

Analytical Services Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at the Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 2018 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. On 31st October 2016, a single County Court Division called 'The County Court of Northern Ireland' replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data are disaggregated solely by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period July to September 2018:
- There were 1,017 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 6% from 1,082 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,436 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,484 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent a decrease of 3% in adult defendants received (from 9,692) and an increase of 1% in adult defendants disposed of (from 9,430) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are some of the lowest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the July to September 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.
- 366 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 342 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 16% (from 315) and of 2% (from 335) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are also some of the lowest numbers of youth defendants received and disposed of during the July to September 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.
- 1,116 new civil and family applications were received and 937 civil applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 7% (from 1,206) and of 14% (from 1,092) 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, the same average waiting time for the corresponding period last year.

CONTENTS

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Findings	6
3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days	
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court	
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court	
3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court	
Appendix 1 - Tables	12
Appendix 2 - Explanatory Notes	25

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018	7
Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018	8
Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): July to September 2007 to July to September 2018	9
Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018	10
Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018	11

Table	Page
<u>Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	12
<u>Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	13
<u>Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	13
<u>Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	14
<u>Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	15
<u>Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	16
<u>Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	17
<u>Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area</u>	18
<u>Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	20
<u>Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	21
<u>Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	21
<u>Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	22
<u>Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	23
<u>Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	24
<u>Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland</u>	24

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 (apart from murder), if a young person is charged with a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult would be 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 input 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 SharePoint, which extracts all the relevant data from ICOS into text files which are refreshed with up-to-date information each weekend. The text files are downloaded onto a secure internal facility that only specified statistical personnel have access to. The data contained in the files are identified only by numbers and names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the NICTS statistical team. ASG statisticians based in the NICTS import these data into the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and to ensure the data are reliable and robust.

2.3 Baseline and Time period

Data contained within this bulletin relate to the time series 2007, when ICOS was adopted as the source for official government statistics, to the current calendar year 2018.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the fourth quarter of 2018 and will be published on 8th February 2019.

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 2018 edition of Judicial Statistics (published on the 28th June 2019).

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 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.

2.8 Revisions

Any revision to data will be applied in light of the ASG (NICTS) Statistical Note 'Policy Statement on Revisions'¹ which may be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the NICTS website². Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

¹ Department of Justice, 2013. *Statistics and Research: Policy statement on Revisions*. [pdf] DoJ. Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-and-research-policy-statement-revisions>

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

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During July to September 2018 there were 940 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 23 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 54 special Magistrates' sitting days. These were decreases of 8% (from 1,006) and of 8% (from 25) for scheduled and additional sittings, and an increase of 6% (from 51) for special sittings compared to the same period the previous year.

