

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 October to December 2016 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. During the period October to December 2016:
- There were 1,114 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was a similar number to the 1,110 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,737 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,675 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 4% (from 10,168) and a decrease of 2% (from 9,916) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the lowest number of adult defendants received and the second lowest number of adult defendants disposed during the October to December 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.
- 328 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 329 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 14% (from 381) and a decrease of 25% (from 437) 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 October to December quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 13 weeks, compared to 12 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,144 new civil and family applications were received and 1,088 civil applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 5% (from 1,206) and an increase of 4% (from 1,051) 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

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 first quarter of 2017 and will be published on 5th May 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 October to December 2016 there were 1,047 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 17 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 50 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was a decrease of less than 1% (from 1,049), an increase of 70% (from 10) and a decrease of 2% (from 51) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

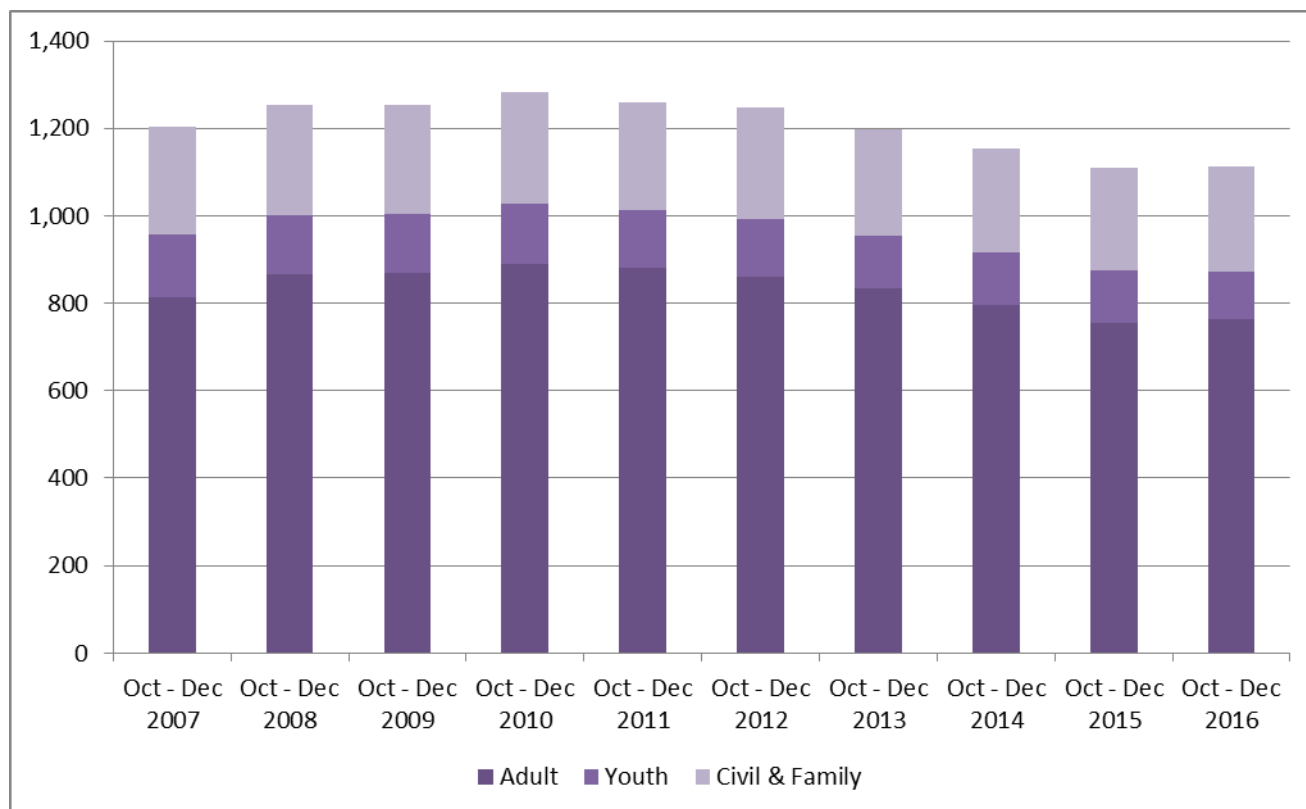
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for October to December 2016 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	702	13	50	765
Youth Criminal	108	0	0	108
Civil & Family	237	4	0	241
Total	1,047	17	50	1,114

Within these 1,114 sitting days, 69% 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 October to December quarter over the last number of years (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: October to December 2007 to October to December 2016



