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**Analytical Services Group**

# **Magistrates' Court Bulletin**

**January to March 2016**

**Research and Statistical Bulletin 11/2016**

**Quarterly provisional figures**

**A Mallon**

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Department of Justice.

For further information write to:

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

**Telephone: 028 9072 8928**

**Email: [ann.mallon@courtsni.gov.uk](mailto:ann.mallon@courtsni.gov.uk)**

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

**[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period January to March 2016 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period January to March 2016:
- There were 1,110 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 4% from 1,151 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,690 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,887 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 13% (from 11,078) and a decrease of 9% (from 10,876) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of both adult defendants received and adult defendants disposed during the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks, the same as the corresponding period last year.
- 361 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 386 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 23% (from 470) and a decrease of 21% (from 490) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of both youth defendants received and youth defendants disposed of during the January to March quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 10 weeks, compared to 11 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,111 new civil and family applications were received and 1,081 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 12% (from 1,265) and a decrease of 8% (from 1,173) 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 was 10 weeks, compared to 9 weeks in the corresponding period last year.

## CONTENTS

Contents	Page
1. <a href="#">Introduction</a>	1
2. <a href="#">Methodology</a>	2
3. <a href="#">Findings</a>	4
<a href="#">3.1 Magistrates' court sittings</a>	
<a href="#">3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court</a>	
<a href="#">3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court</a>	
<a href="#">3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court</a>	
<a href="#">Appendix 1 – Tables</a>	11
<a href="#">Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes</a>	26

Figure	Page
<a href="#">Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016</a>	4
<a href="#">Figure 2: Percentage of adult criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016</a>	5
<a href="#">Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016</a>	6
<a href="#">Figure 4: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2016</a>	6
<a href="#">Figure 5: Percentage of youth criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016</a>	7
<a href="#">Figure 6: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016</a>	8
<a href="#">Figure 7: Percentage of civil &amp; family applications received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016</a>	9
<a href="#">Figure 8: Civil &amp; family applications received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016</a>	10

Table	Page
<a href="#">Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days &amp; average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</a>	11
<a href="#">Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days &amp; average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</a>	12
<a href="#">Table 1.3 Special court sitting days &amp; average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</a>	13
<a href="#">Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</a>	14
<a href="#">Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by division &amp; venue</a>	15

<a href="#"><u>Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</u></a>	16
<a href="#"><u>Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area</u></a>	17
<a href="#"><u>Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</u></a>	19
<a href="#"><u>Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</u></a>	20
<a href="#"><u>Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area</u></a>	21
<a href="#"><u>Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area</u></a>	21
<a href="#"><u>Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by division &amp; venue</u></a>	22
<a href="#"><u>Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by division &amp; venue</u></a>	23
<a href="#"><u>Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by division &amp; venue</u></a>	24
<a href="#"><u>Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes &amp; Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland</u></a>	25

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are twenty-one petty sessions' districts in Northern Ireland. 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 aged between 10 and under 18. 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 (save for murder), if a young person is charged with a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult is 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 inputted 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 Oracle Discoverer 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 2016.

### **2.4 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.

Each court division has a Case Progression Officer who is 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 Officer is 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 2016 edition of Judicial statistics (due to be published on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017).

## **2.5 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.

## **2.6 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **2.7 Revisions**

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions' which can be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website ([www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)). Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.



### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During January to March 2016 there were 1,032 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 22 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 56 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of 4% (from 1,074), a decrease of 27% (from 30) and an increase of 19% (from 47) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

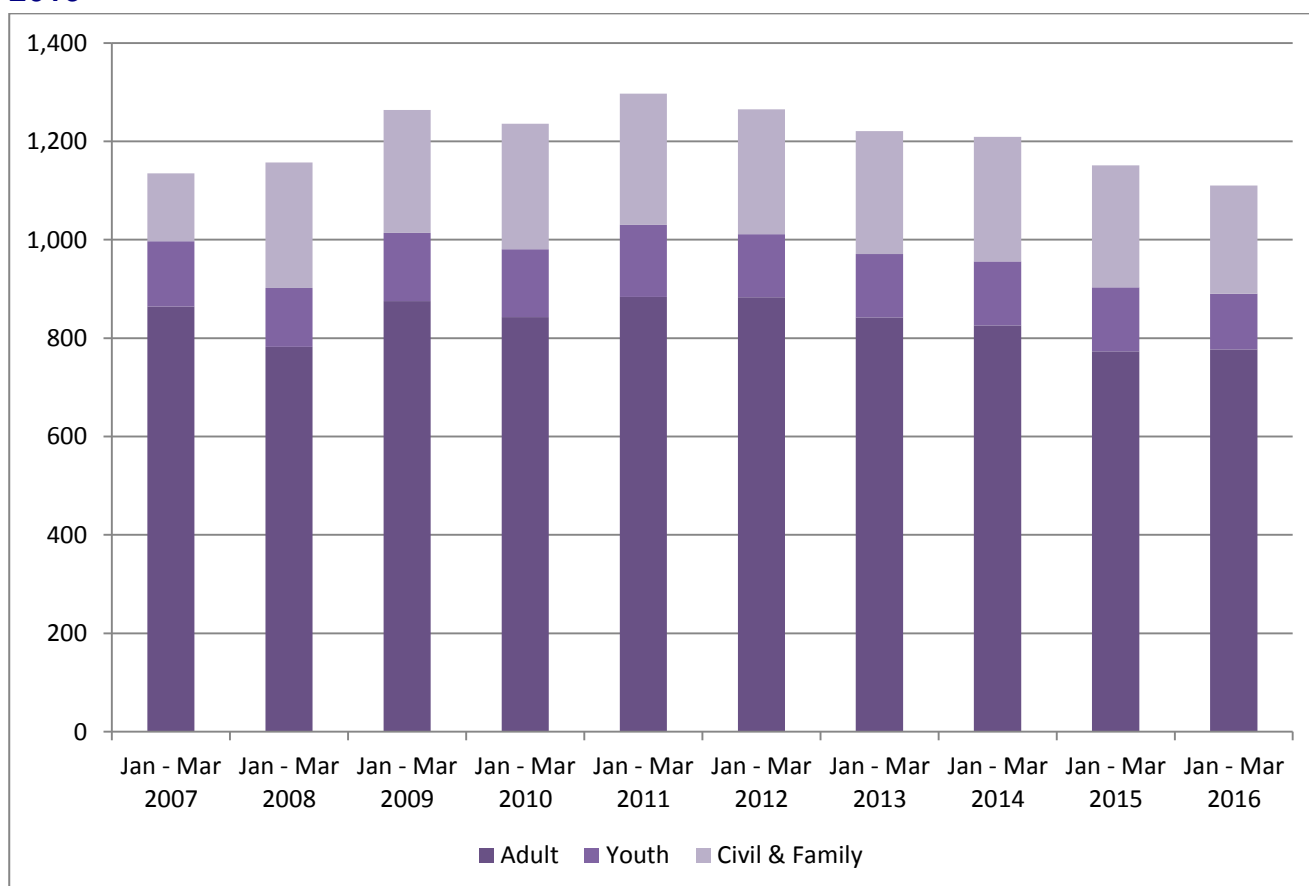
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for January to March 2016 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	703	18	56	777
Youth Criminal	113	0	0	113
Civil & Family	216	4	0	220
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>1,110</b>

