

Analytical Services Group

Magistrates' Court Bulletin

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This bulletin provides information on throughput at Magistrates' Courts in Northern Ireland during the period July to September 2016 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period July to September 2016:
- There were 1,127 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a decrease of 2% from 1,149 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,175 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,353 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 11% (from 10,312) and a decrease of 8% (from 10,122) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of both adult defendants received and adult defendants disposed during the July to September quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks, the same as the corresponding period last year.
- 360 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 314 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 24% (from 475) and a decrease of 32% (from 465) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of both youth defendants received and youth defendants disposed of during the July to September quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 10 weeks, compared to 11 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,318 new civil and family applications were received and 1,155 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 2% (from 1,348) and a decrease of 1% (from 1,167) 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 9 weeks, compared to 8 weeks in the corresponding period last year.

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1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data sources

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

2.2 Methodology for generating data

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

2.3 Baseline and Time period

Data contained within this bulletin relate to the time series 2007, when ICOS was adopted as the source for official government statistics, to the current calendar year 2016.

2.4 Frequency of Publication

This bulletin is published on a quarterly basis. The next bulletin will cover the fourth quarter of 2016 and will be published on 3rd February 2017.

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.

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

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

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

Data contained in this bulletin are currently provisional and will undergo further validation before being published in their final form in the 2016 edition of Judicial statistics (due to be published on 30th June 2017).

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.

2.6 Interpreting trends

Changes to practice within the judicial system in general and the Magistrates' Court in particular, may impact upon business volumes presented in this bulletin. One example would be the introduction of Penalty Notices for Disorder on 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.

2.7 Revisions

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

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Magistrates' court sitting days

During July to September 2016 there were 1,060 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 14 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 53 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of 1% (from 1,074), a decrease of 33% (from 21) and a decrease of 2% (from 54) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

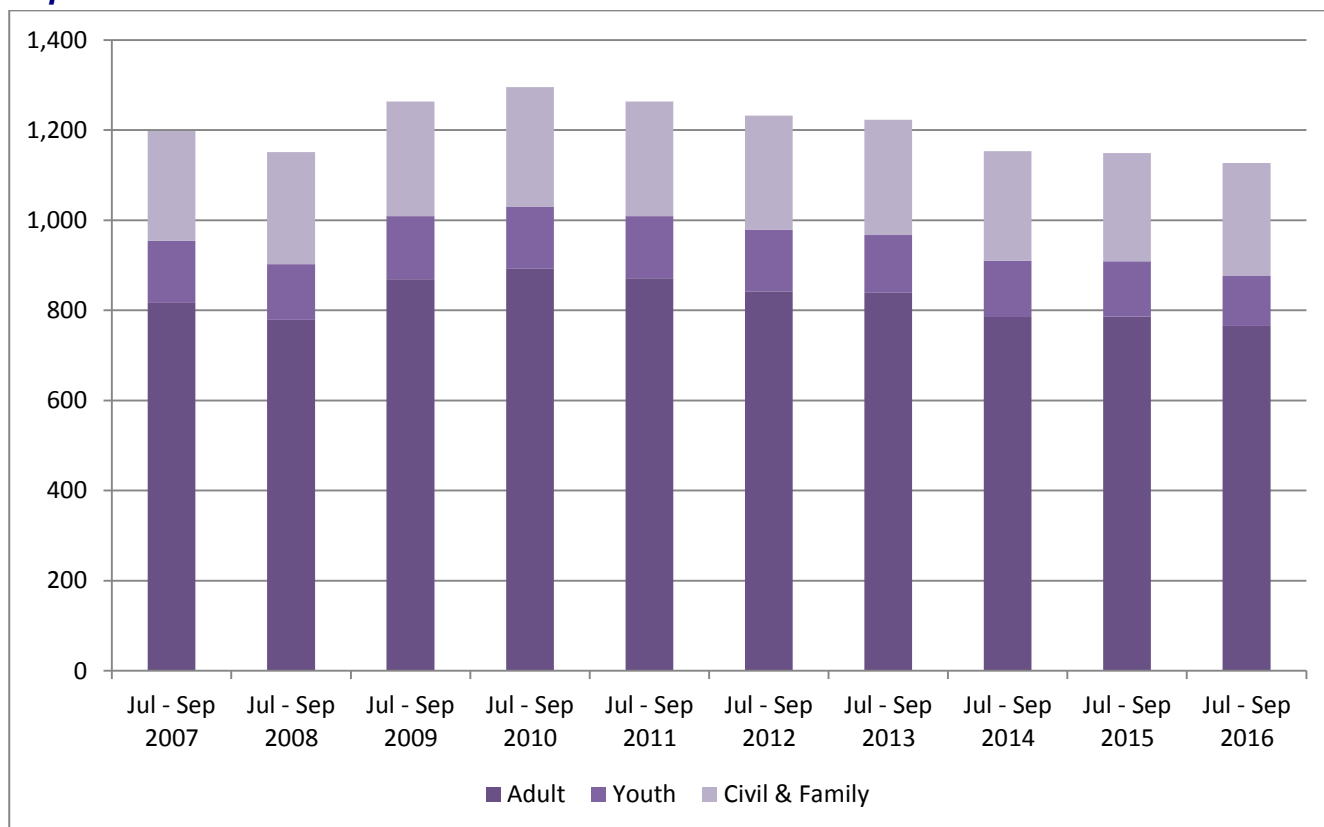
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for July to September 2016 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	700	12	53	765
Youth Criminal	111	0	0	111
Civil & Family	249	2	0	251
Total	1,060	14	53	1,127

Within these 1,127 sitting days, 68% were adult criminal days, 10% were youth criminal days and 22% were civil and family days.

