

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 January to March 2017 and commentary on trends observed for this quarter in each year from 2007. On 31st October 2016, a single County Court Division called 'The County Court of Northern Ireland' replaced the seven existing County Court Divisions. As a consequence of this change, data are disaggregated solely by Court Office (Processing Office). During the period January to March 2017:
- There were 1,134 Magistrates' court sitting days, which was an increase of 2% from 1,110 in the same period the previous year.
- 9,819 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,741 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 1% (from 9,690) and a decrease of 1% (from 9,887) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the second lowest number of adult defendants received and the lowest number of adult defendants disposed during the January to March quarter since the time series began in 2007.
- The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 6 weeks, the same as the corresponding period last year.
- 411 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 414 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 14% (from 361) and an increase of 7% (from 386) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year. This is the second lowest number of both youth defendants received and youth defendants disposed of during the January to March quarter since 2007.
- The average waiting time in the youth criminal court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks, compared to 10 weeks in the corresponding period last year.
- 1,223 new civil and family applications were received and 1,148 civil applications were disposed of. This represents an increase of 10% (from 1,111) and an increase of 6% (from 1,081) 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 10 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 second quarter of 2017 and will be published on 4th August 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.

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 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 January to March 2017 there were 1,052 scheduled Magistrates' sitting days, 29 additional Magistrates' sitting days and 53 special Magistrates' sitting days. This was an increase of 2% (from 1,032), an increase of 32% (from 22) and a decrease of 5% (from 56) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

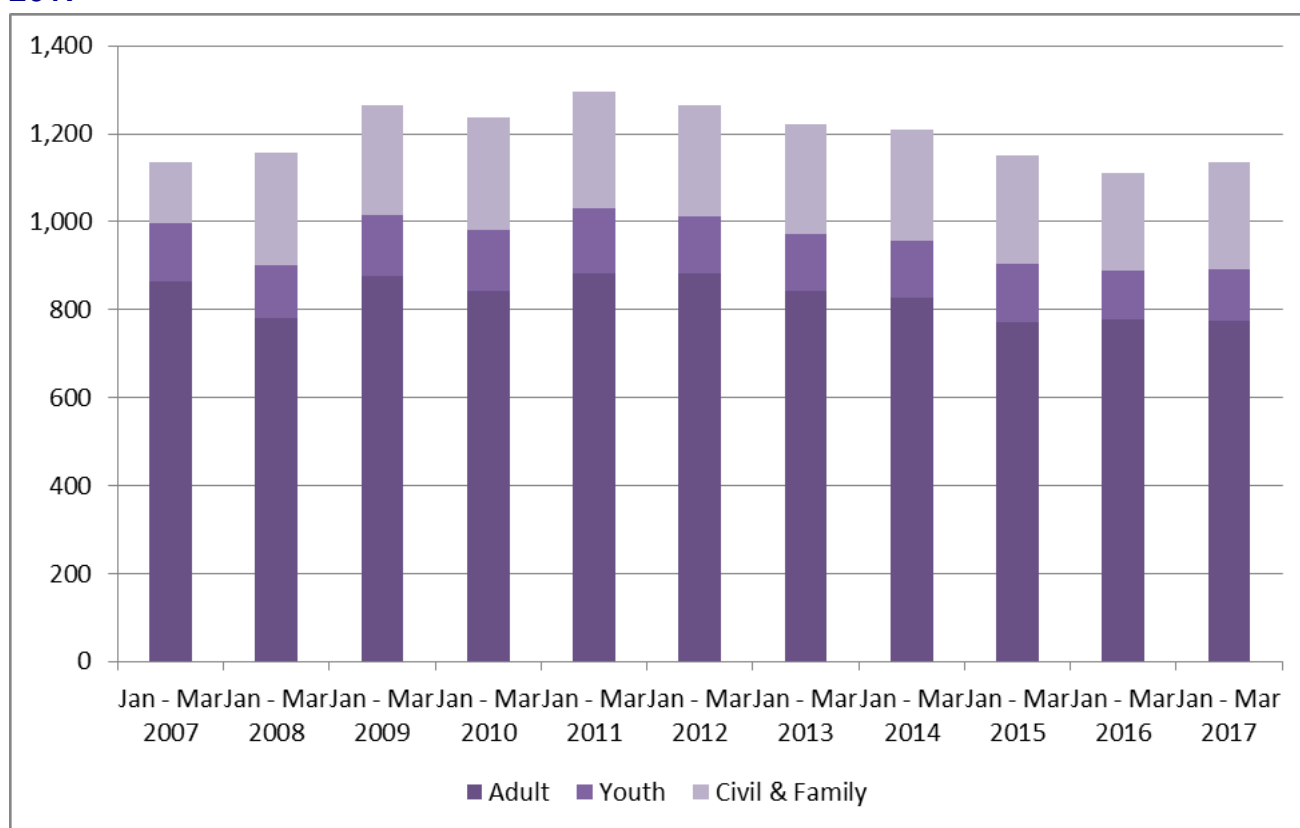
A breakdown of Magistrates' sitting days for January to March 2017 is outlined in the table below:

