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**Analytical Services Group**

# **Magistrates' Court Bulletin**

**October to December 2015**

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**Quarterly provisional figures**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period October to December 2015 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period October to December 2015:
- There were 1,110 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 4% from 1,153 in the same period the previous year.
- 10,168 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,916 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 4% (from 9,751) and an increase of 3% (from 9,587) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the second lowest number of both adult defendants received and adult defendants disposed during the October to December quarter since the time series began in 2007, the lowest being in October to December 2014.
- 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.
- 381 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 437 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 23% (from 496) and a decrease of 10% (from 483) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of both youth defendants received and youth defendants disposed of during the October to December quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks, compared to 10 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,206 new civil and family applications were received and 1,051 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 4% (from 1,250) and a decrease of 14% (from 1,219) 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 8 weeks, compared to 9 weeks in the corresponding period last year.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

The youth court deals with young people who have committed criminal offences, and who are aged between 10 and under 18. The youth court is part of the Magistrates' court and cases are generally heard before a panel of three persons, a salaried District Judge (Magistrates' court) and two specially-trained fee-paid lay magistrates. Although the youth court can deal with the full range of criminal offences (save for murder), if a young person is charged with a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult is punishable with 14 years imprisonment or more, the youth court can commit them for trial at the Crown Court.

In addition to hearing criminal proceedings the youth court also hears proceedings relating to the care, protection and control of juveniles.

Magistrates' courts can deal with a limited number of civil cases as follows:-

- some civil debts, for example, arrears of income tax, national insurance contributions, VAT arrears, rates
- licences, for example, granting, renewing or taking away licences for pubs and clubs
- some matrimonial problems, for example, maintenance and removing a spouse from the matrimonial home
- welfare of children, for example, local authority care or supervision orders, adoption proceedings and residence orders (known as the Family Proceedings Court).

Data relating to business at the Family Proceedings Court is published on a quarterly basis in the NICTS Children Order Bulletin.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Data sources**

Information contained in all tables is sourced from data that are inputted onto the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). This system was implemented across the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) over a two year period from 2005 to 2007. While ICOS was introduced in the Magistrates' Court during 2006, data derived from ICOS has been used as the source for official government statistics since 2007, when the implementation of ICOS across all court tiers was completed. ICOS is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of court business, from receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The data are input into this system on a daily basis by court clerks, and this information is checked and confirmed by another member of staff to ensure the data entries are correct.

### **2.2 Methodology for generating data**

Analytical Service Group (ASG) Statisticians based within the NICTS take a download of Magistrates' court information from ICOS on a monthly basis. The information is downloaded using a package called Oracle Discoverer which extracts all the relevant data from ICOS into text files which are refreshed with up to date information each weekend. The text files are downloaded onto a secure internal facility that only specified statistical personnel have access to. The data contained in the files are identified only by numbers and names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import these data into the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and to ensure the data are reliable and robust.

### **2.3 Baseline and Time period**

Data contained within this bulletin relate to the time series 2007, when ICOS was adopted as the source for official government statistics, to the current calendar year 2015.

### **2.4 Data quality and validation**

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

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

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

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

Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form in the 2015 edition of Judicial statistics (due to be published on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016).

## **2.5 Counting rules**

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

## **2.6 Interpreting trends**

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

## **2.7 Revisions**

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



### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During October to December 2015 there were 1,049 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 10 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 51 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of 2% (from 1,069), a decrease of 58% (from 24) and a decrease of 15% (from 60) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

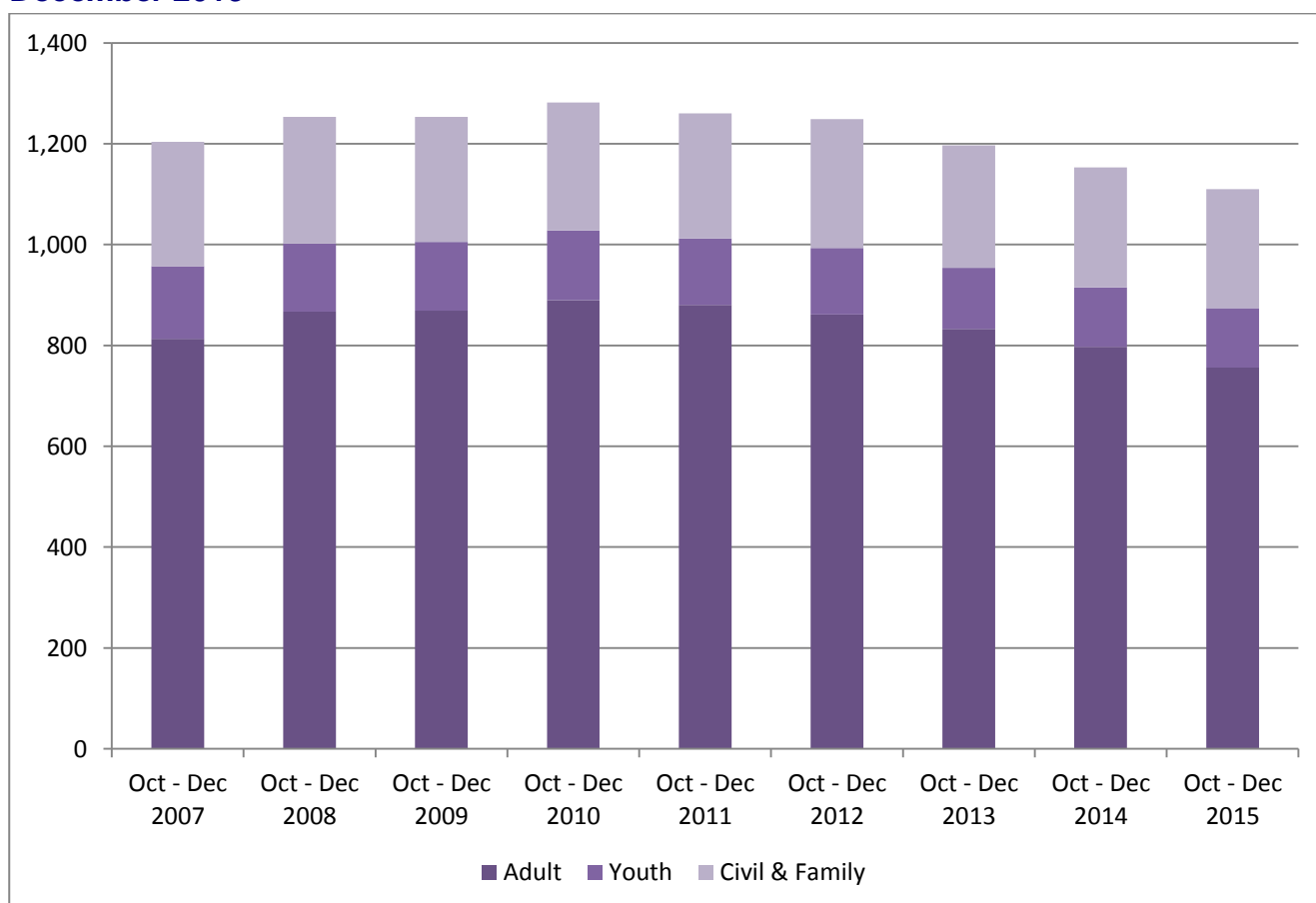
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for October to December 2015 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	695	10	51	756
Youth Criminal	118	0	0	118
Civil & Family	236	0	0	236
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,049</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>1,110</b>

