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July to September 2021

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Provisional Figures

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[Northern Ireland Court Service Statistical Publications](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at the Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 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 July to September 2021, with court activity during this period showing recovery after having 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. This is most obvious in the comparisons of business volumes over time.***
- During the period July to September 2021:
- There were 1,080 Magistrates' court sitting days, an increase of 12% from 961 in the same period the previous year [note 1].

[note 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.

- 9,570 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,257 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 39% in the number of adult defendants received, from 6,870, and of 62% in the number of adult defendants disposed of, from 5,729, compared to the same period the previous year. These are one of the lowest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the July to September quarter since recording began.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal decreased to 10 weeks from an average time of 15 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
- 254 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 210 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 78% in the number of youth defendants received, from 143, and of 58% in the number of youth defendants disposed of, from 133, compared to the same period the previous year.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal decreased to 19 weeks from an average time of 27 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
- 1,076 new civil and family applications were received and 1,058 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 6% (from 1,142) in the number of cases received and an increase of 11% (from 953) in the number of cases disposed of, 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 11 weeks from an average time of seven weeks for the corresponding period last year.

- For some of the comparisons above, it should be noted that they are distorted due to exceptionally low figures from 2020, caused by the closure of the courts due to COVID-19, being compared with figures that are returning to normal business. Historical trend data shows that normal business has still not resumed and thus it may be reasonable to expect an artificially high number of cases in the next few quarters.

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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 fourth quarter of 2021 and will be published on 11th February 2022.

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' [note 2] which may be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website [note 3]. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

[note 2] Department of Justice, 2013. Statistics and Research: Policy statement on Revisions. [pdf] DoJ. Available [here](#)

[note 3] Department of Justice, 2017. Policy Papers [online] Available [here](#)

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During July to September 2021 there were 1,025 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 19 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 36 special Magistrates' sitting days. These represent increases of 12% (from 913), of 27% (from 15) and of 9% (from 33) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The Magistrates' sitting days for July to September 2021 may be categorised as follows:

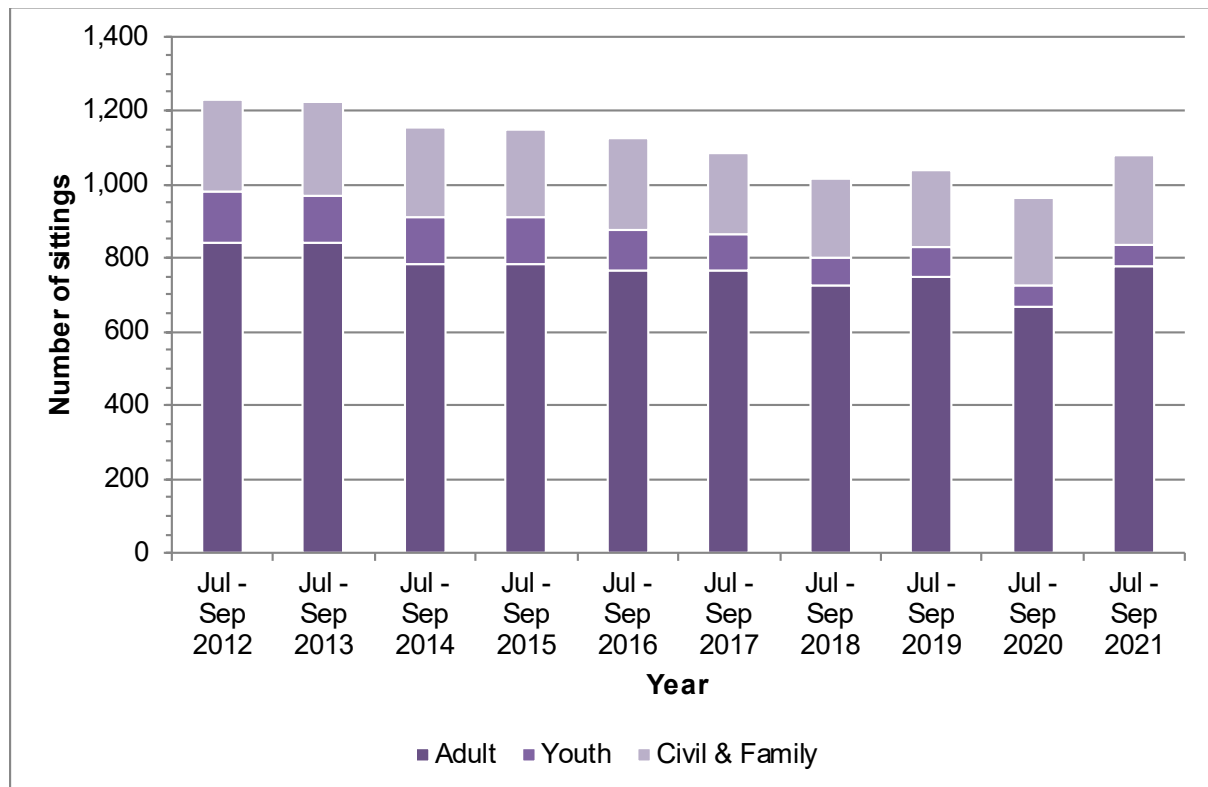
	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	723	17	36	776
Youth Criminal	62	0	0	62
Civil & Family	240	2	0	242
Total	1,025	19	36	1,080

