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Quarterly provisional figures

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at the Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 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).
- ***This report covers data from July to September 2020, so court activity during this period has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figures published show that although courts continue to carry out urgent business and make more use of remote audio and video technology, the impact of COVID-19 is clear to see. It is expected that the limited operation of the criminal courts during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have an impact on many of the published figures in this and future releases.***
- During the period July to September 2020:
 - There were 961 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 7% from 1,037 in the same period the previous year.
 - 6,870 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 5,729 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 34% in adult defendants received (from 10,479) and of 43% in adult defendants disposed of (from 10,012) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are the lowest numbers of adult defendants received and disposed of during the July to September quarter since recording began.
 - The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal increased to 15 weeks from an average time of 6 weeks for the corresponding period last year.
 - 143 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 133 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 54% (from 309) and of 53% (from 283) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. These are 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 increased to 27 weeks from an average time of 12 weeks for the corresponding period last year.

- 1,142 new civil and family applications were received and 953 civil applications were disposed of. These represent an increase of 1% (from 1,130) and a decrease of 5% (from 998) 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 decreased to 7 weeks from an average time of 9 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 (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 2020. 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 fourth quarter of 2020 and will be published on 5th February 2021.

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 (published on the 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'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 2020 there were 913 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 15 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 33 special Magistrates' sitting days. These were decreases of 5% (from 957), of 35% (from 23) and of 42% (from 57) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

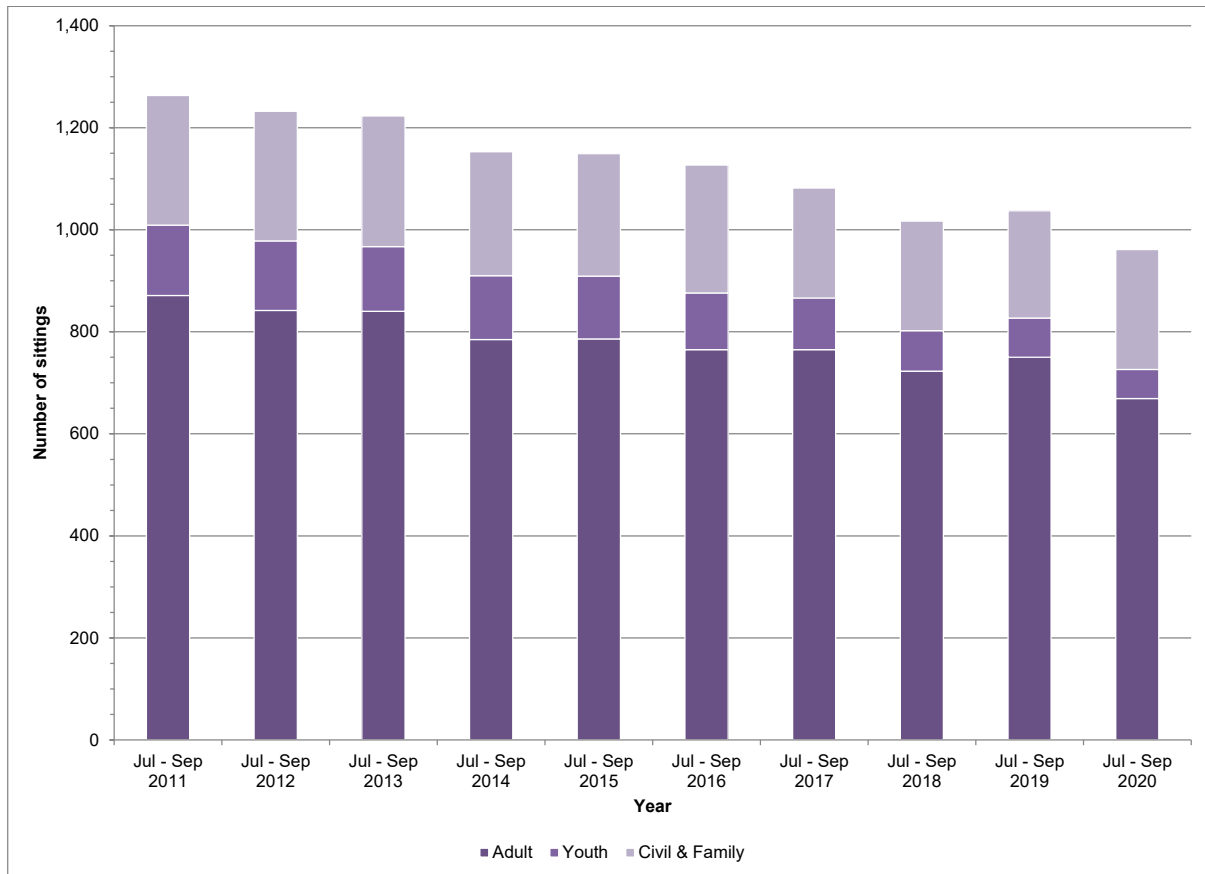
The Magistrates' sitting days for July to September 2020 may be categorised as follows:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	631	5	33	669
Youth Criminal	57	0	0	57
Civil & Family	225	10	0	235
Total	913	15	33	961