	Scheduled	Additional	Special	Total
Adult Criminal	701	21	53	775
Youth Criminal	115	3	0	118
Civil & Family	236	5	0	241
Total	1,052	29	53	1,134

Within these 1,134 sitting days, 68% were adult criminal days, 10% were youth criminal days and 21% were civil and family days.

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

Figure 1: Magistrates' court sitting days: January to March 2007 to January to March 2017



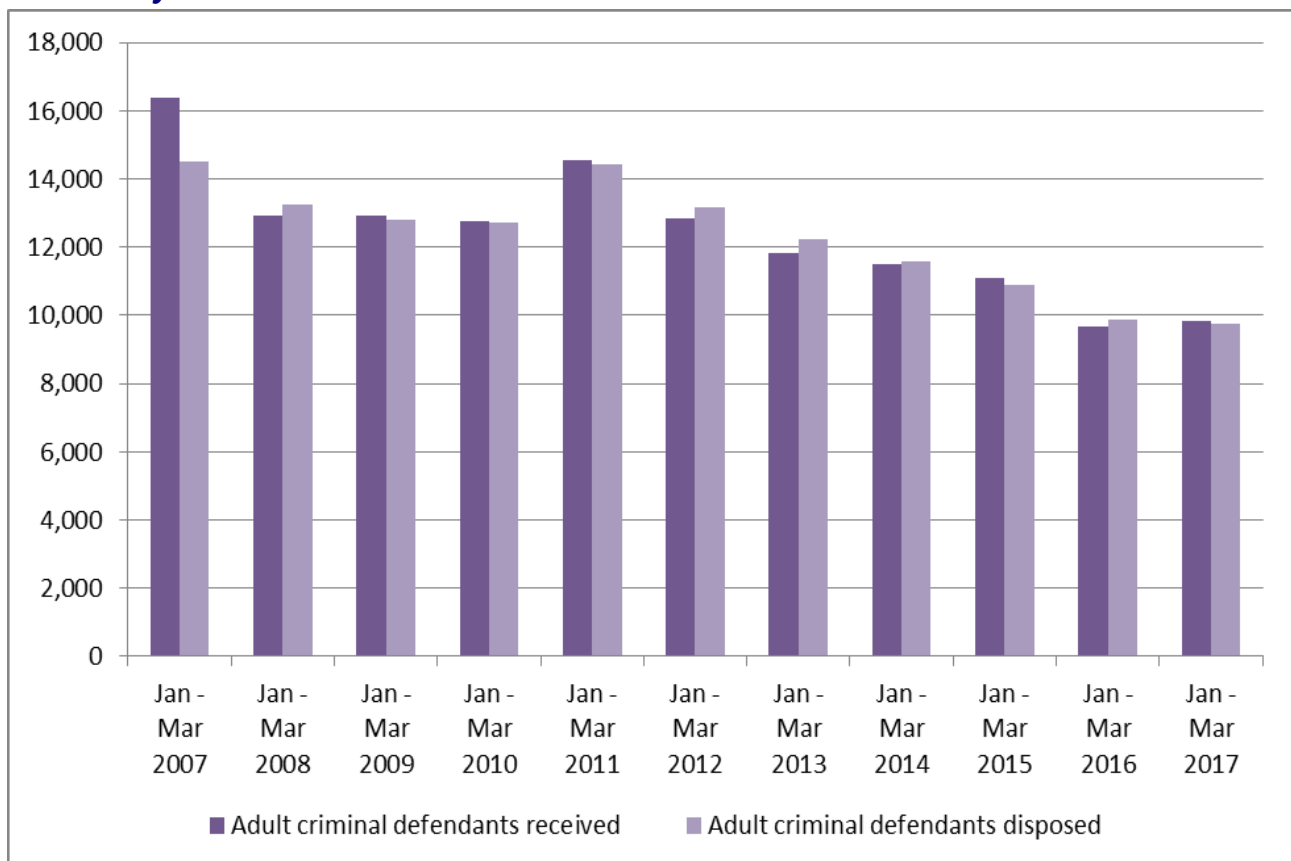
3.2 Adult criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2017, 9,819 new adult criminal defendants were received in court and 9,741 adult defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 1% (from 9,690) and a decrease of 1% (from 9,887) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The majority (78.5%) of prosecutions disposed of in the adult court were brought by PSNI/PPS (70.8% in the same period in 2016).