Within these 1,080 sitting days, 72% were adult criminal days, 6% were youth criminal days and 22% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has generally shown a gradual decrease since the July to September quarter of 2012 and was at its lowest point since recording began in 2020, but has increased to its highest level since July to September 2016 (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: July to September 2012 to July to September 2021



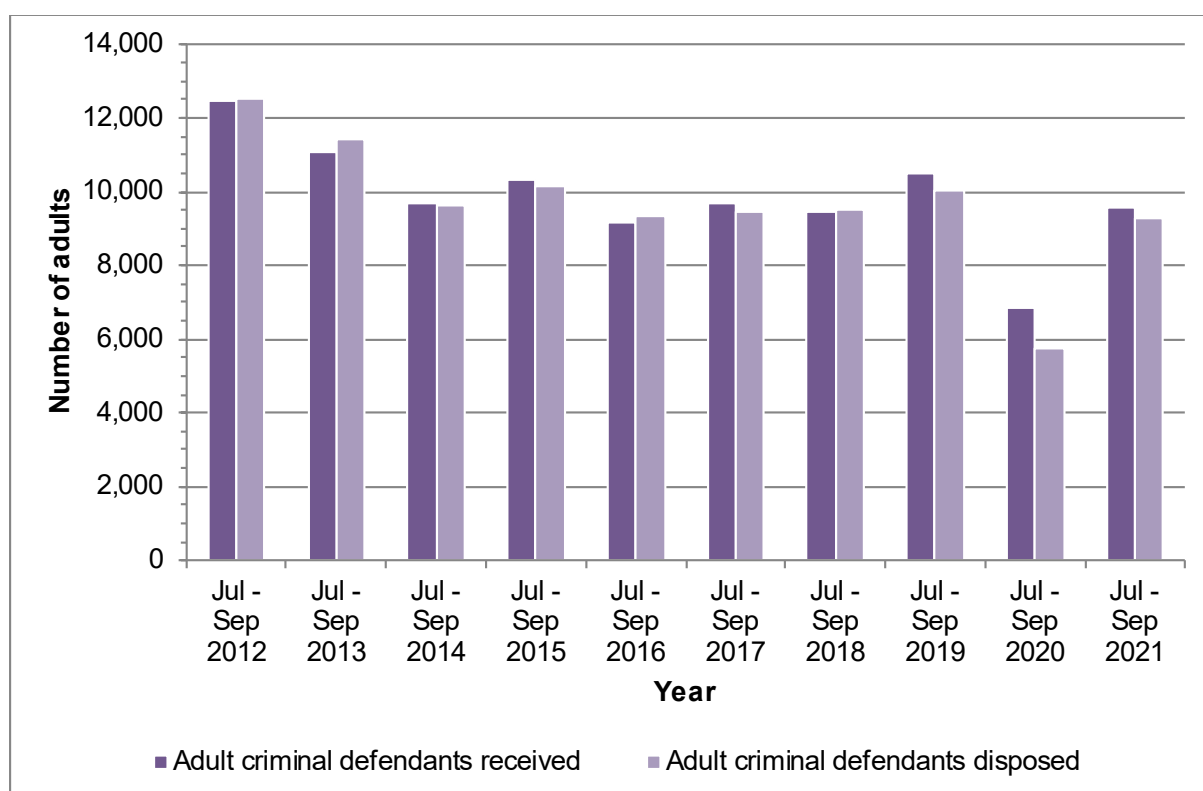
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2021, 9,570 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,257 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 39% in the number of defendants received (from 6,870) and of 62% in the number of defendants disposed of (from 5,729) respectively, compared to the same period in the previous year.

