

Analytical Services Group

County Court Bulletin

January to March 2017

Research and Statistical Bulletin 14/2017

Provisional quarterly figures

R Redmond

12 May 2017

Produced by Analytical Services Group,
Department of Justice.

For further information write to:

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

Telephone: 028 9072 8920

Email: rodney.redmond@courtsni.gov.uk

This bulletin is available on the Internet at:

www.courtsni.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at County Courts in Northern Ireland during the period January to March 2017 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 January to March 2017:
- There were 1,920 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 6% increase on the same quarter last year (1,809). In total, 2,720 civil bills were disposed, an increase of 14% on the number disposed during the same period in 2016 (2,393).
- 39 equity cases were received during January to March 2017, up 30% on the 30 cases received during the period January to March 2016, while 24 equity cases were disposed, an increase of 50% on the 16 disposed during the same period last year.
- A total of 306 ejectment cases were received, up 13% on the 270 cases received during January to March 2016, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 26%, from 160 in the same quarter last year to 201 this quarter.
- 2,803 small claims were received, up 12% on the 2,512 received during the same quarter last year. The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 8% from 2,157 during January to March 2016 to 2,326 this quarter.
- Ten criminal damage cases were received, the same number as that received during the period January to March 2016. No criminal damage cases were disposed during the quarter, compared to one in the same quarter last year.
- A total of 266 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, a 46% decrease on the 495 granted during the same period last year.
- County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,282 sitting days during the quarter, up 20% on the 1,069 sitting days recorded during the period January to March 2016. Some 62% of time was spent on criminal business with 27% spent on civil business and 12% on family business (compared to 50%, 33% and 17% respectively during January to March 2016). The increase in both the number of sitting days, and the proportion of time spent on criminal business is reflective of increased activity in the Crown Court during the period aimed at addressing a backlog of cases arising from the recent legal aid dispute that commenced during May 2015 and was resolved in February 2016.

CONTENTS

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	2
3. Findings	4
3.1 Ordinary civil bills	
3.2 Equity	
3.3 Ejectment	
3.4 Small claims	
3.5 Criminal damage	
3.6 Divorces	
3.7 Licences	
3.8 Sitting Days	
Appendix 1 – Tables	12
Appendix 2 – Explanatory Notes	29

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: January – March 2007 to January - March 2017	4
Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	5
Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	6
Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	7
Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	8
Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	9
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2017	10
Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017	11

Table	Page
Table 1: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received	12
Table 2: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with NID received by Judicial Level	13
Table 3: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed	14
Table 4: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded	15
Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR	15
Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR	16
Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases	16

<u>Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications</u>	17
<u>Table 9: Equity cases and applications received</u>	17
<u>Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed</u>	18
<u>Table 11: Outstanding equity cases</u>	18
<u>Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity</u>	19
<u>Table 13: Ejectment cases received</u>	19
<u>Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed</u>	20
<u>Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID</u>	20
<u>Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment</u>	20
<u>Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received</u>	21
<u>Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NOD received</u>	21
<u>Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed</u>	22
<u>Table 20: Outstanding claims with NOD</u>	23
<u>Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims</u>	23
<u>Table 22: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received</u>	24
<u>Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed</u>	24
<u>Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases</u>	24
<u>Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage</u>	24
<u>Table 26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted</u>	25
<u>Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued</u>	25
<u>Table 28: Matrimonial applications received</u>	25
<u>Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed</u>	26
<u>Table 30: Time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions</u>	26
<u>Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications</u>	26
<u>Table 32: Licences received and disposed</u>	27
<u>Table 33: County Court Judge & District Judge Sitting Days</u>	28

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 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 of county court data, to the current calendar year 2017.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the second quarter of 2017 and will be published on 11th August 2017.

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.

2.6 Counting rules

Receipts are counted from the date the case is entered onto ICOS and the fees are received. 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” will replace 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). Data will also continue to be published by the seven existing County Court Divisions until the end of 2016.

2.6 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.

2.7 Revisions

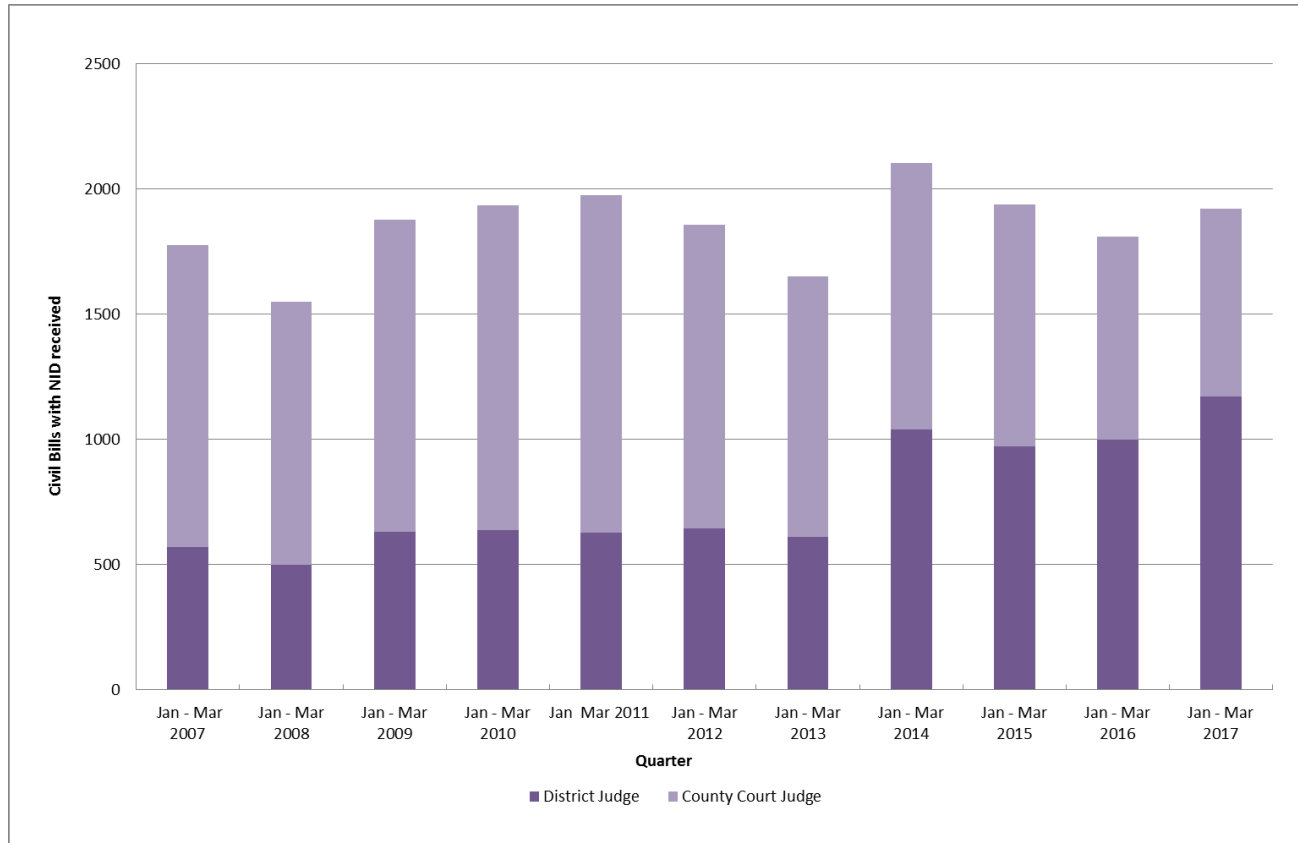
Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note ‘Policy Statement on Revisions’ which can be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website (www.courtsni.gov.uk). Incorrect figures of changes to this publication will be published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