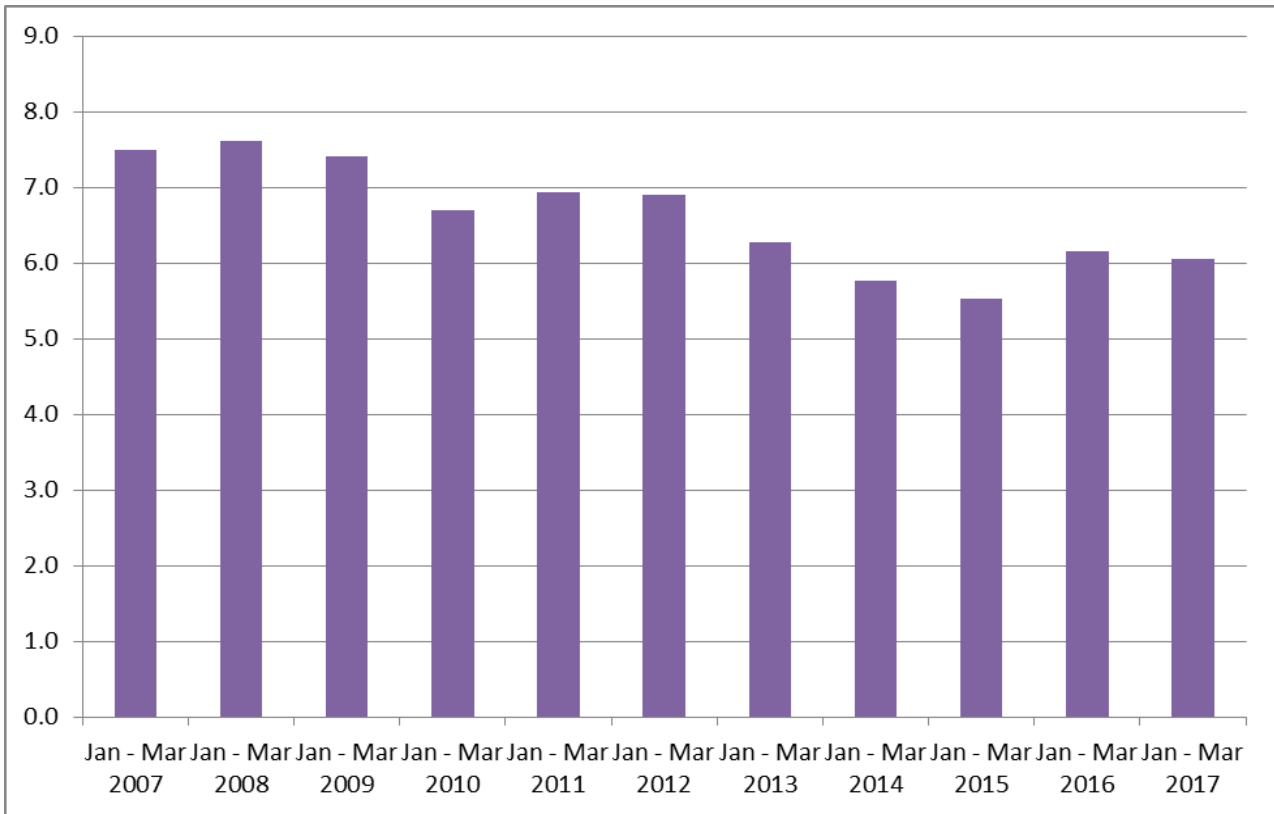
The volume of both adult criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter January to March over the last number of years, with levels of receipts reaching their second lowest level in January to March 2017 and disposals reaching their lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 3).

