

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin
October to December 2019

Quarterly provisional figures

R Martin

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Produced by Analytical Services Group,
Department of Justice.

For further information write to:

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

Telephone: 028 9072 8928

e-mail: richard.martin2@courtsni.gov.uk

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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 2019 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 October to December 2019:
- There were 942 scheduled Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 1% from 954 in the same period the previous year.
- 10,758 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,225 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 11% in adult defendants received (from 9,705) and of 8% in adult defendants disposed (from 9,486) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the highest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the October to December quarter since 2013.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 7 weeks, an increase of 1 week from the average waiting time for the corresponding period last year.
- 328 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 316 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 1% in youth defendants received (from 332) and of 20% in youth defendants disposed (from 394), compared to the same period the previous year. This is the second lowest number of youth defendants received and the lowest number of 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 14 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 856 new civil and family applications were received and 938 civil applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 30% (from 1,064) and of 13% (from 971) 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 13 weeks, compared to an average waiting time of 11 weeks 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 Bulletin¹.

¹ Department of Justice, Statistics and Research, 2019. *NICTS Children's Order Bulletin* [online] Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-childrens-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 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 calendar year 2019. However, within this publication, comparisons of trends are viewed over a 10-year period.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the first quarter of 2020 and will be published on 7th May 2020.

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 2019 edition of Judicial Statistics (published on the 26th June 2020)².

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 Department of Justice, Statistics and Research, 2019. *Judicial Statistics* [online] Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

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 Department of Justice (DoJ) Statistical Note 'Statistics and Research: Policy statement on revisions'³ which may be found on the Statistics and Research page of the Services section on the DoJ website⁴. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice.

³ Department of Justice, 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>

⁴ 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 October to December 2019 there were 942 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 39 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 50 special Magistrates' sitting days. These represented a decrease of 1% (from 954), an increase of 105% (from 19) and a decrease of 4% (from 52) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

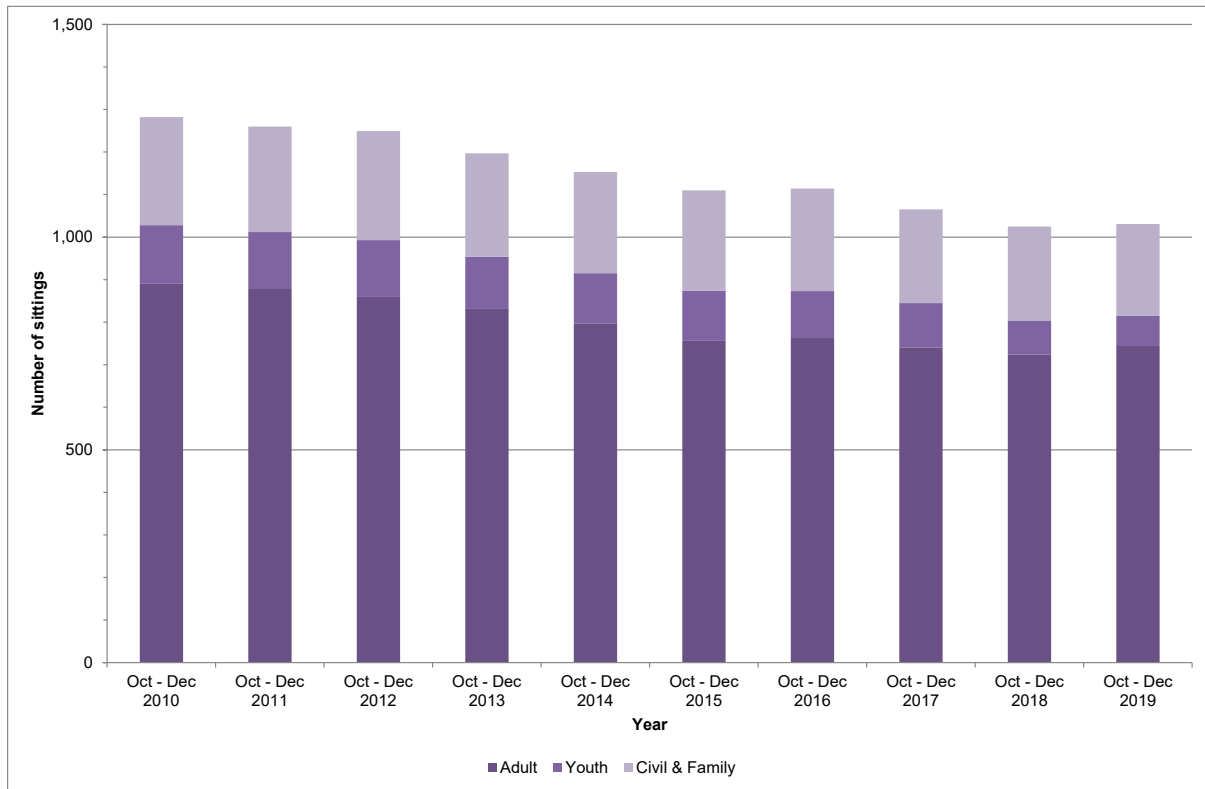
The Magistrates' sitting days for October to December 2019 may be categorised as follows:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	661	33	50	744
Youth Criminal	70	1	0	71
Civil & Family	211	5	0	216
Total	942	39	50	1,031

