



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## Statistical Bulletin: **2017/18**

1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018





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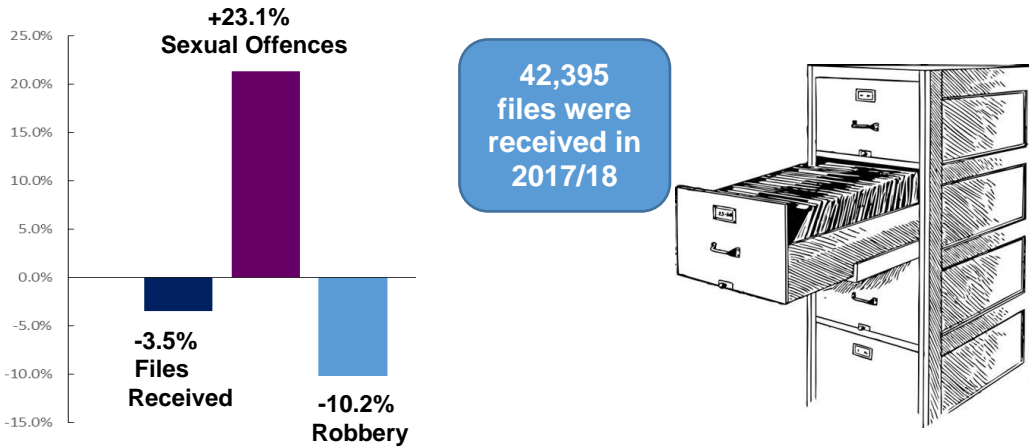
**Note:**