Figure 2: Adult criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2017



The average waiting time in the adult criminal court from first hearing to disposal has remained fairly stable in the January to March quarter over the past number of years (Figure 3). It was 6 weeks during January to March 2017, the same as the corresponding period in the previous year.

Figure 3: Average waiting times in weeks in adult Magistrates' courts (First hearing to disposal): January to March 2007 to January to March 2017



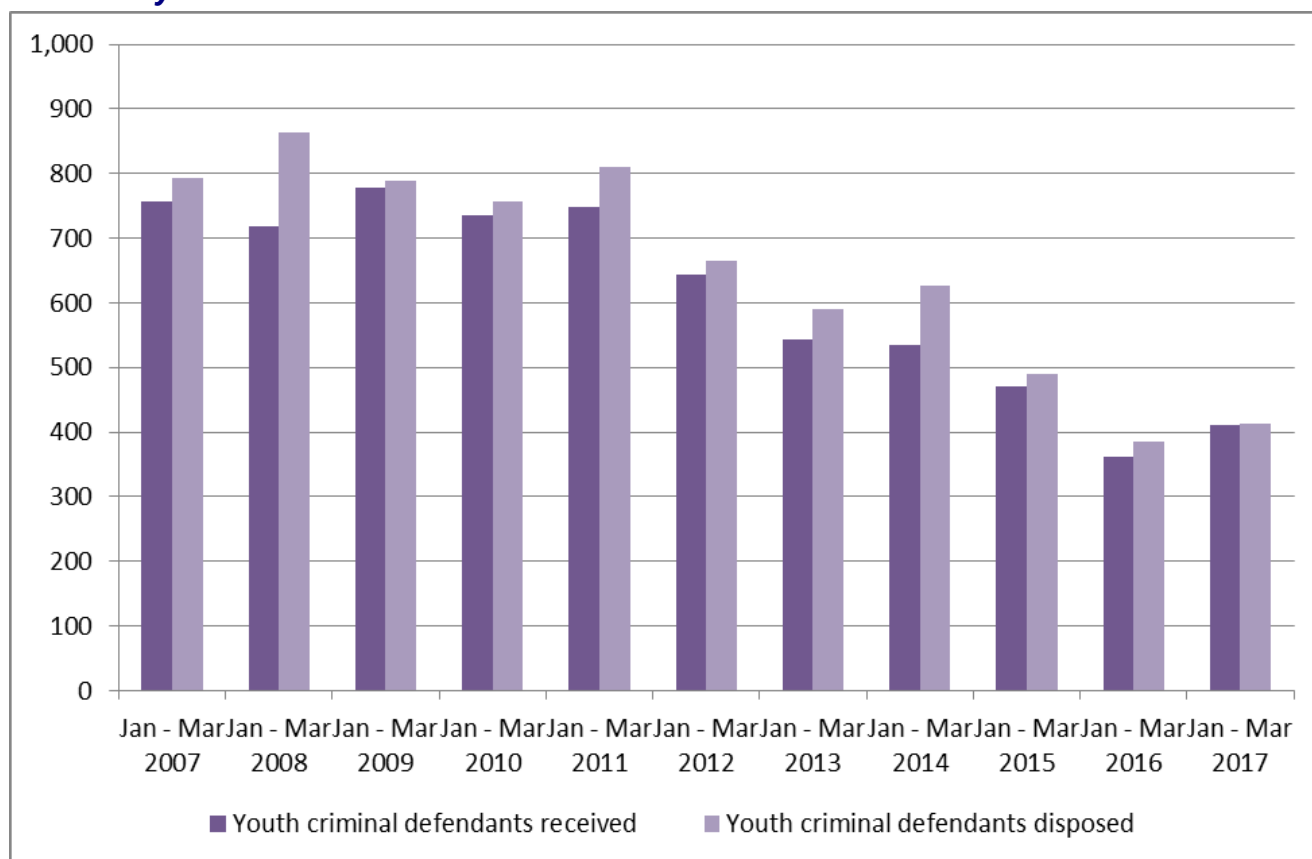
3.3 Youth criminal Magistrates' court

During January to March 2017, 411 new defendants were entered in the youth court and 414 youth defendants were disposed of. This represents an increase of 14% (from 361) and an increase of 7% (from 386) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

All prosecutions disposed of in the youth court were brought by PSNI/ PPS (compared to 98.2% in the same period in 2016).

