

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin

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Research and Statistical Bulletin

Quarterly provisional figures

R Martin

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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 Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period January to March 2020 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 January to March 2020:
- There were 1,022 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was an increase of less than 1% from 1,020 in the same period the previous year.
- 10,177 adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,122 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 1% (from 10,108) and a decrease of 7% (from 9,787) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This continues the trend of an increasing number of adult defendants received since the lowest number of defendants was received in in this quarter in 2016, but this is the lowest number of adult defendants disposed during the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 7 weeks, an increase of one week compared to the corresponding period last year.
- 288 defendants were entered in the youth court and 275 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 6% (from 307) in youth defendants received and an increase of 1% in youth defendants disposed of (from 271) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of youth defendants received and the second lowest number of youth defendants disposed of during the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 13 weeks, compared to 14 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 825 civil and family applications were received and 748 civil applications were disposed of. These both represent decreases of 18% (from 1,005 and from 916 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 10 weeks, compared to 14 weeks in 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	21

Figure	Page
Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020	7
Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020	8
Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2011 to January to March 2020	9
Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020	10
Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020	11

Table	Page
Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue	12
Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue	13
Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue	13
Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue	14
Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue	14
Table 2.3 Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts by venue	15
Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area	15
Table 2.5 Outcome of adult defendants disposed of by business area	16
Table 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue	16

<u>Table 3.2 Youth defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	17
<u>Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	17
<u>Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	18
<u>Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area</u>	18
<u>Table 4.1 Number of civil and family applications received in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 4.2 Number of civil and family applications disposed in the Magistrates' court by venue</u>	19
<u>Table 4.3 Average waiting times in the civil and family Magistrates' courts by venue</u>	20
<u>Table 4.4 Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland</u>	20

1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Data relating to business at the Family Proceedings Court is published on a quarterly basis in the NICTS Children's Order Bulletin¹.

¹ Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, 2020. *NICTS Children's Order Bulletin*. 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 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 that 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 relates to the current calendar year 2020. The time series for this information dates back to 2007, 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 second quarter of 2020 and will be published on 7th August 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 2020 edition of Judicial statistics (due to be published on 25th June 2021).

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*'² which may be found on the NICTS Statistics and Research Publications section of the DoJ website. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice³.

² 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>

³ 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 January to March 2020 there were 943 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 25 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 54 special Magistrates' sitting days. These represent a decrease of 1% (from 953) in scheduled sitting days, an increase of 19% (from 21) in additional sitting days and an increase of 17% (from 46) in special sitting days, compared to the same period the previous year.

