

Judicial Statistics



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Glossary of terms

Introduction

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an agency within the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland.

The NICTS carries out the court administrative functions previously undertaken by the Northern Ireland Court Service. The Court Service became part of the Department of Justice upon the devolution of policing and justice and its functions transferred to the Department (by virtue of the Northern Ireland Court Service (Abolition and Transfer of Functions) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010 made under section 78 of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002).

The principal functions of the NICTS are:

- Providing administrative support for Northern Ireland's courts and tribunals.
- Enforcing civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office.
- Providing support for the judiciary.
- Providing advice to the Minister for Justice on matters relating to the operation of the courts and tribunals and the Enforcement of Judgments Office.
- Providing, managing and maintaining court and tribunal buildings.
- Acting as the Central Authority under certain international Conventions.

This publication provides statistical information in relation to the criminal, civil and family business conducted by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) and the work of some associated offices.

The criminal, civil and family justice systems are impartial and the numbers that are processed through the courts and the corresponding time for processing this information are related to a number of factors. For instance, in relation to criminal cases this may include the seriousness of the offence, the availability of the witnesses and the complexity of individual cases.

For civil cases, this might include external factors such as the state of the economy in relation to mortgage cases received and disposed. The complexity of individual cases and the nature of individual claims may also be factors here.

The Court Structure in Northern Ireland

The Supreme Court

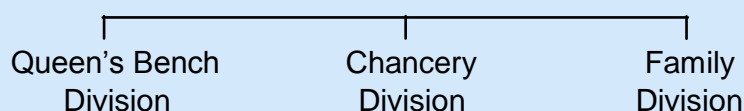
Final Court of Appeal on points of law for the United Kingdom in civil cases.
Final Court of Appeal on points of law for England, Wales and Northern Ireland in criminal cases.

The Court of Appeal

Deals with appeals in civil cases from the High Court and with appeals in criminal cases from the Crown Court. Hears appeals on points of law from the county courts and the magistrates' courts.

The High Court

Hears complex or important civil cases in three divisions and also appeals from county courts.



County Courts

(including family care centres)
Hear a wide range of civil actions and also appeals from magistrates' courts.

Small Claims Courts

Hear consumer claims and minor civil cases.

Coroners' Courts

Investigate the circumstances of sudden, violent or unnatural deaths.

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

Enforces money and other judgments.

The Crown Court

Hears all serious criminal cases.

Magistrates' Courts

(including youth courts and family proceedings courts) (21 petty sessions districts)

Conduct preliminary hearings in more serious criminal cases.

Hear and determine less serious criminal cases, cases involving youths and some civil and domestic cases, including family proceedings.

Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners

Hear appeals from unified Appeal Tribunals in matters arising from social security, child support, tax credits etc.

Users

Who will be interested in this publication?

The information presented in this publication will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are typically used by NICTS policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for Justice to discharge his duties; by the NI Assembly and Justice committee; by students conducting research into Justice issues; and by the media.

Users of Judicial Statistics

This publication is disseminated directly to approximately 30 users. In addition, it is also published on the NICTS' website and the Department's website and the UK Government Statistics Release Calendar (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements>). Users include policy colleagues in NICTS, academics, researchers, members of the public, the NI Assembly, other government departments and other interested parties and individuals.

The publication and further analysis of the data provide an evidence base that is used in a number of NICTS policies, strategies and reviews. Some of the most recent examples are:

- Consultation on review of Scale Costs and Recent Practice and Procedural changes in the County court
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposed-increase-court-fees>
- Consultation on proposals for the rationalisation of the court estate
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposals-rationalisation-court-estate>
- Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2016-2017
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-annual-reports-and-accounts>

In addition, NICTS data are used within other NI departments and their agencies. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- Department of Justice Digest of information on the NI Criminal Justice system
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/compendia-publications>
- Department for Communities – Northern Ireland Housing Statistics
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/housing-statistics>

Around 250 statistical enquiries per year are received by the NICTS from various sources. These include requests for further breakdowns by specific offence codes, specific legislation and court outcomes. In addition, approximately 100 Assembly Questions (either written or oral) and Freedom of Information requests relating to statistical data are received by the NICTS each year.

Levels of Reporting

Due to the extensive volume of information contained within this publication it has not been possible to provide comparisons across all case types, County Court Divisions and processing offices. At the beginning of each chapter a summary section detailing five year trend data at the Northern Ireland level has been included, along with key facts. Within the chapters a further breakdown by processing office for the (Crown Court, County Court, Magistrates and Children Order Chapters) has been provided.

On the 31st October 2016, a single County Court division called 'The County Court of Northern Ireland' replaced the seven existing County Court divisions. Relevant data contained in the publication were published by County Court division up until 2016. From 2017 onwards the data has been disaggregated by court office (processing office).

The principle users of this publication are internal business managers and court administrators. Both these users are primarily interested in the regional breakdowns by processing office of court business for the most recent calendar year. This information is used to assess volumes of court business at a regional level to assist in the decisions around staffing levels, prepare business cases for additional sitting days and inform the setting of operational targets.

Each chapter details the figures for 2017 and direct comparisons to 2016 have been outlined within the text. Detailed figures for 2016 can be accessed by following the link to the Judicial Statistics 2016 publication within the summary section of each chapter or by accessing the link below.

Judicial Statistics 2016:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

More information in relation to technical terms throughout the publication can be found within the Glossary section.

Databases

This section will cover how the databases are constructed from the data input stage through to the full validated datasets which are used to produce the figures contained within this publication. This section is split into the following subsections:

1. Data sources
2. Data downloads
3. Data validation
4. Quality assurance
5. Data extract
6. Accessibility
7. Comparability
8. Revisions
9. Other useful information

1. Data sources

This publication uses data which is primarily based on data input onto the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). This system was implemented across the NICTS over a two year period from 2005 to 2007.

In 2005, ICOS was introduced in the High Court and county court. As regular downloads of information were available from the new system, more detailed information across all court tiers was included in Judicial Statistics. The High Court and county court sections have been completed based on ICOS since 2005 and caution should be taken when comparing Judicial Statistics from publications prior to this.

During 2006, ICOS was introduced in the Crown Court and criminal magistrates' court. Caution should be taken when comparing figures prior to this.

During 2007, the civil and family module of ICOS was completed. This affected the information in the civil and family magistrates' court section and also in the Children Order section from publications prior to this.

For further advice on the differences between 2017 figures and previous years, please contact the statisticians responsible for this publication.

The ICOS system is a live operating system used in each court tier to process every part of the 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.

Other data are also used to compile the information presented in Section G: Miscellaneous in this publication. The Enforcement of Judgments Office use a specially designed system to capture all applications to enforce called the Judgment Enforcement Management System (JEMS). The information in this publication has been extracted from this system. Manual spreadsheets on Excel are used to record information that relate to the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland and the Social Security and Child Support Commissioners. These systems are suitable to extract the data for this publication. Like ICOS, the information is recorded on these databases on a daily basis. The

information is validated internally by staff in these offices who check that the system and databases hold the correct information. The statistics and research team within the NICTS check the data that are provided from these systems to ensure that they are robust. However, statisticians in NICTS do recognise that as the information is input manually there is the potential for errors to occur.

2. Data downloads

The statistics and research team receive a download of information on a monthly basis from the ICOS system. The information is downloaded using a web based platform called Sharepoint. This package 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 by the Analytical Services Group (ASG) statisticians in NICTS on a monthly basis, using a weekly rotation based on each court tier, as shown below.

| Week | Files Downloaded |
|------|--|
| 1 | Magistrates' court – civil and family business areas |
| 2 | Crown Court and Magistrates' court – criminal business areas |
| 3 | High Court – including Queens Bench, Bails, Chancery, Judicial Reviews, Matrimonial and Wardship & Adoption business areas. County Court – all business areas. |
| 4 | Magistrates' court – children order business area. Sittings – all court sittings information |

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. Names and addresses are not held. These statistical files are not transmitted outside the branch.

ASG import the data into a program called SPSS (Statistics Package for Social Sciences). SPSS is then used to perform extensive data validations to identify potential errors in the data and ensure the data are reliable and robust.

3. Data validation

ASG have invested a lot of time and effort into writing an extensive computer program within SPSS to validate the information downloaded from ICOS. The program includes over 100 checks against each business area.

- (i) checking consistency over time and between variables;
- (ii) reliability of data using logic checks;
- (iii) checking that variables fall within accepted ranges; and
- (iv) checking with the ICOS Support Team in the event of any major discrepancies that have occurred since the last download.

The validation program runs in unison with the download program, for example in week 1 the magistrates' civil and family information is downloaded and the corresponding validation checks

are run on the newly downloaded information. This pattern follows for all the court tiers and business areas.

The validation program is designed to produce user friendly tables highlighting the potential problems with data in the title of the table, and the case numbers of the records affected. A validation report is compiled for each court venue and circulated to the Case Progression Officer for amendment. 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 that all validations on ICOS and manual statistical 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;
- Promoting awareness of the impact error can have, its wide ranging consequences and 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 until all records are amended on ICOS. This ensures that the corrections are updated before the next download of files by the statistics and research team. After the files have been refreshed each weekend all the data is then downloaded again (in accordance with the schedule) and this new download will reflect the 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 the ICOS system.

ASG then ensure that all validations in relation to the reporting period are amended prior to publication. Once these amendments have been checked, computer syntax is then used to produce the tables in this publication.

4. Quality assurance

Once computed, the figures in the report are checked carefully prior to publication. The data are broken down by court location as this is the established way of producing and presenting these data. The table below indicates the quality of the data prior to the full years' validation schedule being completed, and then again after the final year figures have been produced. This has been based on the numbers of defendants / cases disposed during the period. As shown, the percentage changes in the figures remain consistently low across all major business areas, typically less than 1%.

| Court Tier | Business Area | Disposals (provisional data as published in quarterly bulletins) | Disposals (final year data) | % change |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|----------|
| High Court | Chancery | 961 | 956 | -0.5% |
| | Bankruptcy | 1534 | 1498 | -2.3% |
| | Companies | 538 | 538 | - |
| | Queen's Bench Writs | 2026 | 1970 | -2.8% |
| | Judicial Reviews | 430 | 421 | -2.1% |
| | Probate Grants | 6759 | 6758 | < -% |
| | Divorces | 768 | 768 | - |
| | Wardship & Adoption | 58 | 58 | - |
| | Bails | 1264 | 1241 | -1.8% |
| Crown Court | Cases Disposed | 1413 | 1408 | -0.4% |
| | Defendants Disposed | 1721 | 1708 | -0.8% |
| County | Appeals | 3188 | 3188 | - |
| | Civil Bills | 10128 | 9885 | -2.4% |
| | Ejectment | 801 | 797 | -0.5% |
| | Small Claims | 9609 | 9462 | -1.5% |
| | Divorces – Decrees Granted | 1291 | 1292 | < +0.1% |
| Magistrates | Adult Defendants Disposed | 38654 | 38649 | < +0.1% |
| | Youth Defendants Disposed | 1529 | 1532 | +0.2% |
| | Civil / Family Applications Disposed | 4561 | 4537 | -0.5% |
| Children Order | Applications Disposed | 4720 | 4702 | -0.4% |

5. Data extract

The statistics in this report are taken from the latest available data that are held on the NICTS systems as of 4 June 2018. ASG check all data that are to be published carefully in order to provide a high level of quality assurance in relation to the data. However, NICTS does acknowledge that some errors may occur due to the inputting of incorrect data on to the ICOS. Most of these errors are detected and corrected by the validations that are computed by the statistics and research team before publication. Nonetheless, there is scope for error to occur. There is also scope for error in relation to the report itself. The information here is manually typed and there is the possibility of transcription errors here.

6. Accessibility

In order that the information provided in this publication is accessible to all groups of people, it is available on the NICTS website in a number of formats – pdf, Excel and html. This publication also complies with the NICTS's Internet Accessibility policy. Requests for the information in different formats can be made by contacting the communicationsgroup@courtsni.gov.uk. A charge may apply for formats not routinely used and individuals will be made aware of any charges and asked to confirm their willingness to pay prior commencement of the work.

7. Comparability

The court structure of Northern Ireland does not equate to the court structures of England and Wales, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland, and therefore no comparisons have been made between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and Ireland.

Direct comparisons can be made for data across all court tiers over an eleven year period, as the ICOS roll out was complete by 2007, except for tables F.4, F.5 and F.6 within the Children Order section.

The recording of orders made within the Children Order courts have been reported at the participant level since 2007, and the introduction of ICOS. Children Order data in relation to orders made, is recorded on ICOS at the **application level**. The data is then extracted based on the **participants** selected on ICOS which indicate all relevant parties to whom the order applies.

Following an operational review of recording practices surrounding the selection of participants to whom orders apply in November 2013, a training program was implemented by operational colleagues. This training was delivered in early 2014 to ensure all relevant participants were being consistently applied on ICOS. This has had a knock-on effect on the numbers of own motion, interim and final orders being reported within the Children Order courts, with figures showing large increases since 2014.

Following a National Statistics consultation with users (for more information click on the following link: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research> a change in the reporting of the orders being made within the Children Order courts from the participant level to the application level from 2016 onwards has been introduced, (and final year figures for 2015 and 2016 have prepared using this new methodology) to overcome issues surrounding the inconsistent recording of participants to whom the orders apply and provide more user friendly data in terms of relating the orders made to the applications being received and disposed. Application level data counts distinct orders made during the court process. This new methodology has been introduced to cover own motion, interim and final orders and will affect the numbers reported in Tables F.4, F.5 and F.6 in this publication.

The numbers of orders made will not be comparable with those published in Judicial Statistics in previous years. To assist with comparisons over time, a back series of orders data from April 2007 to the end of 2015 are available on the Court and Tribunals website at the following link: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Before September 2009 all the courthouses opened from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday each week (excluding public holidays). In September 2009 5 of the 23 courthouses became "Hearing Centres" because they were not fully utilised when the courts weren't sitting and NICTS needed to make better use of their courthouses and staff.

These courthouses were Bangor, Larne, Limavady, Magherafelt and Strabane. They were only open on the day that court hearings take place, and the rest of the time they remain closed.

When the Hearing Centres were opened they offered all of the usual services. However, when the Hearing Centres closed people had to access these services:-

- At other courthouses
- On the telephone
- Over the internet

The NICTS financial situation is different from what it was in 2009. They are now being asked to operate within tighter financial limits but are still required to provide the same range and standard of services.

In March 2013 two of these hearing centres were closed permanently – Larne and Bangor and the court business for these two venues was moved to Ballymena and Newtownards respectively. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing figures for 2016 with preceding years for Larne and Bangor court houses. For more information on the consultation exercise under taken, please use the link below:

Consultation on proposals to close Hearing Centres

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/proposals-rationalisation-court-estate>

8. Revisions

Any revisions to data will be applied in light of the NICTS Statistical Notice ‘Policy Statement on Revisions’. Incorrect figures or changes to this publication will be published on the web in a formal Statistical Notice. For further information, please see the following web link:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-statistics-and-research-useful-documents>

9. Other Useful Information

The court structure of Northern Ireland does not equate to the court structures of England and Wales, Scotland or the Republic of Ireland.

Further information on judicial and court statistics for England and Wales can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics?keywords=&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=ministry-of-justice&from_date=&to_date=

Further information on crime and justice statistics in Scotland can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

Information on court statistics from the Republic of Ireland can be found at:

<http://www.courts.ie/courts.ie/library3.nsf/PageCurrentWebLookUpTopNav/STATISTICS?opendocument&l=en>

The following web links contain details of information that relates to other criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland:

Department of Justice (Northern Ireland)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/statisticalreports>

Police Service of Northern Ireland

<https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/>

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/statistics--research-5021.html>

Youth Justice Agency

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/youth-justice>

Northern Ireland Prison Service

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/prisons/prison-statistics-and-reports>

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

<https://www.pbni.org.uk/about-us/statistics-research/>

Key Highlights

High Court

- Between 2013 and 2017 the number of chancery cases received decreased by 64%, peaking in 2013 with 4,023 cases received. There was a decrease of 55% in the number of chancery cases received between 2014 and 2017. These figures reflect a decrease of 60% in applications received in relation to mortgages between 2014 and 2017, from 2,910 to 1,155. (Mortgage applications made up 80% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2017). UKFinance.org. have also reported that the number of mortgages in arrears continues to fall.
- Queen's Bench writs received have decreased each year between 2013 and 2015 before increasing slightly in 2016, followed by an increase of 13% in 2017. Between 2013 and 2017 there was an overall decrease of 23%. This decrease may be partly due to the increase in the financial limit within the County Court during 2013. In 2013 approximately 1,800 ordinary civil bills were received into the County Court for an amount over £15,000 with an equivalent figure of 2,976 in 2014, 2,689 in 2015, 2,390 in 2016 and 2,340 in 2017. These cases would previously have been received as Queen's Bench Writs. There was a 54% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2013 and 2017. However, caution should be taken when comparing between years as various manual exercises were carried out to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.

Crown Court

- Figure C.1 outlines the number of Crown Court defendants committed and disposed of during the last 5 years. The trend in the number of defendants committed between 2013 and 2017 has generally decreased, with an overall decrease of 36%. The fall in defendants committed over the last five years indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of defendants committing more serious offences, which as a result must be tried in the Crown Court. As indicated in table E.3, indictable charges in the Magistrates' Court have decreased by 43% between 2013 and 2017 (from 4,003 to 2,279).
- There was a decrease of 46% in the number of defendants disposed between 2013 and 2015. In late 2012 an extra County Court Judge was introduced into Belfast Crown Court division to tackle outstanding legacy cases. As a result the numbers of defendants being disposed overtook the numbers being received in 2013 and 2014. However, in 2015 this trend reversed, with a 36% drop in disposals and 450 more defendants received than disposed. The introduction of new rules in May 2015 in relation to legal aid remuneration resulted in a number of solicitors and counsel withdrawing their representation from a range of court cases. This has affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and has had an impact on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process. In 2016 this trend reversed again as the dispute ended and cases began to progress through the system, and in 2017 the disposals decreased again, by 16% as the majority of the backlog had been cleared.

County Court

- Ordinary civil bill cases received fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 4%. Caution must be taken when interpreting this data as the financial limit in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013. As a result, claims for amounts over £15,000 and up to £30,000 are now received into the County Court as a civil bill, were they would previously have been entered into the High Court as a Queen's Bench Writ. These claims amounted to approximately 2,976 cases in 2014, approximately 2,689 cases in 2015, approximately 2,390 cases in 2016 and approximately 2,340 cases in 2017. Civil bills disposed increased each year between 2013 and 2017, apart from a small dip in 2016. There was an overall increase of 18% between 2013 and 2017.

- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. Between 2013 and 2017 both the receipts and disposals declined with decreases of 31% and 43% respectively. The increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the changing economic conditions experienced during the period.

Magistrates' Court

- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received have decreased by 13% and 32% respectively between 2013 and 2017 with increases of 1% and 6% being observed respectively between 2016 and 2017. The decreases since 2013 are partly a result of the introduction of Penalty Notices of Disorder which were introduced on 6th June 2012. These are new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The number of defendants received is also affected by crime rates, police arrests and the decision by the PPS to prosecute.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in both the Adult and Youth courts increased by 6% and 8% respectively between 2013 and 2017. Whilst disposals have decreased by 16% and 32% for Adult and Youth defendants disposed, respectively.

The Children Order

- Applications lodged decreased each year between 2013 and 2015 before increasing by 2% between 2015 and 2016, and a further 2% between 2016 and 2017. Applications lodged decreased by 6% overall between 2013 and 2017.
- Applications disposed generally decreased between 2013 and 2017 apart from a spike in 2014, with an overall decrease of 12%.
- The number of children involved also generally decreased between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 9% between 2013 and 2017.

Part A: Court Of Appeal

The Court of Appeal normally sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. The judges of the Court of Appeal are the Lord Chief Justice (who is the President) and three Lord Justices of Appeal. The Court of Appeal hears appeals in criminal matters from the Crown Court and in civil matters from the High Court. It also hears appeals on points of law from the County Courts, Magistrates' Courts and certain Tribunals. A Court of Appeal case will usually be heard by three judges but can be heard by two. Incidental matters may be heard by one Court of Appeal judge.

Key Facts

- Criminal Appeals received have fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, peaking at 117 in 2013. Between 2013 and 2016 there was a 21% decrease in Criminal Appeal receipts, followed by an increase of 15% in 2017.
- Criminal Appeals disposed increased by 37% between 2013 and 2017, peaking at 122 in 2017.
- Civil Appeals received have fluctuated over the period with an overall decrease of 2% between 2013 and 2017. Civil Appeals disposed fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, and decreased by 16% between 2013 and 2017.
- Civil Appeal Court sitting days have remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2017, before peaking in 2016 with 134 sitting days. Between 2016 and 2017 the number of civil appeals sitting days decreased by 4%, from 134 to 129 days. Criminal Appeal Court sitting days have fluctuated during the period, with an overall decrease of 16%. The highest number of Criminal Appeal Court sitting days occurred in 2015.

Summary Table 1: Court of Appeal 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Criminal Appeals Received | 117 | 99 | 93 | 93 | 107 |
| Criminal Appeals Disposed | 89 | 96 | 109 | 91 | 122 |
| Civil Appeals Received | 92 | 87 | 99 | 75 | 90 |
| Civil Appeals Disposed | 81 | 97 | 70 | 92 | 68 |
| Criminal Appeal Court Sitting Days | 77 | 85 | 91 | 80 | 65 |
| Civil Appeal Court Sitting Days | 104 | 111 | 102 | 134 | 129 |

Section 1: Criminal appeals

There were 107 criminal appeals lodged during 2017, this was a 15% increase when compared to 2016 when 93 criminal appeals were lodged (Table A.1).

Table A.1: Criminal appeals lodged and disposed of in 2017

| | Lodged | Disposed of |
|--|--------|-------------|
| | 107 | 122 |

In 2017, there were 74 appeals lodged against sentence only, 22 were against conviction, 11 were against both conviction and sentence and there were no appeals lodged pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) order 2004. This compares with 63 appeals lodged against sentence only, 27 against conviction, 3 against both conviction and sentence, and no appeals lodged pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) order 2004, in 2016. Of the 107 appeals lodged during 2017, 6 resulted from trials dealing with scheduled offences (Table A.2)

Table A.2: Types of criminal appeals lodged in 2017

| | Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004 | Appeal against | | | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------|------------|-------------------------|-------|
| | | Sentence | Conviction | Conviction and sentence | |
| Scheduled ^[1] | - | - | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Non-Scheduled | - | 74 | 19 | 8 | 101 |
| Total | - | 74 | 22 | 11 | 107 |

^[1] Please note a manual exercise was completed during 2017 which resulted in a number of appeals for offences prosecuted prior to 2006 being re-assigned as scheduled cases. Appeals on historic cases will be assessed at appeal entry stage going forward, to indicate if the original case was scheduled.

There were 34 successful appeals (where either the conviction was quashed or the sentence was varied) in 2017 with no appeals refused, and 36 appeals abandoned/ withdrawn/ stayed (Table A.3). In comparison, there were 33 successful appeals in 2016, with no appeals refused and 16 appeals abandoned or withdrawn.

