

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period April to June 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 are disaggregated solely by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period April to June 2017:
- There were 1,060 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was decrease of 7% from 1,138 in the same period the previous year.
- 10,007 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,129 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 3% (from 10,363) and a decrease of 1% (from 10,245) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the lowest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the April to June 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.
- 416 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 420 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 8% (from 385) and an increase of 14% (from 369) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the second lowest numbers of both youth defendants received and youth defendants disposed of during the April to June quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks, compared to 11 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,443 new civil and family applications were received and 1,197 civil applications were disposed of. This represents an increase of 17% (from 1,233) and an increase of 12% (from 1,072) 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 7 weeks, compared to 9 weeks in the corresponding period last year.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A Magistrates' court (other than a youth court or family proceedings court) is presided over by a district judge (Magistrates' court) sitting alone. The present complement of district judges (Magistrates' court) is twenty-one. The Magistrates' court hears and determines less serious criminal cases, cases involving youth and some civil and domestic cases including family proceedings.

The vast majority of all criminal offences dealt with in Northern Ireland are tried summarily in a Magistrates' court. A significant number of these offences are offences against Road Traffic Orders, such as the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1995 and the Road Traffic Offenders (NI) Order 1996, sometimes described as the 'penalty points' Order.

Magistrates' courts also deal with offences where the defendant can choose trial by jury but decides to have their case heard in the Magistrates' court. If the defendant chooses trial by jury, the case will be passed on to the Crown Court. It is estimated that where the defendant has a choice between summary trial and trial on indictment, approximately three out of four cases are dealt with summarily. This is mainly because this mode of trial is much quicker and the sentencing powers of a District Judge (Magistrates' court) are more restricted than those of a Crown Court Judge - the most serious punishment which a District Judge (Magistrates' court) can impose is 12 months in prison, unless consecutive terms of imprisonment are imposed for more than one offence, when the limit is extended to 18 months.

The youth court deals with young people who have committed criminal offences, and who are 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 2017.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the third quarter of 2017 and will be published on 3rd November 2017.

2.5 Data quality and validation

ASG statisticians based in the NICTS have invested significant time and effort creating an extensive computer programme within SPSS to validate the information downloaded from ICOS. The programme includes over 100 checks against downloaded court data to: (i) check consistency over time and between variables; (ii) assess reliability of data using logic checks; (iii) check that variables fall within accepted ranges; and (iv) check with the ICOS Support Team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download. The validation program produces user friendly tables highlighting the potential problems which are circulated to each Magistrates' court venue as a validation report.

There are Case Progression Officers who are responsible for: monitoring accuracy levels on ICOS, by carrying out sample checks on data entry and court resulting; ensuring all validations on ICOS and manual statistics returns are completed in a timely manner; providing advice and identifying training needs; monitoring the confirmation of ICOS criminal court resulting, including the inputting of adjournment codes; and promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and the negative impact on the reliability of management information.

The Case Progression Officers are given a two-week period from the date the validation report issues to have all records amended on ICOS. This ensures that the corrections are updated before the next download of files. After the files have been refreshed each weekend, all the data are then downloaded again, with the new download reflecting amendments made as a result of the validation reports. If any errors have not been corrected, they will continue to appear in the validation reports until the necessary amendments are made on ICOS.

The NICTS statistics team then ensure that all validations relating to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, SPSS syntax programming is then used to generate the tables in the publication.

Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form in the 2017 edition of Judicial Statistics (published on the 29th June 2018).

2.6 Counting rules

Receipts are counted from the date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office. Disposals are counted from the result date that a final order was made against the case changing the case status to 'Dealt With'.

2.6 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 6th June 2012. These were new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The impact of this change means that offences previously dealt with by the Magistrates' Court are no longer received in court, but are rather dealt with out of court, contributing to the decrease in Magistrates' Court business over this period. For further advice on differences in data between years, please contact the statistician responsible for this bulletin.