Within these 1,110 sitting days, 68% were adult criminal days, 11% were youth criminal days and 21% were civil and family days.

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

**Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: October to December 2007 to October to December 2015**



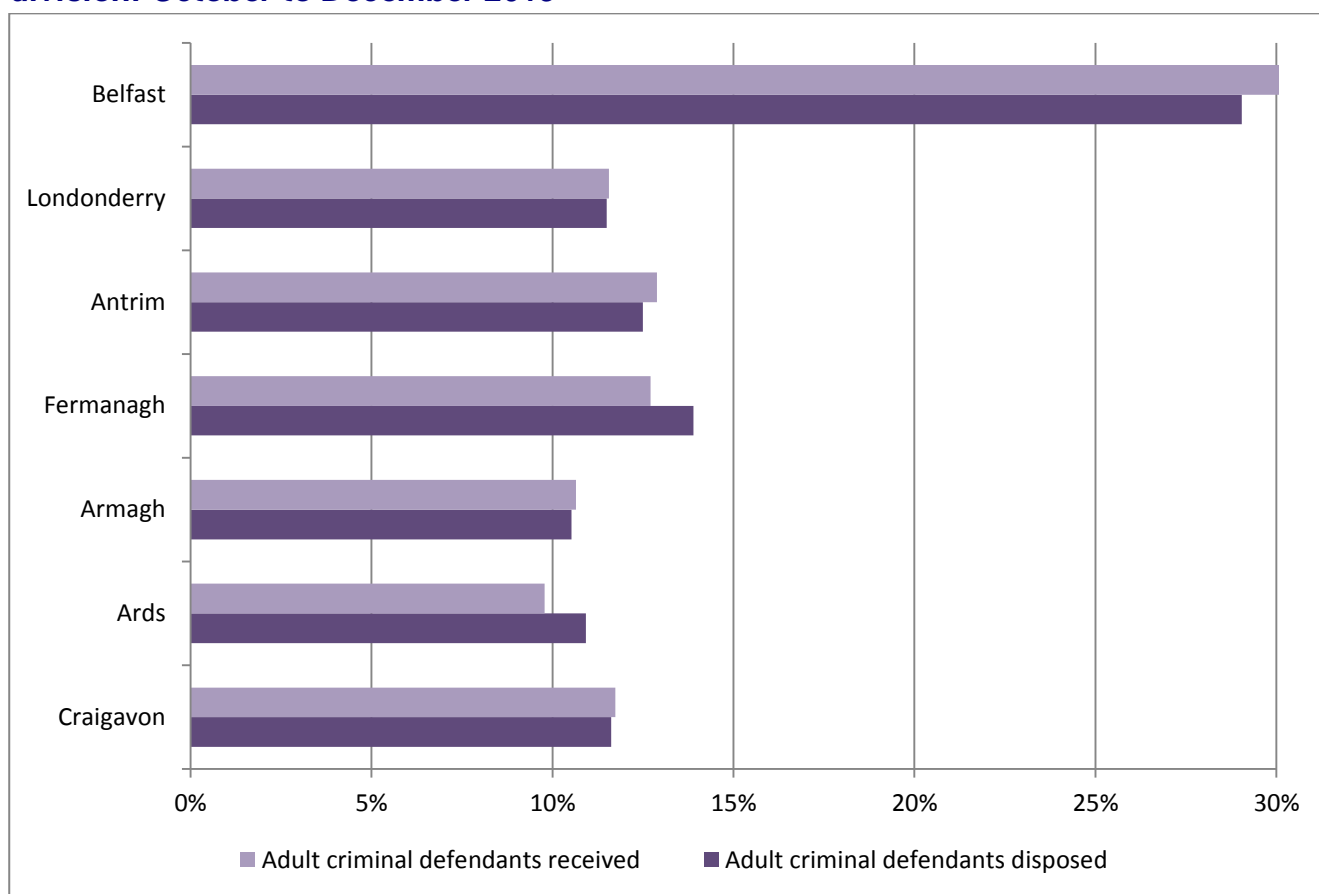
### 3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2015, 10,168 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,916 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 4% (from 9,751) and an increase of 3% (from 9,587) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (74%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/PPS (79% in the same period in 2014).