Within these 1,031 sitting days, 72% were adult criminal days, 7% 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 second lowest point since the beginning of this time series (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: October to December 2010 to October to December 2019



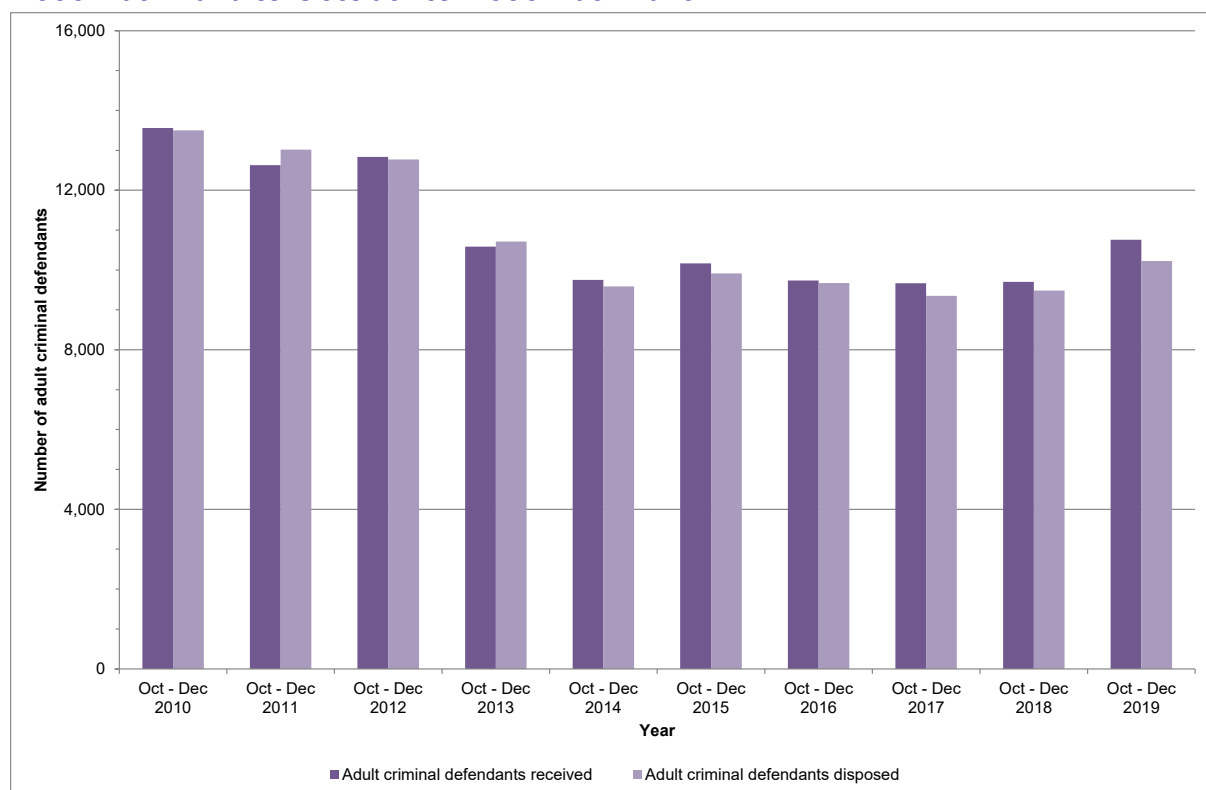
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2019, 10,758 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 10,225 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent increases of 11% in defendants received (from 9,705) and of 8% in defendants disposed (from 9,486) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (76.1%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (77.4% in the same period in 2018).

