



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Máinnystrie O tha Laa

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin

October to December 2021

Research and Statistical Bulletin

Provisional Figures

R Martin

11th February 2022

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 October to December 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 October to December 2021, so court activity during this period has been 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 October to December 2021:
 - There were 1,078 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 1% from 1,089 in the same period the previous year¹.
 - 8,951 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,073 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent an increase of 10% in adult defendants received (from 8,112) and a decrease of 15% in adult defendants disposed of (from 10,616) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest numbers of adult defendants disposed of during the October to December quarter since recording began.
 - The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal decreased to 11 weeks from an average time of 16 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
 - 188 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 255 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 43% in the number of youth criminal defendants received (from 327) and of 27% (from 351) 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 decreased to 15 weeks from an average time of 23 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
- 1,078 new civil and family applications were received and 1,085 civil applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 6% (from 1,149) and of 8% (from 1,178) 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 decreased to 11 weeks from an average time of 14 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	23
Figure	Page
Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: October to December 2012 to October to December 2021	7
Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 2021	8
Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): October to December 2012 to October to December 2021	9
Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 2021	10
Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 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>	13
<u>Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	14
<u>Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	15
<u>Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	16
<u>Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	17
<u>Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	17
<u>Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	18
<u>Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	18
<u>Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	20
<u>Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	20
<u>Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	21
<u>Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	21
<u>Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	22
<u>Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland</u>	22

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 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 first quarter of 2022 and will be published on 13th May 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'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 October to December 2021 there were 1,026 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 19 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 33 special Magistrates' sitting days. These were an increase of 2% (from 1,005), a decrease of 61% (from 49) and a decrease of 6% (from 35) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The Magistrates' sitting days for October to December 2021 may be categorised as follows:

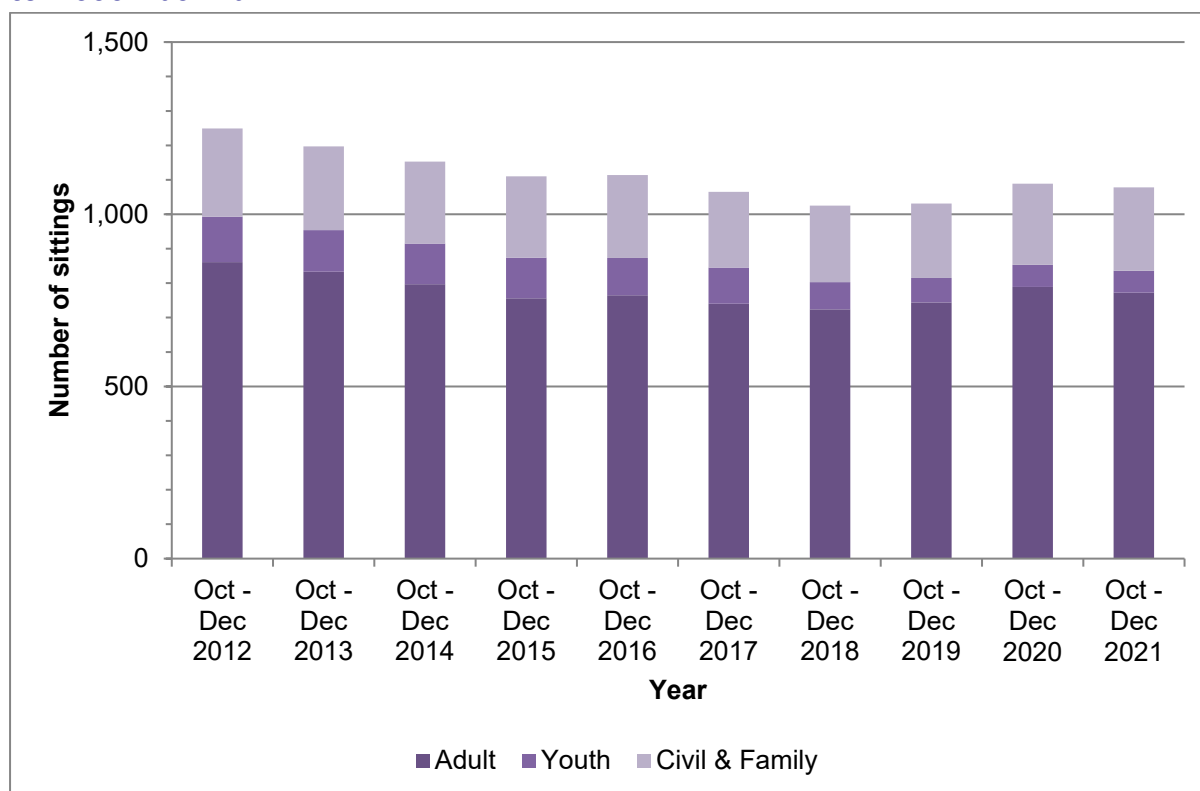
	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	723	16	33	772
Youth Criminal	64	0	0	64
Civil & Family	239	3	0	242
Total	1,026	19	33	1,078