The majority (87.9%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (85.0% in the same period in 2020).

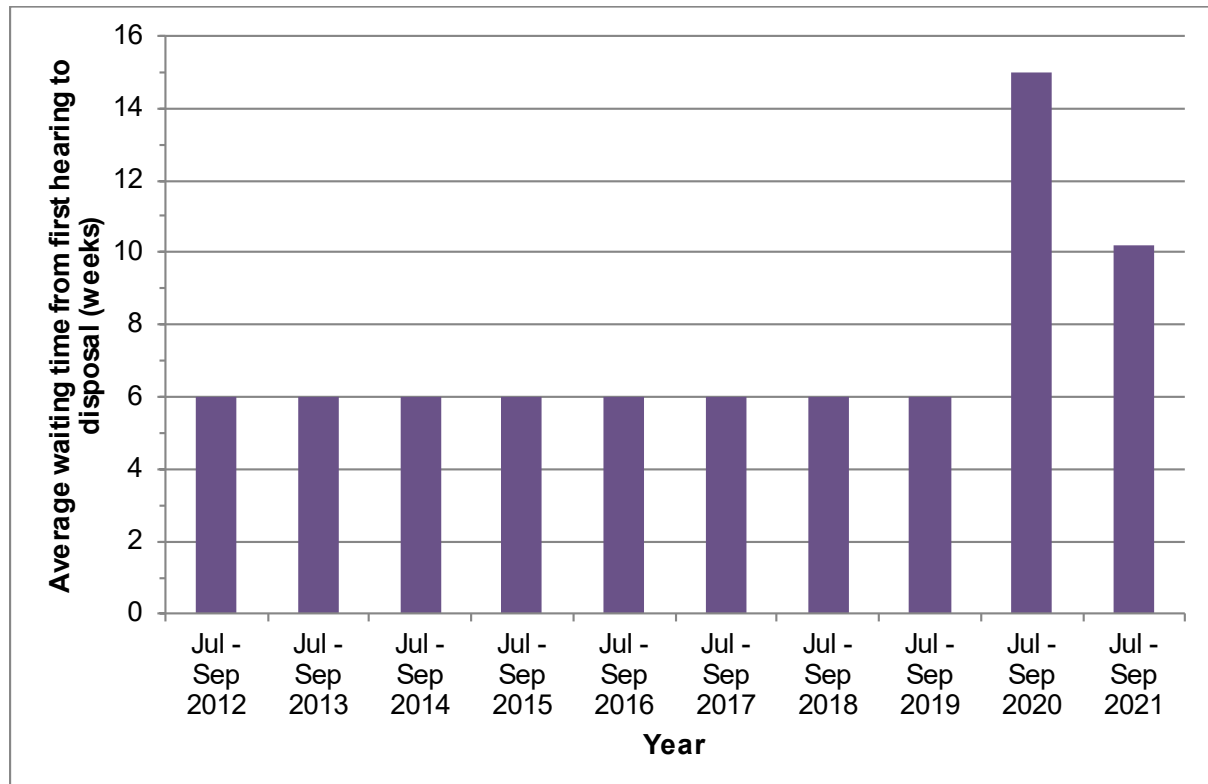
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had shown little change in the July to September quarters from 2016 to 2019, then the numbers received and disposed of decreased to their lowest points in 2020, but these figures have now increased to almost their pre-pandemic levels (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2012 to July to September 2021