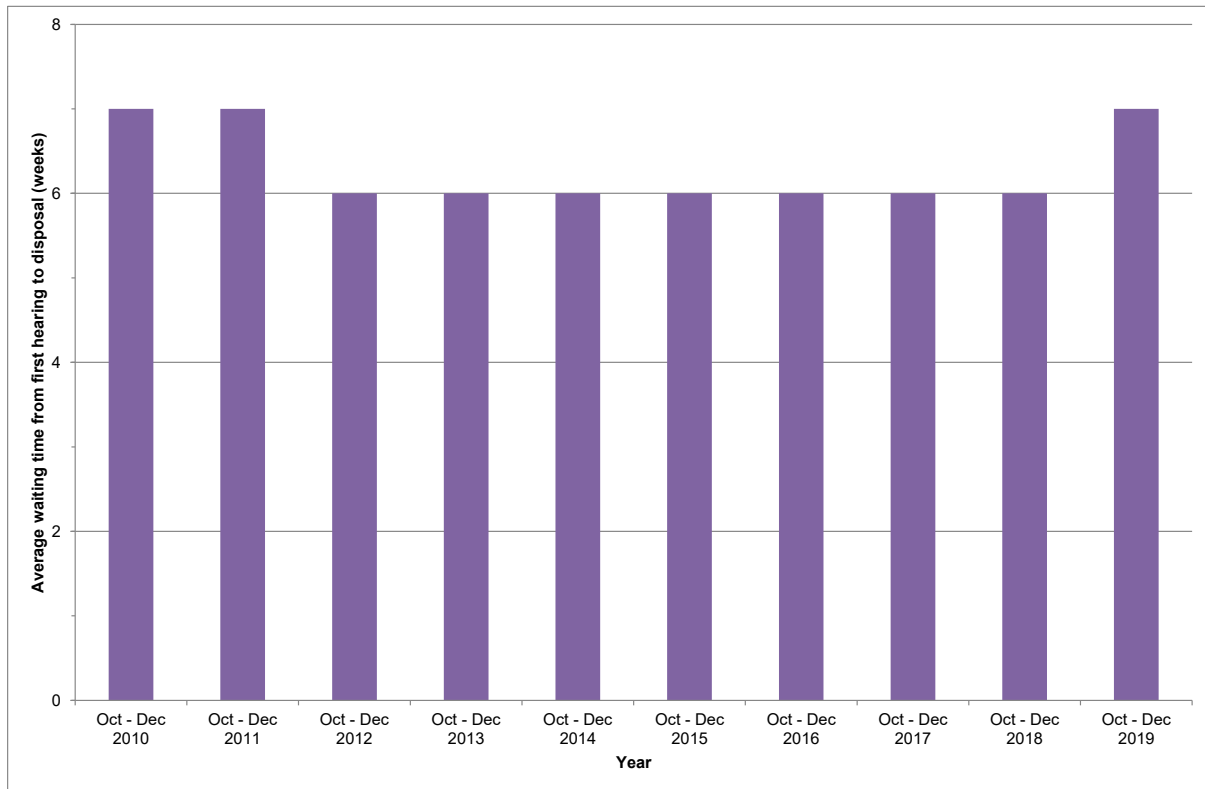
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December over the last number of years, with the lowest levels of both being recorded in the October to December quarter of 2017 and showing small increases for the previous quarter and then the further increases in the current quarter (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2010 to October to December 2019