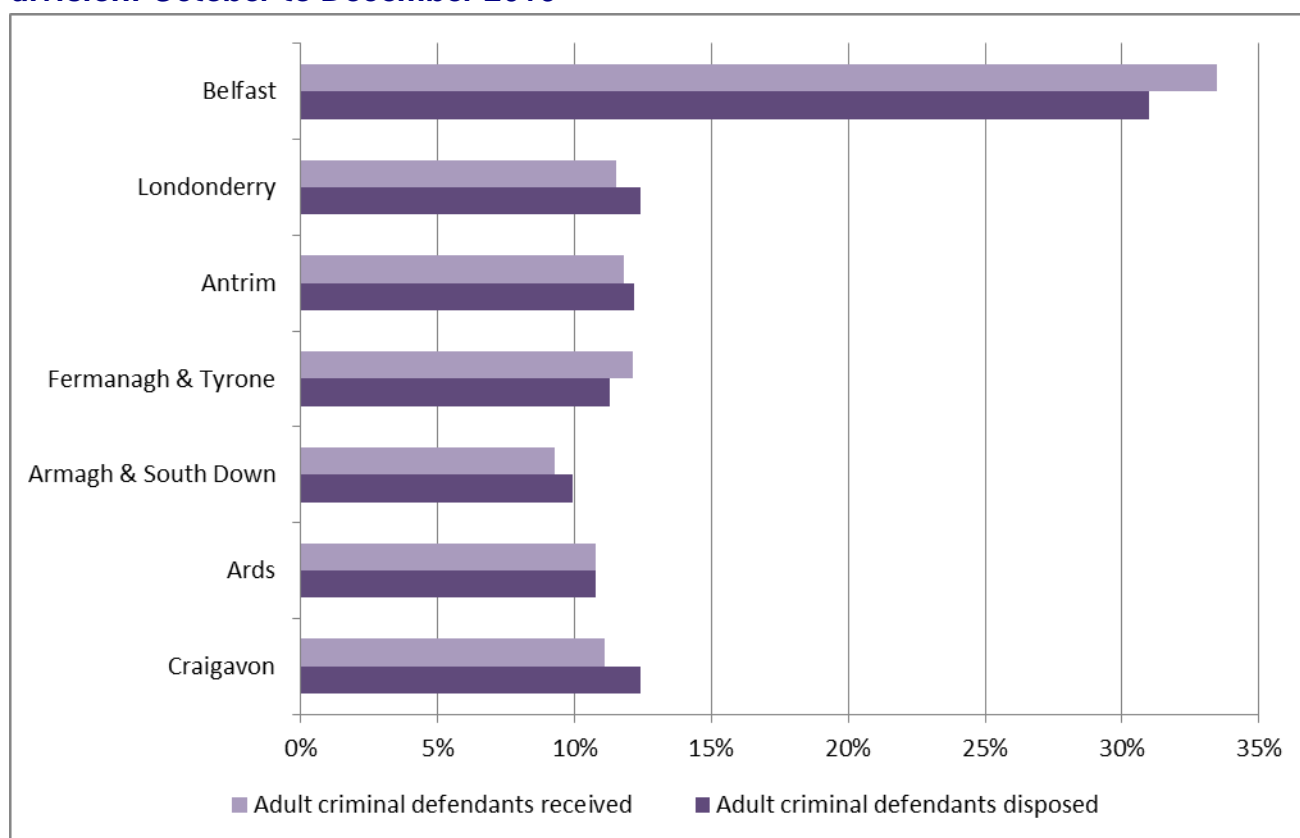
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2016, 9,737 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,675 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 4% (from 10,168) and a decrease of 2% (from 9,916) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (74.5%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/PPS (also 74.1% in the same period in 2015).

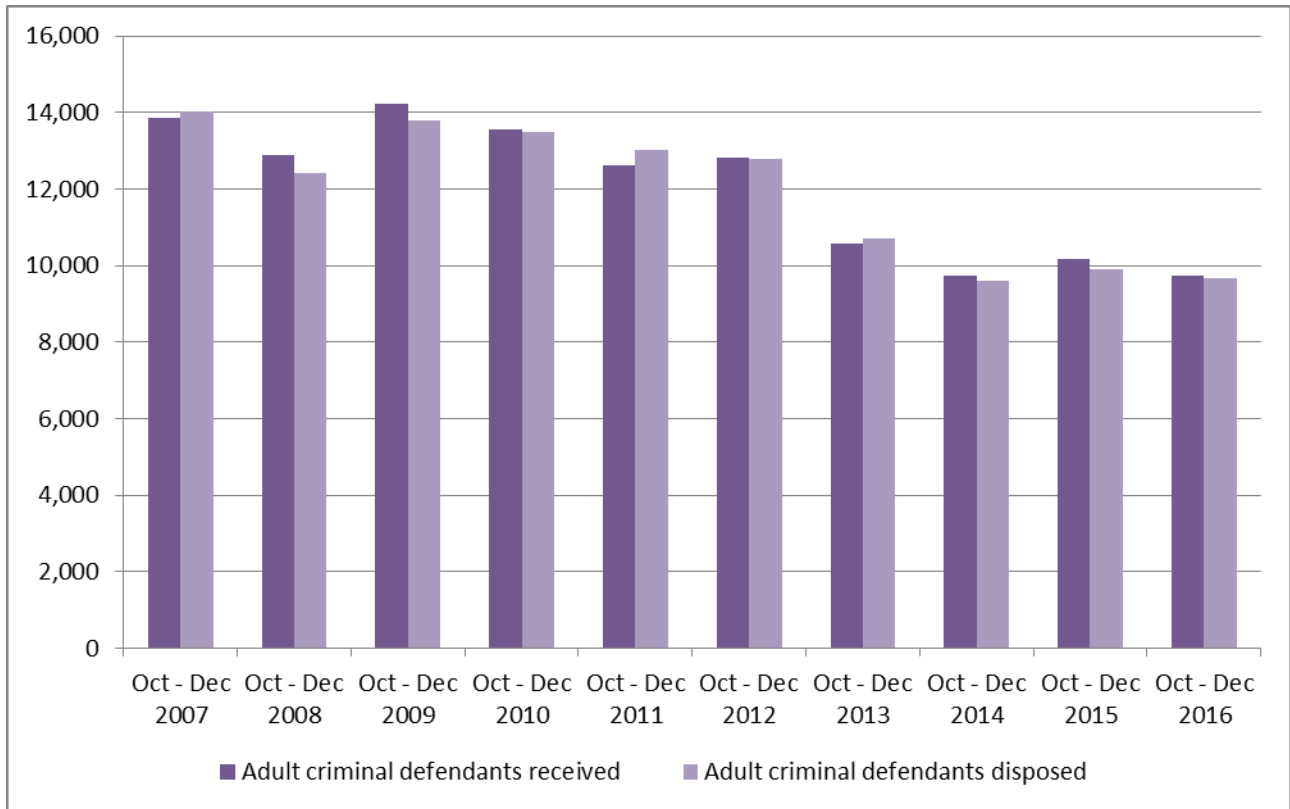
The volume of adult business was highest in the Belfast division (Figure 2).