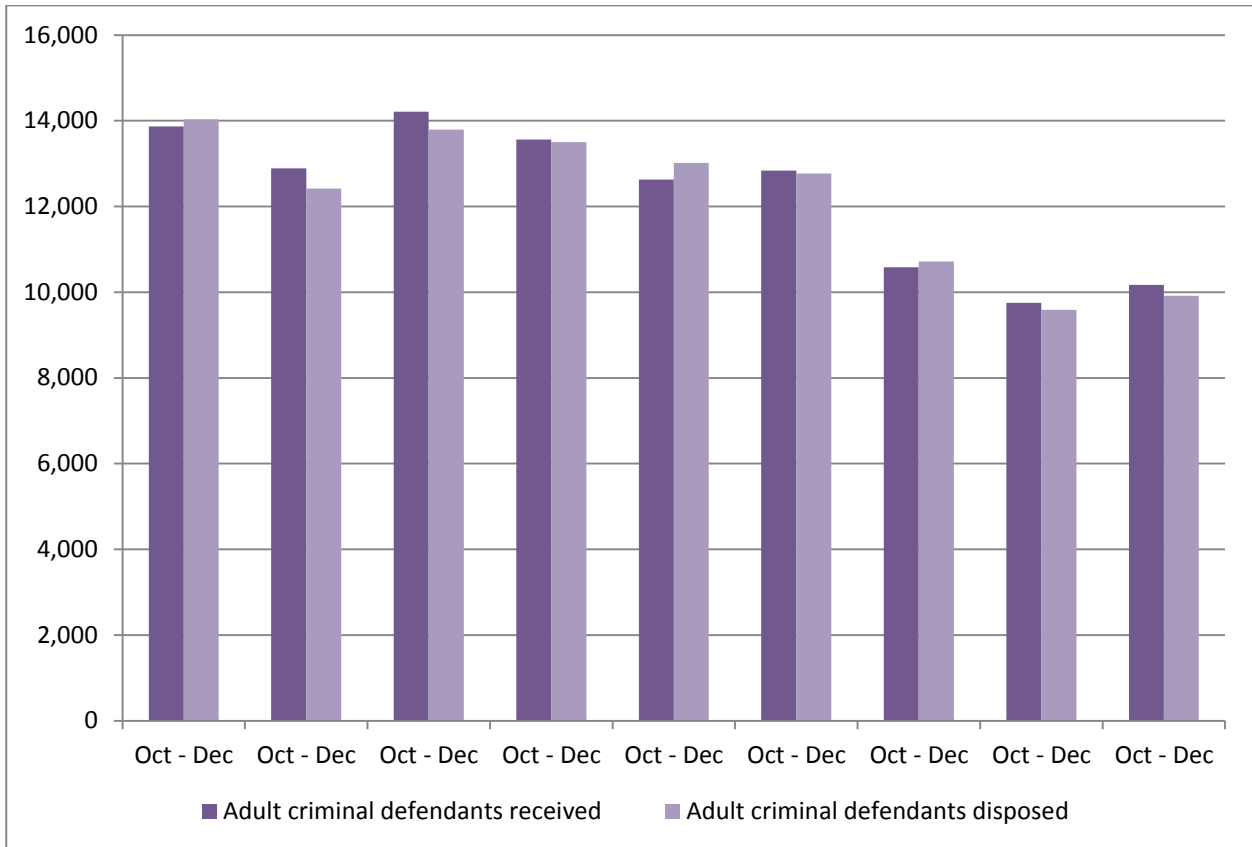
The volume of adult business was highest in the Belfast division (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Percentage of adult criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: October to December 2015**



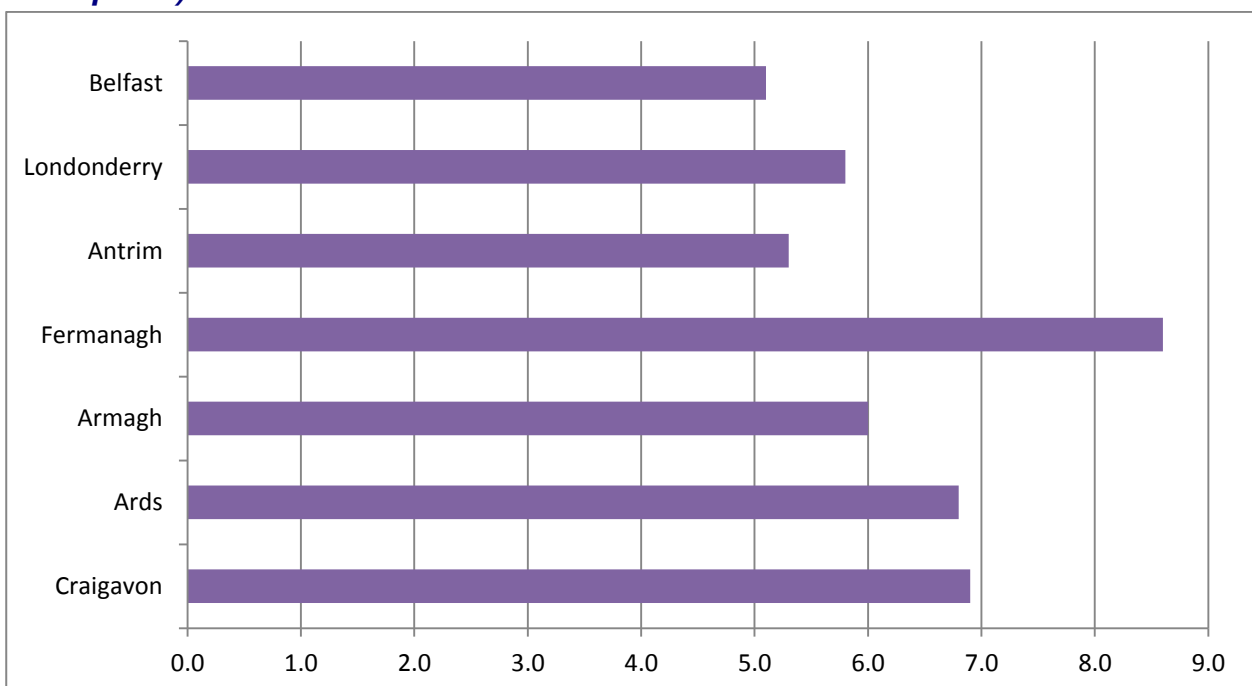
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December since the beginning of the time series in 2007, with numbers increasing slightly between 2014 and 2015 (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2015**



