



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin

January to March 2021

Research and Statistical Bulletin

Provisional Figures

R Martin

7th May 2021



Northern Ireland
**Courts and
Tribunals Service**
www.justice-ni.gov.uk/courts-and-tribunals



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

For further information write to:

**Analytical Services Group,
NI Courts and Tribunals Service,
4th Floor, Laganside House,
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA**

Telephone: 028 9072 8928

Email: richard.martin2@courtsni.gov.uk

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

[Northern Ireland Court Service Statistical Publications](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at the Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period January to March 2021 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. On 31st October 2016, a single County Court Division called 'The County Court of Northern Ireland' replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data are disaggregated solely by Court Office (Processing Office).
- ***This report covers data from January to March 2021, so court activity during this period has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figures published show that although courts continue to carry out urgent business and make more use of remote audio and video technology, the impact of COVID-19 is clear to see. It is expected that the limited operation of the criminal courts during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on many of the published figures in this and future releases.***
- During the period January to March 2021:
 - There were 1,169 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was an increase of 14% from 1,022 in the same period the previous year¹.
 - 8,566 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,225 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent a decrease of 16% in adult defendants received (from 10,177) and an increase of 1% in adult defendants disposed of (from 9,122) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of adult defendants received during the January to March quarter since recording began.
 - The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal increased to 15 weeks from an average time of 7 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
 - 296 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 315 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 3% in the number of youth criminal defendants received (from 288) and of 15% (from 275) in those disposed, compared to the same period the previous year.

¹ Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal increased to 24 weeks from an average time of 13 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
- 1,148 new civil and family applications were received and 1,075 civil applications were disposed of. These represent increases of 39% (from 825) and of 44% (from 748) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.
- The average waiting time for a case to progress through the civil and family court from date of receipt to disposal increased to 13 weeks from an average time of 10 weeks for the corresponding period last year.

CONTENTS

Content	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Findings	6
3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days	
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court	
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court	
3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court	
Appendix 1 - Tables	12
Appendix 2 - Explanatory Notes	24
Figure	Page
Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021	7
Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021	8
Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2012 to January to March 2021	9
Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021	10
Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021	11

Table	Page
<u>Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	12
<u>Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	13
<u>Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	14
<u>Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	15
<u>Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	16
<u>Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	17
<u>Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	18
<u>Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	18
<u>Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	20
<u>Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	21
<u>Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	21
<u>Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	22
<u>Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	23
<u>Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	24
<u>Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland</u>	24

1. INTRODUCTION

A Magistrates' court (other than a youth court or family proceedings court) is presided over by a district judge (Magistrates' court) sitting alone. The present complement of district judges (Magistrates' court) is twenty-one. The Magistrates' court hears and determines less serious criminal cases, cases involving youth and some civil and domestic cases including family proceedings.

The vast majority of all criminal offences dealt with in Northern Ireland are tried summarily in a Magistrates' court. A significant number of these offences are offences against Road Traffic Orders, such as the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995 and the Road Traffic Offenders (NI) Order 1996, sometimes described as the 'penalty points' Order.

Magistrates' courts also deal with offences where the defendant can choose trial by jury but decides to have their case heard in the Magistrates' court. If the defendant chooses trial by jury, the case will be passed on to the Crown Court. It is estimated that where the defendant has a choice between summary trial and trial on indictment, approximately three out of four cases are dealt with summarily. This is mainly because this mode of trial is much quicker and the sentencing powers of a District Judge (Magistrates' court) are more restricted than those of a Crown Court Judge - the most serious punishment which a District Judge (Magistrates' court) can impose is 12 months in prison, unless consecutive terms of imprisonment are imposed for more than one offence, when the limit is extended to 18 months.

The youth court deals with young people who have committed criminal offences and who are older than 10 years of age, but younger than 18 years of age. The youth court is part of the Magistrates' court and cases are generally heard before a panel of three persons, a salaried District Judge (Magistrates' court) and two specially-trained, fee-paid lay magistrates. Although the youth court can deal with the full range of criminal offences (apart from murder), if a young person is charged with a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult would be punishable with 14 years' imprisonment or more, the youth court can commit them for trial at the Crown Court. In addition to hearing criminal proceedings the youth court also hears proceedings relating to the care, protection and control of juveniles.

Magistrates' courts can deal with a limited number of civil cases as follows:-

- some civil debts, for example, arrears of income tax, national insurance contributions, VAT arrears, rates
- licences, for example, granting, renewing or taking away licences for pubs and clubs
- some matrimonial problems, for example, maintenance and removing a spouse from the matrimonial home
- welfare of children, for example, local authority care or supervision orders, adoption proceedings and residence orders (known as the Family Proceedings Court).

Data relating to business at the Family Proceedings Court is published on a quarterly basis in the NICTS Children Order Bulletin.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data sources

Information contained in all tables is sourced from data that are input onto the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). This system was implemented across the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) over a two-year period from 2005 to 2007. While ICOS was introduced in the Magistrates' Court during 2006, data derived from ICOS has been used as the source for official government statistics since 2007, when the implementation of ICOS across all court tiers was completed. ICOS is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of court business, from receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The data are input into this system on a daily basis by court clerks, and this information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure the data entries are correct.