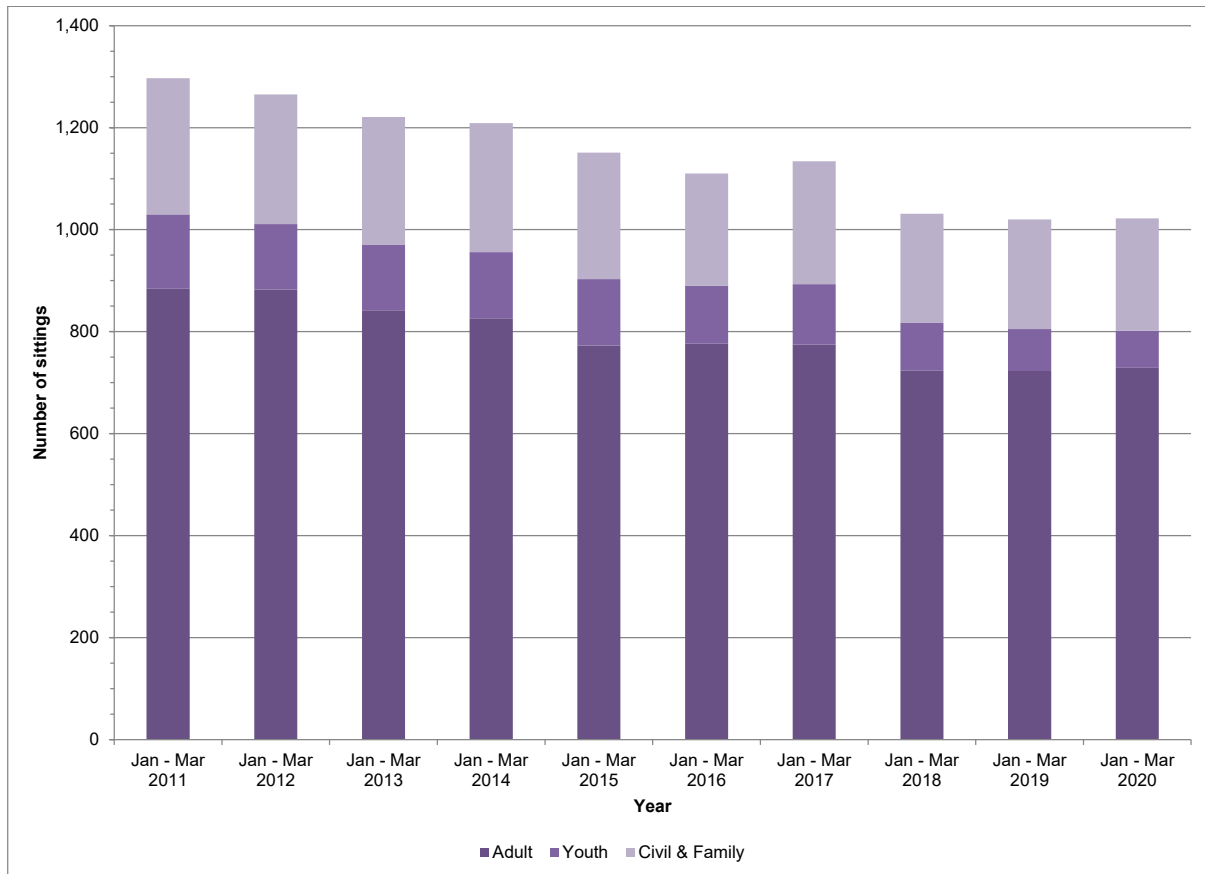
The composition of Magistrates' sitting days for January to March 2020 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	653	22	54	729
Youth Criminal	72	1	0	73
Civil & Family	218	2	0	220
Total	943	25	54	1,022

Within these 1,022 sitting days, 71% were adult criminal days, 7% were youth criminal days and 22% were civil and family days.

The number of sitting days across each Magistrates' business type has been decreasing in the January to March quarter over since 2011, with the exception of the January to March quarter in 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020



