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Analytical Services Group

Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases dealt with at Courts in Northern Ireland 2017/18

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KEY FINDINGS

This bulletin presents data on the average¹ Case Processing Time for Criminal Cases dealt with in the Crown and magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland for the year 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018 and refers to the time from which the offence was reported to, or detected by, the police.

Summary

In general, the overall picture is that the time take for cases to be completed has started to reduce, from recent high recorded in 2016/17. However, while there are decreases in processing times for charge cases, processing times for cases dealt with by way of summons have increased.

All Courts

- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed, at **all courts**, was 162 days. This is a decrease of 1.8% from the previous year but is still the second highest figure recorded in the last five years and higher than the figure of 143 days recorded in 2014/15, the baseline year for this indicator under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan.

Crown Court cases

- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **charge cases disposed at Crown Court**, was 427 days. This is a decrease of 10.3% from the previous year.
- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **summons cases disposed at Crown Court**, was 802 days. This is an increase of 3.4% from the previous year.

Adult Magistrates' Courts

- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **charge cases disposed at adult magistrates' courts**, was 69 days. This is a decrease of 2.8% from 2016/17.

¹ Average is measured as the median number of days taken, i.e., the number of days at which 50% of those cases included under counting rules has been completed.

- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **summons cases disposed at adult magistrates' courts**, was 198 days. This is an increase of 2.6% from 2016/17 and is the highest median value recorded for this type of case in the last five years.

Youth Magistrates' Courts

- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **charge cases disposed at youth magistrates' courts**, was 110 days. This is a decrease of 6.0% from the median of 117 days taken in 2016/17.
- In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court, in relation to **summons cases disposed at youth magistrates' courts**, was 248 days. This is an increase of 4.9% from the median of 237 days taken in 2016/17 and is the highest median value recorded for this type of case in the last five years.

Processing times by Offence Category

- In 2017/18, the median time taken to complete cases where the main offence was a public order one was 137 days, compared to a median time of 622 days taken for cases where the main offence was in the sexual offences category.

CONTENTS

Key findings	Page 1
Introduction and Background	Page 4
Main Findings	Page 5
Appendix 1 – Tables	Page 15
Appendix 2 - Methodology and Counting Rules	Page 17

FIGURES

Figure 1a:	Number of Included Cases by Court Type, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 1b:	Number of Included Crown Court and Magistrates' Youth Courts Cases by Court Type, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 2:	Time taken for all cases from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 3:	Time taken for charge cases dealt with at Crown Court, from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 4:	Time taken for summons cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 5:	Time taken for charge cases completed at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 6:	Time taken for summons cases completed at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 7:	Time taken for charge cases completed at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 8:	Time taken for summons cases completed at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Figure 9:	Process Map from Offence Reported to Court Disposal
Figure 10:	Distribution curve of cases by days taken from offence reported date to case disposed at court date, 2017/18

INDEX OF TABLES - Appendix 1

Table 1:	Time taken for cases dealt with at all courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 2:	Time taken for charge cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 3:	Time taken for summons cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 4:	Time taken for charge cases dealt with at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 5:	Time taken for summons cases dealt with at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 6:	Time taken for charge cases dealt with at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 7:	Time taken for summons cases dealt with at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18
Table 8:	Time taken for all cases from date incident reported to disposal at court, by offence category, 2013/14 - 2017/18

1. INTRODUCTION

This bulletin presents data on the average² case processing time for criminal cases dealt with in the Crown and magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland for the year 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018. The intention of the publication is to show the impact on performance over time of key 'speeding up justice' initiatives put in place through law reform and through administrative and practice improvements. It aims to provide an overview of the time taken for a case to be disposed at court from the date that case began its journey through the criminal justice system, based on a start point of the date the offence was reported to, or detected by, the police. Analysis is also provided in relation to case type, i.e., whether it was a charge or summons case, and in relation to the type of court in which the case was disposed, i.e., Crown Court, adult magistrates' courts or youth magistrates' courts. Findings for the 2017/18 year have been compared with those for cases disposed in the last four years, for context.

The data upon which the publication is based are used to inform policy decisions within the Department of Justice (DoJ), as well as to inform requests from other Government organisations, answers to NI Assembly questions and queries from the general public.

2. BACKGROUND

Speeding up the criminal justice system has been a priority for the Department of Justice since the devolution of responsibility for policing and justice in April 2010 and improving the efficiency of the justice system has been included as a priority under Outcome 7 ('We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other') of Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan launched in June 2018.

The efficiency of the criminal justice system is important for victims and witnesses, and their families and communities, in terms of building confidence, as well as

² Average is measured as the median number of days taken, i.e., the number of days at which 50% of those cases included under counting rules has been completed.

demonstrating legitimacy of the rule of law. Additionally, early resolution of cases can also help offenders understand the implications of their actions. Furthermore, the timely completion of cases, commensurate with the principles of a fair and just process, contributes to delivery of an effective and efficient justice system.

3. MAIN FINDINGS

3.1 Overview

There are two types of courts examined in this publication - the Crown Court and magistrates' courts (both adult and youth) - which have separate remits and hear particular types of cases. Generally speaking, the Crown Court hears more serious, high-level and complex cases and magistrates' courts hear lower level cases. The division between the two primarily reflects the complexity of the cases heard and the potential length of sentence which may be imposed. Consequently, the time taken for a case in the Crown Court is often longer than that seen in the magistrates' courts. This is examined later in this bulletin.

3.2 Number of Included Cases

The count of cases included in calculations in this bulletin relates only to those specified in the counting rules outlined in the methodological section of Appendix 2 of this bulletin. In summary, they include cases prosecuted by PPS on behalf of PSNI which were resolved at court and did not result in an out of court disposal, less those resulting from a breach of a previous court order, where there was complete relevant information available.

In 2017/18, the number of overall cases completed, which were included in the dataset, was 22,995, a decrease of 4.7% from the total of 24,135 cases in 2016/17 and the lowest total in the last 5 years. At Crown Court, there were 1,227 cases completed, a fall of 34.0% from the total of 1,857 completed in 2016/17, though the figure for that year was higher than normal, as extra resources were diverted to

resolve the backlog of cases which had occurred as a result of the legal aid dispute in the preceding period.