Table A.3: Results of criminal appeals by type in 2017

| | Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004 | Conviction only or conviction & sentence | | Sentence only | | Total |
|---|---|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------|
| | | Scheduled | Non-Scheduled | Scheduled | Non-Scheduled | |
| Conviction Quashed | - | - | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Appeal Dismissed – Sentence Affirmed | - | 4 | 21 | 1 | 26 | 52 |
| Sentence Varied | - | - | 3 | - | 28 | 31 |
| Withdrawn/ Abandoned/ Stayed | - | 16 | 5 | - | 15 | 36 |
| Refused | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | - | 20 | 32 | 1 | 69 | 122 |

^[1] Please note a manual exercise was completed during 2017 which resulted in a number of appeals for offences prosecuted prior to 2006 being re-assigned as scheduled cases. Appeals on historic cases will be assessed at appeal entry stage going forward, to indicate if the original case was scheduled.

Section 2: Civil appeals

There were 90 civil appeals received in 2017, 15 more than the 2016 total of 75. As in previous years, the main source of civil appeals was the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court with 55 cases received. A total of 68 appeals were disposed of during the year (Table A.4) which compares with the 92 appeals disposed of in 2016.

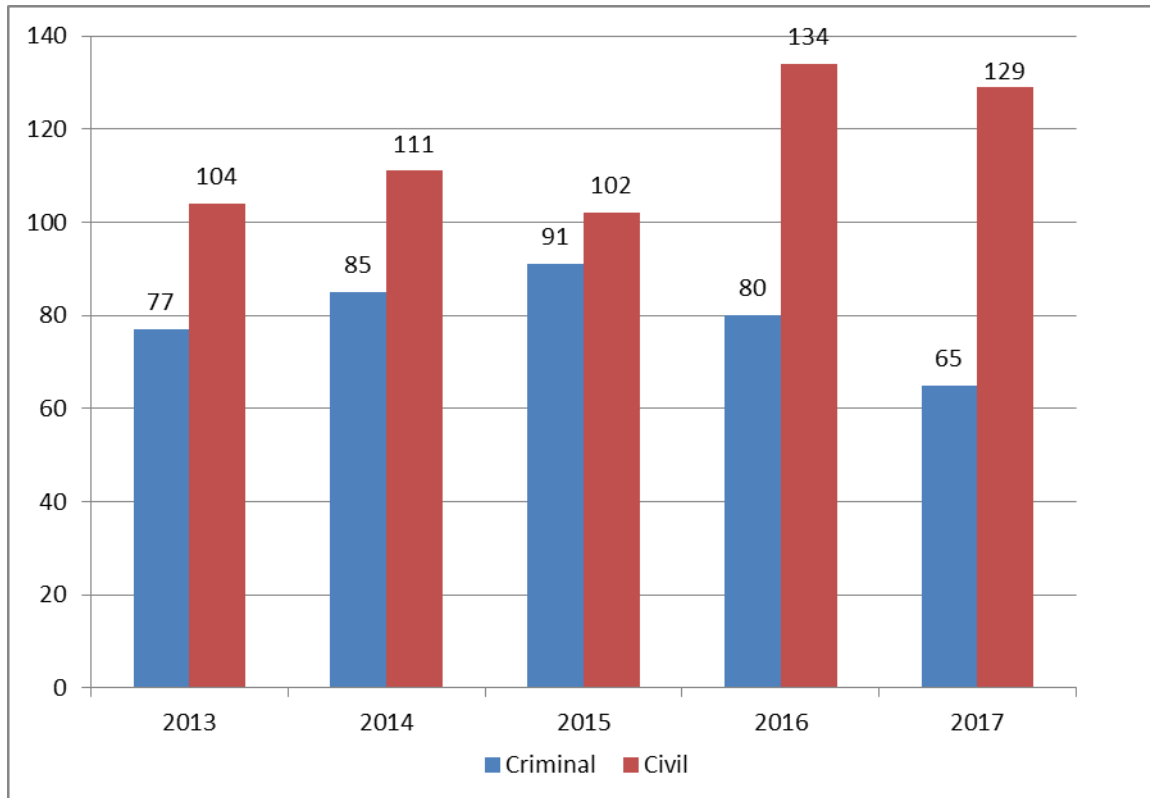
Table A.4: Appeals received and disposed of by origin and type in 2017

| | Received | Disposed |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Chancery Division: Final | 9 | 8 |
| Chancery Division: Interlocutory | 1 | 1 |
| Family Division: Final | 5 | 4 |
| Family Division: Interlocutory | - | - |
| Queen's Bench Division: | | |
| Judicial Review: Final | 30 | 22 |
| Judicial Review: Interlocutory | 2 | 2 |
| Commercial: Final | 4 | 1 |
| Commercial: Interlocutory | - | - |
| Other: Final | 19 | 18 |
| Other: Damages | - | - |
| Other: Interlocutory | - | - |
| Magistrates' court (Section 44 of Judicature Act) | - | - |
| Court of Appeal Cross Appeal | - | - |
| Case Stated | | |
| Court of Appeal (Appeal or Case Stated) | 9 | 8 |
| Requisition to Judge to State a Case | - | - |
| By Outside Body | - | - |
| By Lands Tribunal | - | - |
| By High Court Judge | 6 | 2 |
| By County Court Judge | 1 | 1 |
| By District Judge | 1 | - |
| By District Judge (Magistrates' Court) | 2 | - |
| Determination of pensions: Pension appeal | - | - |
| Immigration Tribunal | - | - |
| Motions on Notice | 1 | 1 |
| Proceeds of crime | - | - |
| Master (EJO) | - | - |
| Other | - | - |
| Total | 90 | 68 |

Section 3: Court sitting times

The number of court sitting days spent on criminal appeals (by majority type of work) decreased from 80 days in 2016 to 65 days in 2017. A total of 129 hours were spent in court hearing criminal appeals in 2017 compared with 133 court hours in 2016. There were 129 court sitting days (by majority type of work) spent on civil appeals during 2017, compared with 134 in 2016. A total of 198 hours were spent in court hearing civil appeals in 2017 compared with 237 court hours during 2016 (Figure A.1 & Table B.42).

Figure A.1: Number of court sitting days (majority days) in the Court of Appeal from 2013 to 2017



Part B: The High Court

The High Court sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. It consists of the Lord Chief Justice (who is the President of the High Court), and three Lords Justices of Appeal along with ten High Court Judges. The High Court hears high value and complex civil cases and deals with civil cases, hears appeals in criminal cases, and also has the power to review the actions of individuals or organisations to make sure they have acted legally and justly. The High Court comprises three Divisions: the Chancery Division, Queen's Bench Division and Family Division.

This section is separated into 4 Sections:

Section 1: Chancery Division

- 1.1 Key Facts
- 1.2 Chancery Division - 2017 Data

Section 2: The Queen's Bench Division

- 2.1 Key Facts
- 2.2 Queens' Bench Division - 2017 Data

Section 3: Family Division

- 3.1 Key Facts
- 3.2 Family Division - 2017 Data

Section 4: Sitting Days

- 4.1 Key Facts
- 4.2 Sitting Days - 2017 Data

Section 1: The Chancery Division

The Chancery Division deals with four main areas of business: Chancery, Bankruptcy, Companies and Probate.

Chancery Office

The main area of business in the Chancery office relates to disputes involving land and property. These include disputes between vendors, purchasers, landlords and tenants; mortgage repossession actions; trespass; right of way; construction of a lease; and squatters. Most actions begin with the issue of a claim or originating proceedings by the claimant against the defendant. The Chancery section also deals with disputes involving copyright; partnerships; patents; execution of trusts; charities; inheritance; and the administration of estates.

People can get into housing debt for a variety of reasons:

- Change in circumstances like job loss, reduction in working hours, sickness or relationship breakdown
- Accessing high cost credit / mortgages from non-traditional lenders and securing it on their homes
- Over borrowing during the property boom

The NICTS produced guidelines for lenders known as Pre-Action Protocols for Mortgage Possession Proceedings. They have been in operation since October 2009 and were revised in August 2011. The Protocols ensure that possession action against homeowners is taken only as a last possible resort <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/information-repossession>

Bankruptcy Office

The Bankruptcy Office deals with all matters relating to insolvency. These include applications to set aside statutory demands; petitions (by creditors and debtors) and voluntary arrangements.

If you cannot repay the debts that you owe, you may be made bankrupt. The most common situations in which you can be made bankrupt are at the request of someone to whom you owe money (a creditors petition) and at your own request (a debtor's petition).

Companies Office

The Companies Office deals with all matters relating to the Companies Order including winding up petitions; insolvent partnerships; and disqualification of directors.

If the Court makes an order to wind up a company it means that the company has gone into compulsory liquidation. The court will then appoint an Official Receiver (OR) to act as liquidator for the company.

Probate Office

The principal business assigned to the Probate Office includes Contentious and Non-contentious Probate applications, leading to the issue of a Grant of Representation in the estate of the deceased person, to facilitate the gathering in and distribution of the assets of the deceased's estate. Probate applications are processed through two registry locations –

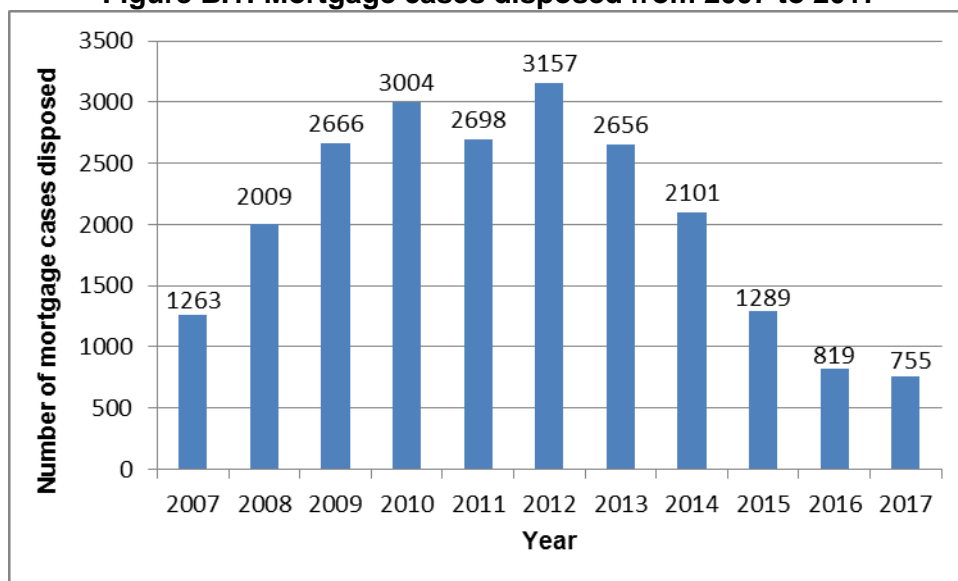
- The Principal Registry in Belfast (located in the Royal Courts of Justice)
- The District Registry in Londonderry (located in Londonderry Courthouse)

Since 30 September 2015 the Principal Registry in Belfast manages all probate applications in Northern Ireland, however pending applications lodged prior to this date continue to be managed by the District Registry in Londonderry.

1.1 Key Facts

- Between 2013 and 2017 the number of chancery cases received decreased year on year, with a 64% decrease overall. There was a decrease of 55% in the number of chancery cases received between 2014 and 2017. These figures reflect a decrease of 60% in applications received in relation to mortgages from 2,910 in 2014 to 1,155 in 2017. (Mortgage applications made up 80% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2017). UK Finance.org has also reported that the number of mortgages in arrears continues to fall. <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UKF-Mortgage-Arrears-Possessions-Update-08-February-2018.pdf>
- The graph below indicates the trend for the last 11 years of Mortgage cases disposed in the High Court. There has been a general upward trend from 2007 to 2012, with a dip in 2011. From 2012 to 2017, there was a 76% decrease in mortgage cases disposed. There were sharp increases each year between 2007 and 2010 as the decline in the wider economic climate continued, before peaking in 2012.
- The 8% decline in the number of mortgage cases disposed between 2016 and 2017 is in keeping with the declining figures published by UK Finance.org. <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/UKF-Mortgage-Arrears-Possessions-Update-08-February-2018.pdf>

Figure B.1: Mortgage cases disposed from 2007 to 2017



- There has been a downward trend in the number of bankruptcy cases received between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 30%.
- There has been a similar trend in Bankruptcy cases disposed with disposals decreasing each year between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 28% over the period. Figures published by the Insolvency Service show that individual bankruptcies in Northern Ireland have decreased by 19% between 2016 and 2017. This is consistent with the 15% decrease in Bankruptcy disposals in 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/insolvency-statistics-january-to-march-2018>

- The number of companies cases received fluctuated between 2013 and 2017 with an overall decrease of 13%. There was a 12% increase between 2015 and 2016, followed by a 22% decrease in 2017. The number of companies cases disposed also fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 5%. There was a 10% increase between 2015 and 2016.
- Probate grants received have fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, with an overall increase of 3%.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 2: Chancery Division cases received 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Chancery | 4,023 | 3,189 | 1,548 | 1,376 | 1,439 |
| Bankruptcy | 2,139 | 2,266 | 1,779 | 1,755 | 1,506 |
| Companies | 586 | 573 | 589 | 659 | 510 |
| Probate grants | 6,569 | 6,054 | 6,550 | 6,688 | 6,758 |

Summary Table 3: Chancery Division cases disposed 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Chancery | 2,889 | 2,307 | 1,510 | 1,048 | 956 |
| Bankruptcy | 2,072 | 2,043 | 1,843 | 1,755 | 1,498 |
| Companies | 566 | 564 | 568 | 622 | 538 |

1.2 Chancery Division - 2017 Data

Table B.1 shows that during 2017, a total of 1,439 Chancery cases were received. This was an increase of 5% from 1,376 in 2016. Mortgage suits accounted for the majority (80%) of cases received in 2017. The number of mortgages received has increased by 5% during 2017 (1,105 in 2016 compared with 1,155 in 2017).

Table B.1: Chancery cases and applications received in 2017

| | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|------|
| | | |
| Cases | Mortgages | 1155 |
| | Other land and property | 48 |
| | Trade and business | 2 |
| | Trusts | 1 |
| | Other | 233 |
| | Total | 1439 |
| Applications | Notice of appointment | 1109 |
| | Summons | 576 |
| | Notice of motion | 52 |
| | Exparte application | 159 |
| | Injunction | 14 |
| | Other | - |
| | Transfer to Commercial List | 1 |
| | Total | 1911 |

There were 1,750 cases and applications disposed of in 2017 compared with 1,869 in 2016, representing a 6% decrease. Mortgages accounted for the majority of disposals with 755 cases disposed of (Table B.2).

Table B.2: Chancery cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | High Court Judge | Master | Office disposal | Total |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Cases | Mortgages | 7 | 746 | 2 | 755 |
| | Other land and property | 19 | 2 | 4 | 25 |
| | Trade and business | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | Trusts | 1 | - | 1 | 2 |
| | Other | 110 | 39 | 22 | 171 |
| | Total | 138 | 788 | 30 | 956 |
| Applications | Notice of appointment | 1 | 156 | - | 157 |
| | Summons | 49 | 412 | 1 | 462 |
| | Notice of motion | 17 | 8 | - | 25 |
| | Ex-parte application | 3 | 143 | - | 146 |
| | Injunction | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| | Transfer to Commercial List | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Other | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 73 | 720 | 1 | 794 |

Bankruptcy

There were 2,268 bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2017 compared with 2,654 in 2016 – a decrease of 15%. In 2017 these included 1,295 bankruptcy petitions, 74% of which were creditor petitions (petition by another person). Figures for 2016 revealed that there were 1,474 bankruptcy petitions, of which 69% were creditor petitions. In 2017, other bankruptcy proceedings included 142 originating applications and 683 ordinary applications (Table B.3). Corresponding figures were 178 and 806 respectively in 2016.

Table B.3: Bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2017

| | | |
|---------------------|---|------|
| | | |
| Cases | Petition by another person | 953 |
| | Petition by debtor | 292 |
| | Other petition | 50 |
| | Originating application | 142 |
| | Other | 69 |
| | Total | 1506 |
| Applications | Petition by debtor | 1 |
| | Notice of motion | 8 |
| | Ordinary application | 683 |
| | Certificate of automatic discharge | 54 |
| | Other | 16 |
| | Total | 762 |

The Master dealt with a total of 2,104 bankruptcy cases and applications in 2017 compared with 2,460 the previous year, a decrease of 14%. The main area of work disposed of by the Master was bankruptcy petitions, a total of 1,225 in 2017 (Table B.4). This was a 17% decrease on the 1,484 bankruptcy petitions disposed of by the Master in 2016.

Table B.4: Bankruptcy cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | High Court Judge | Master | Office disposal | Total |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Cases | Petition by another person | 1 | 878 | 53 | 932 |
| | Petition by debtor | - | 292 | 4 | 296 |
| | Other petition | - | 55 | - | 55 |
| | Originating application | 2 | 131 | - | 133 |
| | Other | - | 82 | - | 82 |
| | Total | 3 | 1438 | 57 | 1498 |
| Applications | Notice of motion | - | 6 | - | 6 |
| | Ordinary application | - | 638 | 1 | 639 |
| | Certificate of automatic discharge | - | 15 | 36 | 51 |
| | Other | - | 7 | - | 7 |
| | Total | - | 666 | 37 | 703 |

Companies

Table B.5 and B.6 show the companies cases and applications received and disposed of in 2017. There were 607 companies cases and applications received and 604 disposed of. This represented a 17% decrease for cases and applications received (734) and a 12% decrease for cases and applications disposed of (683) in 2016.

Table B.5: Companies cases and applications received in 2017

| Cases | Winding up petition | 304 |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----|
| | Other petitions | 28 |
| | Originating summons | 24 |
| | Other | 154 |
| | Total | 510 |
| Applications | Notice of motion | 5 |
| | Ordinary application | 87 |
| | Other | 5 |
| | Total | 97 |

Table B.6: Companies cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | High Court Judge | Master | Office disposal | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Cases | Winding up petition | 2 | 338 | - | 340 |
| | Other petitions | 7 | 25 | - | 32 |
| | Originating summons | - | 19 | - | 19 |
| | Other | 9 | 137 | 1 | 147 |
| | Total | 18 | 519 | 1 | 538 |
| Applications | Notice of motion | 1 | 3 | - | 4 |
| | Ordinary application | 4 | 52 | - | 56 |
| | Other | 4 | 2 | - | 6 |
| | Total | 9 | 57 | - | 66 |

Table B.7 shows the average time intervals in weeks for cases and applications in the Chancery Division for the three business areas. A chancery case took on average 56 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2017, seven weeks less than in 2016 (63). It took 16 weeks on average for a bankruptcy case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2017, two weeks more than 2016 (14), and 14 weeks for a companies case (15 weeks in 2016).

Table B.7: Average time intervals in weeks for business in the Chancery Division in 2017

| | Chancery | | Bankruptcy | | Companies | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | Cases | Applications | Cases | Applications | Cases | Applications |
| Issue to first listing | 44 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 5 |
| First listing to disposal | 12 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 17 |
| Issue to disposal | 56 | 14 | 16 | 8 | 14 | 22 |

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Probate

The number of grants of probate issued during 2017 increased by 1% from 6,688 in 2016 to 6,758 in 2017 (Table B.8).

Since 30 September 2015, the Principal Registry in Belfast manages all probate applications in Northern Ireland, however pending applications lodged prior to this date continue to be managed by the District Registry in Londonderry.

Table B.8: Probate grants issued in non-contentious proceedings in 2017

| | District Registry | | Probate | | Northern Ireland |
|---|-------------------|----------|--------------|----------|------------------|
| | By solicitor | Personal | By solicitor | Personal | |
| Grant of administration | - | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| Pendente Lite | - | - | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Letters of administration with will annexed | - | - | 204 | 1 | 205 |
| Letters of administration with will annexed (DBN) | - | - | 6 | - | 6 |
| Letters of administration | - | - | 1087 | 207 | 1294 |
| Grant of probate | - | - | 4775 | 455 | 5230 |
| Letters of administration (DBN) | - | - | 18 | 1 | 19 |
| Total grants issued | - | - | 6093 | 665 | 6758 |

Section 2: The Queen's Bench Division

The Queen's Bench Division comprises of a number of business areas, namely: the Writ Office, Appeals & Lists Office; Judicial Reviews Office; Commercial Office; and Bail Office. Collectively these Offices are referred to as The Central Office.

The principal business dealt with by the Queen's Bench Division is;

- Claims for damages
- Medical Negligence actions
- Commercial actions
- Matters involving contract
- Personal injury actions
- Appeals from the County Court
- Judicial Reviews
- Bail applications
- Admiralty matters
- Injunctions

Each business area within the Queen's Bench Division has discrete functions, namely;

Writ Office

The primary function of the office is to manage the 'Writ Process' for actions in the Queen's Bench Division, from commencement of proceedings until the trial of the action or final determination. This involves a review process which is initiated approximately 9 months after the last notification by a defendant that they intend to dispute the claim. The aim of the reviews is to progress cases to trial by dealing with matters between the parties which may delay the case being set-down for trial. The Office is also responsible for providing adequately trained staff to act as Court registrars in all Queen's Bench Courts. The Queen's Bench Division deals with large value and/or complex claims for damages including libel and slander actions which may require a jury.

The lower threshold for claims to the High Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013. Cases previously received into the Writ Office for claims between £15,000 and £30,000 are now processed by the County Court. Care should therefore be taken when comparing Writs data before and after this date.

Appeals & Lists Office

The office has overall responsibility for compiling the daily Court List. This involves collating business listed across all the High Court Divisions on a daily basis. The Listing Officer must ensure that business is allocated to appropriate Judges and that adequate courtrooms are available.

Commercial Office

Deals with business relating to a 'business or commercial transaction' such as building contracts, sales of goods, insurance, banking or carriage of goods, may be assigned to the Commercial list, if so directed by the Commercial Judge. One of the ten puisne Judges has been assigned as the Commercial Judge. The Judge carries out regular reviews of actions entered into the Commercial List to ensure that the action is progressed to trial in a timely manner.

Judicial Reviews Office

Judicial Reviews are cases where the court considers if the decision reached by an inferior court, Tribunal, public body or Government Minister followed the proper procedure. The applicant must first apply to the Court for leave to apply for Judicial Review if leave is granted then the applicant has 14 days to apply for a full hearing of the matter.

Bail Office

This office deals with repeat bail applications, i.e. an application to release a defendant from custody who has been refused bail by the Magistrates Court. The Bail Order normally requires the defendant to comply with various conditions and may require money to be lodged or security to be given.

2.1 Key Facts

- Queen's Bench writs received have decreased each year between 2013 and 2015 (32% decrease overall), with a slight increase between 2015 and 2016 (less than 1%), followed by an increase of 13% in 2017. The decrease in the number of writs received between 2013 and 2015 will be partly due to the increase in the financial limit within the County Court during 2013. In 2013 approximately 1,800 ordinary civil bills were received into the County Court for an amount of £15,000 or over with an equivalent figure of 2,976 in 2014, 2,689 in 2015, 2,390 in 2016, and 2,340 in 2017 and these cases would previously have been received as Queen's Bench Writs.
- There was a 54% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2013 and 2017. However, caution should be taken when comparing between years as there were various manual exercises carried out during previous years to deal with old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.
- There was a 16% decrease in the number of Judicial Review applications received and a 16% decrease in the number disposed of between 2013 and 2017. The number of applications received and disposed decreased by 9% and increased by 10% respectively between 2016 and 2017.
- The number of High Court bail applications received decreased by 19% between 2013 and 2017. There was a 13% decrease and a 11% decrease respectively, in receipts and disposals between 2016 and 2017.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 4: Queen's Bench cases received 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Queen's Bench Division - writs | 4,490 | 3,658 | 3,062 | 3,068 | 3,469 |
| Commercial List set-down^R | 81 | 46 | 111 | 78 | 94 |
| Judicial Reviews (applications) | 110 | 95 | 96 | 101 | 92 |
| Masters' appeals | 84 | 89 | 67 | 86 | 87 |
| High Court bails (applications) | 1,781 | 1,818 | 1,458 | 1,668 | 1,449 |

^R Revised figures. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Summary Table 5: Queen's Bench cases disposed 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|-------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Queen's Bench Division – writs | 4,240 | 4,858 ^[1] | 3,808 ^[1] | 3,009 ^[2] | 1,970 |
| Commercial List | 251 | 168 | 170 | 149 | 121 |
| Judicial reviews (applications) | 113 | 106 | 78 | 86 | 95 |
| Masters' appeals | 86 | 81 | 72 | 68 | 83 |
| High Court bails (applications) | 1,546 | 1,516 | 1,347 | 1,387 | 1,241 |

^[1] Please note a manual exercise was carried out during the period to deal with a number of old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court.