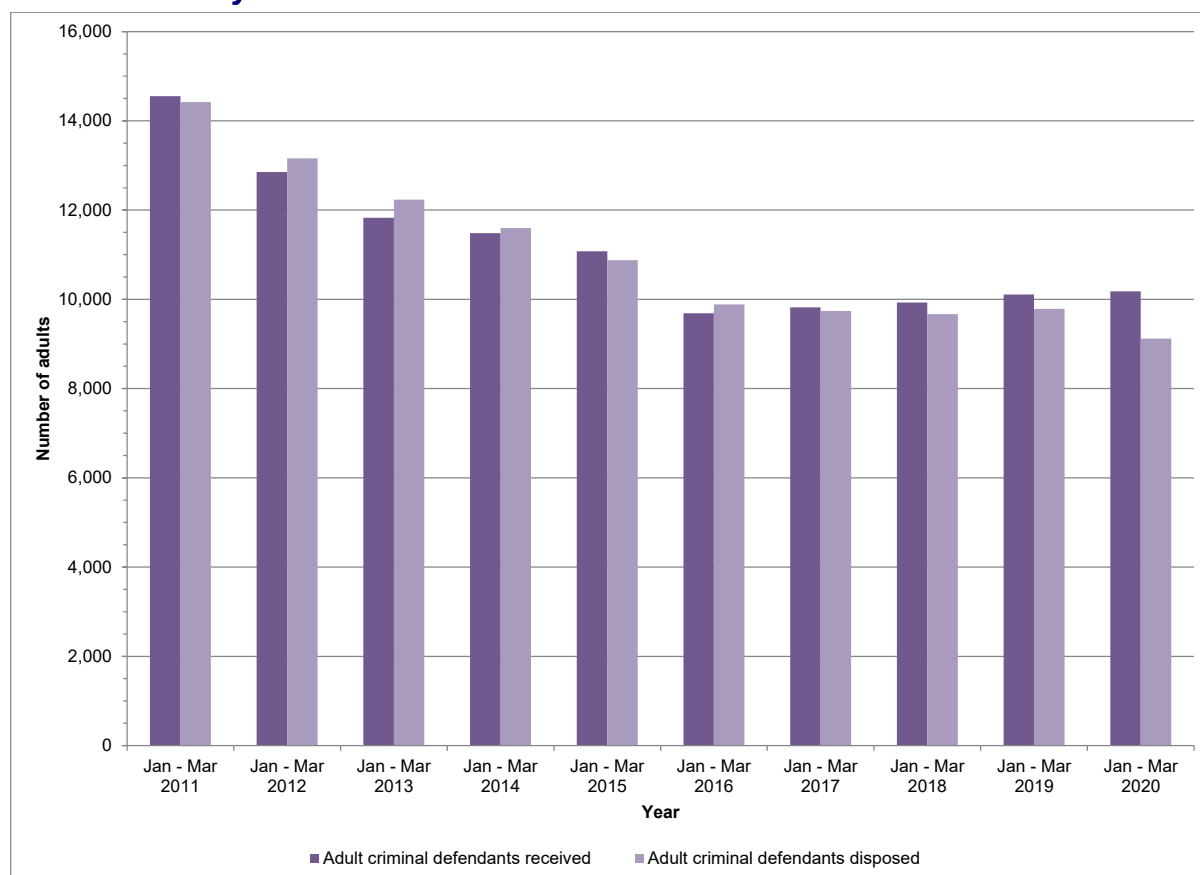
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2020, 10,177 adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,122 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent an increase of 1% (from 10,108) in adult criminal defendants received and a decrease of 7% (from 9,787) respectively in adult criminal defendants disposed of, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (79.1%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (78.3% in the same period in 2019).

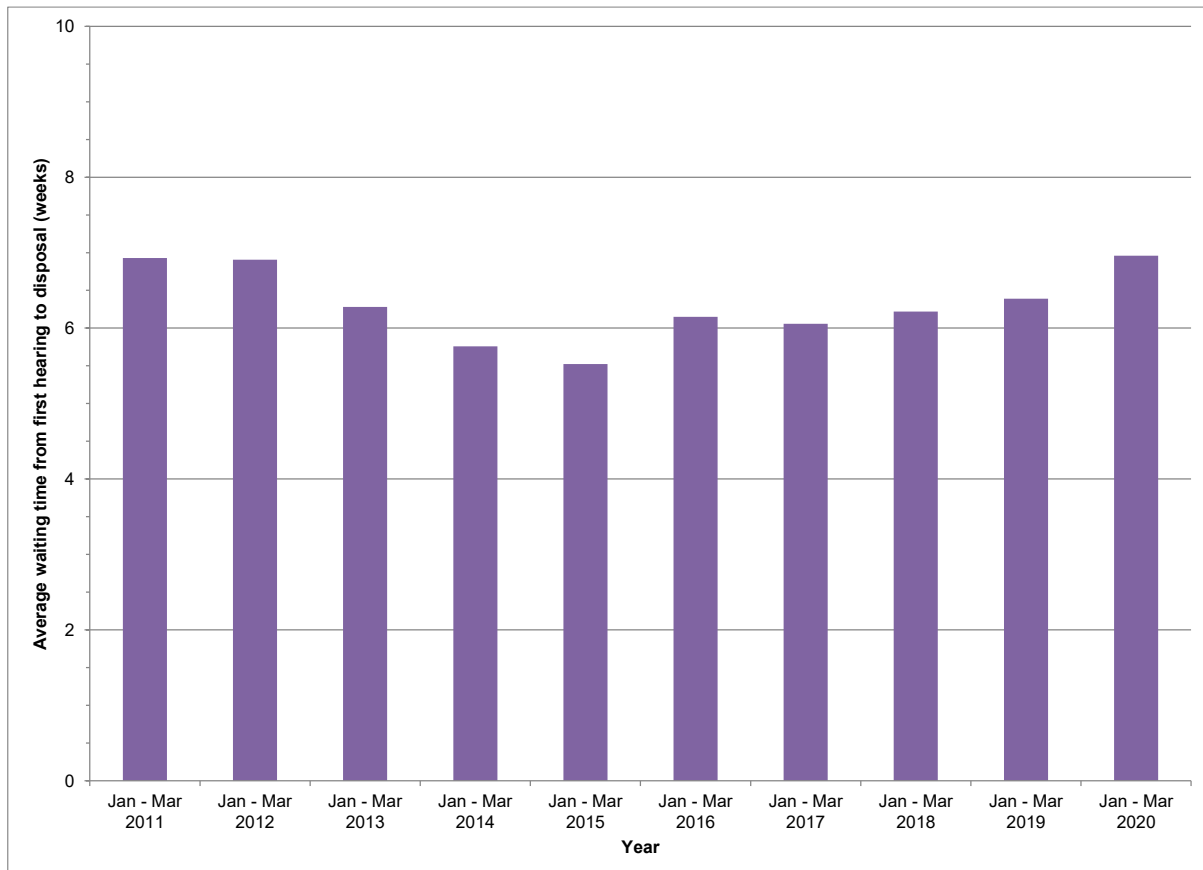
The volume of adult criminal defendants received decreased between 2011 and 2016, however, over the last four years there have been small increases in the number of cases received in the January to March quarter. The volume of adult criminal defendants disposed decreased from 2011 to 2018 and, whilst there has been a small increase in the number of cases disposed of in last year's quarter, the current number of disposals is at its lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal has remained fairly stable in the January to March quarter over the past number of years (Figure 3). It was approximately 7 weeks during January to March 2020, compared to 6 weeks in the corresponding period in the previous year.