Within these 1,078 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 shown a gradual decrease since the October to December quarter of 2012, was at its lowest point since recording began in 2018, but has generally been increasing in the October to December quarters since then (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: October to December 2012 to October to December 2021



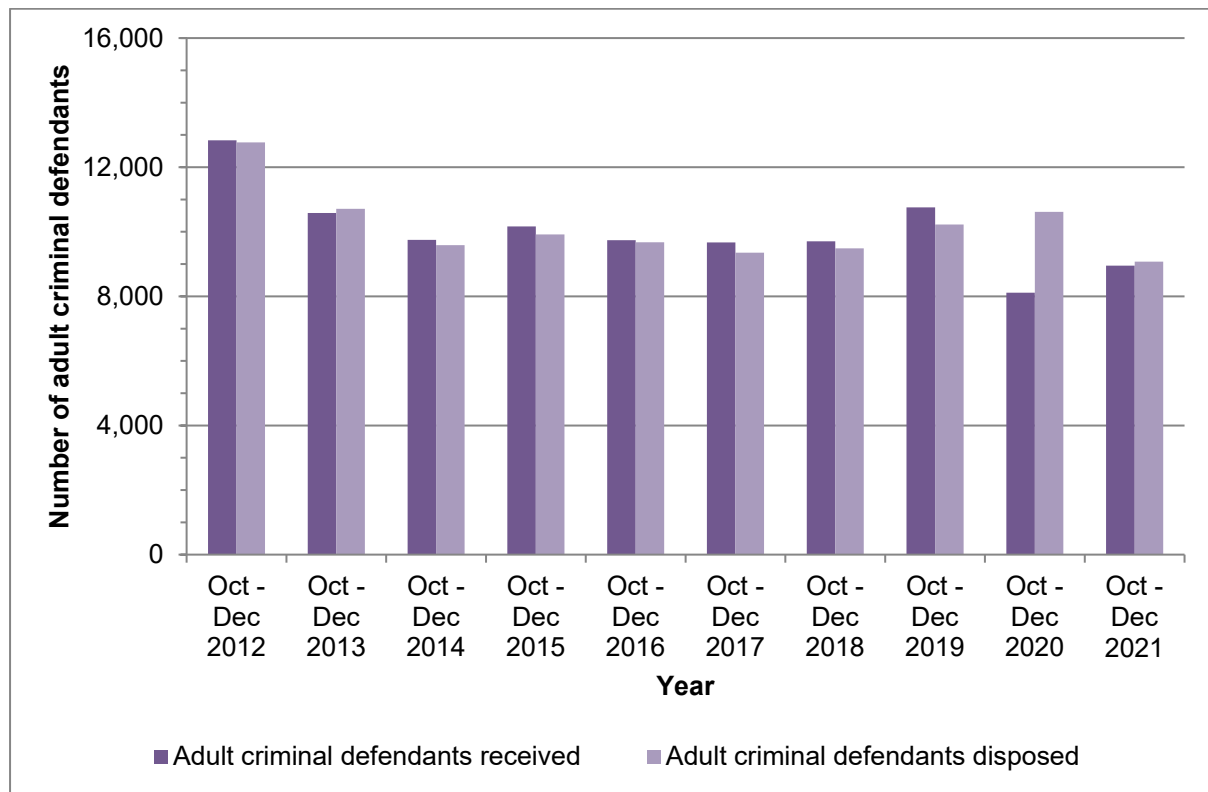
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2021, 8,951 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,073 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent an increase of 10% in defendants received (from 8,112) and a decrease of 15% in defendants disposed of (from 10,616) respectively, compared to the same period in the previous year.

The majority (87%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (85% in the same period in 2020).