Within these 1,110 sitting days, 70% were adult criminal days, 10% were youth criminal days and 20% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has remained fairly stable in the January to March quarter over the last number of years (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016**



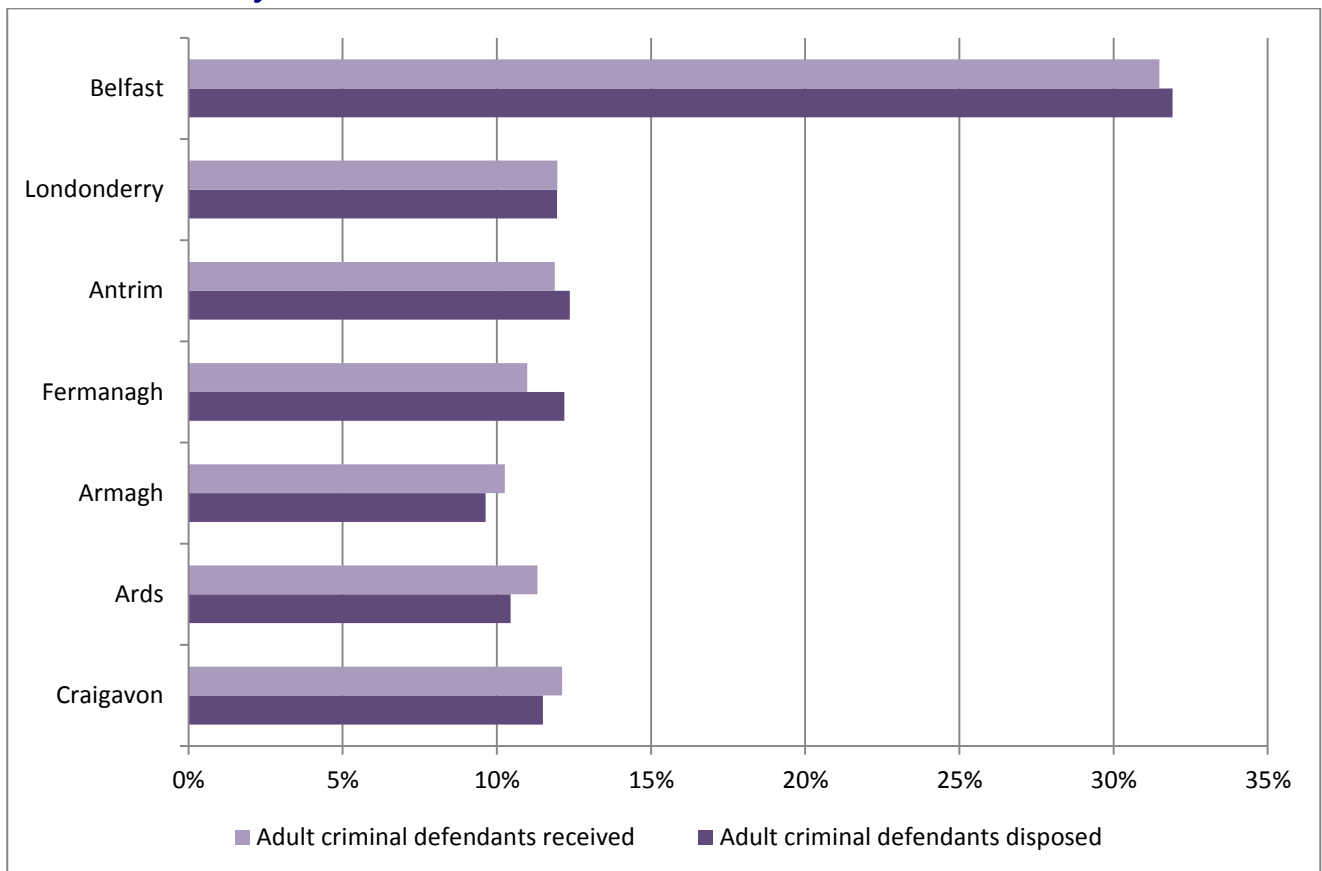
### 3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2016, 9,690 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,887 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 13% (from 11,078) and a decrease of 9% (from 10,876) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (71%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/PPS (74% in the same period in 2015).