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2011 to January to March 2020



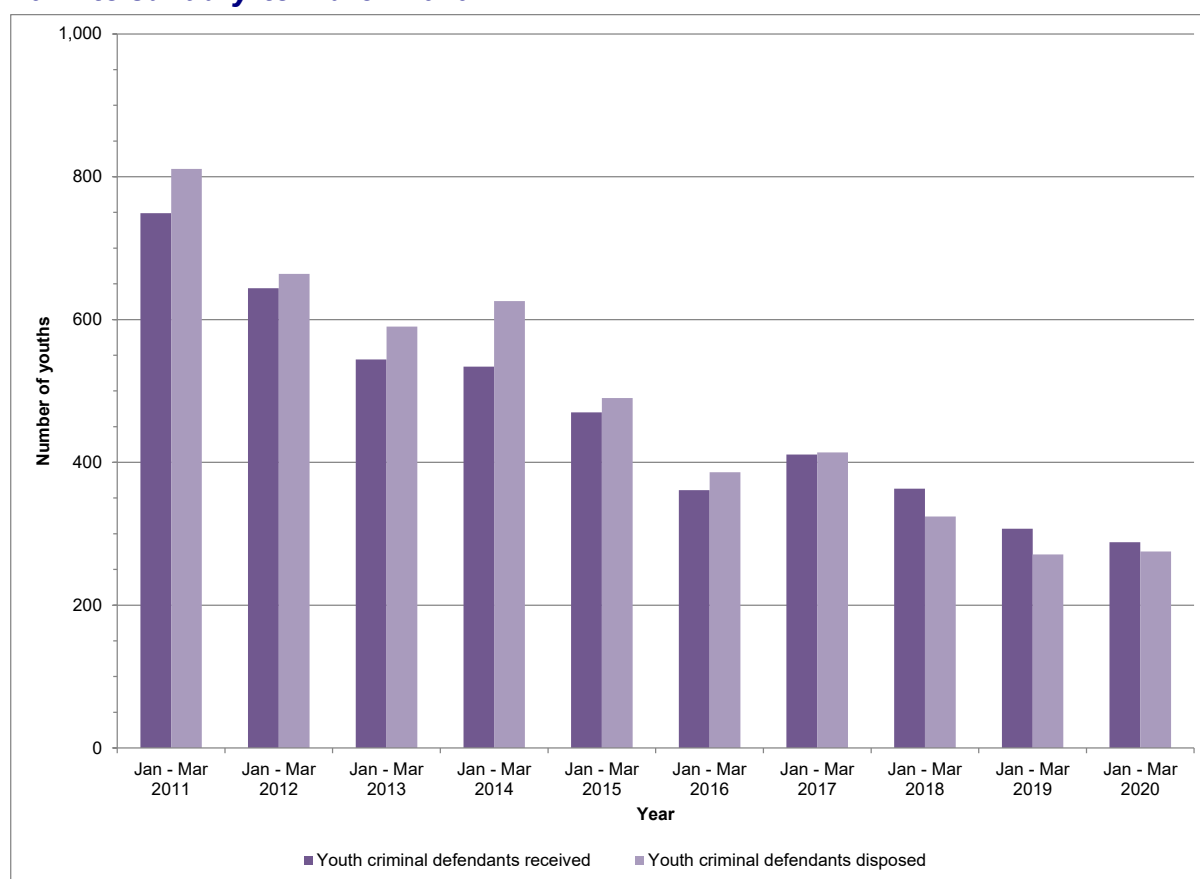
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2020, 288 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 275 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 6% (from 307) in youth criminal defendants received and an increase of 1% (from 271) in youth criminal defendants disposed of, compared to the same period the previous year.