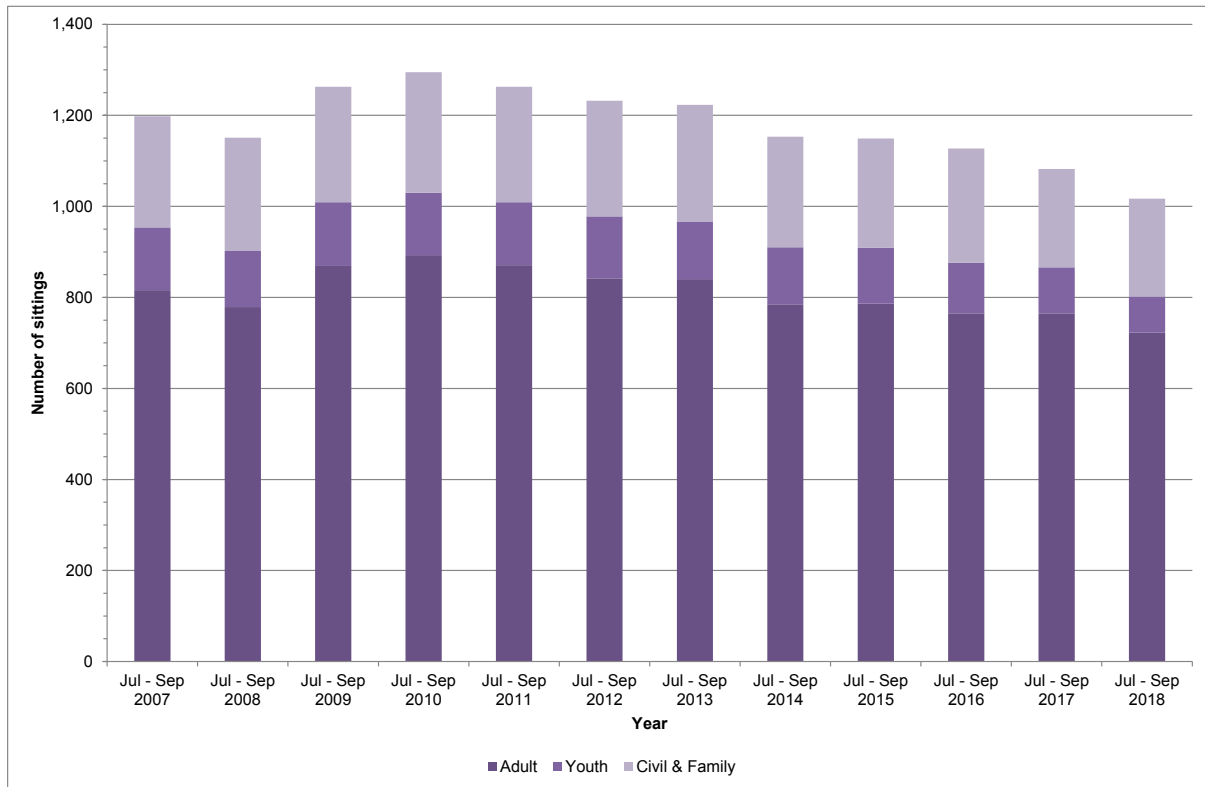
The Magistrates' sitting days for July to September 2018 may be categorised as follows:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	650	19	54	723
Youth Criminal	79	0	0	79
Civil & Family	211	4	0	215
Total	940	23	54	1,017

Within these 1,017 sitting days, 71% were adult criminal days, 8% 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 July to September quarter of 2010, and is at its lowest point since recording began (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018



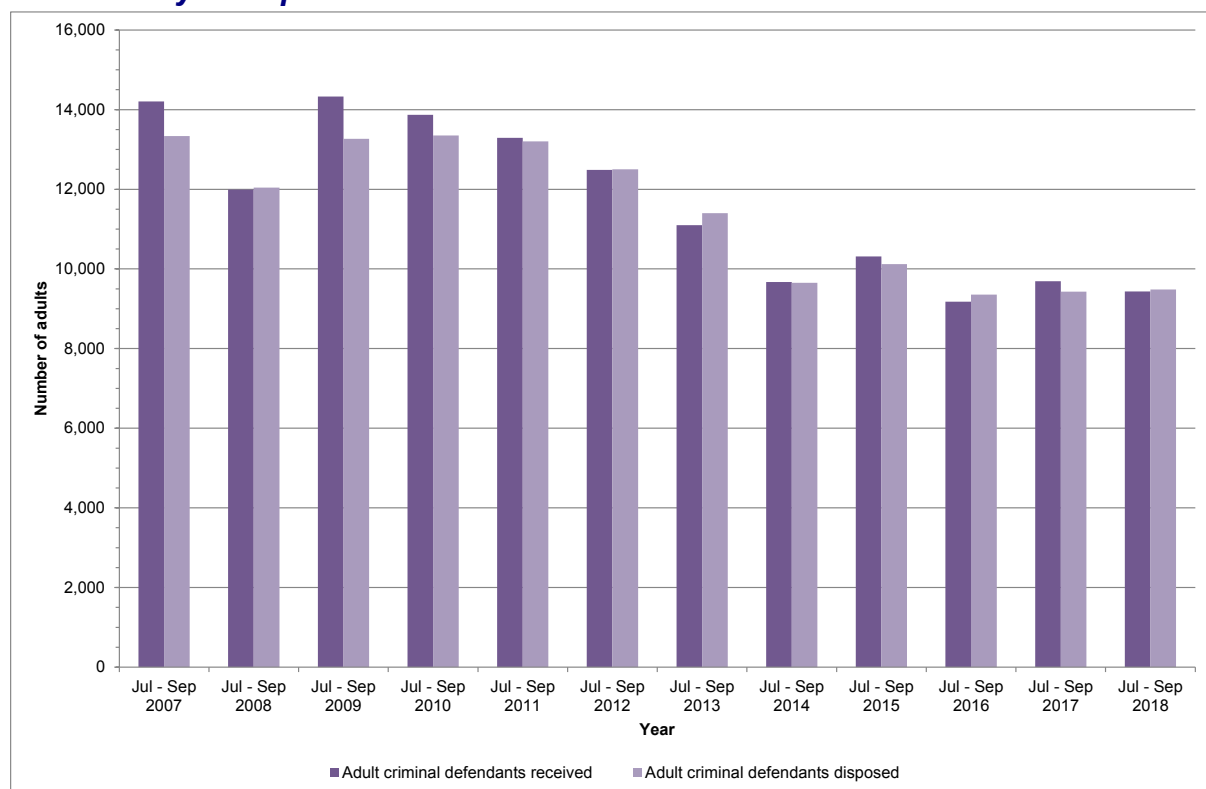
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2018, 9,436 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,484 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent a decrease of 3% in defendants received (from 9,692) and an increase of 1% in defendants disposed of (from 9,430) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (77.9%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (74.1% in the same period in 2017).