Within these 961 sitting days, 70% were adult criminal days, 6% were youth criminal days and 24% 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 2011 and is at its lowest point since recording began (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: July to September 2011 to July to September 2020



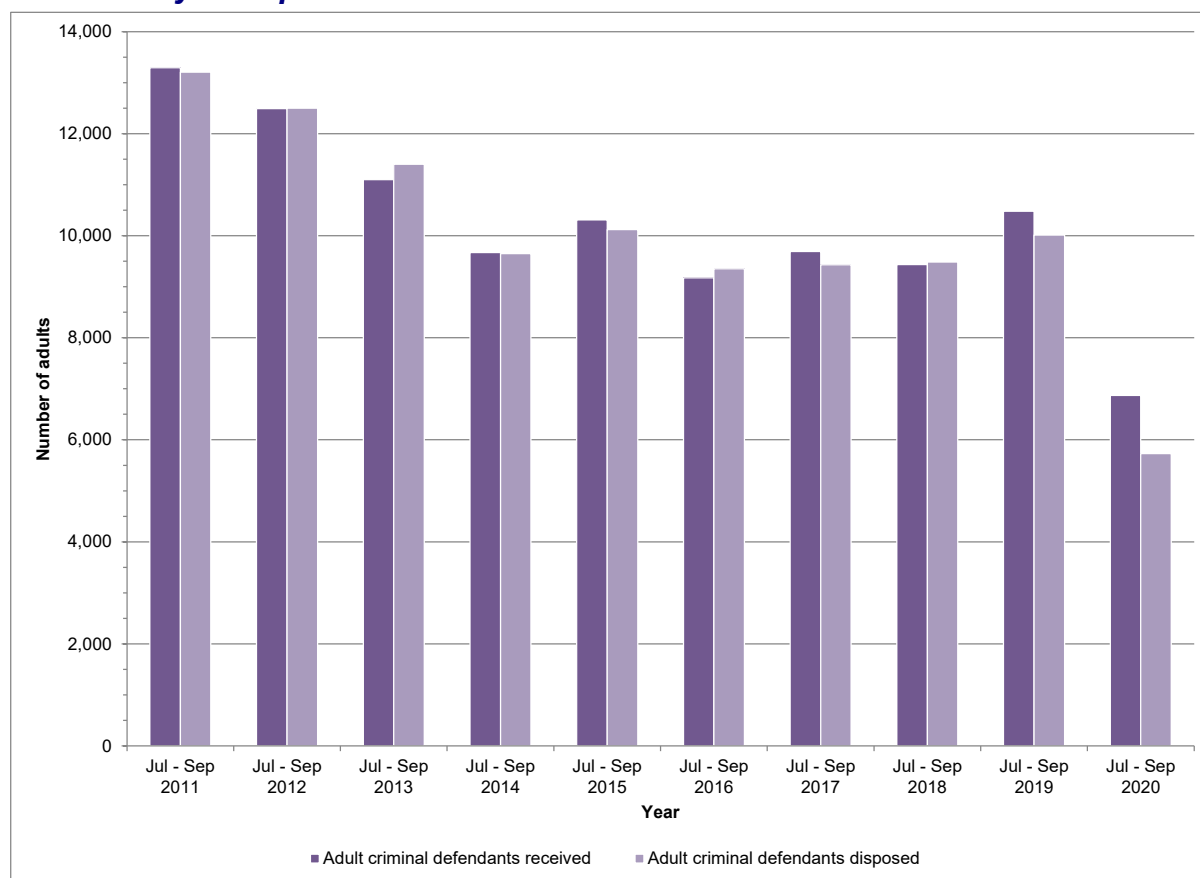
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2020, 6,870 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 5,729 adult defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 34% in defendants received (from 10,479) and of 43% in defendants disposed of (from 10,012) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (85%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (78% in the same period in 2019).