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks during October to December 2015, the same as that during the same period in the previous year. A breakdown of average waiting times by court division for October to December 2015 is shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): October to December 2015**



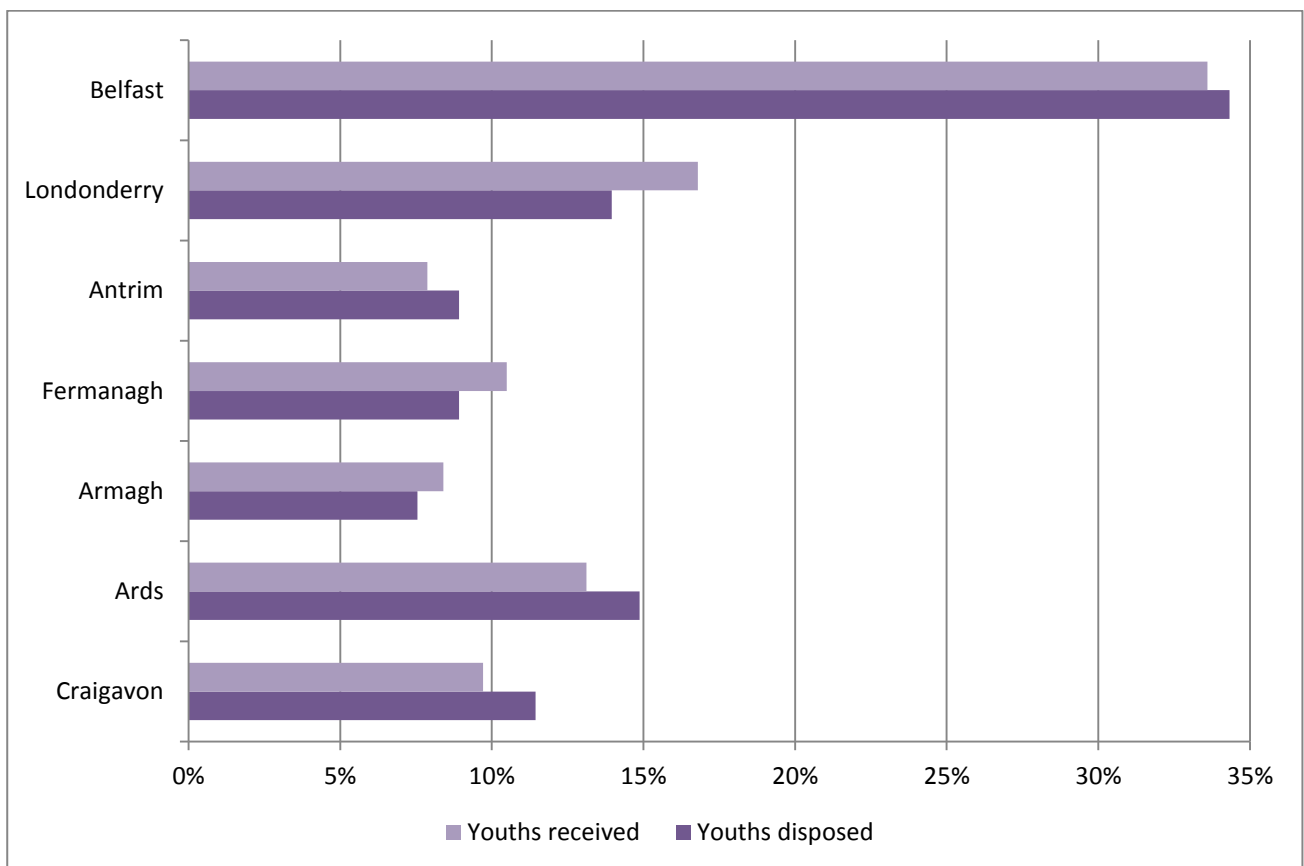
### 3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2015, 381 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 437 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 23% (from 496) and a decrease of 10% (from 483) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Almost all prosecutions (98.9%) disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (99.0% in the same period in 2014).