In 2017/18, the number of charge cases completed at adult magistrates' courts, at 6,508 cases, was a decrease of 5.2% from the 6,868 cases completed in 2016/17 (again, the lowest figure recorded in the dataset in the last five years). The number of summons cases completed at adult magistrates' courts in 2017/18, was 14,184, a fall of 0.7% from the 14,283 cases included in the dataset in 2016/17, but slightly higher than the figure of 14,011 cases included in the dataset in 2015/16.

At 381, the number of charge cases at youth magistrates' courts in 2017/18 which were included in the dataset was 8.2% more than the 352 cases included in the dataset in 2016/17. The number of summons cases dealt with at youth magistrates' courts, at 695, decreased by 10.3% from the figure of 775 cases of this type included in the dataset in 2016/17. Again, this most recent figure is the lowest in the last 5 years for this type of case (Figures 1a and 1b, Tables 1 - 7).

Figure 1a: Number of Included Cases by Court Type, 2013/14 – 2017/18

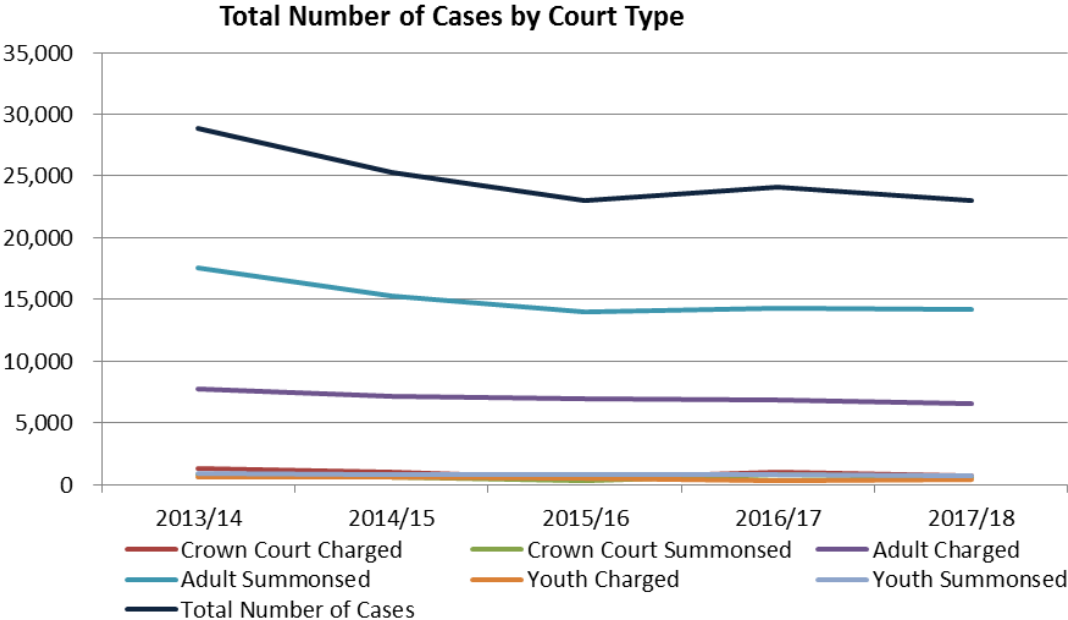
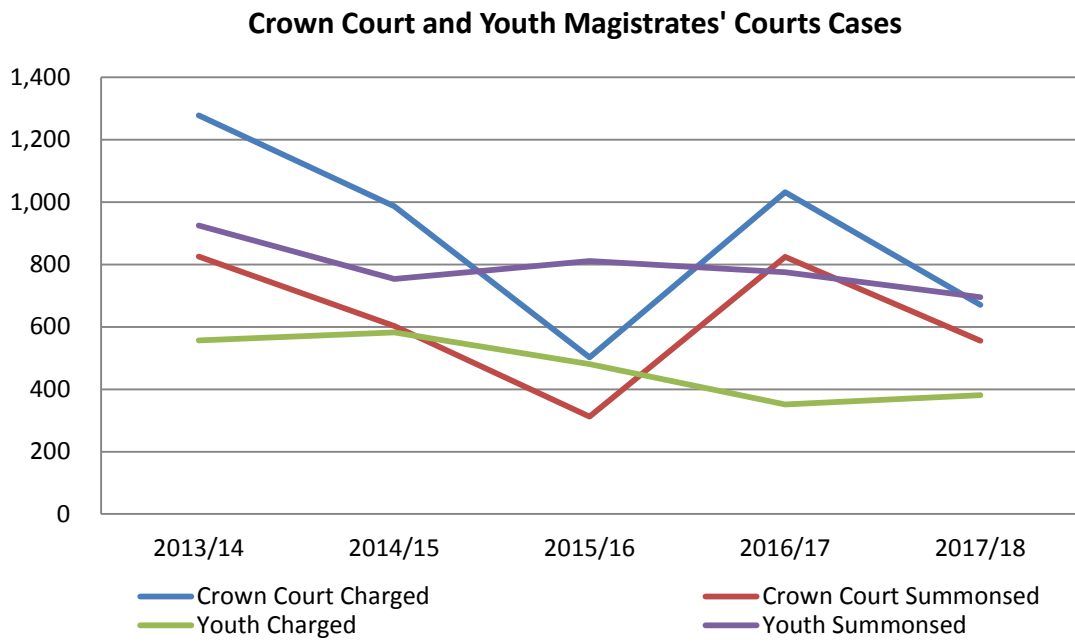


Figure 1b: Number of Included Crown Court and Youth Magistrates' Courts Cases by Court Type, 2013/14 – 2017/18