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

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: July to September 2007 to July to September 2016



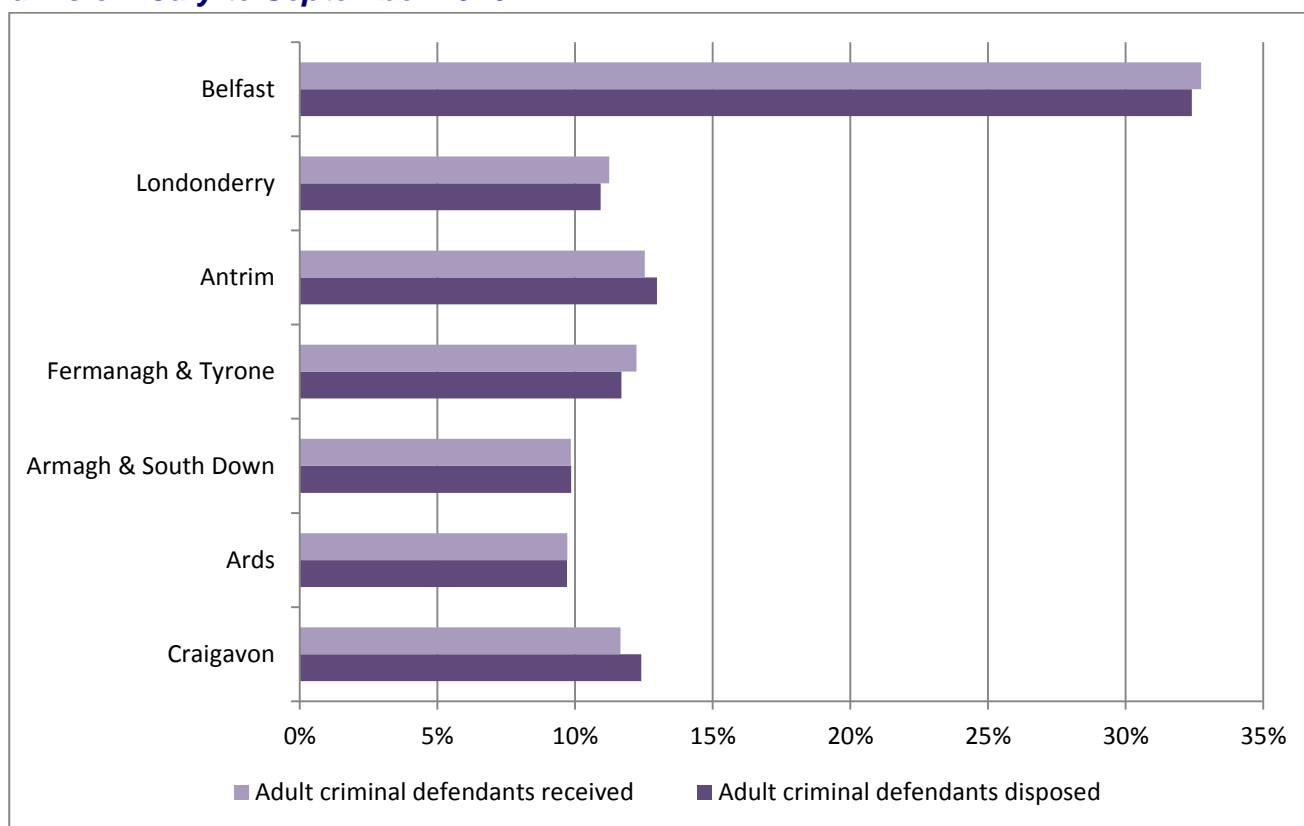
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2016, 9,175 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,353 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 11% (from 10,312) and a decrease of 8% (from 10,122) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (75%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (74% in the same period in 2015).

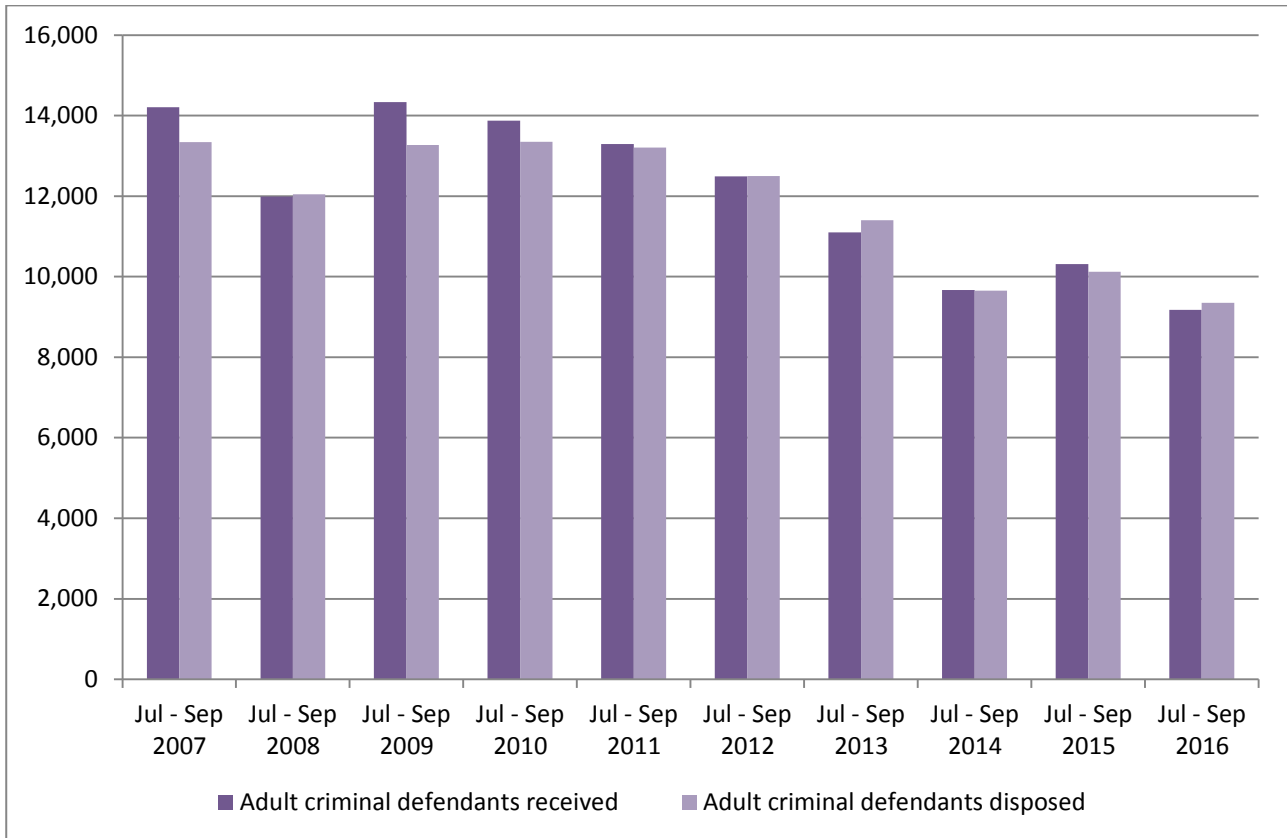
The volume of adult business was highest in the Belfast division (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of adult criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2016