2.2 Methodology for generating data

Analytical Service Group (ASG) statisticians based within the NICTS take a download of Magistrates' court information from ICOS on a monthly basis. The information is downloaded using a package called SharePoint, which extracts all the relevant data from ICOS into text files which are refreshed with up-to-date information each weekend. The text files are downloaded onto a secure internal facility that only specified statistical personnel have access to. The data contained in the files are identified only by numbers and names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import these data into the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and to ensure the data are reliable and robust.

2.3 Baseline and Time period

Data contained within this bulletin relate to the time series 2007, when ICOS was adopted as the source for official government statistics, to the current calendar year 2021. However, within this publication, comparisons of trends are viewed over a 10-year period.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the second quarter of 2021 and will be published on 6th August 2021.

2.5 Data quality and validation

ASG statisticians based in the NICTS have invested significant time and effort creating an extensive computer programme within SPSS to validate the information downloaded from ICOS. The programme includes over 100 checks against downloaded court data to: (i) check consistency over time and between variables; (ii) assess reliability of data using logic checks; (iii) check that variables fall within accepted ranges; and (iv) check with the ICOS Support Team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download. The validation program produces user friendly tables highlighting the potential problems which are circulated to each Magistrates' court venue as a validation report.

There are Case Progression Officers who are responsible for: monitoring accuracy levels on ICOS by carrying out sample checks on data entry and court resulting; ensuring all validations on ICOS and manual statistics returns are completed in a timely manner; providing advice and identifying training needs; monitoring the confirmation of ICOS criminal court resulting, including the inputting of adjournment codes; and promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and the negative impact on the reliability of management information.

The Case Progression Officers are given a two-week period from the date the validation report issues to have all records amended on ICOS. This ensures that the corrections are updated before the next download of files. After the files have been refreshed each weekend, all the data are then downloaded again, with the new download reflecting amendments made as a result of the validation reports. If any errors have not been corrected, they will continue to appear in the validation reports until the necessary amendments are made on ICOS.

The NICTS statistics team then ensure that all validations relating to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, SPSS syntax programming is then used to generate the tables in the publication.

Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form in the 2021 edition of Judicial Statistics (published on the 24th June 2022).

2.6 Counting rules

Receipts are counted from the date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'Dealt With'.

2.7 Interpreting trends

Changes to practice within the judicial system in general, and the Magistrates' Court in particular, may impact upon business volumes presented in this bulletin. One example would be the introduction of Penalty Notices for Disorder on 6th June 2012. These were new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The impact of this change means that offences previously dealt with by the Magistrates' Court are no longer received in court, but are rather dealt with out of court, contributing to the decrease in Magistrates' Court business over this period. For further advice on differences in data between years, please contact the statistician responsible for this bulletin.

2.8 Revisions

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions'² which may be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website³. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

² Department of Justice, 2013. Statistics and Research: Policy statement on Revisions. [pdf] DoJ. Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-and-research-policy-statement-revisions>

³ Department of Justice, 2017. Policy Papers [online] Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/policypapers>

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During January to March 2021 there were 1,094 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 44 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 31 special Magistrates' sitting days. These represent increases of 16% (from 943), of 76% (from 25) and a decrease of 43% (from 54) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The Magistrates' sitting days for January to March 2021 may be categorised as follows:

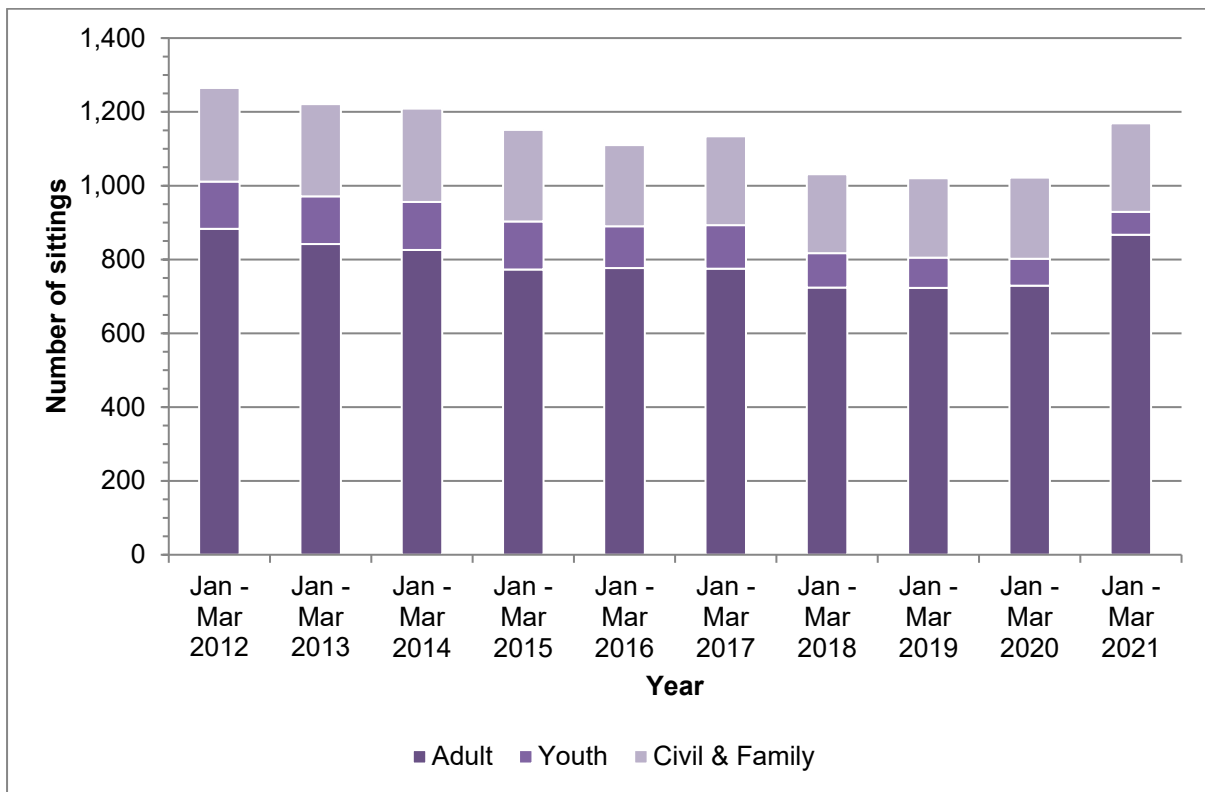
	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	793	43	31	867
Youth Criminal	61	1	0	62
Civil & Family	240	0	0	240
Total	1,094	44	31	1,169