All of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS, compared to 99.6% of the disposals in the same period in 2019.

With the exceptions of disposals in 2014, and receipts and disposals in 2017, the volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter January to March over the last number of years, with the number received at its lowest level and the number disposed at its second lowest level since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020



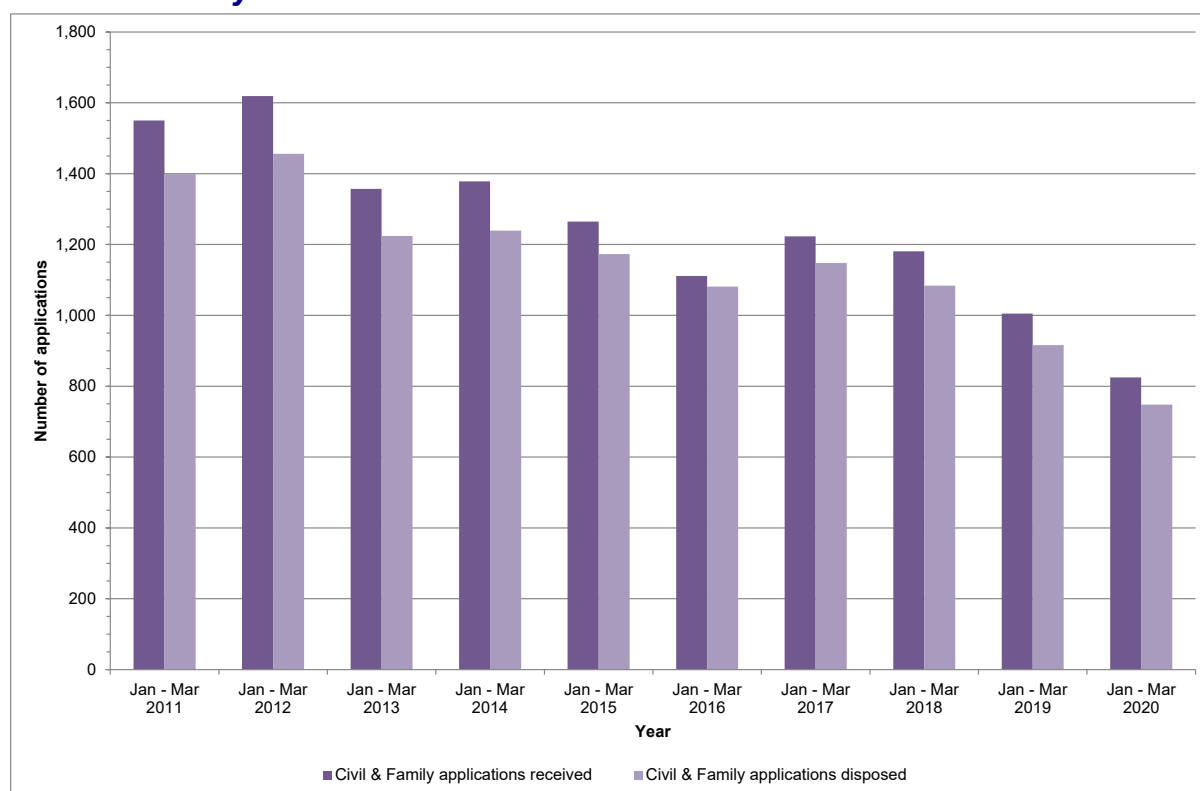
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 13 weeks (14 weeks for the same period in 2019).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During January to March 2020, 825 new civil and family applications were received and 748 civil and family applications were disposed of. These both represent decreases of 18% (from 1,005 and from 916 respectively), compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has shown a decreasing trend during the quarter January to March since 2017, with receipts and disposals reaching their lowest levels in January to March 2020 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2011 to January to March 2020