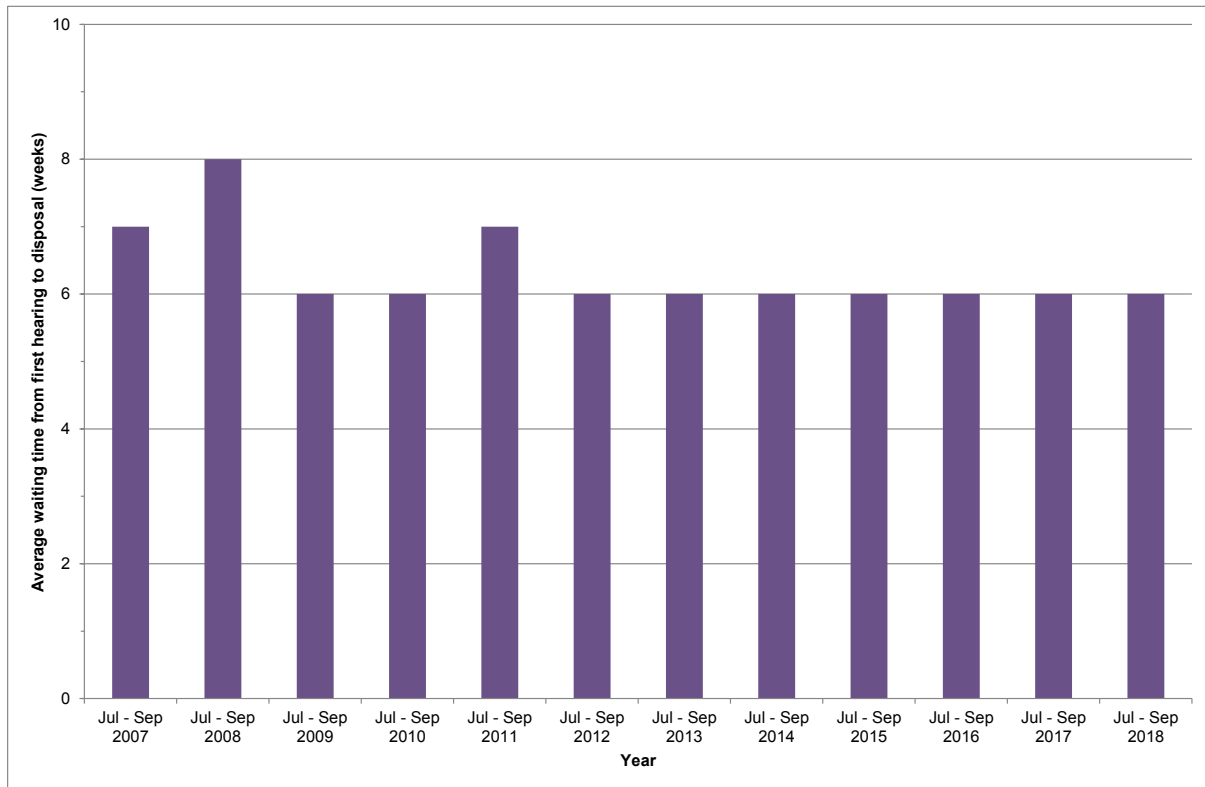
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had been generally decreasing in the quarter July to September over the last number of years, with the lowest levels of both being recorded in the July to September quarter in 2016, increasing slightly in 2017 and defendants received decreased slightly this year with disposals continuing to increase (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018