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Ordinary civil bills

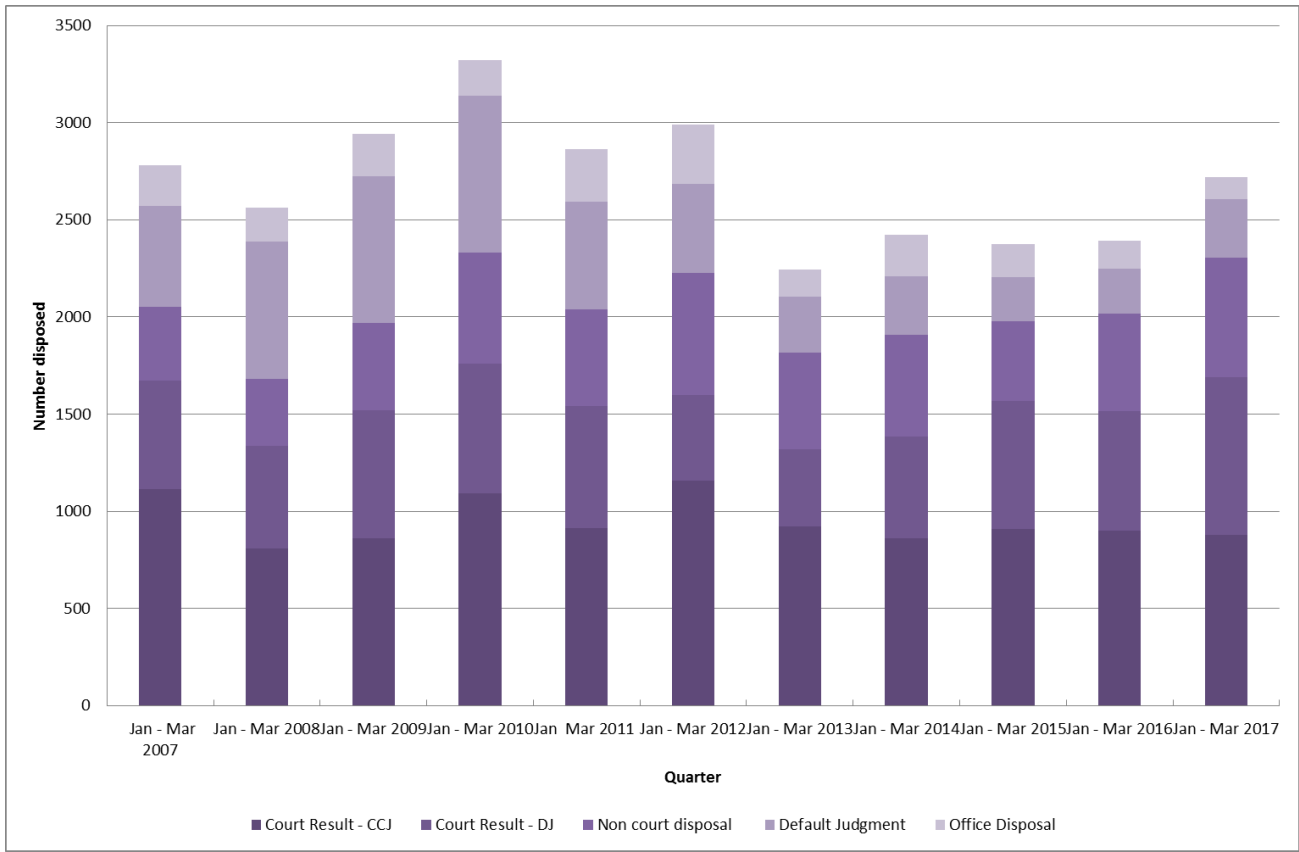
There were 1,920 civil bills with a notice of intention to defend (NID) received, a 6% increase on the same quarter last year (1,809) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Civil bills with NID received: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017



In total, 2,720 civil bills were disposed, an increase of 14% on the 2,393 disposed during the same period in 2016 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Civil bills disposed, by method of disposal: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017



The average time taken from issue to disposal of a civil bill was 57 weeks, compared to the 56 weeks reported for the same quarter in 2016.