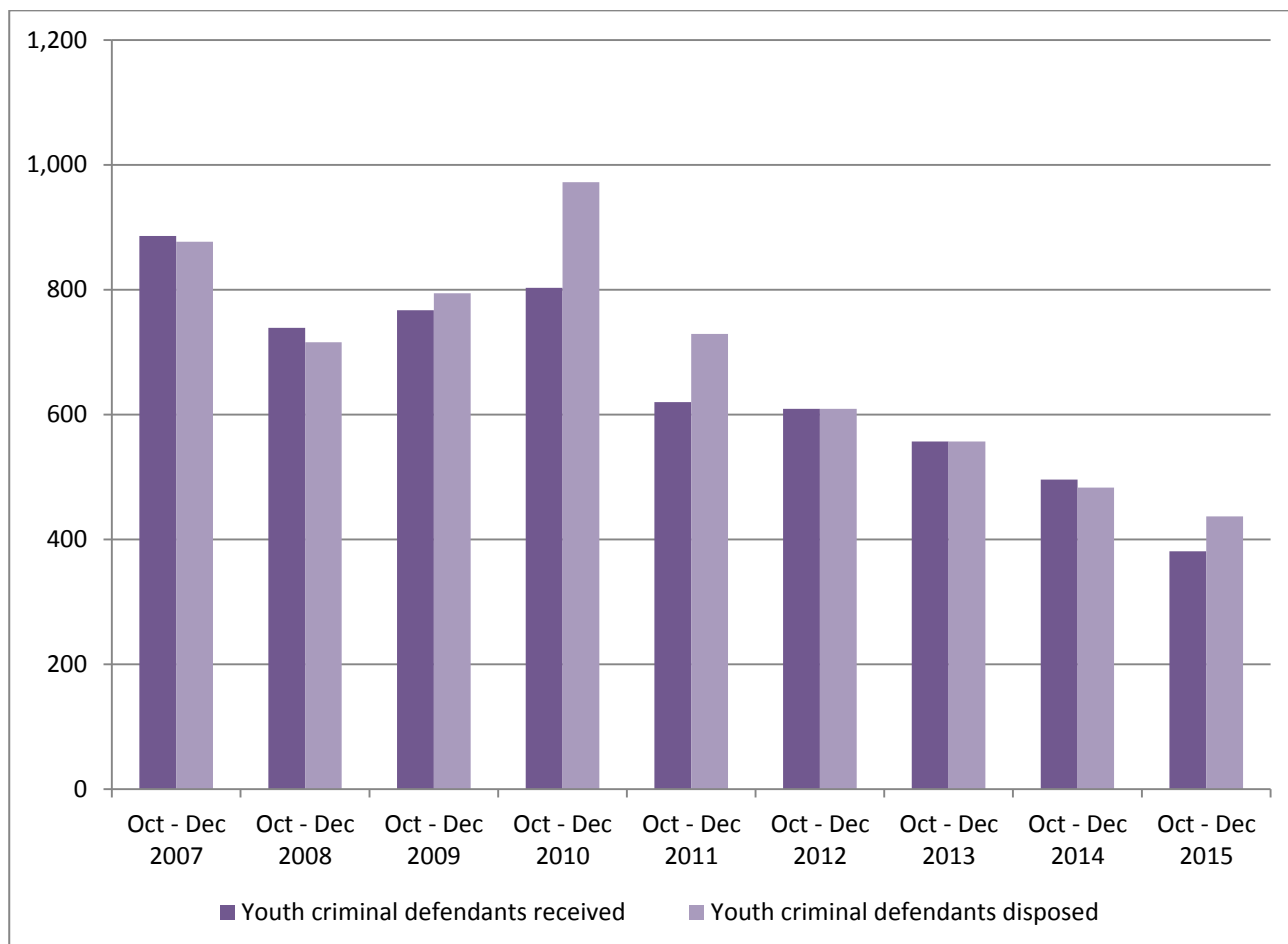
A breakdown of youth business by court division for October to December 2015 is shown in Figure 5 below:

**Figure 5: Percentage of youth criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: October to December 2015**



The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed fluctuated in the October to December quarter between 2007 and 2010. Volumes of both then decreased year on year in the October to December quarter, with receipts reaching their lowest level since the beginning of the time series in 2007, during October to December 2015 (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2015**



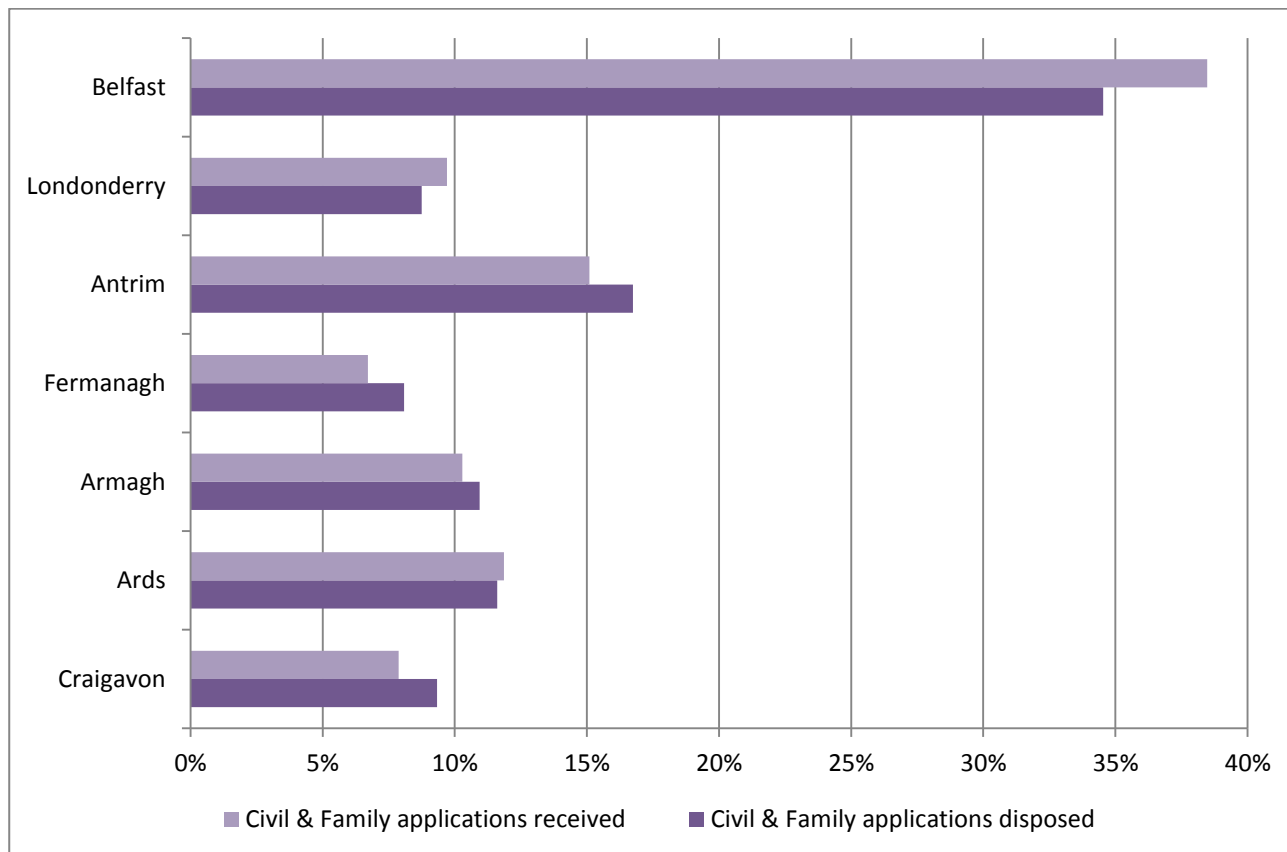
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (10 weeks for the same period in 2014).