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal had remained steady at six weeks between 2012 and 2019, before increasing to 15 weeks in 2020, but decreasing to just over ten weeks in the current July to September quarter (Figure 3).

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



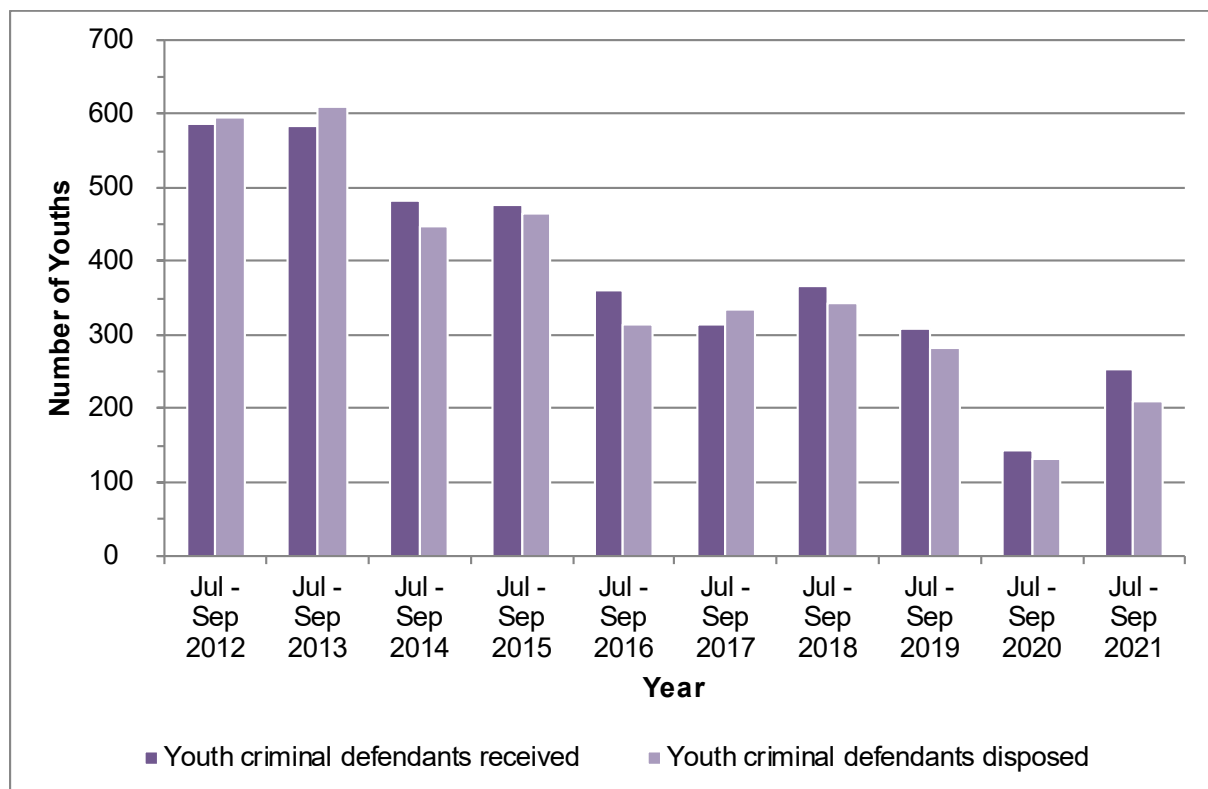
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2021, 254 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 210 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 78% in the number of youth defendants received (from 143) and of 58% in the number of those disposed (from 133) compared to the same period the previous year.