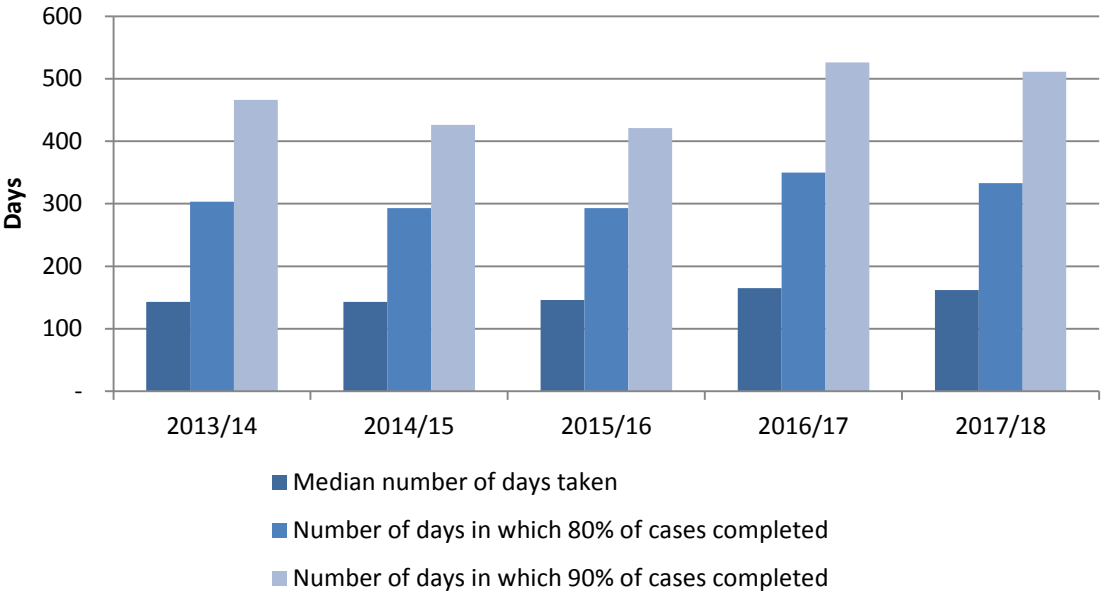


3.3 All Cases – Time Taken

Some complex cases take a long time to complete and, because of this, it is useful to show not just an average processing time, but the time taken to process the bulk of cases. In this report both the time taken to process 80% and 90% of cases is reported.

In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court from the date the offence was reported, in relation to **all courts**, was 162 days. This is a slight decrease of 1.8% from the median of 165 days taken in 2016/17, though still the second highest median time figure recorded in the last 5 years and higher than the figure of 143 days recorded in 2014/15, the baseline year for this indicator under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan. In respect of the time in which 80% of cases were completed, the number of days taken in 2017/18, was 333 days. This is a decrease of 4.5% from the high point of 350 days for cases completed in 2016/17. The figure of 511 days, in relation to the time in which 90% of cases were completed, was the second highest recorded in the last five years (Figure 2, Table 1).

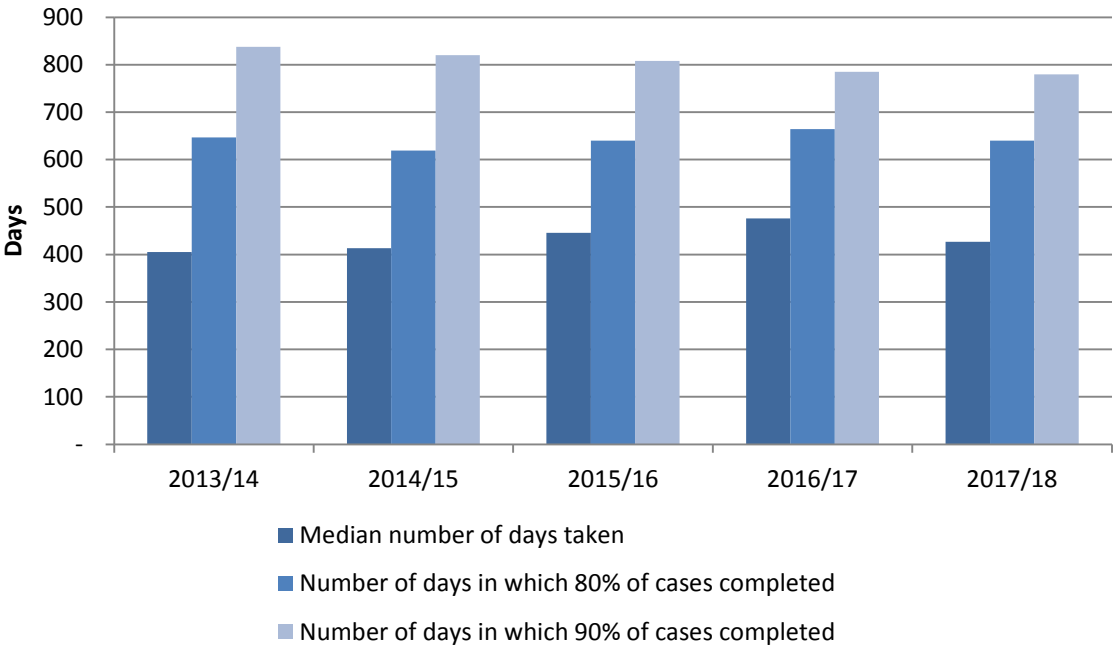
Figure 2: Time taken for all cases from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



3.4 Crown Court Cases – Time Taken

In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court from the date the offence was reported, in relation to **charge cases disposed at Crown Court**, was 427 days. This is a decrease of 10.3% from the median of 476 days taken in 2016/17, the highest in the recent series. In respect of 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 640 days, a decrease of 3.6% from 2016/17. The figure of 780 days, in relation to the time in which 90% of cases were completed, was the lowest recorded in the last five years (Figure 3, Table 2).