^[2] Please note a manual exercise was carried out during the period to deal with a number of old Personal Injury cases which had a Memorandum of Appearance lodged but no further action had been undertaken.

2.2 Queen's Bench Division - 2017 Data

There were 5,781 Queen's Bench cases and applications received during 2017, 60% of these were made up of writs and originating summonses. This was 7% more than the figure relating to 2016, when there were 5,423 cases and applications received of which 57% were writs and originating summonses. There has been a 13% increase in the number of writs received from 3,068 in 2016 to 3,469 in 2017 (Table B.9).

Table B.9: Queen's Bench cases and applications received in 2017

| | | |
|--|---|------|
| | | |
| Writs and originating summonses | Negligence | 1777 |
| | Breach | 105 |
| | Road injuries | 664 |
| | Personal injuries | 466 |
| | Monies due | 233 |
| | Other | 224 |
| | Total | 3469 |
| Miscellaneous | Foreign judgment | 109 |
| | Other | 39 |
| | Total | 148 |
| Applications | Summons/interlocutory applications | 1312 |
| | Remittals and removals | 315 |
| | Exparte applications | 259 |
| | Other | 278 |
| | Total | 2164 |

Table B.10 shows the breakdown of the amount claimed in writs and originating summonses in 2017. The majority of writs and originating summonses were unliquidated in 2017 – 95%, compared with 92% in 2016.

Table B.10: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses received by amount claimed in 2017

| | No Value | Less than £15,000 | £15,000-29,999 | £30,000-49,999 | £50,000 and over | Total |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Negligence | 1774 | 1 | - | - | 2 | 1777 |
| Breach | 105 | - | - | - | - | 105 |
| Road injuries | 662 | 1 | - | 1 | - | 664 |
| Personal injuries | 465 | 1 | - | - | - | 466 |
| Monies due | 65 | 35 | 14 | 31 | 88 | 233 |
| Other | 222 | - | - | - | 2 | 224 |
| Total | 3293 | 38 | 14 | 32 | 92 | 3469 |

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount claimed recorded on ICOS.

There were 782 Queen's Bench writs (excluding commercial actions) set-down for trial during 2017 (Table B.11) compared with 842 the previous year, which represented a decrease of 7%.

The change in the financial limit within the county court in 2013 has had an impact upon the Queen's Bench writs received and set-down since 2013. The number of Queen's Bench writs set-down, have decreased by 51% from 1,605 in 2013 to 782 in 2017. Please note that Queens Bench Writs set-

down from 2010 to 2016 were revised. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Table B.11: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses set-down by amount claimed in 2017

| | No Value | Less than £15,000 | £15,000-29,999 | £30,000-49,999 | £50,000 and over | Total |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Negligence | 466 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 468 |
| Breach | 3 | - | 3 | 1 | - | 7 |
| Road injuries | 204 | - | 1 | 5 | - | 210 |
| Personal injuries | 61 | 2 | 5 | 2 | - | 70 |
| Monies due | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Other | 21 | - | 2 | - | - | 23 |
| Total | 756 | 2 | 11 | 10 | 3 | 782 |

Excludes commercial actions.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount claimed recorded on ICOS.

There were 1,065 writs dealt with in court and 782 writs disposed of as office disposals. Actions set-down as negligence constituted 52% of writs disposed of (Table B.12). In 2016, there were 1,374 writs dealt with in court and 1,516 writs disposed of as office disposals while negligence accounted for 58% of writs disposed.

Table B.12: Queen's Bench cases and applications disposed of in 2017 ^[1]

| | | High Court Judge | Master | Office Disposal | Default judgment | Total |
|--|---|------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------|-------|
| Writs and originating summonses | Negligence | 533 | 39 | 435 | 17 | 1024 |
| | Breach | 16 | 1 | 25 | 9 | 51 |
| | Road injuries | 189 | 10 | 158 | 5 | 362 |
| | Personal injuries | 113 | 73 | 115 | 1 | 302 |
| | Monies due | 13 | 7 | 22 | 81 | 123 |
| | Other | 61 | 10 | 27 | 10 | 108 |
| | Total | 925 | 140 | 782 | 123 | 1970 |
| Miscellaneous | Foreign judgment | - | 1 | 4 | - | 5 |
| | Other | 7 | 2 | 1 | - | 10 |
| | Total | 7 | 3 | 5 | - | 15 |
| Applications | Summons/interlocutory applications | 60 | 1140 | 1 | - | 1201 |
| | Remittals and removals | 2 | 311 | - | - | 313 |
| | Exparte applications | 13 | 187 | - | - | 200 |
| | Other | 116 | 126 | - | - | 242 |
| | Total | 191 | 1764 | 1 | - | 1956 |

Excludes commercial actions.

Of the 1,188 writs disposed of in 2017, either in court or by way of a default judgment, 39% were for £15,000 or more (Table B.13). The proportion of writs disposed of that were £15,000 and over in 2016 was 30% (445).

Table B.13: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses disposed by amount in 2017

| | | No Value | Less than £15,000 | £15,000-29,999 | £30,000-49,999 | £50,000 and over | Total |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| High Court Judge | Negligence | 243 | 70 | 80 | 42 | 98 | 533 |
| | Breach | 11 | 1 | 2 | 2 | - | 16 |
| | Road injuries | 24 | 13 | 33 | 43 | 76 | 189 |
| | Personal injuries | 93 | 2 | 4 | - | 14 | 113 |
| | Monies due | 12 | 1 | - | - | - | 13 |
| | Other | 50 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 61 |
| Master | Negligence | 39 | - | - | - | - | 39 |
| | Breach | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| | Road injuries | 9 | - | - | - | 1 | 10 |
| | Personal injuries | 71 | 1 | 1 | - | - | 73 |
| | Monies due | 7 | - | - | - | - | 7 |
| | Other | 10 | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| Default judgments | Negligence | 16 | - | - | - | 1 | 17 |
| | Breach | 6 | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| | Road injuries | 5 | - | - | - | - | 5 |
| | Personal injuries | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| | Monies due | - | 25 | 5 | 12 | 39 | 81 |
| | Other | 8 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 10 |
| Total | | 606 | 114 | 128 | 105 | 235 | 1188 |

Excludes commercial actions and office disposals.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

In 2017, the average length of time for a writ from first listing to disposal was 28 weeks (Table B.14). In 2016, this was 22 weeks.

Table B.14: Average time intervals in weeks for Queen's Bench cases and applications in 2017

| | Writs and originating summonses | Miscellaneous | Applications |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Issue to first listing | 146 | 115 | 4 |
| First listing to disposal | 28 | 6 | 6 |
| Issue to disposal | 174 | 121 | 10 |

Excludes default judgments and office disposals.

Due to rounding and not all writs and originating summonses having a set-down date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Tables B.15, B.16 and B.17 show the number of commercial actions received, set-down and disposed of. During 2017, there were 94 cases set-down compared with 78 in 2016, please note the 2016 figures were revised. In 2017, 121 cases were disposed of with 103 of these disposed of by a High Court Judge. Comparable figures in 2016 were 149 and 118 respectively. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Table B.15: Queen's Bench commercial actions received in 2017

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| | |
| Negligence | 34 |
| Breach of Contract | 15 |
| Personal injuries | - |
| Monies due | 23 |
| Other | 7 |
| Total | 79 |

Table B.16: Queen's Bench commercial actions set-down in 2017

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| | |
| Negligence | 47 |
| Breach of Contract | 23 |
| Personal injuries | - |
| Monies due | 17 |
| Other | 7 |
| Total | 94 |

Table B.17: Queen's Bench commercial actions disposed of in 2017

| | High Court Judge | Master | Office disposal | Default judgment | Total |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Negligence | 57 | - | 4 | - | 61 |
| Breach of Contract | 18 | - | 2 | - | 20 |
| Personal injuries | - | - | - | - | - |
| Monies due | 21 | 1 | 7 | - | 29 |
| Other | 7 | 1 | 3 | - | 11 |
| Total | 103 | 2 | 16 | - | 121 |

In 2017, the average length of time for a commercial action from first listing to disposal was 48 weeks (Table B.18). In 2016, this was 44 weeks.

Table B.18: Average time intervals in weeks for commercial actions in 2017

| | Commercial actions |
|--|---------------------------|
| Received to Entry to commercial list | 86 |
| Entry to commercial list to first listing | 52 |
| First listing to disposal | 48 |
| Received to disposal | 186 |

Excludes default judgments and office disposals.

Due to rounding and not all writs and originating summonses having a set-down date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Judicial Reviews

Tables B.19 to B.21 are in relation to Judicial Reviews. There were 92 applications for Judicial Review in 2017 compared with 101 in 2016. There were 84 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review granted (26%). The proportion in 2016 for this was 34%. Of the 95 applications for Judicial Review that were disposed in 2017, 6% were granted. In 2016, there were 86 applications for Judicial Review and 6% of these were granted.

Table B.19: Judicial Review applications received in 2017

| | |
|--|-----|
| | |
| Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review | 316 |
| Applications for Judicial Review | 92 |
| Ancillary applications | 5 |

Table B.20: Judicial Review applications disposed of in 2017

| | Granted | Withdrawn / Refused / Dismissed | Other | Total |
|--|---------|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review | 84 | 109 | 131 | 324 |
| Applications for Judicial Review | 6 | 30 | 59 | 95 |
| Ancillary applications | - | - | 2 | 2 |

In 2017, the average length of time from issue to disposal of applications for Judicial Review was 51 weeks (Table B.21) which was a decrease on the 53 weeks in 2016.

Table B.21: Average time intervals in weeks for Judicial Review applications in 2017

| | Applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review | Applications for Judicial Review | Ancillary applications |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Issue to first listing | 26 | 31 | 10 |
| First listing to disposal | 7 | 20 | - |
| Issue to disposal | 33 | 51 | 10 |

Due to rounding and not all applications having a court date, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Masters' appeals

There were 87 Masters' appeals received and 83 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2017 (Tables B.22 and B.23). This compares with the 86 Masters' appeals received and the 68 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2016.

Table B.22: Masters' appeals received in 2017

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| | |
| Queen's Bench Masters' appeals | 43 |
| Chancery Masters' appeals | 44 |
| Total | 87 |

Table B.23: Masters' appeals disposed of in 2017

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| | |
| Queen's Bench Masters' appeals | 41 |
| Chancery Masters' appeals | 42 |
| Total | 83 |

High Court Bails

There were 1,449 applications for bail received in the High Court during 2017, a decrease of 13% from 1,668 in 2016. Of the 1,107 applications disposed in court in 2017, 59% were granted (Table B.26). In 2016, 1,234 applications were disposed in court. Of these, 58% (713) were granted.

Table B.24: Number of bail applications received in 2017

| | |
|---|------|
| | |
| Bail applications | 1088 |
| Bail pending appeals to the county court | 37 |
| Compassionate bail applications | 33 |
| Miscellaneous applications | 1 |
| Applications to revoke bail | 8 |
| Schedule 2 breaches | - |
| Time extension | - |
| Bail variations | 282 |
| Total | 1449 |

Table B.25: Number of bail applications disposed of in chambers in 2017

| | Granted | Refused | Revoke | Other | Total |
|---|---------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Bail applications | 5 | 1 | - | 1 | 7 |
| Bail pending appeals to the county court | - | - | - | - | - |
| Compassionate bail applications | - | - | - | - | - |
| Application to revoke bail | - | - | - | - | - |
| Bail variations | 108 | 1 | - | 18 | 127 |
| Total | 113 | 2 | - | 19 | 134 |

Table B.26: Number of bail applications disposed of in court in 2017

| | Granted | Refused | Revoke | Other | Total |
|---|---------|---------|--------|-------|-------|
| Bail applications | 530 | 340 | 4 | 46 | 920 |
| Bail pending appeals to the county court | 22 | 9 | - | 2 | 33 |
| Compassionate bail applications | 11 | 14 | - | 1 | 26 |
| Miscellaneous applications | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Application to revoke bail | 2 | 2 | - | 3 | 7 |
| Schedule 2 breaches | - | - | - | - | - |
| Bail variations | 85 | 28 | 1 | 6 | 120 |
| Total | 651 | 393 | 5 | 58 | 1107 |

Section 3: Family Division

The Family Division comprises of four key business areas, namely: -

- The Matrimonial Office
- The Office of Care and Protection (Children's Section)
- The Office of Care and Protection (Patient's Section)
- The Official Solicitor's Office

The Matrimonial Office

The Matrimonial Office deals with the following: -

Petitions for divorce - to obtain a decree of divorce the marriage must be proved to have broken down irretrievably with proof of one or more of the following facts:

- adultery
- behaviour with which the petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live
- desertion of at least two years
- two years separation where the respondent consents
- five years separation without consent

No petition may be made for divorce within the first year of marriage.

Petitions for nullity - a Decree of Nullity of Marriage is granted where the petitioner proves that the marriage is either void or voidable.

A void marriage is one that is legally invalid because, for example:

- either party was under the age of sixteen at the time of the marriage
- either party was already married
- the parties are prohibited from marrying, for example father and daughter

A voidable marriage is one which is legal but may be nullified by order of the court because, for example:

- it is not consummated due to incapacity or wilful refusal (most nullities are on these grounds)
- where one party was suffering from a venereal disease in a communicable form, or was pregnant by someone else at the time of marriage

Judicial separation - an alternative to divorce is a decree of judicial separation. This does not dissolve the marriage but absolves the parties from the obligation to live together. This procedure might, for instance, be used if religious beliefs forbid or discourage divorce.

Ancillary relief applications - During or after a divorce, the annulment of a marriage (nullity) or judicial separation, there may still be a need for the court to settle disputes over money or property. The court can make a financial order. This is known as ancillary relief and may deal with the sale or transfer of property, maintenance payments (for example weekly or monthly maintenance), a lump sum payment and/or a pension sharing or attachment order.

Dissolution of a Civil Partnership - You can apply to end ('dissolve') your civil partnership if you have been in the partnership for at least a year.

There are 3 main steps to ending a civil partnership:

- File a dissolution petition - you have to apply to court for permission to end your civil partnership, and show reasons why you want to split up.
- Apply for a conditional order - if your civil partner agrees to the petition, you'll get a document saying there's no reason you can't divorce.
- Apply for a final order - this legally ends your civil partnership - you need to wait 6 weeks after you get the conditional order before you can apply.

The Office of Care and Protection (OCP) (Children's Section)

The principal business assigned to this Office is: -

- Guardianship and Wardship of children
- Adoption
- Applications under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- Applications under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998

Wardship and Adoption - The principal business assigned to Wardship and Adoption office includes applications in relation to the Guardianship and Wardship of children, Adoption applications and applications under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

Family Homes and Domestic Violence - The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998, is designed to offer civil protection against domestic violence. The 1998 Order provides a single set of remedies which are available in all court tiers. Two main remedies were created: the non-molestation order and the occupation order. Both of these orders can be applied for by way of an ex parte application - that is without the respondent or alleged perpetrator of the violence being present. The number of these type of applications are relatively small in the High Court, and are usually dealt with at this court tier, as they are linked to other proceedings being held in the High Court.

The Office of Care and Protection (OCP) (Patients Section)

Responsibility for the management of the property and affairs of people in Northern Ireland who, through mental disorder, are incapable of managing their own financial affairs is vested in the High Court under the provisions of Part VIII of the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. The '**Patient**' is the name given by the Order to a person who is suffering from mental disorder and whose financial affairs are subject to the Court's control. A '**Controller**' is the name given to those appointed by court order to manage a Patient's financial affairs.

The Office of Care and Protection, commonly referred to as OCP is the department of the High Court in which administrative work relating to a Patient's case is dealt with under the supervision of the Master (Care and Protection). The Master is the judicial officer of the Court who is authorised to exercise any discretion, power or other functions of the Court and s/he may also, in particular cases, refer a question to the Judge for decision.

A Controller is a person appointed by the Court to deal with the day-to-day management of the Patient's financial affairs. He or she can be a relative, a friend, or perhaps a professional adviser. If there is no one else suitable or willing to act, an officer of the Court or the Official Solicitor can be appointed in the last resort.

The OCP reviews accounts operated by the Controller (on behalf of the Patient) on an annual basis.

The OCP is also responsible for the registration of Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPA).

The Official Solicitors Office

The Official Solicitor (OS) is an independent statutory officer holder appointed under section 75 of the Judicature (NI) Act 1978 (as amended by section 103 of the Courts Act 2003).

The OS has a wide range of functions primarily necessitating acting as next friend, guardian ad litem or 'Controller' of last resort (for certain minors or adults (known as 'patients') who lack mental capacity to manage their own financial affairs by reason of 'mental disorder' under Part VIII of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986 ('the 1986 Order'). The OS also represents the interests of minors in a range of legal proceedings at the request of the judiciary.

3.1 Key Facts

- The number of divorce petitions received fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 5%. The number of divorce petitions received peaked in 2015 at 2,714 before decreasing by 14% between 2015 and 2017. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of divorce petitions granted decreased by 26% overall. Divorce petitions granted peaked in 2013, before decreasing each year between 2013 and 2017, apart from an increase of 9% between 2015 and 2016. While all divorce petitions are received in the High Court, divorces are granted in both the High Court and County Court.
- Over the last five years the Orders issued in Mental Health Proceedings have fluctuated, peaking in 2016. Orders issued decreased by 44% between 2016 and 2017.

Summary Table 6: High Court Family cases received 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Divorce petitions ^[1] | 2,444 | 2,281 | 2,714 | 2,418 | 2,322 |
| Wardship and adoption | 89 | 83 | 89 | 77 | 73 |
| Family Homes & Domestic Violence | 56 | 46 | 46 | 63 | 57 |
| Mental Health Proceedings (Orders Issued) | 1,196 | 1,366 | 1,241 | 1,519 | 855 |
| Official Solicitor's Office – live patient cases | 249 | 213 | 165 | 147 | 141 |
| Official Solicitor's Office – current Minor cases | 53 | 60 | 68 | 88 | 104 |

[1] Data include civil partnership petitions.

Summary Table 7: High Court Family cases disposed 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|
| Divorce petitions granted ^[1] | 1,036 | 900 | 812 | 884 | 768 |
| Wardship and adoption | 114 | 63 | 75 | 89 | 58 |
| Family Homes & Domestic Violence | 37 | 48 | 44 | 48 | 46 |
| Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' cases disposed | 66 | 77 | 48 | 34 | 46 |

[1] Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

Foot Note – Decrees granted – a provisional order for divorce, which may be made 'absolute' provided no reason is provided to the court to say otherwise.

3.2 Family Division – 2017 Data

Matrimonial

The number of divorce petitions received decreased by 4%, from 2,418 in 2016 to 2,322 in 2017 (Table B.27). 40% (931) of the divorce petitions received in 2017 were as a result of 2 years separation with consent, the same as the 40% in 2016 (970).

Table B.27: Divorce petitions received in 2017

| | | Filed by | | | Total |
|-------------------|------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | Wife | Husband | Unknown | |
| Divorce Petitions | 2 years with consent | 512 | 419 | - | 931 |
| | 5 years separation | 352 | 320 | - | 672 |
| | Adultery | 22 | 9 | - | 31 |
| | Unreasonable behaviour | 290 | 73 | - | 363 |
| | Combination of grounds/other | 233 | 92 | - | 325 |
| Total | | 1409 | 913 | - | 2322 |

Data include civil partnership petitions.

There were 768 decrees granted in the High Court during 2017, a decrease of 13% on the 884 granted during 2016. The most common ground for dissolution continued to be separation (2 years with consent) accounting for 31% of all decrees granted in 2017 (Table B.28), similar to 32% in 2016.

Table B.28: Divorce petitions by type of decrees granted in 2017

| | | Wife | Husband | Both | Total |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------|---------|------|-------|
| Decrees Nisi | 2 years with consent | 127 | 109 | - | 236 |
| | 5 years separation | 67 | 70 | - | 137 |
| | Adultery | 8 | 6 | - | 14 |
| | Unreasonable behaviour | 135 | 34 | - | 169 |
| | Combination of grounds/other | 131 | 43 | 35 | 209 |
| Nullity | 2 years with consent | - | - | - | - |
| | Combination of grounds/other | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| Judicial Separation | 2 years with consent | - | - | - | - |
| | 5 years separation | - | - | - | - |
| | Adultery | - | - | - | - |
| | Unreasonable behaviour | - | - | - | - |
| | Combination of grounds/other | - | - | - | - |
| Total | | 471 | 262 | 35 | 768 |

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

Table B.29: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2017

| | | Found by | | | Total |
|-------------------|------------------------------|----------|---------|------|-------|
| | | Wife | Husband | Both | |
| Divorce Petitions | 2 years with consent | 141 | 100 | - | 241 |
| | 5 years separation | 66 | 67 | - | 133 |
| | Adultery | 10 | 5 | - | 15 |
| | Unreasonable behaviour | 149 | 32 | 2 | 183 |
| | Combination of grounds/other | 139 | 48 | 25 | 212 |
| Total | | 505 | 252 | 27 | 784 |

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

During 2017, there were 931 matrimonial applications received, 13% less than the 1,069 received in 2016. In total, 52% of applications were for ancillary relief in 2017 (Table B.30) compared to the 46% in 2016.

Table B.30: Matrimonial applications received in 2017

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----|
| Applications | Combination of grounds/other | 8 |
| | Ancillary relief | 487 |
| | Matrimonial application | 421 |
| | Other | 15 |
| Total | | 931 |

Of the 814 matrimonial applications disposed of during 2017, 439 (54%) were for ancillary relief (Table B.31). The corresponding number of matrimonial applications disposed of in 2016 was 894 of which 420 (47%) were for ancillary relief.

Table B.31: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Judge | Master | Total |
|--------------|------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Applications | Combination of grounds/other | 5 | - | 5 |
| | Ancillary relief | 5 | 434 | 439 |
| | Matrimonial application | 26 | 339 | 365 |
| | Other | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | | 40 | 774 | 814 |

The average time from the issue of a petition to the date the decree was granted was 41 weeks in 2017 (Table B.32) compared with 39 weeks in 2016.

Table B.32: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2017

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| | Divorce Petitions |
| Issue to first listing | 39 |
| First listing to date decree granted | 3 |
| Issue to date decree granted | 41 |

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

During 2017, the average time from issue to disposal of a matrimonial application was 13 weeks which was more than the average time of 10 weeks in 2016. Applications for ancillary relief took on average 64 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2017 (Table B.33) which was more than the 52 weeks in 2016.

Table B.33: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2017

| | Combination of grounds/other | Ancillary relief | Matrimonial applications | Other |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Issue to first listing | - | 16 | 9 | 5 |
| First listing to disposal | 5 | 47 | 3 | 15 |
| Issue to disposal | 5 | 64 | 13 | 20 |

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Wardship and Adoption

During 2017, adoption order applications accounted for 37% (27) of the total applications received (Table B.34) compared with 51% (39) in 2016.

