

**Analytical Services Group**

**Magistrates' Court Bulletin**  
**October to December 2017**

**Research and Statistical Bulletin 04/2018**  
**Quarterly provisional figures**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at the Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period October to December 2017 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. On 31<sup>st</sup> 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 October to December 2017:
- There were 978 scheduled Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 7% from 1,047 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,668 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,354 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 1% in adult defendants received (from 9,737) and of 3% in adult defendants disposed (from 9,675) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the lowest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the October to December 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 average waiting time for the corresponding period last year.
- 374 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 360 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 14% (from 328) and of 9% (from 329) in youth defendants received and disposed respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the second lowest numbers of youth defendants received and disposed of during the October to December quarter since 2007 (the lowest being October to December 2016).
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks, compared to 13 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,192 new civil and family applications were received and 1,124 civil applications were disposed of. These represent increases of 4% (from 1,144) and of 3% (from 1,088) in applications received and disposed of 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 9 weeks, the same average waiting time as for 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 older than 10 years of age, but younger than 18 years of age. 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 calendar year 2017.

### **2.4 Frequency of Publication**

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the first quarter of 2018 and will be published on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

### **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 29<sup>th</sup> 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'.

## **2.7 Interpreting trends**

Changes to practice within the judicial system in general and the Magistrates' Court in particular, may impact upon business volumes presented in this bulletin. One example would be the introduction of Penalty Notices for Disorder on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012. These were new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The impact of this change means that offences previously dealt with by the Magistrates' Court are no longer received in court, but are rather dealt with out of court, contributing to the decrease in Magistrates' Court business over this period. For further advice on differences in data between years, please contact the statistician responsible for this bulletin.



## 2.8 Revisions

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the Department of Justice (DoJ) Statistical Note 'Statistics and research: Policy statement on revisions'<sup>1</sup> which may be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the DoJ website<sup>2</sup>. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

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<sup>1</sup> DoJ, 2010. *Statistics and Research: Policy statement on revisions*. [pdf] Department of Justice. Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/doj/policy-statement-on-revisions.pdf> [Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018].

<sup>2</sup> Department of Justice, 2017. *Policy Papers* [online] Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/policypapers> [Accessed 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018].

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During October to December 2017 there were 978 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 27 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 60 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of 7% (from 1,047), an increase of 59% (from 17) and an increase of 20% (from 50) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

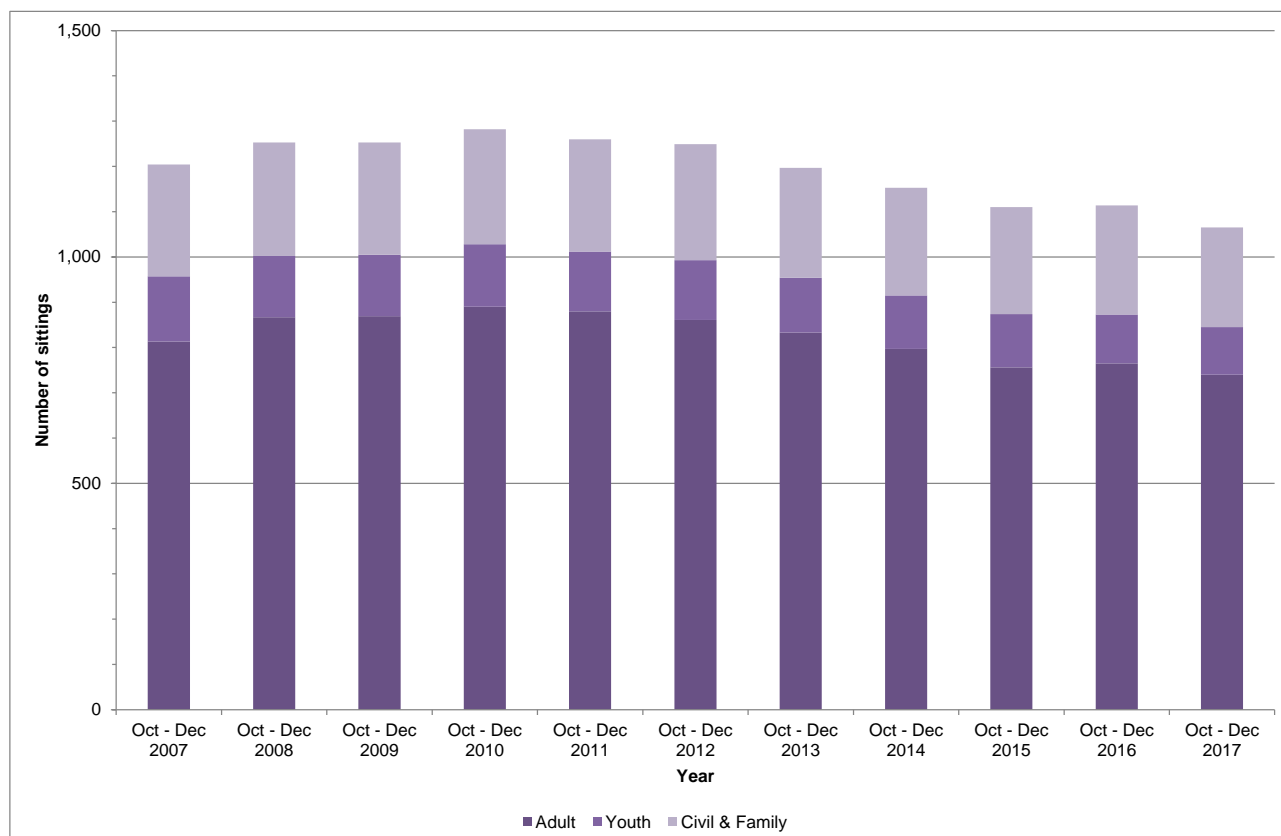
The Magistrates' sitting days for October to December 2017 may be categorised as follows:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	663	17	60	<b>740</b>
Youth Criminal	100	0	0	<b>100</b>
Civil & Family	215	5	0	<b>220</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1,060</b>