2.7 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 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 April to June 2017 there were 983 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 24 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 53 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of 8% (from 1,065), an increase of 100% (from 12) and a decrease of 13% (from 61) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

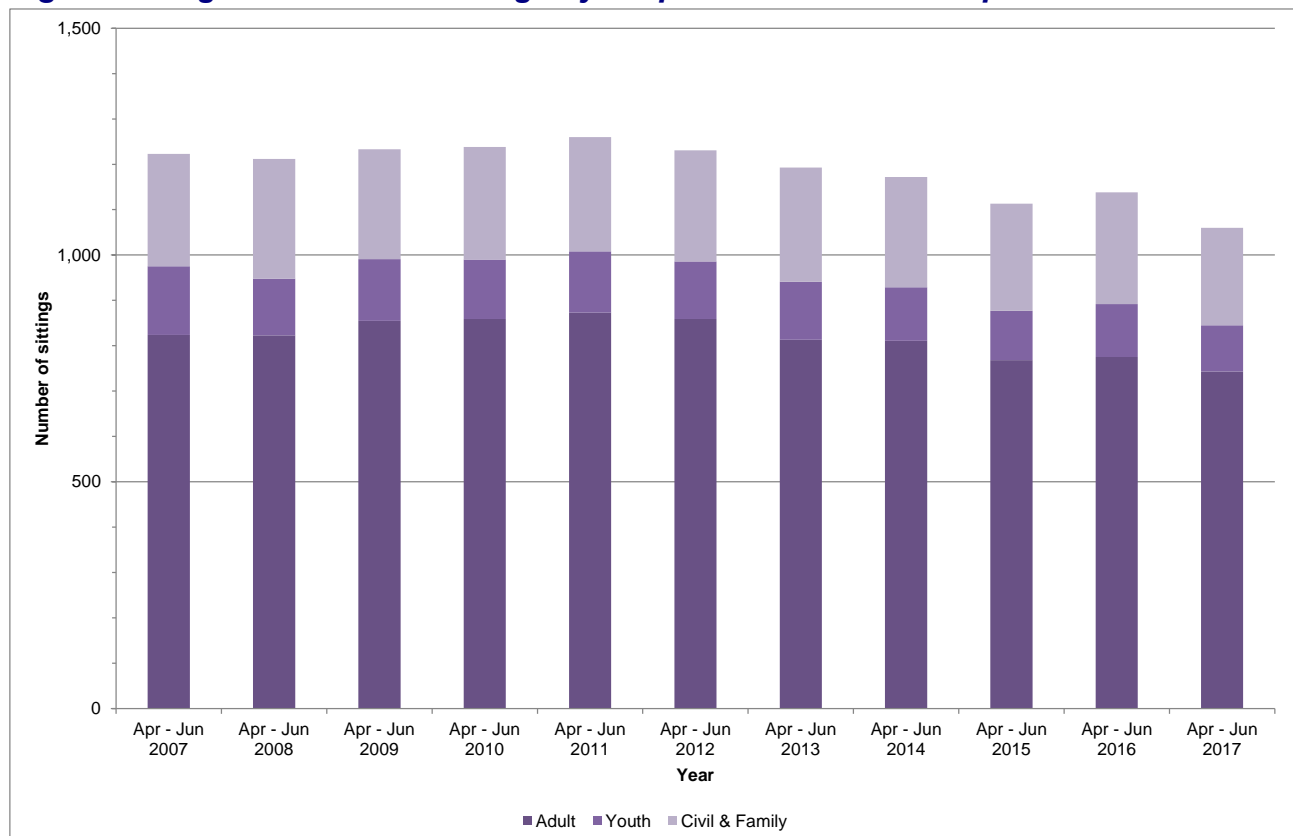
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for April to June 2017 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	667	23	53	743
Youth Criminal	102	0	0	102
Civil & Family	214	1	0	215
Total	983	24	53	1,060

Within these 1,060 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 had historically remained quite stable in the April to June quarters since 2007, but has started a gradual decrease over the last few years and is at its lowest point since recording began (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: April to June 2007 to April to June 2017