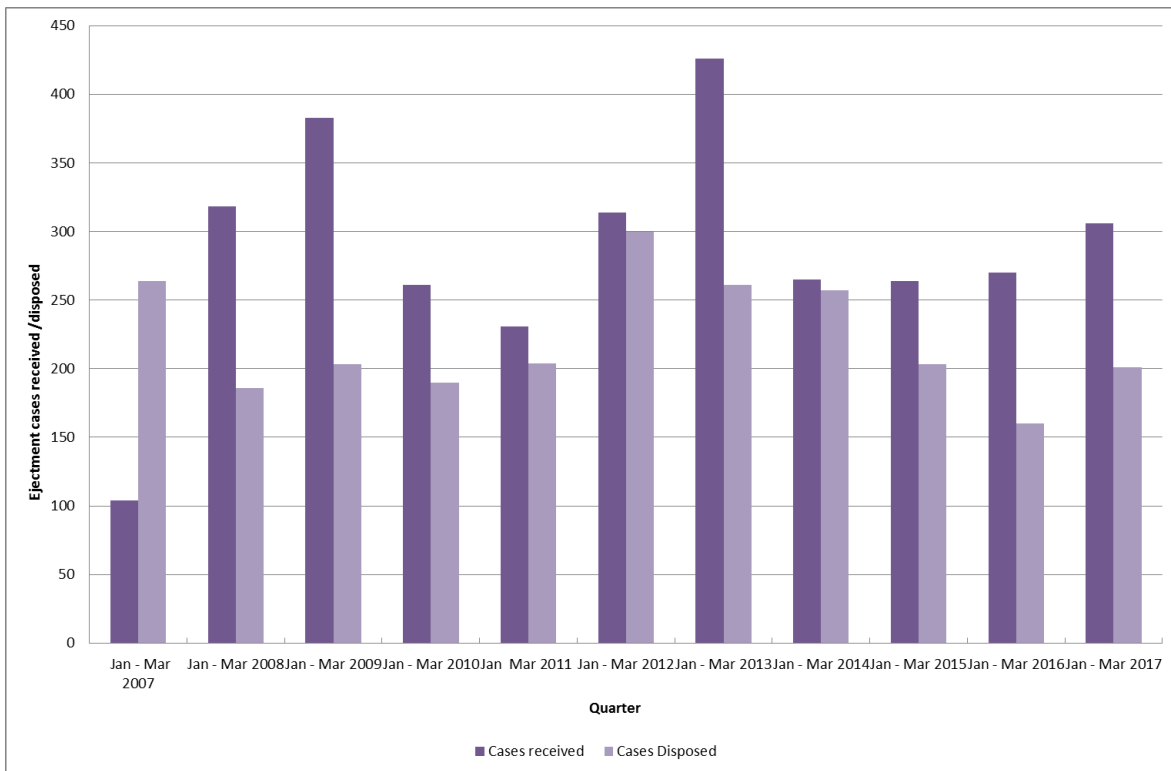
3.2 Equity

A total of 39 equity cases were received during January to March 2017, a 30% increase on the number received during the period January to March 2016 (30), while the number of equity cases disposed increased from 16 during the period January to March 2016, to 24 this quarter. The average time taken from issue to disposal of equity cases was 84 weeks, up from 54 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 306 ejectment cases were received, up 13% on the 270 cases received during January to March 2016, with the number of ejectment cases disposed increasing by 26%, from 160 in the same quarter last year to 201 this quarter (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Ejectment cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017



The average time taken from issue to disposal for ejectment cases was 20 weeks, compared to 21 weeks during the January to March quarter in 2016.

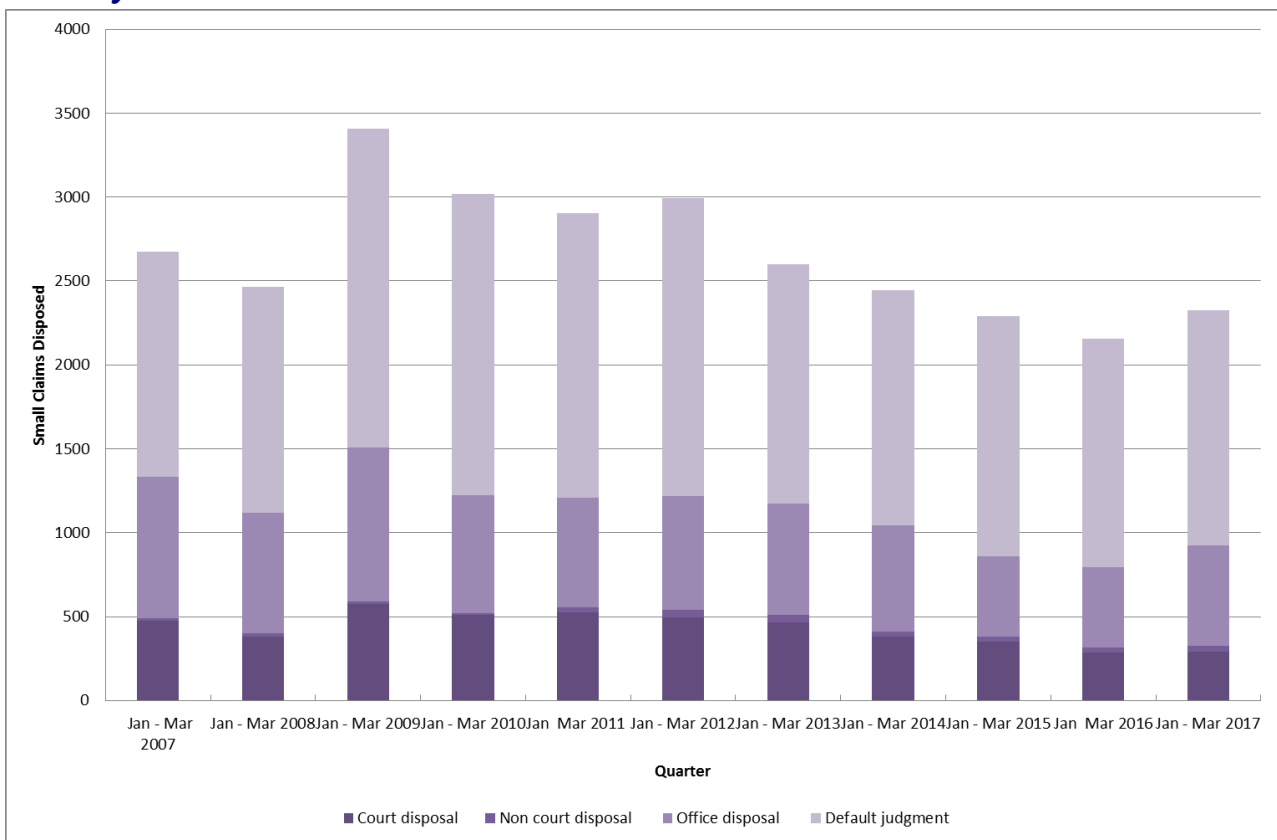
3.4 Small claims

2,803 small claims were received, up 12% on the 2,512, received during the same quarter last year.

The number of small claims cases disposed increased by 8% from 2,157 during January to March 2016 to 2,326 this quarter.