Within these 1,060 sitting days, 70% were adult criminal days, 9% were youth criminal days and 21% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has shown a gradual decrease since the October to December quarter of 2010, and is at its lowest point since recording began in 2007 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: October to December 2007 to October to December 2017**



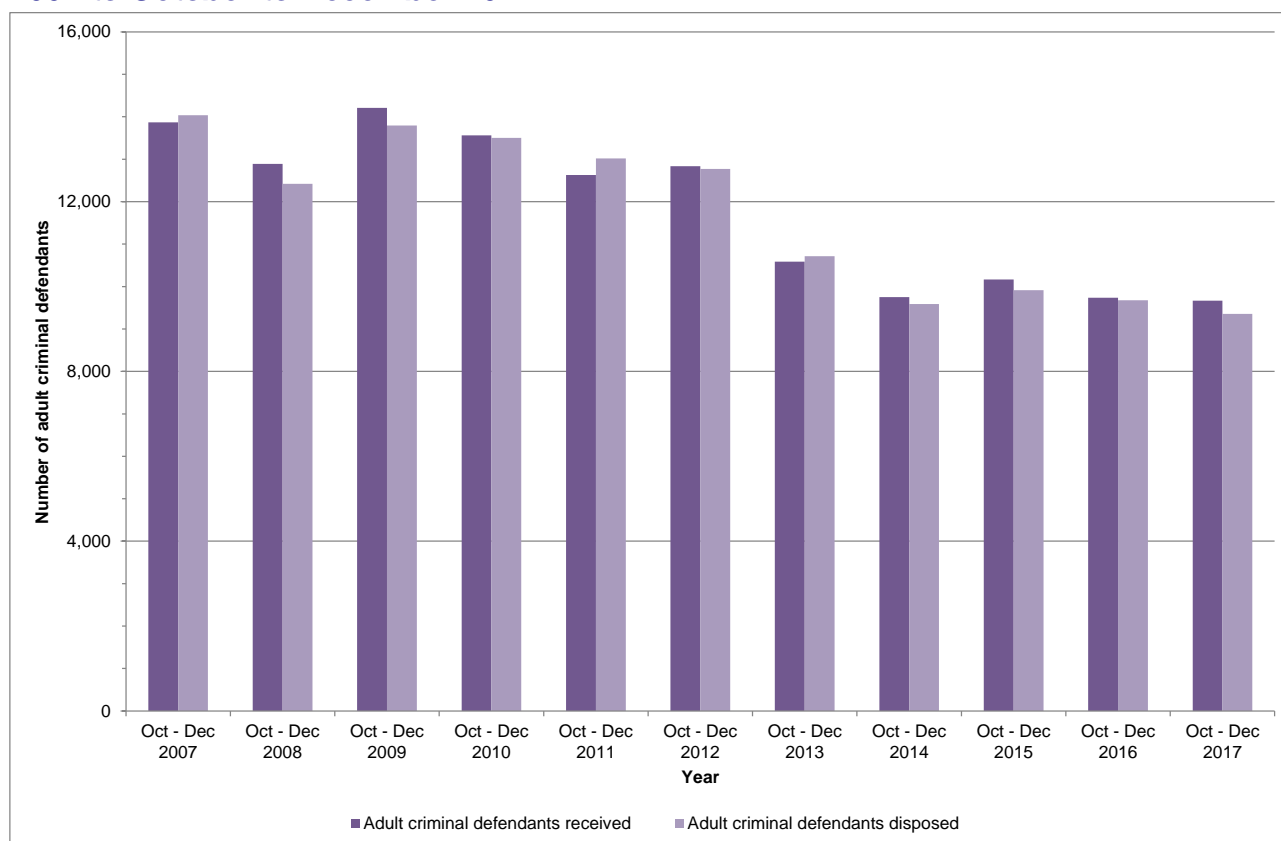
### 3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2017, 9,668 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,354 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 1% in defendants received (from 9,737) and 3% in defendants disposed (from 9,675) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (72.4%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (74.5% in the same period in 2016).

