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October to December 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period October to December 2018 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 contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period October to December 2018:
- There were 1,820 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 3% increase on the same quarter last year (1,763). In total, 2,538 civil bills were disposed, a decrease of 2% on the number disposed during the same period in 2017 (2,587).
- 38 equity cases were received during October to December 2018, up by six cases compared to the 32 cases received during the period October to December 2017, while 29 equity cases were disposed, an increase of 38% on the 21 disposed during the same period last year.
- A total of 270 ejectment cases were received, up 9% on the 247 cases received during October to December 2017, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 15%, from 211 in the same quarter last year to 243 this quarter.
- 2,081 small claims were received, down 28% on the 2,884 received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 30% from 2,755 during October to December 2017 to 1,937 this quarter.
- Five criminal damage cases were received, compared to nine received during the period October to December 2017. Four criminal damage cases were disposed during the quarter, the same as during the same quarter last year.
- A total of 450 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 35% on the 334 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,213 sitting days during the quarter, up 5% on the 1,157 sitting days recorded during the period October to December 2017. Some 53% of time was spent on criminal business with 25% spent on civil business and 22% on family business (compared to 52%, 27% and 20% respectively during October to December 2017).

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1. INTRODUCTION

Civil cases are commenced in the county court if the value of the case is less than £30,000. The financial limit in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on the 25 February 2013. However, for claims concerning matrimonial property or compensation for criminal injuries or criminal damage to property, there is no financial limit. The county court also has jurisdiction to hear applications for adoptions and undefended divorces. Applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for clubs are also made to the county court. In addition to its original civil jurisdiction the county court hears appeals under a number of statutory provisions from the magistrates' courts or from other tribunals.

County courts can deal with a wide range of cases, but the most common ones are:-

- landlord and tenant disputes, for example, possession (eviction), rent arrears, repairs
- consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services
- personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falling into holes in the pavement, accidents at work
- undefended divorce cases, but only in some county courts
- some domestic violence cases, but these may also be heard in the magistrates court
- race and sex discrimination cases
- debt problems, for example, a creditor seeking payment
- employment problems, for example, wages or salary owing or pay in lieu of notice.

The county court also deals with small claims. In general, a small claim is one where the value of the claim is not more than £3,000. This limit was increased from £2,000 in May 2011.

The most common types of claim dealt with in the small claims court are:

- compensation for faulty services provided, for example, by builders, dry cleaners and garages
- compensation for faulty goods, for example, televisions or washing machines which go wrong
- disputes between landlords and tenants, for example, rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs
- wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

All claims arising from regulated credit agreements must be started in the county court, whatever their value.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data sources

Data contained in Tables 1 to 31 and Table 33 use 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 County Court during 2005, 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. As data on licence applications received and disposed are not recorded on ICOS, these data are compiled manually by each county court office and submitted on a quarterly basis.

2.2 Methodology for generating data

Analytical Service Group (ASG) Statisticians based within the NICTS take a download of county 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 of county court data, to the calendar year 2018.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the first quarter of 2019 and will be published on 17th May 2019.

2.5 Data quality and validation

ASG statisticians based in the NICTS have invested significant time and effort creating and 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 the 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 county court venue as a validation report. 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 2018 edition of Judicial Statistics (published on 28th June 2019).

2.6 Counting rules

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are receipted. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to dealt with. 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 contained in the County Court Bulletin is now disaggregated by Court Office (Processing Office) as at the time of data download.

2.7 Interpreting trends

Care should be taken when comparing data trends before and after 2005, when ICOS was introduced as the source for the majority of county court data. Additionally, due to on-going changes to the legal jurisdiction of the county court, users should be cautious of comparing trends in small claims and ordinary civil bills. Changes made to the upper limit of small claims in May 2011 (from £2,000 to £3,000) will have resulted in some claims that would have previously been ordinary civil bills becoming small claims. Also, changes to jurisdiction to increase the upper limit of ordinary civil bills during February 2013 (from £15,000 to £30,000) will have resulted in some cases that were previously High Court writs becoming ordinary civil bills. For further advice on differences in data between years, please contact the statistician responsible for this bulletin.

2.8 Revisions

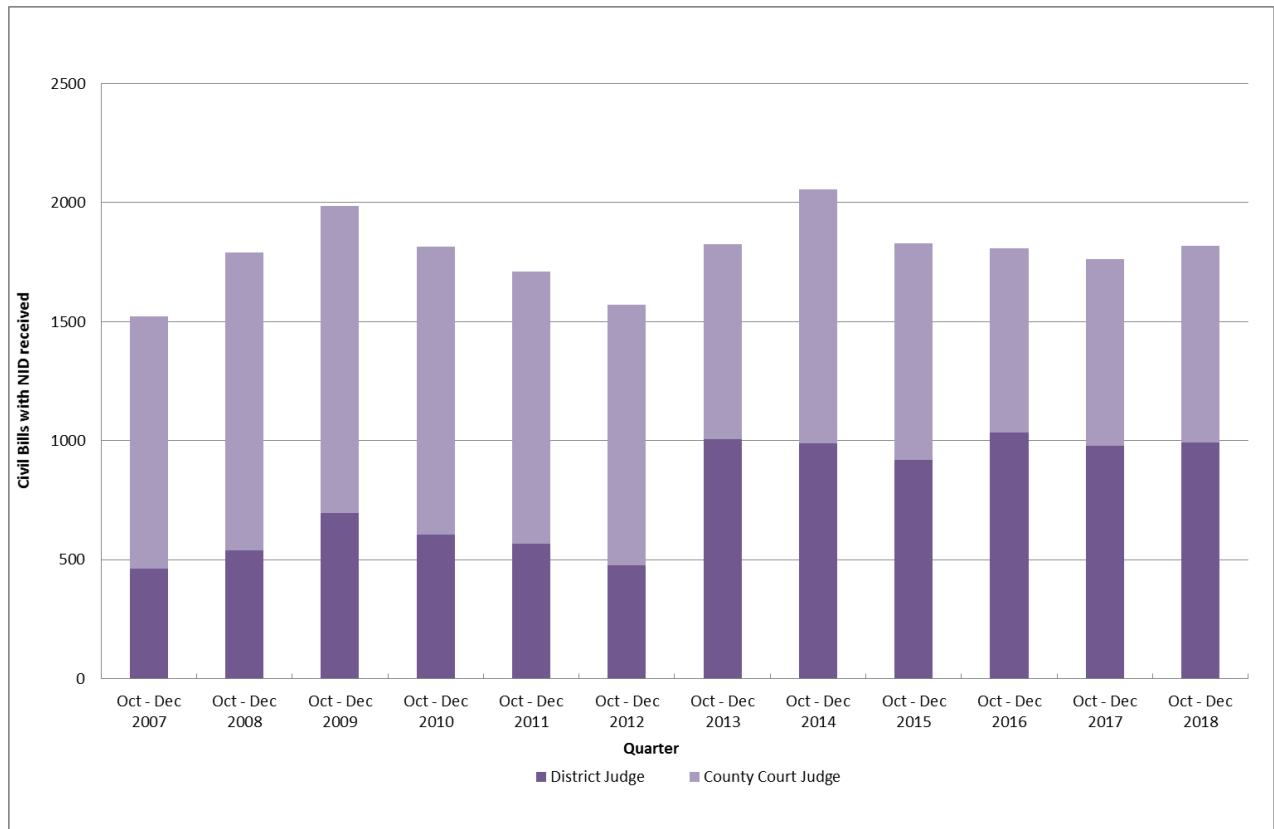
Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note ‘Policy Statement on Revisions’ which can be found at (www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/p_pd_stats_PolicyStatementRevisions.pdf). Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