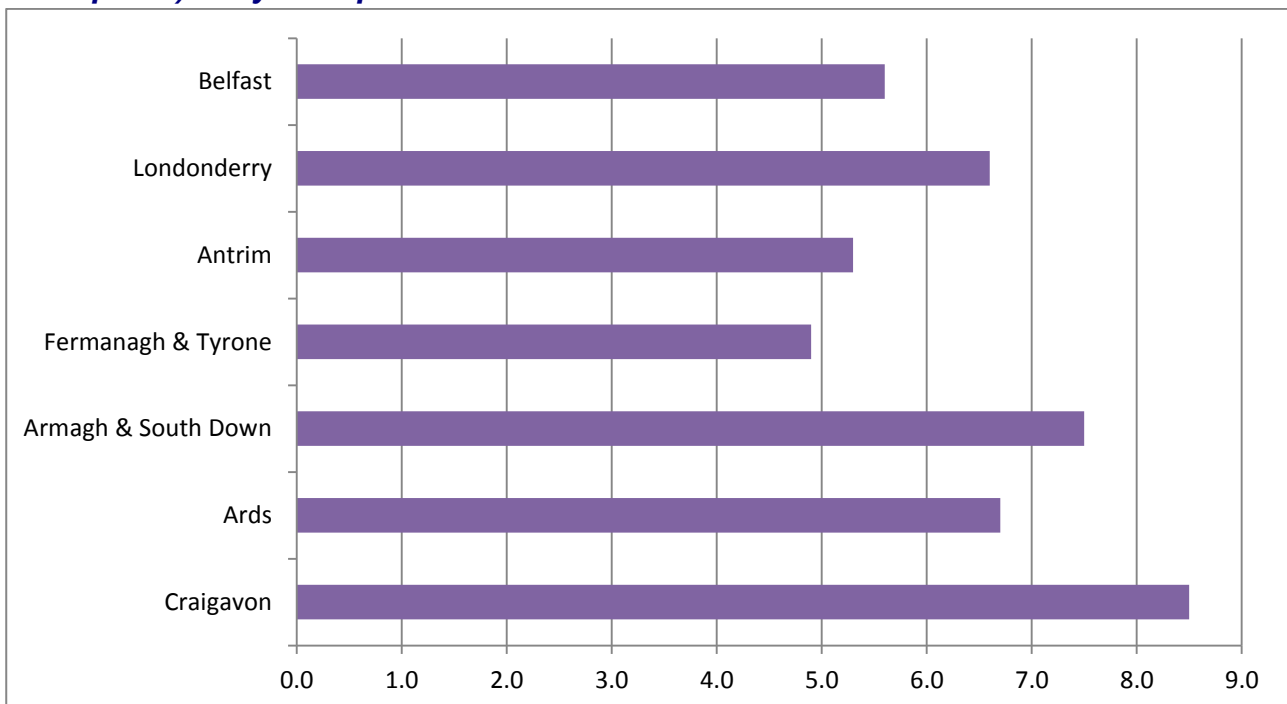
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter July to September over the last number of years, with levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2016



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks during July to September 2016, the same as the corresponding period in the previous year. A breakdown of average waiting times by court division for July to September 2016 is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): July to September 2016



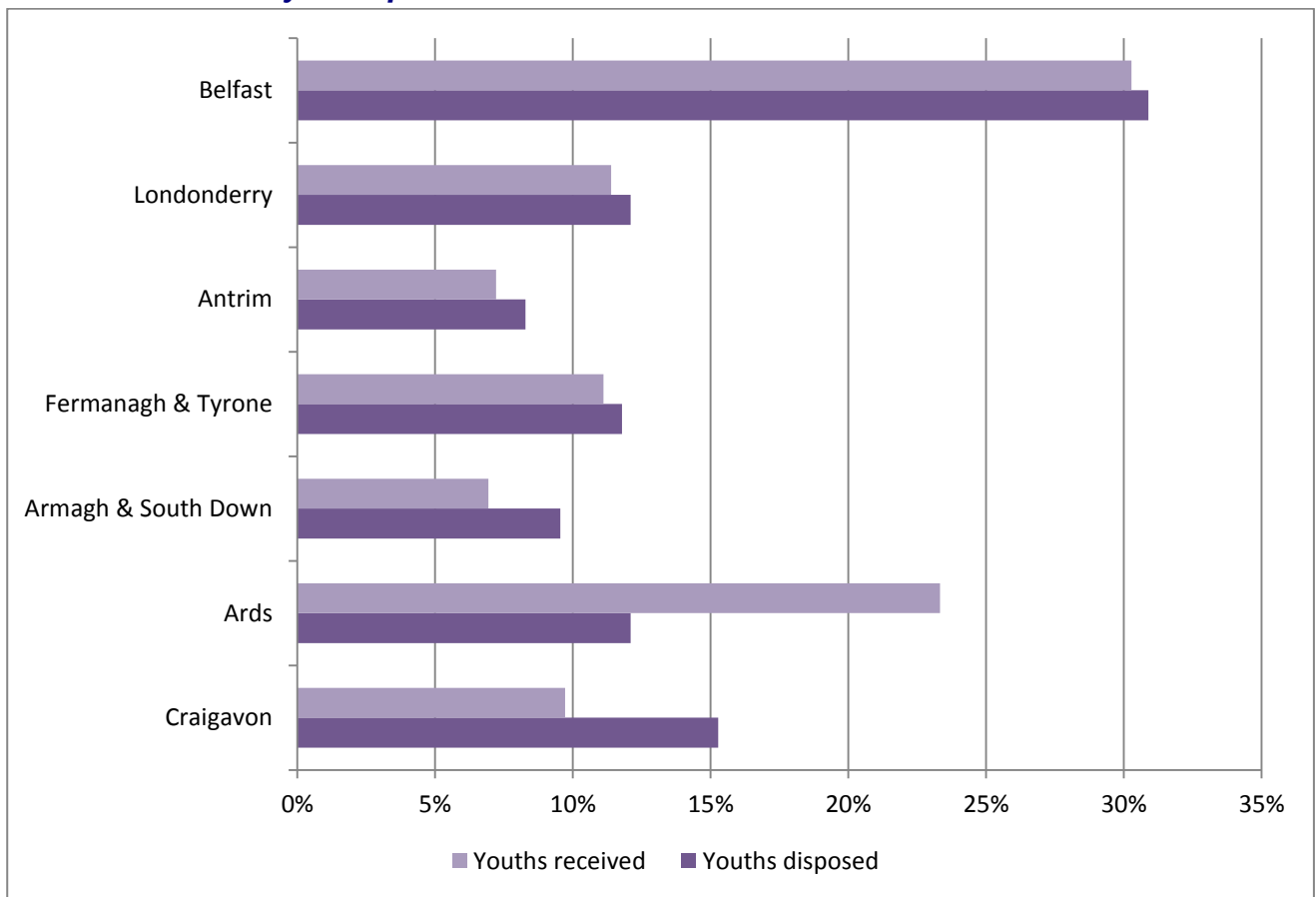
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During July to September 2016, 360 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 314 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 24% (from 475) and a decrease of 32% (from 465) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Almost all prosecutions (97.5%) disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (99.4% in the same period in 2015).