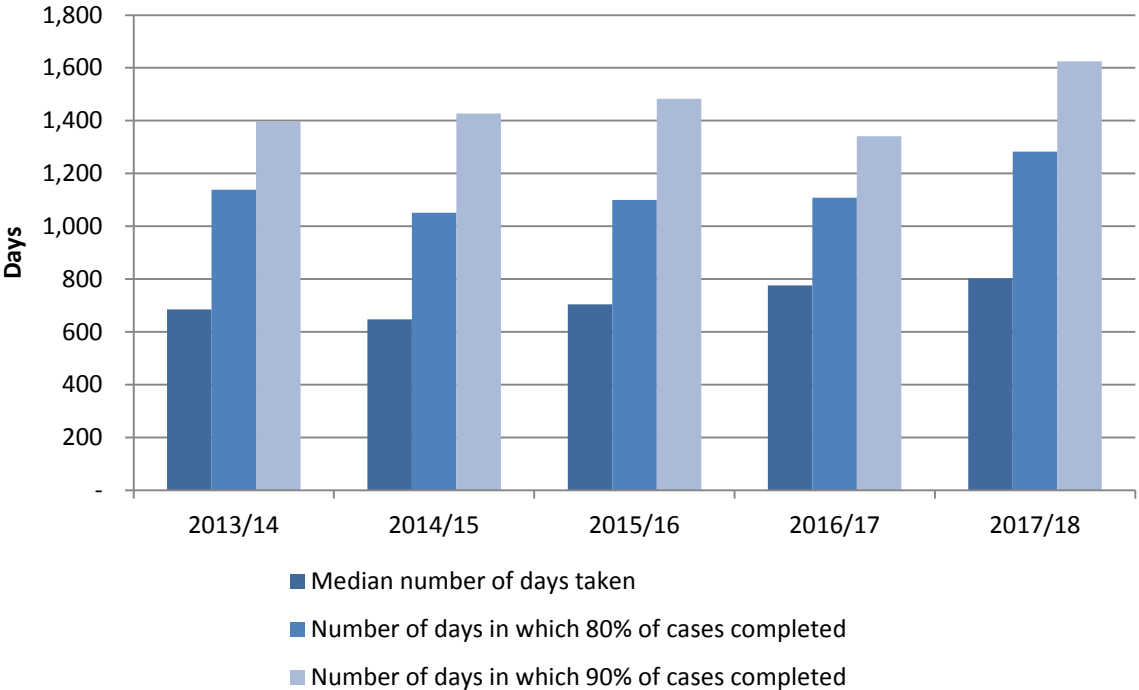
Figure 3: Time taken for charge cases dealt with at Crown Court, from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



Of all case types, **summons cases that are completed at Crown Court** have taken the longest time period in each of the last five years, in terms of the time taken from the date an incident was reported through to disposal at court. In 2017/18, the median time taken for completion of these cases was 802 days. This is the highest median value recorded for this type of case in the past five years and an increase of 3.4% from the median of 776 days taken in 2016/17.

For 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 1,283 days, again the highest period of time recorded for this type of case in the past five years and, an increase of 15.8% from 2016/17 (Figure 4, Table 3).

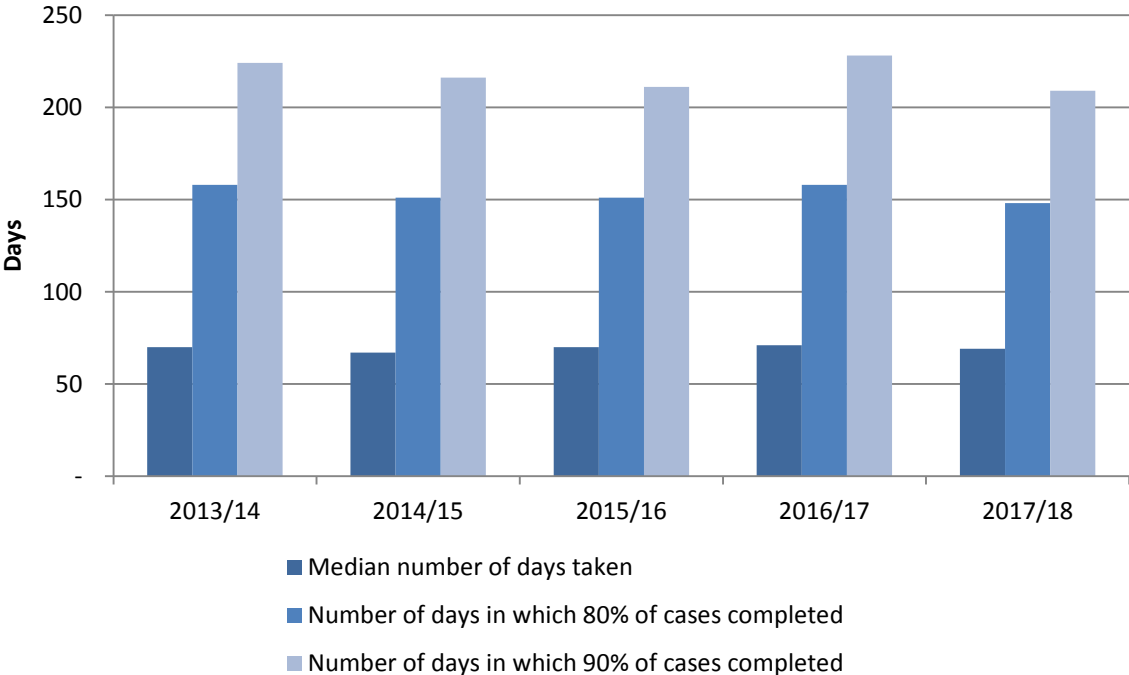
Figure 4: Time taken for summons cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



3.5 Magistrates' Adult Courts – Time Taken

In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court from the date the offence was reported, in relation to **charge cases disposed at adult magistrates' courts**, was 69 days. This is a decrease of 2.8% from 2016/17 and is the second lowest figure recorded in the last five years. In respect of 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 148 days, a decrease of 6.3% from 2016/17. The figures of 148 days, in relation to 80% of cases and 209 days, in relation to 90% of cases in 2017/18, are the lowest recorded in the last five years (Figure 5, Table 4).