The volume of both youth criminal defendants received and disposed has been generally decreasing in the quarter January to March over the last number of years, with levels at the lowest in 2016 since the beginning of the time series in 2007, and a slight rise in both receipts and disposals in 2017 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Youth criminal defendants received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2017



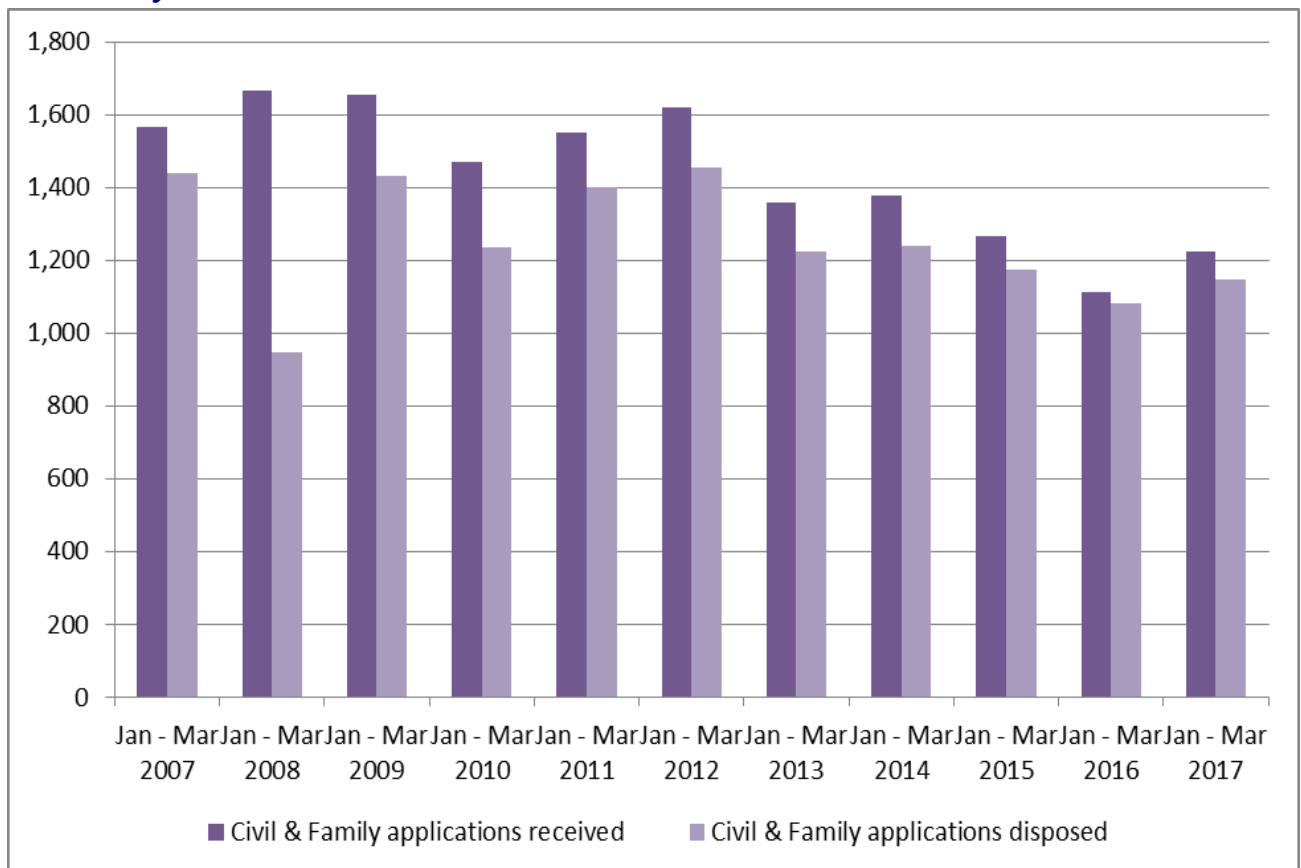
The average waiting time in the youth court from first hearing to disposal was 12 weeks (10 weeks for the same period in 2016).