Table B.34: Adoption cases and applications received in 2017

| | |
|--|----|
| | |
| Adoption Order Applications | 27 |
| Child Abduction Originating Summonses | 7 |
| Children (NI) Order Application | - |
| Freeing Order Applications | 18 |
| Originating Summons (General) | - |
| Human Fertilisation Originating Summons | 3 |
| Interlocutory Applications | 4 |
| Wardship Originating Summonses | 14 |
| Total | 73 |

Of the cases disposed in 2017, 86% were disposed of by a High Court Judge. The majority of applications disposed of (40%) were adoption order applications (Table B.35). In 2016, 91% of cases were disposed by a High Court Judge with 63% (56) being adoption order applications.

Table B.35: Adoption cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | High Court Judge | Master | Total |
|--|------------------|--------|-------|
| Adoption Order Applications | 23 | - | 23 |
| Child Abduction Originating Summonses | 9 | - | 9 |
| Children (NI) Order Application | - | - | - |
| Freeing Order Applications | 14 | - | 14 |
| Originating Summons (General) | - | - | - |
| Human Fertilisation Originating Summons | 2 | - | 2 |
| Interlocutory Applications | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Wardship Originating Summonses | 1 | 7 | 8 |
| Total | 50 | 8 | 58 |

Ex-parte applications for occupation/non-molestation orders accounted for 42% (24) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2017 (Table B.36). The number of ex-parte applications was slightly higher in 2016 at 26, and accounted for 41% of cases and applications received.

Table B.36: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2017

| | |
|--|----|
| | |
| Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation | 27 |
| Ex-parte Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation | 24 |
| Application to Extend/Discharge/Vary Occupation/Non-Molestation | 5 |
| Article 11 Occupation order | 1 |
| Total | 57 |

The Master disposed of 91% (42) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2017 compared with 88% (42) in 2016. Table B.37 shows that 48% (22) of all cases in 2017 were ex-parte compared with 44% (21) the previous year.

Table B.37: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | High Court Judge | Master | Total |
|--|------------------|--------|-------|
| Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation | 3 | 18 | 21 |
| Ex-parte Applications for Occupation/Non-Molestation | 1 | 21 | 22 |
| Application to Extend/Discharge/Vary Occupation/Non-Molestation | - | 3 | 3 |
| Article 11 Occupation order | - | - | - |
| Total | 4 | 42 | 46 |

Table B.38 shows the average time in weeks for adoption and Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2017. It took on average 27 weeks for an adoption case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2017. The corresponding figure for 2016 was 31 weeks.

Table B.38: Average time intervals in weeks for Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications in 2017

| | Adoption | Family Homes And Domestic Violence |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|
| Issue to first listing | 13 | 1 |
| First listing to disposal | 14 | 21 |
| Issue to disposal | 27 | 22 |

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts.

Care and Protection

There were 1,841 patients referred to the Office of Care and Protection in 2017 for investigation under the Mental Health Order, representing a 7% increase on the 2016 total of 1,727 patients. The total live caseload for 2017 was 1,652 (Table B.39) a decrease of 8% on the previous year (1,795).

Table B.39: Office of Care and Protection – Mental Health proceedings in 2017

| | |
|---|------|
| | |
| New referrals | 1841 |
| Enduring Power of Attorney applications received | 982 |
| Orders issued | 855 |
| Certificates issued | 5279 |
| Reviews completed | 1442 |
| Visits^[1] | 80 |
| Live Caseload at 31st December^[2] | 1652 |

^[1]The figure for 'visits' represents the number of visits made to patients by the Lord Chief Justice's General Visitors. From June 2015, visits to patients whose affairs are managed by the Official Solicitor were added to the General Visitors annual schedule hence the significant increase.

^[2] Live caseload is the number of active Full Controller Orders at 31 December 2017.

Official Solicitor's Office

Tables B.40 and B.41 demonstrate the caseload of the Official Solicitor's Office. There were 141 live cases relating to patients and 104 current cases relating to minors in 2017. In 2016, there were 147 live cases relating to patients and 88 current cases relating to minors.

Table B.40: Official Solicitor's Office – Patient caseload in 2017

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| | |
| Referrals | 58 ^[1] |
| Orders | 1063 |
| Ad. Interim orders | 2 |
| Controller orders | 5 |
| Dismissals | 12 |
| Live cases | 141 ^[2] |
| Incoming correspondence | 6859 ^[3] |
| Cases referred to the OS for a specific issue | 226 ^[4] |

^[1] This figure now encompasses Declaratory Judgements (9 in total) which were dealt with during 2017.

^[2] This figure reflects the number of cases at December 2017 where the OS acts as Full Controller (FC)

^[3] This figure reflects all incoming correspondence to the office.

^[4] Cases referred for a specific issue – this figure encompasses all live cases at December 2017 including those where the OS acts as Full Controller together with ancillary cases (i.e. OCP/matrimonial/bankruptcy) in which the OS has been asked to assist with a specific aspect. Involvement in a case may last a considerable time and therefore some of the cases may have been reflected in previous reports and may continue to be reflected in future reports.

Table B.41: Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' caseload in 2017

| | Received | Current Caseload | Disposed |
|---|----------|------------------|----------|
| Guardian of the Fortune | - | - | - |
| Article 13 Children Order - Relocation | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Care Proceedings | - | - | - |
| Article 8 Children Order | 44 | 27 | 17 |
| Parental Incapacity | 48 | 37 | 11 |
| Declaration of Parentage | 1 | 1 | - |
| Next Friend | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Child Abduction | 1 | - | 1 |
| Declaratory Proceedings | 21 | 16 | 5 |
| Judicial Review | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Chancery (Estate) | 2 | 2 | - |
| Chancery | 2 | 2 | - |
| Queen's Bench | 1 | - | 1 |
| House Purchase | 1 | - | 1 |
| Non-Molestation | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| Adoption | 1 | 1 | - |
| Nominal Respondent | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Personal Injury | - | - | - |
| Wardship | 5 | 5 | - |
| Miscellaneous | 1 | 1 | - |
| Total | 150 | 104 | 46 |

Live case load only include those cases where specific actions are actively being taken to progress matters. These cases are recorded as 'disposed of' when the said actions have come to an end. A minor's case is closed when he/she reaches the age of 18 yrs.

Section 4: Sitting Days

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. In the High Court the Judiciary are made up of the Lord Chief Justice, three Lords Justices of Appeal and ten High Court Judges. They sit on a variety of business types as shown in Table B.42, and a sitting day is classified on the basis of the business type on which the majority of time was spent.

4.1 Key Facts

- The number of days sat by High Court judges decreased year on year between 2013 and 2015 years and then increased by 8% between 2015 and 2016, before decreasing by 4% in 2017.
- Overall sitting times have decreased over the five year period, decreasing by 5% over the last year, and decreasing by 18% when compared with 2013.

Summary Table 8: High Court Judge Sitting Days 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Court Sitting Days | 1,998 | 1,957 | 1,890 | 2,045 | 1,972 |
| Total Court Sitting Time (hrs:mins) | 4649:25 | 4320:58 | 4222:34 | 3995:23 | 3810:02 |

4.2 Sitting Days – 2017 Data

Court sitting days and court sitting times

High Court Judges sat on a total of 1,972 court sitting days, a decrease of 4% on the 2,045 days sat during 2016. By majority type of work, High Court Judges sat for a total 496 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 168 in the Crown Court in 2017 (Table B.42). In 2016, High Court Judges sat for a total of 563 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 163 in the Crown Court.

Table B.42 High Court Judges court sitting days and court sitting times in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | Court sitting days | Total court sitting time |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Crown | 168 | 461:15 |
| Queen's Bench | 496 | 949:24 |
| Judicial Reviews | 289 | 538:22 |
| Children Order | 261 | 605:55 |
| Other Family | 50 | 75:00 |
| Appeals | 24 | 27:55 |
| Chancery | 220 | 408:51 |
| Bails | 270 | 416:30 |
| Callover | - | - |
| Court of Appeal - Civil | 129 | 197:35 |
| Court of Appeal - Criminal | 65 | 129:15 |
| Total | 1972 | 3810:02 |

Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken.

Total court sitting time is classified on the basis of all court sitting time spent on each business area.

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.

Part C: The Crown Court

The Crown Court has exclusive jurisdiction to try offences charged on indictment. Offences tried on indictment are more serious offences. The Lord Chief Justice is President of the Crown Court and the Lords Justices of Appeal, High Court Judges and county court judges all sit in the Crown Court.

Trial on indictment in the Crown Court follows after the accused has been returned for trial at committal proceedings in a magistrates' court. The Public Prosecution Service is responsible for preparing a formal document called an indictment, stating the charges which the accused will face. The matters are then tried before a judge sitting with a jury.

The Crown Court normally sits at seven different venues throughout Northern Ireland and the trial of non-scheduled offences takes place at the sitting of the Crown Court determined by the District Judge who committed the accused. This is usually the Crown Court acting for the county court division in which the offence is alleged to have been committed.

Appeal from the Crown Court is to the Court of Appeal. If a person wishes to appeal against conviction on a question of fact, the permission of either the Crown Court Judge or the Court of Appeal is required. To appeal against sentence he or she needs the leave of the Court of Appeal.

All persons convicted of a scheduled offence tried on indictment can appeal against conviction to the Court of Appeal on any grounds and without leave. This automatic right of appeal is a safeguard built into the system because in these cases there is no jury.

The prosecution has no right to appeal against the acquittal of a defendant who has been tried on indictment. The Attorney-General can refer a point of law to the Court of Appeal for its opinion, but even if the Court of Appeal considers that the trial judge made an error of law resulting in an acquittal, the acquittal still stands. The reference and subsequent ruling is useful in guiding the prosecution of future trials.

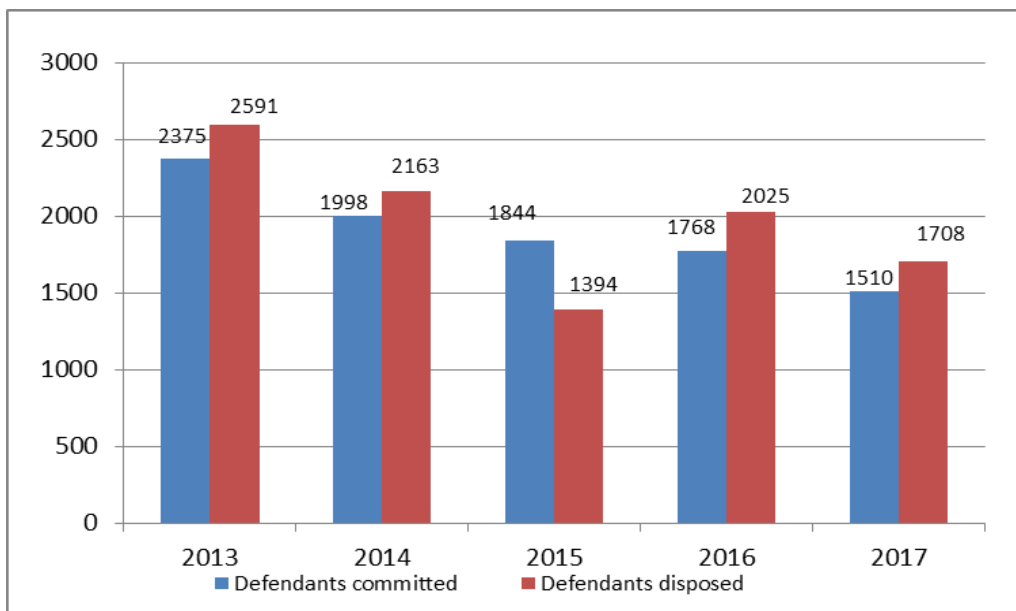
In 2008 the NICTS appointed Case Progression Officers to work with other criminal justice agency officials and the judiciary to minimise delay in the Criminal Courts. Case listing and management are the responsibility of the court; however Case Progression Officers provide support and work with other agency representatives to ensure that all procedural matters are effectively progressed by the parties in the case, therefore reducing unnecessary delay within the system. This includes addressing issues such as:-

- Checking the availability of witnesses
- Managing the arrangements for special measures
- Monitoring disclosure applications
- Ensuring that courtroom technology and interpreter facilities are available
- Monitoring the completion of specialist reports

Key Facts

- Figure C.1 outlines the number of Crown Court defendants committed and disposed of during the last 5 years. The number of defendants committed between 2013 and 2017 has generally decreased, with an overall decrease of 36%. The highest number of committals to the Crown Court occurred in 2013 (2,375). The fall in defendants committed over the last five years indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of defendants committing more serious offences, which as a result must be tried in the Crown Court. As indicated in table E.3, indictable charges in the Magistrates' Court have decreased by 43% between 2013 and 2017 (from 4,003 to 2,279).
- There was a decrease of 46% in the number of defendants disposed of between 2013 and 2015, before increasing by 45% between 2015 and 2016, and then decreasing again by 16% in 2017. In late 2012 an extra County Court Judge was introduced into Belfast Crown Court division to tackle outstanding legacy cases. As a result the numbers of defendants being disposed overtook the numbers being received each year from 2013. However in 2015 this trend changed, with a 36% drop in disposals and 450 more defendants received than disposed. **The introduction of new rules in May 2015 in relation to legal aid remuneration resulted in a number of solicitors and counsel withdrawing their representation from a range of court cases. This has affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and has had an impact on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process.** In 2016 the trend reversed again as the dispute ended and cases began to progress through the system again, and then in 2017, the disposals decreased again as the majority of the backlog had been cleared.

Figure C.1: Crown Court defendants committed and disposed from 2013 to 2017



- Average waiting times between committal and start of trial decreased between 2013 and 2015 before increasing by 47% in 2016 to 168 days. This was due in part to the cases delayed due to the legal aid dispute in 2015 beginning to progress through the Crown Court in 2016. The average waiting times then decreased by 20% in 2017 as the backlog began to clear.
- Crown Court sittings have fluctuated over the last 5 years, with an overall decrease of 8% between 2013 and 2017. (see table C.6).
- Experimental statistics on cracked and ineffective trials at the Crown Court are available in Appendix 2.

- The link below provides comparison figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 9: Crown Court 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Cases received | 1,794 | 1,551 | 1,492 | 1,438 | 1,214 |
| Cases disposed | 1,953 | 1,688 | 1,080 | 1,640 | 1,408 |
| Defendants committed | 2,375 | 1,998 | 1,844 | 1,768 | 1,510 |
| Defendants disposed | 2,591 | 2,163 | 1,394 | 2,025 | 1,708 |
| Average time from committal to start of trial | 137 | 113 | 114 | 168 | 135 |
| Average time from conviction to disposal (days) | 56 | 51 | 100 | 55 | 63 |
| Sittings | 2,745 | 2,636 | 2,326 | 2,539 | 2,536 |

Foot Note – Committed – the procedure by which a person is returned for trial to the Crown Court by the magistrates' court.

Crown Court – 2017 Data

Section 1: Cases received and disposed of

Table C.1 shows the number of cases received in 2017. There were 1,214 cases received in 2017 compared with 1,438 in 2016, a decrease of 16%. In 2017, there were 1,408 cases disposed of (Table C.2), a 14% decrease on the 1,640 disposed of in 2016.

Table C.1: Crown Court cases received in 2017

| | Justice & Security Act ^[1] | Non-Scheduled | Scheduled | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Antrim | - | 152 | - | 152 |
| Belfast | 19 | 385 | - | 404 |
| Craigavon | - | 177 | - | 177 |
| Downpatrick | - | 106 | - | 106 |
| Dungannon | - | 133 | - | 133 |
| Londonderry | - | 108 | - | 108 |
| Newry | - | 134 | - | 134 |
| Total | 19 | 1195 | - | 1214 |

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Table C.2: Crown Court cases disposed of in 2017

| | Justice & Security Act ^[1] | Non-Scheduled | Scheduled | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Antrim | - | 175 | - | 175 |
| Belfast | 9 | 485 | - | 494 |
| Craigavon | - | 199 | - | 199 |
| Downpatrick | - | 124 | - | 124 |
| Dungannon | - | 160 | - | 160 |
| Londonderry | - | 121 | - | 121 |
| Newry | - | 135 | - | 135 |
| Total | 9 | 1399 | - | 1408 |

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Table C.3 Defendants committed to Crown Court in 2017

| | Justice & Security Act ^[1] | Non-Scheduled | Scheduled | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Antrim | - | 177 | - | 177 |
| Belfast | 36 | 482 | - | 518 |
| Craigavon | - | 218 | - | 218 |
| Downpatrick | - | 127 | - | 127 |
| Dungannon | - | 171 | - | 171 |
| Londonderry | - | 130 | - | 130 |
| Newry | - | 169 | - | 169 |
| Total | 36 | 1474 | - | 1510 |

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

In 2017, there were 1,510 defendants committed to the Crown Court (Table C.3). This was a 15% decrease on the 1,768 committed in 2016. There was a total of 1,708 defendants disposed of during 2017 (Table C.4). This was a decrease of 16% when compared with the 2,025 defendants disposed of in 2016.

Table C.4: Crown Court defendants disposed of in 2017

| | Justice & Security Act ^[1] | Non-Scheduled | Scheduled | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| Antrim | 1 | 209 | - | 210 |
| Belfast | 11 | 597 | - | 608 |
| Craigavon | - | 247 | - | 247 |
| Downpatrick | - | 145 | - | 145 |
| Dungannon | - | 198 | - | 198 |
| Londonderry | - | 134 | - | 134 |
| Newry | - | 166 | - | 166 |
| Total | 12 | 1696 | - | 1708 |

^[1] Refers to cases to be tried under the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

Section 2: Crown Court waiting times

The average waiting time between committal to start of trial was 135 days (Table C.5). This was a decrease of 20% on the 168 days in 2016. The average waiting time between conviction to disposal was 63 days, 15% more than in 2016 (55 days).

Table C.5: Average waiting time in the Crown Court in days in 2017

| | Committal to start of trial – days | Conviction to disposal – days | Total defendants disposed of |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Antrim | 139 | 69 | 199 |
| Belfast | 134 | 55 | 553 |
| Craigavon | 112 | 61 | 240 |
| Downpatrick | 107 | 93 | 134 |
| Dungannon | 182 | 65 | 190 |
| Londonderry | 162 | 61 | 130 |
| Newry | 114 | 61 | 154 |
| Total | 135 | 63 | 1600 |

Excludes defendants who had a bench warrant or deferred sentence.

Section 3: Defendants disposed of

The majority of defendants were disposed of by a county court judge (99%) (Table C.6). This was the same as in 2016 when again 99% of defendants were disposed of by a county court judge.

Table C.6: Crown Court defendants disposed of by judge type in 2017

| | Judicial Level | | Total |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------|
| | County Court Judge | High Court Judge | |
| Antrim | 209 | 1 | 210 |
| Belfast | 598 | 10 | 608 |
| Craigavon | 246 | 1 | 247 |
| Downpatrick | 145 | - | 145 |
| Dungannon | 198 | - | 198 |
| Londonderry | 132 | 2 | 134 |
| Newry | 166 | - | 166 |
| Total | 1694 | 14 | 1708 |

Table C.7: Crown Court defendants disposed of by charge type in 2017

| | |
|--|------|
| | |
| All Offences Against the Person | 200 |
| All Sexual Offences | 186 |
| All Burglary Offences | 48 |
| All Robbery Offences | 26 |
| All Theft Offences | 59 |
| All Fraud and Forgery Offences | 119 |
| All Criminal Damage Offences | 19 |
| All Offences Against the State | 12 |
| All Other Offences | 81 |
| All Drug Offences | 174 |
| All Motoring Offences | 80 |
| All Non-Police Offences | 2 |
| Combination of Charges | 702 |
| Total | 1708 |

In total, 35% of defendants made a plea of guilty on all charges (38% in 2016) and 16% were acquitted on all charges (15% in 2016). (Table C.8).

Table C.8: Outcome of Crown Court defendants in 2017

| | Plea of guilty on all charges | Plea of not guilty on at least one charge – found guilty on at least one charge | Plea of not guilty – acquitted on all charges | All charges withdrawn | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|-------------|
| Antrim | 68 | 111 | 31 | - | 210 |
| Belfast | 193 | 317 | 96 | 2 | 608 |
| Craigavon | 103 | 110 | 34 | - | 247 |
| Downpatrick | 65 | 66 | 13 | 1 | 145 |
| Dungannon | 69 | 74 | 53 | 2 | 198 |
| Londonderry | 44 | 61 | 29 | - | 134 |
| Newry | 60 | 88 | 18 | - | 166 |
| Total | 602 | 827 | 274 | 5 | 1708 |

Section 4: Crown Court sittings and times

There were 2,536 sittings in the Crown Court in 2017. This was less than one percent decrease on the number in 2016 (2,539). The total time spent on Crown Court business (6485:34) has decreased by 4% from 2016 (6744:50).

Table C.9: Crown Court sittings and total Crown Court time in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | Number of sittings | Total time |
|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Antrim | 284 | 610:23 |
| Armagh | 20 | 76:56 |
| Belfast | 822 | 2149:03 |
| Coleraine | 12 | 26:17 |
| Craigavon | 281 | 689:49 |
| Downpatrick | 203 | 389:49 |
| Dungannon | 291 | 980:49 |
| Enniskillen | 4 | 11:15 |
| Limavady | 1 | 1:30 |
| Lisburn | 1 | 0:39 |
| Londonderry | 233 | 591:31 |
| Newtownards | 15 | 17:30 |
| Newry | 310 | 780:01 |
| Omagh | 31 | 96:42 |
| Royal Courts of Justice | 27 | 63:15 |
| Strabane | 1 | 0:05 |
| Total | 2536 | 6485:34 |

Crown Court sittings refer to a sitting where any Crown Court business is heard.

Total Crown time includes all time spent on Crown business.

High Court Judges & county court judges sit on Crown business.

Due to rounding individual Crown Court Sitting times may not add up to the total time.

Part D: The County Court

Previously in Northern Ireland, there were seven county court divisions, however 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 contained in the County Court section is now disaggregated solely by Court Office (Processing Office). There are currently eighteen county court judges and four district judges. Civil cases are commenced in the county court if the value of the case is less than £30,000. The financial limit in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on the 25 February 2013. However, for claims concerning matrimonial property or compensation for criminal injuries or criminal damage to property, there is no financial limit. The county court also has jurisdiction to hear applications for adoptions and undefended divorces. Applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for clubs are also made to the county court. In addition to its original civil jurisdiction the county court hears appeals under a number of statutory provisions from the magistrates' courts or from other tribunals.

County courts can deal with a wide range of cases, but the most common ones are:-

- landlord and tenant disputes, for example, possession (eviction), rent arrears, repairs
- consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services
- personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falling into holes in the pavement, accidents at work
- undefended divorce cases, but only in some county courts
- some domestic violence cases, but these may also be heard in the magistrates court
- race and sex discrimination cases
- debt problems, for example, a creditor seeking payment
- employment problems, for example, wages or salary owing or pay in lieu of notice.

The county court also deals with small claims. In general, a small claim is one where the value of the claim is not more than £3,000. This limit was increased from £2,000 in May 2011.

The most common types of claim dealt with in the small claims court are:

- compensation for faulty services provided, for example, by builders, dry cleaners and garages
- compensation for faulty goods, for example, televisions or washing machines which go wrong
- disputes between landlords and tenants, for example, rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs
- wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

All claims arising from regulated credit agreements must be started in the county court, whatever their value.