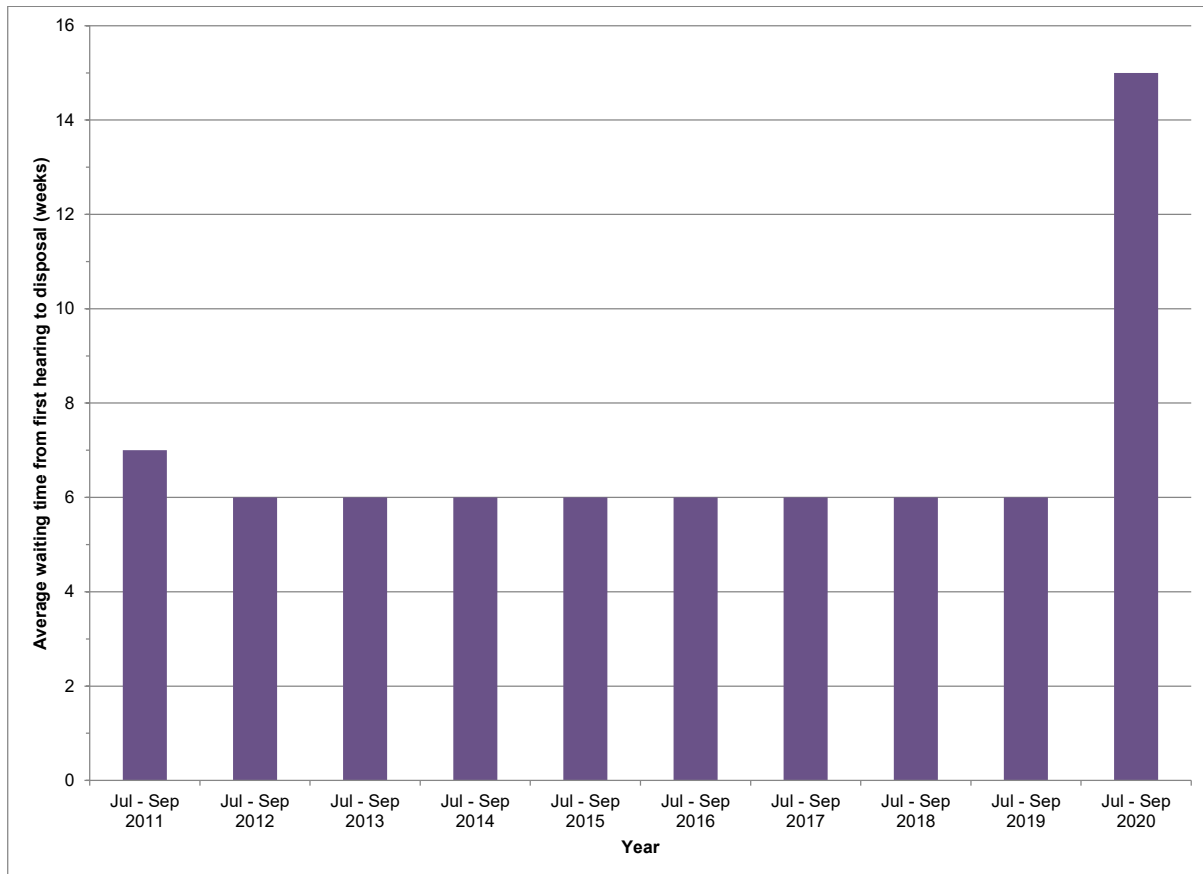
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed had shown a general decrease in the quarter July to September until 2016, when the previous lowest levels of both were recorded, but both had generally increased between then and 2019, but are now at their lowest volume since recording began. (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2011 to July to September 2020