All (100%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/PPS, which was 99.2% in the same period in 2020.

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed of has shown a gradual decrease in the July to September quarters over the last number of years since 2012, with the figures for youth defendants received and disposed of at their lowest in the previous year's quarter before both increasing to their second-lowest figures in the current quarter (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2012 to July to September 2021



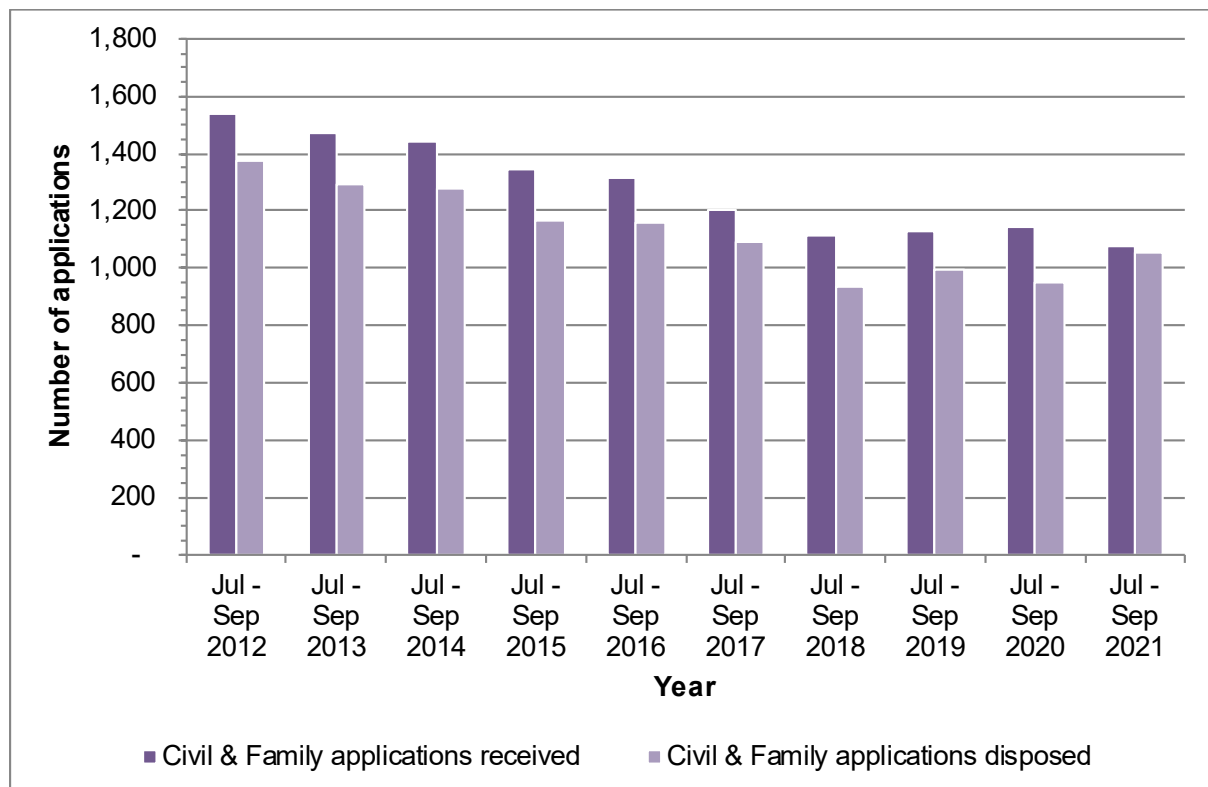
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 19 weeks (27 weeks for the same period in 2020).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During July to September 2021, 1,076 new civil and family applications were received and 1,058 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent a decrease of 6% (from 1,142) in cases received and an increase of 11% (from 953) in cases disposed of, compared to the same period the previous year.