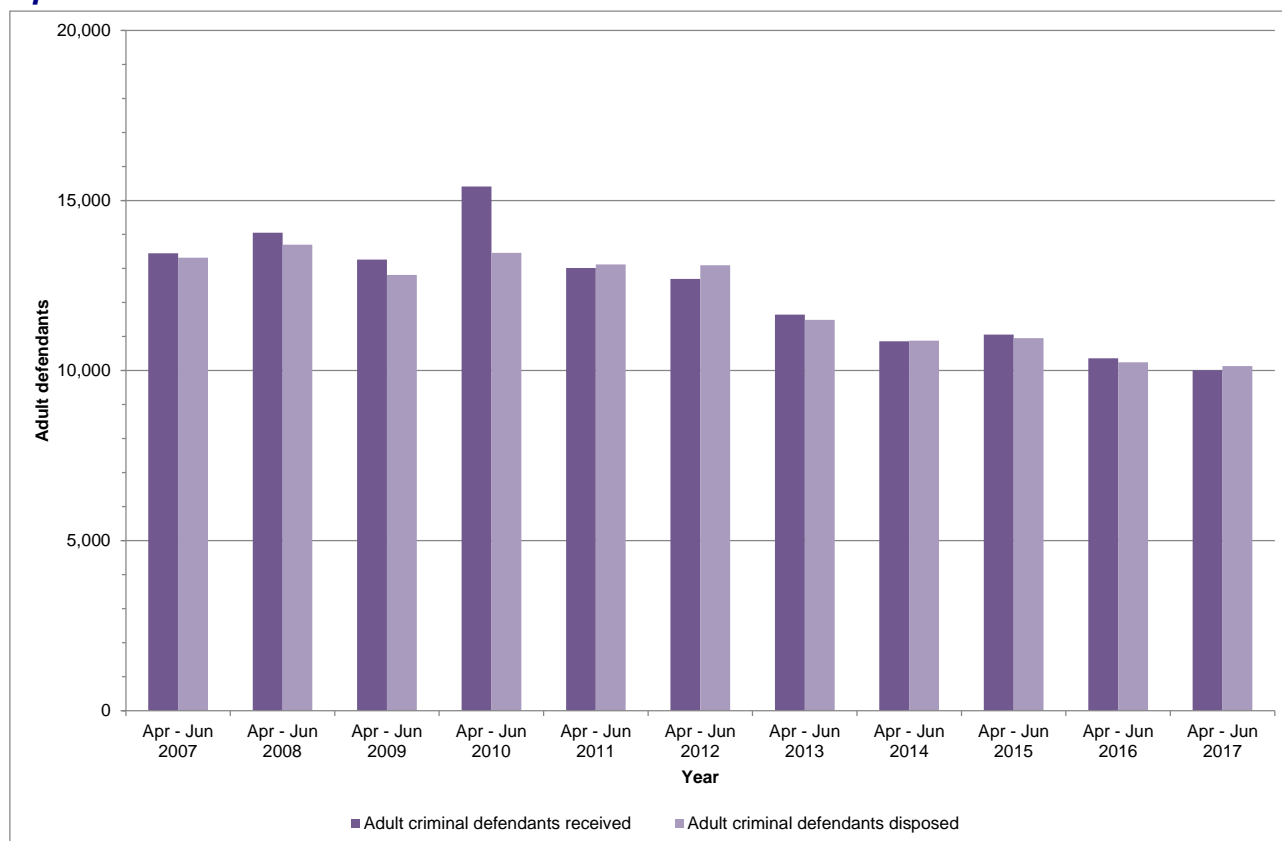
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During April to June 2017, 10,007 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,129 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 3% (from 10,363) and a decrease of 1% (from 10,245) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (76.5%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (74.5% in the same period in 2016).