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



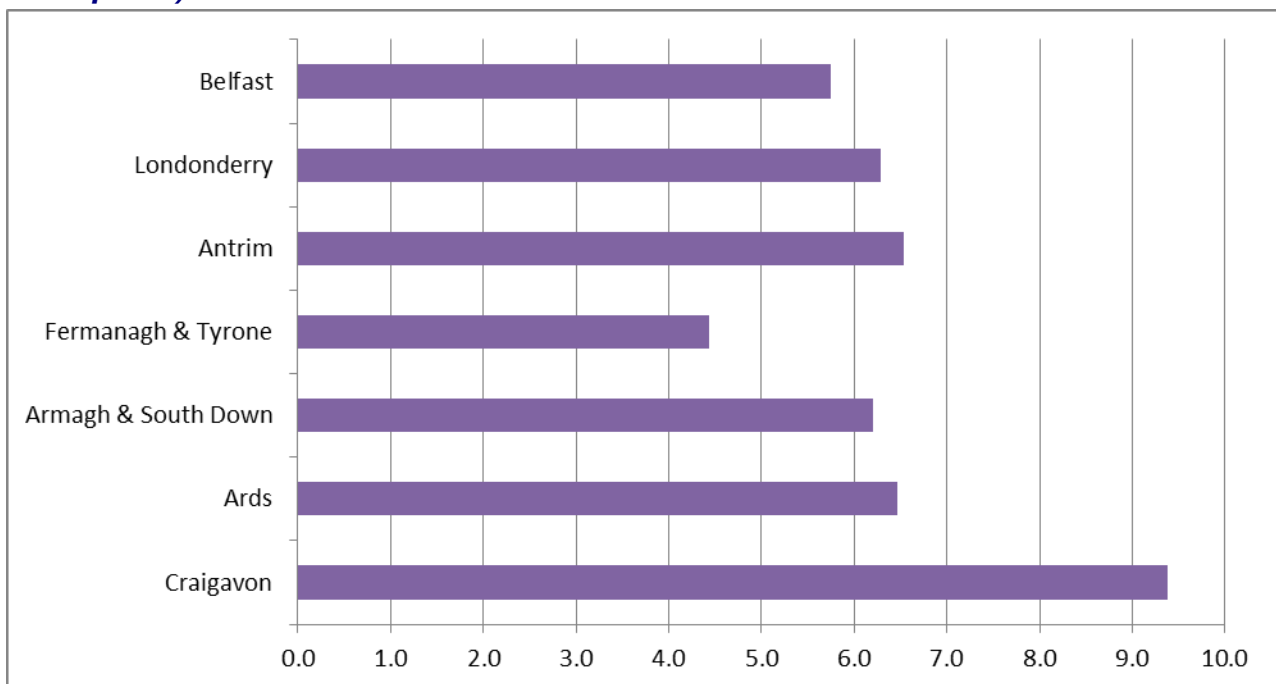
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December over the last number of years, with levels of receipts reaching their lowest level in October to December 2016 and disposals reaching their second lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 2016