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

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2012 to July to September 2021



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 11 weeks from date of receipt to disposal, compared to seven 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 [note 1][note 4][note 5]

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	18	04:45:33	3	02:35:00	5	04:53:00
Ballymena	28	03:58:08	2	02:35:00	14	02:49:21
Laganside	228	03:29:53	18	03:37:46	63	04:31:26
Armagh	17	03:04:24	0	[z]	0	[z]
Banbridge@Newry	17	02:36:10	0	[z]	3	00:50:00
Limavady	13	03:07:41	0	[z]	0	[z]
Lisburn	37	04:04:32	5	02:22:36	17	03:14:31
Magherafelt	13	05:12:50	0	[z]	1	01:30:00
Dungannon	37	05:01:21	1	06:15:00	13	04:11:55
Downpatrick	25	04:10:12	1	05:15:00	0	[z]
Craigavon	32	05:43:00	5	03:12:00	18	02:34:53
Strabane	23	03:39:33	2	01:32:30	1	02:00:00
Omagh	18	03:31:40	2	00:57:30	10	02:26:30
Enniskillen	25	04:33:48	5	04:19:00	2	02:37:30
Coleraine	36	04:00:50	4	02:33:45	10	04:22:30
Londonderry	67	04:07:39	3	03:56:40	33	04:19:50
Newtownards	56	03:53:34	8	02:27:30	34	03:25:52
Newry	33	03:30:14	3	01:55:00	16	04:21:30
Total	723	03:55:39	62	03:05:31	240	03:48:27

[note 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.

[note 4] 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.

[note 5] [z] denotes cells for which there were no court sittings to calculate an average sitting time from and where entering zero would be inaccurate

Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue [note 1][note 4][note 5]

Court Office	Number of additional Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average additional Adult Criminal court sitting time	Number of additional Civil and Family court sitting days	Average additional Civil and Family court sitting time
Ballymena	1	00:15:00	0	[z]
Laganside	1	05:50:00	1	03:40:00
Lisburn	2	01:12:30	1	00:39:00
Dungannon	1	01:00:00	0	[z]
Downpatrick	5	02:45:00	0	[z]
Craigavon	5	05:03:00	0	[z]
Newtownards	2	03:05:00	0	[z]
Total	17	03:12:56	2	02:09:30

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue [note 1][note 4][note 5]

Court Office	Number of special Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average special Adult Criminal court sitting time
Ballymena	10	00:35:30
Lisburn	13	00:51:13
Dungannon	13	01:10:00
Total	36	00:53:38

[note 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.

[note 4] 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.

[note 5] [z] denotes cells for which there were no court sittings to calculate an average sitting time from and where entering zero would be inaccurate

Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue [note 6]

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed Penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,511	185	19	13	2,728
Newtownards Court Office	559	42	8	6	615
Downpatrick Court Office	350	20	1	14	385
Craigavon Court Office	626	44	25	10	705
Armagh Court Office	179	53	17	50	299
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	114	20	1	0	135
Omagh Court Office	173	49	1	0	223
Strabane Court Office	165	32	0	1	198
Antrim Court Office	320	37	17	4	378
Londonderry Court Office	663	45	13	48	769
Enniskillen Court Office	234	40	2	1	277
Coleraine Court Office	323	52	9	7	391
Newry Court Office	452	76	26	17	571
Limavady Court Office	95	34	5	11	145
Magherafelt Court Office	201	30	2	0	233
Ballymena Court Office	523	63	7	7	600
Lisburn Court Office	354	37	23	7	421
Dungannon Court Office	439	42	13	3	497
Total	8,281	901	189	199	9,570

[note 6] 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 [note 6]