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal remained stable at 6 weeks in the July to September quarter for the last number of years until rising to the current figure of 15 weeks (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in Adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): July to September 2011 to July to September 2020



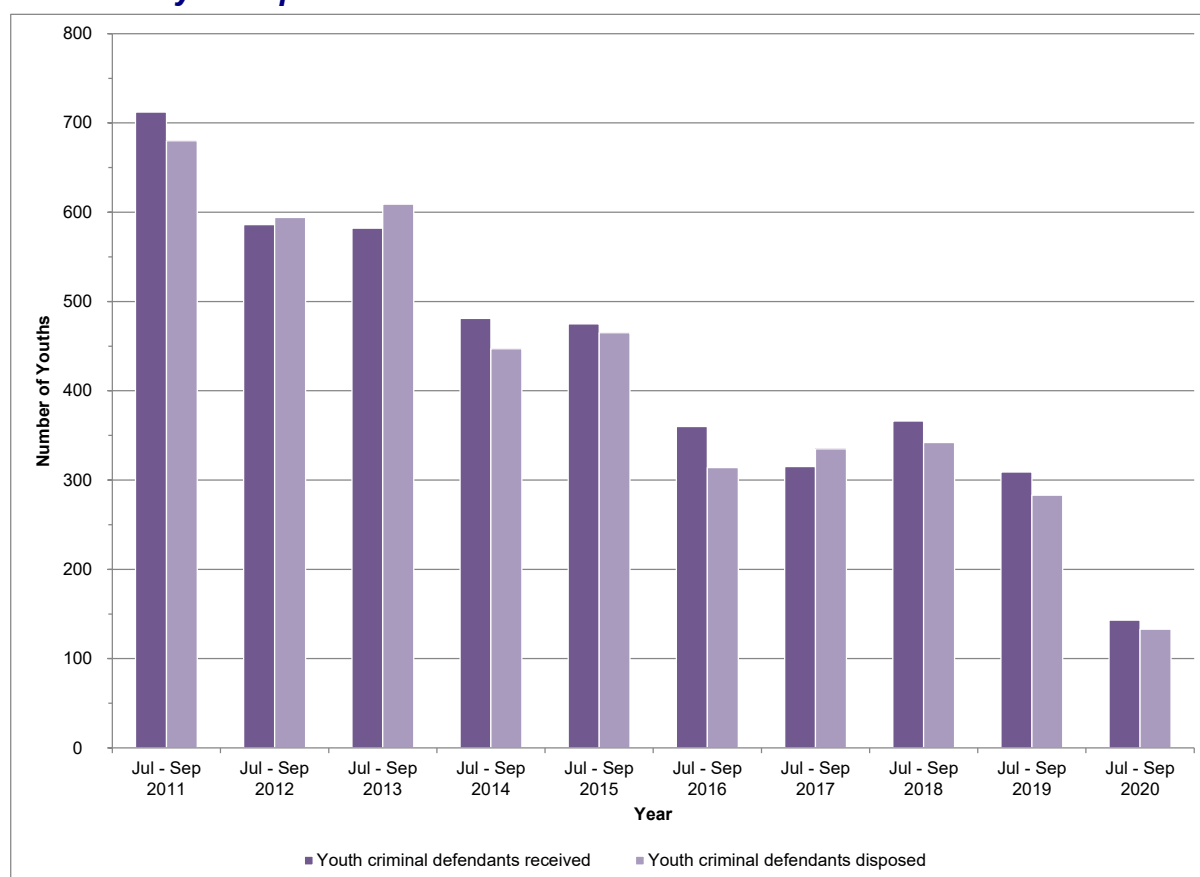
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2020, 143 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 133 youth defendants were disposed of. These represent decreases of 54% (from 309) and of 53% (from 283) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Nearly all (99.2%) of the prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 99.6% in the same period in 2019).