Of the 2,326 small claims disposed during the quarter, the majority (60%) were disposed by way of default judgment, a situation observed during each of the January to March quarters since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Small claims cases disposed, by type of disposal: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017

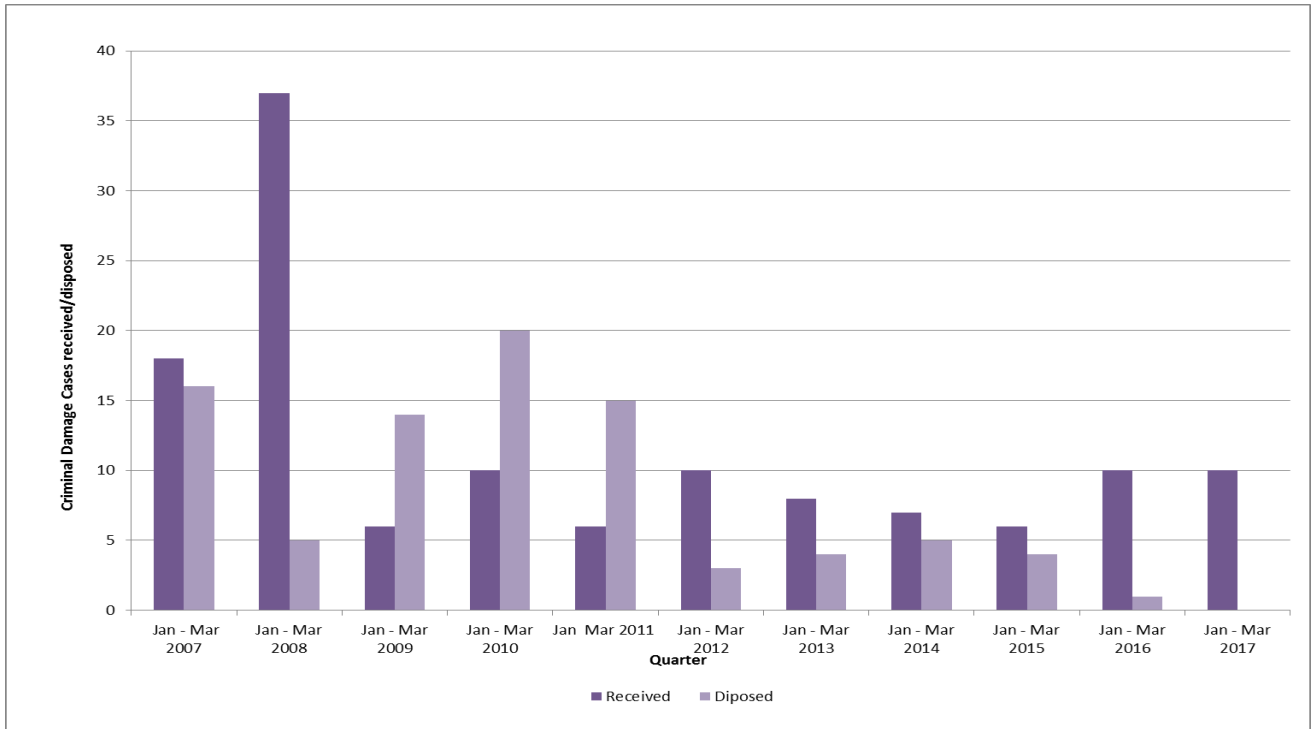


The average number of weeks from issue to disposal for small claims cases was 18 weeks, compared to 21 weeks during the corresponding quarter last year.

3.5 Criminal Damage

Ten criminal damage cases were received, with none disposed during the quarter. This compares with ten cases received and one case disposed during the same quarter in 2016 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Criminal Damage cases received and disposed: January - March 2007 to January - March 2017



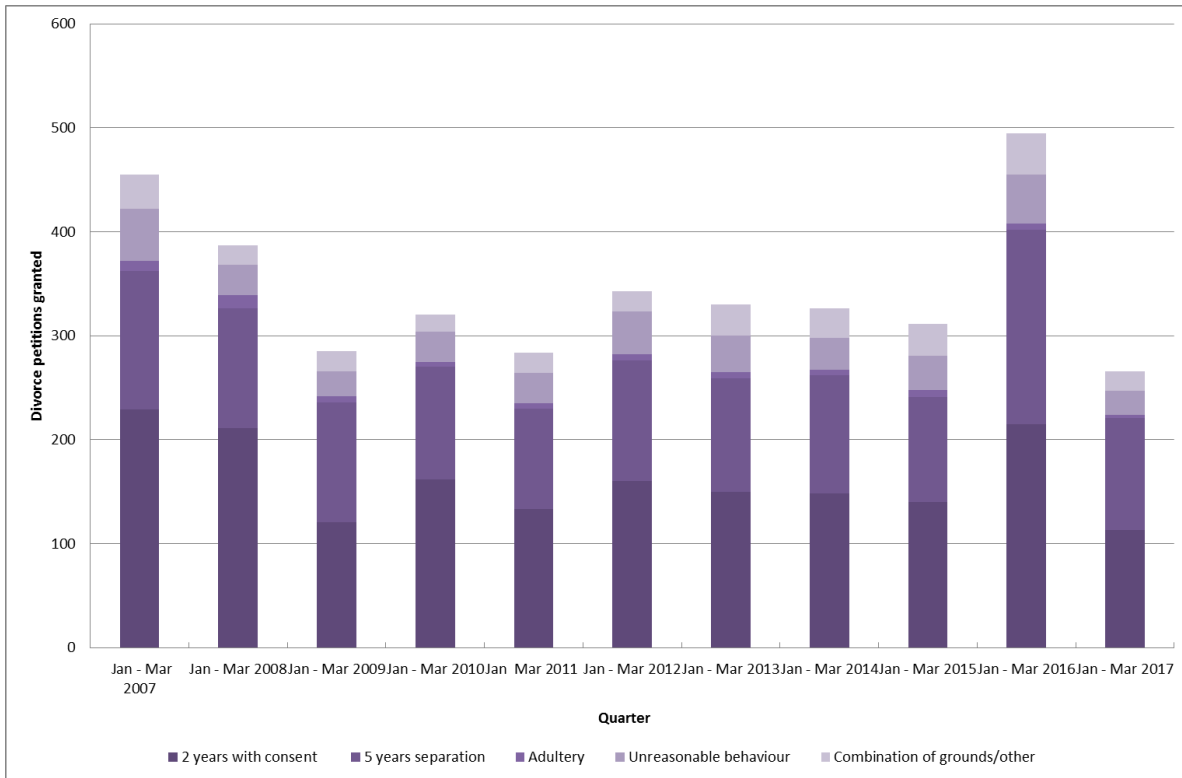
3.6 Divorces

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

A total of 266 divorce decrees were granted in the county court, down 46% on the 495 granted during the same period last year.

The main type of divorce decree granted was '2 years with consent' accounting for 42% of decrees (113), followed by '5 years separation', 41% (108) of decrees (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted, by type: January - March 2007 to January – March 2017



A total of 342 decrees absolute were issued in the county court, a decrease of 20% on the 425 issued during the period January to March 2016. Again the most common type of decree absolute was ‘2 years with consent’, accounting for 45% (153) of cases.