**All statistics for the 2017/18 financial year have now been finalised.**

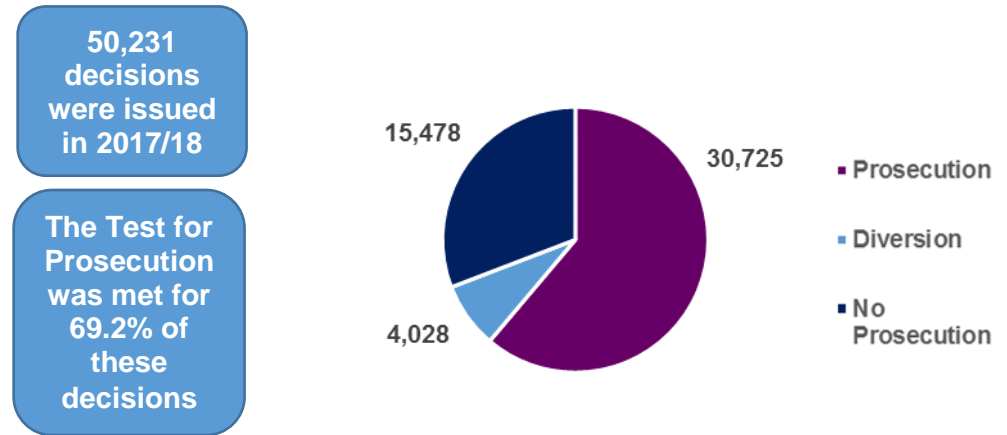


# Statistical Bulletin 2017/18

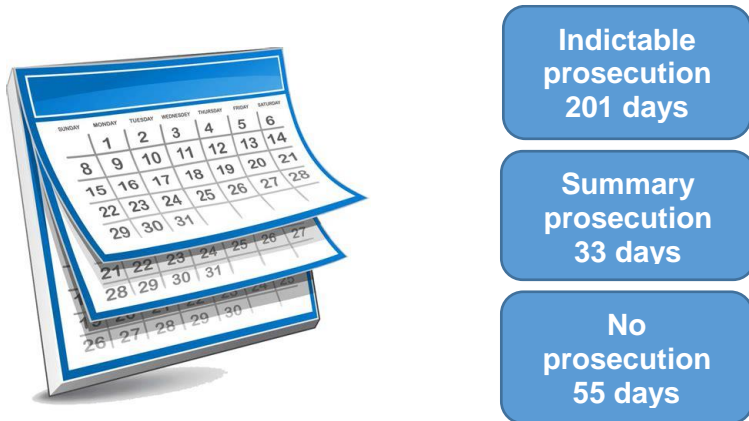
## Files Received



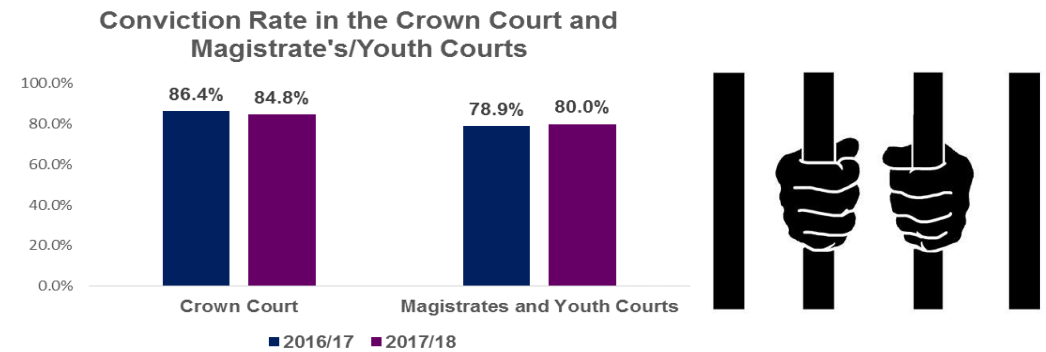
## Decisions Issued



## Average Days to Issue a Decision



## Conviction Rates



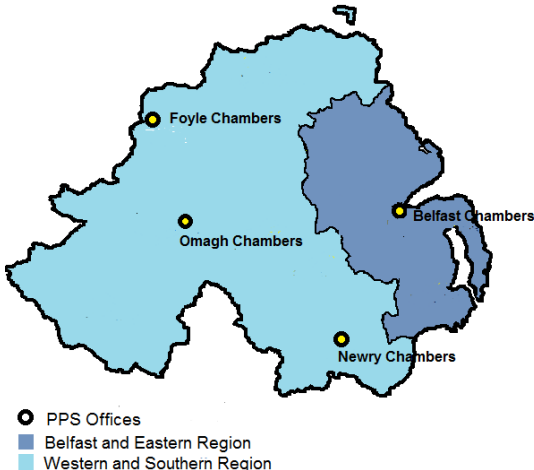
# Introduction

## The Public Prosecution Service

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS), which is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.

The primary role of the PPS is to reach decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute and to have responsibility for the conduct of criminal proceedings. A range of options is also available for dealing with offenders other than through prosecution. These options include restorative cautioning, informed warnings and youth conferencing. Prosecutors may also refer offenders to the National Driver Alertness Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme.

**PPS Regional Structure**



A revised organisational structure was introduced in January 2016 as a result of the PPS Transformation Programme. This included the implementation of a two region model, reducing from the four regions in place previously. Each of the regions, Belfast and Eastern Region and Western and Southern Region, is headed by an Assistant Director (AD). The AD is responsible for working with the courts and the police to provide a high quality prosecution service in their area. The regions deal with a wide range of cases, from the less serious summary cases, which are heard in the Magistrates' Courts, through to more serious indictable cases which are heard in the Crown Court.

A new Serious Crime Unit (SCU) was also implemented in January 2016. The SCU, which is headed by an AD, deals with a range of the most serious offences including murder, manslaughter, rape and serious sexual offences, human trafficking and related offences. Prior to January, cases of this type would typically have been dealt with by the regions.

In addition there are three legal sections, based in PPS Headquarters, which are also headed at AD level. These are as follows:

- Central Casework Section which deals with some of the most high profile and difficult cases in Northern Ireland, including files relating to terrorism and organised crime;
- Fraud and Departmental Section which deals with serious and complex fraud files submitted by the police, as well as files from public bodies; and
- High Court and International Section which deals with a range of specialist legal matters (for example, High Court bail applications, extradition and appeals to the Court of Appeal).

### **About this Bulletin**

This bulletin presents key statistics on the activity of the PPS, including caseloads and prosecutorial decisions. It also includes data on the outcomes of prosecutions at court. The report provides information for the full 2017/18 financial year (i.e. 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018) and includes comparisons for the equivalent period in 2016/17. Where appropriate detailed notes have been provided, which give an explanation of the relevant PPS processes and procedures.

All statistics for 2017/18 have now been finalised. For further details, see 'User Information' on page 21.

If you have any feedback, questions or requests for further information about this bulletin, please contact us as follows:

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# Summary of Key Points

Figures quoted are for the full financial year, 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, unless otherwise stated. This summary should be read together with the explanatory notes and user information provided (see pages 18 - 21).

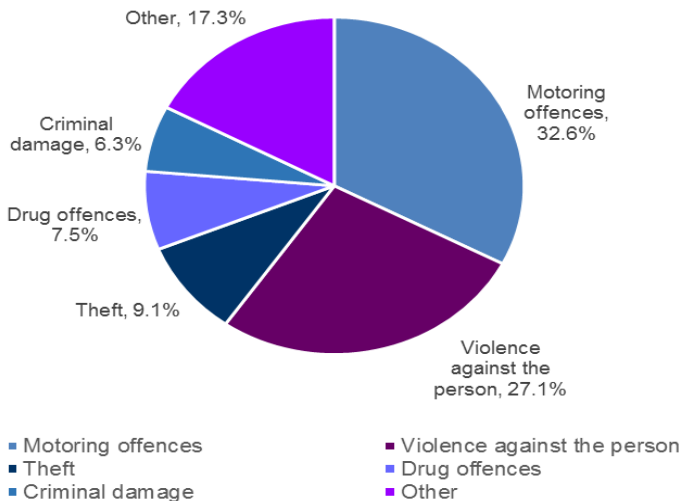
## Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 1a)

- The PPS received 42,395 files during 2017/18. This was a decrease of 3.5% on 2016/17 (43,946).
- Just under half (49.7%) of all files received during the current period related to summary offences, 45.9% to hybrid offences and 4.4% to indictable offences.