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 both the level of defendants received and disposed at their lowest in the current year's quarter (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2011 to July to September 2020



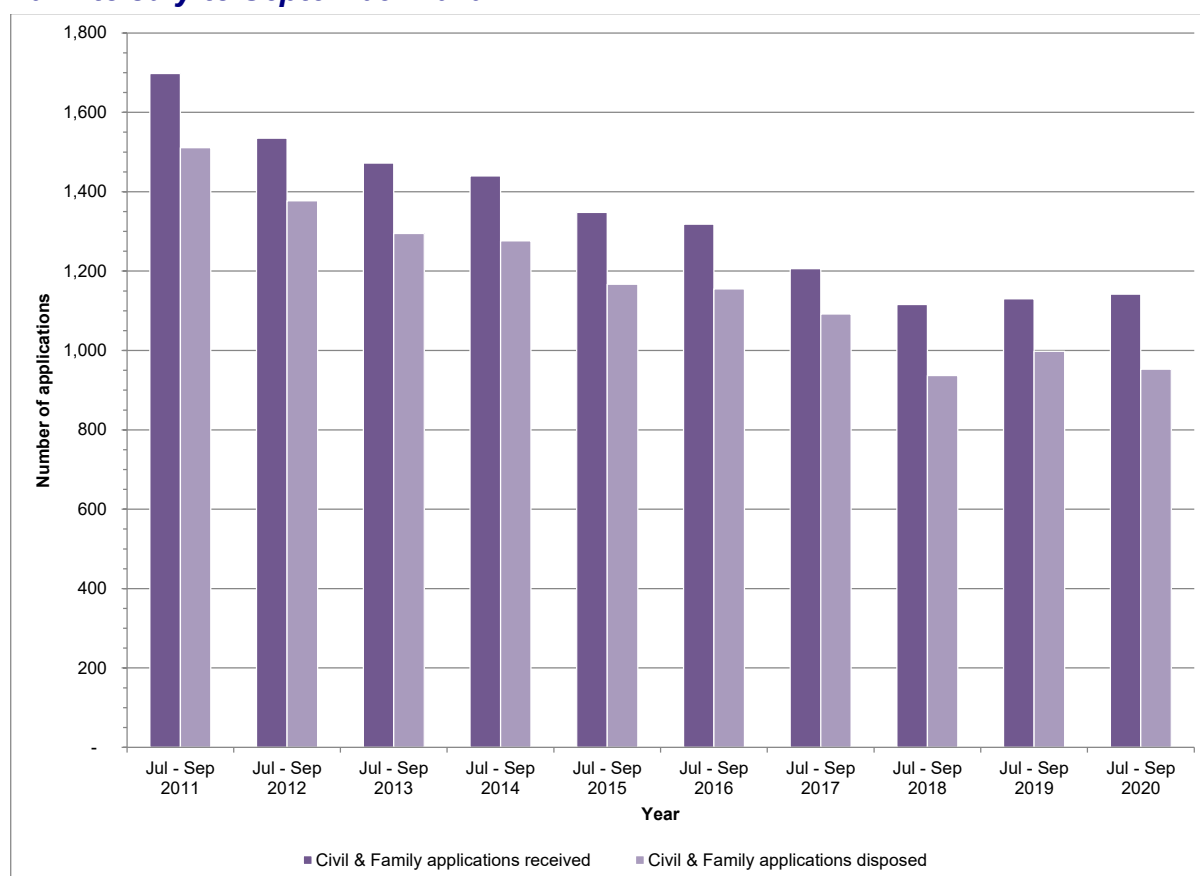
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 27 weeks (12 weeks for the same period in 2019).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During July to September 2020, 1,142 new civil and family applications were received and 953 civil and family applications were disposed of. These represent an increase of 1% (from 1,130) in cases received and a decrease of 5% (from 998) in cases disposed of, 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 2011 and 2020, with the number of receipts showing a slight increase from its second lowest figure and the number of disposals decreasing slightly from its previously second lowest figure between the same quarter in the previous year and in the current quarter (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2011 to July to September 2020