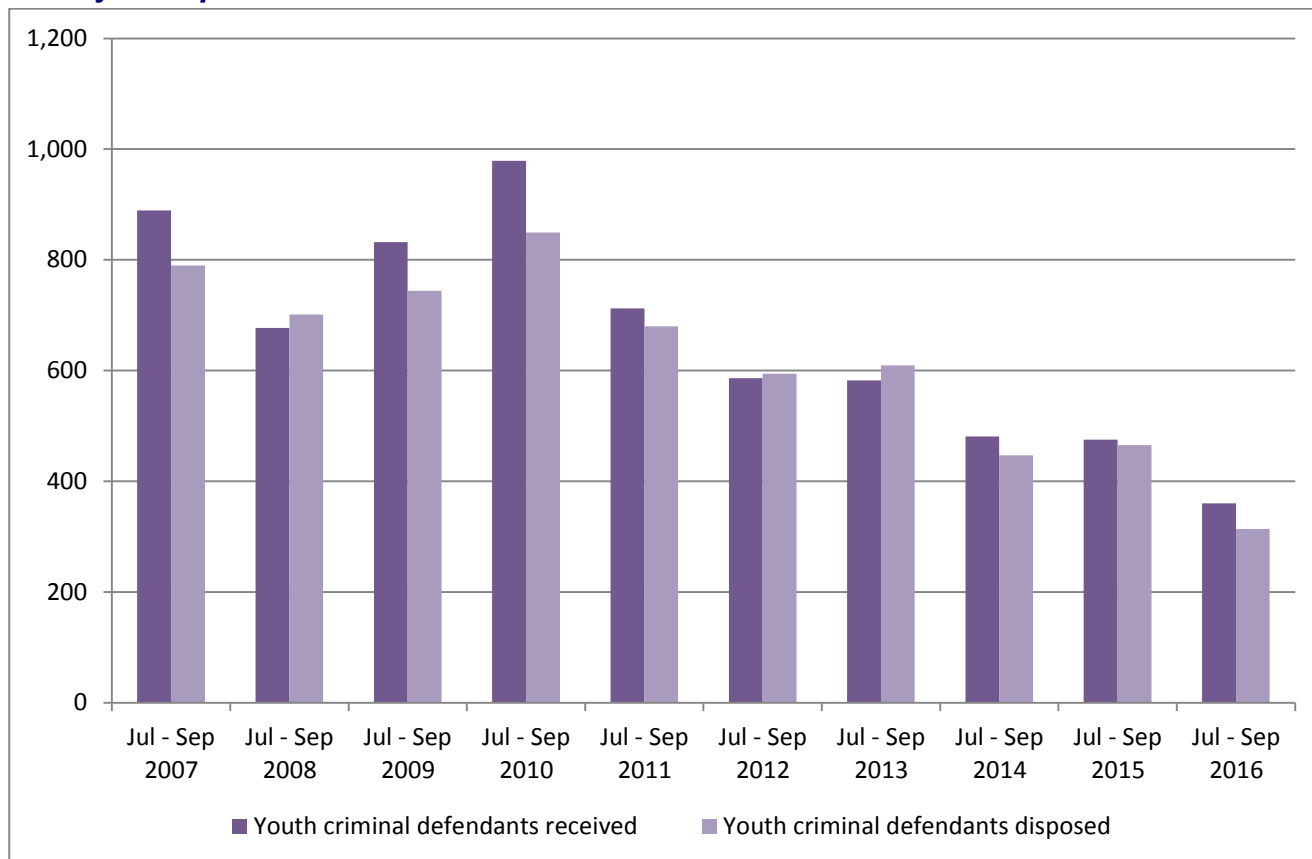
A breakdown of youth business by court division for July to September 2016 is shown in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Percentage of youth criminal defendants received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2016



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 levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2016