## Files Received from Police<sup>1</sup> by Offence Classification (Table 1b)

- During 2017/18, PPS received a total of 41,350 files from police. This represents a 3.1% decrease on the previous financial year (42,675).
- In terms of files received by offence classification, the majority fell into two categories; 'motoring' (32.6%) and 'violence against the person' (27.1%).
- The four offence classifications that have shown the largest decrease in the number of files received compared with 2016/17 were 'violence against the person' (-600), 'criminal damage' (-224), 'motoring offences' (-214) and 'theft' (-196). In terms of an increase on files received the 'sexual offences' category was the only category to have experienced a notable increase with 284 more files received than the previous year. 'Drug offences' and 'possession of weapons' remained at a similar level from 2016/17.

Files Received from Police by Offence Classification



The 'Other' category consists of 'Other Miscellaneous offence' 4.9%, 'Public order' 4.1%, 'Sexual offence' 3.7%, 'Burglary' 1.8%, 'Possession of weapons' 1.6%, 'Fraud and forgery' 0.9% and 'Robbery' 0.3%.

<sup>1</sup> 'Police' includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast/Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police.



**Files Submitted to PPS Departmental Section by Source Department / Agency (Table 1c)**

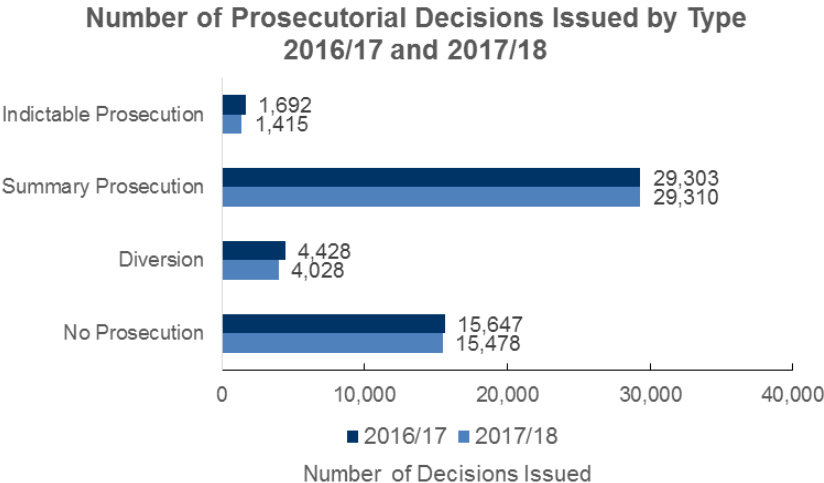
- A total of 897 files were submitted to PPS Departmental Section by departments and agencies during 2017/18, representing an 18.1% decrease on 2016/17 (1,095).
- During 2017/18, the majority of files were submitted either by the Department for Communities (46.2%) or the Driver and Vehicle Agency (39.8%).

**Information Requests Submitted to Police by Request Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 2)**

- A total of 27,025 information requests were submitted to police during 2017/18, an increase of 3.8% on the previous financial year (26,025).
- More than half of all requests submitted during the current period were 'Post Decision Information Requests' (56.9%), 29.5% were 'Decision Information Requests' and 13.4% were 'Full File Requests'.

**Prosecutorial Decisions Issued by Decision Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 3a)**

- During 2017/18, 50,231 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS, a decline of 1.6% on the total issued during 2016/17 (51,070).
- The evidential Test for Prosecution was met in the majority of cases considered by public prosecutors during 2017/18. Of the 50,231 decisions issued, more than two-thirds (69.2%) were for prosecution (30,725) or for diversion from the courts (4,028). This was relatively unchanged from 2016/17 (69.4%).
- Comparing 2016/17 and 2017/18, there was a 0.9% decrease in the number of decisions to prosecute. This comprised of a 16.4% decrease in indictable prosecution decisions while summary prosecution decisions have remained at a similar level (2016/17: 29,303; 2017/18: 29,310). The number of diversionary decisions fell by 9.0% while no prosecution decisions fell by 1.1%.