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

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



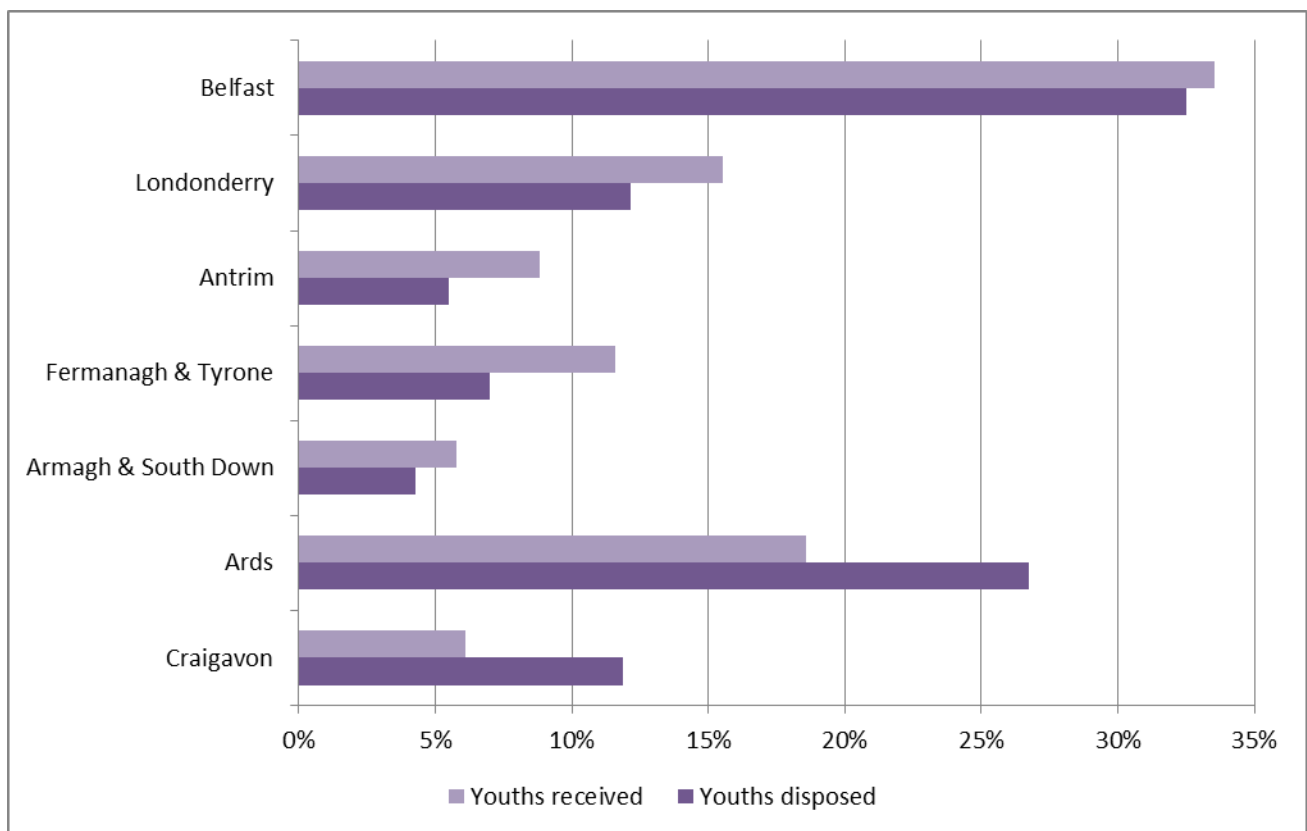
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During October to December 2016, 328 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 329 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 14% (from 381) and a decrease of 25% (from 437) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

Almost all prosecutions (98.5%) disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (98.9% in the same period in 2015).

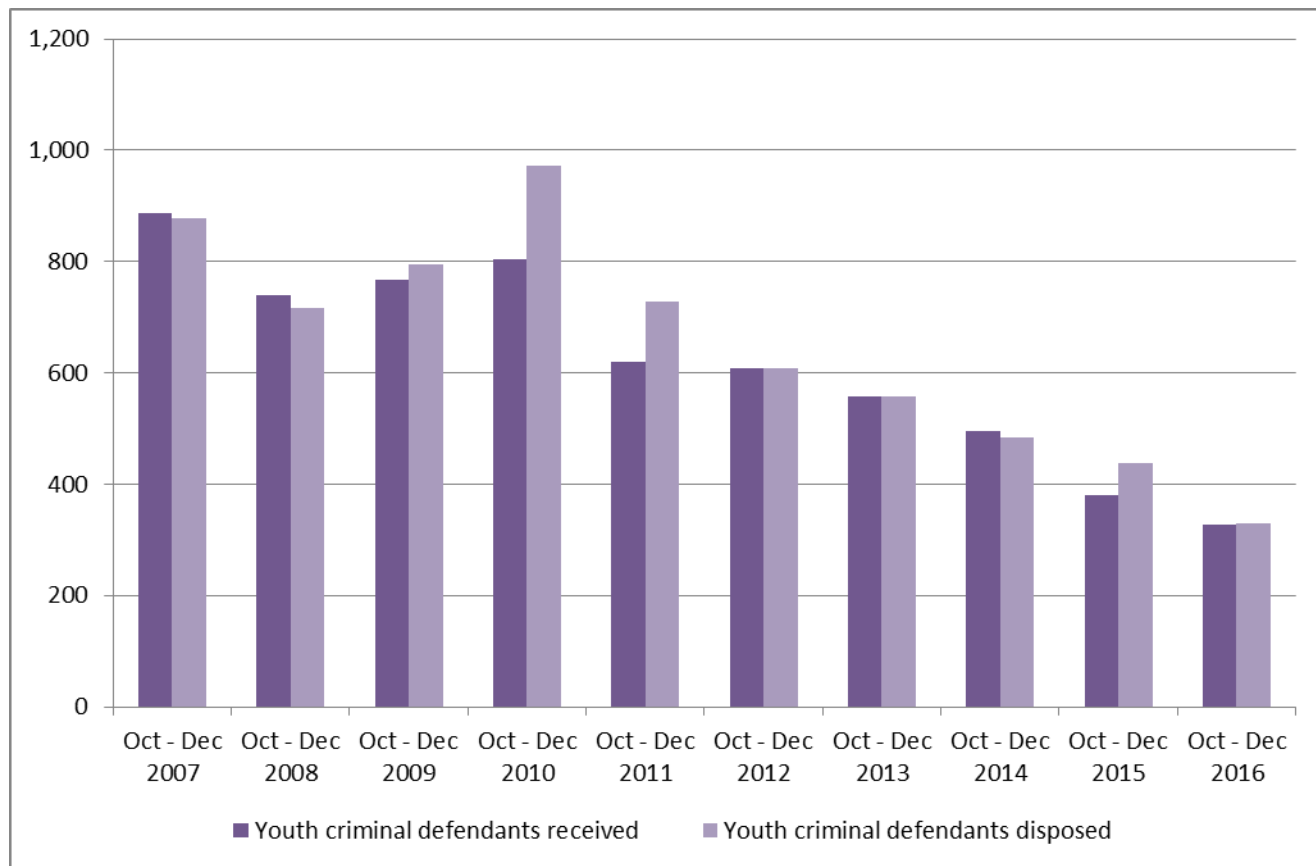
A breakdown of youth business by court division for October to December 2016 is shown in Figure 5 below:

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



The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter October to December 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: October to December 2007 to October to December 2016



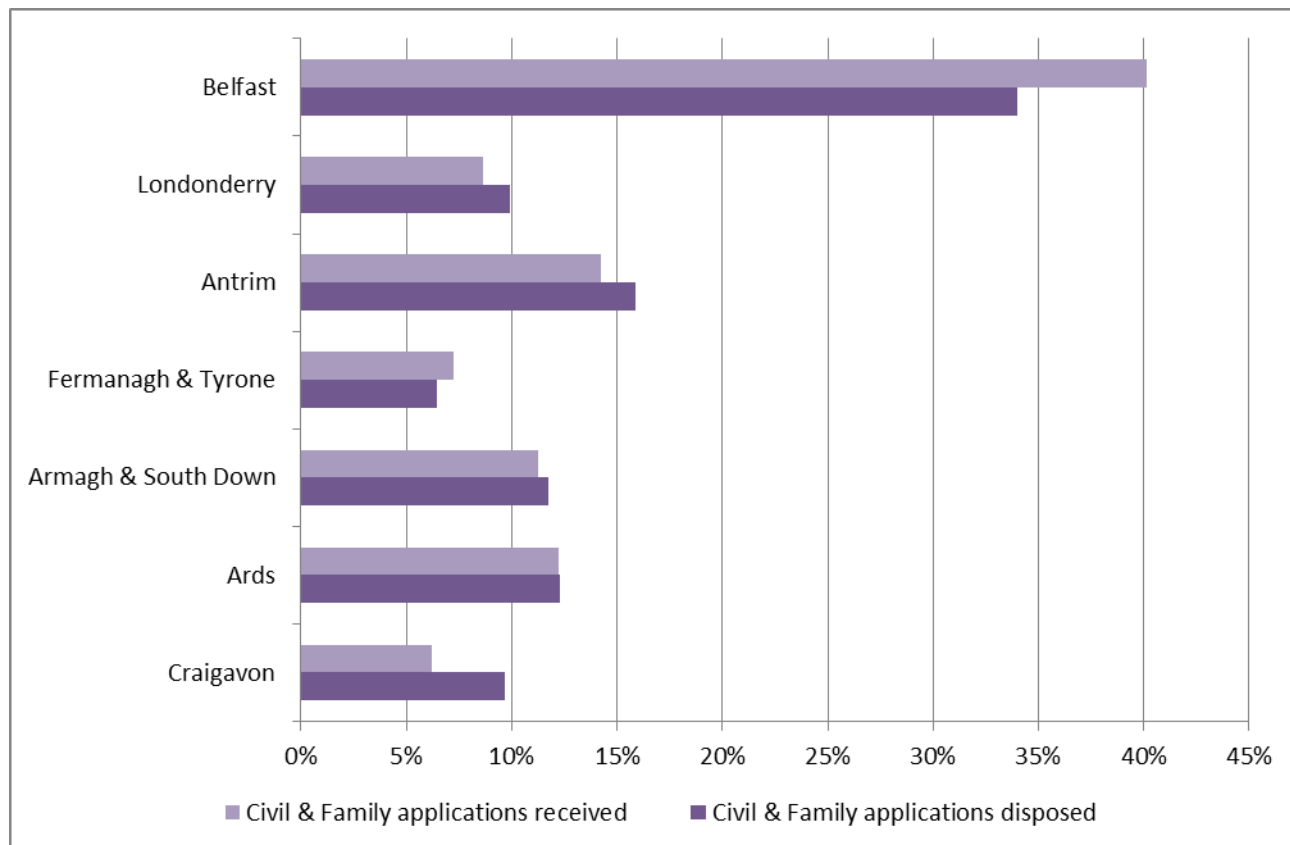
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 13 weeks (12 weeks for the same period in 2015).

3.4 Civil and family Magistrates' court

During October to December 2016, 1,144 new civil and family applications were received and 1,088 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents a decrease of 5% (from 1,206) and an increase of 4% (from 1,051) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