Within these 1,169 sitting days, 74% were adult criminal days, 5% were youth criminal days and 21% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has generally shown a gradual decrease since the January to March quarter of 2012 and was at its lowest point since recording began in 2020, but has increased to its highest level since January to March 2014 (Figure 1).

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



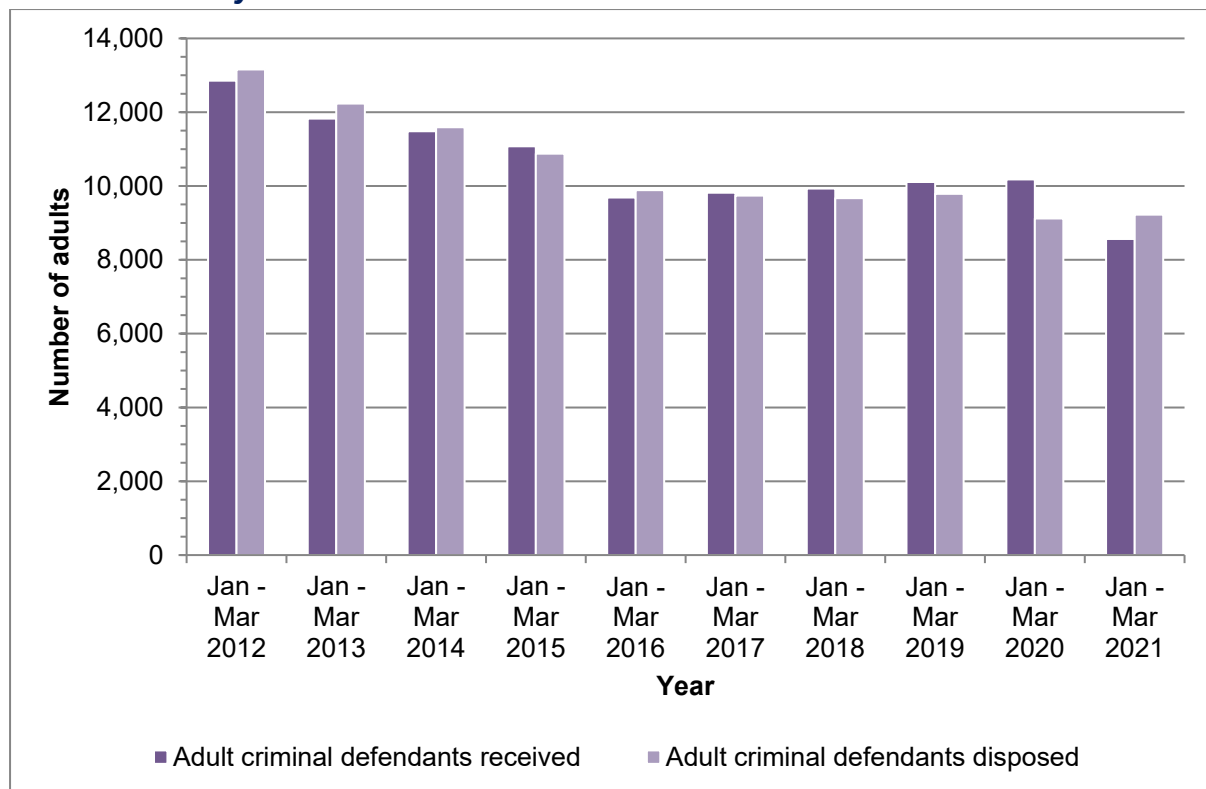
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2021, 8,566 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,225 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent a decrease of 16% in defendants received (from 10,177) and an increase of 1% in defendants disposed of (from 9,122) respectively, compared to the same period in the previous year.

The majority (88.4%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (79.1% in the same period in 2020).