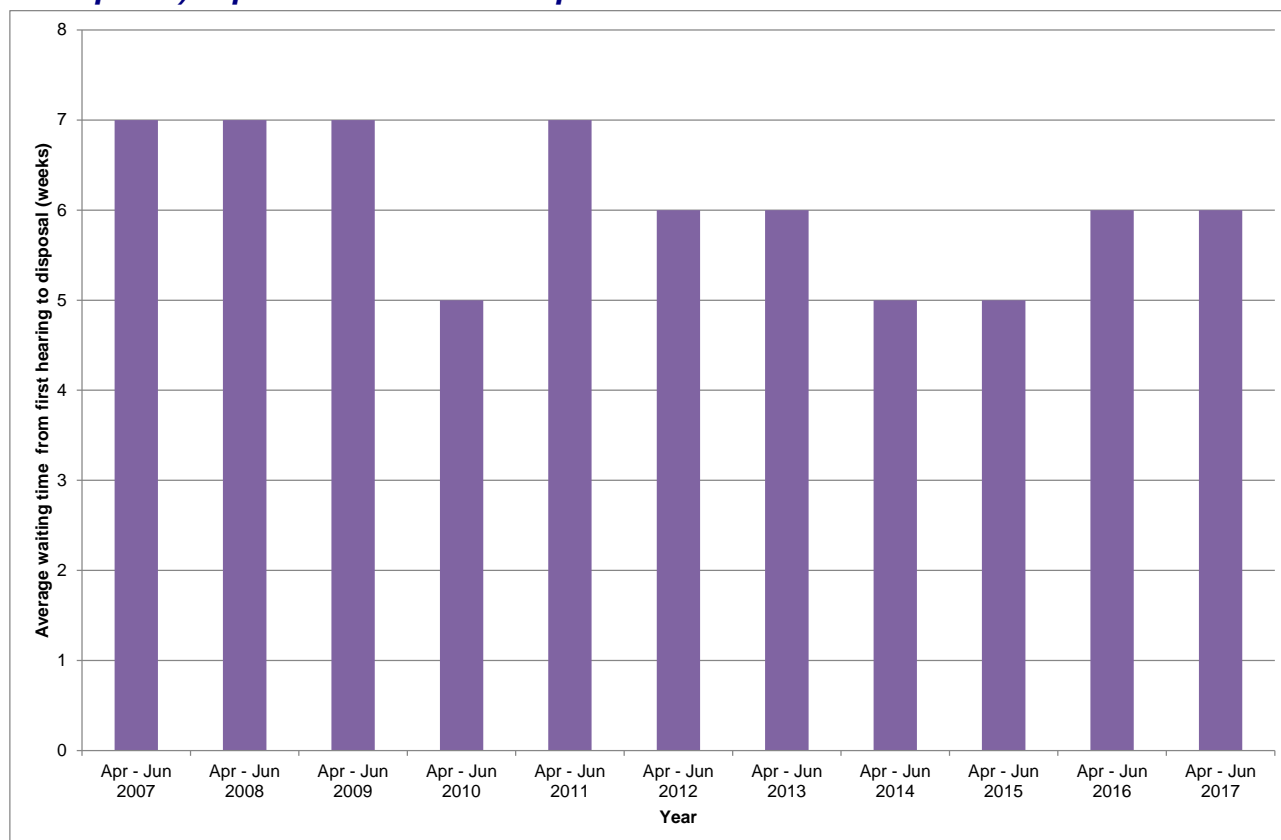
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter April to June over the last number of years, with both levels of receipts and disposals reaching their lowest level in April to June 2017 since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: April to June 2007 to April to June 2017



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal has varied over the past number of years, but has remained within the range of 5 to 7 hours in the April to June quarter (Figure 3). It was 6 weeks during April to June 2017, the same as the corresponding period in the previous year.

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in Adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): April to June 2007 to April to June 2017



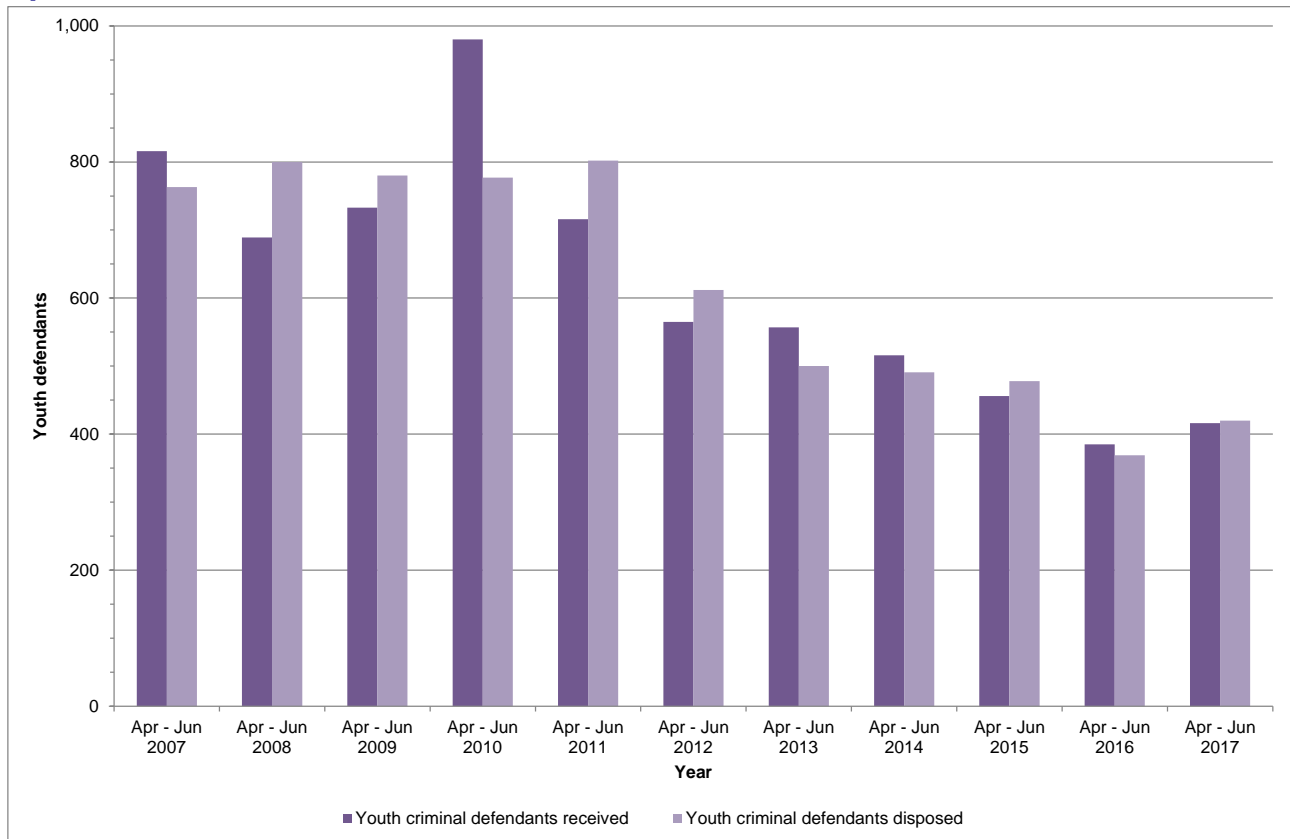
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During April to June 2017, 416 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 420 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 8% (from 385) and an increase of 14% (from 369) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Nearly all (99.3%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 96.7% in the same period in 2016).