The number of cases received and disposed in the county court between 2013 and 2017 is documented in Summary Tables 10 and 11 respectively.

Key Facts

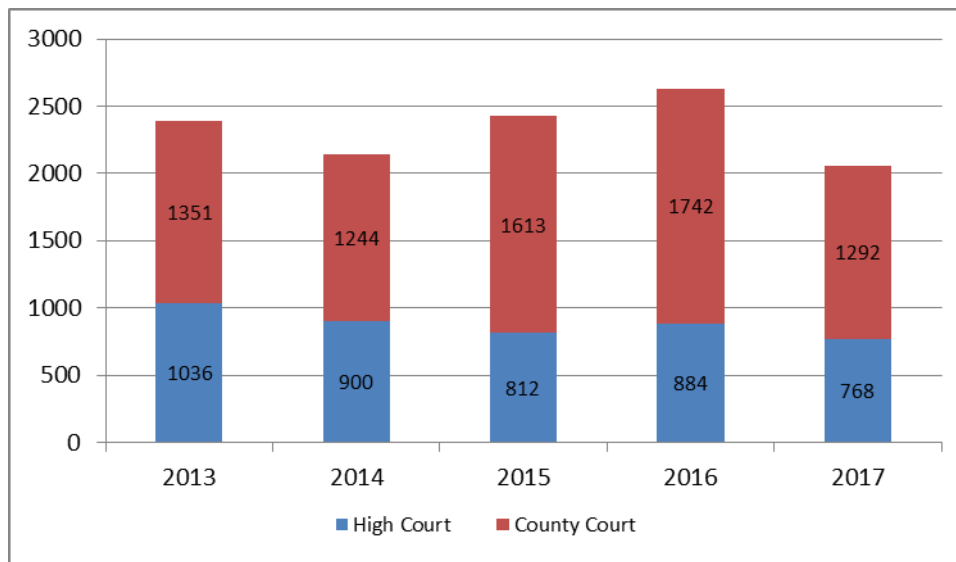
- The number of appeals from the magistrates' courts received and disposed in the County Court decreased by 14% and 13% respectively between 2013 and 2017. Both the receipts and disposals decreased each year between 2013 and 2017.
- Ordinary civil bill cases received fluctuated between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 4%. Caution must be taken when interpreting this data as the financial limit for ordinary civil bills in the County Court increased from £15,000 to £30,000 on 25 February 2013 (note the lower limit for ordinary civil bills increased from £2,000 to £3,000 in May 2011). As a result, claims for amounts over £15,000 and up to £30,000 are now received into the County Court as a civil bill, where they would previously have been entered into the High Court as a Queen's Bench Writ. These claims amounted to approximately 2,976 cases in 2014, approximately 2,689 in 2015, approximately 2,390 in 2016 and approximately 2,340 in 2017. Civil bills disposed increased each year apart from a small dip of less than 1% in 2016. There was an overall increase of 18% between 2013 and 2017.
- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. Between 2013 and 2017 both the receipts and disposals declined with decreases of 31% and 43% respectively. The increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the changing economic conditions experienced during the period.
- Equity cases received remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2017. Equity cases disposed generally decreased between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 16%.
- Despite the limit of the small claims court increasing from £2,000 to £3,000 in May 2011, the number of small claims received decreased on a yearly basis between 2013 and 2016, before increasing by 16% in 2017. There has been a decreasing trend in the number of small claims disposed too between 2012 and 2016, before increasing by 13% in 2017. However the increases in receipts and disposals are primarily the result of proceedings issued by two debt recovery companies during 2017.
- While all divorce petitions are received in the High Court, divorces can be granted in either the High Court or the County Court. Decrees granted in the County Court fluctuated between 2013 and 2017 with an overall decrease of 4% during the period, with peaks in 2015 and 2016. The total number of decrees granted across the High Court and County Court decreased between 2013 and 2017 by 14% overall. The number of decrees granted in the County Court was at its highest level in 2016 while in the High Court it was at its highest level in 2013 across the 5 year time series (see Figure D.1).
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 10: County court cases received 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Appeals from the magistrates' courts | 4,025 | 3,738 | 3,647 | 3,623 | 3,444 |
| Criminal damage cases | 32 | 36 | 27 | 30 | 30 |
| Licences | 179 | 277 | 206 | 204 | 227 |
| Ordinary civil bills | 11,091 | 11,675 | 11,064 | 10,702 | 10,600 |
| Equity | 111 | 135 | 130 | 136 | 135 |
| Ejectment | 1,607 | 982 | 973 | 989 | 1,105 |
| Small claims | 11,944 | 11,514 | 11,002 | 10,073 | 11,720 |

Summary Table 11: County court cases disposed 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Appeals from the magistrates' courts | 3,682 | 3,662 | 3,532 | 3,530 | 3,188 |
| Criminal damage cases | 8 | 20 | 22 | 20 | 14 |
| Licences | 167 | 253 | 185 | 214 | 217 |
| Ordinary civil bills | 8,401 | 9,120 | 9,193 | 9,172 | 9,885 |
| Equity | 124 | 112 | 106 | 91 | 104 |
| Ejectment | 1,388 | 799 | 834 | 750 | 797 |
| Small claims | 10,374 | 10,112 | 9,751 | 8,389 | 9,462 |
| Divorce cases (decrees absolute) | 1,391 | 1,358 | 1,479 | 1,691 | 1,318 |
| Divorce cases (decrees granted) | 1,351 | 1,244 | 1,613 | 1,742 | 1,292 |

Figure D.1: Decrees granted in the High Court and County Court from 2013 to 2017

Foot Note – Decrees granted– a provisional order for divorce, which may be made ‘absolute’ provided no reason is provided to the court to say otherwise.

County Court – 2017 Data

Section 1: Appeals from magistrates' courts

There were a total of 3,444 appeals received during 2017 (Table D.1) and 3,188 appeals disposed of in the county court during 2017 (Table D.2).

Table D.1: Appeals received in 2017

| | Appeals received |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Antrim | 120 |
| Armagh | 114 |
| Ballymena | 234 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 2 |
| Belfast | 590 |
| Coleraine | 322 |
| Craigavon | 298 |
| Downpatrick | 59 |
| Dungannon | 353 |
| Enniskillen | 208 |
| Limavady | 80 |
| Lisburn | 350 |
| Londonderry | 273 |
| Magherafelt | 10 |
| Newry | 146 |
| Newtownards | 160 |
| Omagh | 73 |
| Strabane | 52 |
| Total | 3444 |

The number of appeals received in 2017 (3,444) decreased from 3,623 in 2016 – a decrease of 5%. The highest number of appeals received was in Belfast (590) which represented 17% of cases. In 2016, Belfast was also the highest and represented 24% of cases.

Table D.2: Appeals disposed of in 2017

| | Appeals disposed |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Antrim | 109 |
| Armagh | 126 |
| Ballymena | 205 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 2 |
| Belfast | 568 |
| Coleraine | 258 |
| Craigavon | 305 |
| Downpatrick | 55 |
| Dungannon | 288 |
| Enniskillen | 156 |
| Limavady | 61 |
| Lisburn | 341 |
| Londonderry | 304 |
| Magherafelt | 12 |
| Newry | 117 |
| Newtownards | 153 |
| Omagh | 68 |
| Strabane | 60 |
| Total | 3188 |

The number of appeals disposed of in 2017 (3,188) decreased from 3,530 in 2016 – a decrease of 10%. The highest number of appeals disposed was in Belfast (568) which represented 18% of cases. In 2016, this office also disposed the highest number of cases (23%).

Tables D.3 to D.5 show the result of appeals against conviction and sentence, appeals against sentence only and civil appeals. The vast majority of appeals (99%) dealt with in court in 2017 were criminal cases, and 1% were civil cases, the same proportion as 2016. Of the criminal appeals, 77% were against sentence only and 23% were against conviction and sentence in 2017. These percentages were 76% and 24% respectively in 2016.

Table D.3: Number of magistrates' court appeals against conviction and sentence in 2017

| | Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed | Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal | Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order | Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Antrim | 2 | 7 | 11 | - | 20 |
| Armagh | 6 | 33 | 15 | - | 54 |
| Ballymena | 1 | 24 | 7 | - | 32 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 2 | - | - | - | 2 |
| Belfast | 68 | 44 | 66 | 8 | 186 |
| Coleraine | 8 | 17 | 25 | - | 50 |
| Craigavon | 12 | 26 | 10 | 9 | 57 |
| Downpatrick | - | 20 | 7 | 1 | 28 |
| Dungannon | 5 | 21 | 14 | 5 | 45 |
| Enniskillen | 1 | 9 | 27 | 1 | 38 |
| Limavady | 1 | 5 | 1 | - | 7 |
| Lisburn | 14 | 43 | 33 | 1 | 91 |
| Londonderry | 7 | 17 | 5 | 3 | 32 |
| Magherafelt | 4 | 2 | 2 | - | 8 |
| Newry | - | 12 | 4 | 1 | 17 |
| Newtownards | 1 | 6 | 11 | 4 | 22 |
| Omagh | 1 | 8 | 4 | - | 13 |
| Strabane | - | 8 | 2 | 1 | 11 |
| Total | 133 | 302 | 244 | 34 | 713 |

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence decreased by 15% from 2016 – 713 compared with 839.

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence in 2017 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 302 – 42% of all appeals against conviction and sentence. This was a higher proportion than the 36% in 2016.

Table D.4: Number of magistrates' court appeals against sentence only in 2017

| | Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed | Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal | Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order | Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Antrim | 2 | 78 | 9 | - | 89 |
| Armagh | - | 44 | 11 | 17 | 72 |
| Ballymena | 1 | 71 | 89 | 6 | 167 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 5 | 97 | 221 | 46 | 369 |
| Coleraine | 1 | 152 | 53 | 1 | 207 |
| Craigavon | - | 110 | 124 | 12 | 246 |
| Downpatrick | 4 | 4 | 16 | 1 | 25 |
| Dungannon | 6 | 88 | 138 | 9 | 241 |
| Enniskillen | - | 14 | 94 | 8 | 116 |
| Limavady | - | 22 | 31 | 1 | 54 |
| Lisburn | - | 130 | 107 | 12 | 249 |
| Londonderry | - | 92 | 152 | 27 | 271 |
| Magherafelt | - | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| Newry | 5 | 50 | 31 | 11 | 97 |
| Newtownards | - | 43 | 75 | 12 | 130 |
| Omagh | - | 43 | 11 | - | 54 |
| Strabane | - | 20 | 25 | 4 | 49 |
| Total | 24 | 1062 | 1187 | 167 | 2440 |

The number of appeals against sentence decreased by 8% from 2017 – 2,440 compared with 2,653.

The number of appeals against sentence only in 2017 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 1,062 – 44% of all appeals against sentence only. In 2016, the corresponding proportion was 42% (1,124 out of 2,653).

Table D.5: Number of magistrates' court civil appeals in 2017

| | Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order | Appeal Allowed – Order Varied | Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed | Appeal Withdrawn | Total |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|-------|
| Antrim | - | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | - | - | - | - | - |
| Ballymena | 4 | 1 | - | 1 | 6 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 6 | - | 1 | 6 | 13 |
| Coleraine | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Craigavon | 2 | - | - | - | 2 |
| Downpatrick | - | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| Dungannon | - | 1 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Enniskillen | 1 | 1 | - | - | 2 |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Londonderry | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | - | 2 | - | 1 | 3 |
| Newtownards | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Omagh | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 15 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 35 |

The number of civil appeals in 2017 (35) decreased by 8% from the number of civil appeals in 2016 (38).

Section 2: Criminal damage cases

There were 30 criminal damage cases received during 2017, the same number that was received in 2016. Belfast accounted for 33% of all cases received in 2017 (50% in 2016). Table D.7 shows that there were 14 criminal damage cases disposed of in 2017, compared with 20 disposed of in 2016.

Table D.6: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | - |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----|
| | Armagh | 2 |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 10 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 1 |
| | Craigavon | 2 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | 2 |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | - |
| | Londonderry | 5 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 4 |
| | Newtownards | 3 |
| | Omagh | 1 |
| | Strabane | - |
| Total | 30 | |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 1 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | - |
| | Craigavon | - |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | - |
| | Londonderry | - |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | - |
| | Newtownards | - |
| | Omagh | - |
| | Strabane | - |
| Total | 1 | |

Table D.7: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Court disposal | Non court disposal | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Cases | Antrim | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | - | - | - |
| | Ballymena | - | - | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 6 | - | 6 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | - | - |
| | Coleraine | - | 2 | 2 |
| | Craigavon | - | - | - |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | - |
| | Dungannon | - | - | - |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | - | - | - |
| | Londonderry | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - |
| | Newry | - | - | - |
| | Newtownards | - | - | - |
| | Omagh | 3 | - | 3 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - |
| | Total | 11 | 3 | 14 |
| Applications | Antrim | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | - | - | - |
| | Ballymena | - | - | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | - | 1 | 1 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | - | - |
| | Coleraine | - | - | - |
| | Craigavon | - | - | - |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | - |
| | Dungannon | - | - | - |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | - | - | - |
| | Londonderry | - | - | - |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - |
| | Newry | - | - | - |
| | Newtownards | - | - | - |
| | Omagh | - | - | - |
| | Strabane | - | - | - |
| | Total | - | 1 | 1 |

The average time from issue to disposal for criminal damage cases was 113 weeks in 2017. The corresponding time interval was 241 weeks in 2016. Caution needs to be exercised in comparing these figures due to the small number of cases.

Table D.8: Time intervals in weeks (average) for criminal damage cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Issue to disposal |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Cases | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 109 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | - |
| | Craigavon | - |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | - |
| | Londonderry | 58 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | - |
| | Newtownards | - |
| | Omagh | 158 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 113 |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | - |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | - |
| | Craigavon | - |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | - |
| | Londonderry | - |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | - |
| | Newtownards | - |
| | Omagh | - |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | - |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals.

Section 3: Licences

There were 227 licence applications received in the county court in 2017, 11% more than were received in 2016 (204).

In 2017, 217 licence applications were disposed of, an increase of 1% from the previous year (214). Belfast accounted for 38% of licences received and 44% of licences disposed of in 2017, compared to 44% and 42% respectively in 2016.

Table D.9: Licences received and disposed of in 2017

| | Licences received | Licences disposed of |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Antrim | - | - |
| Armagh | - | - |
| Ballymena | - | - |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - |
| Belfast | 86 | 95 |
| Civil Processing Centre | - | - |
| Coleraine | 32 | 27 |
| Craigavon | 22 | 22 |
| Downpatrick | - | - |
| Dungannon | - | - |
| Enniskillen | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - |
| Lisburn | - | - |
| Londonderry | 16 | 11 |
| Magherafelt | - | - |
| Newry | 17 | 15 |
| Newtownards | 36 | 29 |
| Omagh | 18 | 18 |
| Strabane | - | - |
| Total | 227 | 217 |

Section 4: Ordinary civil bills

There were 10,600 ordinary civil bill cases received in 2017. There were also 4,804 applications received during the same period. The data in respect of both cases and applications are less than those of 2016, when there were 10,702 cases received and 5,216 applications received in 2016. This represents a decrease in the number of cases by 1% and by 8% in the number of applications.

Table D.10: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | 33 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|------|
| | Armagh | 54 |
| | Ballymena | 31 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | 1 |
| | Belfast | 3334 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 3059 |
| | Coleraine | 694 |
| | Craigavon | 450 |
| | Downpatrick | 47 |
| | Dungannon | 14 |
| | Enniskillen | 5 |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 232 |
| | Londonderry | 477 |
| | Magherafelt | 9 |
| | Newry | 561 |
| | Newtownards | 906 |
| | Omagh | 692 |
| | Strabane | 1 |
| Total | 10600 | |
| Applications | Antrim | 36 |
| | Armagh | 22 |
| | Ballymena | 44 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 1299 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 1518 |
| | Coleraine | 187 |
| | Craigavon | 247 |
| | Downpatrick | 36 |
| | Dungannon | 1 |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 154 |
| | Londonderry | 221 |
| | Magherafelt | 3 |
| | Newry | 261 |
| | Newtownards | 423 |
| | Omagh | 352 |
| | Strabane | - |
| Total | 4804 | |

The number of ordinary civil bill cases where Notices of Intention to Defend were received has decreased from 7,335 in 2016 to 7,320 in 2017, representing a decrease in business of less than 1% (Table D.11). The civil bills are assigned to each judge type based on the amount claimed, and the distribution of civil bills changed alongside the increase in the financial limit of the County Court to £30,000, in February 2013. At this point the upper threshold for a district judge case moved from £5,000 to £10,000 and as a result District Judges were assigned 58% of civil bills with an NID lodged in 2017, as opposed to 33% in 2012.

Table D.11: Number of ordinary civil bill cases with Notice of Intention to Defend by judicial level in 2017

| | County court judge level | District judge level | Total |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Antrim | 8 | 20 | 28 |
| Armagh | 21 | 31 | 52 |
| Ballymena | 7 | 18 | 25 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 1631 | 1503 | 3134 |
| Civil Processing Centre | 92 | 110 | 202 |
| Coleraine | 281 | 375 | 656 |
| Craigavon | 131 | 295 | 426 |
| Downpatrick | 12 | 20 | 32 |
| Dungannon | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| Enniskillen | - | 2 | 2 |
| Limavady | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | 72 | 150 | 222 |
| Londonderry | 145 | 325 | 470 |
| Magherafelt | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| Newry | 182 | 346 | 528 |
| Newtownards | 223 | 634 | 857 |
| Omagh | 248 | 417 | 665 |
| Strabane | - | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 3060 | 4260 | 7320 |

The number of cases disposed of increased by 8%, from 9,172 cases in 2016 to 9,885 in 2017. Of the ordinary civil bill cases disposed of in 2017, 12% were default judgments. A further 25% were disposed of at district judge level compared with 34% disposed of at county court judge level (Table D.12). Comparable figures for 2016 were 8%, 28% and 35% respectively.

The increases in Default Judgements are primarily as a result of proceedings issued in bulk by two debt recovery companies, although there has also been increased activity during this period to address backlogs.

Table D.12: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Court result - CCJ | Court result - DJ | Non court disposals | Default judgment | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------|
| Cases | Antrim | 4 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 15 |
| | Armagh | 22 | 18 | 30 | - | 70 |
| | Ballymena | 5 | 11 | 6 | 1 | 23 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | 1 | 1 | - | 2 |
| | Belfast | 1816 | 1080 | 1014 | 12 | 3922 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | - | 205 | 1120 | 1325 |
| | Coleraine | 160 | 264 | 345 | 3 | 772 |
| | Craigavon | 248 | 53 | 247 | 4 | 552 |
| | Downpatrick | 16 | 4 | 8 | - | 28 |
| | Dungannon | 24 | 4 | 19 | - | 47 |
| | Enniskillen | 7 | 1 | 7 | - | 15 |
| | Limavady | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 108 | 18 | 101 | 3 | 230 |
| | Londonderry | 103 | 217 | 151 | 5 | 476 |
| | Magherafelt | - | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| | Newry | 152 | 257 | 241 | - | 650 |
| | Newtownards | 447 | 216 | 313 | 4 | 980 |
| | Omagh | 210 | 324 | 232 | 8 | 774 |
| | Strabane | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Total | 3322 | 2476 | 2926 | 1161 | 9885 |
| Applications | Antrim | 10 | 4 | 11 | - | 25 |
| | Armagh | 2 | - | 8 | - | 10 |
| | Ballymena | 10 | 3 | 12 | - | 25 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 202 | 52 | 542 | - | 796 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | - | 136 | - | 136 |
| | Coleraine | 39 | 27 | 62 | - | 128 |
| | Craigavon | 29 | 6 | 84 | - | 119 |
| | Downpatrick | 20 | - | 6 | - | 26 |
| | Dungannon | - | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 9 | 1 | 22 | - | 32 |
| | Londonderry | 17 | 20 | 92 | - | 129 |
| | Magherafelt | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| | Newry | 36 | 26 | 69 | - | 131 |
| | Newtownards | 55 | 11 | 99 | - | 165 |
| | Omagh | 19 | 31 | 124 | - | 174 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 448 | 182 | 1268 | - | 1898 |

CCJ and DJ split based on the judicial level assigned to the final sitting date, i.e. CCJ will include DJ sitting as a DCCJ.

Table D.13 shows the amount awarded for ordinary civil bills during 2017. Over a third of civil bills (36%) were awarded between £3,000-14,999.

Table D.13: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded in 2017

| | | No Value | Less than £3000 | £3000-14999 | £15000-29999 | £30000 and over | Total |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------|
| Cases | Antrim | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | - | 9 |
| | Armagh | 25 | 2 | 13 | - | - | 40 |
| | Ballymena | 6 | 5 | 5 | - | - | 16 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| | Belfast | 1396 | 602 | 851 | 46 | 1 | 2896 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Coleraine | 92 | 127 | 189 | 16 | - | 424 |
| | Craigavon | 71 | 103 | 122 | 5 | - | 301 |
| | Downpatrick | 9 | 3 | 8 | - | - | 20 |
| | Dungannon | 14 | 6 | 6 | 2 | - | 28 |
| | Enniskillen | 4 | - | 4 | - | - | 8 |
| | Limavady | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 34 | 36 | 49 | 7 | - | 126 |
| | Londonderry | 99 | 86 | 123 | 12 | - | 320 |
| | Magherafelt | - | 2 | 1 | - | - | 3 |
| | Newry | 101 | 132 | 162 | 14 | - | 409 |
| | Newtownards | 145 | 186 | 309 | 22 | 1 | 663 |
| | Omagh | 169 | 125 | 223 | 17 | - | 534 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Total | | 2167 | 1420 | 2067 | 142 | 2 | 5798 |

Excludes cases that were adjourned generally, withdrawn, dismissed, default judgments or had office disposals.

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

On average, it took 58 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal for civil bill cases to progress through the county court in 2017 (Table D.14). This compares with the 57 weeks the previous year.

Table D.14: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases disposed of in 2017

| | Issue to disposal |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cases | |
| Antrim | 71 |
| Armagh | 77 |
| Ballymena | 118 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 15 |
| Belfast | 63 |
| Civil Processing Centre | 60 |
| Coleraine | 46 |
| Craigavon | 50 |
| Downpatrick | 22 |
| Dungannon | 290 |
| Enniskillen | 333 |
| Limavady | - |
| Lisburn | 72 |
| Londonderry | 49 |
| Magherafelt | 35 |
| Newry | 52 |
| Newtownards | 31 |
| Omagh | 68 |
| Strabane | - |
| Total | 58 |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals and office disposals.

During 2017 a civil pilot was commenced in Armagh to target old outstanding cases from across NI in an effort to reduce backlogs and promote disposal of civil business. As a consequence, a number of very old cases were disposed during the period and this has therefore affected the average times. In the majority of these cases the case was struck out as it had been settled but the court was not informed.

The average time interval in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2017 was 13 weeks, one week more than the length of time for applications disposed of in 2016, which was 12 weeks.

Table D.15: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2017

| | Issue to disposal |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Applications | |
| Antrim | 11 |
| Armagh | 11 |
| Ballymena | 12 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - |
| Belfast | 13 |
| Civil Processing Centre | - |
| Coleraine | 17 |
| Craigavon | 22 |
| Downpatrick | 6 |
| Dungannon | - |
| Enniskillen | - |
| Limavady | - |
| Lisburn | 12 |
| Londonderry | 11 |
| Magherafelt | 2 |
| Newry | 16 |
| Newtownards | 8 |
| Omagh | 12 |
| Strabane | - |
| Total | 13 |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals and office disposals.