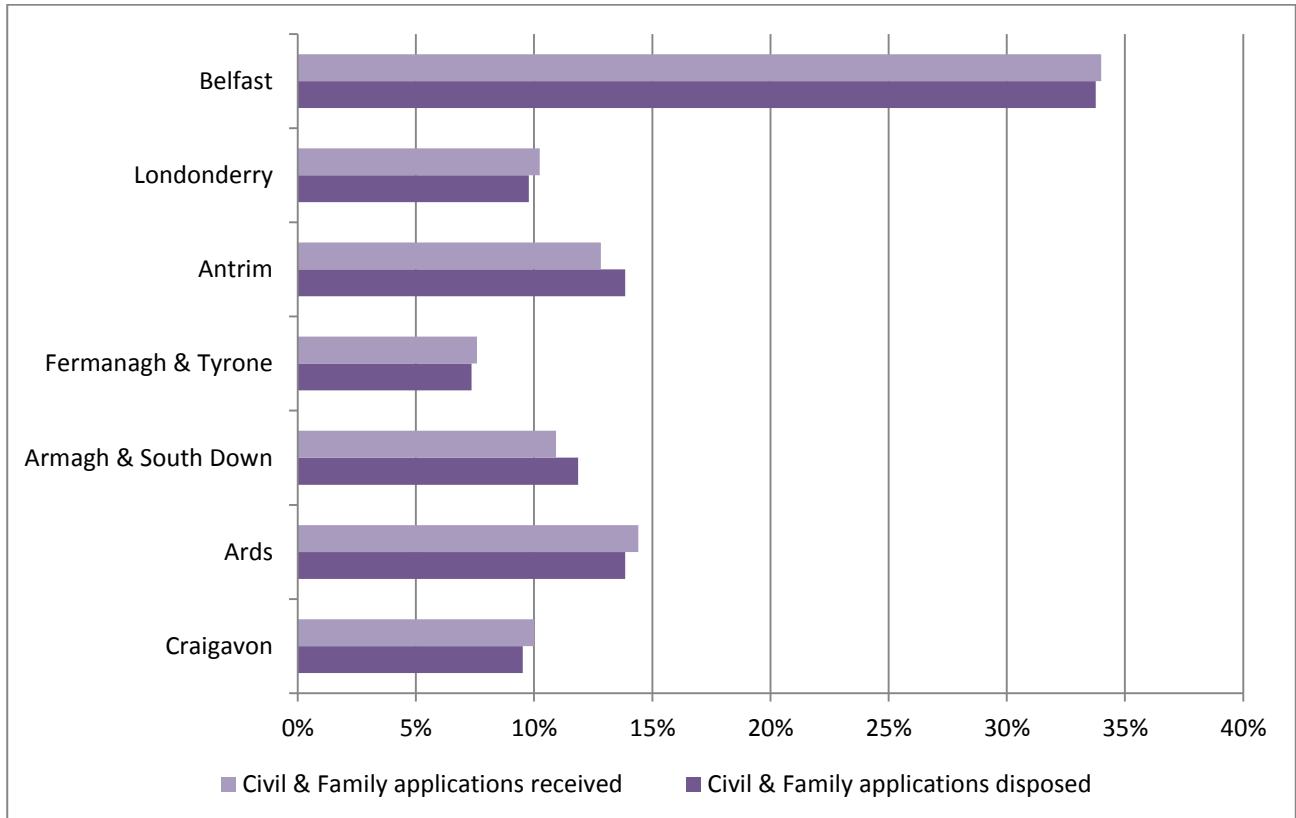
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 10 weeks (11 weeks for the same period in 2015).

3.4 Civil and family Magistrates' court

During July to September 2016, 1,318 new civil and family applications were received and 1,155 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 2% (from 1,348) and a decrease of 1% (from 1,167) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

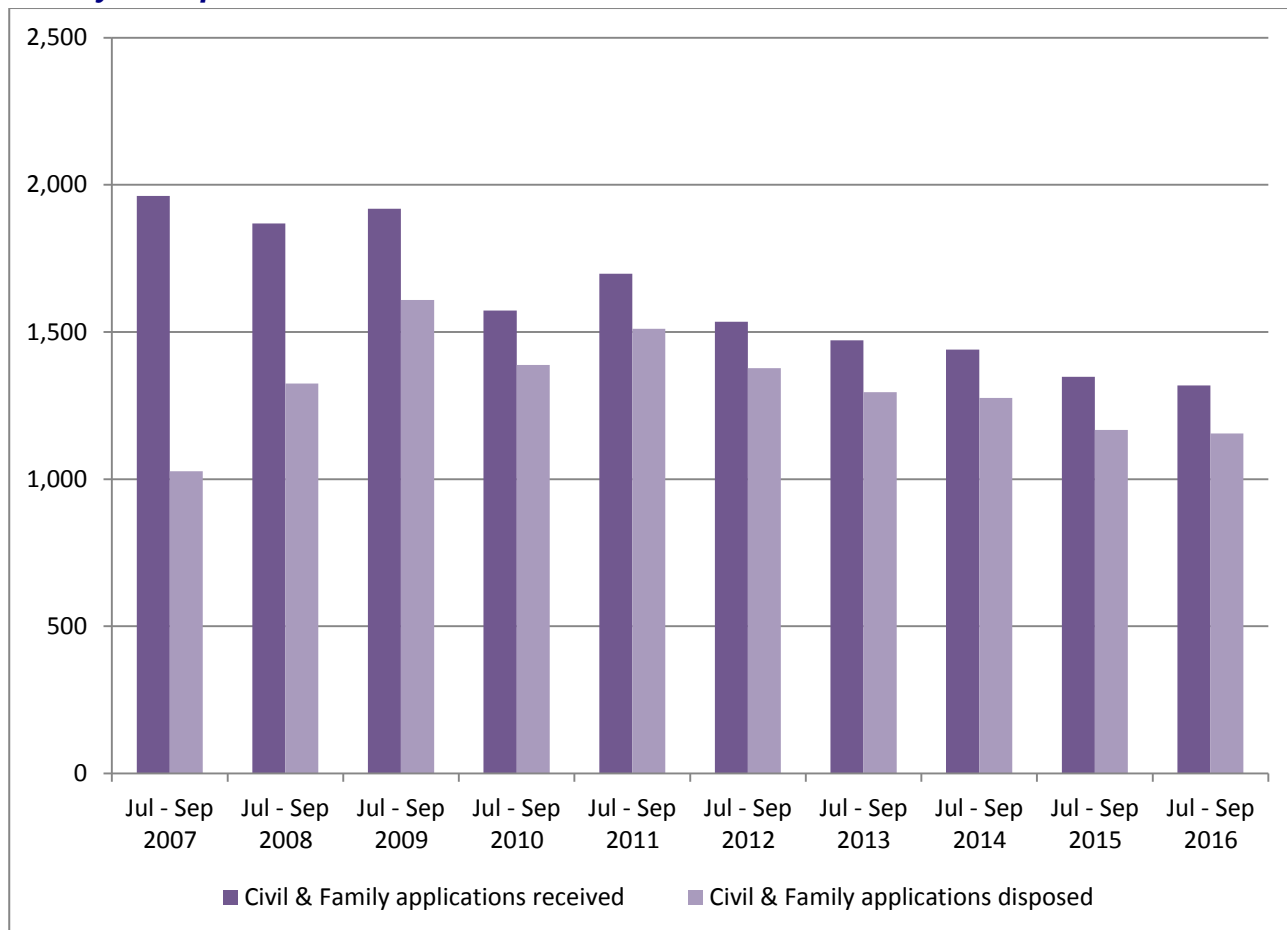
A breakdown of civil and family business by court division for July to September 2016 is shown in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7: Percentage of civil & family applications received and disposed of by court division: July to September 2016