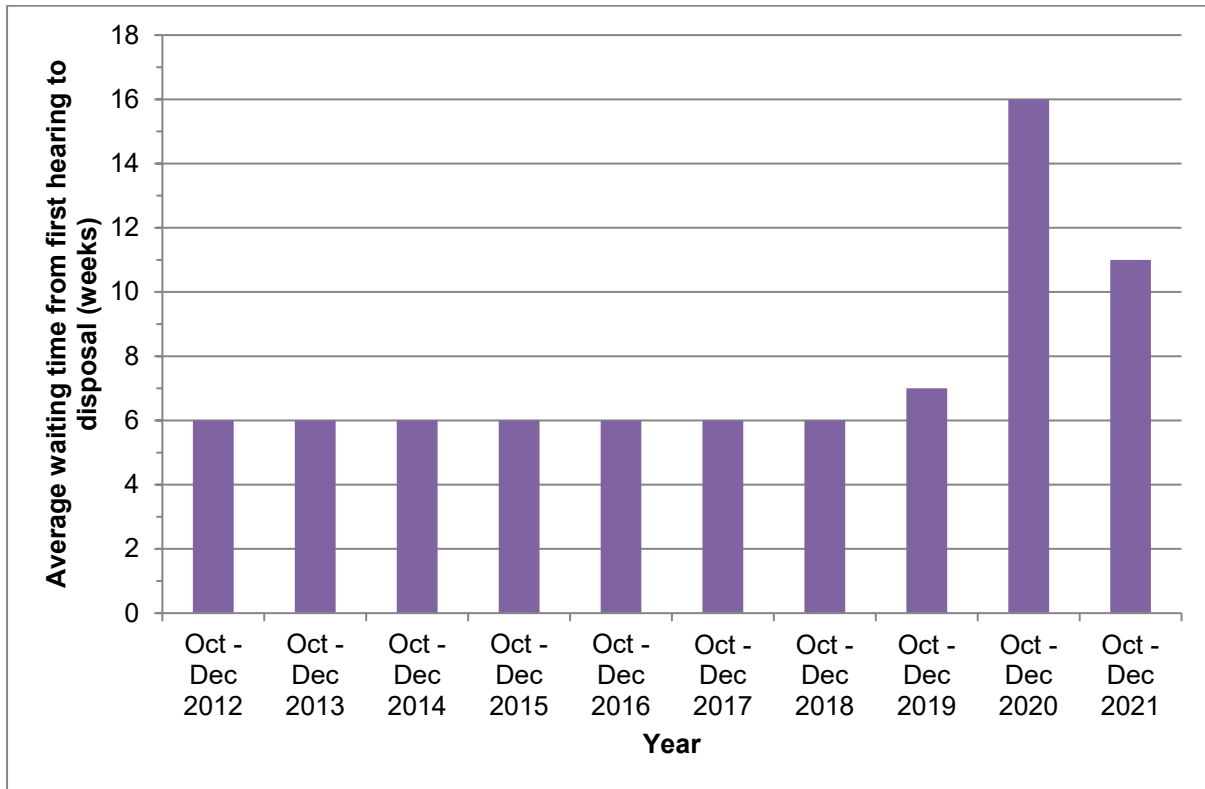
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had shown little change in the October to December quarters from 2014 to 2018, then both increased in 2019, before defendants received in the previous quarter decreased to its lowest point, before increasing in the current quarter, while defendants disposed of showed a further small increase in the previous quarter before decreasing in the current quarter (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 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, then to 16 weeks in the previous October to December quarter before decreasing to eleven weeks in the current quarter (Figure 3).