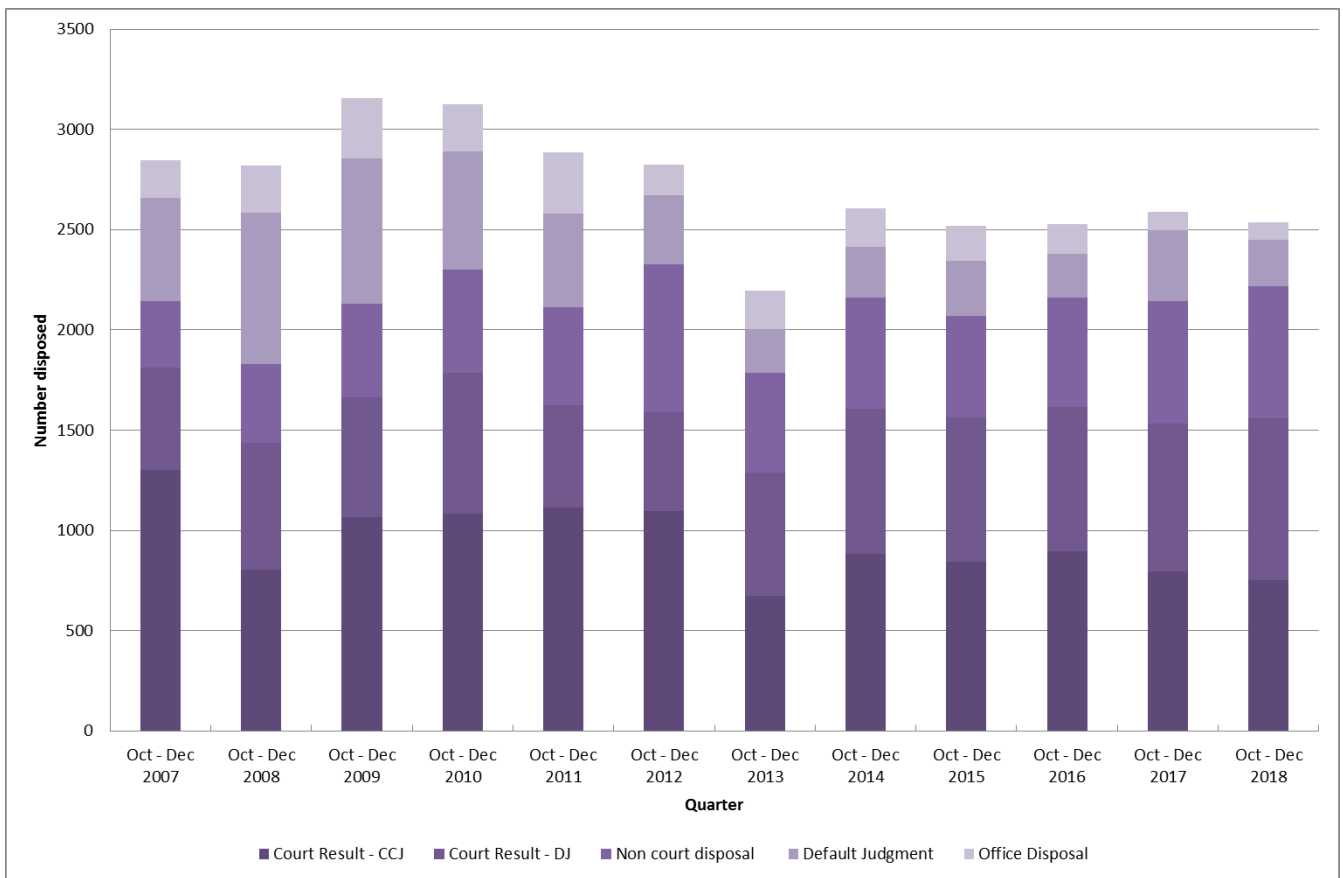
There were 1,820 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 3% increase on the same quarter last year (1,763) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



In total, 2,538 civil bills were disposed, a 2% decrease on the 2,587 disposed during the same period in 2017 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 54 weeks, compared to the 55 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2017.