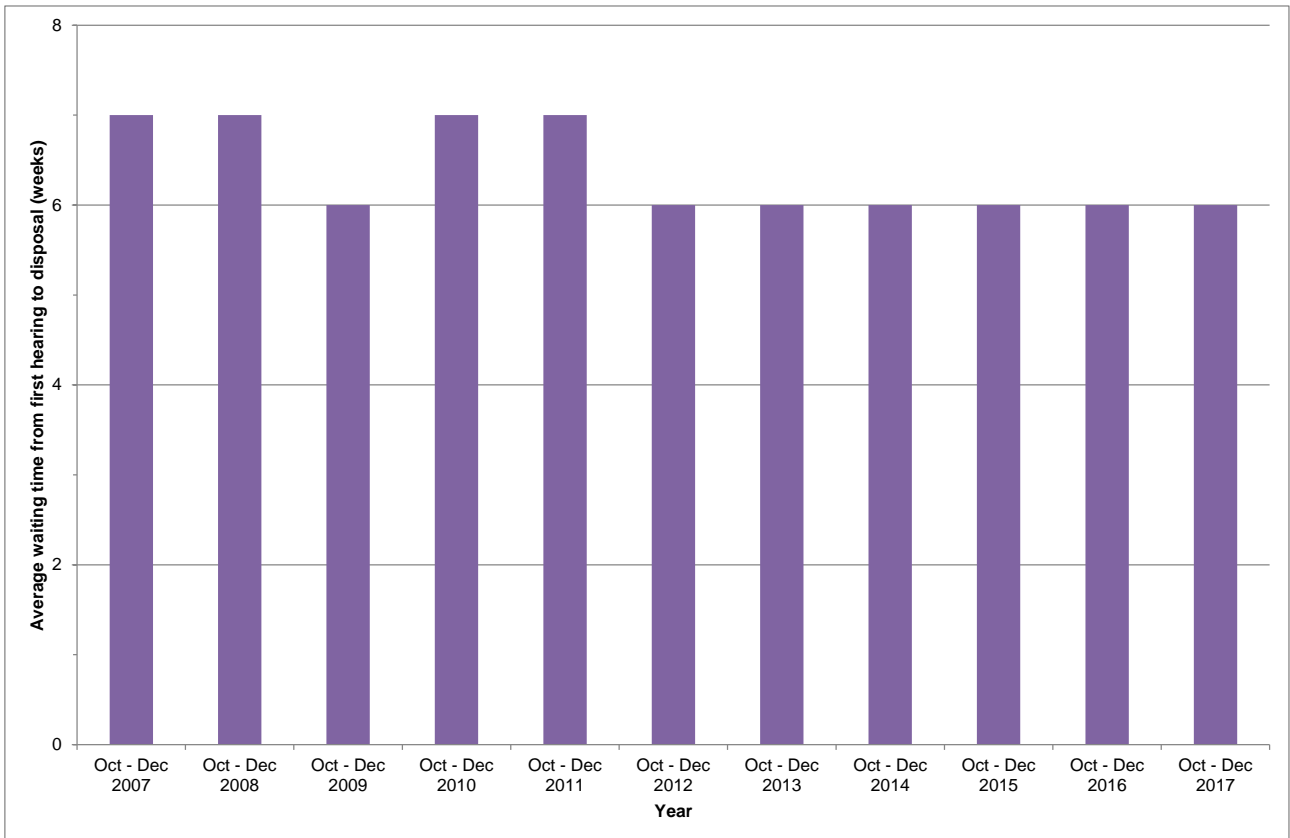
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December over the last number of years, with the lowest levels of both being recorded in this October to December quarter (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2017**