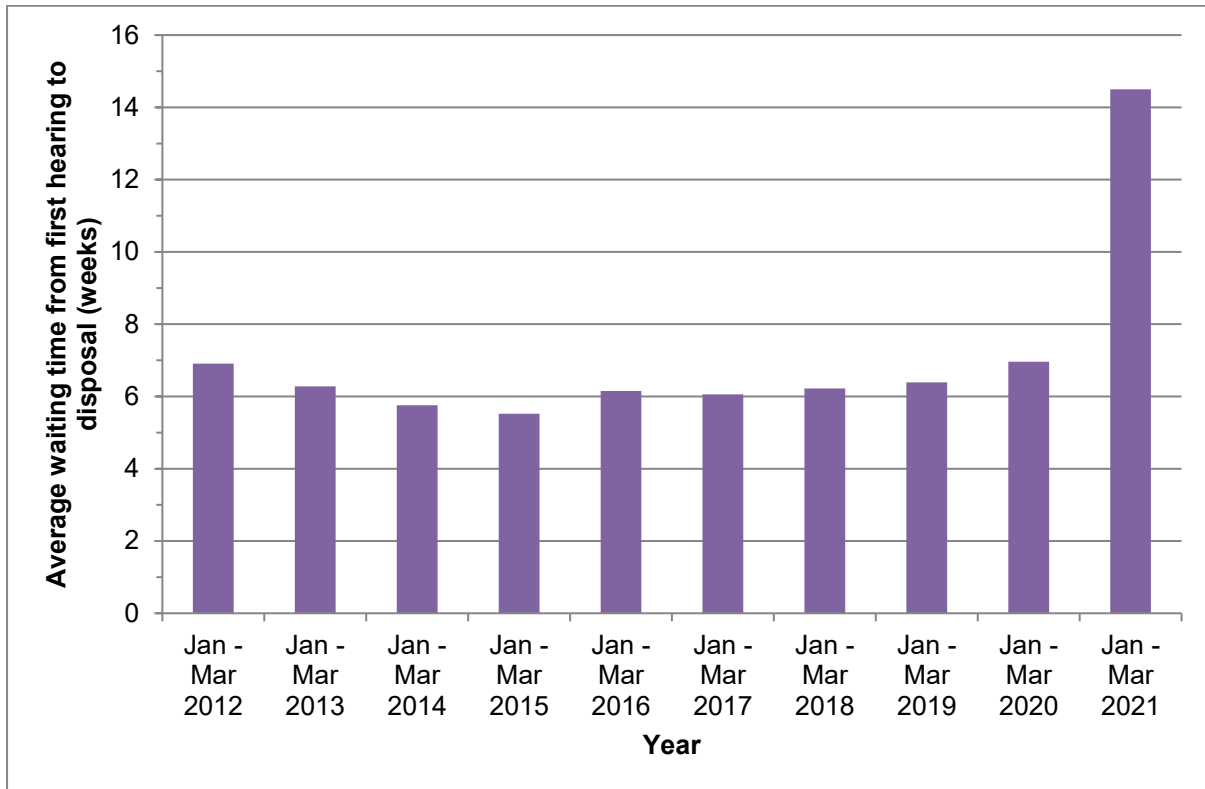
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had shown little change in the January to March quarters from 2016 to 2019, then the number disposed of decreased in 2020, before defendants received in the current quarter decreased to its lowest point, while defendants disposed of showed a small increase (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal had remained stable at 6 weeks from 2012 to 2018, before increasing to seven weeks in 2019 and again to 15 weeks in the current January to March quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in Adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



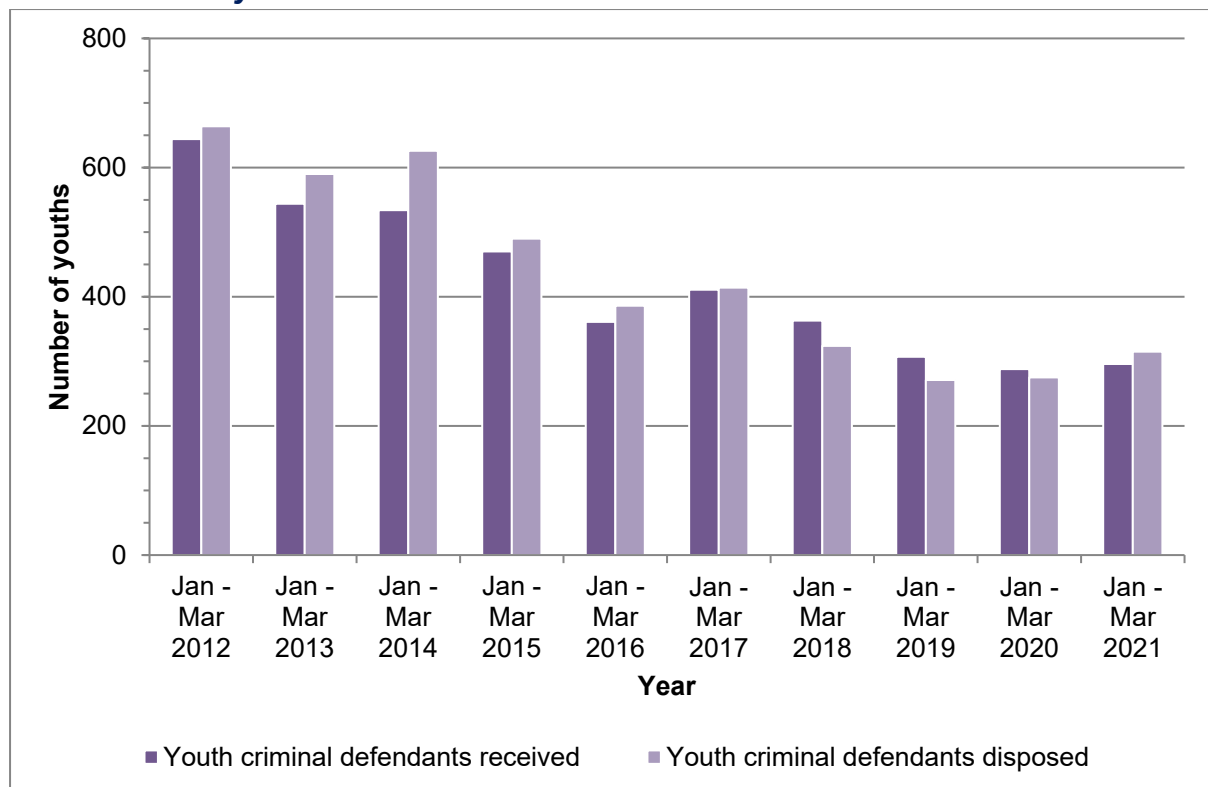
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2021, 296 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 315 youth defendants were disposed of. These represented increases of 3% (from 288) in the number of youth defendants received and of 15% (from 275) in those disposed compared to the same period the previous year.