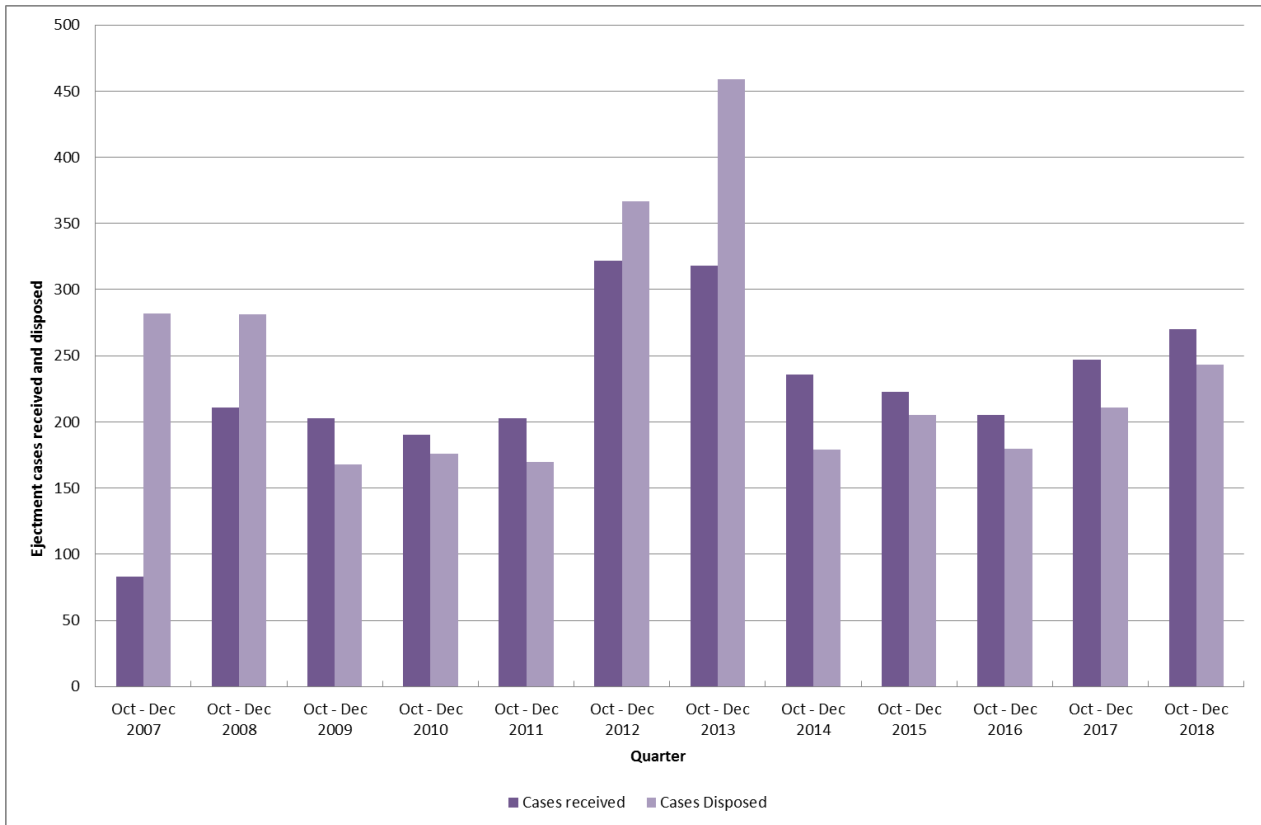
3.2 Equity

A total of 38 equity cases were received during October to December 2018, six more than the number received during the period October to December 2017 (32), while the number of equity cases disposed increased from 21 during the period October to December 2017, to 29 this quarter. The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 70 weeks up from 59 weeks during the same period last year. The relatively small number of equity cases disposed each quarter can lead to significant changes in average times observed from issue to disposal.

3.3 Ejectment

A total of 270 ejectment cases were received, up 9% on the 247 cases received during October to December 2017, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 15%, from 211 in the same quarter last year to 243 this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018

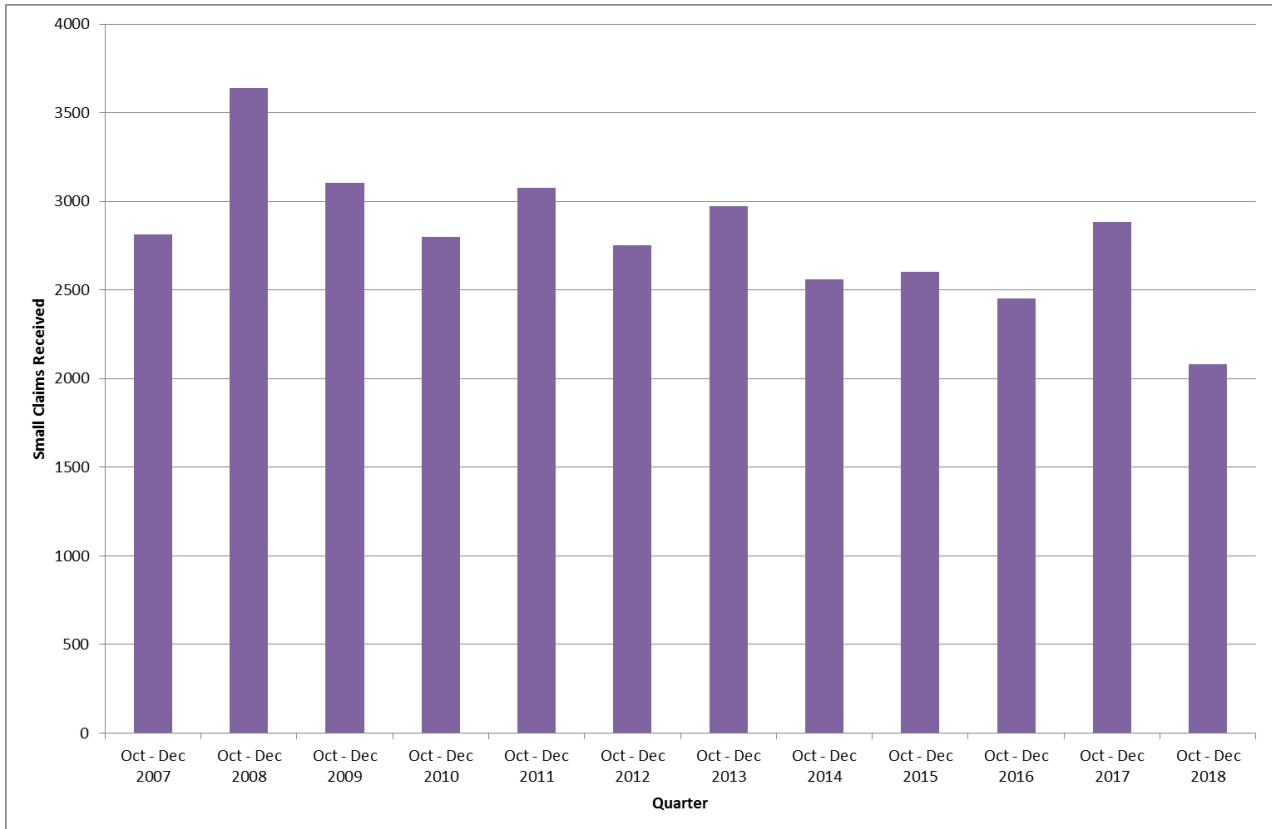


The average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases was 24 weeks, compared to 25 weeks during the October to December quarter in 2017.

3.4 Small claims

2,081 small claims were received, down 28% on the 2,884 received during the same quarter last year (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases received: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



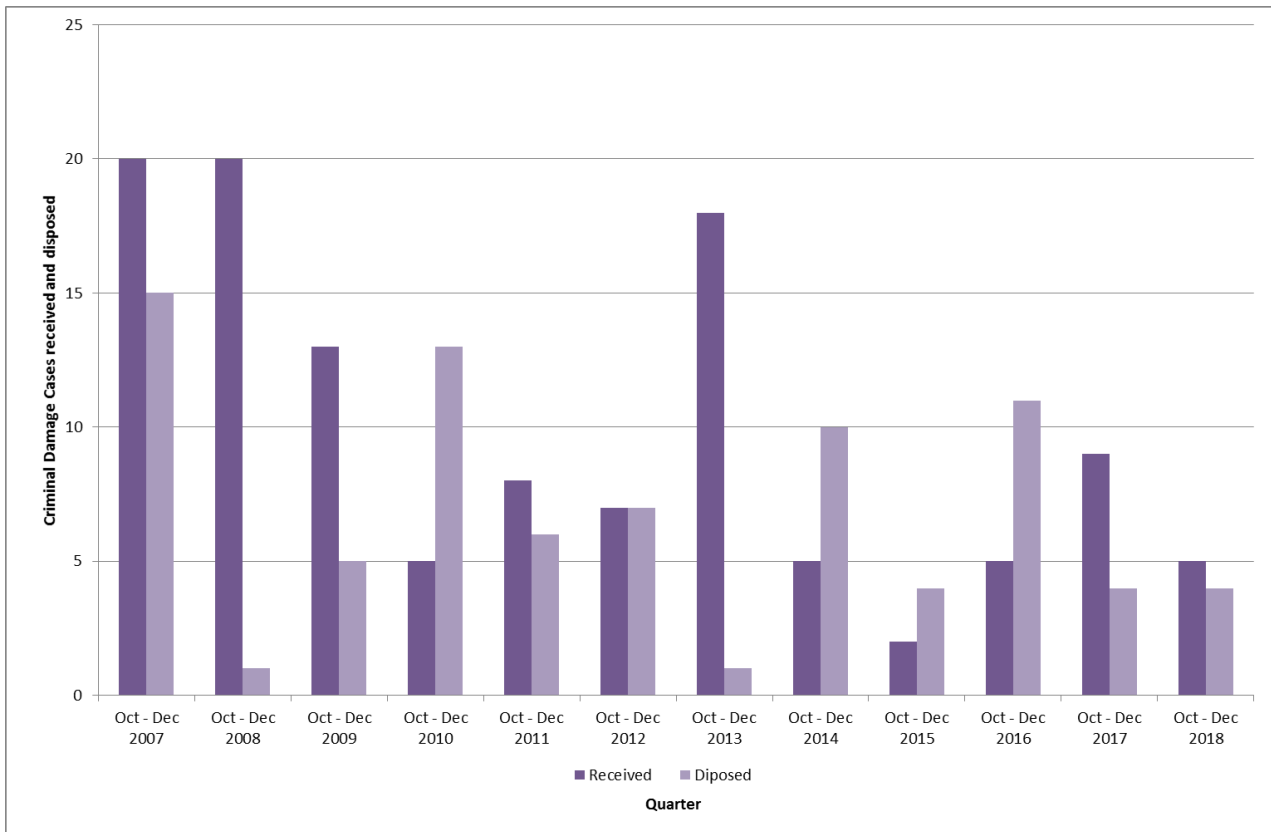
The number of small claims cases disposed decreased by 30% from 2,755 during October to December 2017 to 1,937 this quarter. Of the 1,937 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (61%) were disposed by way of default judgment.

