



Legal Aid
Agency

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE MAIDSTONE & WEST MALLING, WEST
KENT (TONBRIDGE), MEDWAY, AND DARTFORD & GRAVESEND
POLICE STATION DUTY SCHEMES**

Introduction and Background

Duty Scheme

This consultation is in response to the **Kent Police** decision to close Maidstone Police Station Custody Unit currently served by the Maidstone and West Malling Duty Scheme.

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 court and/or police station dealing with their matter.

This Consultation

This consultation paper comprises two sections:

Section 1 outlines the **Police Station Custody Unit closure** and the Duty Schemes affected.

Section 2 outlines the options identified to change the Duty Schemes affected within your local region.

We are consulting on these proposals for **3 weeks**, from **Monday 18th August 2025**. We will confirm a decision by **Monday 15th September 2025**, but should there be other options raised we will consider those and respond in due course.

Responses should be sent by email, marked 'Maidstone & West Malling Consultation' to SEContractManagers@justice.gov.uk by 5pm on **Monday 8th September 2025**.

Section 1 – Police Station Custody Unit closure and the Duty Schemes affected.

The **Maidstone** Police Station Custody Unit will close on **15th October 2025**. Its duty work will be moved to the following Police Station Custody Unit(s) which may include Tonbridge, North Kent, Medway.

As a result of this closure, we are reviewing the Duty Solicitor arrangements for Maidstone & West Malling.

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

The Postcode Tool, which can be found here: [Duty solicitors: rotas, information and guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-solicitors-rotas-information-and-guidance), sets out current Duty Scheme eligibility. The Postcode Tool will be updated post consultation for any changes to Duty Scheme eligibility, where appropriate.

Section 2 – Proposed revisions to schemes in the South East Region

Proposed Changes

Maidstone & West Malling Police Station Duty Scheme

The **Maidstone** Police Station Custody Unit in this region will close on **15th October 2025**.

Our intention:

It is our intention to make no change to the scheme boundaries in place at the current time. Maidstone Police Station will continue to deal with voluntary interviews after closure of the Custody Unit on 15th October 2025. Kent Police have advised that detainees from the Maidstone area will be taken to the nearest Custody Unit under PACE, subject to operational considerations. These are expected to include Tonbridge, North Kent and Medway Custody Units. Custody staff should request the appropriate Duty Scheme from the DSCC based on the area arrested.

A benefit to our intention is that it allows providers currently serving the Maidstone & West Malling scheme to follow the work. Kent Police are unable to specify a single Custody Unit where Maidstone & West Malling detainees will be taken to at this time. The above mentioned approach provides continued access to police station duty work for Maidstone & West Malling scheme members in the short term and flexibility to review further once the impact becomes known.

We envisage the closure of Maidstone Police Custody Suite having an impact on neighbouring schemes, as Maidstone & West Malling scheme members will be assisting clients in Medway, Tonbridge, and North Kent custody suites.

Cases originating in the Maidstone & West Malling scheme will be paid fees relating to the Custody Centre where the client is first seen.

No change to be made to the Maidstone Court Duty Scheme.

We will keep the situation under review and consider whether we need to bring forward further proposals.

We would be grateful for your suggestions in the event that further proposals are required, such as widening scheme membership or merging neighbouring schemes. Please make it clear in your response the reasons for any alternatives proposed.

Legal Aid Agency