### **Prosecutorial Decisions Issued – Reasons for No Prosecution by PPS Region / Function (Table 3b)**

- Of the 15,478 no prosecution decisions issued during 2017/18, 96.7% did not pass the evidential test. The remaining 3.3% did not pass the public interest test.

### **Average Days Required<sup>2</sup> for the Issue of Prosecutorial Decisions by Decision Type – PPS Regions (Table 3c)**

- The average number of calendar days required for the issue of an indictable prosecution decision during 2017/18 was 201, compared with 187 days during 2016/17.
- During 2017/18, summary prosecution decisions required an average of 33 days, eight days more than the previous financial year (25).
- The time taken for diversionary decisions has increased across all types of diversions issued. Cautions required an average of 25 days (21 days in 2016/17), informed warnings 24 days (13 days in 2016/17) and youth conferences 17 days (16 days in 2016/17).

### **Summonses Issued in Police Cases by Service Method and PPS Region (Table 4)**

- A total of 32,553 summonses were issued in police cases during 2017/18, an increase of 4.9% on 2016/17 (31,018). Comparing 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of summonses issued via postal service decreased by 3.9% while those issued via personal service increased by 20.3%.
- During this period 58.0% of summonses issued were served on the defendant by post (63.3% in 2016/17) and the remaining (42.0%) via personal service by police (36.7% in 2016/17).

### **Defendants Dealt with in the Crown Court<sup>3</sup> by Outcome and PPS Region / Function (Table 5a)**

- During 2017/18, 1,510 defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court. This was a decrease of 32.9% from 2016/17 (2,250).
- Of these defendants, 84.8% were convicted and 14.7% were acquitted.
- Comparing 2016/17 and 2017/18 the conviction rate at 84.8% is a decrease on 2016/17 (86.4%)

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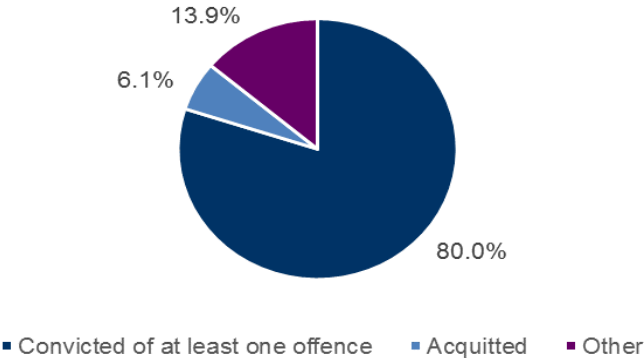
<sup>2</sup> The average figures are based on calendar days and include the time taken for the police to respond to PPS decision information requests. For indictable prosecution decisions, PPS case preparation time is also included (see explanatory notes, page 19).

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the volume of cases dealt with during 2016-17 was well above normal levels. The withdrawal of defence services by the Bar Council and Law Society, in response to the Legal Aid reforms introduced by the Department of Justice, meant that no new cases were conducted in the Crown Court over the period from May 2015 to February 2016. Following the resolution of the dispute, the backlog of cases then had to be dealt with during the 2016/17 financial year.

**Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome and PPS Region / Function (Table 5b)**

- A total of 28,066 defendants were dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts during 2017/18, a decrease of 0.2% on the previous financial year (28,128).
- Of the defendants dealt with during the current period, 80.0% were convicted (78.9% in 2016/17), 6.1% were acquitted (6.3% in 2016/17) and 13.9% had an 'other' outcome (14.7% in 2016/17).
- At 80.0% in 2017/18, the conviction rate has increased by 1.1 percentage points from 2016/17 (78.9%).

**Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome 2017/18**



**Table 1a: Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

		PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>					Number of files
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS	
Quarters	File Type <sup>3</sup>	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
2017/18	Indictable	645	560	642	21	1,868	
	Hybrid	10,393	7,756	792	528	19,469	
	Summary	10,743	9,902	4	409	21,058	
	<b>All Files</b>	<b>21,781</b>	<b>18,218</b>	<b>1,438</b>	<b>958</b>	<b>42,395</b>	
2016/17	Indictable	735	616	496	31	1,878	
	Hybrid	10,846	8,307	674	643	20,470	
	Summary	11,056	10,036	6	500	21,598	
	<b>All Files</b>	<b>22,637</b>	<b>18,959</b>	<b>1,176</b>	<b>1,174</b>	<b>43,946</b>	
<b>% Change (Files Received) 2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>-3.8%</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>	<b>22.3%</b>	<b>-18.4%</b>	<b>-3.5%</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 18.