The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 24 weeks, compared to 21 weeks during the corresponding quarter last year.

3.5 Criminal Damage

Five criminal damage cases were received, with four disposed during the quarter. This compares with nine cases received and four cases disposed during the same quarter in 2017 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



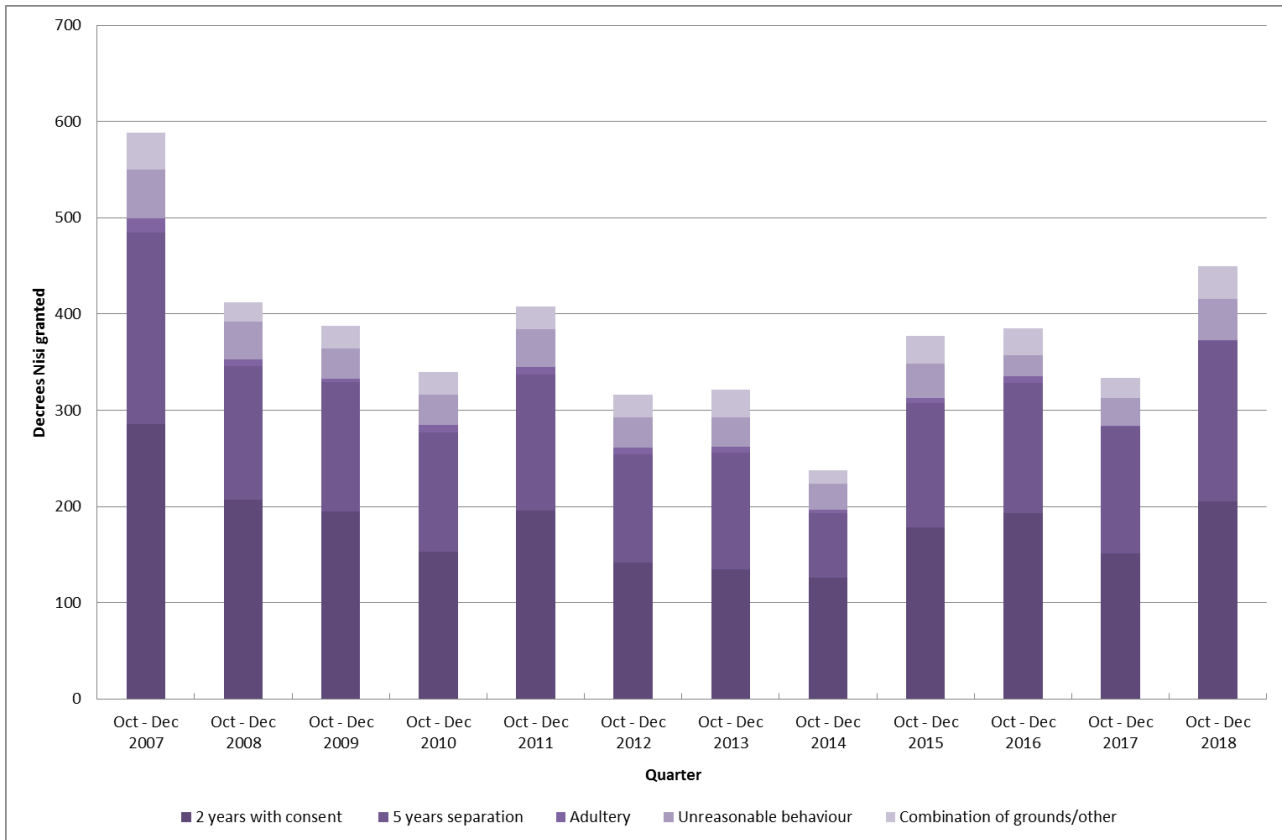
3.6 Divorces

While all divorces are received in the High Court, divorce decrees are also granted and decrees absolute are also issued in the County Court for less contentious and undefended cases.

A total of 450 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, up 35% on the 334 granted during the same period last year.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 46% of decrees (205), followed by '5 years separation', 37% (167) of decrees (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



A total of 347 decrees absolute were issued in the county court, an increase of 10% on the 315 issued during the period October to December 2017. The most common type of decree absolute was '2 years with consent', accounting for 43% (150) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 32 weeks, with an average of eight weeks from the date the decree was granted until the date the decree absolute was issued. This compares to 30 weeks and nine weeks during the same period last year.

