



Legal Aid  
Agency

**Manchester Office**

**7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street  
Manchester, M1 2WD**

**To: All Lancashire and Fylde Duty Scheme Members  
Re: Saturday/Bank Holiday Courts – Lancashire and Fylde**

## **Consultation on the arrangements for Lancashire and Fylde Saturday/Bank Holiday Court Duty Allocation at Preston Combined Court**

### **Introduction and Background**

This consultation is in response to Lancashire HMCTS request for an additional Duty Solicitor to be permanently appointed to cover Saturday/Bank Holiday Court hearings at Preston Combined Court.

The current arrangements:

- Two Duty Solicitors allocated to cover Saturday/Bank Holiday Court
- All Saturday/Bank Holiday Courts take place at Preston Combined Court only
- The Saturday/Bank Holiday Duty Solicitors are allocated from the Preston/Chorley/Ormskirk/South Ribble & Leyland rota as Preston Combined Court is cited in this Duty Scheme area.

Over recent months, Lancashire HMCTS have increased the number of Court sittings on Saturday/Bank Holiday from two to three due to the increased volume of cases being listed on a Saturday. The current arrangement of allocating two Duty Solicitors to cover this is proving insufficient and has had a detrimental impact, causing delays with cases and the length of time to deal with detainees.

Increasing the allocation to three Duty Solicitors on Duty for any Saturday/Bank Holiday Courts will allow for timely management of cases and minimise the time for which detainees are in custody.

The current allocation of Saturday/Bank Holiday Duty Solicitors from the Preston/Chorley/Omskirk/South Ribble & Leyland rota only has reduced access to members of other local Schemes from where an increasing numbers of clients originate.

As a result, we are consulting on a change to the current arrangements for allocation of Saturday/Bank Holiday Court Duty Solicitors to include **all** Lancashire and Fylde Duty Solicitor members, and not only those from the Preston/Chorley/Omskirk/South Ribble & Leyland rota.

The Lancashire and Fylde area Duty Rotas consist of:

- Blackburn/Accrington/Ribble Valley
- Blackpool & Fleetwood
- Burnley/Rosendale
- Preston/Chorley/Omskirk/South Ribble & Leyland
- Lancaster

Please note: there are no amendments proposed by HMCTS to have Saturday/Bank Holidays Courts other than at Preston Combined Court at this time.

The timetable for this consultation exercise is as follows:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Date</b>
Consultation Period	4 weeks	11/05/2026 to 07/06/2026
Consideration of responses	1 week	By 15/06/2026
Publication of consultation response	1 week	By 22/06/2026
Commencement of new rota		By 07/07/2026 (two weeks' notice should a new rota be required)

## **Proposed Options**

Please find below proposed changes:

**OPTION A: COMBINE ALL LANCASHIRE AND FYLDE DUTY ROTA MEMBERS TO ALLOCATE THREE SATURDAY/BANK HOLIDAY COURT DUTY SOLICITORS.**

This proposal would ensure fairness to access the Saturday/Bank Holiday Court Duty slots for all Lancashire and Fylde Duty members at Preston Combined Court.

**OPTION B: CONTINUE TO ALLOCATE SATURDAY/BANK HOLIDAY COURT DUTY SOLICITORS FROM THE PRESTON/CHORLEY/ORMSKIRK/SOUTH RIBBLE & LEYLAND ROTA ONLY.**

This proposal is a continuation of the current allocation arrangements, however will increase to three Duty Solicitors from the same rota on any Saturday/Bank Holiday.

It may be the case that you consider different approaches appropriate for this scheme and if this is the case, please make it clear in your response. Please explain in your response which Option(s) you are referring to or indicate your reasons for preferring any other alternative suggestion.

Following the outcome of this consultation revised rotas will be issued, if required, effective from 6 July 2026.

You are invited to submit any comments regarding the proposals in writing, marked **Lancashire and Fylde Saturday/Bank Holiday Court Duty Allocation Consultation** in the subject box by email to:

[NorthWestCMTeam@justice.gov.uk](mailto:NorthWestCMTeam@justice.gov.uk) by 5pm on 07/06/2026.