Section 5: Equity

During 2017, there were 135 equity cases received, a decrease of less than one per cent from 2016 (136 equity cases). There were also 60 equity applications received during 2017, a decrease of 22% from 2016 (77 equity applications).

Table D.16: Equity cases and applications received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | - |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| | Armagh | 2 |
| | Ballymena | 3 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 20 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 15 |
| | Coleraine | 17 |
| | Craigavon | 9 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 2 |
| | Londonderry | 8 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 14 |
| | Newtownards | 15 |
| | Omagh | 30 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 135 |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | 1 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 5 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 5 |
| | Coleraine | 3 |
| | Craigavon | 1 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 1 |
| | Londonderry | 7 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 6 |
| | Newtownards | 5 |
| | Omagh | 26 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 60 |

Table D.17 shows that there were 104 equity cases disposed of in 2017 which is 14% more than the 91 cases disposed of in 2016. During 2017, the majority of equity cases were disposed of in court (77%). 82% of cases were disposed of in court during 2016.

Table D.17: Equity cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Court result | Non court disposals | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-------|
| Cases | Antrim | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Ballymena | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 12 | 2 | 14 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | 1 | 1 |
| | Coleraine | 7 | 1 | 8 |
| | Craigavon | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| | Downpatrick | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Dungannon | - | 1 | 1 |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 2 | - | 2 |
| | Londonderry | 8 | - | 8 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - |
| | Newry | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| | Newtownards | 10 | 1 | 11 |
| | Omagh | 22 | 9 | 31 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - |
| | Total | 80 | 24 | 104 |
| Applications | Antrim | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | - | - | - |
| | Ballymena | - | - | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | 2 | 2 |
| | Coleraine | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Craigavon | - | - | - |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | - |
| | Dungannon | - | - | - |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Londonderry | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - |
| | Newry | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| | Newtownards | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| | Omagh | 11 | 4 | 15 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - |
| | Total | 25 | 17 | 42 |

Table D.18 shows the time intervals for equity cases and applications from date of issue to date of disposal for each county court division. On average, for cases disposed of during 2017, it took 68 weeks for an equity case to progress through the county courts. In 2016, the corresponding figure was 64 weeks.

Table D.18: Average time intervals in weeks for equity cases disposed of in 2017

| | | Issue to disposal |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Cases | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | 25 |
| | Ballymena^[1] | 268 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 47 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 58 |
| | Craigavon | 49 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 26 |
| | Londonderry | 75 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 64 |
| | Newtownards | 69 |
| | Omagh | 77 |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | 68 | |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 41 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 8 |
| | Craigavon | - |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 2 |
| | Londonderry | 61 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 28 |
| | Newtownards | 14 |
| | Omagh | 11 |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | 19 | |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals. ^[1] Includes one complex case from 2008.

Section 6: Ejectment

There were 1105 ejectment cases received during 2017 compared with 989 in 2016 – an increase of 12% (Table D.19).

36% of ejectment cases were received in Belfast in 2017, compared to 52% the previous year.

Table D.19: Ejectment cases received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | - |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----|
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | 1 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 394 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 177 |
| | Coleraine | 55 |
| | Craigavon | 45 |
| | Downpatrick | 6 |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 97 |
| | Londonderry | 65 |
| | Magherafelt | 1 |
| | Newry | 35 |
| | Newtownards | 153 |
| Omagh | 76 | |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | 1105 | |

In 2017, there were 797 ejectment cases disposed of in the county court compared with 750 the previous year – an increase of 6% (Table D.20). The majority of ejectment cases were disposed of in court – 99% of cases in 2017, similar to 2016 (98%).

Table D.20: Ejectment cases disposed of in 2017

| | | Court result | Non court disposals | Total |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| Cases | Antrim | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Ballymena | 1 | - | 1 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 324 | 2 | 326 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | 1 | 1 |
| | Coleraine | 55 | - | 55 |
| | Craigavon | 50 | 1 | 51 |
| | Downpatrick | 5 | - | 5 |
| | Dungannon | - | - | - |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 64 | 1 | 65 |
| | Londonderry | 49 | - | 49 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - |
| | Newry | 42 | 1 | 43 |
| | Newtownards | 134 | - | 134 |
| | Omagh | 61 | 5 | 66 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | |
| Total | 786 | 11 | 797 | |

Table D.21 shows the average time in weeks for ejectment cases to progress through the courts during 2017. On average, it took 22 weeks for a case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2017 compared to 19 weeks the previous year.

Table D.21: Average time intervals in weeks for ejectment cases disposed of in 2017

| | Issue to disposal | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----|
| Cases | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | 70 |
| | Ballymena | 17 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 22 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 20 |
| | Craigavon | 28 |
| | Downpatrick | 14 |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 30 |
| | Londonderry | 21 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 19 |
| | Newtownards | 18 |
| | Omagh | 26 |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | 22 | |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals, and office disposals.

Section 7: Small claims

Table D.22 shows that the number of small claims cases received was 11,720 in 2017, an increase of 16% from 10,073 in 2016. There were 219 applications received in small claims during 2017 compared with 234 in 2016 – a decrease of 6%.

The increase in small claims received primarily relates to proceedings issued by two debt recovery companies, who contacted the Civil Processing Centre to confirm they would be lodging approximately 1,000 proceedings per month to recover outstanding debt in Northern Ireland. Approximately 70% of this debt will be pursued through the small claims court and the remainder through the civil bills court.

Table D.22: Number of small claims cases and applications received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | 3 |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------|
| | Armagh | 18 |
| | Ballymena | 25 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 588 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 10316 |
| | Coleraine | 126 |
| | Craigavon | 98 |
| | Downpatrick | 11 |
| | Dungannon | 2 |
| | Enniskillen | 14 |
| | Limavady | 1 |
| | Lisburn | 45 |
| | Londonderry | 94 |
| | Magherafelt | 1 |
| | Newry | 101 |
| | Newtownards | 163 |
| | Omagh | 114 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 11720 |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | 1 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 84 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 28 |
| | Coleraine | 28 |
| | Craigavon | 9 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 7 |
| | Londonderry | 9 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 17 |
| | Newtownards | 20 |
| | Omagh | 16 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 219 |

In 2017, there were 1,252 small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received which was a decrease of less than one percent from the previous year (1,258).

Table D.23: Number of small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received in 2017

| Cases | Antrim | 3 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|------|
| | Armagh | 19 |
| | Ballymena | 26 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 494 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | 16 |
| | Coleraine | 115 |
| | Craigavon | 92 |
| | Downpatrick | 9 |
| | Dungannon | 3 |
| | Enniskillen | 15 |
| | Limavady | 1 |
| | Lisburn | 41 |
| | Londonderry | 84 |
| | Magherafelt | 1 |
| | Newry | 85 |
| | Newtownards | 145 |
| Omagh | 103 | |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | | 1252 |

In total, 9,462 small claims cases were disposed of in 2017. This was an increase of 13% on the 8,389 cases disposed of during 2016 (Table D.24).

Table D.24: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed of in 2017

| | | Court disposal | Non court disposal | Default judgment | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|-------|
| Cases | Antrim | 3 | - | - | 3 |
| | Armagh | 17 | 8 | - | 25 |
| | Ballymena | 18 | 5 | - | 23 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 331 | 203 | 17 | 551 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | 1872 | 6188 | 8060 |
| | Coleraine | 104 | 34 | 6 | 144 |
| | Craigavon | 68 | 38 | 3 | 109 |
| | Downpatrick | 6 | 4 | - | 10 |
| | Dungannon | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| | Enniskillen | 12 | 4 | - | 16 |
| | Limavady | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| | Lisburn | 29 | 10 | 3 | 42 |
| | Londonderry | 85 | 19 | 3 | 107 |
| | Magherafelt | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| | Newry | 69 | 20 | 4 | 93 |
| | Newtownards | 119 | 51 | 1 | 171 |
| | Omagh | 77 | 24 | 2 | 103 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 943 | 2292 | 6227 | 9462 |
| Applications | Antrim | - | - | - | - |
| | Armagh | - | - | - | - |
| | Ballymena | - | - | - | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - |
| | Belfast | 55 | 22 | - | 77 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - | 6 | - | 6 |
| | Coleraine | 10 | 4 | - | 14 |
| | Craigavon | 8 | - | - | 8 |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | - | - |
| | Dungannon | - | - | - | - |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | - | - |
| | Limavady | - | - | - | - |
| | Lisburn | 6 | 1 | - | 7 |
| | Londonderry | 5 | - | - | 5 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | - | - |
| | Newry | 12 | 4 | - | 16 |
| | Newtownards | 13 | 7 | - | 20 |
| | Omagh | 11 | 1 | - | 12 |
| | Strabane | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 120 | 45 | - | 165 |

Table D.25 shows that during 2017, it took on average 22 weeks for a small claims case to progress from date of issue to date of disposal, more than in 2016 (21 weeks).

Table D.25: Average time intervals in weeks for small claims cases disposed of in 2017

| | | Issue to disposal |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Cases | Antrim | 18 |
| | Armagh | 21 |
| | Ballymena | 25 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 20 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 24 |
| | Craigavon | 33 |
| | Downpatrick | 15 |
| | Dungannon | 8 |
| | Enniskillen | 22 |
| | Limavady | 33 |
| | Lisburn | 24 |
| | Londonderry | 17 |
| | Magherafelt | 6 |
| | Newry | 19 |
| | Newtownards | 31 |
| | Omagh | 18 |
| | Strabane | - |
| | Total | 22 |
| Applications | Antrim | - |
| | Armagh | - |
| | Ballymena | - |
| | Banbridge@Newry | - |
| | Belfast | 7 |
| | Civil Processing Centre | - |
| | Coleraine | 8 |
| | Craigavon | 15 |
| | Downpatrick | - |
| | Dungannon | - |
| | Enniskillen | - |
| | Limavady | - |
| | Lisburn | 8 |
| | Londonderry | 7 |
| | Magherafelt | - |
| | Newry | 11 |
| | Newtownards | 7 |
| | Omagh | 16 |
| Strabane | - | |
| Total | 9 | |

Excludes default judgments, non-court disposals and office disposals.

Section 8: Divorce cases

There were 1,292 decrees granted in undefended divorce cases in the county court in 2017 (Table D.26). The number of decrees granted has decreased by 26% from 1,742 in 2016.

Table D.26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted in 2017

| | 2 years with consent | 5 years separation | Adultery | Unreasonable behaviour | Combination of grounds/ other | Total |
|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Antrim | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | 8 | 7 | 1 | - | 3 | 19 |
| Ballymena | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 186 | 148 | 3 | 23 | 26 | 386 |
| Coleraine | 107 | 73 | 4 | 33 | 16 | 233 |
| Craigavon | 81 | 61 | 3 | 10 | 10 | 165 |
| Downpatrick | 59 | 35 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 108 |
| Dungannon | 4 | 6 | - | 1 | 4 | 15 |
| Enniskillen | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Londonderry | 58 | 60 | - | 8 | 9 | 135 |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | 31 | 19 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 61 |
| Newtownards | 29 | 22 | - | 4 | 3 | 58 |
| Omagh | 47 | 48 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 112 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 610 | 479 | 15 | 101 | 87 | 1292 |

Table D.27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2017

| | 2 years with consent | 5 years separation | Adultery | Unreasonable behaviour | Combination of grounds/ other | Total |
|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Antrim | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | 34 | 25 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 72 |
| Ballymena | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 173 | 134 | 1 | 24 | 18 | 350 |
| Coleraine | 103 | 81 | 4 | 33 | 20 | 241 |
| Craigavon | 91 | 62 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 177 |
| Downpatrick | 42 | 24 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 75 |
| Dungannon | 10 | 15 | - | 3 | 4 | 32 |
| Enniskillen | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | 3 | - | - | 1 | - | 4 |
| Londonderry | 55 | 60 | 2 | 12 | 8 | 137 |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | 24 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 44 |
| Newtownards | 56 | 35 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 105 |
| Omagh | 33 | 29 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 75 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 627 | 478 | 16 | 106 | 91 | 1318 |

In 2017, there were 1,318 decrees absolute issued compared with 1,691 the previous year – a decrease of 22%.

Tables D.28 and D.29 show that there were 181 matrimonial applications received and 160 disposed of during 2017. Comparable figures in 2016 were 300 and 166 respectively.

Table D.28: Matrimonial applications received in 2017

| | Ancillary relief | Matrimonial application | Other | Total |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Antrim | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | 4 | - | 1 | 5 |
| Ballymena | 13 | - | 1 | 14 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 22 | 1 | 1 | 24 |
| Coleraine | 33 | 2 | 4 | 39 |
| Craigavon | 19 | - | 1 | 20 |
| Downpatrick | - | - | - | - |
| Dungannon | 2 | - | - | 2 |
| Enniskillen | - | - | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Londonderry | 23 | 2 | 4 | 29 |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | 18 | - | 2 | 20 |
| Newtownards | 10 | 1 | - | 11 |
| Omagh | 15 | 1 | - | 16 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 160 | 7 | 14 | 181 |

Table D.29: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2017

| | Ancillary relief | Matrimonial application | Other | Total |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Antrim | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | 20 | - | - | 20 |
| Ballymena | 9 | - | 1 | 10 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | 16 | 1 | - | 17 |
| Coleraine | 30 | 1 | 2 | 33 |
| Craigavon | 12 | - | 2 | 14 |
| Downpatrick | - | - | - | - |
| Dungannon | 5 | - | - | 5 |
| Enniskillen | - | - | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | 5 | - | - | 5 |
| Londonderry | 17 | 2 | 4 | 23 |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | 10 | - | 2 | 12 |
| Newtownards | 11 | 2 | 1 | 14 |
| Omagh | 6 | 1 | - | 7 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 141 | 7 | 12 | 160 |

County court divorce petitions took on average 31 weeks from date of issue to the date decree nisi granted in 2017, more than the 30 weeks taken in 2016. Matrimonial applications took on average 40 weeks to progress through the county courts during 2017 compared to 36 weeks in 2016.

Table D.30: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2017

| | Issue to date decree nisi granted | Date decree nisi granted to date absolute issued |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Antrim | - | - |
| Armagh | 57 | 12 |
| Ballymena | - | - |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - |
| Belfast | 33 | 11 |
| Coleraine | 25 | 11 |
| Craigavon | 26 | 11 |
| Downpatrick | 24 | 11 |
| Dungannon | 37 | 17 |
| Enniskillen | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - |
| Lisburn | - | - |
| Londonderry | 36 | 12 |
| Magherafelt | - | - |
| Newry | 26 | 11 |
| Newtownards | 38 | 10 |
| Omagh | 33 | 12 |
| Strabane | - | - |
| Total | 31 | 11 |

Table D.31: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2017

| | Issue to disposal |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Antrim | - |
| Armagh | 54 |
| Ballymena | 37 |
| Banbridge@Newry | - |
| Belfast | 89 |
| Coleraine | 38 |
| Craigavon | 9 |
| Downpatrick | - |
| Dungannon | 82 |
| Enniskillen | - |
| Limavady | - |
| Lisburn | 60 |
| Londonderry | 31 |
| Magherafelt | - |
| Newry | 26 |
| Newtownards | 17 |
| Omagh | 3 |
| Strabane | - |
| Total | 40 |

Section 9: Court sitting days and court sitting times

Table D.32 shows that there were 4,246 court sitting days in 2017. This is a 2% decrease on the 4,328 court sitting days in 2016.

56% of the county court judges and district judges sitting time was spent on criminal cases, 28% of time was spent on civil cases and 17% of time was spent on family cases in 2017. In 2016, the proportion of time spent on each of these court areas was 57%, 27% and 16% respectively.

Table D.32: County court judge and district judge sitting days and court sitting times in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | Number of court sitting days | Average court sitting time | Total court time | Total court criminal time | Total court civil time | Total family time |
|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Antrim | 312 | 2:16 | 707:11 | 650:47 | 46:34 | 9:50 |
| Armagh | 67 | 2:36 | 173:46 | 12:15 | 157:24 | 4:07 |
| Ballymena | 24 | 4:00 | 96:11 | 0:00 | 88:41 | 7:30 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 5 | 1:13 | 6:04 | 6:04 | 0:00 | 0:00 |
| Belfast | 1568 | 2:51 | 4479:48 | 1996:50 | 1303:36 | 1179:22 |
| Coleraine | 80 | 3:06 | 248:32 | 50:47 | 154:55 | 42:50 |
| Craigavon | 429 | 2:42 | 1155:12 | 759:10 | 150:09 | 245:53 |
| Downpatrick | 239 | 1:57 | 467:47 | 407:45 | 45:27 | 14:35 |
| Dungannon | 363 | 3:29 | 1267:10 | 1037:31 | 122:48 | 106:51 |
| Enniskillen | 30 | 3:20 | 99:50 | 15:25 | 77:25 | 7:00 |
| Limavady | 6 | 2:54 | 17:25 | 1:30 | 12:30 | 3:25 |
| Lisburn | 47 | 3:06 | 146:05 | 34:35 | 99:35 | 11:55 |
| Londonderry | 407 | 2:41 | 1091:37 | 630:58 | 267:45 | 192:54 |
| Magherafelt | 12 | 2:36 | 31:15 | 0:00 | 28:30 | 2:45 |
| Newry | 404 | 2:38 | 1066:02 | 814:52 | 226:12 | 24:58 |
| Newtownards | 137 | 2:25 | 330:30 | 21:20 | 296:35 | 12:35 |
| Omagh | 97 | 3:13 | 312:32 | 104:12 | 134:40 | 73:40 |
| Strabane | 19 | 2:25 | 45:48 | 3:45 | 38:20 | 3:43 |
| Total | 4246 | 2:46 | 11742:45 | 6547:46 | 3251:06 | 1943:53 |

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.

During the year, a number of High Court Bail applications were heard by County Court Judges in the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court

Part E: The Magistrates' Court

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. Over half 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.

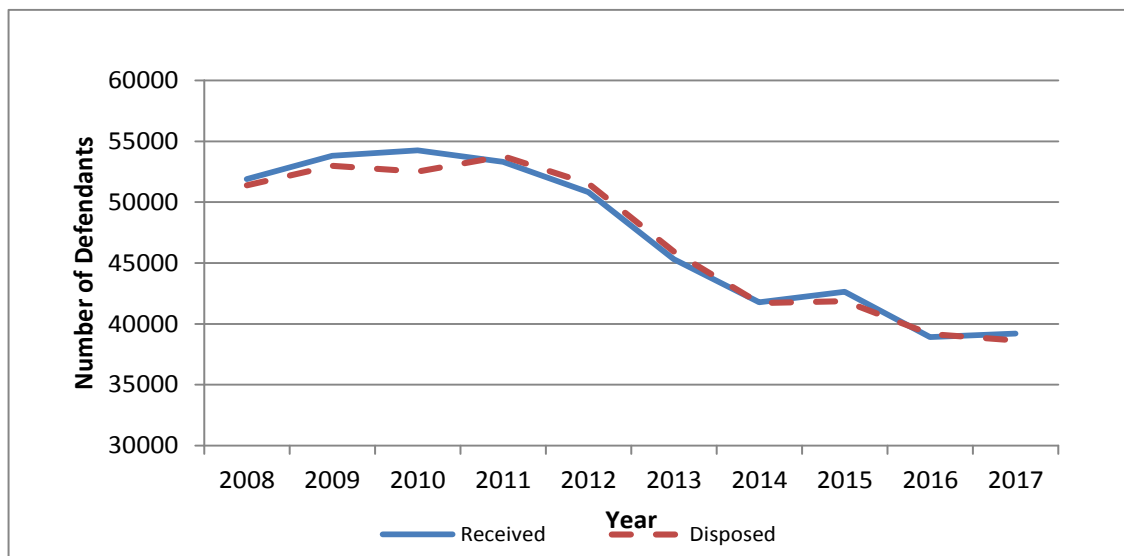
Magistrates' courts can deal with a limited number of civil cases as follows:-

- 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.

Key Facts

- The number of adult criminal defendants received and disposed have generally decreased over the last 10 years (see Figure E.1).

Figure E.1: Criminal Adult Magistrates Defendants Received and Disposed from 2008 to 2017



- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received have decreased by 13% and 32% respectively between 2013 and 2017 with an increase of 1% and an increase of 6% being observed respectively between 2016 and 2017. The decreases since 2013 are partly a result of the introduction of Penalty Notices of Disorder which were introduced on 6th June 2012. These are new diversionary disposals aimed at dealing with minor offences as a direct alternative to a prosecution before the court. The number of defendants received is affected by crime rates, Police arrests and the decision by the PPS to prosecute. For more information on Police and PPS figures, please follow the links below:
<https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/statistics>
<https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Statistics--Research-5021.html>
- Adult criminal disposals have decreased by 16% and Youth disposals have decreased by 32% between 2013 and 2017 with a decrease of 1% and an increase of 10% being observed respectively between 2016 and 2017.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in the Adult court increased by 6% and increased by 8% in Youth court between 2013 and 2017. However, between 2016 and 2017, average waiting times increased by less than 1% in the Adult court and increased by 7% in the Youth court.
- Civil & Family business received decreased annually between 2013 and 2016, but increased by 5% between 2016 and 2017, but there was an overall decrease of 13% between 2013 and 2017. Disposals have followed the same pattern as the receipts, decreasing each year between 2013 and 2016, with an overall decrease of 13%, but with an increase of 4% between 2016 and 2017.

Note: Received – number of defendants received into court by way of Summons or Police charge sheet.
 Disposed – number of defendants who have reached the end of the court process.

- Average waiting times between first hearing and disposal for Civil & Family business have fluctuated over the last five years, with an overall increase of 2% between 2013 and 2017.
- Experimental statistics on cracked and ineffective trials at the magistrates' court, relating to both Adult and Youth criminal defendants, have been published in Appendix 2.
- The link below provides comparative figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 12: Adult, youth and civil magistrates' courts 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Adult criminal defendants received | 45,313 | 41,764 | 42,645 | 38,916 | 39,202 |
| Adult criminal defendants disposed | 45,944 | 41,709 | 41,868 | 39,162 | 38,649 |
| Average waiting time between summons/charge and disposal – adults (wks) | 10.6 | 10.2 | 10.5 | 11.1 | 11.2 |
| Youth criminal defendants received | 2,241 | 2,035 | 1,780 | 1,438 | 1,518 |
| Youth criminal defendants disposed | 2,256 | 2,050 | 1,874 | 1,398 | 1,532 |
| Average waiting time between summons/charge and disposal – youths (wks) | 13.9 | 13.0 | 14.3 | 14.0 | 15.0 |
| Civil & Family business received | 5,768 | 5,569 | 4,962 | 4,797 | 5,035 |
| Civil & Family business disposed | 5,187 | 5,057 | 4,478 | 4,371 | 4,537 |
| Average civil and family waiting time between first hearing to disposal (wks) ^[1] | 6.5 | 6.2 | 6.2 | 7.0 | 6.6 |

[1] Information on the average civil and family waiting time is only available from 2007 onwards when this information was recorded on the ICOS system.

Magistrates Court – 2017 Data

Section 1: Business volumes received in the magistrates' court

In 2017, there were 39,202 adult defendants received, which represents a 1% increase from the 38,916 received in 2016. In the youth court, there were 1,518 defendants received, a 6% increase from the 1,438 received in 2016 (Table E.1).