All (100%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/PPS, the same proportion as was in the same period in 2020.

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed of has shown a gradual decrease in the January to March quarters over the last number of years since 2017, with the figure for youth defendants received at its lowest and the figure for youth defendants disposed of at its second-lowest in the previous year's quarter before both increasing in the current quarter (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



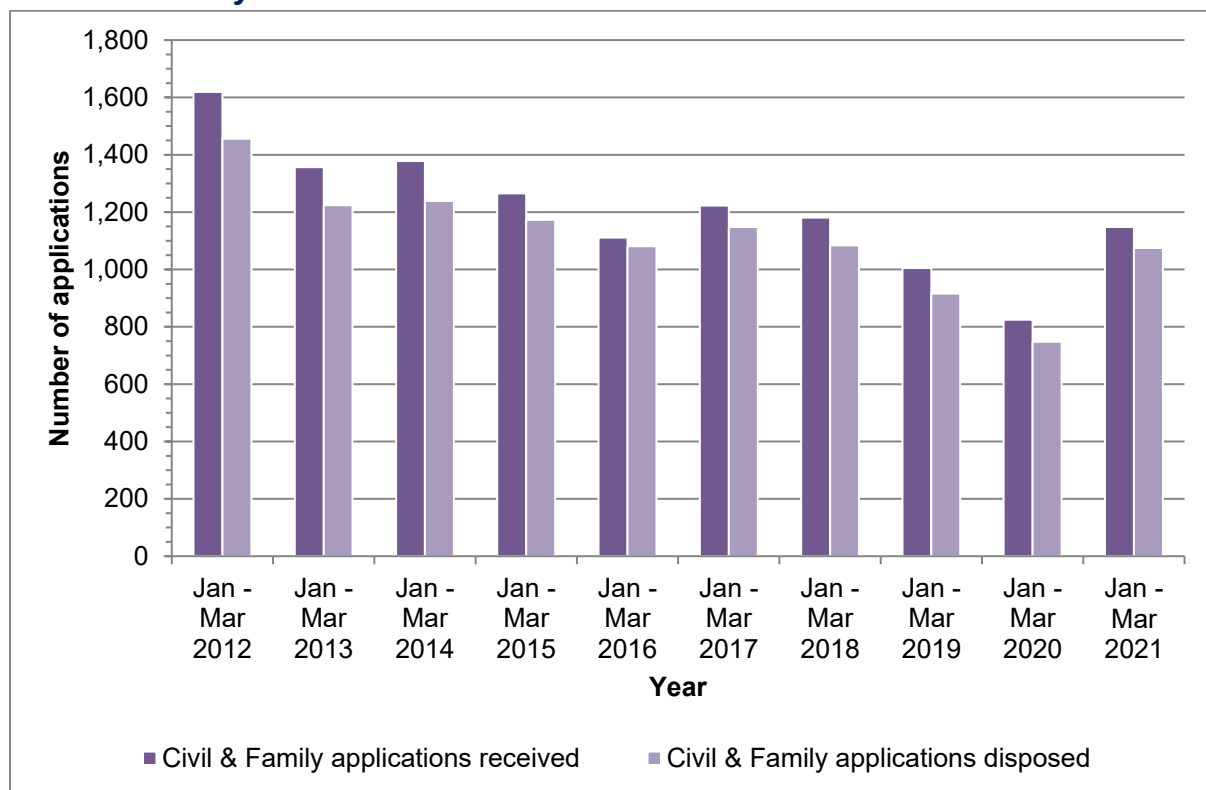
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 24 weeks (13 weeks for the same period in 2020).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During January to March 2021, 1,148 new civil and family applications were received and 1,075 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent increases of 39% (from 825) in cases received and of 44% (from 748) in cases disposed of, compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed had shown a gradual decline during the quarter January to March between 2017 and 2020, with the numbers of receipts and disposals decreasing to their lowest recorded figures until increasing in the current quarter (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2012 to January to March 2021



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 13 weeks from date of receipt to disposal, compared to 10 weeks for the same quarter last year.