**Table 1b: Files Received from Police by Offence Classification**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

Offence Classification <sup>2</sup>	Number of files					
	2017/18		2016/17		Change (2016/17 to 2017/18)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Motoring offences	13,499	32.6%	13,713	32.1%	-214	-1.6%
Violence against the person	11,194	27.1%	11,794	27.6%	-600	-5.1%
Theft	3,778	9.1%	3,974	9.3%	-196	-4.9%
Drug Offences	3,115	7.5%	3,108	7.3%	7	0.2%
Criminal damage	2,617	6.3%	2,841	6.7%	-224	-7.9%
Other Miscellaneous offences	2,019	4.9%	2,194	5.1%	-175	-8.0%
Public order	1,684	4.1%	1,860	4.4%	-176	-9.5%
Sexual offences	1,512	3.7%	1,228	2.9%	284	23.1%
Burglary	737	1.8%	749	1.8%	-12	-1.6%
Possession of weapons	675	1.6%	672	1.6%	3	0.4%
Fraud and forgery	379	0.9%	385	0.9%	-6	-1.6%
Robbery	141	0.3%	157	0.4%	-16	-10.2%
<b>All Files</b>	<b>41,350</b>		<b>42,675</b>		<b>-1325</b>	<b>-3.1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> See explanatory notes, page 18.

**Table 1c: Files Submitted to PPS Departmental Section by Source Department / Agency**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

Department / Agency	Number of files					
	2017/18		2016/17		Change (2016/17 to 2017/18)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Department for Communities	414	46.2%	489	44.7%	-75	-15.3%
Driver and Vehicle Agency	357	39.8%	363	33.2%	-6	-1.7%
Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs <sup>2</sup>	27	3.0%	38	3.5%	-13	-28.9%
Child Maintenance Service	23	2.6%	75	6.8%	-52	-69.3%
NI Environment Agency	22	2.5%	53	4.8%	-31	-58.5%
HM Revenue and Customs	22	2.5%	34	3.1%	-12	-35.3%
Department for the Economy	7	0.8%	9	0.8%	-2	-22.2%
Health and Safety Executive	7	0.8%	9	0.8%	-2	-22.2%
Other	18	2.0%	25	2.3%	-7	-28.0%
<b>All Departments / Agencies</b>	<b>897</b>		<b>1,095</b>		<b>-198</b>	<b>-18.1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> Figures for NI Environment Agency are presented separately.

**Table 2: Information Requests Submitted to Police by Request Type and PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

		PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>					Number of requests
Quarters	Request Type <sup>3</sup>	Belfast and Eastern Number	Western and Southern Number	Serious Crime Unit Number	Headquarters Number	All PPS Number	
2017/18	Full File Request	1,654	1,770	177	14	3,615	
	Decision Information Request	2,976	4,350	580	78	7,984	
	Post Decision Information Request	7,529	7,236	559	52	15,376	
	No Decision	5	36	9	0	50	
	<b>All Requests Submitted</b>	<b>12,164</b>	<b>13,392</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>27,025</b>	
2016/17	Full File Request	1,604	1,767	134	22	3,527	
	Decision Information Request	3,244	4,114	426	89	7,873	
	Post Decision Information Request	7,796	6,207	500	79	14,582	
	No Decision	4	37	2	0	43	
	<b>All Requests Submitted</b>	<b>12,648</b>	<b>12,125</b>	<b>1,062</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>26,025</b>	
<b>% Change (Requests Submitted) 2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>-3.8%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>24.8%</b>	<b>-24.2%</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 18.

**Table 3a: Prosecutorial Decisions Issued by Decision Type and PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

Number of persons (decisions issued)

Quarters	Type of Decision <sup>3</sup>	PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
2017/18	<i>Indictable prosecution</i>	606	464	196	149	1,415
	<i>Summary prosecution</i>	15,835	12,401	161	913	29,310
	<b>Total Prosecution</b>	<b>16,441</b>	<b>12,865</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>1,062</b>	<b>30,725</b>
	<i>Caution</i>	1,225	1,198	#	#	2,447
	<i>Informed warning</i>	121	221	-	-	344
	<i>Youth conference</i>	349	267	#	-	621
	<i>Other</i>	224	392	-	-	616
	<b>Total Diversion</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>2,078</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4,028</b>
	No Prosecution	7,405	6,684	1,195	194	15,478
	<b>All Decisions Issued</b>	<b>25,765</b>	<b>21,627</b>	<b>1,577</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>50,231</b>
2016/17	<i>Indictable prosecution</i>	790	524	194	184	1,692
	<i>Summary prosecution</i>	15,633	12,580	104	986	29,303
	<b>Total Prosecution</b>	<b>16,423</b>	<b>13,104</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>1,170</b>	<b>30,995</b>
	<i>Caution</i>	1,516	1,381	*	*	2,916
	<i>Informed warning</i>	159	206	*	*	366
	<i>Youth conference</i>	388	222	*	*	619
	<i>Other</i>	164	363	*	*	527
	<b>Total Diversion</b>	<b>2,227</b>	<b>2,172</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4,428</b>
	No Prosecution	7,534	7,232	619	262	15,647
	<b>All Decisions Issued</b>	<b>26,184</b>	<b>22,508</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>1,435</b>	<b>51,070</b>
<b>% Change (Decisions Issued)</b>						
<b>2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>-1.6%</b>	<b>-3.9%</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	<b>-12.1%</b>	<b>-1.6%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 19.