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



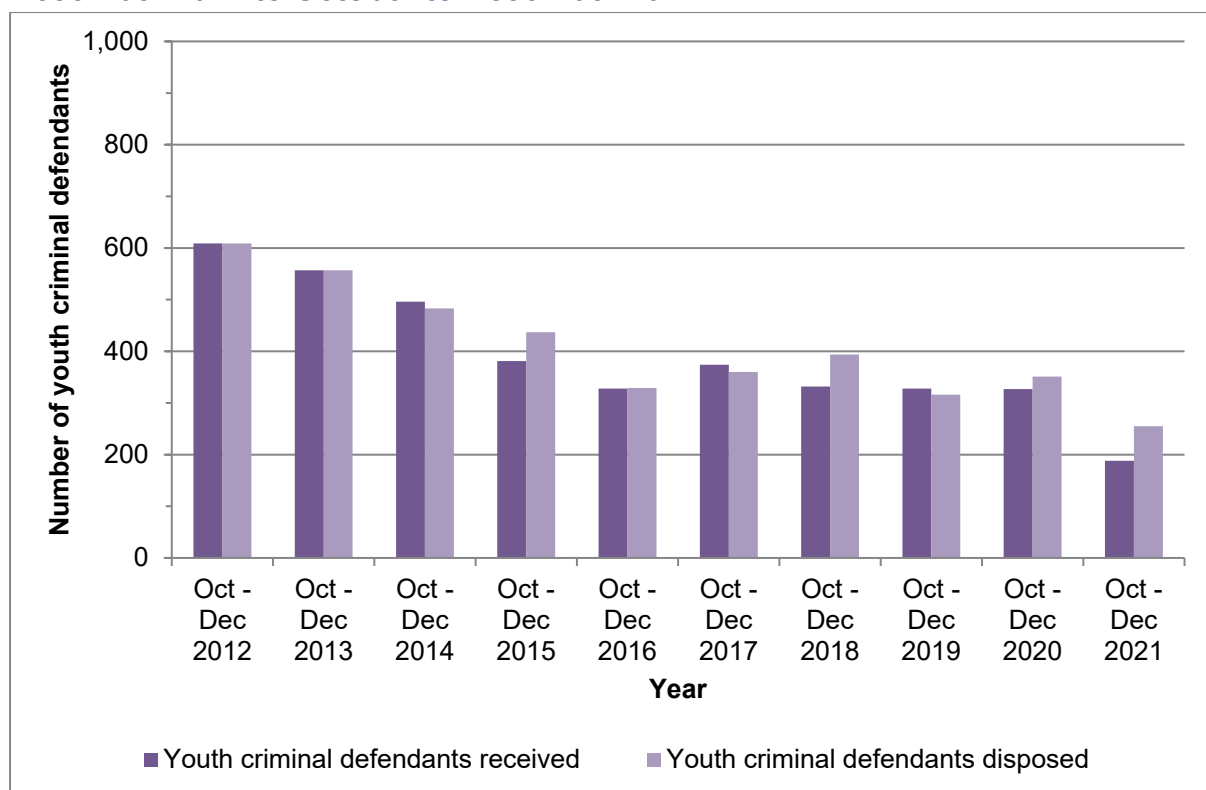
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2021, 188 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 255 youth defendants were disposed of. This were decreases of 43 % (from 327) in the number of youth defendants received and of 27% (from 351) in those disposed compared to the same period the previous year.

All of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 99.7% in the same period in 2020).

The volume of youth criminal defendants received had shown little change in the October to December quarters for the last number of years, but is at its lowest level since the beginning of the time series, while the level of defendants disposed has fluctuated, and continues to do so, also being at its lowest level in the current quarter (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 2021