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal has increased from 6 weeks to 7 weeks, after remaining 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 2010 to October to December 2019



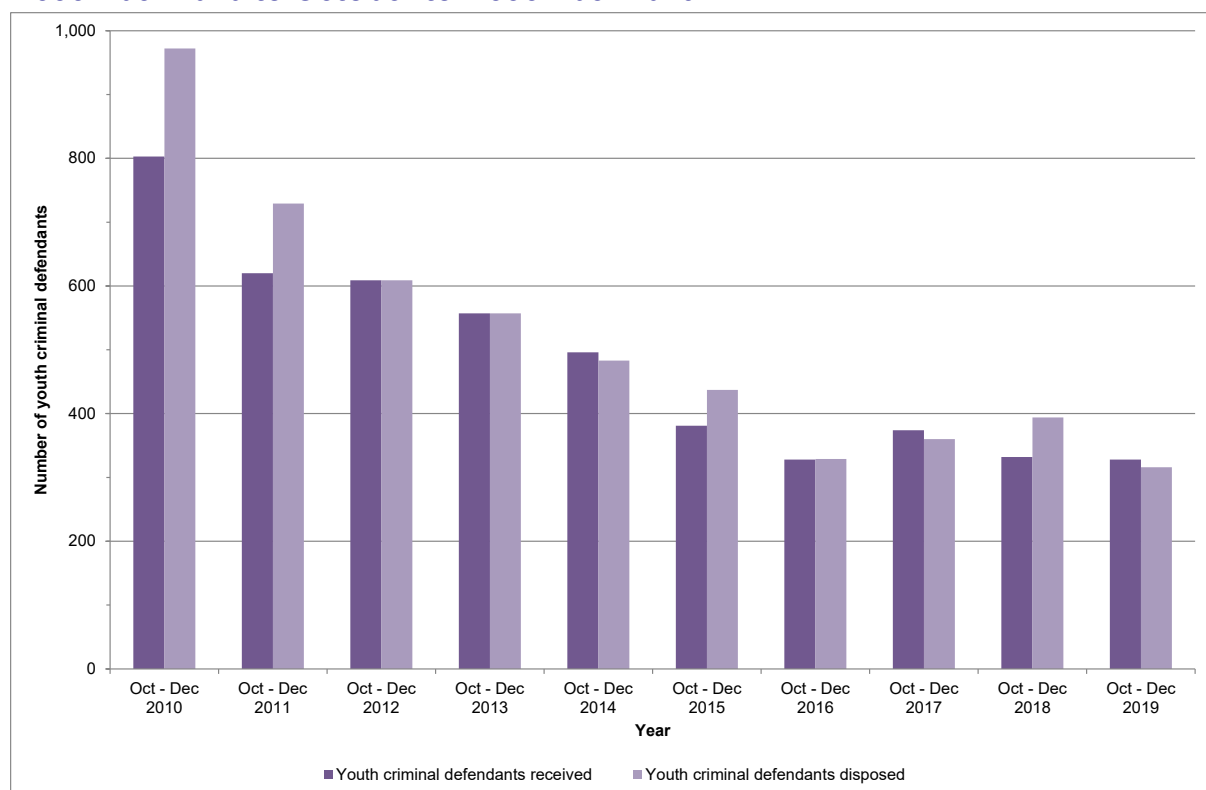
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2019, 328 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 316 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 1% (from 332) and of 20% (from 394) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Nearly all (98.7%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 100% in the same period in 2018).