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter April to June over the last number of years, with levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007, and a slight rise in both receipts and disposals in 2017 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: April to June 2007 to April to June 2017



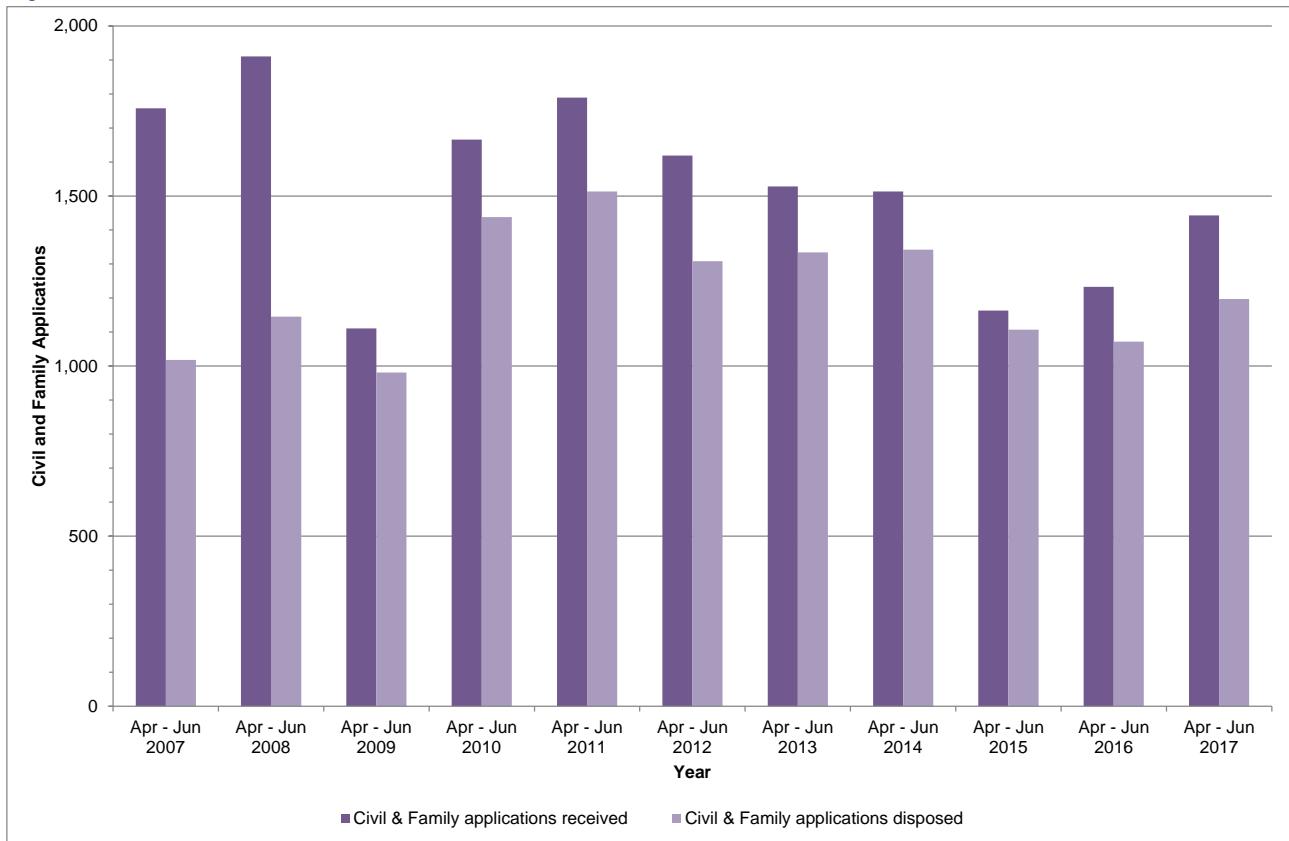
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (11 weeks for the same period in 2016).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During April to June 2017, 1,443 new civil and family applications were received and 1,197 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents an increase of 17% (from 1,233) and an increase of 12% (from 1,072) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has fluctuated during the quarter April to June between 2007 and 2017, with levels of receipts continuing an upwards trend that started from in April to June 2015, their lowest point in the time series, and disposals also increasing from April to June 2016 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: April to June 2007 to April to June 2017