The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has been generally decreasing during the quarter July to September between 2007 and 2016, with levels of receipts reaching their lowest level in July to September 2016 and disposals reaching their second lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Civil & family applications received and disposed: July to September 2007 to July to September 2016



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 9 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (8 weeks for the same period in 2015).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Belfast	Laganside	214	2:50:47	37	3:06:38	74	3:13:30
	Total	214	2:50:47	37	3:06:38	74	3:13:30
Londonderry	Limavady	12	2:16:40		.		.
	Magherafelt	14	2:49:17	2	0:37:30		.
	Londonderry	62	3:46:00	8	3:17:30	23	5:01:44
	Total	88	3:24:47	10	2:45:30	23	5:01:44
Antrim	Antrim	16	3:05:30	6	2:15:50	6	2:58:20
	Ballymena	25	3:35:50	5	2:32:00	16	3:47:30
	Coleraine	33	3:47:25	3	2:45:00	10	4:59:00
	Total	74	3:34:26	14	2:27:51	32	4:00:37
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	38	3:13:41	6	3:13:20	8	3:26:15
	Strabane	21	3:41:25	3	1:58:20		.
	Omagh	26	3:11:25	5	1:25:00	9	3:02:46
	Enniskillen	25	4:56:00	4	5:36:15	2	3:30:00
	Total	110	3:41:42	18	3:02:30	19	3:15:31
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	19	4:13:25	5	1:19:00		.
	Banbridge@Newry	15	3:15:40	2	1:12:30	1	2:35:00
	Newry	33	3:12:25	3	2:02:40	18	3:53:03
	Total	67	3:30:26	10	1:30:48	19	3:48:56
Ards	Downpatrick	25	4:18:00	6	2:26:40		.
	Newtownards	48	3:18:07	5	2:47:00	38	3:30:00
	Total	73	3:38:37	11	2:35:54	38	3:30:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	39	3:38:56	6	1:41:40	14	2:59:38
	Craigavon	35	5:25:00	5	2:51:00	30	1:50:12
	Total	74	4:29:06	11	2:13:10	44	2:12:17

Table 1.1a Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day		Youth criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	700	3:26:51	111	2:42:11	249	3:24:06

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

Table 1.2 Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day		Family day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Londonderry	2	3:32:30		.
	Total	2	3:32:30		.
Antrim	Ballymena	1	0:20:00	1	0:15:00
	Total	1	0:20:00	1	0:15:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	1	1:35:00		.
	Total	1	1:35:00		.
Armagh & South Down	Newry	1	0:05:00		.
	Total	1	0:05:00		.
Ards	Newtownards	2	0:17:30	1	0:06:00
	Total	2	0:17:30	1	0:06:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	4	1:48:45		.
	Craigavon	1	6:15:00		.
	Total	5	2:42:00		.

Table 1.2a Additional court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day		Family day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	12	1:55:50	2	0:10:30

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

Table 1.3 Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue¹

		Adult criminal day	
		Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Londonderry	Magherafelt	2	0:25:00
	Londonderry	9	0:36:06
	Total	11	0:34:05
Antrim	Ballymena	8	0:23:45
	Total	8	0:23:45
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	10	0:47:00
	Total	10	0:47:00
Armagh & South Down	Newry	6	0:48:20
	Total	6	0:48:20
Ards	Newtownards	8	0:25:37
	Total	8	0:25:37
Craigavon	Lisburn	10	0:37:30
	Total	10	0:37:30

Table 1.3a Special court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts for Northern Ireland¹

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Northern Ireland	53	0:35:56

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

Table 2.1 Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts by division & venue²

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2201	797	3	4	3005
	Division total	2201	797	3	4	3005
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	541	196		1	738
	Limavady Court Office	88	45			133
	Magherafelt Court Office	118	43			161
	Division total	747	284		1	1032
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	233	76			309
	Coleraine Court Office	294	125			419
	Ballymena Court Office	271	147	1	3	422
	Division total	798	348	1	3	1150
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	184	99			283
	Strabane Court Office	154	31			185
	Enniskillen Court Office	271	40	3		314
	Dungannon Court Office	217	114	6	4	341
	Division total	826	284	9	4	1123
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	189	31	2		222
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	162	33			195
	Newry Court Office	376	111			487
	Division total	727	175	2		904
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	471	137	4		612
	Downpatrick Court Office	230	50			280
	Division total	701	187	4		892
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	561	101	2	2	666
	Lisburn Court Office	284	113	4	2	403
	Division total	845	214	6	4	1069

Table 2.1a Adult criminal defendants received in the Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Northern Ireland	6845	2289	25	16	9175

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

Table 2.2 Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court by division & venue²

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2182	848		2	3032
	Division total	2182	848		2	3032
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	538	188		1	727
	Limavady Court Office	94	46		1	141
	Magherafelt Court Office	115	40			155
	Division total	747	274		2	1023
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	231	82			313
	Coleraine Court Office	292	121			413
	Ballymena Court Office	351	133	1	3	488
	Division total	874	336	1	3	1214
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	186	100			286
	Strabane Court Office	165	25			190
	Enniskillen Court Office	253	35	2		290
	Dungannon Court Office	230	96		1	327
	Division total	834	256	2	1	1093
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	184	46			230
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	127	34			161
	Newry Court Office	417	114			531
	Division total	728	194			922
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	468	150	2		620
	Downpatrick Court Office	243	45			288
	Division total	711	195	2		908
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	615	109		2	726
	Lisburn Court Office	321	108	4	2	435
	Division total	936	217	4	4	1161

Table 2.2a Adult criminal defendants disposed of in the Magistrates' court in Northern Ireland²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Northern Ireland	7012	2320	9	12	9353

² 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 division & venue³

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	4.47	4.84	.79	5.63
	Total	4.47	4.84	.79	5.63
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	4.67	5.72	1.31	7.03
	Limavady Court Office	6.27	4.92	.73	5.66
	Magherafelt Court Office	4.84	4.93	.77	5.69
	Total	4.91	5.49	1.15	6.64
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	4.94	4.10	.51	4.61
	Coleraine Court Office	4.37	4.41	.58	4.99
	Ballymena Court Office	4.87	5.53	.57	6.10
	Total	4.71	4.75	.56	5.31
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	5.61	3.05	.61	3.67
	Strabane Court Office	3.91	3.84	.49	4.33
	Enniskillen Court Office	3.95	5.31	.97	6.28
	Dungannon Court Office	4.51	4.14	.97	5.11
	Total	4.55	4.10	.79	4.90
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3.70	8.49	1.17	9.66
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.40	5.19	.68	5.86
	Newry Court Office	5.81	6.68	.36	7.04
	Total	5.04	6.86	.62	7.48
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	4.43	5.78	.90	6.68
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.11	5.73	.88	6.61
	Total	4.33	5.76	.89	6.66
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	3.99	8.45	.74	9.19
	Lisburn Court Office	4.06	6.17	1.02	7.20
	Total	4.02	7.61	.85	8.45

Table 2.3a Average waiting times in the adult Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	4.55	5.45	.80	6.25

³ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences excluded.