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed had 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 2016, before increasing slightly in each of the previous two quarters, but then decreasing again to their joint-lowest and lowest levels respectively (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2010 to October to December 2019



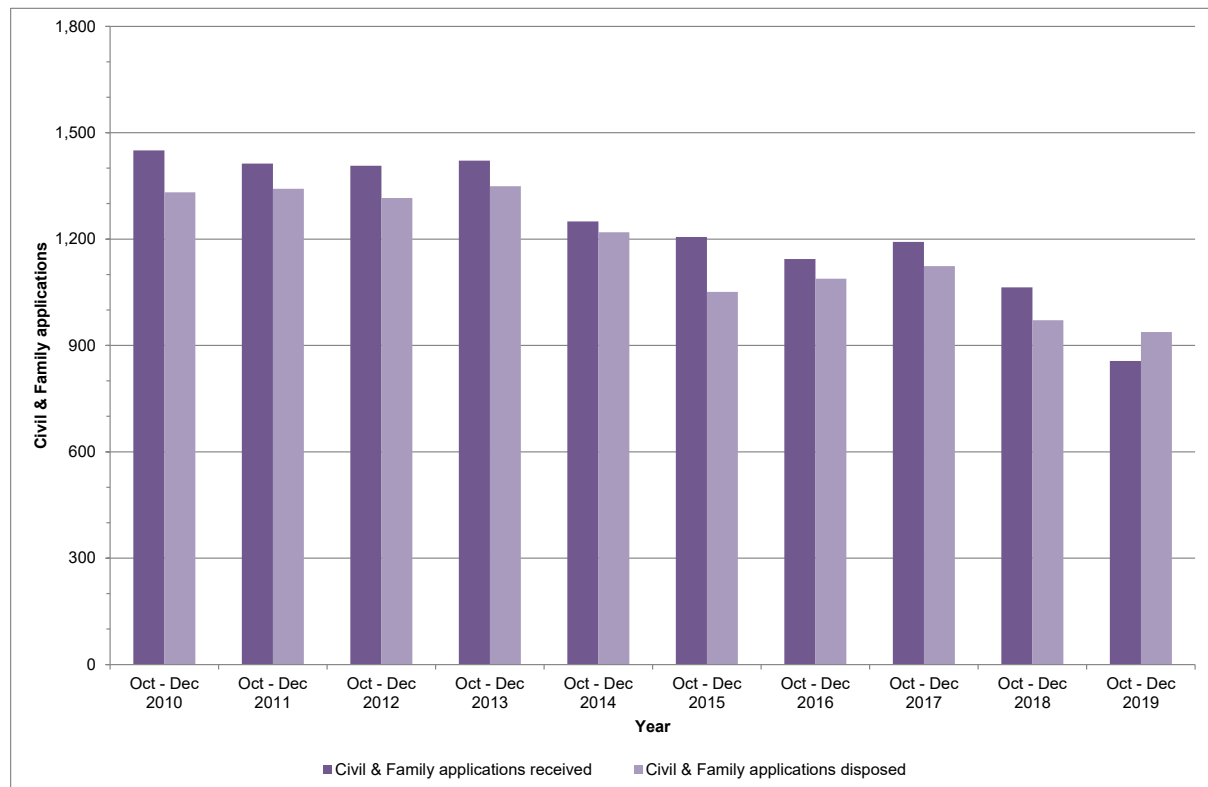
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (14 weeks for the same period in 2018).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During October to December 2019, 856 new civil and family applications were received and 938 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent decreases of 20% (from 1,064) and 3% (from 971) 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 since 2010, with levels of receipts reaching their lowest point in the time series in the current October to December quarter (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2010 to October to December 2019



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 13 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (11 weeks for the same period in 2018).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue⁵