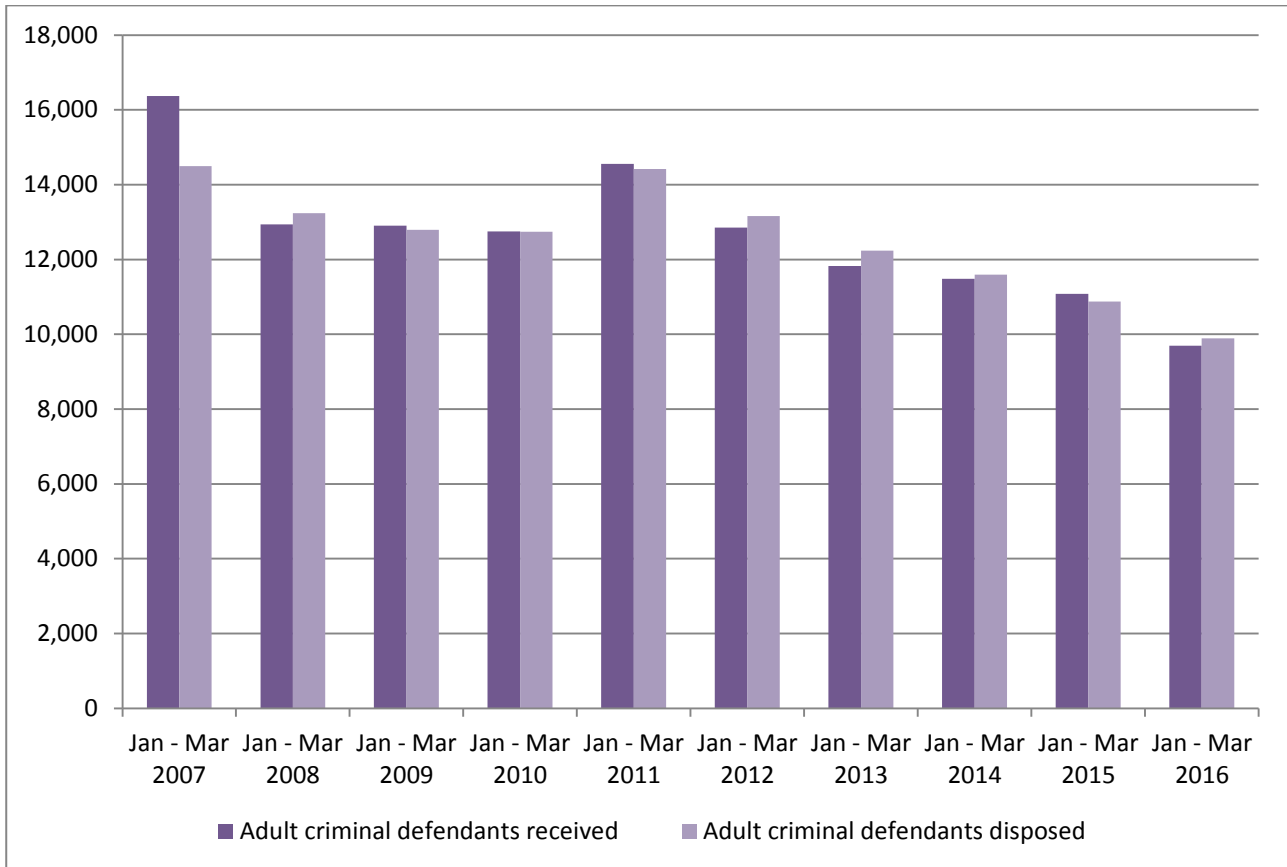
The volume of adult business was highest in the Belfast division (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of adult criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016**



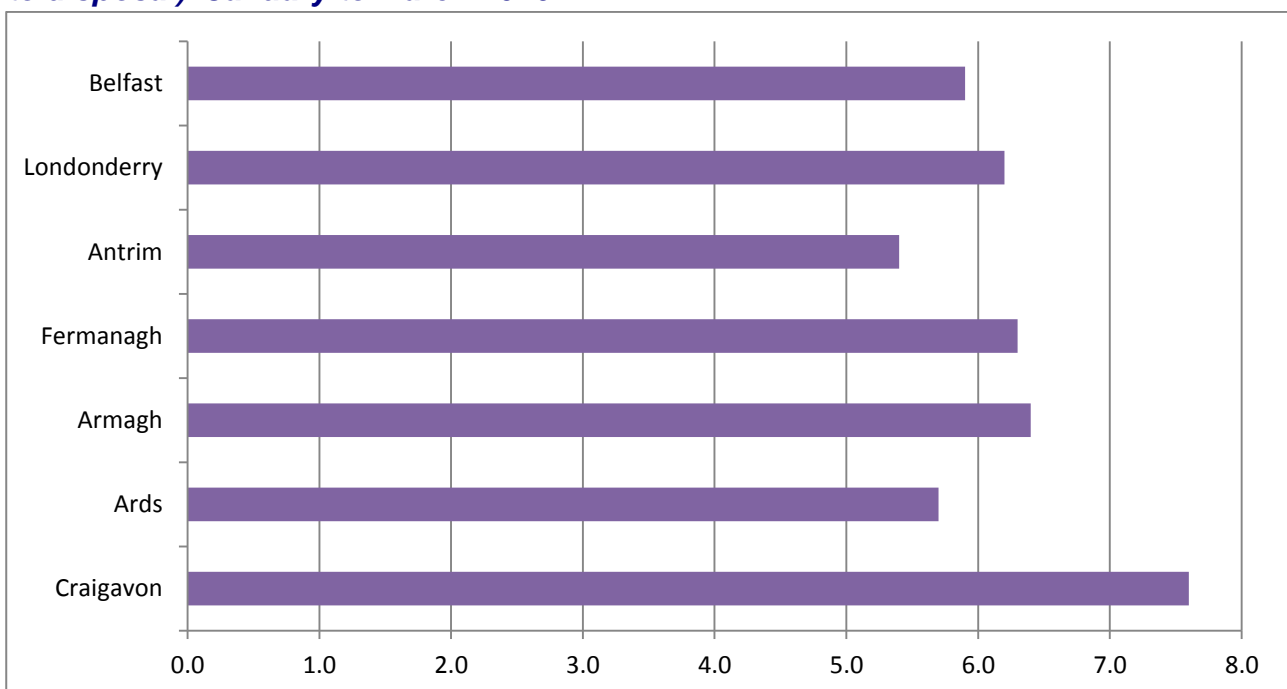
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter January to March over the last number of years, with levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016**



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks during January to March 2016, the same as that during the same period in the previous year. A breakdown of average waiting times by court division for January to March 2016 is shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2016**