3.4 Civil and Family Magistrates' court

During January to March 2017, 1,223 new civil and family applications were received and 1,148 civil and family applications were disposed of. This represents an increase of 10% (from 1,111) and an increase of 6% (from 1,081) respectively, compared to the same period the previous year.

The volume of both civil and family applications received and disposed has fluctuated during the quarter January to March between 2007 and 2017, with levels of receipts reaching their second lowest level in January to March 2017 and disposals reaching their third lowest level since the time series began in 2007 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Civil & family applications received and disposed: January to March 2007 to January to March 2017



The average length of time for a case to progress through the civil court was 9 weeks from date of receipt to disposal (10 weeks for the same period in 2016).

APPENDIX 1 - TABLES

Table 1.1 Scheduled court sitting days & average court sitting times in the Magistrates' courts by 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
Antrim	16	4:31:52	6	3:20:50	7	3:11:25
Ballymena	23	4:36:44	6	5:10:00	13	3:03:09
Laganside	220	3:06:19	37	3:16:32	75	3:43:08
Armagh	20	3:01:45	5	1:39:00	1	3:40:00
Banbridge@Newry	15	3:02:00	2	1:50:00	1	3:15:00
Limavady	13	2:29:36		.		.
Lisburn	36	4:23:45	5	2:03:00	15	3:39:40
Magherafelt	14	3:42:30	1	1:45:00	1	3:00:00
Dungannon	38	3:40:23	6	2:54:10	8	3:49:37
Downpatrick	25	4:09:36	6	1:39:10		.
Craigavon	32	5:05:37	5	3:41:00	21	3:16:25
Strabane	22	3:20:13	3	2:08:20		.
Omagh	23	3:38:02	5	0:53:00	10	3:07:30
Enniskillen	29	5:17:45	6	3:59:10		.
Coleraine	33	4:03:29	6	2:20:00	9	4:47:13
Londonderry	59	4:11:12	8	4:36:15	21	5:13:05
Newtownards	51	3:23:49	5	3:24:00	37	2:43:55
Newry	32	3:26:46	3	1:51:40	17	3:30:52
Total	701	3:41:51	115	3:02:40	236	3:36:04

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 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
Ballymena	2	3:27:30		.		.
Laganside	4	3:11:45		.		.
Armagh	2	3:35:00		.		.
Lisburn	2	0:47:30		.	1	1:45:00
Craigavon	2	3:22:30		.		.
Strabane		.	1	5:50:00		.
Coleraine	2	3:52:30		.		.
Londonderry	1	4:00:00		.	3	0:56:40
Newtownards	6	4:54:10	2	4:00:00		.
Newry		.		.	1	0:30:00
Total	21	3:38:11	3	4:36:40	5	1:01:00

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 venue¹

	Adult criminal day	
	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time
Ballymena	12	0:30:00
Lisburn	10	0:24:00
Omagh	5	0:49:00
Londonderry	10	0:43:06
Newtownards	8	0:30:00
Newry	8	0:27:30
Total	53	0:32:45

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 venue²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2562	720	9	11	3302
Newtownards Court Office	618	83	1	1	703
Downpatrick Court Office	288	45			333
Craigavon Court Office	536	109			645
Armagh Court Office	223	28		1	252
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	111	32			143
Omagh Court Office	174	62	1	1	238
Strabane Court Office	192	37			229
Antrim Court Office	214	87			301
Londonderry Court Office	598	165		2	765
Enniskillen Court Office	252	16	4	2	274
Coleraine Court Office	330	85		1	416
Newry Court Office	461	103			564
Limavady Court Office	116	29			145
Magherafelt Court Office	109	52			161
Ballymena Court Office	309	131			440
Lisburn Court Office	398	113	2	2	515
Dungannon Court Office	318	70	3	2	393
Total	7809	1967	20	23	9819