	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	19	03:11:34	3	05:11:20	5	03:31:00
Ballymena	21	04:41:40	2	03:42:30	12	02:22:05
Laganside	197	03:21:38	23	03:06:05	62	04:42:02
Armagh	20	04:09:15	0	-	0	-
Banbridge@Newry	14	03:12:30	0	-	0	-
Limavady	12	03:30:00	0	-	0	-
Lisburn	34	04:14:42	5	02:07:00	14	03:44:38
Magherafelt	11	04:59:05	0	-	0	-
Dungannon	35	04:13:00	3	04:31:40	9	03:44:26
Downpatrick	25	03:17:48	0	-	0	-
Craigavon	32	04:15:15	5	03:31:00	12	02:19:20
Strabane	21	02:53:34	3	02:13:20	0	-
Omagh	22	03:05:49	4	01:07:30	7	01:53:34
Enniskillen	27	04:37:15	4	03:02:30	2	02:34:30
Coleraine	34	04:17:56	4	03:22:30	11	04:55:00
Londonderry	59	03:57:37	2	04:27:30	24	03:36:27
Newtownards	49	03:18:09	9	02:37:46	33	03:43:01
Newry	29	03:10:00	3	01:55:00	20	03:36:00
Total	661	03:41:49	70	03:01:03	211	03:48:56

⁵ A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. 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 venue⁵

	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
Ballymena	0	-	0	-	1	05:45:00
Laganside	18	03:43:36	0	-	0	-
Banbridge@Newry	0	-	0	-	1	00:10:00
Lisburn	2	02:45:00	1	04:25:00	0	-
Dungannon	1	03:00:00	0	-	0	-
Royal Courts Of Justice	0	-	0	-	1	00:16:00
Coleraine	1	05:45:00	0	-	0	-
Londonderry	6	02:18:30	0	-	2	02:52:30
Newtownards	4	02:25:00	0	-	0	-
Newry	1	01:30:00	0	-	0	-
Total	33	03:13:21	1	04:25:00	5	02:23:12

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue⁵

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	11	00:35:27
Lisburn	7	00:35:00
Craigavon	1	01:00:00
Omagh	5	01:08:00
Londonderry	8	00:45:07
Newtownards	10	00:28:00
Newry	8	00:52:30
Total	50	00:41:55

⁵ A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers. 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 venue⁶

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,821	751	41	15	3,628
Newtownards Court Office	571	185	5	1	762
Downpatrick Court Office	265	70	7	1	343
Craigavon Court Office	565	137	9	1	712
Armagh Court Office	198	54	10	3	265
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	92	56	6	0	154
Omagh Court Office	164	85	2	0	251
Strabane Court Office	123	69	1	1	194
Antrim Court Office	288	86	7	2	383
Londonderry Court Office	609	141	15	4	769
Enniskillen Court Office	202	78	4	0	284
Coleraine Court Office	364	109	13	2	488
Newry Court Office	452	136	6	0	594
Limavady Court Office	102	53	7	2	164
Magherafelt Court Office	163	55	2	1	221
Ballymena Court Office	357	129	4	3	493
Lisburn Court Office	384	155	8	3	550
Dungannon Court Office	383	101	14	5	503
Total	8,103	2,450	161	44	10,758

⁶ 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 venue⁶

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,785	689	6	1	3,481
Newtownards Court Office	562	173	4	0	739
Downpatrick Court Office	248	63	3	1	315
Craigavon Court Office	488	140	6	1	635
Armagh Court Office	170	58	5	0	233
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	75	50	8	0	133
Omagh Court Office	154	98	1	0	253
Strabane Court Office	118	63	0	0	181
Antrim Court Office	276	89	4	0	369
Londonderry Court Office	597	153	0	0	750
Enniskillen Court Office	217	70	1	0	288
Coleraine Court Office	357	110	6	2	475
Newry Court Office	433	127	10	0	570
Limavady Court Office	89	46	1	0	136
Magherafelt Court Office	142	56	2	2	202
Ballymena Court Office	356	114	4	2	476
Lisburn Court Office	348	148	2	0	498
Dungannon Court Office	372	109	9	1	491
Total	7,787	2,356	72	10	10,225