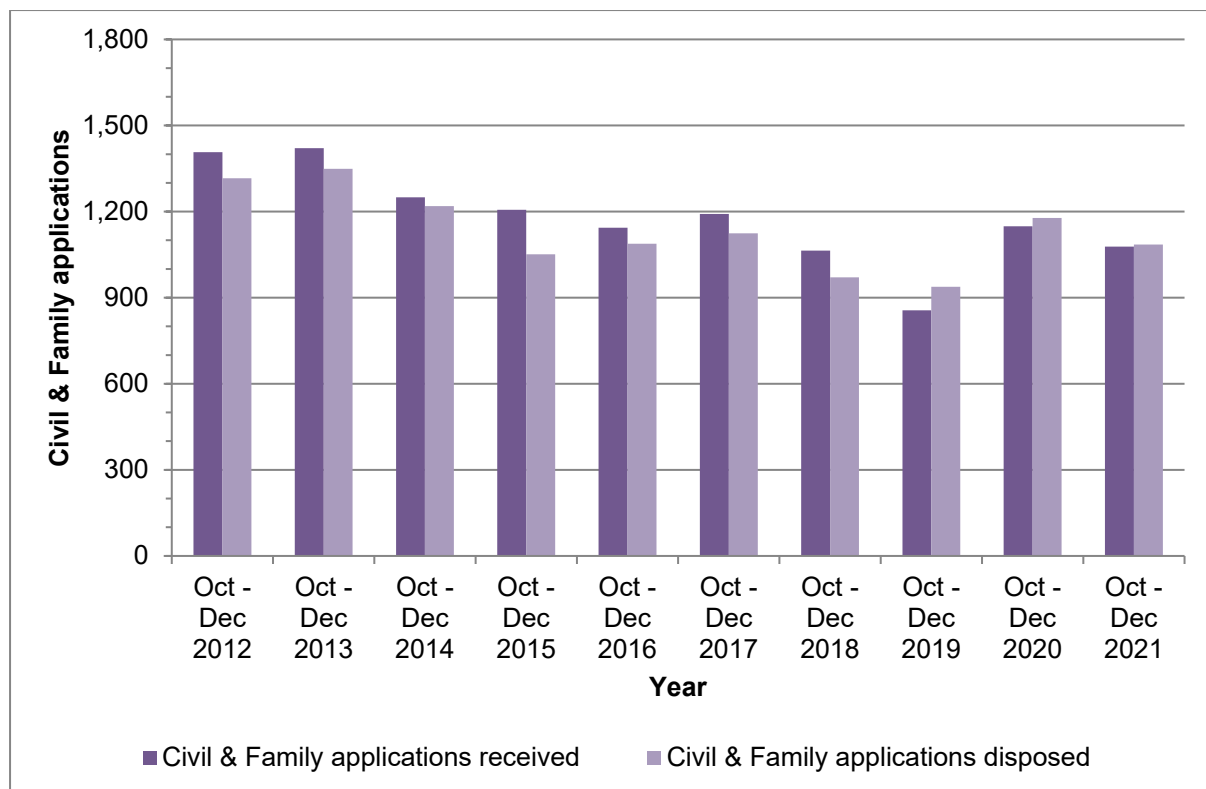
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 15 weeks (23 weeks for the same period in 2020).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During October to December 2021, 1,078 new civil and family applications were received and 1,085 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 6% (from 1,149) in cases received and of 8% (from 1,178) 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 October to December between 2011 and 2019, with the numbers of receipts and disposals decreasing to their lowest recorded figures in 2019 until increasing in the previous quarter and showing some decline in the current quarter (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2012 to October to December 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 14 weeks for the same quarter last year.

APPENDIX 1 – TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days and 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	4:11:56	3	2:21:40	5	4:30:00
Ballymena	26	4:48:50	2	2:52:30	13	3:36:32
Laganside	211	3:28:28	20	3:45:15	60	4:34:19
Armagh	16	3:52:48	0	[z]	1	1:30:00
Banbridge@Newry	15	2:19:20	0	[z]	3	1:26:40
Limavady	13	3:21:32	0	[z]	0	[z]
Lisburn	34	4:26:19	6	2:59:10	17	3:45:17
Magherafelt	14	5:15:42	0	[z]	1	4:40:00
Dungannon	40	4:50:00	5	5:26:00	6	3:59:30
Downpatrick	38	3:07:45	0	[z]	0	[z]
Craigavon	38	4:14:53	6	1:51:40	18	2:55:30
Strabane	23	3:37:10	1	3:45:00	0	[z]
Omagh	18	3:33:26	1	0:45:00	12	1:55:15
Enniskillen	24	4:17:55	6	4:04:10	3	3:00:00
Coleraine	36	4:44:45	1	7:00:00	14	4:46:47
Londonderry	66	3:42:35	4	2:08:45	32	4:00:39
Newtownards	60	2:48:15	8	3:01:52	36	3:03:16
Newry	33	2:57:25	1	0:50:00	18	3:49:03
Total	723	3:44:27	64	3:20:23	239	3:46:06

[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 and 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 Civil and Family court sitting days	Average Civil and Family court sitting time
Ballymena	0	[z]	1	6:10:00
Armagh	1	4:40:00	0	[z]
Lisburn	4	1:53:45	1	0:36:00
Dungannon	1	4:30:00	0	[z]
Downpatrick	6	2:16:50	0	[z]
Craigavon	3	3:43:20	0	[z]
Londonderry	0	[z]	1	9:00:00
Newtownards	1	3:35:00	0	[z]
Total	16	2:49:26	3	5:15:20

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days and 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
Ballymena	9	00:29:26
Lisburn	12	00:47:30
Dungannon	12	01:02:30
Total	33	00:48:01