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 venue²

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Laganside Courts	2552	718	9	8	3287
Newtownards Court Office	559	104	2	2	667
Downpatrick Court Office	258	44			302
Craigavon Court Office	548	109			657
Armagh Court Office	190	35	1	1	227
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	129	30			159
Omagh Court Office	182	72	1		255
Strabane Court Office	159	39		1	199
Antrim Court Office	227	93			320
Londonderry Court Office	624	162			786
Enniskillen Court Office	260	39	4	1	304
Coleraine Court Office	299	92			391
Newry Court Office	436	89			525
Limavady Court Office	103	29			132
Magherafelt Court Office	111	51			162
Ballymena Court Office	307	154			461
Lisburn Court Office	387	111	2	2	502
Dungannon Court Office	318	81	3	3	405
Total	7649	2052	22	18	9741

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 venue³

	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	Finding to disposal (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)
Laganside Courts	4.93	5.24	.75	5.99
Newtownards Court Office	4.65	5.99	1.20	7.19
Downpatrick Court Office	4.76	5.56	.71	6.27
Craigavon Court Office	4.62	4.89	.69	5.58
Armagh Court Office	4.77	7.62	.71	8.32
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3.99	6.73	.43	7.16
Omagh Court Office	4.55	4.72	.42	5.14
Strabane Court Office	5.22	3.58	.48	4.06
Antrim Court Office	5.31	5.23	.56	5.79
Londonderry Court Office	4.49	4.68	1.14	5.82
Enniskillen Court Office	4.47	6.75	.81	7.56
Coleraine Court Office	4.79	5.39	.92	6.30
Newry Court Office	6.25	6.57	.10	6.67
Limavady Court Office	4.61	3.13	1.24	4.37
Magherafelt Court Office	5.68	4.73	.72	5.45
Ballymena Court Office	5.36	4.58	.57	5.14
Lisburn Court Office	4.27	5.39	.95	6.34
Dungannon Court Office	4.90	4.30	.92	5.21
Total	4.89	5.29	.77	6.06

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	685	14			699
All Sexual Offences	133			2	135
All Burglary Offences	58				58
All Robbery Offences	7				7
All Theft Offences	451	8		10	469
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	100	84			184
All Criminal Damage Offences	209			1	210
All Offences Against the State	245	1		5	251
All Other Offences	235	1236			1471
All Drug Offences	482				482
All Motoring Offences	3040	545	11		3596
All Non-Police Offences	12	72	11		95
All Breach	101	47			148
Combination of charges	1891	45			1936
Total	7649	2052	22	18	9741

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	353	10			363
Plea of guilty on all charges	3474	373			3847
All charges withdrawn	1332	600			1932
Fixed penalty default			22		22
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	2016	1030			3046
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	474	39			513
Penalty Notice for Disorder default				18	18
Total	7649	2052	22	18	9741

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 venue

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	111	111
Newtownards Court Office	67	67
Downpatrick Court Office	7	7
Craigavon Court Office	25	25
Armagh Court Office	6	6
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5	5
Omagh Court Office	7	7
Strabane Court Office	3	3
Antrim Court Office	27	27
Londonderry Court Office	35	35
Enniskillen Court Office	11	11
Coleraine Court Office	22	22
Newry Court Office	31	31
Limavady Court Office	5	5
Magherafelt Court Office	6	6
Ballymena Court Office	22	22
Lisburn Court Office	11	11
Dungannon Court Office	10	10
Total	411	411

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

	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Total
Laganside Courts	114	114
Newtownards Court Office	60	60
Downpatrick Court Office	5	5
Craigavon Court Office	21	21
Armagh Court Office	8	8
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4	4
Omagh Court Office	10	10
Strabane Court Office	9	9
Antrim Court Office	22	22
Londonderry Court Office	49	49
Enniskillen Court Office	14	14
Coleraine Court Office	17	17
Newry Court Office	28	28
Limavady Court Office	5	5
Magherafelt Court Office	4	4
Ballymena Court Office	21	21
Lisburn Court Office	7	7
Dungannon Court Office	16	16
Total	414	414