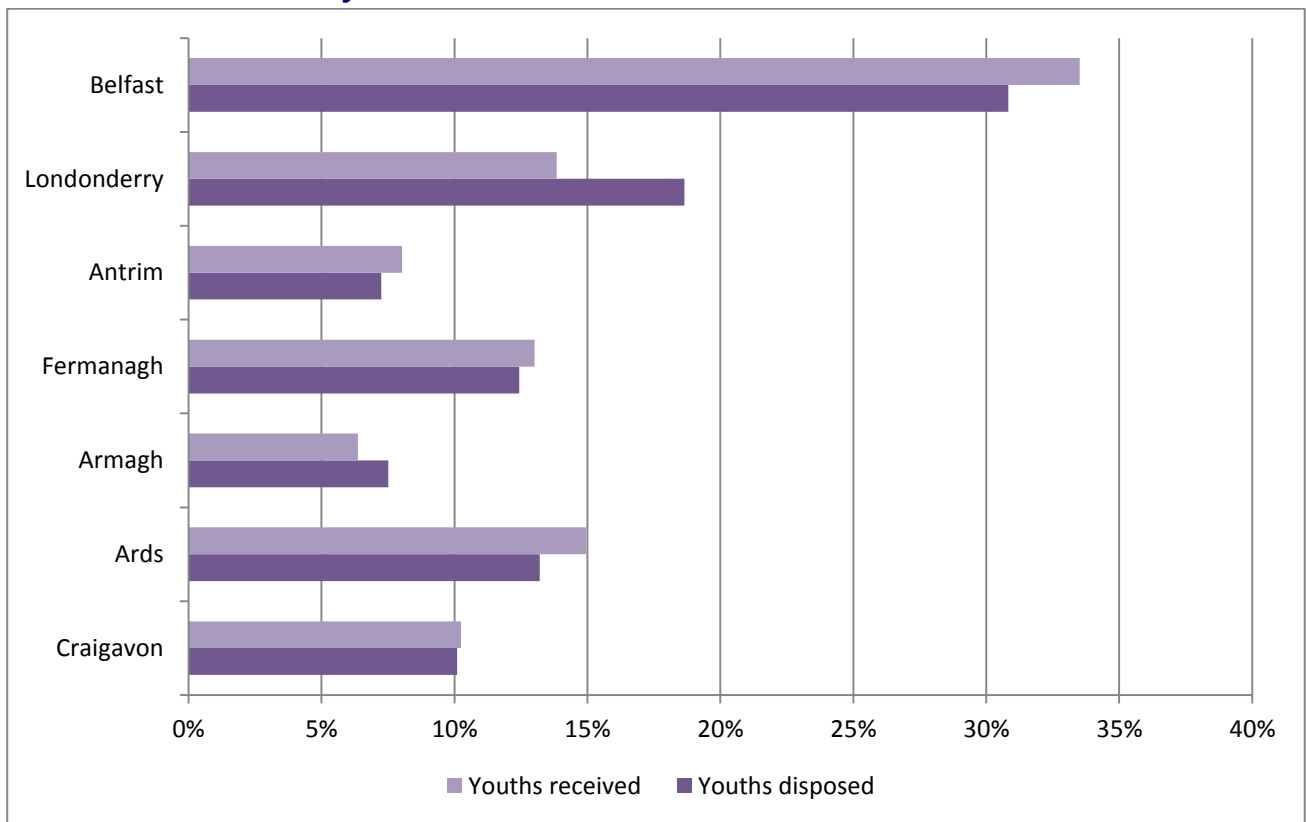
### 3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2016, 361 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 386 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 23% (from 470) and a decrease of 21% (from 490) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Almost all prosecutions (98.2%) disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (99.6% in the same period in 2015).

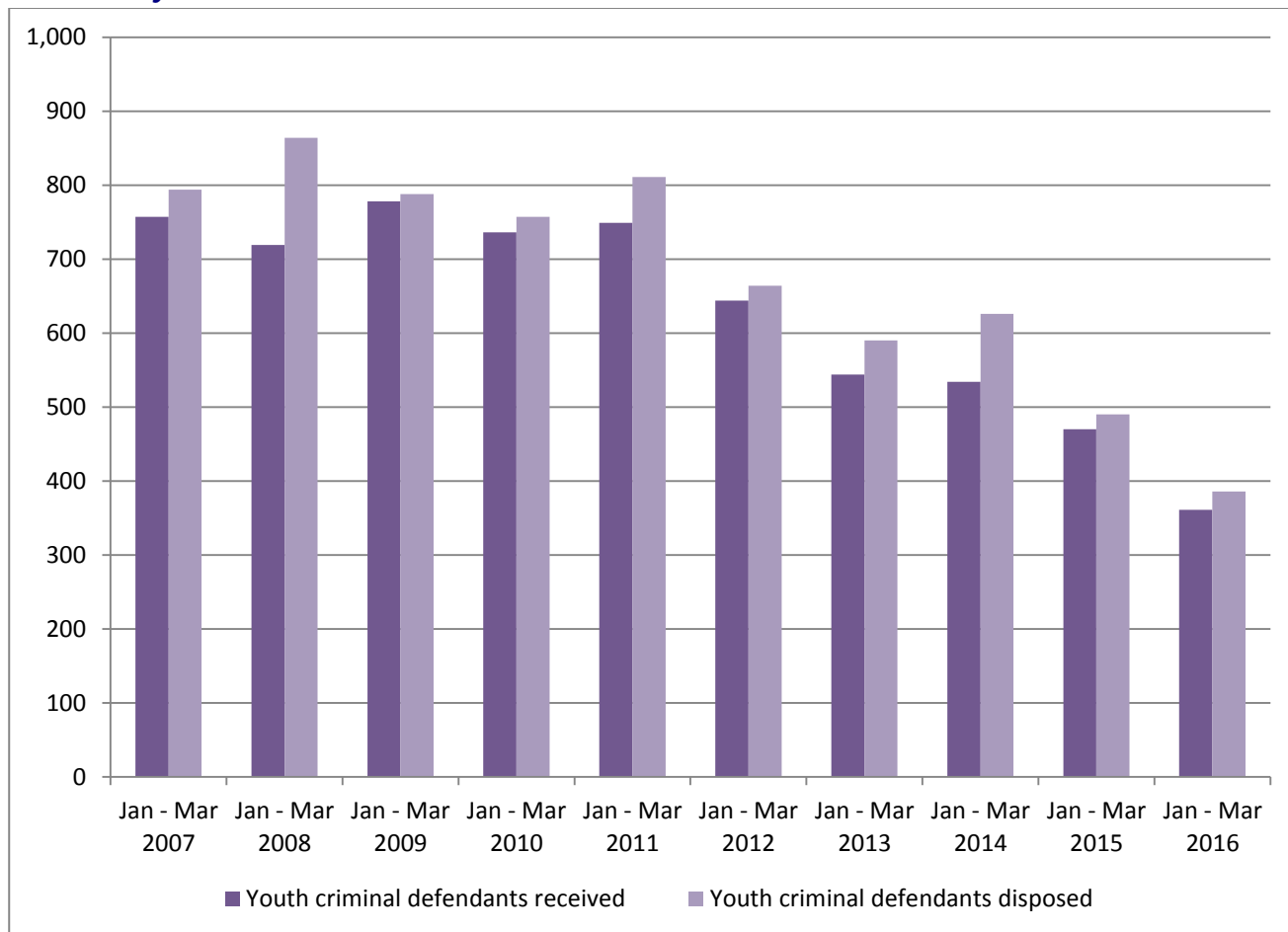
A breakdown of youth business by court division for January to March 2016 is shown in Figure 5 below:

**Figure 5: Percentage of youth criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016**



The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter January to March over the last number of years, with levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016**



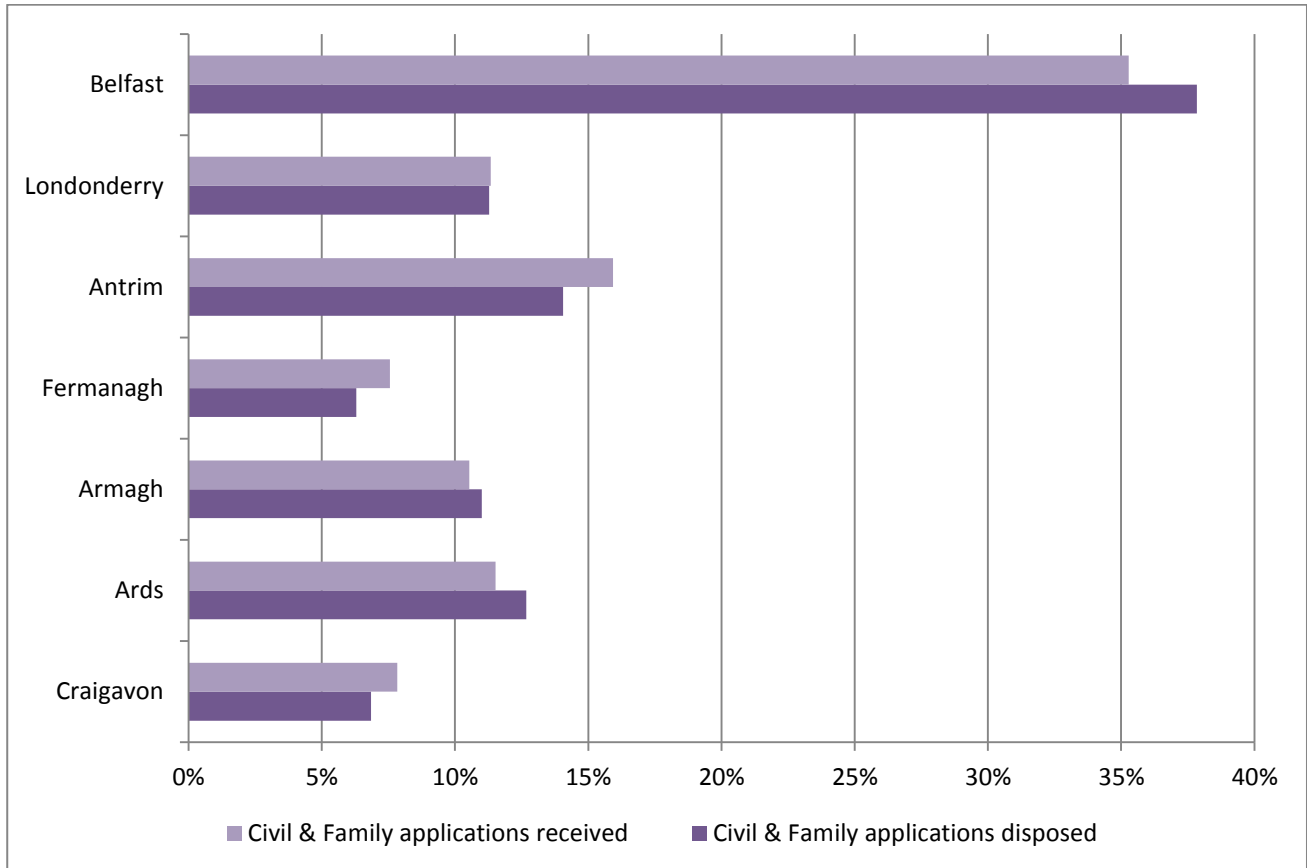
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 10 weeks (11 weeks for the same period in 2015).