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

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in Adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): July to September 2007 to July to September 2018



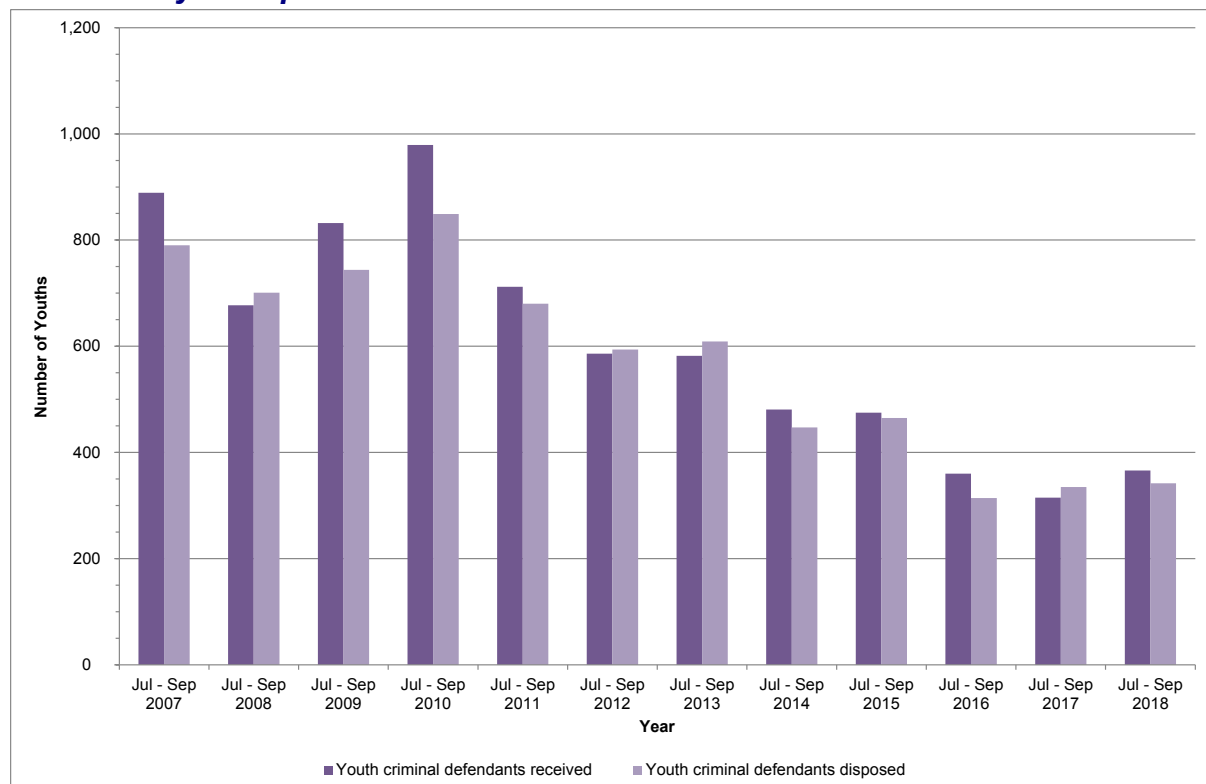
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2018, 366 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 342 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 16% (from 315) and of 2% (from 335) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Nearly all (99.1%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 97.9% in the same period in 2017).