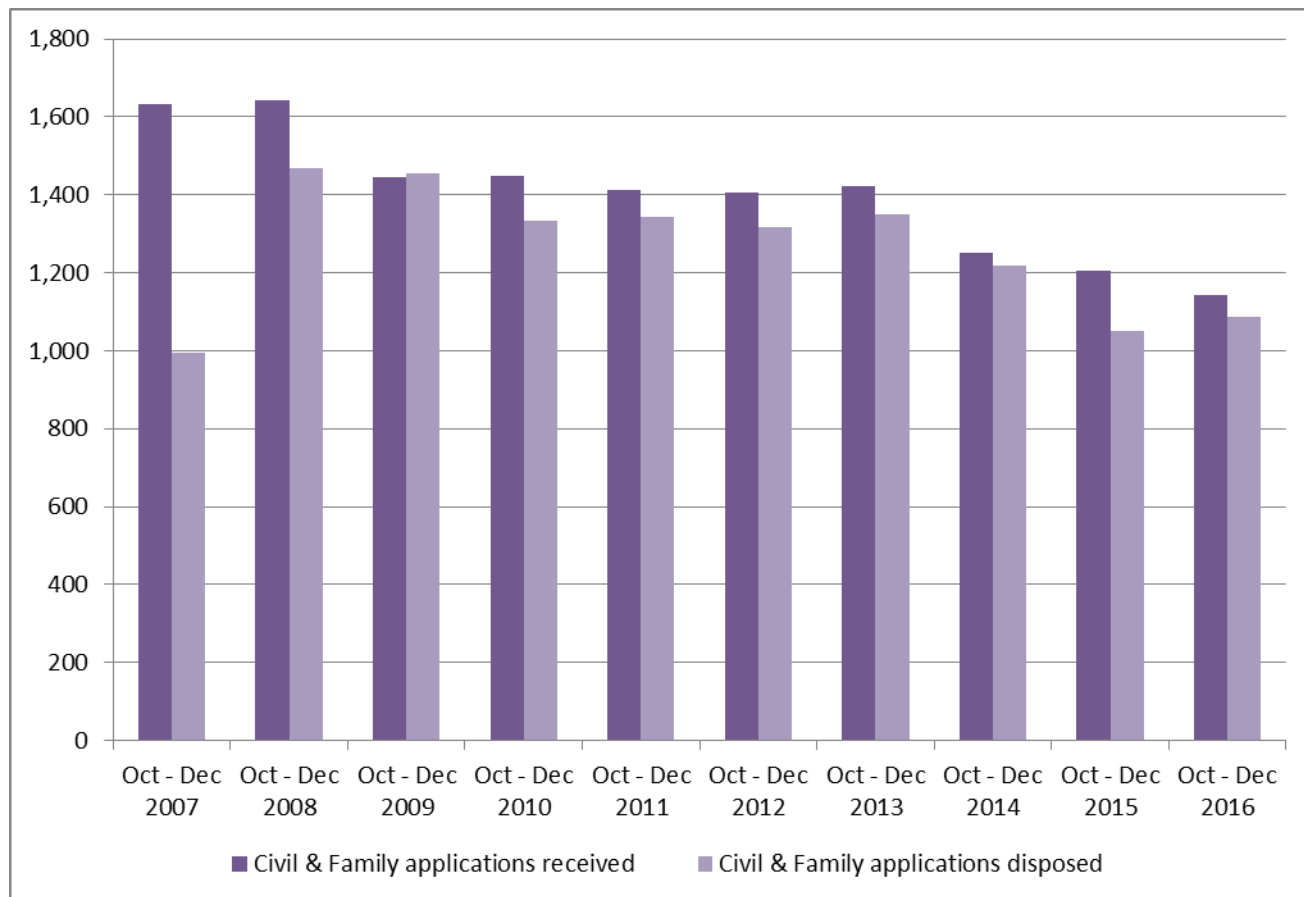
A breakdown of civil and family business by court division for October to December 2016 is shown in Figure 7 below:

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



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

Figure 8: Civil & family applications received and disposed: October to December 2007 to October to December 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	211	2:52:05	36	2:43:16	75	3:18:43
	Total	211	2:52:05	36	2:43:16	75	3:18:43
Londonderry	Limavady	12	2:37:05		.		.
	Magherafelt	16	2:48:45		.	1	2:00:00
	Londonderry	60	4:18:46	3	3:46:40	24	5:13:57
	Total	88	3:48:32	3	3:46:40	25	5:06:12
Antrim	Antrim	16	3:43:45	5	1:49:00	6	3:33:20
	Ballymena	22	4:49:19	5	2:39:00	17	2:28:31
	Coleraine	33	3:45:27	5	3:38:00	8	5:16:15
	Total	71	4:04:51	15	2:42:00	31	3:24:21
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Dungannon	36	3:21:15	6	2:49:30	8	2:05:45
	Strabane	23	3:30:52	2	5:12:30	1	1:00:00
	Omagh	21	3:30:28	6	1:40:50	9	2:25:00
	Enniskillen	27	5:10:24	5	4:26:00	1	2:00:00
	Total	107	3:52:40	19	3:08:15	19	2:11:06
Armagh & South Down	Armagh	21	3:55:28	4	2:28:45		.
	Banbridge@Newry	16	3:25:56	3	2:56:40		.
	Newry	32	2:46:46	5	2:10:00	16	3:30:56
	Total	69	3:16:46	12	2:27:55	16	3:30:56
Ards	Downpatrick	25	3:50:24	6	2:09:10		.
	Newtownards	50	3:12:06	6	4:14:10	35	2:37:00
	Total	75	3:24:52	12	3:11:40	35	2:37:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	38	3:42:53	6	1:55:00	14	3:36:25
	Craigavon	43	5:16:39	5	1:54:00	22	2:44:05
	Total	81	4:32:40	11	1:54:32	36	3:04:26

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	702	3:33:17	108	2:45:44	237	3:17:52

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
Belfast	Laganside	4	2:46:15	1	0:30:00
	Total	4	2:46:15	1	0:30:00
Londonderry	Londonderry	1	1:00:00	1	1:30:00
	Total	1	1:00:00	1	1:30:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	1	1:00:00		.
	Total	1	1:00:00		.
Ards	Newtownards	3	3:06:40	1	0:55:00
	Total	3	3:06:40	1	0:55:00
Craigavon	Lisburn	3	1:53:20	1	1:10:00
	Craigavon	1	4:00:00		.
	Total	4	2:25:00	1	1:10:00

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	13	2:28:04	4	1:01:15

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	Londonderry	6	0:54:10
	Total	6	0:54:10
Antrim	Ballymena	9	0:15:00
	Total	9	0:15:00
Fermanagh & Tyrone	Omagh	11	0:58:38
	Total	11	0:58:38
Armagh & South Down	Newry	6	0:19:10
	Total	6	0:19:10
Ards	Newtownards	7	0:31:25
	Total	7	0:31:25
Craigavon	Lisburn	11	0:44:32
	Total	11	0:44:32