### 3.4 Civil and family Magistrates' court

During October to December 2015, 1,206 new civil and family applications were received and 1,051 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 4% (from 1,250) and a decrease of 14% (from 1,219) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

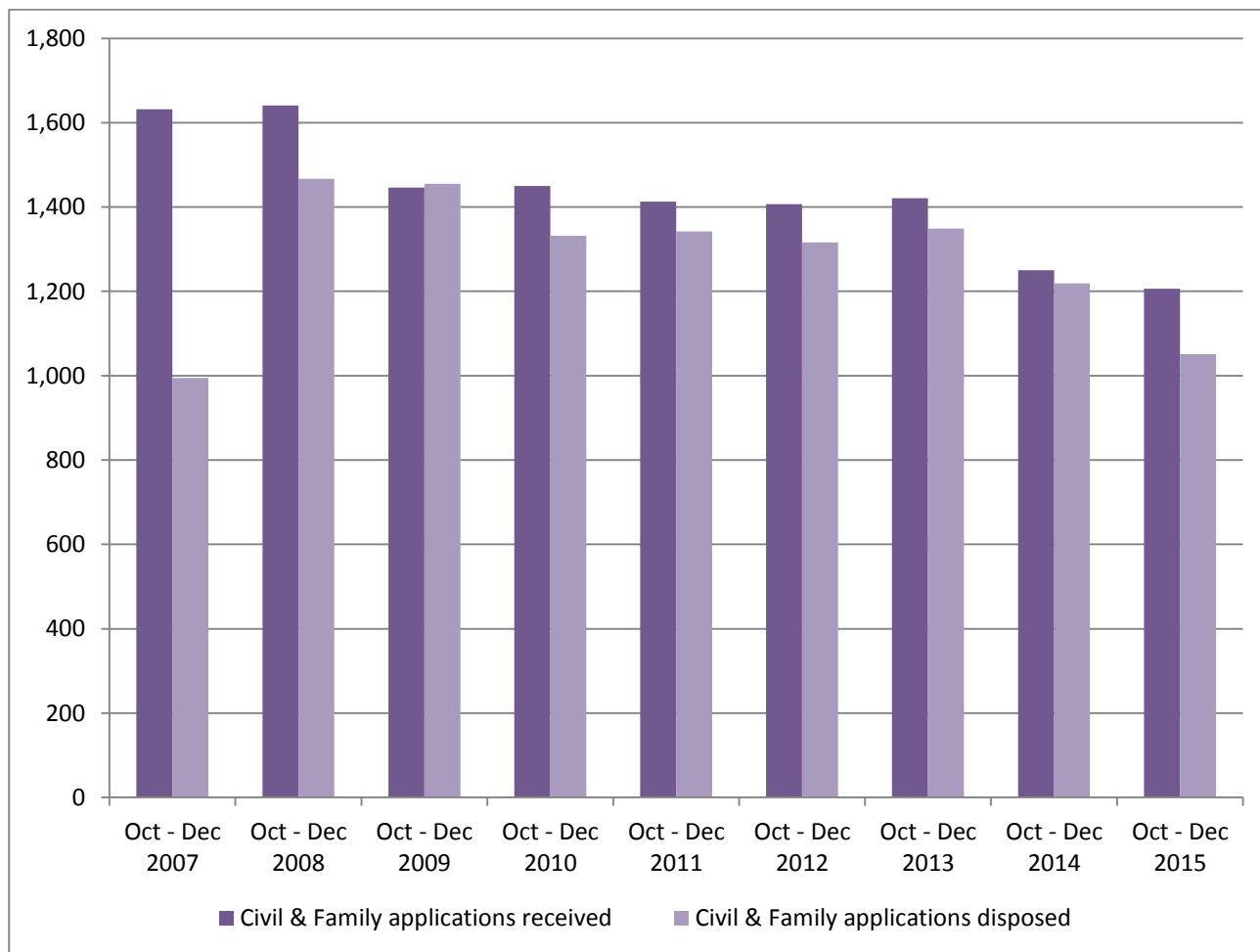
A breakdown of civil and family business by court division for October to December 2015 is shown in Figure 7 below:

**Figure 7: Percentage of civil & family applications received and disposed of by court division: October to December 2015**



The volume of civil and family applications received during the quarter October to December was similar between 2007 and 2008 and then decreased in 2009. The number of receipts then remained fairly stable between 2009 and 2013 before decreasing in 2014 and again in 2015. The volume of civil and family applications disposed during the quarter October to December increased between 2007 and 2008 and then generally decreased year on year between 2008 and 2015 (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2015**



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 8 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (9 weeks for the same period in 2014).

## APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

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

		Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	209	2:51:20	36	3:21:40	79	2:52:50
	Total	209	2:51:20	36	3:21:40	79	2:52:50
Londonderry	Limavady	13	2:49:13		.		.
	Magherafelt	12	2:19:35	6	0:41:40		.
	Londonderry	57	4:10:15	9	3:56:26	25	4:31:24
	Total	82	3:41:13	15	2:38:32	25	4:31:24
Antrim	Antrim	18	3:28:03	4	1:50:00	7	2:40:00
	Ballymena	24	3:44:02	5	2:14:00	14	3:20:42
	Coleraine	34	3:28:31	6	2:36:40	8	4:06:15
	Total	76	3:33:18	15	2:16:40	29	3:23:26
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	38	4:00:23	6	1:47:00	9	3:17:13
	Strabane	21	4:11:40	3	3:10:00		.
	Omagh	25	4:02:09	5	0:52:00	9	3:22:13
	Enniskillen	28	4:55:42	5	4:33:00		.
	Total	112	4:16:43	19	2:29:18	18	3:19:43
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	20	3:49:03	3	2:25:00	1	1:45:00
	Banbridge@Newry	14	3:36:47	3	2:46:40		.
	Newry	35	2:46:34	4	1:42:45	17	3:35:17
	Total	69	3:14:52	10	2:14:36	18	3:29:10
Ards	Downpatrick	25	4:32:24	5	3:10:00		.
	Newtownards	54	3:23:36	7	2:55:00	38	2:15:15
	Total	79	3:45:22	12	3:01:15	38	2:15:15
Craigavon	Lisburn	34	4:01:42	6	2:10:50	15	3:28:20
	Craigavon	34	5:40:10	5	4:06:00	14	3:33:55
	Total	68	4:50:56	11	3:03:10	29	3:31:02

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

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	695	3:35:45	118	2:50:00	236	3:10:30

<sup>1</sup> A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.