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 7 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (9 weeks for the same period in 2016).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue¹

	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
Antrim	15	4:43:40	6	4:10:00	7	3:55:42
Ballymena	28	4:38:02	6	4:18:20	13	2:58:00
Laganside	206	3:01:21	34	2:26:26	60	4:11:09
Armagh	20	3:18:39	4	1:46:15	-	-
Banbridge@Newry	14	3:24:38	2	1:50:00	-	-
Limavady	13	3:02:18	-	-	-	-
Lisburn	31	4:16:27	5	2:30:00	19	3:02:06
Magherafelt	13	3:41:32	2	2:17:30	1	1:25:00
Dungannon	38	3:50:47	4	2:26:15	9	4:03:53
Downpatrick	23	4:31:44	3	1:48:20	-	-
Craigavon	31	4:55:38	6	3:29:10	15	2:41:40
Strabane	22	4:03:38	2	3:07:30	1	1:15:00
Omagh	24	3:36:40	5	1:38:00	9	2:54:20
Enniskillen	23	4:27:23	6	4:24:10	-	-
Coleraine	31	4:01:07	4	3:25:00	9	4:04:40
Londonderry	58	3:58:57	1	5:30:00	21	5:08:48
Newtownards	47	3:29:15	7	4:30:00	36	2:34:10
Newry	30	3:26:00	5	2:46:00	14	4:27:51
Total	667	3:41:24	102	2:58:16	214	3:38:49

Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue¹

	Adult criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Antrim	1	5:21:00	-	-
Laganside	6	2:09:10	1	1:00:00
Lisburn	3	0:51:40	-	-
Craigavon	1	4:10:00	-	-
Coleraine	2	6:15:00	-	-
Londonderry	4	1:08:45	-	-
Newtownards	5	0:55:00	-	-
Newry	1	0:30:00	-	-
Total	23	2:03:05	1	1:00:00

¹ 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 venue¹

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	10	0:28:00
Lisburn	10	0:44:30
Omagh	7	0:50:42
Londonderry	10	0:49:30
Newtownards	8	0:33:45
Newry	8	0:37:30
Total	53	0:40:28

Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,369	786	4	7	3,166
Newtownards Court Office	609	220	3	-	832
Downpatrick Court Office	317	41	-	-	358
Craigavon Court Office	519	103	1	-	623
Armagh Court Office	215	46	3	2	266
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	156	32	-	-	188
Omagh Court Office	161	85	-	-	246
Strabane Court Office	140	30	-	-	170
Antrim Court Office	230	82	-	-	312
Londonderry Court Office	528	199	-	2	729
Enniskillen Court Office	199	40	-	-	239
Coleraine Court Office	250	166	-	2	418
Newry Court Office	502	112	-	1	615
Limavady Court Office	91	53	-	-	144
Magherafelt Court Office	140	70	1	-	211
Ballymena Court Office	336	141	-	-	477
Lisburn Court Office	445	126	2	-	573
Dungannon Court Office	303	137	-	-	440
Total	7,510	2,469	14	14	10,007