3.7 Licences

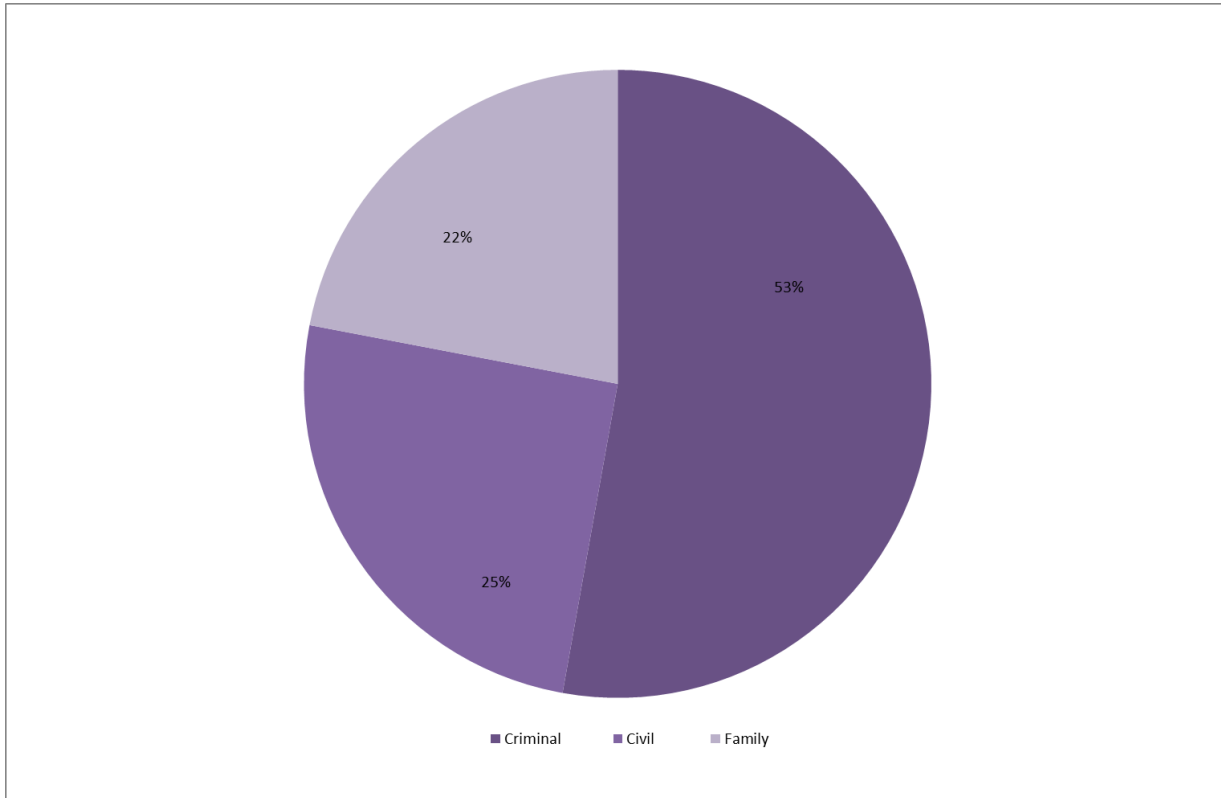
There were 87 licence applications received and 72 disposed, compared to the 62 received and 69 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,213 sitting days during the quarter, up 5% on the 1,157 sitting days recorded during the period October to December 2017.

Within these 1,213 sitting days, 53% of time was spent on criminal business, 25% of time was spent on civil business and 22% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

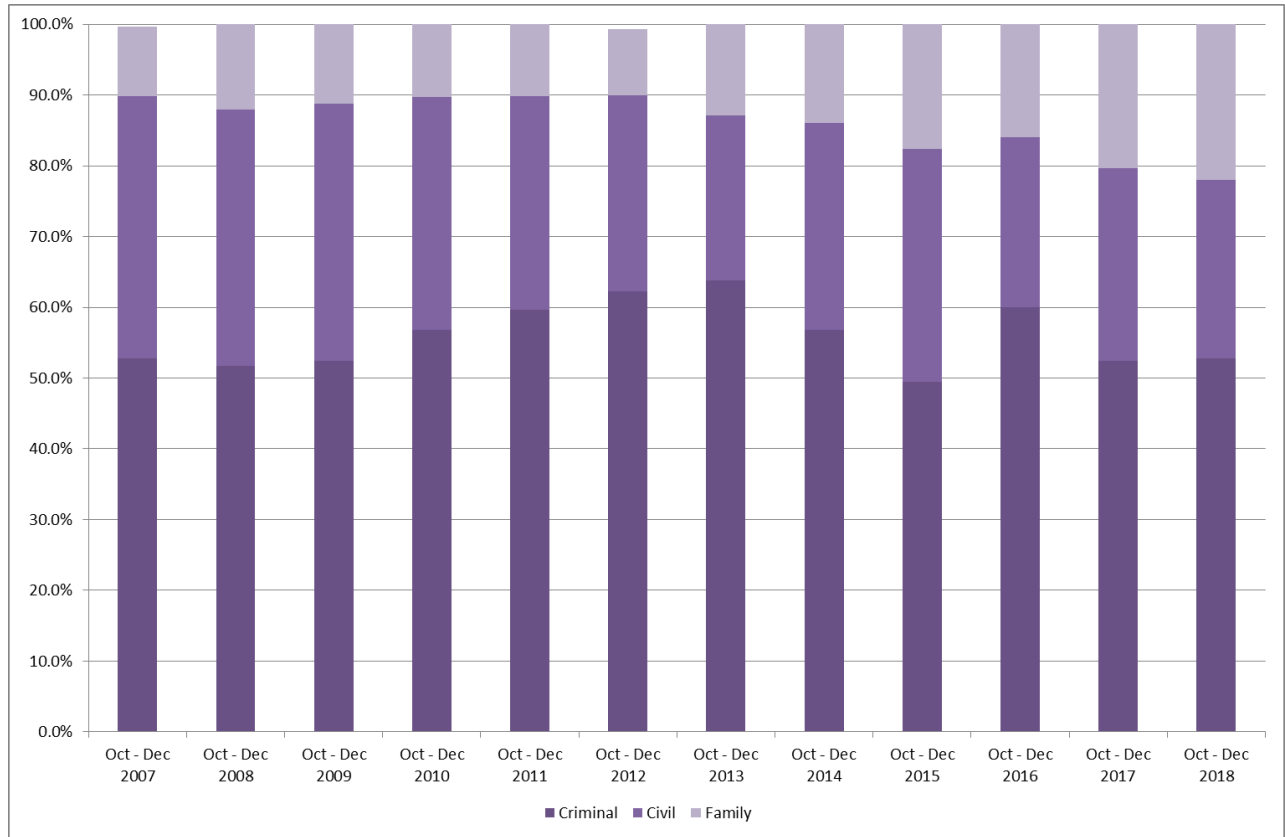
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: October - December 2018



The proportion of time spent on criminal business fluctuated during October to December quarter since 2007, peaking at 64% during the quarter October to December 2013. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over that particular period. The proportion of time spent on criminal business then decreased to 50% during October to December 2015, which was reflective of the action taken by a number of solicitors and counsel who withdrew their representation from a number of Crown Court cases in response to the introduction, in May 2015, of new rules in relation to legal aid remuneration. Following resolution of this dispute in February 2016, activity in the Crown Court increased, with the proportion of time spent by County Court Judges on criminal business increasing to 60% of sittings during October to December 2016, while the backlog of cases arising from the dispute was being addressed. Progress made in addressing the backlog has meant the proportion of time spent on criminal

business decreased over the last two October to December quarters, with the proportion of time spent on criminal business falling to 53% this quarter.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: October - December 2007 to October - December 2018