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 7 weeks from date of receipt to disposal, compared to 9 weeks for 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	20	2:33:18	3	1:03:20	5	2:32:00
Ballymena	23	2:46:18	1	3:00:00	11	2:16:49
Laganside	160	3:00:44	14	3:21:30	57	4:38:46
Armagh	17	2:00:24	0	-	3	0:23:20
Banbridge@Newry	16	1:40:18	0	-	1	1:00:00
Limavady	14	2:30:47	0	-	0	-
Lisburn	35	3:17:42	6	1:09:10	28	2:04:06
Magherafelt	12	1:50:00	0	-	0	-
Dungannon	38	3:30:01	3	2:46:00	11	3:49:32
Downpatrick	24	2:02:05	0	-	0	-
Craigavon	34	3:21:51	4	1:45:00	18	1:53:03
Strabane	21	2:26:40	1	2:15:00	2	1:50:00
Omagh	16	2:59:41	4	0:50:00	10	2:30:06
Enniskillen	25	4:01:48	3	1:36:40	3	3:20:00
Coleraine	35	2:37:00	5	1:38:00	7	4:47:08
Londonderry	59	2:57:28	2	3:25:00	16	3:03:07
Newtownards	52	2:09:04	8	1:54:22	34	2:52:47
Newry	30	2:54:40	3	1:11:40	19	2:21:03
Total	631	2:50:22	57	2:05:56	225	3:07:16

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	0	-
Laganside	0	-	8	0:51:52
Lisburn	2	1:50:00	0	-
Royal Courts Of Justice	0	-	1	0:30:00
Londonderry	1	1:00:00	0	-
Newry	1	0:30:00	1	0:30:00
Total	5	1:04:00	10	0:47:30

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
Lisburn	10	0:37:30
Dungannon	10	1:05:30
Londonderry	13	0:59:00
Total	33	0:54:27

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	2,320	121	0	0	2,441
Newtownards Court Office	512	69	4	0	585
Downpatrick Court Office	233	2	0	0	235
Craigavon Court Office	503	5	0	0	508
Armagh Court Office	157	12	16	7	192
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	119	0	0	0	119
Omagh Court Office	139	9	0	0	148
Strabane Court Office	95	31	0	0	126
Antrim Court Office	282	18	8	0	308
Londonderry Court Office	384	16	2	10	412
Enniskillen Court Office	126	1	0	0	127
Coleraine Court Office	218	11	19	3	251
Newry Court Office	305	5	0	0	310
Limavady Court Office	62	1	4	2	69
Magherafelt Court Office	90	0	0	0	90
Ballymena Court Office	360	27	5	3	395
Lisburn Court Office	230	14	0	0	244
Dungannon Court Office	264	46	0	0	310
Total	6,399	388	58	25	6,870