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter July to September over the last number of years, with the level of defendants received at its lowest in the previous year's quarter and the level of defendants disposed continuing to increase slightly from its lowest level in the same quarter of 2016 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018



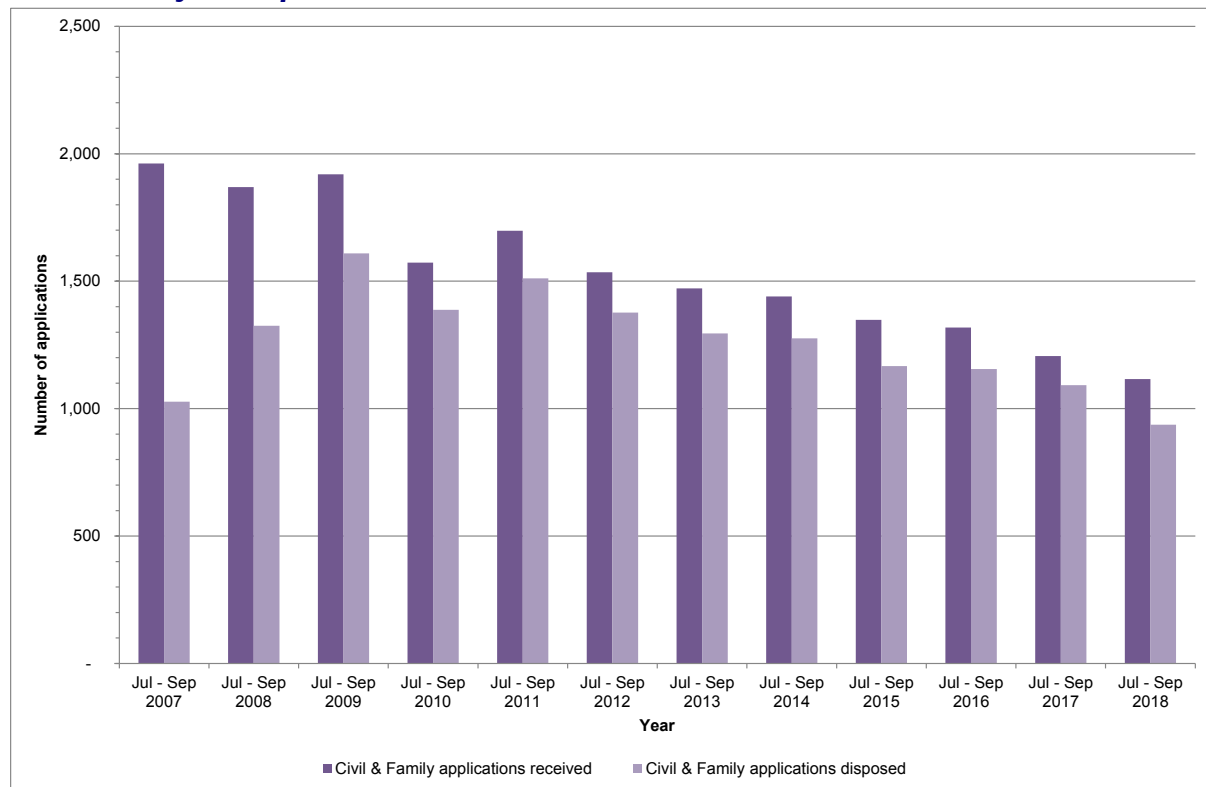
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (11 weeks for the same period in 2017).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During July to September 2018, 1,116 new civil and family applications were received and 937 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 7% (from 1,206) and 14% (from 1,092) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has shown a gradual decline during the quarter July to September between 2007 and 2018, with levels of receipts and disposals reaching their lowest point in the time series in the current quarter (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2018



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 8 weeks from date of receipt to disposal, the same length of time as it did in the same quarter last year.