⁶ 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 venue⁷

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	4.77	6.36	0.84	7.20
Newtownards Court Office	4.81	7.05	0.68	7.73
Downpatrick Court Office	5.66	6.39	0.60	6.98
Craigavon Court Office	4.67	4.03	0.54	4.57
Armagh Court Office	5.42	6.75	0.54	7.29
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	8.74	4.48	0.30	4.78
Omagh Court Office	5.45	5.27	0.44	5.71
Strabane Court Office	5.57	4.36	0.50	4.86
Antrim Court Office	5.39	5.24	0.66	5.90
Londonderry Court Office	4.59	5.47	1.12	6.59
Enniskillen Court Office	4.55	5.99	0.76	6.76
Coleraine Court Office	5.26	7.05	0.96	8.01
Newry Court Office	4.88	4.69	0.15	4.84
Limavady Court Office	5.52	3.94	0.29	4.23
Magherafelt Court Office	5.76	7.68	0.93	8.60
Ballymena Court Office	5.47	5.98	0.81	6.79
Lisburn Court Office	4.43	6.40	0.83	7.22
Dungannon Court Office	5.86	4.94	0.51	5.45
Total	5.02	5.91	0.72	6.63

⁷ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{6 8}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	669	1	0	0	670
All Sexual Offences	185	0	0	1	186
All Burglary Offences	87	0	0	0	87
All Robbery Offences	17	0	0	0	17
All Theft Offences	496	0	0	3	499
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	141	77	0	0	218
All Criminal Damage Offences	189	0	0	0	189
All Offences Against the State	213	0	0	4	217
All Other Offences	256	1,236	0	2	1,494
All Drug Offences	633	1	0	0	634
All Motoring Offences	2,826	843	49	0	3,718
All Non-Police Offences	11	100	23	0	134
All Breach	118	50	0	0	168
Combination of charges	1,946	48	0	0	1,994
Total	7,787	2,356	72	10	10,225

Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area⁸

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	462	0	0	0	462
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,671	346	0	0	4,017
All charges withdrawn	1,310	863	0	0	2,173
Fixed penalty default	0	0	72	0	72
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1,894	1,098	0	0	2,992
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	450	49	0	0	499
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	10	10
Total	7,787	2,356	72	10	10,225

⁶ Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

⁸ 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	111	2	113
Newtownards Court Office	51	0	51
Downpatrick Court Office	3	0	3
Craigavon Court Office	18	0	18
Armagh Court Office	1	0	1
Omagh Court Office	12	0	12
Strabane Court Office	4	0	4
Antrim Court Office	13	0	13
Londonderry Court Office	20	0	20
Enniskillen Court Office	10	0	10
Coleraine Court Office	11	0	11
Newry Court Office	26	0	26
Magherafelt Court Office	1	0	1
Ballymena Court Office	15	0	15
Lisburn Court Office	15	0	15
Dungannon Court Office	15	0	15
Total	326	2	328

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	93	4	97
Newtownards Court Office	54	0	54
Downpatrick Court Office	4	0	4
Craigavon Court Office	30	0	30
Armagh Court Office	11	0	11
Omagh Court Office	2	0	2
Strabane Court Office	5	0	5
Antrim Court Office	21	0	21
Londonderry Court Office	13	0	13
Enniskillen Court Office	7	0	7
Coleraine Court Office	26	0	26
Newry Court Office	13	0	13
Ballymena Court Office	11	0	11
Lisburn Court Office	22	0	22
Dungannon Court Office	312	4	316
Total	93	4	97

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue⁷

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	2.71	4.80	4.67	9.46
Newtownards Court Office	2.87	7.16	4.14	11.30
Downpatrick Court Office	1.93	13.25	8.25	21.50
Craigavon Court Office	3.88	11.80	3.05	14.84
Armagh Court Office	5.29	8.39	3.75	12.14
Omagh Court Office	6.36	12.07	0.00	12.07
Strabane Court Office	2.07	10.39	0.00	10.39
Antrim Court Office	3.42	3.85	5.93	9.78
Londonderry Court Office	2.82	6.56	4.51	11.07
Enniskillen Court Office	4.40	6.86	1.46	8.31
Coleraine Court Office	3.02	5.58	7.24	12.82
Newry Court Office	4.78	10.26	1.45	11.71
Ballymena Court Office	3.07	12.11	2.04	14.16
Lisburn Court Office	4.56	6.42	6.70	13.12
Dungannon Court Office	3.29	7.11	4.43	11.54
Total	2.71	4.80	4.67	9.46