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	1,796	257	0	0	2,053
Newtownards Court Office	370	49	8	0	427
Downpatrick Court Office	114	23	1	0	138
Craigavon Court Office	350	40	14	6	410
Armagh Court Office	141	21	16	3	181
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	95	17	0	0	112
Omagh Court Office	93	31	0	0	124
Strabane Court Office	63	14	0	0	77
Antrim Court Office	224	49	0	0	273
Londonderry Court Office	278	17	0	0	295
Enniskillen Court Office	116	18	0	0	134
Coleraine Court Office	136	6	1	1	144
Newry Court Office	369	96	0	0	465
Limavady Court Office	29	4	0	1	34
Magherafelt Court Office	56	27	7	0	90
Ballymena Court Office	234	69	0	0	303
Lisburn Court Office	207	20	0	1	228
Dungannon Court Office	200	41	0	0	241
Total	4,871	799	47	12	5,729

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	3.80	11.74	2.07	13.81
Newtownards Court Office	4.96	11.36	2.18	13.54
Downpatrick Court Office	4.30	13.45	2.78	16.24
Craigavon Court Office	5.82	13.12	1.48	14.61
Armagh Court Office	8.25	10.82	2.88	13.70
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3.86	9.79	2.84	12.63
Omagh Court Office	3.89	11.50	2.09	13.58
Strabane Court Office	3.43	11.68	2.56	14.25
Antrim Court Office	6.55	11.62	1.80	13.42
Londonderry Court Office	3.32	13.26	3.63	16.89
Enniskillen Court Office	3.84	12.44	2.01	14.46
Coleraine Court Office	2.96	16.00	2.25	18.25
Newry Court Office	4.36	15.15	1.19	16.34
Limavady Court Office	8.33	16.35	2.59	18.94
Magherafelt Court Office	8.71	16.23	1.21	17.44
Ballymena Court Office	3.96	12.31	2.69	15.00
Lisburn Court Office	3.68	16.84	3.79	20.64
Dungannon Court Office	4.62	10.21	1.61	11.82
Total	4.47	12.52	2.17	14.69

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	309	0	0	0	309
All Sexual Offences	84	0	0	3	87
All Burglary Offences	60	0	0	0	60
All Robbery Offences	12	0	0	0	12
All Theft Offences	242	0	0	4	246
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	51	17	0	0	68
All Criminal Damage Offences	123	0	0	0	123
All Offences Against the State	111	0	0	5	116
All Other Offences	86	503	0	0	589
All Drug Offences	483	0	0	0	483
All Motoring Offences	2,016	227	27	0	2,270
All Non-Police Offences	7	15	20	0	42
All Breach	73	18	0	0	91
Combination of charges	1214	19	0	0	1,233
Total	4,871	799	47	12	5,729

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	296	0	0	0	296
Plea of guilty on all charges	2,748	73	0	0	2,821
All charges withdrawn	790	270	0	0	1,060
Fixed penalty default	0	0	47	0	47
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	982	438	0	0	1,420
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	55	18	0	0	73
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	12	12
Total	4,871	799	47	12	5,729

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 3.1 Youth defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by venue

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	52	52
Newtownards Court Office	33	33
Downpatrick Court Office	3	3
Craigavon Court Office	7	7
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	1
Omagh Court Office	2	2
Strabane Court Office	1	1
Antrim Court Office	1	1
Londonderry Court Office	19	19
Enniskillen Court Office	2	2
Coleraine Court Office	1	1
Newry Court Office	4	4
Lisburn Court Office	14	14
Dungannon Court Office	3	3
Total	143	143

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	61	0	61
Newtownards Court Office	13	0	13
Downpatrick Court Office	1	0	1
Craigavon Court Office	7	0	7
Omagh Court Office	1	0	1
Strabane Court Office	2	0	2
Antrim Court Office	6	0	6
Londonderry Court Office	7	0	7
Enniskillen Court Office	2	0	2
Coleraine Court Office	7	1	8
Newry Court Office	6	0	6
Ballymena Court Office	3	0	3
Lisburn Court Office	9	0	9
Dungannon Court Office	7	0	7
Total	132	1	133