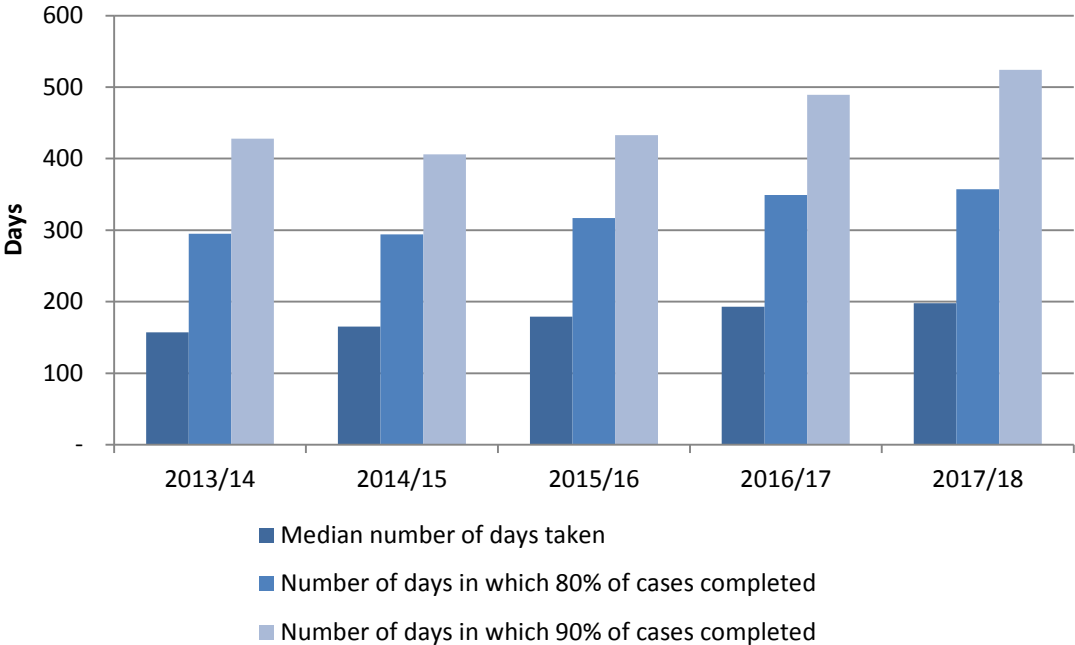
Figure 5: Time taken for charge cases completed at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed at court in relation to **summons cases disposed at adult magistrates' courts**, was 198 days. This is an increase of 2.6% from 2016/17 and the highest median time recorded for this type of case in the last five years. For 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 357 days, an increase of 2.3% from 2016/17 and, also, the highest value recorded for this type of case in the last five years. The number of

days taken for 90% of cases to be completed in 2017/18 was 524 days, again the highest number of days in the last five years (Figure 6, Table 5).

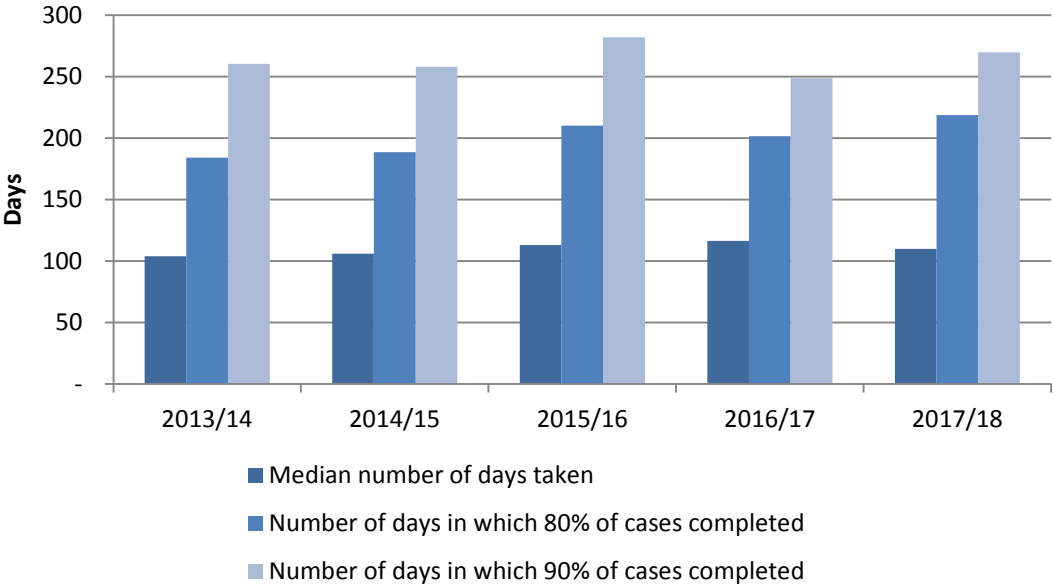
Figure 6: Time taken for summons cases completed at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



3.6 Magistrates' Youth Courts – Time Taken

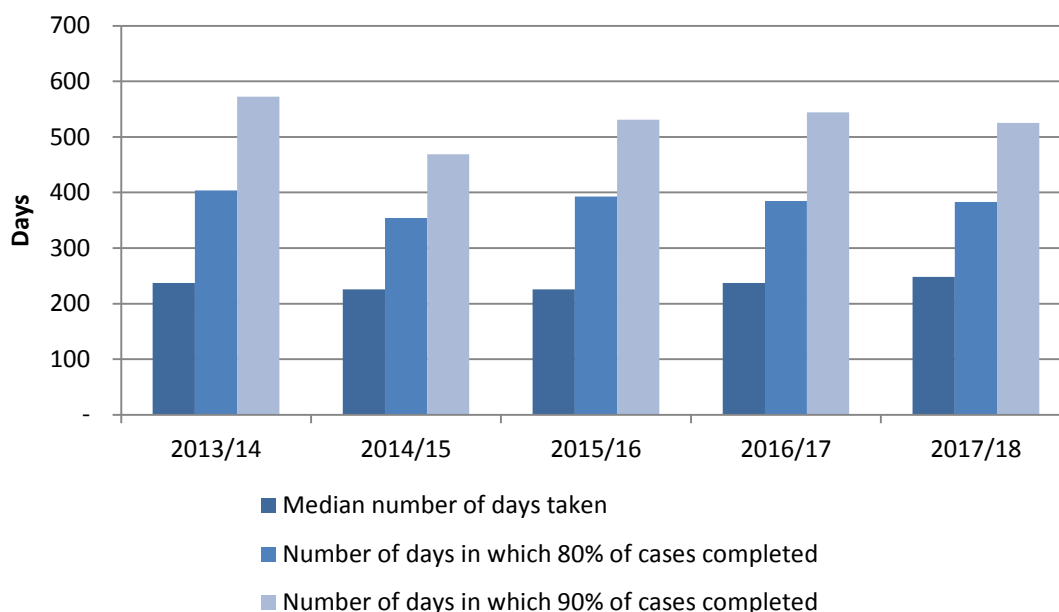
In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed in relation to **charge cases disposed at youth magistrates' courts**, was 110 days. This is a decrease of 6.0% from the median of 117 days taken in 2016/17 and the lowest time recorded since 2014/15. However, for 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 219 days, an increase of 9.0% from 2016/17. However, the figure of 219 days recorded in 2017/18 was the highest number of days recorded, in terms of the time taken for 80% of cases to be dealt with, in any of the last five years (Figure 7, Table 6).