The average time taken from issue to the date a divorce decree was granted was 30 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 32 weeks and eight weeks during the same period last year.

3.7 Licences

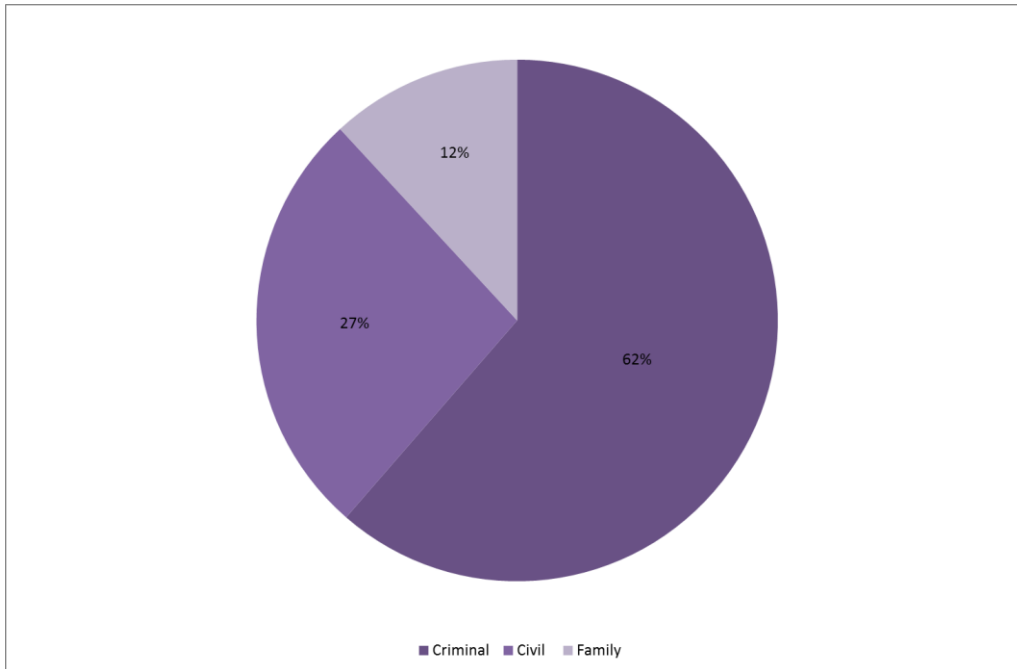
There were 43 licence applications received and 45 disposed, compared to the 45 received and 50 disposed during the same quarter last year.

3.8 Sitting Days

County Court and District Judges sat a total of 1,282 sitting days during the quarter, up 20% on the 1,069 sitting days recorded during the period January to March 2016.

Within these 1,282 sitting days, 62% of time was spent on criminal business, 27% of time was spent on civil business and 12% of time was spent on family business (Figure 7).

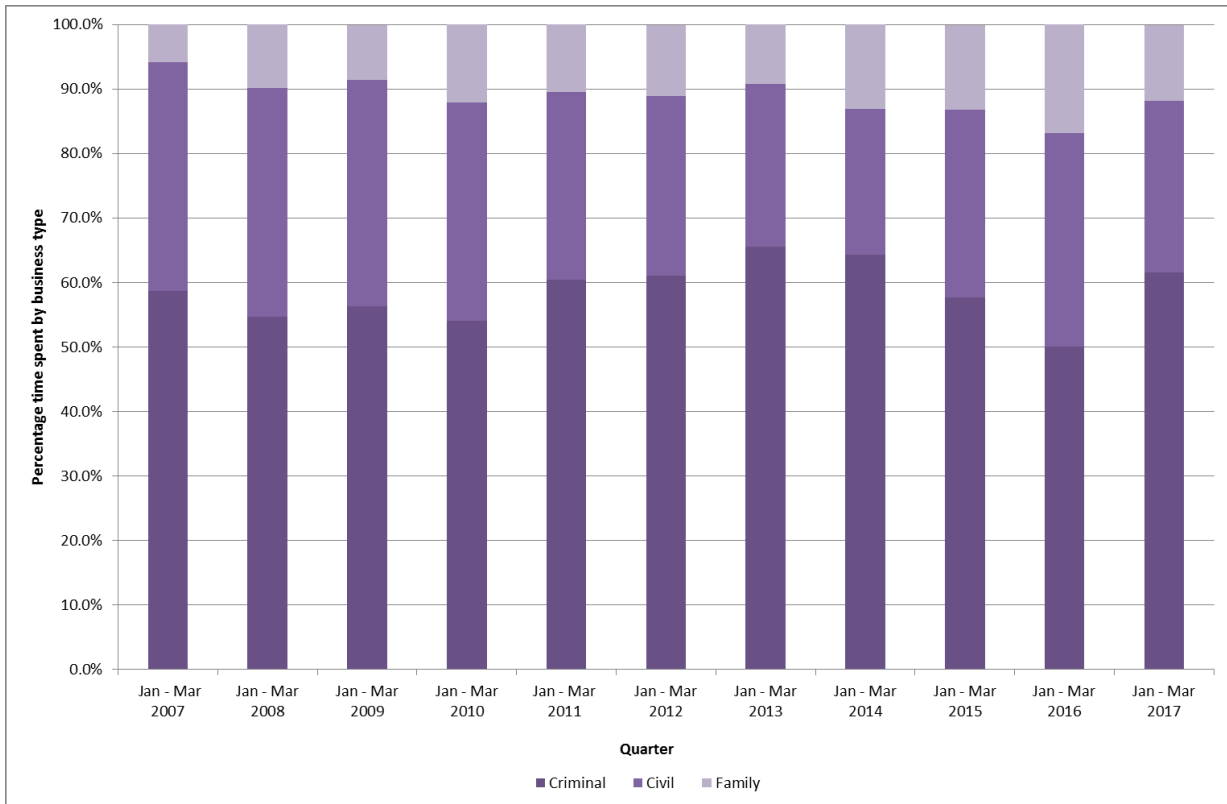
Figure 7: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2017



The proportion of time spent on criminal business fluctuated during January to March quarter since 2007, peaking at 66% during the quarter January to March 2013. This is largely reflective of County Court Judges dealing with increased volumes of cases in the Crown Court over the period.

The proportion of time spent on criminal business then decreased to 50% during January to March 2016. This decrease 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 has increased while the backlog of cases arising from the dispute is addressed. This has resulted in an increase both in the number of days sat by County Court Judges and the proportion of time spent on criminal business (62%) during January to March 2017.