"-" refers to a count less than 3.

"#" refers to a number >=3 which has been suppressed to prevent disclosure of small numbers elsewhere.

"\*" refers to a category where a detailed breakdown cannot be provided due to small numbers involved.



**Table 3b: Prosecutorial Decisions Issued - Reasons for No Prosecution by PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

		Number of persons (decisions issued)				
		PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Reason for no prosecution <sup>3</sup>	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
2017/18	Did not pass the evidential test	7,043	6,574	1,168	185	14,970
	Did not pass the public interest test	362	110	27	9	508
	<b>All no prosecution decisions</b>	<b>7,405</b>	<b>6,684</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>15,478</b>
2016/17	Did not pass the evidential test	7,205	7,099	605	246	15,155
	Did not pass the public interest test	329	133	14	16	492
	<b>All no prosecution decisions</b>	<b>7,534</b>	<b>7,232</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>15,647</b>
<b>% Change (No prosecution decisions issued) 2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>-1.7%</b>	<b>-7.6%</b>	<b>93.1%</b>	<b>-26.0%</b>	<b>-1.1%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 19.

**Table 3c: Average Days Required for the Issue of Prosecutorial Decisions by Decision Type (PPS Regions)**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

			Average (calendar) days
Quarters	Type of Decision <sup>2</sup>		All Regions
2017/18	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	201
		Summary prosecution	33
	Diversion	Caution	25
		Informed warning	24
		Youth conference	17
		Other	33
	No Prosecution		55
2016/17	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	187
		Summary prosecution	25
	Diversion	Caution	21
		Informed warning	13
		Youth conference	16
		Other	26
	No Prosecution		50

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> Average days includes time taken for police to respond to decision information requests (see explanatory notes, page 19).

**Table 4: Summonses Issued in Police Cases by Service Method and PPS Region**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

		PPS Region				Number of summonses
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	All Regions	
Quarters	Service Method <sup>2</sup>	Number	Number	Number	Number	
2017/18	Postal Service	10,231	8,550	89	18,870	
	Personal Service	9,322	4,239	122	13,683	
	<b>All Summonses</b>	<b>19,553</b>	<b>12,789</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>32,553</b>	
2016/17	Postal Service	10,801	8,789	52	19,642	
	Personal Service	7,795	3,462	119	11,376	
	<b>All Summonses</b>	<b>18,596</b>	<b>12,251</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>31,018</b>	
<b>% Change (Summonses Issued) 2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>5.1%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> See explanatory notes, page 20.

**Table 5a: Defendants Dealt with in the Crown Court by Outcome and PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

		Number of persons (defendants)				
		PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Outcome <sup>3</sup>	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
2017/18	Convicted of at least one offence	633	398	114	136	1,281
	Acquitted	82	66	62	12	222
	Other	4	1	1	1	7
	<b>All defendants</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1,510</b>
	<b>Conviction Rate (%) <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>88.0%</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>64.4%</b>	<b>91.3%</b>	<b>84.8%</b>
2016/17	Convicted of at least one offence	971	781	41	150	1,943
	Acquitted	139	130	12	20	301
	Other	4	2	0	0	6
	<b>All defendants</b>	<b>1,114</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>2,250</b>
	<b>Conviction Rate (%) <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>87.2%</b>	<b>85.5%</b>	<b>77.4%</b>	<b>88.2%</b>	<b>86.4%</b>
<b>% Change (Defendants dealt with) 2016/17 to 2017/18 <sup>4</sup></b>		<b>-35.5%</b>	<b>-49.1%</b>	<b>234.0%</b>	<b>-12.4%</b>	<b>-32.9%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 20.

<sup>4</sup> In May 2015 the Law Society and the Bar Council for Northern Ireland withdrew criminal defence services in response to the new Crown Court legal aid fee scheme introduced by the Department of Justice. As a result, no new cases were conducted in the Crown Court over the period May 2015 to February 2016.