APPENDIX 1

Civil Bills

Table 1: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	729
	Newtownards Court Office	127
	Downpatrick Court Office	58
	Craigavon Court Office	74
	Armagh Court Office	8
	Omagh Court Office	144
	Antrim Court Office	15
	Londonderry Court Office	87
	Coleraine Court Office	127
	Newry Court Office	113
	Magherafelt Court Office	2
	Ballymena Court Office	18
	Lisburn Court Office	59
	Civil Processing Centre	964
	Total	2525
Application	Laganside Courts	369
	Newtownards Court Office	91
	Downpatrick Court Office	8
	Craigavon Court Office	68
	Armagh Court Office	8
	Omagh Court Office	64
	Antrim Court Office	4
	Londonderry Court Office	89
	Coleraine Court Office	49
	Newry Court Office	67
	Ballymena Court Office	11
	Lisburn Court Office	42
	Civil Processing Centre	342
	Total	1212

Table 2: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with NIDs received by judicial level

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	388	446	834
Newtownards Court Office	127	15	142
Downpatrick Court Office	16	50	66
Craigavon Court Office	54	31	85
Armagh Court Office	10	5	15
Omagh Court Office	88	75	163
Antrim Court Office	4	9	13
Londonderry Court Office	70	23	93
Coleraine Court Office	88	42	130
Newry Court Office	78	63	141
Magherafelt Court Office	1	4	5
Ballymena Court Office	12	3	15
Lisburn Court Office	34	40	74
Civil Processing Centre	23	21	44
Total	993	827	1820

Table 3: Number of ordinary civil bills cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgement	Office disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	422	298	228	6	23	977
	Newtownards Court Office	43	102	63	1	4	213
	Downpatrick Court Office	23	7	21		4	55
	Craigavon Court Office	31	32	46	2	2	113
	Armagh Court Office	3	5	7			15
	Omagh Court Office	49	118	53	4	5	229
	Strabane Court Office	2					2
	Antrim Court Office	4	1	7			12
	Londonderry Court Office	48	68	31	2	7	156
	Enniskillen Court Office		3				3
	Coleraine Court Office	45	48	71	1	5	170
	Newry Court Office	40	69	55	3	7	174
	Magherafelt Court Office	3	1	2			6
	Ballymena Court Office	10	12	8	1	1	32
	Lisburn Court Office	30	37	49	2	2	120
	Dungannon Court Office		3	1			4
	Central Office			1			1
	Civil Processing Centre			17	212	27	256
	Total	753	804	660	234	87	2538
	Application	Laganside Courts	51	10	115		
Newtownards Court Office		10	2	16			28
Downpatrick Court Office		4		2			6
Craigavon Court Office		5		22			27
Armagh Court Office		1					1
Omagh Court Office		1	14	28			43
Antrim Court Office		4		1			5
Londonderry Court Office		5	5	28			38
Coleraine Court Office		10	3	9			22
Newry Court Office		15	11	11			37
Ballymena Court Office		1	1	4			6
Lisburn Court Office		1	1	3			5
Civil Processing Centre				37			37
Total		108	47	276			431

Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bills cases by amount awarded¹

			No value	Less than £3000	£3000- 14999	£15000- 29999	Total
Case	Processing Office	Laganside Courts	292	158	256	14	720
		Newtownards Court Office	33	37	69	6	145
		Downpatrick Court Office	7	5	17	1	30
		Craigavon Court Office	5	31	22	5	63
		Armagh Court Office	1	1	6		8
		Omagh Court Office	38	57	69	3	167
		Strabane Court Office			2		2
		Antrim Court Office	2	3			5
		Londonderry Court Office	55	30	29	2	116
		Enniskillen Court Office	1	1	1		3
		Coleraine Court Office	21	21	45	6	93
		Newry Court Office	21	30	54	4	109
		Magherafelt Court Office	1	1	2		4
		Ballymena Court Office	5	6	10	1	22
		Lisburn Court Office	6	20	35	6	67
Dungannon Court Office			3		3		
Total			488	401	620	48	1557

¹Excludes cases that were adjourned generally, default judgements or had office disposals

Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	880	1288	2168
Newtownards Court Office	183	18	201
Downpatrick Court Office	18	92	110
Craigavon Court Office	85	84	169
Armagh Court Office	14	9	23
Omagh Court Office	221	196	417
Strabane Court Office	1		1
Antrim Court Office	19	21	40
Londonderry Court Office	145	108	253
Enniskillen Court Office	2	1	3
Coleraine Court Office	163	160	323
Newry Court Office	118	114	232
Limavady Court Office	3		3
Magherafelt Court Office	3	6	9
Ballymena Court Office	23	16	39
Lisburn Court Office	65	70	135
Dungannon Court Office	3	2	5
Civil Processing Centre	116	105	221
Total	2062	2290	4352

Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	283	541	824
Newtownards Court Office	67	10	77
Downpatrick Court Office	3	58	61
Craigavon Court Office	39	40	79
Armagh Court Office	7	14	21
Omagh Court Office	113	100	213
Antrim Court Office	2	3	5
Londonderry Court Office	59	30	89
Enniskillen Court Office		1	1
Coleraine Court Office	73	53	126
Newry Court Office	60	60	120
Limavady Court Office		2	2
Magherafelt Court Office	1	2	3
Ballymena Court Office	12	8	20
Lisburn Court Office	28	22	50
Dungannon Court Office	2	4	6
Civil Processing Centre	1	1	2
Total	750	949	1699

Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases²

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	58
	Newtownards Court Office	35
	Downpatrick Court Office	83
	Craigavon Court Office	39
	Armagh Court Office	40
	Omagh Court Office	63
	Strabane Court Office	282
	Antrim Court Office	81
	Londonderry Court Office	68
	Enniskillen Court Office	48
	Coleraine Court Office	47
	Newry Court Office	39
	Magherafelt Court Office	40
	Ballymena Court Office	39
	Lisburn Court Office	46
	Dungannon Court Office	35
Total	54	

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications²

			Issue to disposal
Application	Processing Office	Laganside Courts	16
		Newtownards Court Office	16
		Downpatrick Court Office	14
		Craigavon Court Office	73
		Armagh Court Office	12
		Omagh Court Office	7
		Antrim Court Office	14
		Londonderry Court Office	10
		Coleraine Court Office	14
		Newry Court Office	6
		Ballymena Court Office	6
		Lisburn Court Office	12
		Total	14

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	5
	Downpatrick Court Office	3
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	6
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Coleraine Court Office	2
	Newry Court Office	6
	Ballymena Court Office	1
	Lisburn Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	8
	Total	38
	Application	Newtownards Court Office
Downpatrick Court Office		2
Craigavon Court Office		1
Omagh Court Office		4
Coleraine Court Office		2
Newry Court Office		1
Lisburn Court Office		1
Civil Processing Centre		1
Total		13

Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Non court disposals	Office disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	2		1	3
	Newtownards Court Office	4			4
	Craigavon Court Office	2			2
	Omagh Court Office	6	2		8
	Londonderry Court Office	2			2
	Coleraine Court Office	5			5
	Newry Court Office	2	1		3
	Ballymena Court Office	1			1
	Lisburn Court Office	1			1
	Total	25	3	1	29
Application	Omagh Court Office	2	2		4
	Total	2	2		4