Table E.1: Business volumes received in adult criminal, youth and civil courts in 2017

| | Number of adult defendants | Number of youth defendants | Number of civil applications |
|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Antrim | 1242 | 57 | 79 |
| Armagh | 1013 | 19 | 110 |
| Ballymena | 1866 | 70 | 359 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 691 | 17 | 73 |
| Belfast | 12318 | 443 | 1904 |
| Coleraine | 1698 | 119 | 182 |
| Craigavon | 2567 | 82 | 172 |
| Downpatrick | 1328 | 38 | 186 |
| Dungannon | 1754 | 32 | 131 |
| Enniskillen | 1084 | 46 | 102 |
| Limavady | 577 | 6 | 24 |
| Lisburn | 2174 | 67 | 314 |
| Londonderry | 3083 | 164 | 317 |
| Magherafelt | 706 | 32 | 39 |
| Newry | 2368 | 93 | 323 |
| Newtownards | 2925 | 188 | 518 |
| Omagh | 957 | 22 | 119 |
| Strabane | 851 | 23 | 83 |
| Total | 39202 | 1518 | 5035 |

Section 2: Adult criminal business disposed of

There were 38,649 defendants disposed of in 2017 (Table E.2), a decrease of 1% from the 39,162 disposed of in 2016. Belfast accounted for 32% of the business, the same proportion as it did in 2016.

Table E.2: Number of adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2017

| | Number of adult defendants |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Antrim | 1249 |
| Armagh | 969 |
| Ballymena | 1825 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 686 |
| Belfast | 12410 |
| Coleraine | 1648 |
| Craigavon | 2595 |
| Downpatrick | 1287 |
| Dungannon | 1669 |
| Enniskillen | 1130 |
| Limavady | 584 |
| Lisburn | 2053 |
| Londonderry | 2980 |
| Magherafelt | 706 |
| Newry | 2337 |
| Newtownards | 2789 |
| Omagh | 925 |
| Strabane | 807 |
| Total | 38649 |

Table E.3 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2017. In total, there were 83,408 charges disposed of, which is a decrease of 1% from 83,832 in 2016. PSNI/PPS prosecutions accounted for 86% of charges in 2017 (71,576), a greater percentage than the 85% in 2016 (71,055).

Table E.3: Number and type of charges brought for defendants disposed of in 2017

| | PSNI/PPS Prosecution | Departmental Prosecution | Fixed Penalty | Penalty notice for Disorder | Total |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Indictable charges | 2253 | 26 | - | - | 2279 |
| Hybrid charges | 24910 | 2080 | - | 2 | 26992 |
| Indictable triable summarily charges | 8813 | 29 | - | 24 | 8866 |
| Summary charges | 33266 | 9312 | 79 | 34 | 42691 |
| Other Summary charges | 2334 | 246 | - | - | 2580 |
| Total | 71576 | 11693 | 79 | 60 | 83408 |

Figures are based on the number of charges disposed.

The class on ICOS is based on the police classification. Major & minor motoring charges have been counted in either summary, indictable, indictable triable summarily or hybrid.

Table E.4 shows the outcomes of defendants disposed of in 2017. 38% of defendants pleaded guilty on all charges, a 1% increase on the proportion of those making the same plea in 2016.

Table E.4: Outcomes of defendants disposed of in 2017

| | PSNI/PPS Prosecution | Departmental Prosecution | Fixed Penalty | Penalty notice for Disorder | Total |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Committed to Crown Court | 1455 | 10 | - | - | 1465 |
| Plea of guilty on all charges | 13378 | 1491 | - | - | 14869 |
| All charges withdrawn | 5141 | 2803 | - | - | 7944 |
| Fixed Penalty default | - | - | 79 | - | 79 |
| Penalty Notice for Disorder Default | - | - | - | 60 | 60 |
| Plea not guilty – found guilty on at least one charge | 7452 | 4819 | - | - | 12271 |
| Plea not guilty – acquitted on all charges | 1729 | 232 | - | - | 1961 |
| Total | 29155 | 9355 | 79 | 60 | 38649 |

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.5 shows there were 111,036 final orders granted in the magistrates' adult court in 2017, an increase of 2% from 108,912 in 2016.

Table E.5: Types of disposals from the magistrates' adult court in 2017

| | Northern Ireland |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Community Orders | 4603 |
| Custodial Orders | 11905 |
| Monetary Orders | 31666 |
| Non-Custodial Orders | 3862 |
| Road Traffic Orders | 17979 |
| Withdrawn | 23570 |
| Final Orders | 145 |
| Other Final Orders | 17306 |
| Total | 111036 |

Figures are based on the number of final orders.

Table E.6 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland for adult defendants disposed of in 2017 between the date of summons and the date of first hearing was 5 weeks (5 weeks in 2016 also). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and disposal was 6 weeks. This was the same as in 2016.

Table E.6: Average waiting times in weeks for adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2017

| | Summons/ charge to first hearing (weeks) | First hearing to finding (weeks) | First hearing to disposal (weeks) | Summons to disposal (weeks) |
|------------------------|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Antrim | 5.4 | 4.2 | 4.8 | 10.1 |
| Armagh | 5.1 | 5.3 | 6.2 | 11.2 |
| Ballymena | 5.2 | 4.3 | 5.0 | 10.2 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 4.4 | 5.5 | 5.9 | 10.3 |
| Belfast | 5.2 | 5.3 | 6.1 | 11.4 |
| Coleraine | 4.9 | 4.9 | 5.5 | 10.4 |
| Craigavon | 4.6 | 4.2 | 4.8 | 9.4 |
| Downpatrick | 4.3 | 5.5 | 6.4 | 10.7 |
| Dungannon | 5.2 | 4.1 | 4.8 | 10.0 |
| Enniskillen | 5.0 | 6.3 | 7.2 | 12.1 |
| Limavady | 5.1 | 4.1 | 5.4 | 10.5 |
| Lisburn | 4.4 | 5.0 | 6.0 | 10.4 |
| Londonderry | 5.1 | 5.4 | 6.4 | 11.5 |
| Magherafelt | 5.7 | 4.5 | 4.9 | 10.6 |
| Newry | 9.0 | 5.9 | 6.1 | 15.1 |
| Newtownards | 5.3 | 5.9 | 7.1 | 12.3 |
| Omagh | 4.9 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 9.5 |
| Strabane | 5.0 | 3.5 | 4.1 | 9.1 |
| Total | 5.3 | 5.1 | 5.9 | 11.2 |

Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences are excluded.

Section 3: Youth criminal business disposed of

In 2017, there were 1,532 youth defendants disposed of (Table E.7), with 30% disposed of in Belfast. This represents a 10% increase from the total disposed of in 2016 (1,398), when 33% were disposed of in Belfast.

Table E.7: Number of defendants disposed of in the youth court in 2017

| | Number of youth defendants |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Antrim | 62 |
| Armagh | 23 |
| Ballymena | 75 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 18 |
| Belfast | 452 |
| Coleraine | 105 |
| Craigavon | 75 |
| Downpatrick | 22 |
| Dungannon | 39 |
| Enniskillen | 51 |
| Limavady | 9 |
| Lisburn | 59 |
| Londonderry | 176 |
| Magherafelt | 28 |
| Newry | 81 |
| Newtownards | 218 |
| Omagh | 21 |
| Strabane | 18 |
| Total | 1532 |

Table E.8 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2017 for youth defendants. In total, there were 3,712 charges disposed of in 2017. This represents an 11% increase from 3,331 charges disposed in 2016.

Table E.8: Number and type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of in 2017

| | PSNI/PPS Prosecution | Departmental Prosecution | Fixed Penalty | Total |
|---|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Indictable charges | 152 | - | - | 152 |
| Hybrid charges | 1556 | 59 | - | 1615 |
| Indictable triable summarily charges | 643 | - | - | 643 |
| Summary charges | 1277 | 16 | - | 1293 |
| Other Summary charges | 5 | 4 | - | 9 |
| Total | 3633 | 79 | - | 3712 |

Figures are based on the number of charges disposed.

The class on ICOS is based on the police classification. Major & minor motoring charges have been counted in either summary, indictable, indictable triable summarily or hybrid.

Table E.9 shows the outcomes for youth defendants disposed of in 2017. 52% of youth defendants pleaded guilty on all charges compared with 46% in 2016.

Table E.9: Outcomes for youth defendants disposed of in 2017

| | PSNI/PPS Prosecution | Departmental Prosecution | Fixed Penalty | Total |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|-------|
| Committed to the Crown Court | 19 | - | - | 19 |
| Plea of guilty on all charges | 795 | 1 | - | 796 |
| All charges withdrawn | 355 | 4 | - | 359 |
| Fixed Penalty default | - | - | - | - |
| Plea not guilty – found guilty on at least one charge | 257 | 1 | - | 258 |
| Plea not guilty – acquitted on all charges | 81 | 19 | - | 100 |
| Total | 1507 | 25 | - | 1532 |

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.10 shows there were 4,548 final orders granted in the magistrates' youth court in 2017. This represents a 12% increase from 4,054 granted in 2016.

Table E.10: Types of disposals from the youth courts in 2017

| | Northern Ireland |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Community Orders | 1322 |
| Custodial Orders | 610 |
| Monetary Orders | 186 |
| Non-Custodial Orders | 319 |
| Road Traffic Orders | 284 |
| Withdrawn | 1124 |
| Final Orders | 28 |
| Other Final Orders | 675 |
| Total | 4548 |

Figures are based on the number of final orders.

Table E.11 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland for youth defendants disposed of in the youth courts in 2017. The average waiting time between the date of summons to the date of first hearing in 2017 was 3 weeks (3 weeks in 2016). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and finding was 7 weeks (7 weeks in 2016). The average waiting time from date of first hearing to date of disposal was 12 weeks (11 weeks in 2016).

Table E.11: Average waiting times in weeks for youth defendants disposed of in the youth courts in 2017

| | Summons/ charge to first hearing (weeks) | First hearing to finding (weeks) | First hearing to disposal (weeks) | Summons to disposal (weeks) |
|-----------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Antrim | 3.2 | 4.1 | 9.4 | 12.6 |
| Armagh | 3.8 | 10.3 | 13.7 | 17.5 |
| Ballymena | 5.4 | 7.5 | 11.6 | 17.0 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 5.4 | 11.4 | 16.5 | 21.9 |
| Belfast | 3.2 | 7.8 | 12.7 | 15.8 |
| Coleraine | 3.2 | 3.6 | 8.2 | 11.4 |
| Craigavon | 4.3 | 7.7 | 10.8 | 15.1 |
| Downpatrick | 2.2 | 7.6 | 13.9 | 16.1 |
| Dungannon | 2.8 | 8.0 | 11.2 | 14.0 |
| Enniskillen | 3.2 | 7.7 | 12.3 | 15.6 |
| Limavady | 3.0 | 2.2 | 11.3 | 14.3 |
| Lisburn | 2.4 | 6.5 | 10.5 | 12.9 |
| Londonderry | 3.3 | 7.9 | 13.3 | 16.6 |
| Magherafelt | 2.0 | 6.0 | 10.4 | 12.5 |
| Newry | 4.0 | 5.8 | 8.2 | 12.2 |
| Newtownards | 3.3 | 5.6 | 11.8 | 15.1 |
| Omagh | 3.4 | 5.2 | 8.1 | 11.6 |
| Strabane | 4.0 | 9.0 | 12.1 | 16.1 |
| Total | 3.4 | 6.9 | 11.7 | 15.0 |

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

Section 4: Civil & Family business disposed of

There were 4,537 applications disposed of during 2017 (Table E.12). This represents a 4% increase from 4,371 applications disposed of in 2016.

Table E.12: Number of civil & family applications disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2017

| | Total |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Antrim | 82 |
| Armagh | 107 |
| Ballymena | 344 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 73 |
| Belfast | 1629 |
| Coleraine | 158 |
| Craigavon | 156 |
| Downpatrick | 171 |
| Dungannon | 108 |
| Enniskillen | 92 |
| Limavady | 20 |
| Lisburn | 304 |
| Londonderry | 282 |
| Magherafelt | 40 |
| Newry | 304 |
| Newtownards | 491 |
| Omagh | 99 |
| Strabane | 77 |
| Total | 4537 |

Table E.13 shows the average waiting time in Northern Ireland in the civil and family magistrates' court from the date of issue to first hearing was 2 weeks (also 2 weeks in 2016). The average waiting time from the date of first hearing to disposal was 7 weeks. This was also 7 weeks in 2016. The average waiting time from date of issue to disposal was 8 weeks, compared to 9 weeks in 2016.

Table E.13: Average waiting times in weeks in the civil and family magistrates' courts in 2017

| | Date of issue to first hearing (weeks) | Date of first hearing to disposal (weeks) | Date of issue to disposal (weeks) |
|-----------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Antrim | 1.7 | 12.5 | 14.2 |
| Armagh | 1.7 | 5.9 | 7.6 |
| Ballymena | 1.2 | 5.1 | 6.3 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 1.7 | 6.4 | 8.1 |
| Belfast | 1.7 | 7.3 | 9.0 |
| Coleraine | 2.1 | 4.7 | 6.8 |
| Craigavon | 1.4 | 4.8 | 6.2 |
| Downpatrick | 1.7 | 10.8 | 12.6 |
| Dungannon | 2.8 | 2.8 | 5.6 |
| Enniskillen | 1.6 | 3.9 | 5.5 |
| Limavady | 1.1 | 1.7 | 2.8 |
| Lisburn | 0.8 | 7.0 | 7.8 |
| Londonderry | 1.6 | 5.6 | 7.2 |
| Magherafelt | 2.0 | 7.7 | 9.7 |
| Newry | 2.0 | 5.5 | 7.5 |
| Newtownards | 1.5 | 7.5 | 9.0 |
| Omagh | 0.7 | 4.5 | 5.3 |
| Strabane | 1.5 | 3.8 | 5.3 |
| Total | 1.6 | 6.6 | 8.2 |

There were 4,342 applications under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order disposed of in 2017 (Table E.14), a 5% increase from the 4,142 disposed of in 2016. The majority of applications were granted (59%) in 2017. This proportion was 62% (2,567) the previous year.

Table E.14: Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in 2017

| | Granted | Dismissed or refused | Withdrawn | Vary discharge | Other | Total |
|---|----------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Non molestation | 2531 | 656 | 591 | 452 | 27 | 4257 |
| Occupation | 14 | 5 | 27 | 6 | 1 | 53 |
| Vary / Discharge non- molestation | - | 11 | 11 | 8 | 1 | 31 |
| Other Family Homes & Domestic Violence | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| Total | 2545 | 672 | 630 | 466 | 29 | 4342 |

Section 5: Court sittings and court sitting times

Tables E.15 and E.16 show the number of scheduled, additional and special court sittings and court sitting times in the magistrates' court in 2017. There were 4,149 scheduled and additional court sittings in the magistrates' court, a decrease of 3% from 4,268 scheduled and additional court sittings in 2016. The average court sitting time was 3 hours 30 minutes, a slightly higher sitting time than in 2016, which was 3 hours 25 minutes. There were 216 special criminal court sittings in 2017, with an average sitting time of 40 minutes, compared to 220 special sittings with an average sitting time of 35 minutes in 2016. There was one special family sitting in 2017 of one hour and 10 minutes, with no special family sittings in 2016.

Table E.15: Scheduled and additional sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by venue in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | Adult | | Youth | | Civil & Family | | Total number of sittings | |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | Number of sittings | Average sitting time | Number of sittings | Average sitting time | Number of sittings | Average sitting time | Number of sittings | Average sitting time |
| Antrim | 70 | 4:20 | 22 | 3:11 | 23 | 3:20 | 115 | 3:55 |
| Armagh | 86 | 3:22 | 15 | 1:49 | 5 | 4:22 | 106 | 3:11 |
| Ballymena | 100 | 4:22 | 23 | 3:57 | 56 | 3:01 | 179 | 3:53 |
| Banbridge@Newry | 58 | 3:36 | 9 | 1:43 | 2 | 4:33 | 69 | 3:23 |
| Belfast | 853 | 3:05 | 135 | 2:43 | 264 | 3:40 | 1252 | 3:10 |
| Coleraine | 135 | 3:48 | 18 | 3:03 | 35 | 4:35 | 188 | 3:52 |
| Craigavon | 133 | 4:49 | 17 | 3:06 | 67 | 3:19 | 217 | 4:13 |
| Downpatrick | 98 | 4:21 | 20 | 2:26 | 1 | 1:15 | 119 | 4:00 |
| Dungannon | 150 | 3:51 | 21 | 2:36 | 36 | 4:03 | 207 | 3:45 |
| Enniskillen | 107 | 4:33 | 20 | 4:31 | 2 | 3:30 | 129 | 4:31 |
| Limavady | 50 | 2:59 | - | - | - | - | 50 | 2:59 |
| Lisburn | 148 | 4:09 | 22 | 2:08 | 71 | 3:04 | 241 | 3:38 |
| Londonderry | 256 | 3:57 | 12 | 4:23 | 100 | 4:22 | 368 | 4:05 |
| Magherafelt | 54 | 3:34 | 9 | 1:57 | 4 | 1:36 | 67 | 3:14 |
| Newry | 125 | 3:19 | 20 | 2:21 | 64 | 3:56 | 209 | 3:25 |
| Newtownards | 215 | 3:11 | 25 | 3:53 | 143 | 2:34 | 383 | 3:00 |
| Omagh | 89 | 3:27 | 22 | 1:06 | 37 | 2:28 | 148 | 2:52 |
| Strabane | 89 | 3:24 | 11 | 3:06 | 2 | 1:38 | 102 | 3:20 |
| Total | 2816 | 3:37 | 421 | 2:50 | 912 | 3:28 | 4149 | 3:30 |

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 based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Table E.16: Special sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by venue in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | Adult Criminal | | Family | |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | Number of sittings | Average sitting time | Number of sittings | Average sitting time |
| Antrim | - | - | - | - |
| Armagh | - | - | - | - |
| Ballymena | 45 | 0:26 | - | - |
| Banbridge@Newry | - | - | - | - |
| Belfast | - | - | - | - |
| Coleraine | - | - | - | - |
| Craigavon | - | - | - | - |
| Downpatrick | - | - | - | - |
| Dungannon | - | - | - | - |
| Enniskillen | - | - | - | - |
| Limavady | - | - | - | - |
| Lisburn | 41 | 0:31 | - | - |
| Londonderry | 37 | 0:52 | - | - |
| Magherafelt | - | - | - | - |
| Newry | 32 | 0:43 | - | - |
| Newtownards | 28 | 0:27 | - | - |
| Omagh | 33 | 1:07 | 1 | 1:10 |
| Strabane | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 216 | 0:40 | 1 | 1:10 |

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 based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

Part F: The Children Order

The primary aim of the Children Order is to promote the welfare of children. The Order creates a clear, practical and consistent code of law governing the care, protection and upbringing of children and the provision of services to them and their families. It confers concurrent jurisdiction on all three tiers of the courts (High Court, county courts and magistrates' courts) so that subject to certain limited exceptions, any court can make any of the orders available under the Order. Under the Order the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration. When dealing with children, courts try to ensure that delay is avoided, and may only make an order if to do so is better than making no order at all.

All Children Order matters are dealt with at Family Proceedings Courts (which are part of the magistrates' courts), at Family Care Centres (which are part of the county courts) or in the Family Division (Office of Care & Protection) of the High Court. Matters affecting children are split into public and private law applications;

Public Law applications: are those brought by local authorities and include matters such as care, supervision and emergency protection orders.

Private Law applications: are those brought by private individuals, generally in connection with divorce or the parents' separation. Order types include parental responsibility, residence, financial provision and article 8 contact applications.

Key facts

- Applications lodged decreased each year between 2013 and 2015 before increasing by 2% between 2015 and 2016, and a further 2% between 2016 and 2017. Applications lodged decreased by 6% overall between 2013 and 2017.
- Applications disposed generally decreased between 2013 and 2017, apart from a spike in 2014, with an overall decrease of 12%. Between 2016 and 2017 applications disposed decreased by 5%.
- The number of children involved also generally decreased between 2013 and 2017, with an overall decrease of 9% between 2013 and 2017.
- **A change in the counting methodology for orders made was introduced in 2016, and therefore a comparison of figures in tables F.4, F.5 and F.6 with previous Judicial Statistics publications prior to 2015 should not be made. A back series of data based on the new counting methodology is available via the following link:**
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>
For more information please see details on page 18 or alternatively contact the statistician responsible for this publication.
- Own motion orders made increased by 31% from 979 in 2016 to 1,282 in 2017. Interim orders increased by 8% from 8,055 in 2016 to 8,719 in 2017, and final orders decreased by 6% from 7,248 in 2016 to 6,814 in 2017. The increase in interim orders was mainly due to the increase in interim care orders made.
- The number of court sitting days increased each year between 2013 and 2017. There was an overall increase of 15% between 2013 and 2017.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2016:
<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-judicial-statistics>

Summary Table 13: Children Order 2013 to 2017

| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Applications lodged | 5,777 | 5,715 | 5,223 | 5,332 | 5,443 |
| Applications disposed | 5,373 | 5,734 | 5,140 | 4,954 | 4,702 |
| Children involved ^[1] | 7,591 | 8,413 | 7,686 | 7,349 | 6,935 |
| Number of court sitting days | 1,712 | 1,815 | 1,936 | 1,953 | 1,970 |

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2015 this accounted for 815 children, in 2016 this accounted for 765 children of the total and in 2017 this accounted for 734 children of the total.

Children Order – 2017 Data

Section 1: Applications entered and disposed of

Tables F.1 and F.2, show that a total of 5,443 applications were received in designated courts in 2017. This was an increase of 2% from 5,332 in 2016. The majority of business (92%) was lodged in family proceedings courts, with 3% lodged in the High Court and 5% lodged in family care centres. In 2016, 91% of business was lodged in family proceedings courts, 4% in the High Court and 5% lodged in family care centres.

Of the 4,702 applications disposed of in 2017, the family proceedings court accounted for 86% of all business dealt with, the High Court accounted for 3% and family care centres accounted for 11%. In 2016, 85% of business was dealt with in the family proceedings court, while the High Court accounted for 3% and family care centres accounted for 12%. The total number of applications disposed of in 2017 decreased by 5% compared with 2016 (4,954).

Table F.1: Applications received and disposed of in 2017

| | | Number of applications received | Number of disposals |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Public Law^[1] | Family Proceedings Court | 732 | 462 |
| | Family Care Centre | 76 | 177 |
| | High Court | 51 | 49 |
| | Total | 859 | 688 |
| Private Law^[2] | Family Proceedings Court | 4256 | 3584 |
| | Family Care Centre | 196 | 335 |
| | High Court | 132 | 95 |
| | Total | 4584 | 4014 |

^[1]Public law = care, supervision, child assessment, education supervision, emergency protection orders, extensions, contact with children in care, secure accommodation.

^[2]Private law = residence, contact, specific issues, prohibited steps, parental responsibility, financial contribution, guardianship, family assistance, non-molestation and occupation orders.