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,398	198	0	1	2,597
Newtownards Court Office	597	55	1	3	656
Downpatrick Court Office	349	20	1	13	383
Craigavon Court Office	635	43	5	1	684
Armagh Court Office	194	58	23	53	328
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	136	24	3	0	163
Omagh Court Office	142	59	0	0	201
Strabane Court Office	142	34	0	0	176
Antrim Court Office	332	40	7	1	380
Londonderry Court Office	717	44	7	19	787
Enniskillen Court Office	241	45	0	0	286
Coleraine Court Office	330	48	2	2	382
Newry Court Office	438	82	24	3	547
Limavady Court Office	81	31	0	4	116
Magherafelt Court Office	152	33	0	0	185
Ballymena Court Office	533	61	0	0	594
Lisburn Court Office	339	38	3	2	382
Dungannon Court Office	382	24	4	0	410
Total	8,138	937	80	102	9,257

[note 6] 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

[note 7]

Court Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	3.63	10.61	1.04	11.65
Newtownards Court Office	4.29	11.89	1.24	13.13
Downpatrick Court Office	4.15	14.50	0.92	15.41
Craigavon Court Office	5.80	8.95	0.70	9.66
Armagh Court Office	17.19	8.36	0.17	8.53
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.62	6.52	0.12	6.64
Omagh Court Office	3.85	6.51	0.99	7.50
Strabane Court Office	4.22	7.29	1.26	8.56
Antrim Court Office	5.73	5.01	0.87	5.88
Londonderry Court Office	5.39	8.78	1.76	10.55
Enniskillen Court Office	3.87	6.88	0.90	7.78
Coleraine Court Office	5.24	11.34	1.62	12.96
Newry Court Office	10.44	7.88	0.08	7.95
Limavady Court Office	4.97	5.13	0.48	5.61
Magherafelt Court Office	4.34	7.95	1.13	9.08
Ballymena Court Office	4.50	5.46	1.62	7.08
Lisburn Court Office	3.64	9.53	1.40	10.93
Dungannon Court Office	4.44	7.32	1.09	8.41
Total	5.25	9.14	1.04	10.19

[note 7] Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area [note 6][note 8]

Charge type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	694	1	0	0	695
All Sexual Offences	200	0	0	2	202
All Burglary Offences	66	0	0	0	66
All Robbery Offences	6	0	0	0	6
All Theft Offences	329	1	0	5	335
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	127	36	0	0	163
All Criminal Damage Offences	201	0	0	0	201
All Offences Against the State	148	0	0	7	155
All Other Offences	332	250	0	88	670
All Drug Offences	750	0	0	0	750
All Motoring Offences	3,160	569	40	0	3,769
All Non-Police Offences	24	11	40	0	75
All Breach	102	29	0	0	131
Combination of charges	1,999	40	0	0	2,039
Total	8,138	937	80	102	9,257

[note 6] Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

[note 8] 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

[note 6]

Outcome type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	486	0	0	0	486
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,627	165	0	0	3,792
All charges withdrawn	1,372	311	0	0	1,683
Fixed penalty default	0	0	80	0	80
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	2,156	434	0	0	2,590
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	497	27	0	0	524
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	102	102
Total	8,138	937	80	102	9,257

[note 6] Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

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

[note 6]

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	54	54
Newtownards Court Office	50	50
Craigavon Court Office	21	21
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	7	7
Strabane Court Office	1	1
Antrim Court Office	4	4
Londonderry Court Office	21	21
Enniskillen Court Office	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	12	12
Newry Court Office	28	28
Ballymena Court Office	11	11
Lisburn Court Office	20	20
Dungannon Court Office	15	15
Total	254	254

[note 6] Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014

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

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	52	52
Newtownards Court Office	26	26
Downpatrick Court Office	1	1
Craigavon Court Office	33	33
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	2	2
Strabane Court Office	4	4
Antrim Court Office	5	5
Londonderry Court Office	10	10
Enniskillen Court Office	10	10
Coleraine Court Office	10	10
Newry Court Office	23	23
Ballymena Court Office	2	2
Lisburn Court Office	20	20
Dungannon Court Office	11	11
Total	210	210

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue
 [note 7]