**Table 5b: Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome and PPS Region / Function**

2016/17 and 2017/18 <sup>1</sup>

Number of persons (defendants)

Quarter	Outcome <sup>3</sup>	PPS Region / Function <sup>2</sup>				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
2017/18	Convicted of at least one offence	12,065	9,648	75	675	22,463
	Acquitted	1,032	622	15	29	1,698
	Other	2,098	1,611	56	140	3,905
	<b>All defendants</b>	<b>15,195</b>	<b>11,881</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>28,066</b>
	<b>Conviction Rate (%) <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>79.4%</b>	<b>81.2%</b>	<b>51.4%</b>	<b>80.0%</b>	<b>80.0%</b>
2016/17	Convicted of at least one offence	11,541	9,896	55	709	22,201
	Acquitted	1,025	716	18	27	1,786
	Other	2,242	1,710	27	162	4,141
	<b>All defendants</b>	<b>14,808</b>	<b>12,322</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>28,128</b>
	<b>Conviction Rate (%) <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>80.3%</b>	<b>55.0%</b>	<b>79.0%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>
<b>% Change (Defendants dealt with) 2016/17 to 2017/18</b>		<b>2.6%</b>	<b>-3.6%</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	<b>-6.0%</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the financial year; i.e. the period from 1 April to 31 March.

<sup>2</sup> The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

<sup>3</sup> See explanatory notes, page 20.

## Explanatory Notes

### **Table 1a**

A file may refer to one or more individuals. 'File type' is based on the 'primary' offence (generally the most serious offence in terms of the potential penalties in law) in each case at the time the file is submitted to PPS. In general, *summary offences* relate to less serious criminal behaviour and are tried in the Magistrates' Court before a District Judge. *Indictable offences* relate to more serious criminal behaviour and are tried at the Crown Court before a judge, and in most cases, a jury. There are a number of *hybrid offences* which may be tried at either the Magistrates' or Crown Court, for example: theft; assault occasioning actual bodily harm, etc. For these offences, on taking a decision to prosecute, the Public Prosecutor must also decide whether the defendant should be tried in the Magistrates' Court or the Crown Court. In making this decision the prosecutor will consider whether the Magistrates' Court is the appropriate venue in that it has sufficient sentencing powers in relation to the gravity of the offence. For a range of offences, the defendant may also elect for trial in the Crown Court.

The figures include all files submitted by police (Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast / Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police), the Office of the Police Ombudsman and a range of statutory authorities, for example the Driver and Vehicle Agency and HM Revenue and Customs. It should be noted that files submitted by the Office of the Police Ombudsman may be considered by prosecutors in the regional offices or Headquarters.

### **Table 1b**

The Offence Classifications used are standardised across the criminal justice organisations in Northern Ireland. While current classifications continue to mirror the Home Office Recorded Crime Offence Categories, there may be some variation in the offences included within each category. Therefore, data published on Recorded Crime Offence Groups prior to 2014/15 will not be directly comparable with the Offence Classifications.

Files have been assigned to the respective categories on the basis of the 'primary' offence (see above) in each case at the time the file is submitted to PPS from police.

'Police' includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast / Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police. Files received by the PPS Regions / Headquarters from the Office of the Police Ombudsman are excluded.

### **Table 2**

The various types of request are defined as follows:

- *Full file requests* are designed to allow the PPS to ask the PSNI for a full file as defined in the relevant protocols.
- A *decision information request (DIR)* is issued by PPS to police where the evidence and information contained in an investigation file is incomplete and a further written report or action is required before a prosecutorial decision can be taken.
- *Post decision information requests* are designed to allow the PPS to ask the PSNI to gather additional evidential material or provide other information required at some further stage in the prosecution process (e.g. for trial).
- Finally a *'no decision' decision information request* may issue when, on the evidence submitted by police in an investigation file, it is not possible to take a prosecution decision and

it is not reasonable to issue a detailed DIR having regard to the number or type of deficiencies in the file.

**Table 3a**

More than one prosecutorial decision may be recorded against any individual within a case. Therefore 'type of decision' refers to the most serious decision issued, in the following order: Indictable prosecution; summary prosecution; diversion; and no prosecution. A number of types of prosecutorial decision are available to the prosecutor, as follows:

- *Indictable prosecution* applies in the more serious offences which may be heard in the Crown Court.
- *Summary prosecution* applies to cases which may be heard in the Magistrates' Courts.
- A *caution* is a formal reprimand administered by the police. Whilst it is not a conviction it is recorded on a person's criminal record.
- An *informed warning* is also a formal reprimand administered by police and is recorded on a person's criminal record.
- A *diversionary youth conference* is an alternative to prosecution in court and may be used in cases where the defendant is a youth. This type of restorative conference may involve a number of parties, including the defendant, the victim and police. A youth conference is a formal process, and although not a conviction, is recorded on a person's criminal record.
- '*Other diversionary options* include referrals to the NI Driver Improvement Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme.
- It should be noted that diversionary options are only available to prosecutors if the defendant admits that he/she has committed the offence and agrees to accept and participate in the diversionary option.
- A *decision for no prosecution* will be taken if the prosecutor decides that in any case being considered there is insufficient evidence or that it is not in the public interest to prosecute (see note regarding the Test for Prosecution below).