[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 sitting 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	2,382	221	50	44	2,697
Newtownards Court Office	540	53	11	5	609
Downpatrick Court Office	293	34	3	6	336
Craigavon Court Office	477	77	9	3	566
Armagh Court Office	147	49	6	6	208
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	70	17	5	0	92
Omagh Court Office	156	30	6	1	193
Strabane Court Office	138	26	3	1	168
Antrim Court Office	251	63	6	8	328
Londonderry Court Office	649	79	23	19	770
Enniskillen Court Office	234	49	3	0	286
Coleraine Court Office	353	102	10	4	469
Newry Court Office	414	80	6	4	504
Limavady Court Office	97	32	8	3	140
Magherafelt Court Office	148	38	4	1	191
Ballymena Court Office	395	121	2	3	521
Lisburn Court Office	350	38	19	4	411
Dungannon Court Office	374	73	8	7	462
Total	7,468	1,182	182	119	8,951

[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	2,386	216	9	12	2,623
Newtownards Court Office	545	51	8	3	607
Downpatrick Court Office	333	31	3	3	370
Craigavon Court Office	589	67	16	8	680
Armagh Court Office	197	41	0	8	246
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	84	18	2	0	104
Omagh Court Office	160	20	0	0	180
Strabane Court Office	142	29	0	0	171
Antrim Court Office	287	59	0	2	348
Londonderry Court Office	674	71	1	16	762
Enniskillen Court Office	236	43	1	0	280
Coleraine Court Office	358	83	1	0	442
Newry Court Office	462	84	5	12	563
Limavady Court Office	112	35	0	0	147
Magherafelt Court Office	176	31	0	0	207
Ballymena Court Office	426	88	0	0	514
Lisburn Court Office	354	47	4	1	406
Dungannon Court Office	344	72	4	3	423
Total	7,865	1,086	54	68	9,073

[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	4.24	12.07	1.18	13.25
Newtownards Court Office	4.29	12.64	1.08	13.72
Downpatrick Court Office	4.71	15.91	0.83	16.74
Craigavon Court Office	7.14	8.01	0.90	8.90
Armagh Court Office	5.81	7.36	0.58	7.95
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.27	9.38	0.48	9.86
Omagh Court Office	3.61	6.27	0.99	7.26
Strabane Court Office	4.11	8.89	1.57	10.46
Antrim Court Office	4.48	6.72	1.10	7.83
Londonderry Court Office	4.29	10.54	0.93	11.47
Enniskillen Court Office	4.22	6.78	0.91	7.68
Coleraine Court Office	4.44	8.63	1.14	9.77
Newry Court Office	10.72	7.85	0.22	8.08
Limavady Court Office	4.45	7.33	1.20	8.54
Magherafelt Court Office	4.14	11.04	1.21	12.25
Ballymena Court Office	3.99	6.01	1.33	7.35
Lisburn Court Office	5.39	10.25	2.16	12.41
Dungannon Court Office	5.55	7.30	0.63	7.93
Total	5.05	9.95	1.05	10.99

[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	697	1	0	0	698
All Sexual Offences	159	0	0	2	161
All Burglary Offences	60	0	0	0	60
All Robbery Offences	11	0	0	0	11
All Theft Offences	328	4	0	4	336
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	151	29	0	0	180
All Criminal Damage Offences	174	0	0	0	174
All Offences Against the State	173	0	0	2	175
All Other Offences	347	372	0	60	779
All Drug Offences	660	0	0	0	660
All Motoring Offences	2,883	549	28	0	3,460
All Non-Police Offences	30	26	26	0	82
All Breach	99	54	0	0	153
Combination of charges	2,093	51	0	0	2,144
Total	7,865	1,086	54	68	9,073

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	514	7	0	0	521
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,393	165	0	0	3,558
All charges withdrawn	1,312	392	0	0	1,704
Fixed penalty default	0	0	54	0	54
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	2,178	483	0	0	2,661
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	468	39	0	0	507
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	68	68
Total	7,865	1,086	54	68	9,073

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

[note 6]

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	42	42
Newtownards Court Office	29	29
Downpatrick Court Office	1	1
Craigavon Court Office	24	24
Omagh Court Office	2	2
Antrim Court Office	5	5
Londonderry Court Office	26	26
Enniskillen Court Office	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	12	12
Newry Court Office	15	15
Magherafelt Court Office	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	8	8
Lisburn Court Office	4	4
Dungannon Court Office	10	10
Total	188	188