APPENDIX 1 – TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue³

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Civil and 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	18	5:10:23	2	4:15:00	6	4:00:00
Ballymena	21	5:11:11	3	2:50:00	7	3:30:17
Laganside	189	3:14:50	24	3:01:40	63	3:59:40
Armagh	21	4:08:25	-		-	
Banbridge@Newry	14	3:06:04	-		-	
Limavady	13	2:50:46	-		-	
Lisburn	33	4:14:41	6	1:54:10	20	2:15:24
Magherafelt	12	3:40:25	-		-	
Dungannon	35	4:17:51	3	5:05:00	9	3:28:20
Downpatrick	24	3:38:20	-		1	4:00:00
Craigavon	33	4:45:45	5	2:58:00	11	2:52:43
Strabane	21	3:31:54	1	1:45:00	1	0:50:00
Omagh	18	3:59:43	4	1:20:00	9	2:11:06
Enniskillen	26	4:30:11	5	3:18:00	2	3:45:00
Coleraine	31	4:25:58	5	2:41:36	10	4:38:00
Londonderry	25	4:01:48	3	3:20:00	8	4:18:22
Newtownards	48	3:22:23	9	3:12:13	34	3:27:47
Newry	31	3:00:03	6	2:05:50	16	4:15:33
Londonderry@Omagh	37	3:35:16	-		-	
Londonderry@Coleraine	-		3	4:15:00	14	2:39:08
Total	650	3:46:16	79	2:56:29	211	3:31:34

³ 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 venue³

	Adult criminal day		Civil and Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	1	0:10:00	-	
Laganside	12	4:20:00	-	
Lisburn	3	1:28:20	1	0:20:00
Londonderry	1	4:52:00	3	3:10:40
Newtownards	1	0:20:00	-	
Newry	1	0:10:00	-	
Total	19	3:15:37	4	2:28:00

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue³

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	13	0:35:46
Lisburn	11	0:24:05
Downpatrick	1	0:30:00
Omagh	10	1:18:06
Londonderry	5	0:40:24
Newtownards	7	0:22:51
Newry	7	0:17:08
Total	54	0:37:27

³ 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 venue⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,485	639	6	3	3,133
Newtownards Court Office	505	146	1	1	653
Downpatrick Court Office	240	48	-	-	288
Craigavon Court Office	500	117	26	6	649
Armagh Court Office	168	51	-	1	220
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	111	29	15	-	155
Omagh Court Office	146	103	-	-	249
Strabane Court Office	153	40	-	-	193
Antrim Court Office	260	85	1	-	346
Londonderry Court Office	380	142	-	-	522
Enniskillen Court Office	204	50	-	1	255
Coleraine Court Office	292	111	1	1	405
Newry Court Office	427	128	9	3	567
Limavady Court Office	101	46	-	1	148
Magherafelt Court Office	101	48	-	1	150
Ballymena Court Office	396	129	-	-	525
Lisburn Court Office	369	124	-	-	493
Dungannon Court Office	348	134	3	-	485
Total	7,186	2,170	62	18	9,436

⁴ 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 venue⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,489	587	-	2	3,078
Newtownards Court Office	571	127	3	2	703
Downpatrick Court Office	226	47	-	-	273
Craigavon Court Office	548	118	1	-	667
Armagh Court Office	166	47	-	-	213
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	103	26	13	-	142
Omagh Court Office	171	100	-	-	271
Strabane Court Office	177	44	-	-	221
Antrim Court Office	306	90	-	-	396
Londonderry Court Office	469	146	-	-	615
Enniskillen Court Office	212	48	-	-	260
Coleraine Court Office	276	104	-	-	380
Newry Court Office	427	105	9	-	541
Limavady Court Office	91	46	-	-	137
Magherafelt Court Office	94	44	-	-	138
Ballymena Court Office	334	125	-	-	459
Lisburn Court Office	343	120	-	-	463
Dungannon Court Office	383	141	3	-	527
Total	7,386	2,065	29	4	9,484