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	3.09	9.39	5.33	14.72
Newtownards Court Office	3.53	6.73	4.92	11.65
Downpatrick Court Office	.00	13.81	2.00	15.81
Craigavon Court Office	4.04	9.26	4.38	13.65
Armagh Court Office	3.02	9.88	4.88	14.76
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	4.18	11.39	2.64	14.04
Omagh Court Office	2.43	5.70	2.27	7.96
Strabane Court Office	3.16	14.40	5.62	20.02
Antrim Court Office	3.13	4.28	5.86	10.13
Londonderry Court Office	3.47	6.73	6.70	13.44
Enniskillen Court Office	3.39	8.09	5.36	13.44
Coleraine Court Office	3.65	2.75	2.68	5.43
Newry Court Office	5.44	1.03	1.10	2.13
Limavady Court Office	4.75	3.25	6.25	9.50
Magherafelt Court Office	2.67	6.00	1.76	7.76
Ballymena Court Office	6.04	5.23	3.47	8.70
Lisburn Court Office	3.73	6.24	2.78	9.02
Dungannon Court Office	2.77	7.06	3.06	10.13
Total	3.47	7.37	4.78	12.14

⁵ 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	Total
All Offences Against the Person	67	67
All Sexual Offences	5	5
All Burglary Offences	9	9
All Theft Offences	47	47
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	1	1
All Criminal Damage Offences	48	48
All Offences Against the State	20	20
All Other Offences	8	8
All Drug Offences	16	16
All Motoring Offences	40	40
Combination of charges	153	153
Total	414	414

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	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	10	10
Plea of guilty on all charges	207	207
All charges withdrawn	108	108
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	67	67
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	22	22
Total	414	414

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Laganside Courts	9	451	460
Newtownards Court Office	3	138	141
Downpatrick Court Office	3	43	46
Craigavon Court Office	3	37	40
Armagh Court Office	1	21	22
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	3	25	28
Omagh Court Office	7	23	30
Strabane Court Office		14	14
Antrim Court Office		17	17
Londonderry Court Office	2	74	76
Enniskillen Court Office	1	15	16
Coleraine Court Office		51	51
Newry Court Office	3	79	82
Limavady Court Office		4	4
Magherafelt Court Office		6	6
Ballymena Court Office	3	100	103
Lisburn Court Office	6	53	59
Dungannon Court Office	2	26	28
Total	46	1177	1223

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

	Current Business Area		Total
	Domestic Proceedings	Family Homes and Domestic Violence	
Laganside Courts	20	386	406
Newtownards Court Office	2	138	140
Downpatrick Court Office	2	39	41
Craigavon Court Office	2	40	42
Armagh Court Office	2	27	29
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	5	24	29
Omagh Court Office	2	20	22
Strabane Court Office		9	9
Antrim Court Office		24	24
Londonderry Court Office	2	69	71
Enniskillen Court Office	5	18	23
Coleraine Court Office	2	42	44
Newry Court Office	5	69	74
Limavady Court Office		3	3
Magherafelt Court Office		8	8
Ballymena Court Office	4	85	89
Lisburn Court Office	3	59	62
Dungannon Court Office	3	29	32
Total	59	1089	1148

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	1.60	6.84	8.44
Newtownards Court Office	1.56	7.16	8.72
Downpatrick Court Office	1.64	12.76	14.40
Craigavon Court Office	1.68	4.39	6.06
Armagh Court Office	2.59	12.32	14.91
Banbridge@Newry Court Office	1.61	7.60	9.21
Omagh Court Office	2.07	3.01	5.08
Strabane Court Office	.67	2.08	2.75
Antrim Court Office	2.13	13.90	16.04
Londonderry Court Office	1.76	4.38	6.15
Enniskillen Court Office	2.61	7.23	9.84
Coleraine Court Office	1.80	5.74	7.54
Newry Court Office	2.11	4.23	6.34
Limavady Court Office	.29	.00	.29
Magherafelt Court Office	2.68	5.88	8.55
Ballymena Court Office	1.08	5.68	6.76
Lisburn Court Office	.37	10.39	10.76
Dungannon Court Office	1.90	5.65	7.55
Total	1.61	6.88	8.50

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	619	150	166	125	2	1062
Occupation	4	3	8	2	1	18
Vary discharge non-mol occupation		6	2	1		9
Total	623	159	176	128	3	1089

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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