Figure 8: County Court Sitting Days by Business Type: January - March 2007 to January – March 2017



APPENDIX 1

Civil Bills

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

Case	Laganside Courts	504
	Newtownards Court Office	169
	Downpatrick Court Office	7
	Craigavon Court Office	102
	Armagh Court Office	29
	Omagh Court Office	97
	Antrim Court Office	10
	Londonderry Court Office	79
	Enniskillen Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	100
	Newry Court Office	61
	Ballymena Court Office	7
	Lisburn Court Office	15
	Dungannon Court Office	7
	Civil Processing Centre	1741
Total	2929	
Application	Laganside Courts	351
	Newtownards Court Office	131
	Downpatrick Court Office	8
	Craigavon Court Office	70
	Armagh Court Office	6
	Omagh Court Office	95
	Antrim Court Office	17
	Londonderry Court Office	60
	Coleraine Court Office	43
	Newry Court Office	73
	Ballymena Court Office	10
	Lisburn Court Office	40
	Civil Processing Centre	361
	Total	1265

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

	District judge	County court judge	Total
Laganside Courts	347	300	647
Newtownards Court Office	173	41	214
Downpatrick Court Office	4	4	8
Craigavon Court Office	92	43	135
Armagh Court Office	22	8	30
Omagh Court Office	83	58	141
Strabane Court Office	1	1	2
Antrim Court Office	10	2	12
Londonderry Court Office	80	42	122
Enniskillen Court Office	3	0	3
Coleraine Court Office	78	65	143
Newry Court Office	66	36	102
Magherafelt Court Office	2	0	2
Ballymena Court Office	6	2	8
Lisburn Court Office	12	3	15
Dungannon Court Office	7	1	8
Civil Processing Centre	186	142	328
Total	1172	748	1920

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	572	307	187	14	51	1131
	Newtownards Court Office	41	177	83	7	7	315
	Downpatrick Court Office	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Craigavon Court Office	81	6	69	3	6	165
	Armagh Court Office	2	3	7	0	0	12
	Banbridge Court Office	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Omagh Court Office	56	110	34	3	7	210
	Strabane Court Office	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Antrim Court Office	0	1	2	0	0	3
	Londonderry Court Office	32	65	37	2	8	144
	Enniskillen Court Office	0	0	5	0	0	5
	Coleraine Court Office	42	73	101	1	11	228
	Newry Court Office	31	57	51	1	7	147
	Ballymena Court Office	1	7	1	0	0	9
	Lisburn Court Office	18	0	5	2	2	27
	Dungannon Court Office	1	1	10	0	0	12
	Civil Processing Centre	2	2	18	268	17	307
Total	879	811	613	301	116	2720	
Application	Laganside Courts	44	18	161	0	0	223
	Newtownards Court Office	12	17	25	0	0	54
	Downpatrick Court Office	6	0	1	0	0	7
	Craigavon Court Office	9	0	26	0	0	35
	Armagh Court Office	0	0	3	0	0	3
	Omagh Court Office	5	8	35	0	0	48
	Antrim Court Office	4	1	4	0	0	9
	Londonderry Court Office	5	6	28	0	0	39
	Coleraine Court Office	7	8	16	0	0	31
	Newry Court Office	6	8	22	0	0	36
	Ballymena Court Office	1	1	4	0	0	6
	Lisburn Court Office	3	0	1	0	0	4
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	25	0	0	25
	Total	102	67	351	0	0	520

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

		No value	Less than £3000	£3000-14999	£15000-29999	£30000 and over	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	461	181	220	17	0	879
	Newtownards Court Office	52	66	93	7	0	218
	Downpatrick Court Office	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Craigavon Court Office	26	27	33	1	0	87
	Armagh Court Office	3	1	1	0	0	5
	Banbridge Court Office		1		0	0	1
	Omagh Court Office	46	41	75	4	0	166
	Antrim Court Office	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Londonderry Court Office	24	27	41	5	0	97
	Coleraine Court Office	25	46	39	5	0	115
	Newry Court Office	25	22	35	6	0	88
	Ballymena Court Office	3	2	3	0	0	8
	Lisburn Court Office	6	3	8	1	0	18
	Dungannon Court Office	1	0	1	0	0	2
	Civil Processing Centre	2	2	0	0	0	4
Total	674	421	549	46	0	1690	

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

Table 5: Outstanding civil bills with NID but no COR

	County court judge	District judge	Total
Laganside Courts	1315	801	2116
Newtownards Court Office	94	203	297
Downpatrick Court Office	2	5	7
Craigavon Court Office	113	162	275
Armagh Court Office	27	29	56
Omagh Court Office	258	234	492
Strabane Court Office	1	1	2
Antrim Court Office	4	10	14
Londonderry Court Office	128	152	280
Enniskillen Court Office	0	1	1
Coleraine Court Office	173	154	327
Newry Court Office	120	122	242
Ballymena Court Office	3	7	10
Lisburn Court Office	12	22	34
Dungannon Court Office	7	12	19
Central Office	1	0	1
Civil Processing Centre	259	274	533
Total	2517	2189	4706

Table 6: Outstanding civil bills with COR

	County court judge	District judge	Total
Laganside Courts	689	289	978
Newtownards Court Office	29	65	94
Downpatrick Court Office	3	0	3
Craigavon Court Office	54	110	164
Armagh Court Office	3	7	10
Omagh Court Office	82	75	157
Strabane Court Office	2	0	2
Antrim Court Office	1	2	3
Londonderry Court Office	31	44	75
Enniskillen Court Office	3	1	4
Coleraine Court Office	56	73	129
Newry Court Office	65	60	125
Limavady Court Office	1	0	1
Magherafelt Court Office	0	2	2
Ballymena Court Office	8	2	10
Lisburn Court Office	15	7	22
Dungannon Court Office	3	4	7
Civil Processing Centre	8	6	14
Total	1053	747	1800

Table 7: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases

Case	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	64
Newtownards Court Office	32
Downpatrick Court Office	9
Craigavon Court Office	44
Armagh Court Office	94
Banbridge Court Office	15
Omagh Court Office	65
Antrim Court Office	83
Londonderry Court Office	57
Coleraine Court Office	47
Newry Court Office	49
Ballymena Court Office	116
Lisburn Court Office	86
Dungannon Court Office	102
Civil Processing Centre	17
Total	57

