schemes only require minor adjustments, or are for notification purposes, 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 change(s) and scheme(s) you are referring to, and indicate your reasons for preferring these alternatives.

Barkingside Magistrates Court

The reduction in the number of court duty slots from 1st October 2019.

Our proposals are as follows:

Option 1:

Merge Romford Magistrates Court and Barkingside Magistrates Court schemes

This would mean that one scheme would then operate from this location and slots would be proportionally allocated based on the current number of solicitors on each of the current schemes.

Option 2:

Continue to operate separate Romford Magistrates Court and Barkingside Magistrates Court schemes

This would mean splitting the available slots equally between the two schemes. In practical terms, based on need identified by the court, the result would be that each scheme would receive 8 slots.

Our Preference:

The preferred option is option 1. The reasons for this is:

- There is a smaller number of slots on the old Romford Magistrates Court Scheme which would mean a disproportionate reduction against Barkingside slots if option 2 were selected. In addition, more slots will be therefore be allocated to members of the Barkingside scheme that would be eligible for the Barkingside rotas but not normally the Romford rotas.

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