Table 11: Outstanding equity cases

Case	Laganside Courts	29
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Downpatrick Court Office	15
	Craigavon Court Office	8
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	65
	Londonderry Court Office	20
	Coleraine Court Office	30
	Newry Court Office	38
	Ballymena Court Office	5
	Lisburn Court Office	5
Civil Processing Centre	33	
Total	251	

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	53
	Newtownards Court Office	50
	Craigavon Court Office	61
	Omagh Court Office	62
	Londonderry Court Office	75
	Coleraine Court Office	114
	Newry Court Office	35
	Ballymena Court Office	51
	Lisburn Court Office	108
	Total	70
Application	Omagh Court Office	20
	Total	20

Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Laganside Courts	102
	Newtownards Court Office	16
	Craigavon Court Office	3
	Omagh Court Office	11
	Londonderry Court Office	15
	Coleraine Court Office	11
	Newry Court Office	5
	Ballymena Court Office	1
	Lisburn Court Office	18
	Civil Processing Centre	88
	Total	270

Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	1	111	1	113
	Newtownards Court Office	1	19	1	21
	Craigavon Court Office		8		8
	Omagh Court Office	1	16		17
	Londonderry Court Office		25	2	27
	Coleraine Court Office		23	1	24
	Newry Court Office		7		7
	Ballymena Court Office		1	1	2
	Lisburn Court Office	1	23		24
	Total	4	233	6	243

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Laganside Courts	17
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Downpatrick Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	9
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Coleraine Court Office	5
	Newry Court Office	5
	Lisburn Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	4
Total		50

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	22
	Newtownards Court Office	22
	Craigavon Court Office	15
	Omagh Court Office	47
	Londonderry Court Office	19
	Coleraine Court Office	18
	Newry Court Office	36
	Ballymena Court Office	10
	Lisburn Court Office	31
	Total	

³Excludes default judgements, non-court disposals and office disposals

Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	109
	Newtownards Court Office	39
	Downpatrick Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	27
	Armagh Court Office	6
	Omagh Court Office	22
	Londonderry Court Office	13
	Enniskillen Court Office	6
	Coleraine Court Office	21
	Newry Court Office	13
	Ballymena Court Office	9
	Lisburn Court Office	10
	Dungannon Court Office	2
	Civil Processing Centre	1802
	Total	2081
Application	Laganside Courts	23
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	3
	Londonderry Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	1
	Newry Court Office	1
	Ballymena Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	2
	Total	35

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NODs received

Case	Laganside Courts	114
	Newtownards Court Office	39
	Downpatrick Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	29
	Armagh Court Office	7
	Omagh Court Office	30
	Londonderry Court Office	20
	Enniskillen Court Office	5
	Coleraine Court Office	31
	Newry Court Office	17
	Ballymena Court Office	10
	Lisburn Court Office	14
	Dungannon Court Office	2
	Civil Processing Centre	7
Total	327	

Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	64	5	44	6	119
	Newtownards Court Office	34	5	8	1	48
	Craigavon Court Office	15	1	3	1	20
	Armagh Court Office	7				7
	Omagh Court Office	20	4	6	1	31
	Antrim Court Office	2				2
	Londonderry Court Office	27	2	4		33
	Coleraine Court Office	41	3	6		50
	Newry Court Office	17	2	3		22
	Ballymena Court Office	8		1	1	10
	Lisburn Court Office	10	2			12
	Dungannon Court Office			1		1
	Civil Processing Centre	1		400	1181	1582
	Total	246	24	476	1191	1937
	Application	Laganside Courts	6			
Newtownards Court Office		2	1			3
Craigavon Court Office		2				2
Armagh Court Office		2				2
Omagh Court Office		2				2
Londonderry Court Office		1	2			3
Coleraine Court Office			1			1
Newry Court Office		1				1
Total		16	4			20

**Table 20: Outstanding small claims
with NOD**

Laganside Courts	182
Newtownards Court Office	40
Downpatrick Court Office	2
Craigavon Court Office	34
Armagh Court Office	10
Omagh Court Office	38
Londonderry Court Office	28
Enniskillen Court Office	7
Coleraine Court Office	57
Newry Court Office	25
Ballymena Court Office	10
Lisburn Court Office	15
Dungannon Court Office	1
Civil Processing Centre	16
Total	465

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	17
	Newtownards Court Office	19
	Craigavon Court Office	34
	Armagh Court Office	64
	Omagh Court Office	21
	Antrim Court Office	17
	Londonderry Court Office	32
	Coleraine Court Office	25
	Newry Court Office	16
	Ballymena Court Office	28
	Lisburn Court Office	25
	Total	24
Application	Laganside Courts	4
	Newtownards Court Office	10
	Craigavon Court Office	21
	Armagh Court Office	21
	Omagh Court Office	7
	Londonderry Court Office	6
	Newry Court Office	5
	Total	9

³Excludes default judgements, non-court disposals and office disposals

Criminal Damage

Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	3
	Omagh Court Office	1
	Newry Court Office	1
	Total	5

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	2	2
	Omagh Court Office	2	2
	Total	4	4

Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases

Laganside Courts	23
Newtownards Court Office	4
Craigavon Court Office	2
Armagh Court Office	2
Omagh Court Office	5
Londonderry Court Office	1
Coleraine Court Office	2
Newry Court Office	7
Ballymena Court Office	1
Dungannon Court Office	2
Total	49

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	243
	Omagh Court Office	163
	Total	203

³Excludes default judgements, non court disposals and office disposals

Divorces

Table 26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	57	46	1	4	8	116
Newtownards Court Office	1	1				2
Downpatrick Court Office	26	16		7	4	53
Craigavon Court Office	32	19		8	4	63
Omagh Court Office	23	17		4	5	49
Londonderry Court Office	18	13		3	5	39
Coleraine Court Office	38	36		11	6	91
Newry Court Office	10	19		6	2	37
Total	205	167	1	43	34	450

Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	41	29	1	4	5	80
Newtownards Court Office		1				1
Downpatrick Court Office	13	14		3	5	35
Craigavon Court Office	25	20	1	5	3	54
Armagh Court Office	2	1		1		4
Omagh Court Office	15	6		1	5	27
Londonderry Court Office	18	13		3	1	35
Coleraine Court Office	27	29	1	11	7	75
Newry Court Office	7	22		2	2	33
Ballymena Court Office					1	1
Dungannon Court Office	2					2
Total	150	135	3	30	29	347

Table 28: Matrimonial applications received

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	5			5
Newtownards Court Office	1			1
Downpatrick Court Office	1			1
Craigavon Court Office	5	1	2	8
Omagh Court Office	4			4
Londonderry Court Office	8		2	10
Coleraine Court Office	9			9
Newry Court Office	10		1	11
Ballymena Court Office	2			2
Total	45	1	5	51

Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed

	Ancillary relief	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	3		3
Downpatrick Court Office	2		2
Craigavon Court Office	5	1	6
Armagh Court Office	1		1
Omagh Court Office	4		4
Londonderry Court Office	3	1	4
Coleraine Court Office	9		9
Newry Court Office	9		9
Ballymena Court Office	4		4
Dungannon Court Office	1		1
Total	41	2	43

Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions

	Issue to date decree granted	Date decree granted to date absolute issued
Laganside Courts	29	8
Newtownards Court Office	53	8
Downpatrick Court Office	29	8
Craigavon Court Office	34	9
Omagh Court Office	30	8
Londonderry Court Office	51	8
Coleraine Court Office	28	8
Newry Court Office	30	8
Total	32	8

Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications⁴

	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	26
Downpatrick Court Office	33
Craigavon Court Office	22
Armagh Court Office	93
Omagh Court Office	22
Londonderry Court Office	4
Coleraine Court Office	63
Newry Court Office	20
Ballymena Court Office	36
Dungannon Court Office	113
Total	35

⁴Excludes non-court disposals

Licences

Table 32: Licences received and disposed

Court Office	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Coleraine	11	9
Newtownards	14	5
Newry	6	5
Laganside Courts	34	33
Craigavon	7	6
Omagh	8	9
Londonderry	7	5
Total	87	72

County Court Judge and District Judge Sitting Days

Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days⁵

	Total time			Total criminal time	Total civil time	Total family time
	Number of sitting days	Average sitting	Total time			
Antrim	96	2:46:34	266:31:00	253:01:00	12:50:00	0:40:00
Ballymena	11	4:01:21	44:15:00	0:00:00	30:15:00	14:00:00
Laganside	462	3:24:16	1572:56:00	689:58:00	347:02:00	535:56:00
Armagh	31	2:27:05	76:00:00	2:20:00	73:33:00	0:07:00
Limavady	2	4:57:30	9:55:00	0:00:00	9:50:00	0:05:00
Lisburn	13	2:39:55	34:39:00	8:09:00	26:15:00	0:15:00
Magherafelt	6	1:09:10	6:55:00	0:00:00	6:55:00	0:00:00
Dungannon	112	3:14:08	362:23:00	269:54:00	45:34:00	46:55:00
Downpatrick	47	2:33:24	120:10:00	100:05:00	17:35:00	2:30:00
Craigavon	117	1:51:20	217:07:00	120:16:00	33:58:00	62:53:00
Strabane	8	2:03:45	16:30:00	0:00:00	15:40:00	0:50:00
Omagh	26	3:23:13	88:04:00	21:01:00	47:00:00	20:03:00
Enniskillen	6	3:31:50	21:11:00	0:00:00	19:55:00	1:16:00
Coleraine	24	2:50:00	68:00:00	23:05:00	28:20:00	16:35:00
Londonderry	98	2:08:48	210:23:00	112:39:00	51:56:00	45:48:00
Newtownards	36	2:17:05	82:15:00	11:25:00	67:00:00	3:50:00
Newry	118	2:00:20	236:40:00	201:31:00	31:07:00	4:02:00
Total	1213	2:49:51	3433:54:00	1813:24:00	864:45:00	755:45:00

⁵A 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

APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES

Amount awarded

This relates to the monetary value awarded in cases such as small claims and ordinary civil bills. On occasion the amount awarded may be unliquidated which means that the claim was not made for a specific amount of money, but rather, for example, damage caused to a property, for repairs for damage caused or for faulty workmanship.

Application

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

Case

The proceedings, arguments and evidence in court and the court hearing.

Certificate of Readiness (COR)

When a small claim or civil bill is contested by the respondent, the matter will proceed to the county court for judgment. Before the case can be heard, both parties must contribute to the completion of a Certificate of Readiness (COR) which informs the court that the case is ready to heard and can therefore be listed by the court for hearing.

County Court Judge (CCJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court and the Crown Court. In the County Court, they will sit on business such as ordinary civil bills (with a value over £10,000 and up to £30,000), criminal damage, licences, equity, ejectment and divorces.

Court Disposal

Includes all cases issued with a final order by County Court Judge or District Judge.

Criminal Damage

These are cases in which there is an allegation that a property has been destroyed or damaged or where a person is alleged to have made threats, had intent, or was found to have anything on their property with intent to cause damage to another property.

Default Judgment

This is a judgment in favour of one party due to some failure to take action by the other party. In most cases this will be a judgment in favour of the applicant due to the failure of the respondent to contest the claim brought against them. The failure to take action is the default. The default judgment is the relief requested in the party's original petition.

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.

District Judge (DJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court or Magistrates' Court. In the County Court they will sit on business such as small claims and ordinary civil bills (with a value up to £10,000).

Divorces

These are proceedings initiated in order to dissolve a marriage. Dissolutions of civil partnerships are also included within these figures. Following the issue of a divorce petition in the High Court, if it is a defended case it will be heard in the High Court and if it is an undefended case it may be heard either in the High Court or the County Court (depending on the choice of the individuals involved). Initially a Decree Nisi, judicial separation or nullity is granted, which is an initial order for divorce. Providing that no reason is provided to the court to challenge the nisi, a Decree Absolute, which is a final order for divorce that dissolves a marriage and permits an individual party to remarry, is made. A defended divorce is a proceeding in which an individual (the petitioner) applies for a divorce and the other party (the respondent) indicates that they wish to contest a divorce being granted at all, or on the reasons stated by the petitioner.

Equity

Any type of proceeding which seeks a court judgement on disputes relating to property disputes i.e. who owns it, and should damages be paid.

Ejectment

A legal document which seeks to recover possession of land and/or a dwelling house (e.g. where a tenant has stopped paying rent). Similar matters relating to properties owned with a mortgage are dealt with through proceedings within the Chancery Division of the High Court.

Issue

This is the process by which a complaint or claim is lodged with the court. It can also be described as the 'Received Date'.

Licences

These are applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for public houses and clubs, enabling their legal operation.

Matrimonial Application

These are applications attached to divorce proceedings such as Ancillary Relief applications that relate to financial relief to one or both parties following a petition for divorce, for example, maintenance and the division of property/finances.

Notice of Dispute (NOD)

When a small claim is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Dispute. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

Non court disposal

Includes all disposals not completed in court, for example settlements or withdrawals.

Notice of Intention to Defend (NID)

When a civil bill is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Intention to Defend. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

Ordinary civil bills

A legal document which seeks to recover damages for (i) personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falls on pavements and accidents at work and (ii) consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services. There have been a number of changes in the threshold for ordinary civil bills in recent years. Until 25 February 2013 ordinary civil bills related to cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £15,000 (prior to May 2011, the lower limit was £2,000). Following changes made on 25 February 2013, the upper limit for civil bills was extended to include cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £30,000.

Outstanding case

A case that is currently active within the County Court system, for example, live cases not yet disposed.

Received

The date the papers are lodged with the court and the fees receipted.

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 the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates court, when it is based in the first instance, on 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.

Small claims

Small claims allow certain types of claims to be decided informally by the county court, usually without the need of a solicitor or barrister. In general a small claim is one where the value to be claimed is not more than £3,000 (before May 2011 the upper limit was £2,000). Examples of small claims are (i) compensation for faulty services by, for example, builders, dry cleaners and garages (ii) compensation for faulty goods such as electrical goods (iii) disputes between landlords and tenants for rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs and (iv) debts or wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case, application or claim being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved, by either the court, an arrangement between parties out of court or by being withdrawn by the applicant.

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