Table 8: Time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications²

		Issue to disposal
Application	Laganside Courts	13
	Newtownards Court Office	10
	Downpatrick Court Office	9
	Craigavon Court Office	16
	Omagh Court Office	8
	Antrim Court Office	2
	Londonderry Court Office	6
	Coleraine Court Office	16
	Newry Court Office	13
	Ballymena Court Office	5
	Lisburn Court Office	2
Total	11	

²Excludes default judgements and office disposals

Equity

Table 9: Equity cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	8
	Newtownards Court Office	6
	Craigavon Court Office	2
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	7
	Londonderry Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	5
	Newry Court Office	2
	Lisburn Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	6
	Total	39
Application	Laganside Courts	1
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Omagh Court Office	5
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Coleraine Court Office	2
	Newry Court Office	3
	Civil Processing Centre	1
	Total	17

Table 10: Equity cases and applications disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	4	0	0	4
	Newtownards Court Office	3	0	0	3
	Downpatrick Court Office	1	0	0	1
	Craigavon Court Office	3	0	0	3
	Omagh Court Office	3	0	2	5
	Londonderry Court Office	3	0	0	3
	Coleraine Court Office	0	0	1	1
	Newry Court Office	2	1	0	3
	Ballymena Court Office	1	0	0	1
	Total	20	1	3	24
Application	Laganside Courts	0	0	1	1
	Newtownards Court Office	0	1	0	1
	Omagh Court Office	5	0	1	6
	Londonderry Court Office	0	0	1	1
	Newry Court Office	1	0	0	1
	Total	6	1	3	10

Table 11: Outstanding equity cases

Case	Laganside Courts	30
	Newtownards Court Office	17
	Downpatrick Court Office	3
	Craigavon Court Office	14
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	66
	Londonderry Court Office	16
	Coleraine Court Office	31
	Newry Court Office	31
	Ballymena Court Office	4
	Lisburn Court Office	1
	Dungannon Court Office	1
	Central Office	1
Civil Processing Centre	22	
Total	238	

Table 12: Time intervals in weeks for equity

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	42
	Newtownards Court Office	159
	Downpatrick Court Office	155
	Craigavon Court Office	59
	Omagh Court Office	115
	Londonderry Court Office	63
	Newry Court Office	69
	Ballymena Court Office	47
	Total	84
Application	Newtownards Court Office	0
	Omagh Court Office	18
	Newry Court Office	5
	Total	13

Ejectment

Table 13: Ejectment cases received

Case	Laganside Courts	64
	Newtownards Court Office	36
	Downpatrick Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	5
	Omagh Court Office	12
	Londonderry Court Office	13
	Coleraine Court Office	6
	Newry Court Office	4
	Lisburn Court Office	25
	Civil Processing Centre	139
	Total	306

Table 14: Ejectment cases disposed

		Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	28	47	0	75
	Newtownards Court Office	13	24	0	37
	Craigavon Court Office	0	24	0	24
	Omagh Court Office	22	0	1	23
	Londonderry Court Office	13	0	0	13
	Coleraine Court Office	11	0	1	12
	Newry Court Office	13	0	0	13
	Lisburn Court Office	0	4	0	4
	Total	100	99	2	201

Table 15: Outstanding ejectment cases with NID

Case	Laganside Courts	11
	Omagh Court Office	6
	Londonderry Court Office	3
	Coleraine Court Office	2
	Newry Court Office	7
	Civil Processing Centre	6
Total		35

Table 16: Time intervals in weeks for ejectment

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	20
	Newtownards Court Office	15
	Craigavon Court Office	20
	Omagh Court Office	24
	Londonderry Court Office	12
	Coleraine Court Office	20
	Newry Court Office	20
	Lisburn Court Office	52
	Total	20

Small Claims

Table 17: Number of small claims cases and applications received

Case	Laganside Courts	108
	Newtownards Court Office	29
	Downpatrick Court Office	5
	Craigavon Court Office	18
	Armagh Court Office	4
	Omagh Court Office	13
	Londonderry Court Office	25
	Enniskillen Court Office	5
	Coleraine Court Office	17
	Newry Court Office	32
	Ballymena Court Office	7
	Lisburn Court Office	8
	Dungannon Court Office	1
	Civil Processing Centre	2531
Total	2803	
Application	Laganside Courts	16
	Newtownards Court Office	5
	Craigavon Court Office	4
	Omagh Court Office	1
	Londonderry Court Office	1
	Coleraine Court Office	2
	Newry Court Office	3
	Civil Processing Centre	9
	Total	41

Table 18: Number of small claims cases with NODs received

Case	Laganside Courts	112
	Newtownards Court Office	39
	Downpatrick Court Office	3
	Craigavon Court Office	18
	Armagh Court Office	5
	Omagh Court Office	22
	Londonderry Court Office	23
	Enniskillen Court Office	7
	Coleraine Court Office	29
	Newry Court Office	31
	Ballymena Court Office	8
	Lisburn Court Office	10
	Dungannon Court Office	2
Civil Processing Centre	8	
Total	317	

Table 19: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed

		Court disposal	Non court disposal	Office disposal	Default judgement	Total
Case	Laganside Courts	123	11	54	9	197
	Newtownards Court Office	31	3	8	0	42
	Downpatrick Court Office	0	1	1	0	2
	Craigavon Court Office	24	2	11	2	39
	Armagh Court Office	7	0	3	0	10
	Omagh Court Office	31	0	5	1	37
	Londonderry Court Office	27	0	2	1	30
	Enniskillen Court Office	2	0		0	2
	Coleraine Court Office	23	6	4	3	36
	Newry Court Office	13	1	5	1	20
	Ballymena Court Office	4		1	0	5
	Lisburn Court Office	5	1	2	0	8
	Dungannon Court Office	2	0	0	0	2
	Civil Processing Centre	0	10	501	1385	1896
Total	292	35	597	1402	2326	
Application	Laganside Courts	17	6	0	0	23
	Newtownards Court Office	2	0	0	0	2
	Craigavon Court Office	3	0	0	0	3
	Omagh Court Office	1	0	0	0	1
	Londonderry Court Office	2	0	0	0	2
	Coleraine Court Office	2	0	0	0	2
	Newry Court Office	3	1	0	0	4
	Lisburn Court Office	1	0	0	0	1
	Civil Processing Centre	0	2	0	0	2
Total	31	9	0	0	40	

Table 20: Outstanding small claims with NOD

Laganside Courts	187
Newtownards Court Office	36
Downpatrick Court Office	5
Craigavon Court Office	18
Armagh Court Office	9
Omagh Court Office	17
Londonderry Court Office	43
Enniskillen Court Office	8
Coleraine Court Office	50
Newry Court Office	32
Magherafelt Court Office	1
Ballymena Court Office	15
Lisburn Court Office	6
Civil Processing Centre	16
Total	443