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	1.29	16.69	15.17	31.86
Newtownards Court Office	3.08	11.27	9.23	20.51
Downpatrick Court Office	0.00	11.14	0.00	11.14
Craigavon Court Office	5.43	29.80	4.86	34.66
Omagh Court Office	4.71	0.00	2.00	2.00
Strabane Court Office	4.86	22.21	8.29	30.50
Antrim Court Office	2.00	7.14	9.33	16.48
Londonderry Court Office	4.05	7.45	13.33	20.79
Enniskillen Court Office	3.14	26.93	0.00	26.93
Coleraine Court Office	2.64	32.24	0.00	32.24
Newry Court Office	2.71	13.50	13.00	26.50
Ballymena Court Office	4.19	8.00	18.67	26.67
Lisburn Court Office	0.24	11.62	4.67	16.29
Dungannon Court Office	2.27	15.76	0.00	15.76
Total	2.19	16.12	10.69	26.81

⁵ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area^{4, 6}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	15	0	15
All Sexual Offences	3	0	3
All Burglary Offences	1	0	1
All Robbery Offences	2	0	2
All Theft Offences	11	0	11
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	0	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	13	0	13
All Offences Against the State	3	0	3
All Drug Offences	7	0	7
All Motoring Offences	7	1	8
Combination of charges	69	0	69
Total	132	1	133

Table 3.5 Outcome of youth defendants disposed of by business area

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	2	0	2
Plea of guilty on all charges	65	0	65
All charges withdrawn	38	1	39
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	26	0	26
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	1	0	1
Total	132	1	133

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 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	11	332	343
Newtownards Court Office	3	84	87
Downpatrick Court Office	2	30	32
Craigavon Court Office	0	45	45
Armagh Court Office	0	15	15
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	19	20
Omagh Court Office	1	24	25
Strabane Court Office	1	8	9
Antrim Court Office	2	25	27
Londonderry Court Office	2	91	93
Enniskillen Court Office	0	9	9
Coleraine Court Office	3	69	72
Newry Court Office	4	65	69
Ballymena Court Office	1	48	49
Lisburn Court Office	1	153	154
Dungannon Court Office	1	92	93
Total	33	1,109	1,142

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	7	342	349
Newtownards Court Office	4	77	81
Downpatrick Court Office	2	17	19
Craigavon Court Office	2	41	43
Armagh Court Office	0	8	8
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	0	14	14
Omagh Court Office	0	17	17
Strabane Court Office	0	6	6
Antrim Court Office	2	20	22
Londonderry Court Office	2	56	58
Enniskillen Court Office	0	6	6
Coleraine Court Office	1	45	46
Newry Court Office	0	48	48
Magherafelt Court Office	0	1	1
Ballymena Court Office	1	46	47
Lisburn Court Office	1	116	117
Dungannon Court Office	0	71	71
Total	22	931	953

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	2.32	3.48	5.76
Newtownards Court Office	1.70	9.24	10.94
Downpatrick Court Office	1.52	12.44	13.03
Craigavon Court Office	1.82	10.03	11.85
Armagh Court Office	0.63	2.75	3.38
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.63	3.86	5.49
Omagh Court Office	1.21	5.71	6.92
Strabane Court Office	0.69	4.14	4.83
Antrim Court Office	1.80	11.51	10.90
Londonderry Court Office	1.12	4.60	5.72
Enniskillen Court Office	0.95	8.67	9.62
Coleraine Court Office	0.93	1.33	2.25
Newry Court Office	0.98	6.34	7.32
Magherafelt Court Office	3.00	43.00	46.00
Ballymena Court Office	2.06	9.65	9.22
Lisburn Court Office	0.91	5.17	6.08
Dungannon Court Office	1.36	4.06	5.42
Total	1.68	5.33	6.89

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	460	207	159	82	5	913
	Occupation	1	1	8	0	0	10
	Vary discharge non-mol occupation	2	1	4	1	0	8
Total		463	209	171	83	5	931

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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