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal has remained stable at 6 weeks in the October to December quarter for the last number of years (Figure 3).

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



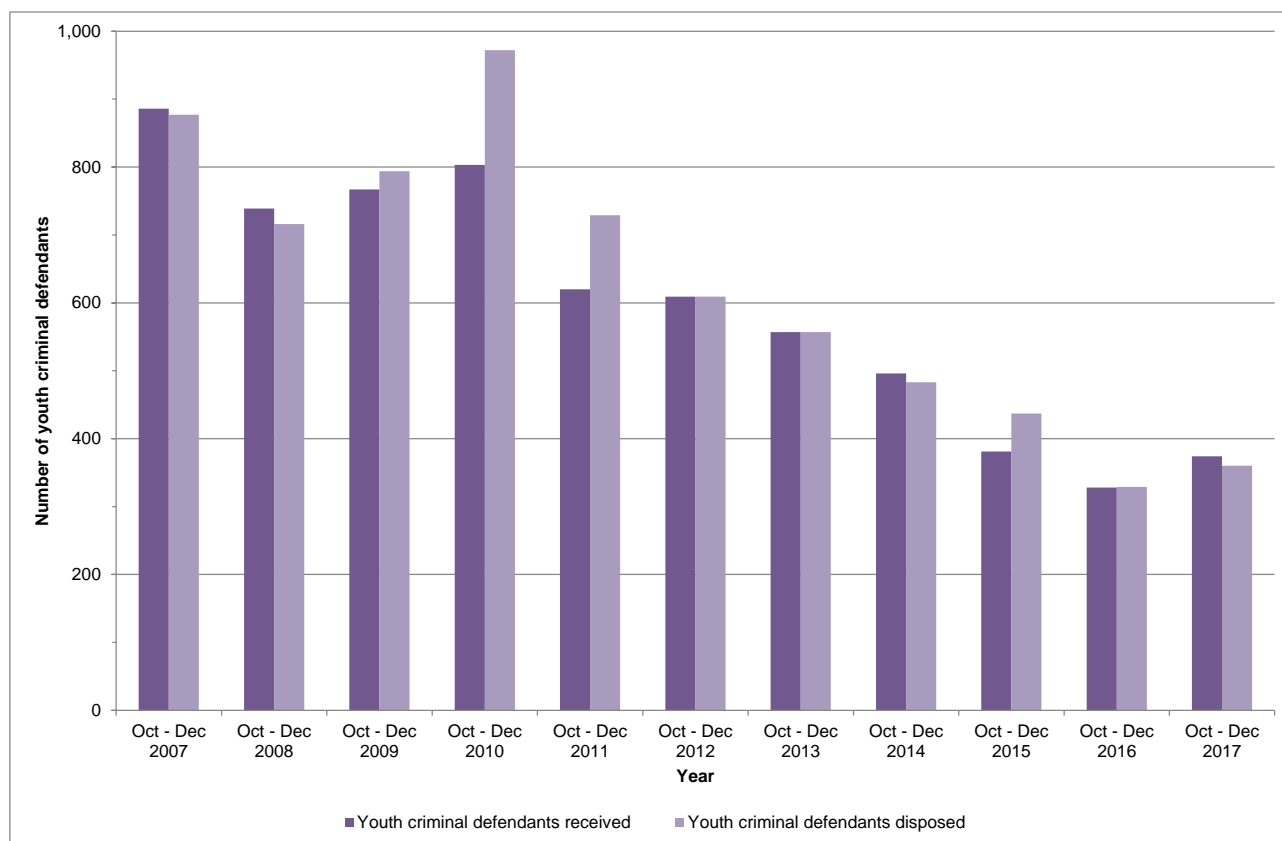
### 3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2017, 374 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 360 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 14% (from 328) and of 9% (from 329) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Nearly all (95.8%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 98.5% in the same period in 2016).