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area⁸

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	66	0	66
All Sexual Offences	3	0	3
All Burglary Offences	6	0	6
All Robbery Offences	1	0	1
All Theft Offences	37	0	37
All Criminal Damage Offences	30	0	30
All Offences Against the State	15	0	15
All Other Offences	2	0	2
All Drug Offences	16	0	16
All Motoring Offences	36	0	36
All Breach	1	4	5
Combination of charges	99	0	99
Total	312	4	316

⁷ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

⁸ 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	3	0	3
Plea of guilty on all charges	167	2	169
All charges withdrawn	76	2	78
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	53	0	53
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	13	0	13
Total	312	4	316

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	15	235	250
Newtownards Court Office	11	77	88
Downpatrick Court Office	4	16	20
Craigavon Court Office	9	25	34
Armagh Court Office	5	13	18
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	11	12
Omagh Court Office	2	7	9
Strabane Court Office	0	16	16
Antrim Court Office	2	21	23
Londonderry Court Office	8	97	105
Enniskillen Court Office	1	9	10
Coleraine Court Office	5	28	33
Newry Court Office	8	49	57
Limavady Court Office	0	4	4
Magherafelt Court Office	0	2	2
Ballymena Court Office	7	50	57
Lisburn Court Office	5	48	53
Dungannon Court Office	9	56	65
Total	92	764	856

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	20	339	359
Newtownards Court Office	9	71	80
Downpatrick Court Office	4	24	28
Craigavon Court Office	9	19	28
Armagh Court Office	4	12	16
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	11	12
Omagh Court Office	5	4	9
Strabane Court Office	1	19	20
Antrim Court Office	2	16	18
Londonderry Court Office	9	82	91
Enniskillen Court Office	1	14	15
Coleraine Court Office	8	30	38
Newry Court Office	12	49	61
Limavady Court Office	0	4	4
Magherafelt Court Office	0	2	2
Ballymena Court Office	4	46	50
Lisburn Court Office	8	56	64
Dungannon Court Office	8	35	43
Total	105	833	938

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	2.56	11.13	13.69
Newtownards Court Office	1.92	10.74	12.65
Downpatrick Court Office	2.55	13.18	15.73
Craigavon Court Office	1.63	5.36	6.99
Armagh Court Office	2.07	17.75	19.82
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.51	6.93	8.44
Omagh Court Office	2.25	7.78	10.03
Strabane Court Office	1.94	11.66	13.59
Antrim Court Office	0.97	2.02	2.98
Londonderry Court Office	3.53	16.64	20.17
Enniskillen Court Office	2.33	9.19	11.52
Coleraine Court Office	2.09	11.61	13.70
Newry Court Office	2.15	9.13	11.28
Limavady Court Office	2.18	5.82	8.00
Magherafelt Court Office	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ballymena Court Office	1.31	6.62	7.93
Lisburn Court Office	1.54	8.25	9.79
Dungannon Court Office	1.33	3.42	4.75
Total	2.25	10.40	12.66

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

		Order Made					Total
		Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary discharge	Other	
Complaint	Non molestation	412	148	143	114	6	823
	Occupation	0	3	3	0	0	6
	Vary discharge non-mol occupation	1	1	2	0	0	4
Total		413	152	148	114	6	833

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 orders, 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 orders, occupation orders or both.

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.

Analytical Services Group,
Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service,
Department of Justice
4th Floor, Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street,
Belfast BT1 3LA
e-mail: richard.martin2@courtsni.gov.uk
Telephone: 028 9072 8928

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-magistrates-court-bulletin>