² 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 venue²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,472	790	3	12	3,277
Newtownards Court Office	609	202	-	1	812
Downpatrick Court Office	304	43	-	-	347
Craigavon Court Office	576	101	1	-	678
Armagh Court Office	250	43	2	2	297
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	147	34	-	-	181
Omagh Court Office	169	70	-	-	239
Strabane Court Office	183	31	-	-	214
Antrim Court Office	245	82	-	-	327
Londonderry Court Office	481	194	-	1	676
Enniskillen Court Office	222	36	-	-	258
Coleraine Court Office	298	153	-	1	452
Newry Court Office	531	98	-	-	629
Limavady Court Office	107	50	-	-	157
Magherafelt Court Office	140	59	1	-	200
Ballymena Court Office	322	139	-	-	461
Lisburn Court Office	407	107	2	-	516
Dungannon Court Office	287	121	-	-	408
Total	7,750	2,353	9	17	10,129

Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	5.36	5.44	.78	6.22
Newtownards Court Office	5.75	6.18	.72	6.90
Downpatrick Court Office	3.66	5.85	.51	6.36
Craigavon Court Office	4.37	4.47	.52	4.99
Armagh Court Office	4.39	4.87	1.04	5.90
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.37	4.64	.52	5.17
Omagh Court Office	4.90	3.90	.47	4.37
Strabane Court Office	4.33	4.88	.71	5.59
Antrim Court Office	5.75	4.38	.55	4.93
Londonderry Court Office	5.15	5.49	.98	6.47
Enniskillen Court Office	4.45	8.33	1.03	9.36
Coleraine Court Office	5.48	4.89	.54	5.43
Newry Court Office	11.09	5.56	.25	5.82
Limavady Court Office	5.32	5.63	.58	6.21
Magherafelt Court Office	5.31	5.29	.49	5.78
Ballymena Court Office	5.39	4.26	.62	4.88
Lisburn Court Office	4.36	5.23	.87	6.10
Dungannon Court Office	4.99	3.76	.35	4.11
Total	5.47	5.27	.68	5.95

³ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{2 4}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	677	7	-	-	684
All Sexual Offences	114	-	-	2	116
All Burglary Offences	61	-	-	-	61
All Robbery Offences	8	-	-	-	8
All Theft Offences	456	-	-	9	465
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	105	109	-	-	214
All Criminal Damage Offences	167	-	-	-	167
All Offences Against the State	236	-	-	6	242
All Other Offences	214	1,417	-	-	1,631
All Drug Offences	477	1	-	-	478
All Motoring Offences	3,190	679	4	-	3,873
All Non-Police Offences	8	70	5	-	83
All Breach	102	39	-	-	141
Combination of charges	1,935	31	-	-	1,966
Total	7,750	2,353	9	17	10,129

Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	401	-	-	-	401
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,488	374	-	-	3,862
All charges withdrawn	1,375	717	-	-	2,092
Fixed penalty default	-	-	9	-	9
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1,993	1,216	-	-	3,209
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	493	46	-	-	539
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	-	-	-	17	17
Total	7,750	2,353	9	17	10,129

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

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	126	3	129
Newtownards Court Office	54	-	54
Downpatrick Court Office	2	-	2
Craigavon Court Office	27	-	27
Armagh Court Office	4	-	4
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5	-	5
Omagh Court Office	4	-	4
Strabane Court Office	5	-	5
Antrim Court Office	16	-	16
Londonderry Court Office	46	-	46
Enniskillen Court Office	16	-	16
Coleraine Court Office	27	-	27
Newry Court Office	13	-	13
Limavady Court Office	1	-	1
Magherafelt Court Office	4	-	4
Ballymena Court Office	29	-	29
Lisburn Court Office	27	-	27
Dungannon Court Office	7	-	7
Total	413	3	416

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	130	3	133
Newtownards Court Office	73	-	73
Downpatrick Court Office	4	-	4
Craigavon Court Office	17	-	17
Armagh Court Office	6	-	6
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	8	-	8
Omagh Court Office	5	-	5
Strabane Court Office	2	-	2
Antrim Court Office	23	-	23
Londonderry Court Office	39	-	39
Enniskillen Court Office	11	-	11
Coleraine Court Office	23	-	23
Newry Court Office	16	-	16
Magherafelt Court Office	6	-	6
Ballymena Court Office	18	-	18
Lisburn Court Office	22	-	22
Dungannon Court Office	14	-	14
Total	417	3	420