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December over the last number of years, with the numbers of defendants received and disposed of at their lowest in the previous year's quarter, before both have increased slightly from this lowest level to their current level (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2017**



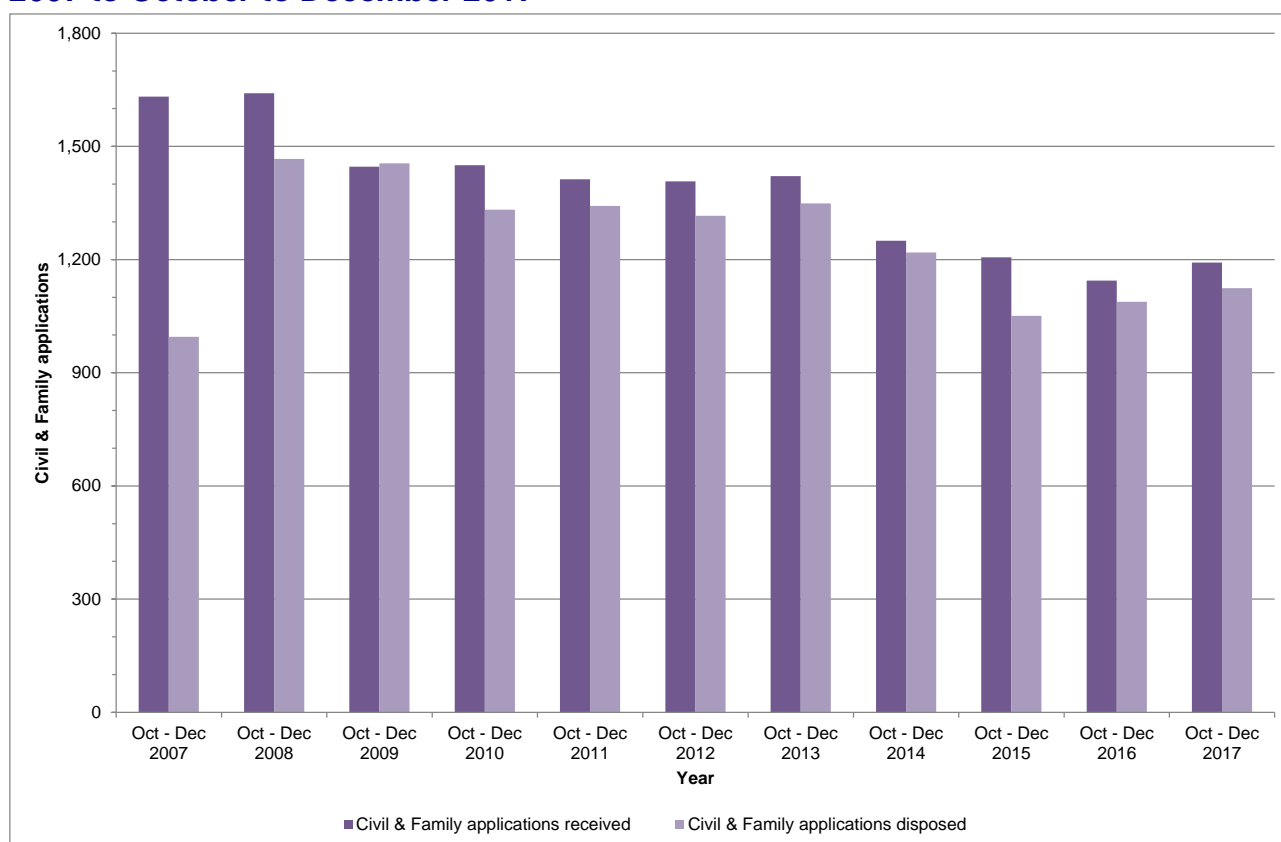
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (13 weeks for the same period in 2016).