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	50	0:38:36

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	2456	800		3	3259
	Division total	2456	800		3	3259
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	587	175	8	6	776
	Limavady Court Office	111	44			155
	Magherafelt Court Office	127	58	5		190
	Division total	825	277	13	6	1121
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	246	94			340
	Coleraine Court Office	282	157			439
	Ballymena Court Office	239	128		2	369
	Division total	767	379		2	1148
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	156	105	11		272
	Strabane Court Office	133	42		2	177
	Enniskillen Court Office	251	66	8		325
	Dungannon Court Office	269	134		2	405
	Division total	809	347	19	4	1179
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	151	53			204
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	134	35			169
	Newry Court Office	408	119	1		528
	Division total	693	207	1		901
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	573	140	2	1	716
	Downpatrick Court Office	273	56	3	1	333
	Division total	846	196	5	2	1049
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	471	120		4	595
	Lisburn Court Office	349	133	3		485
	Division total	820	253	3	4	1080

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	7216	2459	41	21	9737

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	2237	759	2	1	2999
	Division total	2237	759	2	1	2999
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	619	203	6	5	833
	Limavady Court Office	112	47			159
	Magherafelt Court Office	145	61	3		209
	Division total	876	311	9	5	1201
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	248	89			337
	Coleraine Court Office	316	162			478
	Ballymena Court Office	237	127			364
	Division total	801	378			1179
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	138	91	1		230
	Strabane Court Office	131	48		1	180
	Enniskillen Court Office	231	48	8		287
	Dungannon Court Office	260	134	1		395
	Division total	760	321	10	1	1092
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	176	48	1		225
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	149	48			197
	Newry Court Office	405	134	1		540
	Division total	730	230	2		962
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	577	134	2		713
	Downpatrick Court Office	265	58	3	1	327
	Division total	842	192	5	1	1040
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	612	124	1	4	741
	Lisburn Court Office	348	110	3		461
	Division total	960	234	4	4	1202

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	7206	2425	32	12	9675

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	4.67	5.03	.72	5.75
	Total	4.67	5.03	.72	5.75
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	4.92	5.81	1.08	6.89
	Limavady Court Office	4.91	3.49	.30	3.79
	Magherafelt Court Office	5.51	5.20	.66	5.86
	Total	5.02	5.39	.90	6.29
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	5.70	4.16	.52	4.69
	Coleraine Court Office	4.62	5.88	.75	6.63
	Ballymena Court Office	4.53	6.76	1.33	8.09
	Total	4.90	5.66	.87	6.53
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	5.34	2.70	.35	3.05
	Strabane Court Office	4.60	3.91	.62	4.53
	Enniskillen Court Office	4.64	4.26	.75	5.02
	Dungannon Court Office	5.12	4.19	.61	4.79
	Total	4.95	3.85	.59	4.44
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.06	6.73	1.01	7.74
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.76	4.67	.63	5.31
	Newry Court Office	5.61	5.19	.72	5.90
	Total	5.07	5.45	.77	6.21
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	4.32	6.28	.86	7.14
	Downpatrick Court Office	5.25	4.47	.55	5.01
	Total	4.61	5.71	.76	6.47
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	4.02	10.02	.72	10.74
	Lisburn Court Office	4.18	6.23	.90	7.13
	Total	4.08	8.59	.79	9.38

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	4.74	5.57	.76	6.33

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	773	14			787
All Sexual Offences	119	1			120
All Burglary Offences	64				64
All Robbery Offences	23				23
All Theft Offences	468			6	474
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	65	71			136
All Criminal Damage Offences	167				167
All Offences Against the State	210			5	215
All Other Offences	251	1501		1	1753
All Drug Offences	490				490
All Motoring Offences	2633	665	15		3313
All Non-Police Offences	11	81	17		109
All Breach	92	38			130
Combination of charges	1840	54			1894
Total	7206	2425	32	12	9675

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	434				434
Plea of guilty on all charges	3162	342			3504
All charges withdrawn	1335	775			2110
Fixed penalty default			32		32
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	1851	1253			3104
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	424	55			479
Penalty Notice for Disorder default				12	12
Total	7206	2425	32	12	9675

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	Fixed penalty	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	107	3		110
	Division total	107	3		110
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	40			40
	Limavady Court Office	5			5
	Magherafelt Court Office	6			6
	Division total	51			51
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	9			9
	Coleraine Court Office	9			9
	Ballymena Court Office	11			11
	Division total	29			29
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	9			9
	Strabane Court Office	3			3
	Enniskillen Court Office	12			12
	Dungannon Court Office	14			14
	Division total	38			38
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	3			3
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4			4
	Newry Court Office	12			12
	Division total	19			19
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	51			51
	Downpatrick Court Office	9		1	10
	Division total	60		1	61
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	15			15
	Lisburn Court Office	5			5
	Division total	20			20

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Total
Northern Ireland	324	3	1	328

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

		PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Total
Belfast	Laganside Courts	103	4		107
	Division total	103	4		107
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	32			32
	Limavady Court Office	6			6
	Magherafelt Court Office	2			2
	Division total	40			40
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	8			8
	Coleraine Court Office	8			8
	Ballymena Court Office	2			2
	Division total	18			18
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	5			5
	Strabane Court Office	4			4
	Enniskillen Court Office	8			8
	Dungannon Court Office	6			6
	Division total	23			23
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2			2
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4			4
	Newry Court Office	8			8
	Division total	14			14
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	76			76
	Downpatrick Court Office	11		1	12
	Division total	87		1	88
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	33			33
	Lisburn Court Office	6			6
	Division total	39			39