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	2.87	7.01	5.07	12.08
Newtownards Court Office	3.09	5.91	7.17	13.09
Downpatrick Court Office	3.50	7.18	8.29	15.46
Craigavon Court Office	5.43	6.08	.82	6.90
Armagh Court Office	4.61	6.75	6.00	12.75
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.63	15.08	4.31	19.39
Omagh Court Office	3.90	8.76	7.00	15.76
Antrim Court Office	2.82	3.77	4.84	8.62
Londonderry Court Office	3.53	9.17	3.40	12.57
Enniskillen Court Office	2.73	3.33	4.00	7.33
Coleraine Court Office	3.98	3.84	4.80	8.64
Newry Court Office	6.06	10.34	1.36	11.70
Magherafelt Court Office	1.57	5.71	6.40	12.11
Ballymena Court Office	2.75	6.64	4.10	10.74
Lisburn Court Office	2.80	6.86	2.86	9.71
Dungannon Court Office	2.27	11.64	3.81	15.44
Total	3.25	6.90	4.79	11.69

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	81	-	81
All Sexual Offences	3	-	3
All Burglary Offences	9	-	9
All Robbery Offences	1	-	1
All Theft Offences	35	-	35
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	-	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	44	-	44
All Offences Against the State	22	-	22
All Other Offences	4	2	6
All Drug Offences	18	-	18
All Motoring Offences	36	-	36
All Breach	2	1	3
Combination of charges	161	-	161
Total	417	3	420

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	3	-	3
Plea of guilty on all charges	218	-	218
All charges withdrawn	96	3	99
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	74	-	74
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	26	-	26
Total	417	3	420

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Fh&Dv (Magistrates Court)	
Laganside Courts	14	512	526
Newtownards Court Office	-	155	155
Downpatrick Court Office	2	40	42
Craigavon Court Office	3	53	56
Armagh Court Office	1	22	23
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	-	13	13
Omagh Court Office	6	40	46
Strabane Court Office	-	36	36
Antrim Court Office	2	16	18
Londonderry Court Office	2	91	93
Enniskillen Court Office	2	26	28
Coleraine Court Office	1	40	41
Newry Court Office	10	89	99
Limavady Court Office	-	13	13
Magherafelt Court Office		14	14
Ballymena Court Office	4	110	114
Lisburn Court Office	3	79	82
Dungannon Court Office	2	42	44
Total	52	1,391	1,443

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Fh&Dv (Magistrates Court)	
Laganside Courts	15	423	438
Newtownards Court Office	-	135	135
Downpatrick Court Office	1	28	29
Craigavon Court Office	6	39	45
Armagh Court Office	1	21	22
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	16	19
Omagh Court Office	5	28	33
Strabane Court Office	-	27	27
Antrim Court Office	1	17	18
Londonderry Court Office	2	69	71
Enniskillen Court Office	1	17	18
Coleraine Court Office	-	33	33
Newry Court Office	7	73	80
Limavady Court Office	-	10	10
Magherafelt Court Office	-	10	10
Ballymena Court Office	1	102	103
Lisburn Court Office	4	74	78
Dungannon Court Office	3	25	28
Total	50	1,147	1,197

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

	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	1.82	6.96	8.79
Newtownards Court Office	1.14	7.90	9.04
Downpatrick Court Office	1.30	5.14	6.44
Craigavon Court Office	1.50	6.50	8.00
Armagh Court Office	1.43	3.88	5.31
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.33	7.14	9.47
Omagh Court Office	2.26	1.76	4.02
Strabane Court Office	.97	2.81	3.79
Antrim Court Office	2.00	3.67	5.67
Londonderry Court Office	1.36	5.54	6.90
Enniskillen Court Office	1.47	1.23	2.70
Coleraine Court Office	1.65	4.51	6.16
Newry Court Office	1.93	4.41	6.26
Limavady Court Office	.76	2.14	2.90
Magherafelt Court Office	1.64	6.80	8.44
Ballymena Court Office	1.18	4.60	5.77
Lisburn Court Office	.58	5.61	6.19
Dungannon Court Office	4.78	1.97	6.75
Total	1.61	5.81	7.41

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	
New complaint	Non molestation	702	174	128	120	5	1,129
	Occupation	2	-	5	2	1	10
	Vary discharge non-molestation occupation	-	3	2	2	-	7
	Other Family Homes & domestic violence	-	-	1	-	-	1
Total		704	177	136	124	6	1,147

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.

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