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 10 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (14 weeks for the same period in 2019).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue⁴

	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	3:25:00	2	3:25:00	4	2:56:15
Ballymena	21	4:52:08	2	8:10:00	8	2:56:15
Laganside	189	3:16:23	26	3:20:20	63	3:46:30
Armagh	17	4:07:03			1	3:15:00
Banbridge@Newry	14	3:10:42			1	3:00:00
Limavady	12	2:53:20				
Lisburn	36	3:54:18	6	2:46:40	15	3:18:00
Magherafelt	11	4:36:10				
Dungannon	35	3:47:08	5	4:23:00	7	4:35:00
Downpatrick	27	2:50:55				
Craigavon	30	4:03:10	4	2:57:30	18	2:04:10
Strabane	24	2:26:47	2	1:15:00	1	1:00:00
Omagh	17	4:07:21	3	1:35:00	10	2:34:00
Enniskillen	26	4:38:50	6	2:47:30		
Coleraine	40	4:07:45	4	3:05:00	5	4:47:00
Londonderry	58	3:52:42	2	3:07:30	31	3:40:03
Newtownards	47	2:58:15	8	2:31:15	36	2:53:53
Newry	30	3:00:52	2	1:57:30	18	2:32:30
Total	653	3:33:48	72	3:09:13	218	3:16:06

⁴ 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 venue⁴

	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	1	4:20:00				
Laganside	10	3:18:00	1	5:50:00		
Armagh	2	0:27:30				
Dungannon	1	1:00:00				
Royal Courts of Justice					1	1:05:00
Londonderry	2	3:40:00			1	2:00:00
Newtownards	3	2:13:20				
Newry	3	2:01:40				
Total	22	2:41:49	1	5:50:00	2	1:32:30

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by venue⁴

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	11	0:40:00
Lisburn	8	0:50:37
Craigavon	1	1:10:00
Omagh	9	0:47:13
Londonderry	12	0:40:05
Newtownards	6	0:31:40
Newry	7	0:46:25
Total	54	0:43:15

⁴ 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 venue⁵

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,491	526	46	25	3,088
Newtownards Court Office	563	126	15	6	710
Downpatrick Court Office	246	56	7	2	311
Craigavon Court Office	548	119	12	7	686
Armagh Court Office	200	54	16	2	272
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	100	31	6	1	138
Omagh Court Office	128	69	4	0	201
Strabane Court Office	121	49	6	0	176
Antrim Court Office	268	71	9	2	350
Londonderry Court Office	661	119	18	5	803
Enniskillen Court Office	214	58	8	0	280
Coleraine Court Office	361	74	9	0	444
Newry Court Office	574	127	14	3	718
Limavady Court Office	100	45	2	1	148
Magherafelt Court Office	184	70	7	2	263
Ballymena Court Office	477	149	9	2	637
Lisburn Court Office	364	74	21	5	464
Dungannon Court Office	361	114	11	2	488
Total	7,961	1,931	220	65	10,177

Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by venue⁵

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2,370	521	17	8	2,916
Newtownards Court Office	494	110	9	1	614
Downpatrick Court Office	228	65	7	1	301
Craigavon Court Office	483	100	4	0	587
Armagh Court Office	211	46	8	0	265
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	86	36	2	0	124
Omagh Court Office	131	69	2	0	202
Strabane Court Office	115	46	0	0	161
Antrim Court Office	248	68	1	0	317
Londonderry Court Office	594	113	0	0	707
Enniskillen Court Office	185	64	0	0	249
Coleraine Court Office	346	72	3	0	421
Newry Court Office	407	89	8	2	506
Limavady Court Office	83	49	0	0	132
Magherafelt Court Office	157	51	1	0	209
Ballymena Court Office	369	126	6	2	503
Lisburn Court Office	348	82	4	0	434
Dungannon Court Office	358	106	9	1	474
Total	7,213	1,813	81	15	9,122

⁵ 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 venue⁶

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	4.57	7.00	0.91	7.91
Newtownards Court Office	4.73	7.28	0.97	8.25
Downpatrick Court Office	5.43	5.26	0.86	6.12
Craigavon Court Office	4.97	4.50	0.81	5.31
Armagh Court Office	5.84	8.09	0.69	8.78
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.12	5.91	0.47	6.37
Omagh Court Office	4.88	6.83	0.67	7.50
Strabane Court Office	4.72	4.07	0.63	4.70
Antrim Court Office	4.16	5.29	0.79	6.08
Londonderry Court Office	4.63	5.31	0.91	6.22
Enniskillen Court Office	4.53	5.32	0.71	6.02
Coleraine Court Office	4.64	6.07	0.92	6.99
Newry Court Office	5.57	4.85	0.28	5.13
Limavady Court Office	4.77	5.18	0.38	5.56
Magherafelt Court Office	5.61	8.15	0.93	9.09
Ballymena Court Office	5.26	4.53	0.96	5.49
Lisburn Court Office	4.78	7.69	1.08	8.77
Dungannon Court Office	5.74	4.83	0.77	5.59
Total	4.88	6.12	0.83	6.96

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{5,7}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	579	1	0	0	580
All Sexual Offences	145	0	0	5	150
All Burglary Offences	56	0	0	0	56
All Robbery Offences	8	0	0	0	8
All Theft Offences	411	0	0	7	418
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	120	47	0	0	167
All Criminal Damage Offences	184	0	0	0	184
All Offences Against the State	169	0	0	2	171
All Other Offences	184	952	0	1	1,137
All Drug Offences	582	0	0	0	582
All Motoring Offences	2,769	656	47	0	3,472
All Non-Police Offences	28	95	34	0	157
All Breach	87	24	0	0	111
Combination of charges	1,891	38	0	0	1,929
Total	7,213	1,813	81	15	9,122

⁵ Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

⁶ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

⁷ 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 area⁵

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	362	0	0	0	362
Plea of guilty on all charges	3,601	272	0	0	3,873
All charges withdrawn	1,149	696	0	0	1,845
Fixed penalty default	0	0	81	0	81
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1,739	801	0	0	2,540
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	362	44	0	0	406
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	15	15
Total	7,213	1,813	81	15	9,122

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	84	84
Newtownards Court Office	40	40
Downpatrick Court Office	6	6
Craigavon Court Office	29	29
Armagh Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	10	10
Strabane Court Office	3	3
Antrim Court Office	5	5
Londonderry Court Office	34	34
Enniskillen Court Office	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	14	14
Newry Court Office	21	21
Ballymena Court Office	11	11
Lisburn Court Office	13	13
Dungannon Court Office	8	8
Total	288	288

⁵ Fixed penalty default summonses have been re-instated in the court lists since 1st July 2014.