### 3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During October to December 2017, 1,192 new civil and family applications were received and 1,124 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent increases of 4% (from 1,144) and 3% (from 1,088) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received has shown a gradual decline during the quarter October to December between 2007 and 2016, with levels of receipts reaching their lowest point in the time series in the October to December quarter 2016 before increasing slightly this quarter (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2017**



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 9 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 venue<sup>3</sup>**

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Antrim	16	4:10:26	5	3:05:00	4	2:56:15
Ballymena	22	4:24:19	6	2:30:00	10	2:49:12
Laganside	193	3:11:26	28	2:48:55	63	3:19:12
Armagh	22	3:37:08	2	2:20:00	3	3:53:20
Banbridge@Newry	15	4:27:00	2	1:55:00	1	5:50:00
Limavady	12	3:40:50	0	-	0	-
Lisburn	36	4:25:41	6	1:52:30	20	2:49:30
Magherafelt	12	3:56:15	5	2:07:00	0	-
Dungannon	37	3:47:58	6	2:49:10	9	3:49:26
Downpatrick	24	4:02:55	7	3:26:25	0	-
Craigavon	31	4:28:42	3	2:18:20	16	3:55:37
Strabane	22	3:29:32	3	3:15:00	0	-
Omagh	20	3:24:00	6	0:44:10	9	2:19:06
Enniskillen	26	4:14:36	5	5:00:00	1	3:00:00
Coleraine	32	3:31:46	5	3:40:00	8	4:23:52
Londonderry	62	4:09:22	1	3:40:00	20	3:58:00
Newtownards	51	3:09:30	4	3:58:45	36	2:18:20
Newry	30	3:30:02	6	2:32:30	15	4:12:00
<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>3:41:31</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2:47:54</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>3:16:40</b>

**Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue<sup>3</sup>**

	Adult criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Antrim	2	4:42:30	0	-
Ballymena	1	0:30:00	0	-
Laganside	3	3:15:00	1	0:10:00
Lisburn	2	1:02:30	0	-
Dungannon	1	7:20:00	0	-
Craigavon	2	4:20:00	0	-
Londonderry	2	2:15:00	3	2:36:40
Newtownards	3	1:00:00	0	-
Newry	1	0:15:00	1	0:30:00
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2:40:35</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1:42:00</b>

<sup>3</sup> A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

**Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue<sup>3</sup>**

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	11	0:25:27
Lisburn	12	0:27:05
Omagh	10	1:12:00
Londonderry	9	0:58:33
Newtownards	7	0:20:42
Newry	11	0:57:16
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0:43:47</b>

**Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue<sup>4</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,051	735	7	5	2,798
Newtownards Court Office	554	171	2	0	727
Downpatrick Court Office	242	65	0	0	307
Craigavon Court Office	485	137	0	0	622
Armagh Court Office	181	77	0	0	258
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	133	34	0	0	167
Omagh Court Office	163	109	1	0	273
Strabane Court Office	189	40	2	0	231
Antrim Court Office	230	75	0	0	305
Londonderry Court Office	592	215	2	4	813
Enniskillen Court Office	213	54	4	1	272
Coleraine Court Office	300	149	0	0	449
Newry Court Office	496	141	0	0	637
Limavady Court Office	102	43	0	0	145
Magherafelt Court Office	100	70	0	1	171
Ballymena Court Office	326	136	0	0	462
Lisburn Court Office	407	114	2	1	524
Dungannon Court Office	329	175	3	0	507
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,093</b>	<b>2,540</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9,668</b>

<sup>4</sup> Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.



**Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue<sup>4</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,078	743	7	4	2,832
Newtownards Court Office	505	177	2	0	684
Downpatrick Court Office	263	60	0	0	323
Craigavon Court Office	433	150	1	0	584
Armagh Court Office	138	70	0	0	208
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	147	36	0	0	183
Omagh Court Office	123	100	0	0	223
Strabane Court Office	150	42	1	0	193
Antrim Court Office	227	66	0	0	293
Londonderry Court Office	554	214	2	5	775
Enniskillen Court Office	215	58	3	1	277
Coleraine Court Office	273	142	0	0	415
Newry Court Office	515	158	0	0	673
Limavady Court Office	119	42	0	0	161
Magherafelt Court Office	85	71	0	1	157
Ballymena Court Office	263	135	0	0	398
Lisburn Court Office	384	117	2	1	504
Dungannon Court Office	298	168	5	0	471
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,770</b>	<b>2,548</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9,354</b>

**Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue<sup>5</sup>**

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	5.02	5.71	0.72	6.43
Newtownards Court Office	4.98	6.09	1.40	7.48
Downpatrick Court Office	4.41	5.56	1.26	6.82
Craigavon Court Office	4.85	3.27	0.60	3.86
Armagh Court Office	5.65	5.21	0.74	5.95
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.53	5.98	0.43	6.41
Omagh Court Office	5.00	4.43	0.20	4.64
Strabane Court Office	4.45	3.22	0.59	3.81
Antrim Court Office	5.30	4.18	0.40	4.58
Londonderry Court Office	5.39	6.22	1.02	7.24
Enniskillen Court Office	4.34	6.56	0.97	7.53
Coleraine Court Office	4.53	4.28	0.50	4.79
Newry Court Office	9.20	5.50	0.22	5.73
Limavady Court Office	5.06	4.19	0.68	4.87
Magherafelt Court Office	6.42	3.04	0.26	3.30
Ballymena Court Office	4.92	3.96	0.70	4.66
Lisburn Court Office	4.55	4.63	1.36	6.00
Dungannon Court Office	5.52	3.43	0.83	4.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.30</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>0.77</b>	<b>5.88</b>

<sup>5</sup> Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

**Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area<sup>4 6</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	564	3	0	0	567
All Sexual Offences	119	0	0	3	122
All Burglary Offences	56	0	0	0	56
All Robbery Offences	11	0	0	0	11
All Theft Offences	367	0	0	3	370
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	105	110	0	0	215
All Criminal Damage Offences	160	0	0	0	160
All Offences Against the State	197	0	0	5	202
All Other Offences	201	1,349	0	1	1,551
All Drug Offences	443	0	0	0	443
All Motoring Offences	2,720	891	11	0	3,622
All Non-Police Offences	8	126	12	0	146
All Breach	103	38	0	0	141
Combination of charges	1,716	32	0	0	1,748
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,770</b>	<b>2,549</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9,354</b>

**Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area<sup>4</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	324	0	0	0	324
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,215	384	0	0	3,599
All charges withdrawn	1,114	812	0	0	1,926
Fixed penalty default	0	0	23	0	23
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1,747	1,290	0	0	3,037
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	370	63	0	0	433
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	12	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,770</b>	<b>2,549</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9,354</b>

<sup>6</sup> Please note that as of 07/01/2011 the charge of 'disorderly behaviour' was re-categorised from 'other offences' into 'offences against the state'.

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	110	0	110
Newtownards Court Office	32	6	38
Downpatrick Court Office	19	0	19
Craigavon Court Office	14	0	14
Armagh Court Office	4	0	4
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4	0	4
Omagh Court Office	6	0	6
Strabane Court Office	13	0	13
Antrim Court Office	10	0	10
Londonderry Court Office	38	0	38
Enniskillen Court Office	5	0	5
Coleraine Court Office	38	2	40
Newry Court Office	35	0	35
Limavady Court Office	1	0	1
Magherafelt Court Office	9	0	9
Ballymena Court Office	12	0	12
Lisburn Court Office	9	0	9
Dungannon Court Office	7	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>374</b>

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	122	7	129
Newtownards Court Office	30	6	36
Downpatrick Court Office	7	0	7
Craigavon Court Office	20	0	20
Armagh Court Office	3	0	3
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	0	1
Omagh Court Office	3	0	3
Strabane Court Office	4	0	4
Antrim Court Office	7	0	7
Londonderry Court Office	34	0	34
Enniskillen Court Office	13	0	13
Coleraine Court Office	32	2	34
Newry Court Office	21	0	21
Limavady Court Office	1	0	1
Magherafelt Court Office	14	0	14
Ballymena Court Office	17	0	17
Lisburn Court Office	13	0	13
Dungannon Court Office	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>360</b>

**Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue<sup>5</sup>**

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	2.89	9.24	5.05	14.29
Newtownards Court Office	3.32	4.82	4.42	9.24
Downpatrick Court Office	2.26	5.54	1.20	6.74
Craigavon Court Office	3.51	7.76	1.89	9.65
Armagh Court Office	3.29	27.71	-	27.71
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	0.71	13.00	17.00	30.00
Omagh Court Office	4.00	1.33	1.67	3.00
Strabane Court Office	4.93	1.00	-	1.00
Antrim Court Office	5.29	3.54	1.75	5.29
Londonderry Court Office	2.92	12.43	3.30	15.73
Enniskillen Court Office	3.54	8.90	3.75	12.65
Coleraine Court Office	2.26	4.20	5.07	9.27
Newry Court Office	2.89	4.46	2.11	6.57
Limavady Court Office	-	-	6.86	6.86
Magherafelt Court Office	1.54	6.76	3.29	10.05
Ballymena Court Office	9.17	13.08	3.05	16.13
Lisburn Court Office	1.25	8.77	4.30	13.07
Dungannon Court Office	2.07	8.50	-	8.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>7.88</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>11.96</b>

**Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area<sup>6</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	54	0	54
All Sexual Offences	5	0	5
All Burglary Offences	5	0	5
All Theft Offences	40	0	40
All Criminal Damage Offences	43	0	43
All Offences Against the State	19	0	19
All Other Offences	10	0	10
All Drug Offences	15	0	15
All Motoring Offences	28	0	28
All Breach	1	13	14
Combination of charges	125	2	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>360</b>

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	4	0	4
Plea of guilty on all charges	178	1	179
All charges withdrawn	79	1	80
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	67	1	68
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	17	12	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>360</b>

**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	20	448	468
Newtownards Court Office	10	94	104
Downpatrick Court Office	5	58	63
Craigavon Court Office	2	31	33
Armagh Court Office	0	30	30
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	12	13
Omagh Court Office	4	17	21
Strabane Court Office	0	20	20
Antrim Court Office	0	27	27
Londonderry Court Office	2	60	62
Enniskillen Court Office	0	32	32
Coleraine Court Office	2	38	40
Newry Court Office	5	73	78
Limavady Court Office	0	7	7
Magherafelt Court Office	0	11	11
Ballymena Court Office	3	61	64
Lisburn Court Office	4	83	87
Dungannon Court Office	2	30	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1,132</b>	<b>1,192</b>

**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	12	407	419
Newtownards Court Office	7	101	108
Downpatrick Court Office	4	57	61
Craigavon Court Office	0	33	33
Armagh Court Office	0	29	29
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2	9	11
Omagh Court Office	5	17	22
Strabane Court Office	0	21	21
Antrim Court Office	0	23	23
Londonderry Court Office	1	67	68
Enniskillen Court Office	0	25	25
Coleraine Court Office	4	33	37
Newry Court Office	3	65	68
Limavady Court Office	0	4	4
Magherafelt Court Office	0	17	17
Ballymena Court Office	2	69	71
Lisburn Court Office	5	79	84
Dungannon Court Office	2	21	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>1,077</b>	<b>1,124</b>

**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	1.80	8.86	10.65
Newtownards Court Office	1.76	8.07	9.83
Downpatrick Court Office	1.94	13.20	15.14
Craigavon Court Office	1.30	5.16	6.47
Armagh Court Office	1.43	3.62	5.05
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.39	8.36	9.75
Omagh Court Office	2.55	4.78	6.99
Strabane Court Office	1.31	3.37	4.69
Antrim Court Office	1.14	7.60	8.75
Londonderry Court Office	2.03	6.45	8.48
Enniskillen Court Office	0.87	3.87	4.72
Coleraine Court Office	2.48	3.38	5.86
Newry Court Office	1.61	5.26	6.87
Limavady Court Office <sup>7</sup>	-	-	-
Magherafelt Court Office	1.98	10.77	12.76
Ballymena Court Office	1.65	6.23	7.88
Lisburn Court Office	1.21	5.63	6.84
Dungannon Court Office	2.23	1.86	4.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.72</b>	<b>7.36</b>	<b>9.07</b>

**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	618	156	158	117	11	1,060
	Occupation	3	0	8	2	0	13
	Vary discharge non-molestation occupation	0	1	1	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>621</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1,077</b>

<sup>7</sup> All of the cases disposed of in Limavady civil and family Magistrate's Court in October to December 2017 were ex-parte non-molestation applications, which are emergency applications by nature and will be processed on the day they are received. It is therefore acceptable for these cases to have no delay between receipt, hearing and disposal.

## **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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