Figure 7: Time taken for charge cases completed at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



In 2017/18, the median time taken for a case to be disposed in relation to **summons cases disposed at youth magistrates' courts**, was 248 days, an increase of 4.6% from 2016/17 and the highest median value recorded for this type of case in the last five years. However, for 80% of cases, the number of days taken for a case to be completed in 2017/18 was 383 days, the lowest figure recorded for this type of case, since 2014/15 (Figure 8, Table 7).

Figure 8: Time taken for summons cases completed at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18



3.7 Offence Category – Time Taken

In 2017/18, the median time taken for cases where the main offence was a sexual offence was 622 days. This is similar to 2016/17, but still the second highest median figure, for this type of case, recorded in the last five years. Cases where the main offence category was a public order or a motoring offence had the shortest average times taken, from offence reported to disposal at court, at 137 and 139 days respectively, in 2017/18. Both of these were still, respectively, the highest median values for these types of cases that were recorded in the last five years (Table 8).

When considering average time taken for cases to complete however, it should be borne in mind that different types of cases may, by their nature, be more likely to be heard in either the Crown Court, or a magistrates' courts. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to make comparisons in relation to offence categories across time, rather than to compare times taken for cases falling into one offence category with another.

APPENDIX 1

Table 1: Time taken for cases dealt with at all courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	28,912	25,277	23,018	24,135	22,995
Median number of days taken	143	143	146	165	162
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	303	293	293	350	333
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	466	426	421	526	511

Table 2: Time taken for charge cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	1,278	987	502	1,032	671
Median number of days taken	405	413	446	476	427
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	647	619	640	664	640
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	837	820	808	785	780

Table 3: Time taken for summons cases dealt with at Crown Court from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	826	603	313	825	556
Median number of days taken	685	647	704	776	802
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	1,138	1,051	1,099	1,108	1,283
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	1,396	1,427	1,483	1,341	1,625

Table 4: Time taken for charge cases dealt with at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	7,779	7,114	6,900	6,868	6,508
Median number of days taken	70	67	70	71	69
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	158	151	151	158	148
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	224	216	211	228	209

Table 5: Time taken for summons cases dealt with at adult magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	17,547	15,237	14,011	14,283	14,184
Median number of days taken	157	165	179	193	198
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	295	294	317	349	357
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	428	406	433	489	524

Table 6: Time taken for charge cases dealt with at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	557	582	481	352	381
Median number of days taken	104	106	113	117	110
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	184	188	210	201	219
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	260	258	282	249	270

Table 7: Time taken for summons cases dealt with at youth magistrates' courts from date incident reported to disposal at court, 2013/14 – 2017/18

Offence Reported date to Court Disposal date	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of cases	925	754	811	775	695
Median number of days taken	237	226	226	237	248
Number of days in which 80% of cases completed	404	354	393	385	383
Number of days in which 90% of cases completed	572	469	531	544	525

Table 8: Time taken for all cases from date incident reported to disposal at court, by offence category, 2013/14 - 2017/18

Offence category	Median Days taken					% cases disposed at Crown Court in 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
Violence Against the Person	217	207	210	240	229	9.4%
Sexual	558	528	470	623	622	64.3%
Robbery	417	338	379	462	438	87.0%
Theft	160	149	166	198	188	4.0%
Burglary	264	237	257	337	263	31.8%
Criminal Damage	170	160	161	173	177	3.0%
Drugs	177	178	168	202	183	11.2%
Possession of Weapons	180	160	130	191	177	7.7%
Public Order	124	119	123	133	137	2.0%
Motoring	113	118	119	130	139	0.4%
Fraud	362	351	389	441	382	26.4%
Miscellaneous	187	191	185	216	223	13.0%
Total	143	143	146	165	162	5.3%

Source: Department of Justice

Notes:

1. Figures relate to cases disposed at court during the time period specified. Each period is a financial year, running from 1st April to the following 31st March. They relate to the number of calendar days between the listed dates for each table. Court recess dates are not taken into account.
2. Figures relate to cases brought on behalf of the PSNI, Harbour and Airport police in Northern Ireland that resulted in a court disposal.
3. Figures do not include cases where the case was dismissed but a caution was administered, fixed penalty registrations, penalty notices for disorder or cases resulting from a breach of a court order. Successful youth engagement cases were also excluded.
4. Offence category relates to principal offence.

APPENDIX 2

1. METHODOLOGY AND COUNTING RULES

1.1 Introduction

The criminal justice system is designed to deliver various appropriate disposals when a defendant has been found guilty for an offence. Diversion and the operation of discretion can help ensure that lower level offending is subject to early and proportionate actions. At this early stage, many cases are diverted from the more formal justice system into an out of court disposal option, for reasons of public policy or for the good of the individual or broader public.