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	76	76
Newtownards Court Office	38	38
Downpatrick Court Office	4	4
Craigavon Court Office	34	34
Omagh Court Office	12	12
Strabane Court Office	2	2
Antrim Court Office	11	11
Londonderry Court Office	23	23
Enniskillen Court Office	11	11
Coleraine Court Office	7	7
Newry Court Office	20	20
Magherafelt Court Office	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	16	16
Lisburn Court Office	8	8
Dungannon Court Office	12	12
Total	275	275

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by venue⁶

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	3.26	10.79	5.18	15.97
Newtownards Court Office	3.16	8.56	4.16	12.72
Downpatrick Court Office	1.39	16.68	1.50	18.18
Craigavon Court Office	3.50	3.91	3.29	7.20
Omagh Court Office	2.75	7.18	4.64	11.82
Strabane Court Office	5.29	11.00	0.00	11.00
Antrim Court Office	2.07	12.30	1.63	13.93
Londonderry Court Office	4.75	1.29	8.36	9.65
Enniskillen Court Office	4.00	8.52	4.11	12.63
Coleraine Court Office	7.50	5.19	0.00	5.19
Newry Court Office	3.94	4.73	3.78	8.51
Magherafelt Court Office	0.00	73.00	0.00	73.00
Ballymena Court Office	3.63	5.95	4.72	10.68
Lisburn Court Office	1.48	11.93	5.33	17.26
Dungannon Court Office	8.37	7.11	2.11	9.22
Total	3.67	8.16	4.39	12.55

⁶ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area⁷

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	53	53
All Sexual Offences	7	7
All Burglary Offences	3	3
All Theft Offences	23	23
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	39	39
All Offences Against the State	13	13
All Other Offences	6	6
All Drug Offences	17	17
All Motoring Offences	30	30
Combination of charges	83	83
Total	275	275

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	2	2
Plea of guilty on all charges	150	150
All charges withdrawn	68	68
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	37	37
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	18	18
Total	275	275

⁷ 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	168	185
Newtownards Court Office	4	92	96
Downpatrick Court Office	7	37	44
Craigavon Court Office	5	36	41
Armagh Court Office	2	16	18
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	0	1
Omagh Court Office	11	10	21
Strabane Court Office	0	23	23
Antrim Court Office	3	18	21
Londonderry Court Office	4	87	91
Enniskillen Court Office	0	16	16
Coleraine Court Office	5	49	54
Newry Court Office	3	44	47
Limavady Court Office	0	7	7
Ballymena Court Office	3	49	52
Lisburn Court Office	5	69	74
Dungannon Court Office	6	28	34
Total	76	749	825

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	11	159	170
Newtownards Court Office	5	85	90
Downpatrick Court Office	3	30	33
Craigavon Court Office	3	28	31
Armagh Court Office	4	9	13
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2	2	4
Omagh Court Office	2	8	10
Strabane Court Office	0	25	25
Antrim Court Office	2	22	24
Londonderry Court Office	6	90	96
Enniskillen Court Office	0	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	3	41	44
Newry Court Office	5	49	54
Limavady Court Office	1	6	7
Ballymena Court Office	7	40	47
Lisburn Court Office	6	55	61
Dungannon Court Office	2	28	30
Total	62	686	748

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	2.22	6.89	9.11
Newtownards Court Office	2.03	8.08	10.11
Downpatrick Court Office	1.54	10.91	12.45
Craigavon Court Office	1.59	8.81	10.39
Armagh Court Office	2.46	5.54	8.00
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.79	11.00	15.79
Omagh Court Office	1.37	3.49	4.86
Strabane Court Office	1.94	4.76	6.70
Antrim Court Office	1.52	14.34	15.20
Londonderry Court Office	1.97	8.10	10.08
Enniskillen Court Office	0.13	2.89	3.02
Coleraine Court Office	1.34	5.74	7.08
Newry Court Office	2.15	6.00	8.15
Limavady Court Office	1.65	5.80	7.45
Ballymena Court Office	1.43	8.41	9.84
Lisburn Court Office	1.42	11.17	12.59
Dungannon Court Office	2.18	4.53	6.71
Total	1.88	7.72	9.59

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	359	164	95	53	5	676
	Occupation	1	2	2	2	0	7
	Vary discharge non-mol occupation	0	2	0	1	0	3
Total		360	168	97	56	5	686

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 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

www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/courts-and-tribunals