Table 2.4 Type of charges brought for adult defendants disposed of by business area^{2,4}

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Offences Against the Person	697	12			709
All Sexual Offences	133			1	134
All Burglary Offences	62				62
All Robbery Offences	15				15
All Theft Offences	455	1		4	460
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	87	88			175
All Criminal Damage Offences	169			1	170
All Offences Against the State	242			6	248
All Other Offences	186	1387			1573
All Drug Offences	452	1			453
All Motoring Offences	2567	700	5		3272
All Non-Police Offences	3	48	4		55
All Breach	117	43			160
Combination of charges	1827	40			1867
Total	7012	2320	9	12	9353

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

⁴ 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 area²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	406				406
Plea of guilty on all charges	3200	357			3557
All charges withdrawn	1276	702			1978
Fixed penalty default			9		9
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1691	1208			2899
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	439	53			492
Penalty Notice for Disorder default				12	12
Total	7012	2320	9	12	9353

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

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	106	3	109
	Division total	106	3	109
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	36		36
	Limavady Court Office	3		3
	Magherafelt Court Office	2		2
	Division total	41		41
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	7	4	11
	Coleraine Court Office	8		8
	Ballymena Court Office	6	1	7
	Division total	21	5	26
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	6		6
	Strabane Court Office	9		9
	Enniskillen Court Office	17		17
	Dungannon Court Office	8		8
	Division total	40		40
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4		4
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4		4
	Newry Court Office	17		17
	Division total	25		25
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	76		76
	Downpatrick Court Office	8		8
	Division total	84		84
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	18		18
	Lisburn Court Office	17		17
	Division total	35		35

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	352	8	360

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	95	2	97
	Division total	95	2	97
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	31		31
	Limavady Court Office	2		2
	Magherafelt Court Office	5		5
	Division total	38		38
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	8	4	12
	Coleraine Court Office	7		7
	Ballymena Court Office	6	1	7
	Division total	21	5	26
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	4		4
	Strabane Court Office	4		4
	Enniskillen Court Office	20	1	21
	Dungannon Court Office	8		8
	Division total	36	1	37
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3		3
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1		1
	Newry Court Office	26		26
	Division total	30		30
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	31		31
	Downpatrick Court Office	7		7
	Division total	38		38
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	25		25
	Lisburn Court Office	23		23
	Division total	48		48

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Northern Ireland	306	8	314

Table 3.3 Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts by division & venue³

		Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	2.18	7.85	4.79	12.64
	Total	2.18	7.85	4.79	12.64
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	3.21	6.39	2.54	8.93
	Limavady Court Office	4.57	3.50	4.00	7.50
	Magherafelt Court Office	5.04	4.50	1.93	6.43
	Total	3.52	5.97	2.55	8.53
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	5.26	5.30	3.70	9.00
	Coleraine Court Office	4.67	3.71	1.71	5.43
	Ballymena Court Office	3.31	3.14	4.00	7.14
	Total	4.57	4.25	3.17	7.43
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	.76	3.33	1.67	5.00
	Strabane Court Office	3.14	7.93	2.00	9.93
	Enniskillen Court Office	2.86	6.52	1.91	8.43
	Dungannon Court Office	2.93	2.57	5.62	8.19
	Total	2.70	5.60	2.64	8.24
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.38	11.00	.14	11.14
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Newry Court Office	3.97	3.46	1.60	5.06
	Total	3.83	4.47	1.29	5.75
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	2.73	5.70	5.21	10.92
	Downpatrick Court Office	2.16	13.78	2.10	15.88
	Total	2.59	7.65	4.46	12.11
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	3.14	7.57	1.38	8.96
	Lisburn Court Office	2.22	7.03	4.27	11.30
	Total	2.65	7.28	2.93	10.21

Table 3.3a Average waiting times in the youth Magistrates' courts in Northern Ireland³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	2.89	6.62	3.53	10.15

³ Arrest warrants, adjourned generally, deferred sentences and youth monitored cases are excluded.

Table 3.4 Type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of by business area⁴

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Offences Against the Person	41		41
All Sexual Offences	4		4
All Burglary Offences	11		11
All Theft Offences	30		30
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1		1
All Criminal Damage Offences	28		28
All Offences Against the State	23		23
All Other Offences	5		5
All Drug Offences	14		14
All Motoring Offences	28		28
All Non-Police Offences		5	5
All Breach	1	3	4
Combination of charges	120		120
Total	306	8	314

⁴ 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	6		6
Plea of guilty on all charges	136	6	142
All charges withdrawn	84	1	85
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	63	1	64
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	17		17
Total	306	8	314

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	8	440	448
	Division total	8	440	448
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	5	116	121
	Limavady Court Office		4	4
	Magherafelt Court Office	1	9	10
	Division total	6	129	135
Antrim	Antrim Court Office		24	24
	Coleraine Court Office	2	51	53
	Ballymena Court Office	5	87	92
	Division total	7	162	169
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	2	33	35
	Strabane Court Office		25	25
	Enniskillen Court Office	4	21	25
	Dungannon Court Office	2	13	15
	Division total	8	92	100
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3	23	26
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	30	33
	Newry Court Office	9	76	85
	Division total	15	129	144
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	4	136	140
	Downpatrick Court Office	2	48	50
	Division total	6	184	190
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	5	64	69
	Lisburn Court Office	1	62	63
	Division total	6	126	132