APPENDIX 1 – TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Number of Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average Adult Criminal court sitting time	Number of Youth Criminal court sitting days	Average Youth Criminal court sitting time	Number of Civil and Family court sitting days	Average Civil and Family court sitting time
Antrim	24	4:24:47	2	3:22:30	6	4:39:10
Ballymena	24	5:00:25	2	5:10:00	11	2:31:49
Laganside	230	3:54:59	22	4:02:40	60	3:14:18
Armagh	17	4:01:49	0	-	2	1:25:00
Banbridge@Newry	15	3:06:40	0	-	3	0:33:20
Limavady	12	4:00:10	0	-	0	-
Lisburn	43	4:42:19	5	2:55:00	15	4:13:20
Magherafelt	13	4:55:23	0	-	1	0:45:00
Royal Courts of Justice	38	4:57:22	2	5:32:30	10	3:45:30
Dungannon	0	-	0	-	1	1:10:00
Downpatrick	27	3:39:48	0	-	0	-
Craigavon	31	5:09:09	4	3:56:15	19	2:26:34
Strabane	23	3:15:02	0	-	1	1:00:00
Omagh	25	3:29:12	2	1:32:30	11	3:31:27
Enniskillen	27	4:36:28	6	4:22:30	3	3:43:20
Coleraine	71	4:12:10	2	1:55:00	6	5:11:40
Londonderry	80	4:16:17	1	2:40:00	36	2:40:00
Newtownards	61	2:50:09	9	2:55:00	39	3:26:55
Newry	32	4:03:58	4	1:32:30	16	4:13:30
Total	793	4:04:36	61	3:32:11	240	3:16:00

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Number of Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average Adult Criminal court sitting time	Number of Civil and Family court sitting days	Average Civil and Family court sitting time
Antrim	2	3:10:00	0	-
Laganside	14	4:26:04	0	-
Lisburn	0	-	1	1:15:00
Dungannon	1	2:00:00	0	-
Downpatrick	7	4:38:34	0	-
Craigavon	7	2:47:08	0	-
Strabane	1	2:00:00	0	-
Coleraine	11	2:38:38	0	-
Total	43	3:34:11	1	1:15:00

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Number of Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average Adult Criminal court sitting time
Ballymena	10	0:45:00
Lisburn	9	0:43:00
Dungannon	12	1:16:15
Total	31	0:56:30

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,472	218	20	16	2,726
Newtownards Court Office	515	94	7	4	620
Downpatrick Court Office	220	22	12	4	258
Craigavon Court Office	594	85	12	1	692
Armagh Court Office	188	33	5	0	226
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	102	24	6	0	132
Omagh Court Office	137	64	1	0	202
Strabane Court Office	124	29	2	3	158
Antrim Court Office	256	32	11	12	311
Londonderry Court Office	557	96	38	23	714
Enniskillen Court Office	192	28	1	1	222
Coleraine Court Office	310	52	23	12	397
Newry Court Office	403	73	8	4	488
Limavady Court Office	83	18	10	2	113
Magherafelt Court Office	89	54	9	5	157
Ballymena Court Office	285	52	6	2	345
Lisburn Court Office	342	62	29	9	442
Dungannon Court Office	303	57	3	0	363
Total	7,172	1,093	203	98	8,566

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014

Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' Court by venue

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,795	205	0	0	3,000
Newtownards Court Office	541	82	7	1	631
Downpatrick Court Office	231	25	8	3	267
Craigavon Court Office	628	87	1	1	717
Armagh Court Office	204	24	1	0	229
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	123	22	4	0	149
Omagh Court Office	164	60	0	0	224
Strabane Court Office	113	27	0	0	140
Antrim Court Office	314	38	0	1	353
Londonderry Court Office	633	84	1	3	721
Enniskillen Court Office	223	21	0	0	244
Coleraine Court Office	378	51	6	2	437
Newry Court Office	454	67	1	3	525
Limavady Court Office	91	18	2	0	111
Magherafelt Court Office	189	51	0	0	240
Ballymena Court Office	378	54	0	0	432
Lisburn Court Office	335	56	5	1	397
Dungannon Court Office	358	50	0	0	408
Total	8,152	1,022	36	15	9,225

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	3.56	14.78	1.09	15.87
Newtownards Court Office	4.42	14.56	0.92	15.47
Downpatrick Court Office	5.93	17.13	1.37	18.50
Craigavon Court Office	5.91	10.21	0.70	10.92
Armagh Court Office	5.52	13.21	5.35	18.56
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.32	11.46	0.96	12.42
Omagh Court Office	4.07	11.72	0.80	12.52
Strabane Court Office	3.96	13.39	0.79	14.19
Antrim Court Office	4.67	8.98	0.97	9.95
Londonderry Court Office	3.71	13.39	1.31	14.70
Enniskillen Court Office	3.92	10.58	1.32	11.90
Coleraine Court Office	4.80	12.80	1.23	14.02
Newry Court Office	6.67	11.45	0.42	11.86
Limavady Court Office	4.78	14.19	0.95	15.15
Magherafelt Court Office	4.51	16.33	0.68	17.01
Ballymena Court Office	4.10	13.12	2.09	15.22
Lisburn Court Office	3.97	14.47	1.48	15.95
Dungannon Court Office	3.73	11.14	1.09	12.22
Total	4.37	13.31	1.19	14.50

Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area

Charge type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	865	1	0	0	866
All Sexual Offences	234	0	0	1	235
All Burglary Offences	81	0	0	0	81
All Robbery Offences	7	0	0	0	7
All Theft Offences	396	1	0	2	399
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	126	45	0	0	171
All Criminal Damage Offences	225	0	0	0	225
All Offences Against the State	141	0	0	5	146
All Other Offences	266	405	0	7	678
All Drug Offences	575	0	0	0	575
All Motoring Offences	2,843	475	17	0	3,335
All Non-Police Offences	23	27	19	0	69
All Breach	124	34	0	0	158
Combination of charges	2,246	34	0	0	2,280
Total	8,152	1,022	36	15	9,225

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area

Outcome type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	529	0	0	0	529
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,495	177	0	0	3,672
All charges withdrawn	1,482	397	0	0	1,879
Fixed penalty default	0	0	36	0	36
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	2,116	413	0	0	2,529
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	530	35	0	0	565
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	15	15
Total	8,152	1,022	36	15	9,225

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	54	54
Newtownards Court Office	52	52
Downpatrick Court Office	5	5
Craigavon Court Office	37	37
Armagh Court Office	1	1
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	12	12
Strabane Court Office	1	1
Antrim Court Office	10	10
Londonderry Court Office	22	22
Enniskillen Court Office	13	13
Coleraine Court Office	26	26
Newry Court Office	17	17
Limavady Court Office	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	16	16
Lisburn Court Office	20	20
Dungannon Court Office	8	8
Total	296	296

Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	71	71
Newtownards Court Office	74	74
Downpatrick Court Office	4	4
Craigavon Court Office	38	38
Armagh Court Office	2	2
Omagh Court Office	6	6
Strabane Court Office	4	4
Antrim Court Office	5	5
Londonderry Court Office	30	30
Enniskillen Court Office	6	6
Coleraine Court Office	15	15
Newry Court Office	16	16
Limavady Court Office	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	9	9
Lisburn Court Office	23	23
Dungannon Court Office	11	11
Total	315	315

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	2.92	22.68	17.52	40.20
Newtownards Court Office	2.29	17.82	8.72	26.54
Downpatrick Court Office	0.00	10.11	18.75	28.86
Craigavon Court Office	4.03	10.28	2.92	13.20
Armagh Court Office	3.00	18.00	0.00	18.00
Omagh Court Office	5.74	11.02	1.00	12.02
Strabane Court Office	0.76	21.81	4.33	26.14
Antrim Court Office	0.00	6.97	2.40	9.37
Londonderry Court Office	2.06	16.53	4.30	20.83
Enniskillen Court Office	4.05	25.05	3.02	28.07
Coleraine Court Office	5.50	8.50	0.00	8.50
Newry Court Office	4.29	8.34	5.70	14.04
Ballymena Court Office	5.14	12.00	1.57	13.57
Lisburn Court Office	2.64	12.15	7.10	19.25
Dungannon Court Office	3.32	6.13	3.43	9.56
Total	2.93	15.78	8.09	23.86

Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area

Charge type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	57	57
All Sexual Offences	8	8
All Burglary Offences	7	7
All Theft Offences	28	28
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	41	41
All Offences Against the State	16	16
All Other Offences	11	11
All Drug Offences	17	17
All Motoring Offences	20	20
Combination of charges	109	109
Total	315	315

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area

Outcome Type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	2	2
Plea of guilty on all charges	146	146
All charges withdrawn	96	96
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	59	59
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	12	12
Total	315	315

Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by venue

Court Office	Domestic Proceedings	Family, Homes and Domestic Violence (Magistrates Court)	Total
Laganside Courts	12	327	339
Newtownards Court Office	13	128	141
Downpatrick Court Office	3	30	33
Craigavon Court Office	2	36	38
Armagh Court Office	2	6	8
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	8	11
Omagh Court Office	4	31	35
Strabane Court Office	1	5	6
Antrim Court Office	5	34	39
Londonderry Court Office	7	112	119
Enniskillen Court Office	0	22	22
Coleraine Court Office	4	48	52
Newry Court Office	6	76	82
Limavady Court Office	0	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	7	71	78
Lisburn Court Office	4	88	92
Dungannon Court Office	1	51	52
Total	74	1,074	1,148

Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by venue

Court Office	Domestic Proceedings	Family, Homes and Domestic Violence (Magistrates Court)	Total
Laganside Courts	7	218	225
Newtownards Court Office	5	153	158
Downpatrick Court Office	3	25	28
Craigavon Court Office	4	50	54
Armagh Court Office	1	12	13
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	15	16
Omagh Court Office	3	33	36
Strabane Court Office	1	8	9
Antrim Court Office	1	26	27
Londonderry Court Office	5	95	100
Enniskillen Court Office	0	19	19
Coleraine Court Office	5	55	60
Newry Court Office	8	80	88
Limavady Court Office	0	3	3
Magherafelt Court Office	0	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	4	67	71
Lisburn Court Office	5	95	100
Dungannon Court Office	2	65	67
Total	55	1,020	1,075

Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue

Court Office	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	1.33	2.70	4.03
Newtownards Court Office	2.14	18.11	20.26
Downpatrick Court Office	2.64	25.32	27.96
Craigavon Court Office	2.66	13.58	16.25
Armagh Court Office	2.19	16.57	18.76
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3.24	7.48	10.72
Omagh Court Office	2.25	8.22	10.48
Strabane Court Office	1.94	33.22	35.16
Antrim Court Office	1.41	2.19	3.60
Londonderry Court Office	1.37	7.98	9.35
Enniskillen Court Office	1.21	8.09	9.30
Coleraine Court Office	2.21	10.20	12.41
Newry Court Office	8.19	14.64	22.83
Limavady Court Office	1.33	66.24	67.57
Magherafelt Court Office	4.00	9.00	13.00
Ballymena Court Office	1.99	8.83	10.82
Lisburn Court Office	1.54	9.69	11.23
Dungannon Court Office	1.99	10.68	12.67
Total	2.35	10.49	12.83

Arrest warrants are excluded

Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland

Type of Complaint	Order granted	Order dismissed or refused	Order withdrawn	Order varied or discharge	Other outcome to order	Total
Non-molestation	515	174	141	156	14	1,000
Occupation	1	2	2	4	0	9
Vary or discharge non-molestation or occupation	0	2	6	1	0	9
Other Family, Homes & Domestic Violence	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	516	180	149	161	14	1,020

APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES

Acquittal

A judgement or verdict that a person is not guilty of the crime with which they have been charged.

Additional sitting

These are additional court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, but planned in advance of the date of the sitting.

Adult Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged 18 years or over on the date on which they committed the offence.

Applications

The act of applying to a civil or family court to ask it to do something, for example to start proceedings or make an order.

Charge sheet

A charge sheet is a method by which PSNI can put charge(s) to a defendant and on which they will either release the defendant on police bail to appear at court within 28 days of the charging or they can detain the defendant in custody to produce them before a court at the earliest opportunity.

Civil and Family application

These are applications in relation to Children Order, domestic and family homes and domestic violence proceedings.

Committed to Crown Court

The procedure by which a defendant is returned for trial to the Crown Court by the Magistrates' court, if the Magistrates' court is satisfied that there is a case to answer.

Departmental prosecution

Departmental prosecutions are for criminal offences which are investigated by a department or other non-police body and prosecuted by either the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) or a separate prosecutorial body (e.g. motor tax evasion which is prosecuted by the Department of the Environment).

Disposed

The date a case is finally dealt with via a court or non-court result and the case is no longer in the court process.

Domestic proceeding (including FHDV orders, Non molestation, Occupation, Vary discharge)

These are orders made in respect of applications made under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. These orders may include non-molestation, occupation orders or both. A non-molestation order is made for the protection of the applicant and may prohibit the respondent from carrying out particular actions or behaviours and may include an exclusion zone. Occupation orders provide for the rights of the application to peacefully occupy a particular property without interference from the respondent. These orders may be varied to add or remove particular requirements and the order can also be discharged by the court to bring the terms of the order to an end.

Family Magistrates' Business

Family business in the Magistrate's Court (the Family Proceedings Court) covers applications brought in respect of the care and welfare of children, domestic proceedings and applications for non-molestation and/or occupation orders.

Finding

This is the date on which a defendant is either found guilty or not guilty of having committed the offence alleged in either the summons or charge sheet.

First hearing

This is the date on which a case first appears in court.

Fixed Penalty Default

This is a fixed penalty which has been issued for a minor motoring offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

Hybrid charge

This is also referred to as a 'triable-either-way' offence. A criminal offence that may be prosecuted either summarily (in the Magistrates' court) or on indictment (in the Crown Court). In the majority of cases, the prosecution decides how the offence is tried depending on the seriousness of the offence.

Indictable charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant is usually tried in the Crown Court.

Indictable triable summarily charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant can be tried in the Crown Court but may in some instances be tried in a Magistrates' court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder

These are diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences, such as non-motoring offences, as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder Default

This is a penalty notice for disorder which has been issued for a defined offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

PSNI/ PPS prosecution

These are prosecutions for criminal offences which are investigated by Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and prosecuted by Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Received

The date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office.

Scheduled sitting

This is a regular court sitting that is included within the court calendar.

Sitting

This is a period of work by a judge in a single courtroom on a single day. Several types of business may be heard at one sitting. Business heard in different courtrooms, whether at the same venue or elsewhere, is counted as separate sittings.

Sitting Days

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It is a period of work by a judge on a single day. Multiple sittings on one calendar date will be aggregated into one sitting day based on the Judicial officer, venue and sitting date. Several types of business may be heard within one sitting day. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.

Special sitting

These are additional unplanned court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, that are required to hear unforeseen business, such a dealing with a defendant on a weekend or public holiday.

Summary charge

This is an offence which is triable in a Magistrates' court.

Summons

This is the method by which a complaint is made to require a defendant to appear before a court in respect of particular charge(s). The details of the charge(s) will be contained on the summons as well as the first date and place at which the defendant is to attend court.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved.

Youth Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged between 10 and 18 years on the date on which they committed the offence.

Analytical Services Group,
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service,
Department of Justice
4th Floor, Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA

e-mail: richard.martin2@courtsni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9072 8928

[Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service](#)