For cases that do proceed to prosecution at court, there are two main courts in Northern Ireland—the Crown Court and magistrates’ courts (both adult and youth). As the division of cases between the two types of courts depends primarily on the nature of the offences to be tried and the potential length of sentence which may be imposed, the time taken for a case in the Crown Court may be longer than that seen in magistrates’ courts. Further, there are additional cases that may proceed to prosecution but do not reach the end of the full court process, due either to lack of sufficient evidence or because the charge is withdrawn.

Cases may be brought to court by way of summons or charge and defendants may end up having their case heard in various types of court. However, despite differences in the types of court, the types of offences and the method by which a defendant is brought to court, the process through which a case proceeds from offence reported to case disposed is generally the same (detailed in Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: Process Map from Offence Reported to Court Disposal



The offence is first reported to the police, or detected by the police, (offence reported), after which an investigation is conducted. Subject to the outcome of that investigation, the police may charge a suspect, or inform the suspect that they are to be reported (charged/informed) to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS), who will review the case and take a decision as to whether or not to instigate a prosecution. When the police have collected enough evidence, a case file will be prepared and submitted to the PPS (PPS submission). The PPS then must apply the test for prosecution and decide whether to prosecute (PPS decision). If the PPS decides to prosecute, a first court date will be set (first court appearance) and the case will proceed through the court as normal (with the examination of evidence and witnesses and opportunities for both the prosecution and defence to make their cases). The process concludes when a decision is made by the court. A case is disposed of in court when a defendant is either acquitted, or if the defendant is convicted, when a sentence has been handed down (court disposal).

It is important to note however, that cases instigated by way of police charge (rather than reported to PPS), will ordinarily appear in court prior to PPS taking a prosecution decision. In general, the purpose of such pre-prosecution decision hearings is to determine issues such as bail or remand. For the purpose of this bulletin therefore, in cases brought before the court by way of charge, the date of the first court appearance relates to the first occasion on which the case appears in court after the PPS has taken a decision to prosecute. In effect therefore, the data ignores court appearances which occur before a prosecution decision is taken. The Department has adopted this approach, with the agreement of criminal justice partners, in order to provide a better basis for comparing charge cases with reported cases.

1.2 What counts as a case?

The figures reported in this bulletin relate to cases disposed at court in the year specified, where the case was prosecuted by the Public Prosecution Service on behalf of Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Harbour Police, Airport Constabulary or the National Crime Agency (NCA).

For the purposes of the statistics presented in this publication, a case may be considered to commence when an offence is first reported to, or detected by, the PSNI, Harbour Police, Airport Constabulary or the NCA. The case then proceeds through the various stages of the criminal justice system until it is considered disposed, as a result of a prosecution at court. The time period measured therefore, is the number of calendar days from Offence Reported Date to Courts Disposal Date, for cases disposed at courts in the 12 months ending in the year specified in the tables. Court recess dates are not taken into account.

Cases disposed through an out of court disposal, or which do not reach the end of the full court process for the reasons listed above, do not go through the standard stages of the court system and, as such, are not directly comparable with cases that have gone through the judicial system. They are therefore **excluded** from the dataset. Similarly, cases relating to breaches of court orders previously imposed are **excluded** from in the dataset, as they relate to a previous offence and have not proceeded through the various stages in the criminal justice process in the same way that cases relating to other offences may have.

Due to the exclusions outlined above, the figures in this publication, therefore, should not be considered as the total number of cases disposed in courts in the years concerned, rather, only as the number of cases in the dataset upon which the calculations derived for this publication are based. Overall case volumes disposed by the Northern Ireland courts may be sourced at <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

The court processing time dataset is based on the principal offence (main offence) at conviction or disposal. Where an offender is convicted of several offences on the same occasion, only one offence, the principal offence, is counted. The basis for selection of the principal offence is laid down in rules issued by the Home Office. In summary, the rules stipulate that only offences with an admission or finding of guilty are included and the principal offence is usually taken as that for which the greatest penalty was imposed. Where there is no conviction as a result of a prosecution, the principal offence is generally taken as the one which might have drawn the most

severe penalty, should a conviction have occurred. The methodology for calculation of the principal offence may be found at:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/methodology-paper-adoption-and-implementation-principal-offence-northern-ireland>.

The offence counted and used in the compilation of figures in this bulletin is the one on which the court took its final decision. In relation to convictions, this is not necessarily the same offence as that for which the defendant was initially prosecuted. The decision recorded is that reached by the court and takes no account of any subsequent appeal to a higher court.

1.3 Data source

The data for this bulletin were taken from the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism (DSM1). They were extracted primarily based on records contained on the Criminal Records Viewer (CRV). The CRV is held on Causeway and utilises data which originated in the PSNI, PPS and from Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS). Causeway is an interconnected information system, launched as a joint undertaking by the Criminal Justice Organisations (CJOs) in Northern Ireland.

1.4 Data quality and validation

Following guidance provided by the Office for National Statistics on the Quality Assessment of Administrative Data, information pertaining to data quality and validation is continually assessed. While the relevant CJOs have a vested interest in maintaining the accuracy of data within their management information systems, a number of accuracy, quality assurance/validation procedures have been conducted upon the dataset used to compile this data series, to ensure the data extracted are accurate, complete and fit for the statistical purposes for which they are to be used. Both automated and manual checks have been carried out, at individual case level and, data corrected, where possible, to ensure that:

- key fields are complete and logical;
- a general check of the data as a whole suggests no other anomalies.

Examples of some of the changes made to the dataset as part of the validation process for 2017/18 included: the removal of 1,350 cases relating to breaches of court orders, 5 cases were amended where the defendant was recorded as being under 10 at the time of the offence and, 4 were recoded as charge cases, as this information was missing from the original dataset.