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

		Adult criminal day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Londonderry	2	0:57:30
	Total	2	0:57:30
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	1	0:45:00
	Enniskillen	1	4:50:00
	Total	2	2:47:30
Armagh & South Down	Newry	1	0:30:00
	Total	1	0:30:00
Ards	Newtownards	3	2:58:20
	Total	3	2:58:20
Craigavon	Lisburn	2	1:42:30
	Total	2	1:42:30

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

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	10	2:02:00

<sup>1</sup> A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

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

		Adult criminal day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Magherafelt	1	0:30:00
	Londonderry	8	0:38:45
	Total	9	0:37:46
Antrim	Ballymena	10	0:25:00
	Total	10	0:25:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	9	0:42:13
	Total	9	0:42:13
Armagh & South Down	Newry	6	0:37:30
	Total	6	0:37:30
Ards	Newtownards	10	0:23:30
	Total	10	0:23:30
Craigavon	Lisburn	7	0:33:34
	Total	7	0:33:34

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

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	51	0:32:38

<sup>1</sup> A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2309	792	6	13	3120
	Division total	2309	792	6	13	3120
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	579	215			794
	Limavady Court Office	111	49		2	162
	Magherafelt Court Office	127	92			219
	Division total	817	356		2	1175
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	257	91	1		349
	Coleraine Court Office	339	193	3	3	538
	Ballymena Court Office	312	105	5	1	423
	Division total	908	389	9	4	1310
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	183	90			273
	Strabane Court Office	215	34			249
	Enniskillen Court Office	258	60			318
	Dungannon Court Office	305	147			452
	Division total	961	331			1292
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	199	80	1		280
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	115	41		1	157
	Newry Court Office	503	139	3	1	646
	Division total	817	260	4	2	1083
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	512	134	4	1	651
	Downpatrick Court Office	283	60		1	344
	Division total	795	194	4	2	995
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	521	140	3	2	666
	Lisburn Court Office	359	165	2	1	527
	Division total	880	305	5	3	1193

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Northern Ireland	7487	2627	28	26	10168

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

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2099	773	4	4	2880
	Division total	2099	773	4	4	2880
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	568	209			777
	Limavady Court Office	108	52		1	161
	Magherafelt Court Office	112	90			202
	Division total	788	351		1	1140
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	282	87	1		370
	Coleraine Court Office	310	180	1	1	492
	Ballymena Court Office	273	98	5	1	377
	Division total	865	365	7	2	1239
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	226	83			309
	Strabane Court Office	210	37			247
	Enniskillen Court Office	266	57			323
	Dungannon Court Office	362	137			499
	Division total	1064	314			1378
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	170	65	1		236
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	129	44			173
	Newry Court Office	498	133	3	1	635
	Division total	797	242	4	1	1044
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	540	148	1	1	690
	Downpatrick Court Office	331	61		1	393
	Division total	871	209	1	2	1083
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	492	131	3	2	628
	Lisburn Court Office	371	150	2	1	524
	Division total	863	281	5	3	1152

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Northern Ireland	7347	2535	21	13	9916

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

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

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	4.23	4.45	.68	5.13
	Total	4.23	4.45	.68	5.13
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	3.87	5.73	.96	6.69
	Limavady Court Office	5.19	2.77	.80	3.56
	Magherafelt Court Office	5.71	3.47	.52	3.99
	Total	4.38	4.91	.86	5.77
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	4.69	4.08	.91	4.98
	Coleraine Court Office	4.73	3.56	.51	4.07
	Ballymena Court Office	4.87	6.29	1.03	7.32
	Total	4.76	4.55	.79	5.34
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	5.25	3.25	.49	3.75
	Strabane Court Office	4.17	4.18	.63	4.81
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.79	4.92	1.05	5.98
	Dungannon Court Office	4.61	14.20	1.02	15.22
	Total	4.48	7.77	.84	8.61
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.55	6.66	.43	7.08
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.20	6.37	.40	6.77
	Newry Court Office	5.66	5.31	.10	5.41
	Total	5.17	5.79	.23	6.02
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	4.63	5.84	.45	6.29
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.49	6.95	.70	7.65
	Total	4.58	6.25	.54	6.79
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4.88	6.31	.78	7.09
	Lisburn Court Office	4.98	5.74	1.03	6.77
	Total	4.92	6.05	.89	6.95

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

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	4.57	5.51	.70	6.21

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

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
All Offences Against the Person	718	5			723
All Sexual Offences	163			4	167
All Burglary Offences	80				80
All Robbery Offences	8				8
All Theft Offences	512			6	518
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	76	110			186
All Criminal Damage Offences	174				174
All Offences Against the State	246			1	247
All Other Offences	332	468		2	802
All Drug Offences	468				468
All Motoring Offences	2537	664	6		3207
All Non-Police Offences	6	1163	15		1184
All Breach	110	61			171
Combination of charges	1917	64			1981
<b>Total</b>	<b>7347</b>	<b>2535</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9916</b>

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

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

**Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area<sup>2</sup>**

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty default	Penalty Notice for Disorder default	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	445				445
Plea of guilty on all charges	3290	363			3653
All charges withdrawn	1347	880			2227
Fixed penalty default			21		21
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1804	1213			3017
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	461	79			540
Penalty Notice for Disorder				13	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>7347</b>	<b>2535</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9916</b>