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Total
Northern Ireland	324	4	1	329

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	2.78	8.43	4.15	12.58
	Total	2.78	8.43	4.15	12.58
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2.15	8.47	7.02	15.49
	Limavady Court Office	3.71	6.67	6.33	13.00
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.29	.00	.00	.00
	Total	2.27	8.02	6.73	14.75
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	4.55	7.02	1.64	8.67
	Coleraine Court Office	3.96	7.54	4.25	11.79
	Ballymena Court Office	3.64	7.36	2.93	10.29
	Total	4.20	7.25	2.73	9.98
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	3.71	8.14	2.67	10.81
	Strabane Court Office	1.89	9.79	.00	9.79
	Enniskillen Court Office	1.96	4.82	4.98	9.80
	Dungannon Court Office	8.94	18.23	2.00	20.23
	Total	3.96	9.66	2.89	12.56
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	4.07	.00	4.00	4.00
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5.29	7.21	9.00	16.21
	Newry Court Office	4.23	5.31	1.80	7.11
	Total	4.43	4.56	3.89	8.44
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	2.91	6.56	4.90	11.46
	Downpatrick Court Office	4.96	7.65	1.61	9.26
	Total	3.19	6.70	4.46	11.16
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	1.99	13.25	5.62	18.87
	Lisburn Court Office	3.52	6.67	2.67	9.33
	Total	2.13	12.63	5.34	17.98

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	2.97	8.27	4.51	12.78

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	Fixed penalty	Total
All Offences Against the Person	54			54
All Sexual Offences	7			7
All Burglary Offences	10			10
All Robbery Offences	2			2
All Theft Offences	27			27
All Criminal Damage Offences	46			46
All Offences Against the State	10			10
All Other Offences	4	1		5
All Drug Offences	14			14
All Motoring Offences	33			33
All Non-Police Offences			1	1
All Breach	1	3		4
Combination of charges	116			116
Total	324	4	1	329

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	Fixed penalty	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	3			3
Plea of guilty on all charges	157			157
All charges withdrawn	69	4		73
Fixed penalty default			1	1
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	71			71
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	24			24
Total	324	4	1	329

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	19	440	459
	Division total	19	440	459
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	4	83	87
	Limavady Court Office		2	2
	Magherafelt Court Office		10	10
	Division total	4	95	99
Antrim	Antrim Court Office		34	34
	Coleraine Court Office		41	41
	Ballymena Court Office	4	84	88
	Division total	4	159	163
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	7	11	18
	Strabane Court Office		16	16
	Enniskillen Court Office	3	14	17
	Dungannon Court Office	2	30	32
	Division total	12	71	83
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office		29	29
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4	13	17
	Newry Court Office	2	81	83
	Division total	6	123	129
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	5	104	109
	Downpatrick Court Office	3	28	31
	Division total	8	132	140
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2	31	33
	Lisburn Court Office	1	37	38
	Division total	3	68	71

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	1088	1144

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	12	358	370
	Division total	12	358	370
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	4	93	97
	Limavady Court Office		1	1
	Magherafelt Court Office		10	10
	Division total	4	104	108
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	1	27	28
	Coleraine Court Office	2	50	52
	Ballymena Court Office	3	90	93
	Division total	6	167	173
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	3	10	13
	Strabane Court Office		21	21
	Enniskillen Court Office	2	16	18
	Dungannon Court Office	2	16	18
	Division total	7	63	70
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	1	27	28
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	2	15	17
	Newry Court Office	4	79	83
	Division total	7	121	128
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	2	100	102
	Downpatrick Court Office	1	31	32
	Division total	3	131	134
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	6	45	51
	Lisburn Court Office	1	53	54
	Division total	7	98	105

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	46	1042	1088

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	1.58	4.95	7.23
	Total	1.58	4.95	7.23
Londonderry	Londonderry Court Office	2.02	6.58	8.60
	Limavady Court Office	.00	.00	.00
	Magherafelt Court Office	1.36	4.07	5.43
	Total	1.94	6.28	8.22
Antrim	Antrim Court Office	2.45	5.95	8.41
	Coleraine Court Office	2.09	10.20	12.29
	Ballymena Court Office	1.55	8.99	10.43
	Total	1.86	8.86	10.66
Fermanagh and Tyrone	Omagh Court Office	3.45	1.27	4.73
	Strabane Court Office	2.42	3.67	6.09
	Enniskillen Court Office	1.74	8.11	9.85
	Dungannon Court Office	2.33	- .66	1.67
	Total	2.41	3.25	5.67
Armagh and South Down	Armagh Court Office	2.01	3.43	5.43
	Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.47	4.59	6.06
	Newry Court Office	1.84	6.03	7.87
	Total	1.82	5.27	7.10
Ards	Newtownards Court Office	1.53	5.01	6.54
	Downpatrick Court Office	1.86	5.61	7.47
	Total	1.61	5.15	6.76
Craigavon	Craigavon Court Office	2.02	15.85	17.87
	Lisburn Court Office	.74	12.67	13.41
	Total	1.36	14.21	15.58

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	1.73	6.55	8.51

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	
Non molestation	622	168	152	83	1025
Occupation	3	1	9		13
Vary discharge non-mol occupation	1	1	1	1	4
Total	626	170	162	84	1042

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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