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

Court Office	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	61	61
Newtownards Court Office	56	56
Downpatrick Court Office	3	3
Craigavon Court Office	19	19
Armagh Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	7	7
Strabane Court Office	1	1
Antrim Court Office	2	2
Londonderry Court Office	34	34
Enniskillen Court Office	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	15	15
Newry Court Office	15	15
Ballymena Court Office	1	1
Magherafelt Court Office	10	10
Lisburn Court Office	10	10
Dungannon Court Office	11	11
Total	255	255

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

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	1.72	11.92	5.55	17.47
Newtownards Court Office	3.89	10.36	4.56	14.92
Downpatrick Court Office	1.14	47.05	4.33	51.38
Craigavon Court Office	4.27	12.05	4.69	16.74
Armagh Court Office	5.00	19.29	0.00	19.29
Omagh Court Office	4.95	9.81	4.50	14.31
Strabane Court Office	0.00	12.86	13.00	25.86
Antrim Court Office	3.57	10.50	7.00	17.50
Londonderry Court Office	3.69	9.55	6.73	16.28
Enniskillen Court Office	4.29	8.69	7.00	15.69
Coleraine Court Office	3.51	9.64	5.79	15.43
Newry Court Office	2.74	8.79	2.75	11.54
Magherafelt Court Office	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ballymena Court Office	4.70	5.16	2.30	7.46
Lisburn Court Office	3.61	10.80	0.86	11.65
Dungannon Court Office	4.58	5.55	1.18	6.73
Total	3.42	10.48	4.74	15.21

[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	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	36	36	36
All Sexual Offences	5	5	5
All Burglary Offences	2	2	2
All Theft Offences	23	23	23
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	1	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	20	20	20
All Offences Against the State	21	21	21
All Other Offences	10	10	10
All Drug Offences	20	20	20
All Motoring Offences	26	26	26
All Non-Police Offences	1	1	1
Combination of charges	90	90	90
Total	255	255	255

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

Outcome Type	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	2	2	2
Plea of guilty on all charges	114	114	114
All charges withdrawn	74	74	74
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	47	47	47
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	18	18	18
Total	255	255	255

[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	24	287	311
Newtownards Court Office	7	113	120
Downpatrick Court Office	4	39	43
Craigavon Court Office	6	51	57
Armagh Court Office	1	8	9
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	0	17	17
Omagh Court Office	7	31	38
Strabane Court Office	0	11	11
Antrim Court Office	3	13	16
Londonderry Court Office	9	87	96
Enniskillen Court Office	1	26	27
Coleraine Court Office	4	40	44
Newry Court Office	8	88	96
Limavady Court Office	0	2	2
Ballymena Court Office	5	85	90
Lisburn Court Office	4	61	65
Dungannon Court Office	6	30	36
Total	89	989	1,078

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	23	283	306
Newtownards Court Office	6	104	110
Downpatrick Court Office	3	45	48
Craigavon Court Office	3	50	53
Armagh Court Office	5	10	15
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	15	18
Omagh Court Office	3	34	37
Strabane Court Office	1	10	11
Antrim Court Office	3	20	23
Londonderry Court Office	12	100	112
Enniskillen Court Office	0	19	19
Coleraine Court Office	1	45	46
Newry Court Office	5	73	78
Limavady Court Office	0	3	3
Ballymena Court Office	7	80	87
Lisburn Court Office	7	74	81
Dungannon Court Office	7	31	38
Total	89	996	1,085

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	2.25	5.47	7.72
Newtownards Court Office	1.95	11.14	13.10
Downpatrick Court Office	1.79	16.54	18.34
Craigavon Court Office	2.75	2.96	5.71
Armagh Court Office	22.58	10.90	33.49
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.83	6.84	8.67
Omagh Court Office	1.71	6.92	8.63
Strabane Court Office	1.39	20.36	21.75
Antrim Court Office	2.36	7.36	9.72
Londonderry Court Office	2.08	11.58	13.66
Enniskillen Court Office	1.06	4.26	5.32
Coleraine Court Office	1.61	7.75	9.36
Newry Court Office	3.02	4.27	7.29
Limavady Court Office	1.76	15.67	17.43
Ballymena Court Office	1.76	6.88	8.64
Lisburn Court Office	2.07	13.86	15.93
Dungannon Court Office	9.84	13.17	23.02
Total	2.68	8.41	11.08

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	452	219	213	87	5	976
Occupation	0	0	7	2	0	9
Vary or discharge non-molestation or occupation	1	1	1	6	0	9
Other	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total	453	221	221	96	5	996

[note 9] Arrest warrants are excluded

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](#)