Table 21: Time intervals in weeks for small claims³

		Issue to disposal
Case	Laganside Courts	19
	Newtownards Court Office	19
	Craigavon Court Office	22
	Armagh Court Office	21
	Omagh Court Office	16
	Londonderry Court Office	14
	Enniskillen Court Office	15
	Coleraine Court Office	20
	Newry Court Office	19
	Ballymena Court Office	22
	Lisburn Court Office	12
	Dungannon Court Office	8
	Total	18
Application	Laganside Courts	8
	Newtownards Court Office	9
	Craigavon Court Office	17
	Omagh Court Office	10
	Londonderry Court Office	6
	Coleraine Court Office	7
	Newry Court Office	12
	Lisburn Court Office	4
	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	4
	Newtownards Court Office	2
	Craigavon Court Office	1
	Armagh Court Office	1
	Omagh Court Office	1
	Dungannon Court Office	1
	Total	10

Table 23: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed

Case		
	Laganside Courts	0
	Newtownards Court Office	0
	Craigavon Court Office	0
	Armagh Court Office	0
	Omagh Court Office	0
	Dungannon Court Office	0
	Total	0

Table 24: Outstanding criminal damage cases

Laganside Courts	29
Newtownards Court Office	4
Craigavon Court Office	4
Armagh Court Office	4
Omagh Court Office	16
Londonderry Court Office	2
Coleraine Court Office	3
Newry Court Office	2
Dungannon Court Office	1
Total	65

Table 25: Time intervals in weeks for criminal damage cases²

Laganside Courts	0
Newtownards Court Office	0
Craigavon Court Office	0
Armagh Court Office	0
Omagh Court Office	0
Londonderry Court Office	0
Coleraine Court Office	0
Newry Court Office	0
Dungannon Court Office	0
Total	0

²Excludes default judgements 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	30	32	1	3	6	72
Newtownards Court Office	15	13	0	3	1	32
Craigavon Court Office	8	10	0	3	3	24
Armagh Court Office	7	6	0		1	14
Omagh Court Office	5	7	1	2	2	17
Londonderry Court Office	19	17	0	2	3	41
Coleraine Court Office	28	18	1	9	2	58
Dungannon Court Office	1	5	0	1	1	8
Total	113	108	3	23	19	266

Table 27: Divorce petitions by number of absolutes issued

	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/other	Total
Laganside Courts	41	29	0	8	6	84
Newtownards Court Office	25	14	0	4	2	45
Craigavon Court Office	25	12	1	0	4	42
Armagh Court Office	15	10	0	2	3	30
Omagh Court Office	1	1	0	0	1	3
Londonderry Court Office	13	22	1	7	3	46
Coleraine Court Office	29	31	2	9	6	77
Ballymena Court Office	0	0	0	0	1	1
Dungannon Court Office	4	9		1	0	14
Total	153	128	4	31	26	342

Table 28: Matrimonial applications received

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	4	1	1	6
Newtownards Court Office	2	0	0	2
Craigavon Court Office	3	0	0	3
Armagh Court Office	3	0	1	4
Omagh Court Office	3	0	0	3
Londonderry Court Office	5	2	1	8
Coleraine Court Office	9	0	1	10
Ballymena Court Office	4	0	0	4
Total	33	3	4	40

Table 29: Matrimonial applications disposed

	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application to a master	Other	Total
Laganside Courts	1	1	0	2
Newtownards Court Office	2	1	1	4
Craigavon Court Office	1	0	1	2
Armagh Court Office	10	0	0	10
Londonderry Court Office	2	1	0	3
Coleraine Court Office	5	0	1	6
Ballymena Court Office	1	0	1	2
Total	22	3	4	29

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	33	7
Craigavon Court Office	24	8
Armagh Court Office	65	10
Omagh Court Office	30	6
Londonderry Court Office	31	8
Coleraine Court Office	24	8
Dungannon Court Office	39	10
Total	30	8

Table 31: Time intervals in weeks for divorce applications⁴

	Issue to disposal
Laganside Courts	33
Newtownards Court Office	15
Craigavon Court Office	5
Armagh Court Office	19
Londonderry Court Office	39
Coleraine Court Office	38
Ballymena Court Office	63
Total	27

⁴Excludes non-court disposals

Licences

Table 32: Licences

Court Office	Licences Received	Licences Disposed
Coleraine	2	1
Newtownards	6	2
Newry	1	1
Laganside Courts	19	26
Craigavon	7	7
Omagh	6	7
Londonderry	2	1
Total	43	45

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	112	2:39:46	298:15:00	283:00:00	14:45:00	0:30:00
Ballymena	9	4:00:06	36:01:00	0:00:00	34:26:00	1:35:00
Laganside	451	2:53:05	1301:06:00	611:34:00	400:58:00	288:34:00
Armagh	5	2:54:24	14:32:00	3:45:00	8:10:00	2:37:00
Banbridge@Newry	1	2:42:00	2:42:00	2:42:00	0:00:00	0:00:00
Limavady	1	1:45:00	1:45:00	0:00:00	1:30:00	0:15:00
Lisburn	15	2:52:32	43:08:00	14:33:00	25:00:00	3:35:00
Magherafelt	2	2:00:00	4:00:00	0:00:00	3:00:00	1:00:00
Dungannon	116	3:27:07	400:26:00	336:19:00	45:45:00	18:22:00
Downpatrick	83	1:47:46	149:06:00	133:49:00	13:57:00	1:20:00
Craigavon	130	2:45:19	358:13:00	253:57:00	46:22:00	57:54:00
Strabane	5	2:13:48	11:09:00	0:30:00	9:25:00	1:14:00
Omagh	26	3:26:46	89:36:00	51:00:00	33:05:00	5:31:00
Enniskillen	9	2:44:40	24:42:00	1:10:00	20:00:00	3:32:00
Coleraine	19	2:54:03	55:07:00	11:02:00	39:20:00	4:45:00
Londonderry	119	3:17:35	391:54:00	264:29:00	101:40:00	25:45:00
Newtownards	46	2:13:41	102:30:00	8:35:00	91:55:00	2:00:00
Newry	133	3:11:30	424:30:00	309:52:00	97:33:00	17:05:00
Total	1282	2:53:34	3708:42:00	2286:17:00	986:51:00	435:34:00

⁵ 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.

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.

Analytical Services Group,
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service,

Department of Justice

4th Floor, Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA

Email: Rodney.redmond@courtsni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9072 8920

www.courtsni.gov.uk