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

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	119	9	128
	Division total	119	9	128
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	56		56
	Limavady Court Office	4		4
	Magherafelt Court Office	4		4
	Division total	64		64
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	13		13
	Coleraine Court Office	6		6
	Ballymena Court Office	11		11
	Division total	30		30
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	6		6
	Strabane Court Office	7		7
	Enniskillen Court Office	14	1	15
	Dungannon Court Office	12		12
	Division total	39	1	40
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2		2
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5		5
	Newry Court Office	25		25
	Division total	32		32
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	35		35
	Downpatrick Court Office	15		15
	Division total	50		50
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	22	1	23
	Lisburn Court Office	14		14
	Division total	36	1	37

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	370	11	381

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	147	3	150
	Division total	147	3	150
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	50		50
	Limavady Court Office	1		1
	Magherafelt Court Office	10		10
	Division total	61		61
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	11		11
	Coleraine Court Office	12		12
	Ballymena Court Office	16		16
	Division total	39		39
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	7		7
	Strabane Court Office	10		10
	Enniskillen Court Office	11	1	12
	Dungannon Court Office	10		10
	Division total	38	1	39
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2		2
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	6		6
	Newry Court Office	25		25
	Division total	33		33
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	39		39
	Downpatrick Court Office	26		26
	Division total	65		65
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	26	1	27
	Lisburn Court Office	23		23
	Division total	49	1	50

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	432	5	437



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

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2.11	8.55	4.90	13.46
	Total	2.11	8.55	4.90	13.46
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	3.15	4.13	5.60	9.73
	Limavady Court Office	4.71	.00	3.86	3.86
	Magherafelt Court Office	4.66	6.98	5.84	12.82
	Total	3.42	4.51	5.60	10.11
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	6.64	4.73	.40	5.13
	Coleraine Court Office	2.43	9.04	2.00	11.04
	Ballymena Court Office	2.90	8.22	1.86	10.08
	Total	3.95	7.36	1.43	8.79
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	4.05	2.67	3.62	6.29
	Strabane Court Office	4.95	8.02	.00	8.02
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.24	9.27	10.10	19.37
	Dungannon Court Office	3.81	4.92	7.11	12.03
	Total	4.06	6.36	5.05	11.41
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.14	12.43	4.00	16.43
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.17	6.09	1.00	7.09
	Newry Court Office	1.94	3.23	6.07	9.30
	Total	2.10	4.35	4.76	9.11
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	2.68	7.20	3.48	10.68
	Downpatrick Court Office	3.35	5.49	3.76	9.25
	Total	2.96	6.48	3.60	10.07
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2.32	4.64	3.45	8.09
	Lisburn Court Office	2.88	16.96	4.06	21.03
	Total	2.65	11.94	3.81	15.76

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

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	2.83	7.32	4.40	11.72

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

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	71		71
All Sexual Offences	5		5
All Burglary Offences	8		8
All Robbery Offences	1		1
All Theft Offences	41		41
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1		1
All Criminal Damage Offences	45		45
All Offences Against the State	19		19
All Other Offences	6		6
All Drug Offences	12		12
All Motoring Offences	42	1	43
All Breach	2	4	6
Combination of charges	179		179
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>437</b>

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

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	4		4
Plea of guilty on all charges	193	1	194
All charges withdrawn	105	2	107
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	103		103
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	27	2	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>437</b>

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	15	449	464
	Division total	15	449	464
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2	110	112
	Limavady Court Office		3	3
	Magherafelt Court Office		2	2
	Division total	2	115	117
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2	39	41
	Coleraine Court Office		37	37
	Ballymena Court Office	7	97	104
	Division total	9	173	182
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office		13	13
	Strabane Court Office		17	17
	Enniskillen Court Office	7	21	28
	Dungannon Court Office	5	18	23
	Division total	12	69	81
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2	32	34
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4	12	16
	Newry Court Office	6	68	74
	Division total	12	112	124
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	5	104	109
	Downpatrick Court Office	3	31	34
	Division total	8	135	143
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2	46	48
	Lisburn Court Office	1	46	47
	Division total	3	92	95

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	61	1145	1206

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	18	345	363
	Division total	18	345	363
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	5	83	88
	Limavady Court Office		1	1
	Magherafelt Court Office		3	3
	Division total	5	87	92
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1	32	33
	Coleraine Court Office	2	39	41
	Ballymena Court Office	2	100	102
	Division total	5	171	176
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1	17	18
	Strabane Court Office	1	14	15
	Enniskillen Court Office	3	24	27
	Dungannon Court Office	6	19	25
	Division total	11	74	85
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1	28	29
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	16	19
	Newry Court Office	6	61	67
	Division total	10	105	115
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	6	85	91
	Downpatrick Court Office	2	29	31
	Division total	8	114	122
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2	45	47
	Lisburn Court Office	2	49	51
	Division total	4	94	98

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	61	990	1051

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

		Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	1.63	5.07	6.70
	Total	1.63	5.07	6.70
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	1.62	5.75	7.37
	Limavady Court Office	.00	.00	.00
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.67	15.67	17.33
	Total	1.60	6.01	7.62
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1.36	9.69	11.05
	Coleraine Court Office	1.94	3.19	5.13
	Ballymena Court Office	1.13	6.33	7.46
	Total	1.36	6.23	7.59
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1.25	4.56	5.81
	Strabane Court Office	1.10	1.67	2.76
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.74	17.25	20.99
	Dungannon Court Office	2.93	2.85	5.78
	Total	2.51	7.58	10.09
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1.61	3.52	5.13
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.81	6.66	9.47
	Newry Court Office	2.02	2.99	5.01
	Total	2.05	3.73	5.78
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	1.58	4.10	5.68
	Downpatrick Court Office	1.67	14.25	15.93
	Total	1.61	6.68	8.28
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	1.42	6.48	7.91
	Lisburn Court Office	.53	9.77	10.30
	Total	.96	8.19	9.15

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

	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	1.63	5.88	7.51

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

	New Order					Total
	Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary discharge	Other	
<b>Non molestation</b>	620	135	129	79	7	970
<b>Occupation</b>	6	1	3			10
<b>Vary discharge non-mol occupation</b>		3	2	5		10
<b>Total</b>	626	139	134	84	7	990

## **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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