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

Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue⁵

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	6.54	4.70	.86	5.56
Newtownards Court Office	5.03	6.66	1.25	7.90
Downpatrick Court Office	4.87	6.31	1.27	7.58
Craigavon Court Office	4.84	5.00	.58	5.58
Armagh Court Office	4.37	6.44	.52	6.96
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	6.48	6.15	.33	6.48
Omagh Court Office	5.14	4.50	.45	4.94
Strabane Court Office	5.14	4.91	.49	5.40
Antrim Court Office	5.38	4.78	.67	5.45
Londonderry Court Office	5.00	7.08	1.04	8.12
Enniskillen Court Office	4.14	5.34	.68	6.02
Coleraine Court Office	4.45	5.92	.95	6.87
Newry Court Office	8.12	5.56	.39	5.95
Limavady Court Office	4.81	3.66	.88	4.54
Magherafelt Court Office	5.68	4.33	.76	5.09
Ballymena Court Office	5.02	5.27	.90	6.16
Lisburn Court Office	4.60	5.72	1.09	6.81
Dungannon Court Office	4.94	4.83	.67	5.50
Total	5.63	5.31	.82	6.13

⁵ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{4,6}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	653	4	-	-	657
All Sexual Offences	136	-	-	-	136
All Burglary Offences	52	-	-	-	52
All Robbery Offences	9	-	-	-	9
All Theft Offences	465	-	-	-	465
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	70	70	-	-	140
All Criminal Damage Offences	181	-	-	1	182
All Offences Against the State	233	-	-	1	234
All Other Offences	205	1,297	-	2	1,504
All Drug Offences	568	1	-	-	569
All Motoring Offences	2,857	579	17	-	3,453
All Non-Police Offences	10	47	12	-	69
All Breach	103	28	-	-	131
Combination of charges	1,844	39	-	-	1,883
Total	7,386	2,065	29	4	9,484

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

⁶ 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 area⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	354	5	-	-	359
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,541	306	-	-	3,847
All charges withdrawn	1,170	690	1	-	1,861
Fixed penalty default	-	-	28	-	28
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1,884	1,011	-	-	2,895
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	437	53	-	-	490
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	-	-	-	4	4
Total	7,386	2,065	29	4	9,484

⁴ 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 venue

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	129	-	129
Newtownards Court Office	63	1	64
Downpatrick Court Office	3	-	3
Craigavon Court Office	27	1	28
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	-	1
Omagh Court Office	7	-	7
Strabane Court Office	5	-	5
Antrim Court Office	6	-	6
Londonderry Court Office	30	1	31
Enniskillen Court Office	2	-	2
Coleraine Court Office	14	-	14
Newry Court Office	30	-	30
Magherafelt Court Office	1	-	1
Ballymena Court Office	11	-	11
Lisburn Court Office	23	-	23
Dungannon Court Office	11	-	11
Total	363	3	366

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	93	-	93
Newtownards Court Office	47	1	48
Downpatrick Court Office	14	-	14
Craigavon Court Office	24	1	25
Armagh Court Office	5	-	5
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	-	1
Omagh Court Office	16	-	16
Strabane Court Office	4	-	4
Antrim Court Office	6	-	6
Londonderry Court Office	28	1	29
Enniskillen Court Office	8	-	8
Coleraine Court Office	16	-	16
Newry Court Office	26	-	26
Magherafelt Court Office	3	-	3
Ballymena Court Office	9	-	9
Lisburn Court Office	27	-	27
Dungannon Court Office	12	-	12
Total	339	3	342