### 3.4 Civil and family Magistrates' court

During January to March 2016, 1,111 new civil and family applications were received and 1,081 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 12% (from 1,265) and a decrease of 8% (from 1,173) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

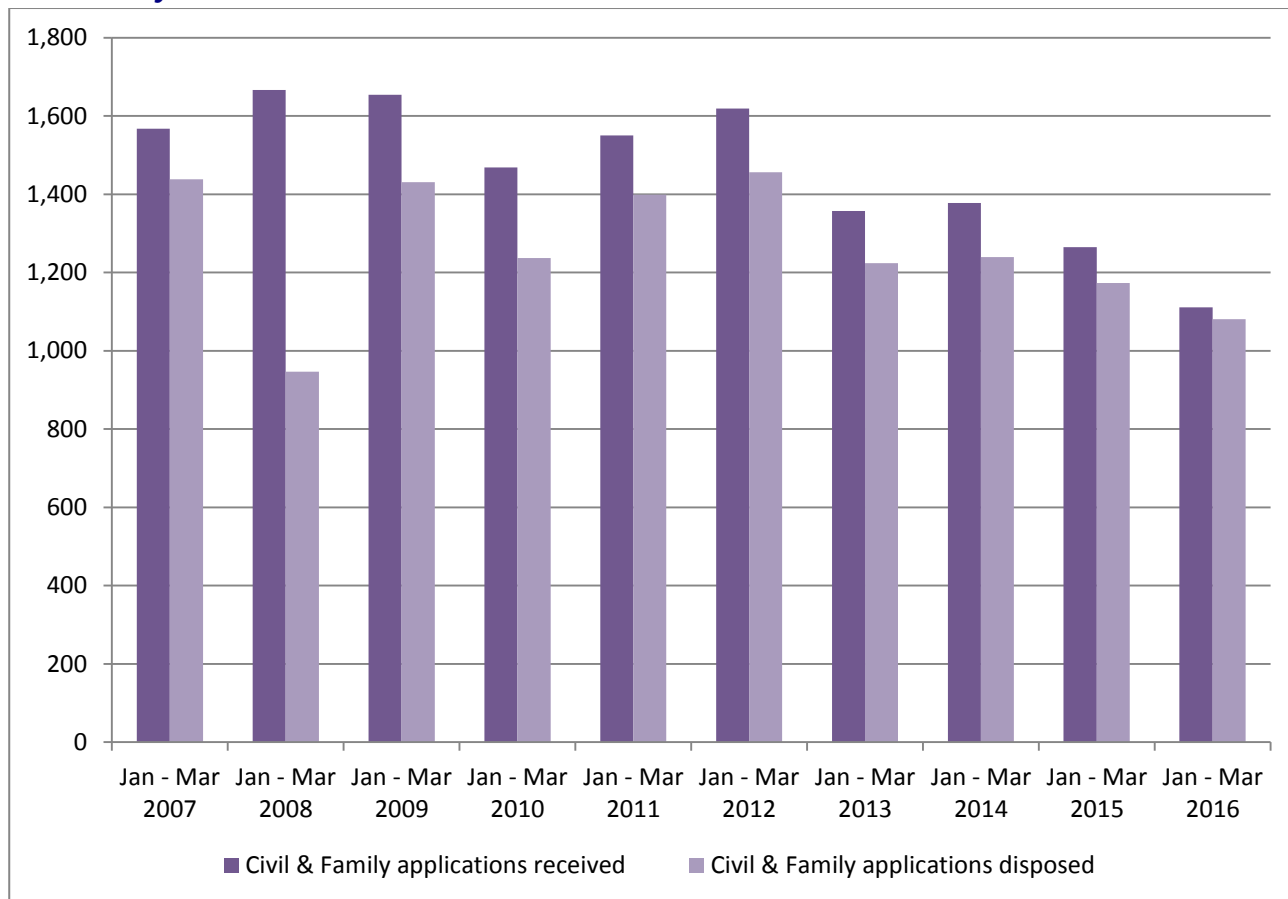
A breakdown of civil and family business by court division for January to March 2016 is shown in Figure 7 below:

**Figure 7: Percentage of civil & family applications received and disposed of by court division: January to March 2016**



The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has fluctuated during the quarter January to March between 2007 and 2016, with levels of receipts reaching their lowest level in January to March 2016 and disposals reaching their second lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2016**



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 10 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (9 weeks for the same period in 2015).

## APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>1</sup>

		Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	221	2:59:33	39	2:31:10	70	3:20:21
	Total	221	2:59:33	39	2:31:10	70	3:20:21
Londonderry	Limavady	13	2:59:13				
	Magherafelt	12	3:23:45	5	1:37:00	1	0:40:00
	Londonderry	62	4:14:18	7	5:17:51	18	5:08:36
	Total	87	3:56:06	12	3:45:50	19	4:54:28
Antrim	Antrim	16	4:06:52	5	1:32:00	5	2:48:00
	Ballymena	23	3:57:49	6	2:24:30	14	2:51:47
	Coleraine	31	4:09:50	3	3:51:40	8	4:05:37
	Total	70	4:05:12	14	2:24:25	27	3:12:57
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	39	4:14:18	6	2:48:20	8	2:55:37
	Strabane	21	4:28:20	2	2:27:30		
	Omagh	27	4:16:46	5	2:07:00	8	3:17:30
	Enniskillen	25	4:34:12	6	4:25:50	2	2:30:00
	Total	112	4:21:58	19	3:06:03	18	3:02:30
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	21	3:23:05	3	3:01:40	2	4:27:30
	Banbridge@Newry	16	2:57:48	2	1:40:00	1	0:05:00
	Newry	33	3:32:49	3	3:38:20	15	3:54:08
	Total	70	3:21:54	8	2:55:00	18	3:45:06
Ards	Downpatrick	24	4:31:40	6	3:12:30		
	Newtownards	49	3:36:50	5	4:08:00	35	2:22:51
	Total	73	3:54:51	11	3:37:43	35	2:22:51
Craigavon	Lisburn	37	4:01:04	5	1:45:00	15	3:03:00
	Craigavon	33	5:15:21	5	3:49:00	14	3:19:17
	Total	70	4:36:06	10	2:47:00	29	3:10:51

Table 1.1a Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	703	3:43:48	113	2:53:41	216	3:17:41

<sup>1</sup> 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 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.



**Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>1</sup>**

		Adult criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	4	2:35:45	1	5:05:00
	Total	4	2:35:45	1	5:05:00
Londonderry	Londonderry	2	0:35:00		.
	Total	2	0:35:00		.
Antrim	Ballymena	1	0:30:00		.
	Total	1	0:30:00		.
Armagh & South Down	Banbridge@Newry	1	1:20:00		.
	Newry	1	0:15:00		.
	Total	2	0:47:30		.
Ards	Newtownards	3	2:48:20	2	1:30:00
	Total	3	2:48:20	2	1:30:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	5	0:47:00	1	1:05:00
	Craigavon	1	5:55:00		.
	Total	6	1:38:20	1	1:05:00

**Table 1.2a Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>**

	Adult criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	18	1:46:16	4	2:17:30

<sup>1</sup> 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 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

**Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>1</sup>**

		Adult criminal day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Londonderry	12	0:35:55
	Total	12	0:35:55
Antrim	Ballymena	8	0:26:52
	Total	8	0:26:52
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	9	0:52:13
	Total	9	0:52:13
Armagh & South Down	Newry	9	0:31:06
	Total	9	0:31:06
Ards	Newtownards	7	0:31:25
	Total	7	0:31:25
Craigavon	Lisburn	11	0:34:32
	Total	11	0:34:32

**Table 1.3a Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>**

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	56	0:35:38

<sup>1</sup> 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 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

**Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>2</sup>**

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	1994	1037	10	10	3051
	Division total	1994	1037	10	10	3051
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	566	233	1	6	806
	Limavady Court Office	137	33		1	171
	Magherafelt Court Office	133	49			182
	Division total	836	315	1	7	1159
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	202	150	5		357
	Coleraine Court Office	282	130	2	2	416
	Ballymena Court Office	247	126	1	4	378
	Division total	731	406	8	6	1151
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	184	73			257
	Strabane Court Office	176	47			223
	Enniskillen Court Office	200	47			247
	Dungannon Court Office	259	78			337
	Division total	819	245			1064
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	210	53	2	1	266
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	153	36		1	190
	Newry Court Office	402	135	1		538
	Division total	765	224	3	2	994
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	559	220	4		783
	Downpatrick Court Office	242	71		1	314
	Division total	801	291	4	1	1097
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	509	137	2	3	651
	Lisburn Court Office	385	133	3	2	523
	Division total	894	270	5	5	1174

**Table 2.1a Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
Northern Ireland	6840	2788	31	31	9690

<sup>2</sup> Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

**Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by division & venue<sup>2</sup>**

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2144	997	6	8	3155
	Division total	2144	997	6	8	3155
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	565	258	1	4	828
	Limavady Court Office	119	35		1	155
	Magherafelt Court Office	142	57			199
	Division total	826	350	1	5	1182
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	195	149	2		346
	Coleraine Court Office	291	139	3	4	437
	Ballymena Court Office	311	124	1	4	440
	Division total	797	412	6	8	1223
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	209	76			285
	Strabane Court Office	202	49			251
	Enniskillen Court Office	227	44			271
	Dungannon Court Office	296	102			398
	Division total	934	271			1205
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	207	55	2	2	266
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	141	37			178
	Newry Court Office	376	132	1		509
	Division total	724	224	3	2	953
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	500	217	3		720
	Downpatrick Court Office	245	68			313
	Division total	745	285	3		1033
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	493	156	2	2	653
	Lisburn Court Office	338	140	3	2	483
	Division total	831	296	5	4	1136

**Table 2.2a Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland<sup>2</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
Northern Ireland	7001	2835	24	27	9887

<sup>2</sup> Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.

**Table 2.3: Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>3</sup>**

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	5.34	5.03	.85	5.88
	Total	5.34	5.03	.85	5.88
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	5.80	5.56	1.11	6.67
	Limavady Court Office	4.82	3.89	.75	4.64
	Magherafelt Court Office	5.50	4.88	.68	5.56
	Total	5.62	5.22	.99	6.22
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	5.94	3.71	.63	4.34
	Coleraine Court Office	5.36	4.10	.72	4.82
	Ballymena Court Office	5.71	6.36	.61	6.97
	Total	5.65	4.78	.65	5.43
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	5.12	4.28	.48	4.75
	Strabane Court Office	4.09	4.37	.90	5.26
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.32	6.61	.67	7.28
	Dungannon Court Office	4.14	6.35	1.19	7.54
	Total	4.18	5.49	.84	6.33
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.43	6.26	.45	6.71
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.48	3.81	.63	4.45
	Newry Court Office	5.39	6.46	.37	6.83
	Total	4.96	5.91	.44	6.35
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	5.71	4.60	.72	5.32
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.87	5.54	1.05	6.59
	Total	5.45	4.88	.82	5.70
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4.39	7.35	.67	8.02
	Lisburn Court Office	4.78	6.17	.95	7.11
	Total	4.55	6.85	.78	7.64

**Table 2.3a Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>**

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	5.16	5.36	.79	6.15

<sup>3</sup> Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded.

**Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area<sup>2,4</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
All Offences Against the Person	724	2			726
All Sexual Offences	141	2		4	147
All Burglary Offences	80				80
All Robbery Offences	19				19
All Theft Offences	455			12	467
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	79	99			178
All Criminal Damage Offences	173				173
All Offences Against the State	274	1		11	286
All Other Offences	188	528			716
All Drug Offences	442				442
All Motoring Offences	2414	855	9		3278
All Non-Police Offences	9	1240	15		1264
All Breach	106	51			157
Combination of charges	1897	57			1954
<b>Total</b>	<b>7001</b>	<b>2835</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9887</b>

<sup>2</sup> Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder Default	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	420				420
Plea of guilty on all charges	3088	408			3496
All charges withdrawn	1343	910			2253
Fixed penalty default			24		24
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1732	1460			3192
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	418	57			475
Penalty Notice for Disorder				27	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>7001</b>	<b>2835</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9887</b>

<sup>2</sup> Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	116	5		121
	Division total	116	5		121
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	38			38
	Limavady Court Office	3			3
	Magherafelt Court Office	9			9
	Division total	50			50
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	4			4
	Coleraine Court Office	16			16
	Ballymena Court Office	8		1	9
	Division total	28		1	29
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	7			7
	Strabane Court Office	7			7
	Enniskillen Court Office	21	1		22
	Dungannon Court Office	11			11
	Division total	46	1		47
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4			4
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1			1
	Newry Court Office	18			18
	Division total	23			23
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	34			34
	Downpatrick Court Office	20			20
	Division total	54			54
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	22			22
	Lisburn Court Office	15			15
	Division total	37			37