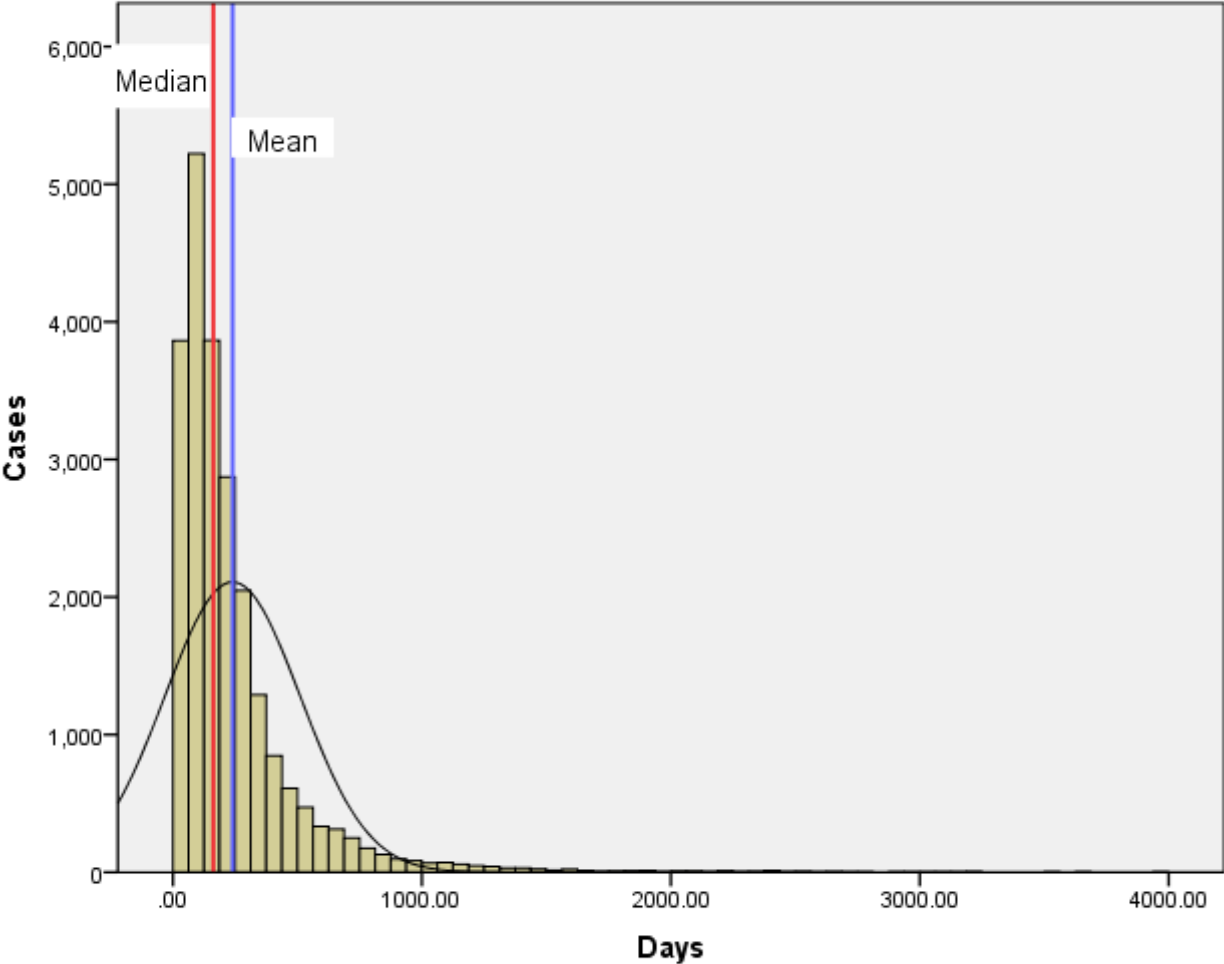
Nevertheless, users should be aware that the statistics contained in this publication originate from various administrative data sources, which have different purposes, aims and objectives and are kept for non-statistical purposes, e.g., Criminal Record Viewer (CRV) is maintained for reviewing and vetting individuals' criminal records.

1.5 Interpreting the data

Figures reported relate primarily to the average time taken, from Offence Reported Date to Courts Disposal Date. The form of average reported on in this bulletin is the median, or the value below which 50 per cent of cases were completed. Figures for the time taken to deal with cases at the 80th and 90th percentiles (the time taken for 80% and 90% of cases to be dealt with respectively) are also reported.

The median is used as the measure of average in relation to this measure. Initial data exploration identified that, when there are a few cases that have taken a long time to complete, measurement of the mean time taken for cases may be affected by a distribution curve with a long tail, i.e., by a small number of cases that have taken an inordinately long time. Therefore, given the distribution of cases in relation to the time taken to complete them, the median, rather than the mean, is the best way to measure the midpoint in the series and thus to remove any possible skew caused by cases that may, for various reasons, take an inordinately long time to process or complete. For example, the 'average' number of days taken to complete a case in 2017/18, when measured using the median was 162 days, compared to 239 days when measured using the mean. This latter figure however, equates to the 67th percentile in terms of time taken for a case to be completed (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Distribution curve of cases by days taken from offence reported date to case disposed at court date, 2017/18



1.6 Statistical coverage

The data included in the bulletin are based on cases resulting in a conviction in a court, where the conviction did not end in a subsequent diversion, and which were recorded as completed in Northern Ireland for the year 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018. Statistical coverage is restricted to those criminal prosecutions which were brought on behalf of the PSNI, the NCA, the Airport Constabulary or Harbour Police. As already stated, cases relating to breaches of court orders previously imposed are not included, nor are cases that end in an out of court disposal. Further, prosecutions brought by government departments, public bodies and private individuals are not included, as their prosecution is beyond the remit of the Department of Justice.

The court structure of Northern Ireland does not equate to the court structures of England and Wales, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland, and therefore no comparisons have been made between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and Ireland.

1.7 Analysis and Presentation of Statistics

The data used in this report are validated, maintained and analysed using IBM SPSS, which is a statistical package commonly used within social science.

For ease of use, figures in charts are given as whole numbers, whereas percentages throughout the text and tables are reported to one decimal place. Whilst tables of information have been included in Appendix 1, the tables are also published alongside this bulletin in Microsoft Excel and OpenDocument Spreadsheet format, for ease of use.

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