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue⁵

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	3.17	10.64	3.48	14.12
Newtownards Court Office	3.82	5.58	1.92	7.49
Downpatrick Court Office	2.46	13.89	8.27	22.16
Craigavon Court Office	4.24	9.06	2.17	11.23
Armagh Court Office	5.79	18.39	0.00	18.39
Omagh Court Office	3.00	16.11	2.62	18.72
Strabane Court Office	2.05	7.43	0.00	7.43
Antrim Court Office	1.57	10.00	4.60	14.60
Londonderry Court Office	2.23	5.16	5.14	10.29
Enniskillen Court Office	2.80	14.94	.57	15.51
Coleraine Court Office	3.61	4.06	3.27	7.34
Newry Court Office	4.65	2.89	3.29	6.18
Magherafelt Court Office	5.00	9.43	0.00	9.43
Ballymena Court Office	3.71	6.59	3.57	10.16
Lisburn Court Office	1.51	9.99	3.25	13.24
Dungannon Court Office	2.02	11.48	5.46	16.94
Total	3.22	8.91	3.18	12.10

⁵ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	59	-	59
All Sexual Offences	5	-	5
All Burglary Offences	7	-	7
All Theft Offences	28	-	28
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	-	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	52	-	52
All Offences Against the State	16	-	16
All Other Offences	11	1	12
All Drug Offences	6	-	6
All Motoring Offences	35	-	35
All Breach	-	2	2
Combination of charges	119	-	119
Total	339	3	342

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	144	1	145
All charges withdrawn	111	-	111
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	59	1	60
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	21	1	22
Total	339	3	342

⁶ 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 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	17	446	463
Newtownards Court Office	6	91	97
Downpatrick Court Office	4	37	41
Craigavon Court Office	3	38	41
Armagh Court Office	3	17	20
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2	4	6
Omagh Court Office	5	31	36
Strabane Court Office	1	15	16
Antrim Court Office	6	25	31
Londonderry Court Office	5	42	47
Enniskillen Court Office	-	31	31
Coleraine Court Office	4	35	39
Newry Court Office	6	76	82
Limavady Court Office	-	4	4
Magherafelt Court Office	2	8	10
Ballymena Court Office	2	53	55
Lisburn Court Office	7	75	82
Dungannon Court Office	1	14	15
Total	74	1,042	1,116

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	14	363	377
Newtownards Court Office	6	79	85
Downpatrick Court Office	3	24	27
Craigavon Court Office	5	30	35
Armagh Court Office	3	16	19
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2	6	8
Omagh Court Office	1	19	20
Strabane Court Office	-	12	12
Antrim Court Office	2	22	24
Londonderry Court Office	3	47	50
Enniskillen Court Office	-	28	28
Coleraine Court Office	3	27	30
Newry Court Office	7	61	68
Limavady Court Office	-	3	3
Magherafelt Court Office	1	8	9
Ballymena Court Office	1	41	42
Lisburn Court Office	2	80	82
Dungannon Court Office	3	15	18
Total	56	881	937

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	1.44	6.78	8.22
Newtownards Court Office	1.58	8.49	10.08
Downpatrick Court Office	1.69	12.06	13.76
Craigavon Court Office	1.82	3.25	5.07
Armagh Court Office	2.21	11.32	13.53
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2.32	6.00	8.32
Omagh Court Office	1.47	1.65	3.12
Strabane Court Office	1.02	2.25	3.27
Antrim Court Office	1.17	7.36	8.54
Londonderry Court Office	2.93	9.18	11.87
Enniskillen Court Office	1.28	5.27	6.54
Coleraine Court Office	1.60	5.56	7.17
Newry Court Office	2.09	3.77	5.87
Limavady Court Office	1.29	0.00	1.29
Magherafelt Court Office	1.33	2.81	4.14
Ballymena Court Office	1.22	7.31	8.53
Lisburn Court Office	.91	4.54	5.45
Dungannon Court Office	2.99	7.52	10.51
Total	1.58	6.50	8.07

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	509	115	127	100	15	866
	Occupation	4	1	2	2	-	9
	Vary discharge non-mol occupation	1	-	-	3	1	5
	Other Family Homes & domestic violence	-	-	-	1	-	1
Total		514	116	129	106	16	881

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 may include non-molestation, occupation orders or both. 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 two or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.

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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