**Table 3.1a Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
Northern Ireland	354	6	1	361

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	114	5		119
	Division total	114	5		119
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	58			58
	Limavady Court Office	5			5
	Magherafelt Court Office	9			9
	Division total	72			72
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	4			4
	Coleraine Court Office	15			15
	Ballymena Court Office	8		1	9
	Division total	27		1	28
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	10			10
	Strabane Court Office	3			3
	Enniskillen Court Office	22	1		23
	Dungannon Court Office	12			12
	Division total	47	1		48
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3			3
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3			3
	Newry Court Office	23			23
	Division total	29			29
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	39			39
	Downpatrick Court Office	12			12
	Division total	51			51
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	26			26
	Lisburn Court Office	13			13
	Division total	39			39

**Table 3.2a Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
Northern Ireland	379	6	1	386



**Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by division & venue<sup>3</sup>**

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2.66	8.25	4.23	12.48
	Total	2.66	8.25	4.23	12.48
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2.71	4.23	7.25	11.48
	Limavady Court Office	3.91	7.80	6.20	14.00
	Magherafelt Court Office	4.33	3.62	1.83	5.45
	Total	2.96	4.45	6.65	11.10
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2.50	.43	5.50	5.93
	Coleraine Court Office	2.01	4.56	5.18	9.74
	Ballymena Court Office	6.39	5.65	.00	5.65
	Total	3.52	4.53	3.48	8.01
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	2.31	3.64	4.05	7.69
	Strabane Court Office	3.76	6.00	3.00	9.00
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.07	5.16	1.13	6.30
	Dungannon Court Office	3.11	6.87	1.44	8.32
	Total	3.00	5.44	1.94	7.38
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.36	2.50	2.21	4.71
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	.00	14.57	.00	14.57
	Newry Court Office	3.79	4.42	3.53	7.95
	Total	3.36	5.53	2.98	8.51
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	3.17	7.83	2.45	10.28
	Downpatrick Court Office	3.02	8.02	2.38	10.39
	Total	3.14	7.86	2.44	10.30
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4.77	8.34	2.39	10.73
	Lisburn Court Office	4.49	4.23	4.42	8.65
	Total	4.67	6.88	3.11	9.99

**Table 3.3a Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>**

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	3.14	6.51	3.98	10.49

<sup>3</sup> Arrest warrants, adjourned generally, deferred sentences and youth monitored cases are excluded.

**Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area<sup>4</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
All Offences Against the Person	65			65
All Sexual Offences	9			9
All Burglary Offences	11			11
All Theft Offences	41			41
All Criminal Damage Offences	30			30
All Offences Against the State	22			22
All Other Offences	14			14
All Drug Offences	15			15
All Motoring Offences	42		1	43
All Breach		6		6
Combination of charges	130			130
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>386</b>

<sup>4</sup> Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

**Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	4			4
Plea of guilty on all charges	181	1		182
All charges withdrawn	92	1		93
Fixed penalty default			1	1
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	81			81
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	21	4		25
<b>Total</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>386</b>

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	9	383	392
	Division total	9	383	392
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	5	109	114
	Magherafelt Court Office	1	11	12
	Division total	6	120	126
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2	37	39
	Coleraine Court Office	1	35	36
	Ballymena Court Office	4	98	102
	Division total	7	170	177
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	2	16	18
	Strabane Court Office		15	15
	Enniskillen Court Office	4	10	14
	Dungannon Court Office	4	33	37
	Division total	10	74	84
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4	24	28
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	11	12
	Newry Court Office	4	73	77
	Division total	9	108	117
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	6	95	101
	Downpatrick Court Office	1	26	27
	Division total	7	121	128
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	11	32	43
	Lisburn Court Office		44	44
	Division total	11	76	87

**Table 4.1a Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland**

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	59	1052	1111

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	32	377	409
	Division total	32	377	409
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2	111	113
	Magherafelt Court Office		9	9
	Division total	2	120	122
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2	19	21
	Coleraine Court Office		30	30
	Ballymena Court Office	7	94	101
	Division total	9	143	152
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1	14	15
	Strabane Court Office		11	11
	Enniskillen Court Office	1	13	14
	Dungannon Court Office	2	26	28
	Division total	4	64	68
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1	28	29
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	10	11
	Newry Court Office	6	73	79
	Division total	8	111	119
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	7	99	106
	Downpatrick Court Office	3	28	31
	Division total	10	127	137
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4	36	40
	Lisburn Court Office	3	31	34
	Division total	7	67	74

**Table 4.2a Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland**

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	72	1009	1081

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

		Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2.02	10.40	12.39
	Total	2.02	10.40	12.39
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	1.80	6.67	8.47
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.24	1.11	2.35
	Total	1.76	6.26	8.02
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1.21	1.52	2.73
	Coleraine Court Office	1.27	4.29	5.56
	Ballymena Court Office	1.35	5.94	7.29
	Total	1.32	5.00	6.32
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1.94	.92	2.87
	Strabane Court Office	.96	3.64	4.60
	Enniskillen Court Office	1.85	10.57	12.42
	Dungannon Court Office	1.38	3.89	5.27
	Total	1.53	4.57	6.10
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2.00	5.13	7.13
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.13	3.64	5.77
	Newry Court Office	2.14	2.45	4.59
	Total	2.10	3.21	5.32
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	2.01	6.21	8.23
	Downpatrick Court Office	2.24	11.05	13.28
	Total	2.06	7.31	9.37
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2.87	7.42	10.29
	Lisburn Court Office	.58	16.59	17.17
	Total	1.82	11.63	13.45

**Table 4.3a Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland**

	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	1.86	7.70	9.56

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

	New Order					Total
	Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary discharge	Other	
<b>Non molestation</b>	599	131	156	100	4	990
<b>Occupation</b>	3	1	9	1		14
<b>Vary discharge non-mol occupation</b>				3		3
<b>Other Family Homes &amp; domestic violence</b>				2		2
<b>Total</b>	602	132	165	106	4	1009

## **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 include non-molestation and/or occupation orders. 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 2 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**

4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Laganside House  
23-27 Oxford Street,  
Belfast BT1 3LA

Email: [ann.mallon@courtsni.gov.uk](mailto:ann.mallon@courtsni.gov.uk)

Telephone: 028 9072 8928

[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)