**Table 3b**

Prosecutions are initiated where the prosecutor is satisfied that the Test for Prosecution is met. There are two aspects to the Test:

- a) Whether the evidence which can be offered in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction (the evidential test); and
- b) Whether prosecution is required in the public interest (the public interest test).

Each of these stages must be separately considered but a decision whether or not a prosecution is in the public interest can only arise when the evidential test has been satisfied.

**Table 3c**

As mentioned in note to Table 3a, more than one prosecutorial decision may be recorded against any individual within a case. Therefore these figures are based on the first decision issued. Monitoring covers the period in calendar days from date initial papers (charge cases only) or full file is received by the PPS to the date the prosecutorial decision is issued. This excludes defendants for whom a warrant has been issued but includes any time taken for police to respond to decision information requests (see note to Table 2 above). Average days for indictable prosecution decisions include the time taken for the prosecutor's decision and for case preparation (i.e. where appropriate, ensuring that the case is ready for court). In indictable cases case preparation includes time required for the preparation of committal papers which contain the evidence, such as statements, exhibits etc., to be presented to the

Crown Court. It may also include consideration of duties of disclosure by the prosecutor and applications to be made to the court.

**Table 4**

Information refers to police cases only. A summons may be served on a defendant either by post, or via a personal summons served by the police. The defendant will be required to attend court on the date stated on the summons. Following the commencement of Rule 2(6) of the Magistrates' Courts (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2009, in early 2010, the large majority of offences can now be dealt with by way of a postal summons. The only exceptions relate to corporate defendants, vulnerable defendants and those defendants who have not responded to a postal summons.

More than one summons may be issued in respect of an individual defendant in a case. For example, if the defendant does not attend court on the day stated on an initial postal summons, this will generally be followed up by a personal summons served by police.

**Table 5a**

Includes all defendants dealt with in the Crown Court during the period, based on results data supplied by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (via the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism). Proceedings in the Crown Court generally follow the issue of a decision by PPS to prosecute on indictment. The category 'acquitted' includes the following outcomes: acquittals, acquittals by direction, No Bills, no evidence offered – defendant acquitted, left on books, proceedings stayed, unfit to plead – but found that he/she did not do the act, no case to answer - granted. 'Other' Includes defendant deceased, withdrawal – all charges, bound over for not having shown cause, bound over where charge withdrawn, withdrawn due to diversionary route. It should be noted that if an individual is involved in more than one case which is resulted during this period, they will be counted as a separate defendant on each occasion.

**Table 5b**

Includes all defendants dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts during the period, based on results data supplied by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (via the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism). Data reflect the number of persons where PPS has taken a decision to prosecute summarily; i.e. defendants against whom charges were withdrawn prior to decision are excluded. The category 'acquitted' includes the following outcomes: dismissed; no case to answer granted; and proceedings stayed. 'Other' includes: defendant deceased; withdrawal – all charges; bound over for not having shown cause; bound over where charge withdrawn; withdrawn due to diversionary route. Excludes persons returned for trial in the Crown Court. It should be noted that if an individual is involved in more than one case which is resulted during this period, they will be counted as a separate defendant on each occasion.

**Tables 5a and 5b**

Conviction rates are calculated on the basis of the number of persons convicted as a percentage of all persons dealt with during the period.

The Department of Justice publish conviction data on an annual basis; however this may not be directly comparable with data included in this report due to variations in data quality validations and counting rules.



## **User Information**

### **Data sources and validations**

The information presented in this bulletin is derived from the Case Management System (CMS), the main operational system in use within the PPS. This is a 'live' system with data being input on a daily basis.

It should be noted that the CMS is also linked to the CJSNI's Causeway data sharing mechanism. The first phase of Causeway ('DSM 0'), introduced in 2005/06, allowed police to submit files to the PPS electronically. The most recent phase ('DSM 1') was launched at the end of November 2009 and broadened the portfolio of information shared electronically. For example PPS are now supplied with court results by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service which feed into the PPS Case Management System via Causeway.

The information is extracted using Business Objects. It is then validated and quality assured to ensure that the data is reliable and robust for use. Any inconsistencies are reported back to operational staff or to the PPS Information and Communications Technology Branch. If required, any necessary amendments are then made to the data.

All statistics for the current financial year have now been finalised.

### **Rounding conventions**

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers or to one decimal place and may not always sum to 100%.

### **Official Statistics**

These are 'Official Statistics' as defined in Section 6 of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007. Statisticians from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency are seconded to the PPS and are responsible for ensuring that the statistics produced comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The PPS would value any feedback on this report and welcome recommendations on the future addition of data that may be of interest to readers. Contact details are provided overleaf.

### **Future publications**

The next Statistical Bulletin, covering the period 1 April 2018 to 30 June 2018, will be published in August/September 2018.

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