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	56	1262	1318

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

		Current Business Area		Total
		Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Belfast	Laganside Courts	14	376	390
	Division total	14	376	390
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	6	100	106
	Limavady Court Office		4	4
	Magherafelt Court Office		3	3
	Division total	6	107	113
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2	26	28
	Coleraine Court Office	2	44	46
	Ballymena Court Office	8	78	86
	Division total	12	148	160
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	2	26	28
	Strabane Court Office		14	14
	Enniskillen Court Office	1	16	17
	Dungannon Court Office	3	23	26
	Division total	6	79	85
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1	22	23
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1	27	28
	Newry Court Office	8	78	86
	Division total	10	127	137
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	4	120	124
	Downpatrick Court Office	3	33	36
	Division total	7	153	160
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	1	66	67
	Lisburn Court Office		43	43
	Division total	1	109	110

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Northern Ireland	56	1099	1155

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

		Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Belfast	Laganside Courts	1.81	8.40	10.21
	Total	1.81	8.40	10.21
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	1.63	6.99	8.63
	Limavady Court Office	.93	.00	.93
	Magherafelt Court Office	.00	.00	.00
	Total	1.57	6.56	8.13
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	13.18	10.61	23.79
	Coleraine Court Office	1.81	4.33	6.14
	Ballymena Court Office	1.21	8.39	9.59
	Total	3.48	7.61	11.08
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	1.23	4.89	6.13
	Strabane Court Office	.88	.29	1.16
	Enniskillen Court Office	1.51	2.29	3.81
	Dungannon Court Office	2.03	4.12	6.15
	Total	1.48	3.38	4.85
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1.66	4.17	5.84
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.14	2.79	3.93
	Newry Court Office	1.97	5.68	7.53
	Total	1.74	4.83	6.51
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	1.52	6.24	7.76
	Downpatrick Court Office	1.78	12.97	14.75
	Total	1.57	7.76	9.33
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	1.17	7.34	8.51
	Lisburn Court Office	.35	11.45	11.80
	Total	.85	8.95	9.79

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

	Date of receipt to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Date of receipt to disposal (weeks)
Northern Ireland	1.86	7.28	9.13

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	
Non molestation	693	149	131	99	3	1075
Occupation	4	4	2	3		13
Vary discharge non-mol occupation	1	3	3	2		9
Other Family Homes & domestic violence				2		2
Total	698	156	136	106	3	1099

APPENDIX 2 - EXPLANATORY NOTES

Acquittal

A judgement or verdict that a person is not guilty of the crime with which they have been charged.

Additional sitting

These are additional court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, but planned in advance of the date of the sitting.

Adult Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged 18 years or over on the date on which they committed the offence.

Applications

The act of applying to a civil or family court to ask it to do something, for example to start proceedings or make an order.

Charge sheet

A charge sheet is a method by which PSNI can put charge(s) to a defendant and on which they will either release the defendant on police bail to appear at court within 28 days of the charging or they can detain the defendant in custody to produce them before a court at the earliest opportunity.

Civil and Family application

These are applications in relation to Children Order, domestic and family homes and domestic violence proceedings.

Committed to Crown Court

The procedure by which a defendant is returned for trial to the Crown Court by the Magistrates' court, if the Magistrates' court is satisfied that there is a case to answer.

Departmental prosecution

Departmental prosecutions are for criminal offences which are investigated by a department or other non-police body and prosecuted by either the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) or a separate prosecutorial body (e.g. motor tax evasion which is prosecuted by the Department of the Environment).

Disposed

The date a case is finally dealt with via a court or non-court result and the case is no longer in the court process.

Domestic proceeding (including FHDV orders, Non molestation, Occupation, Vary discharge)

These are orders made in respect of applications made under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. These orders include non-molestation and/or occupation orders. A non-molestation order is made for the protection of the applicant and may prohibit the respondent from carrying out particular actions or behaviours and may include an exclusion zone. Occupation orders provide for the rights of the application to peacefully occupy a particular property without interference from the respondent. These orders may be varied to add or remove particular requirements and the order can also be discharged by the court to bring the terms of the order to an end.

Family Magistrates' Business

Family business in the Magistrate's Court (the Family Proceedings Court) covers applications brought in respect of the care and welfare of children, domestic proceedings and applications for non-molestation and/or occupation orders.

Finding

This is the date on which a defendant is either found guilty or not guilty of having committed the offence alleged in either the summons or charge sheet.

First hearing

This is the date on which a case first appears in court.

Fixed penalty Default

This is a fixed penalty which has been issued for a minor motoring offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

Hybrid charge

This is also referred to as a 'triable-either-way' offence. A criminal offence that may be prosecuted either summarily (in the Magistrates' court) or on indictment (in the Crown Court). In the majority of cases, the prosecution decides how the offence is tried depending on the seriousness of the offence.

Indictable charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant is usually tried in the Crown Court.

Indictable triable summarily charge

A serious criminal offence where the defendant can be tried in the Crown Court but may in some instances be tried in a Magistrates' court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder

These are diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences, such as non-motoring offences, as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court.

Penalty Notice for Disorder Default

This is a penalty notice for disorder which has been issued for a defined offence and which has not been paid by the payment due date and has therefore gone into default. At this stage a summons is issued to bring the matter before the court to have a Judge set the default terms for non-payment.

PSNI/PPS prosecution

These are prosecutions for criminal offences which are investigated by Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and prosecuted by Public Prosecution Service (PPS).

Received

The date a served summons or a charge sheet is received by the Magistrates' Court office.

Scheduled sitting

This is a regular court sitting that is included within the court calendar.

Sitting

This is a period of work by a judge in a single courtroom on a single day. Several types of business may be heard at one sitting. Business heard in different courtrooms, whether at the same venue or elsewhere, is counted as separate sittings.

Sitting Days

A court sitting day is counted as any day where the judiciary sit in court. It is a period of work by a judge on a single day. Multiple sittings on one calendar date will be aggregated into one sitting day based on the Judicial officer, venue and sitting date. Several types of business may be heard within one sitting day. Days are classified on the basis of, in the first instance, the earliest scheduled sitting. Where the start time for 2 or more sittings is the same, the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken. It does not include time in chambers or days where the judiciary are sitting in chambers.

Special sitting

These are additional unplanned court sittings, not included within the regular court calendar, that are required to hear unforeseen business, such a dealing with a defendant on a weekend or public holiday.

Summary charge

This is an offence which is triable in a Magistrates' court.

Summons

This is the method by which a complaint is made to require a defendant to appear before a court in respect of particular charge(s). The details of the charge(s) will be contained on the summons as well as the first date and place at which the defendant is to attend court.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved.

Youth Magistrates' Business

Magistrates' court criminal business in which the defendant is aged between 10 and 18 years on the date on which they committed the offence.

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