Court Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	2.73	12.40	7.03	19.42
Newtownards Court Office	3.35	17.31	3.08	20.39
Downpatrick Court Office	0.00	9.14	8.00	17.14
Craigavon Court Office	3.47	12.53	9.87	22.40
Omagh Court Office	4.14	5.00	0.00	5.00
Strabane Court Office	3.89	10.14	2.00	12.14
Antrim Court Office	5.36	11.36	3.50	14.86
Londonderry Court Office	5.00	19.51	1.50	21.01
Enniskillen Court Office	4.41	28.49	0.00	28.49
Coleraine Court Office	4.67	35.73	7.33	43.06
Newry Court Office	2.80	3.69	1.96	5.65
Ballymena Court Office	6.36	1.50	3.43	4.93
Lisburn Court Office	5.33	15.00	3.88	18.88
Dungannon Court Office	2.54	7.93	1.14	9.07
Total	3.58	14.07	4.84	18.91

[note 7] Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area [note 6][note 8]

Charge type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	38	38
All Sexual Offences	4	4
All Burglary Offences	6	6
All Theft Offences	16	16
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	3	3
All Criminal Damage Offences	23	23
All Offences Against the State	12	12
All Other Offences	6	6
All Drug Offences	13	13
All Motoring Offences	20	20
Combination of charges	69	69
Total	210	210

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area [note 6][note 8]

Outcome Type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	4	4
Plea of guilty on all charges	74	74
All charges withdrawn	74	74
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	37	37
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	21	21
Total	210	210

[note 6] Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st October 2014.

[note 8] 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	13	267	280
Newtownards Court Office	3	123	126
Downpatrick Court Office	0	50	50
Craigavon Court Office	2	48	50
Armagh Court Office	3	8	11
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	8	9
Omagh Court Office	2	32	34
Strabane Court Office	1	15	16
Antrim Court Office	1	23	24
Londonderry Court Office	10	101	111
Enniskillen Court Office	0	8	8
Coleraine Court Office	3	57	60
Newry Court Office	7	78	85
Magherafelt Court Office	0	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	0	78	78
Lisburn Court Office	2	70	72
Dungannon Court Office	3	58	61
Total	51	1,025	1,076

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	12	284	296
Newtownards Court Office	7	116	123
Downpatrick Court Office	2	37	39
Craigavon Court Office	7	49	56
Armagh Court Office	2	10	12
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	0	12	12
Omagh Court Office	7	24	31
Strabane Court Office	1	15	16
Antrim Court Office	6	17	23
Londonderry Court Office	5	91	96
Enniskillen Court Office	1	13	14
Coleraine Court Office	3	49	52
Newry Court Office	4	70	74
Ballymena Court Office	5	68	73
Lisburn Court Office	4	81	85
Dungannon Court Office	3	53	56
Total	69	989	1,058

Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue [note 9]

Court Office	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	3.44	6.70	10.14
Newtownards Court Office	2.07	12.11	14.18
Downpatrick Court Office	1.50	10.15	11.65
Craigavon Court Office	2.02	6.65	8.67
Armagh Court Office	2.61	11.01	13.62
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.93	11.86	13.79
Omagh Court Office	2.49	14.19	16.68
Strabane Court Office	1.70	7.38	9.08
Antrim Court Office	1.62	5.35	6.98
Londonderry Court Office	1.47	7.27	8.74
Enniskillen Court Office	2.77	18.07	20.84
Coleraine Court Office	1.58	6.45	8.03
Newry Court Office	3.29	9.79	13.08
Ballymena Court Office	1.57	5.21	6.78
Lisburn Court Office	1.58	10.54	12.12
Dungannon Court Office	1.22	4.81	6.04
Total	2.33	8.27	10.60

[note 9] 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	478	195	169	108	16	966
Occupation	4	6	3	2	0	15
Vary or discharge non-molestation or occupation	1	1	1	5	0	8
Total	483	202	173	115	16	989

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.

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