Table F.2: Applications received and disposed of by venue in 2017

| | | Public Law ^[1] | | Private Law ^[2] | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | Number of applications entered | Number of disposals | Number of applications entered | Number of disposals |
| Family Proceedings Court | Antrim | - | - | 58 | 28 |
| | Armagh | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| | Ballymena | 85 | 45 | 328 | 311 |
| | Belfast | 205 | 126 | 1492 | 1240 |
| | Coleraine | 3 | 3 | 157 | 100 |
| | Craigavon | 87 | 43 | 292 | 224 |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | 13 | 13 |
| | Dungannon | 4 | 19 | 16 | 38 |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | 6 | 4 |
| | Lisburn | 25 | 21 | 328 | 258 |
| | Limavady | - | - | 5 | 5 |
| | Londonderry | 76 | 51 | 364 | 339 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | 4 | 3 |
| | Newry | 65 | 38 | 379 | 327 |
| | Newtownards | 88 | 80 | 612 | 571 |
| | Omagh | 94 | 36 | 195 | 118 |
| | Strabane | - | - | 5 | 3 |
| | Venue total | 732 | 462 | 4256 | 3584 |
| Family Care Centre | Belfast | 46 | 103 | 107 | 217 |
| | Coleraine | - | 1 | - | 2 |
| | Craigavon | 21 | 39 | 63 | 75 |
| | Dungannon | 2 | 10 | 17 | 23 |
| | Londonderry | 7 | 24 | 9 | 18 |
| | Venue total | 76 | 177 | 196 | 335 |
| High Court | Royal Courts of Justice | 51 | 49 | 132 | 95 |
| | Venue total | 51 | 49 | 132 | 95 |
| Northern Ireland | | 859 | 688 | 4584 | 4014 |

^[1]Public law = care, supervision, child assessment, education supervision, emergency protection orders, extensions, contact with children in care, secure accommodation.

^[2]Private law = residence, contact, specific issues, prohibited steps, parental responsibility, financial contribution, guardianship, family assistance, non-molestation and occupation orders.

Section 2: Reasons for transfer

Complexity accounted for 66% of the reasons quoted for the transfer of cases between courts in 2017 (Table F.3) – 5 percentage points more than in 2016 when 61% (408 out of 666 transfers) were recorded.

Table F.3: Reasons for transfer in 2017

| | Complexity | Consolidation | Convenience | Gravity | Jurisdiction | Returned to Lower Court | Separate Representation for Child | Urgency | Point of Law | Public Interest | Other | Total |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|---------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|--------------|-----------------|-------|-------|
| Family Proceedings | 435 | 88 | 10 | 15 | 92 | - | 3 | 8 | 3 | 1 | - | 655 |
| Family Care Centre | 87 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 | - | 5 | - | 1 | - | 125 |
| High Court | - | - | - | - | 2 | 6 | - | - | - | - | - | 8 |
| Northern Ireland | 522 | 101 | 12 | 19 | 99 | 14 | 3 | 13 | 3 | 2 | - | 788 |

Where a court tier / venue is omitted, this indicates a nil return for the period to date.

There may be more than one reason for each case.

From April 2009 data collection methods for transfers changed to incorporate a wider range of reasons.

Section 3: Own motion orders and interim orders

There were 1,282 own motion orders granted in 2017 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level. This was an increase of 31% when comparing with revised figures for 2016 (based on the new methodology) when 979 own motion orders were granted at the application level. To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.4. Appointment of Guardian ad Litem accounted for 24% and care orders accounted for 18% of orders made while Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 17% and residence orders counted for 9% of own motion orders in 2017 (Table F.4).

Table F.4: Own motion orders granted in 2017 (application level)

| | Own motion orders |
|---|-------------------|
| Appointment of Guardian ad Litem | 308 |
| Article 8 Contact | 216 |
| Care | 232 |
| Child Assessment | 8 |
| Contact with a child in care | - |
| Declaration of Parentage | 1 |
| Education Supervision | 3 |
| Emergency Protection | 11 |
| Extension of Emergency Protection Order | 4 |
| Family Assistance | - |
| Non-Molestation Order | - |
| Occupation Articles | - |
| Other orders, applications etc | 275 |
| Parental Responsibility | 5 |
| Prohibited Steps | 57 |
| Recovery | 1 |
| Residence | 112 |
| Secure Accommodation | 1 |
| Specific Issues | 44 |
| Supervision | 4 |
| Total | 1282 |

These figures may also include some interim orders.

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

There were 8,719 interim orders made during 2017, which was an increase of 8% on the previous year (8,055) based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level, 50% were interim care orders and 42% were interim/short term Article 8 Contact orders (Table F.5). To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.5.

Table F.5: Interim orders granted in 2017 (application level)

| | Interim orders |
|---|----------------|
| Appointment of Guardian ad Litem | - |
| Article 8 Contact | 3635 |
| Care | 4322 |
| Child Assessment | - |
| Contact with a child in care | 1 |
| Contact with a child in care - refusal | - |
| Contribution and other Financial | - |
| Education Supervision | - |
| Emergency Protection | - |
| Extension of Emergency Protection Order | - |
| Family Assistance | - |
| Financial Provision | - |
| Non-Molestation Order | - |
| Occupation Articles | - |
| Other orders, applications etc | - |
| Parental Responsibility | 4 |
| Prohibited Steps | 144 |
| Recovery | - |
| Residence | 356 |
| Secure Accommodation | 117 |
| Specific Issues | 19 |
| Supervision | 121 |
| Total | 8719 |

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Section 4: Final Orders Made

There were 6,814 final orders made in 2017, a decrease of 6% from 7,248 in 2016 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level (Table F.6). In 2017, Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 24% and residence orders 13%. To view the back series of orders data using the new methodology please click on the link below Table F.6.

Table F.6: Final Orders Made – 2017 (application level)

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Adjourn Generally | 26 |
| Article 3 Legal Aid granted | 383 |
| Article 8 Contact | 1615 |
| Care Order | 276 |
| Contact with a child in care | 22 |
| Declaration of Parentage | 26 |
| Discharge Emergency Protection Order | 1 |
| Discharge of a Care Order | 82 |
| Discharge Interim Contact Order | 80 |
| Discharge Non-Molestation/Occupation Order | 1 |
| Discharge Prohibited Steps Order | 25 |
| Discharge Residence Order | 22 |
| Dismissed | 325 |
| Education Supervision | 25 |
| Emergency Protection Order | 78 |
| Emergency Protection Order – out of hours | 6 |
| Extension of an Emergency Protection Order | 25 |
| Family Assistance Order | 4 |
| Financial Provision | 11 |
| Leave to assist/arrange for child to live abroad | 13 |
| Leave to change surname by which the child is known | 8 |
| Leave to remove child from United Kingdom | 1 |
| Non-molestation order | 1 |
| Order of No Order (Final Order) | 45 |
| Other Order | 1096 |
| Parental Responsibility Order | 134 |
| Prohibited steps | 191 |
| Recovery of a child | 4 |
| Refusal of Article 3 Legal Aid Certificate | 15 |
| Residence Order | 912 |
| Residence and Contact Order | 1 |
| Secure Accommodation Order | 16 |
| Specific Issues | 220 |
| Strike Out Order | 122 |
| Supervision Order | 91 |
| Terminating Appointment of Guardian Ad Litem | 381 |
| Withdrawn | 530 |
| Total | 6814 |

NB C18 Final Orders were removed as an order on ICOS in September 2009.

Please note that a new methodology to count orders at the **application level** was introduced. For more information please see page 18 of this publication. Comparisons with previous Judicial Statistics Publications should not be made. A back series of data using the new counting methodology is available at the following location:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Section 5: Age and gender of children

There were a total of 6,935 children involved in Children Order cases during 2017. In total, 35% of these were aged 0-4 and 32% were aged 5-8 (Table F.7).

Table F.7: Age and gender of children in applications disposed of in 2017

| | 0-4 | 5-8 | 9-12 | 13-16 | Total |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Male | 1263 | 1073 | 768 | 417 | 3521 |
| Female | 1164 | 1133 | 693 | 407 | 3397 |
| Unknown | 16 | 1 | - | - | 17 |
| Total ^[1] | 2443 | 2207 | 1461 | 824 | 6935 |

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2017 this accounted for 734 children of the total.

Section 6: Average time in weeks from lodgement to disposal by venue

The average disposal times for private law cases in 2017 was 33 weeks in the High Court, 42 weeks in the family care centres and 19 weeks in the family proceedings courts. In 2016, the corresponding average disposal times were 30 weeks in the High Court, 49 weeks in family care centres and 20 weeks in the family proceedings courts. Disposal times of cases in the High Court and the family care centres will include the time spent at the lower courts if cases were transferred (Table F.8).

Table F.8: Average time in weeks from lodgement to disposal by venue in 2017

| | | Public law | | Private law | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| | | Average time weeks | Number of cases | Average time weeks | Number of cases |
| Family Proceedings Court | Antrim | - | - | 15.5 | 28 |
| | Armagh | - | - | 8.0 | 2 |
| | Ballymena | 38.9 | 45 | 29.3 | 311 |
| | Belfast | 27.4 | 126 | 15.7 | 1240 |
| | Coleraine | 40.2 | 3 | 15.7 | 100 |
| | Craigavon | 20.2 | 43 | 14.5 | 224 |
| | Downpatrick | - | - | 7.8 | 13 |
| | Dungannon | 26.0 | 19 | 30.0 | 38 |
| | Enniskillen | - | - | 0.6 | 4 |
| | Lisburn | 25.8 | 21 | 18.7 | 258 |
| | Limavady | - | - | 9.7 | 5 |
| | Londonderry | 29.8 | 51 | 25.9 | 339 |
| | Magherafelt | - | - | 0.0 | 3 |
| | Newry | 20.4 | 38 | 18.1 | 327 |
| | Newtownards | 25.1 | 80 | 23.0 | 571 |
| | Omagh | 16.7 | 36 | 11.5 | 118 |
| | Strabane | - | - | 0.6 | 3 |
| Total | 26.3 | 462 | 19.3 | 3584 | |
| Family Care Centre | Belfast | 48.9 | 103 | 45.1 | 217 |
| | Coleraine | 90.7 | 1 | 25.1 | 2 |
| | Craigavon | 48.8 | 39 | 40.6 | 75 |
| | Dungannon | 54.4 | 10 | 23.8 | 23 |
| | Londonderry | 50.9 | 24 | 40.8 | 18 |
| | Total | 49.7 | 177 | 42.3 | 335 |
| High Court | Royal Courts of Justice | 55.6 | 49 | 33.3 | 95 |
| | Total | 55.6 | 49 | 33.3 | 95 |
| Northern Ireland | | 34.4 | 688 | 21.5 | 4014 |

The time shown will include the time taken at the first court tier.

Section 7: Court sittings and court sitting times

Table F.9 shows the number of sittings where any Children Order business was heard in court. During 2017, the family proceedings courts sat for over 2,838 hours, a decrease of less than 1% on the 2,852 hours in 2016. This was 56% of the total court sitting time for the Children Order in 2017 (59% in 2016).

Table F.9: Court sittings and court sitting times in 2017 (hrs : mins)

| | | Total court sitting time | Average Children Order court sitting time | Number of court sittings |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Family Proceedings Court | Antrim | 96:55 | 4:24 | 22 |
| | Ballymena | 159:47 | 2:51 | 56 |
| | Banbridge@Newry | 1:50 | 0:22 | 5 |
| | Belfast | 804:45 | 3:25 | 235 |
| | Coleraine | 153:38 | 4:31 | 34 |
| | Craigavon | 205:20 | 3:52 | 53 |
| | Dungannon | 158:17 | 3:52 | 41 |
| | Lisburn | 181:55 | 3:02 | 60 |
| | Londonderry | 391:29 | 4:10 | 94 |
| | Magherafelt | 0:50 | 0:25 | 2 |
| | Newry | 245:57 | 3:37 | 68 |
| | Newtownards | 349:20 | 2:32 | 138 |
| | Omagh | 88:23 | 2:20 | 38 |
| | Strabane | 0:15 | 0:15 | 1 |
| | Venue total | 2838:41 | 3:21 | 847 |
| Family Care Centre | Antrim | 0:30 | 0:15 | 2 |
| | Belfast | 1100:24 | 2:42 | 407 |
| | Coleraine | 11:50 | 5:55 | 2 |
| | Craigavon | 187:47 | 2:24 | 78 |
| | Dungannon | 45:05 | 1:40 | 27 |
| | Enniskillen | 2:15 | 2:15 | 1 |
| | Londonderry | 153:55 | 2:58 | 52 |
| | Omagh | 62:07 | 3:53 | 16 |
| | | Venue total | 1563:53 | 2:40 |
| High Court | Royal Courts of Justice | 711:30 | 1:19 | 538 |
| | Venue total | 711:30 | 1:19 | 538 |
| Northern Ireland | | 5114:04 | 2:36 | 1970 |

A court sitting 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.

Children Order sittings refer to a sitting where any Children Order business is heard. Total Children Order time includes all time spent on Children Order business.

High Court Judges, county court judges and district judges (magistrates' court) sit on Children Order business.

Part G: Miscellaneous

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

The Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) is essentially a centralised unit for enforcing judgments of the courts. The EJO's powers and procedures are contained in the Judgments Enforcement (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, and Judgment Enforcement Rules (Northern Ireland) 1981. The EJO also enforces other types of civil judgments such as those that are connected with the possession of land and property.

Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners

Social Security Commissioners hear appeals from Appeal Tribunals in relation to matters arising under the social security system. Child Support Commissioners hear appeals from Child Support Appeal Tribunals.

Pensions Appeal Tribunal

This Tribunal hears appeals from ex-servicemen or women who have had their claims for a War Pension rejected by the Secretary of State for Defence. Its jurisdiction covers Northern Ireland. The Tribunal is independent from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. Hearings have been in existence, as part of the Lord Chancellor's responsibility, since the War Pensions Act 1919.

The War Pensions Scheme started in 1918 and continues in respect of injuries that occurred before 5 April 2005. For injuries after 5 April 2005 a new Scheme, the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme applies. The Tribunal deals with appeals for both Schemes.

The War Pensions Scheme

- Whether a person is entitled to a War Pension;
- The percentage at which the War Pensions Agency has assessed a person's disablement; or
- Whether a person is entitled to an allowance e.g. for mobility needs.

Or

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

- Whether a person is entitled to an award; or
- The amount of the award.

These Tribunals deal with appeals against certain decisions the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency have made on War Disablement Pensions. A Tribunal normally consists of three members – a qualified lawyer, a qualified medical practitioner and a member who served in the armed forces. **It is independent of the Government and, in particular, the Ministry of Defence.** The law about rights to appeal is set out in the Pensions Appeal Tribunals Acts 1943 and 1949 (as amended), known as 'the Acts' and in the Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensation) Act 2004. You can appeal to the Tribunal against certain decisions taken by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. The decisions you can appeal against are set out in the Acts.

In general terms, Pensions Appeal Tribunals hear appeals under both the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the War Pensions Scheme. The War Pensions Scheme has three main types of appeals- “entitlement appeals”, “assessment appeals” and “specified decision appeals”.

What is an entitlement appeal?

An entitlement appeal is concerned with whether a person qualifies for a pension. For example, an entitlement appeal might decide whether or not your (or your late husband’s or wife’s) medical condition was caused, or made worse, by service in the armed forces or the merchant navy.

What is an assessment appeal?

An assessment appeal is about the percentage of disablement caused or made worse by service. This affects the amount, if any, of War Disablement Pension which might be paid but the Pensions Appeal Tribunal does not itself make decisions about the amount of money to be paid.

What is a specified decision appeal?

A specified decision appeal is concerned with entitlement to various allowances, supplements, extra pensions, awards, expenses, maintenance, deductions and payments. In this publication we cannot set out every specified decision, but a complete list is given in the Pensions Appeal Tribunals (Additional Rights of Appeal) Regulations 2001 (S.I.2001 No. 1031).

Coroners

Coroners are independent judicial officers who are available to deal with matters relating to deaths that may require further investigation to establish the cause of death.

Coroners in Northern Ireland can either be barristers or solicitors and are appointed by the Lord Chancellor.

What do Coroners do?

Coroners inquire into deaths reported to them that appear to be:

- unexpected or unexplained,
- as a result of violence,
- an accident,
- as a result of negligence,
- from any cause other than natural illness or disease, or
- in circumstances that require investigation.

The Coroner will seek to establish the cause of death and will make whatever inquiries are necessary to do this e.g. ordering a postmortem examination, obtaining witness statements and medical records, or holding an inquest.

The Coroners Service is headed by a High Court Judge and there are three Coroners. In addition, there are twelve salaried judges who hold the role of coroner concurrently with their other judicial post.

Key facts

- The number of notices of intention to enforce lodged and the number of applications for enforcement accepted both decreased over the last 5 years, and peaked in 2013 for notices of intention to enforce and in 2014 for applications for enforcement accepted. Between 2013 and 2016, notices of intention to enforce lodged decreased by 63% and applications for enforcement accepted decreased by 69% before increasing by 46% and 63% respectively, between 2016 and 2017. Across the five years notices of intention to enforce lodged and applications for enforcement accepted, decreased by 46% and 49% respectively.
- The number of applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners lodged and the number cleared have both fluctuated over the last five years. The number lodged decreased by 5% overall between 2013 and 2017 and the number cleared decreased by 19% overall.
- The number of appeals to Social Security Commissioners lodged decreased by 30% and the number cleared decreased by 8% in the last five years, with appeals lodged at their highest levels in 2013 and appeals cleared peaking in 2014.
- The number of inquests held relating to the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland decreased year on year between 2013 and 2015, before increasing by 40% between 2015 and 2017. There was an overall decrease of 6%, between 2013 and 2017.

Summary Table 14: Enforcement of Judgments Office, Social Security Commissioners, Pension Appeal Tribunals and Coroners 2013 to 2017

| | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| EJO | Notices of Intention to enforce lodged | 20,750 | 19,564 | 10,184 | 7,682 | 11,205 |
| | Applications for enforcement accepted | 11,667 | 12,651 | 6,623 | 3,675 | 5,987 |
| | Repossessions Completed ^[1] | 1,522 | 1,216 | 646 | 465 | 337 |
| Social Security Commissioners | Leave to appeal to Commissioners lodged | 133 | 178 | 163 | 132 | 126 |
| | Leave to appeal to Commissioners cleared | 155 | 161 | 152 | 165 | 126 |
| | Appeals to Commissioners lodged | 108 | 82 | 79 | 81 | 76 |
| | Appeals to Commissioners cleared | 86 | 95 | 77 | 92 | 79 |
| Pension Appeal Tribunals^[2] | Entitlement Appeals lodged | 33 | 50 | 49 | 46 | 39 |
| | Entitlement Appeals cleared | 39 | 34 | 33 | 47 | 46 |
| | Assessment Appeals lodged | 54 | 73 | 50 | 64 | 56 |
| | Assessment Appeals cleared | 48 | 45 | 47 | 52 | 59 |
| | Specified Decision Appeals lodged | 10 | 13 | 9 | 12 | 3 |
| | Specified Decision Appeals cleared | 7 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| | Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals lodged | 21 | 16 | 14 | 21 | 16 |
| | Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals cleared | 17 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 16 |
| Coroners | Number of deaths reported | 3,967 | 3,910 | 3,954 | 4,025 | 4089 |
| | Number of inquests held | 139 | 120 | 93 | 120 | 130 |
| | No inquest with post mortem | 1,130 | 1,078 | 1,171 | 1,011 | 1,081 |
| | No inquest and no post mortem | 1,929 | 1,949 | 2,004 | 2,297 | 2,311 |
| | Other disposals of registered entries | 761 | 647 | 669 | 555 | 594 |

^[1]Figures for Repossessions Completed from 2007 to 2012 have been revised due to the removal of duplicate records identified within the dataset. The changes to the figures have been slight and in accordance with our revisions policy these have been updated and marked as having been revised. (Repossessions were previously referred to as evictions).

For more information on our revisions policy click here:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/nicts-statistics-and-research-useful-documents>

A back series of revised figures can be viewed by clicking here:

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

^[2]NICTS took over responsibility for Pension Appeal Tribunals in 2007.

Miscellaneous – 2017 Data

Section 1: Enforcement of Judgments Office

Since the early 1970s, the task of enforcing civil judgments in Northern Ireland has been simplified by the creation of the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO), which operates under the supervision of the Master (Enforcement of Judgments), assisted by the Chief Enforcement Officer. In 2017, 11,205 notices of intention to enforce were lodged and 5,987 applications for enforcement were accepted (Table G.1), an increase of 46% from 7,682 and an increase of 63% from 3,675 respectively in 2016.

Table G.1: Enforcement orders made and applications for enforcement in 2017

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| | |
| Method of search | |
| By EJO staff | 352 |
| On-line (by customers) | 70586 |
| Notices of intention: | |
| Notices Issued | 11205 |
| Applications for enforcement: | |
| Applications accepted | 5987 |
| Types of application | |
| Article 23 discovery | 278 |
| Money judgment | 5126 |
| Possession judgment | 566 |
| Possession of Goods | 17 |
| Total | 5987 |

Table G.2 shows the 'Debt Ratio' which is the amount of debt recovered for every £1 paid in enforcement fees. In 2017, this was £6.36 whereas in 2016 this was £11.42.

Table G.2: Money judgments and debt ratio in 2017

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| | |
| Original debt lodged | £11,608,549.45 |
| EJO fees paid | £1,284,339.33 |
| Total debt registered | £12,892,888.78 |
| Total debt recovered | £8,163,177.29 |
| % of debt recovered | 63.32% |
| Debt ratio | £6.36 |

A possession file is deemed 'completed' when –

- A repossession takes place.
- The creditor withdraws their application.
- An official arrangement between the creditor and debtor is made (these cases may be re-activated if the arrangement breaks down).

Table G.3 shows that during 2017, 617 cases were completed. This represents a decrease of 32% from the 2016 figure of 902, with repossessions also decreasing by 28% over the last year, from 465 in 2016 to 337 in 2017.

Table G.3 Possession judgments in 2017

| | |
|--|-----|
| | |
| Repossessions completed^[1] | 337 |
| Cases withdrawn | 52 |
| Arrangement in place (case held) | 228 |
| Total | 617 |

^[1] Repossessions completed were previously referred to as evictions completed

Section 2: Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunals

There were 126 applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners lodged during 2017, 6 less than the 132 lodged during 2016. There were 126 applications for leave cleared in 2017 compared with 165 cleared during 2016 (Table G.4).

Table G.4: Social Security Commissioners' applications for leave to appeal to the Commissioners in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 126 | 9 | 117 | 126 |

The number of appeals to the Commissioners lodged decreased from 81 in 2016 to 76 in 2017. In total, 79 were cleared in 2017 compared with 92 in 2016 (Table G.5).

Table G.5: Social Security Commissioners' appeals to the Commissioners in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 76 | 18 | 61 | 79 |

Table G.6 shows the number of applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2017.

Table G.6: Social Security Commissioners' Applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 1 | - | - | - |

Tables G.7 to G.13 show the caseload of Pensions Appeal Tribunals in 2017. 46 entitlement appeals and 59 assessment appeals were dealt with in 2017. Corresponding figures for 2016 were 47 and 52 respectively. The majority of assessment appeals (75%) were dealt with after a hearing, the same percentage as in 2016.

Table G.7: Pensions Appeal Tribunals entitlement appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|-------------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 39 | 32 | 14 | 46 |

Table G.8: Pensions Appeal Tribunals assessment appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 56 | 44 | 15 | 59 |

Table G.9: Pensions Appeal Tribunals specified decision appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 8 |

Table G.10: Pensions Appeal Tribunals armed forces compensation scheme appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 16 | 8 | 8 | 16 |

Table G.11: Pensions Appeal Tribunals late appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 5 | - | - | - |

Table G.12: Pensions Appeal Tribunals jurisdiction appeals in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | 1 | - | - | - |

Table G.13: Pensions Appeal Tribunals leave to appeal applications in 2017

| | Lodged | Cleared | | |
|------|--------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | After hearing | Without hearing | Total Cleared |
| 2017 | - | - | - | - |

Section 3: Coroners Service for Northern Ireland

Table G.14 shows the Coroners' caseload for 2017. There was a 2% increase in the number of deaths reported to the Coroner between 2016 and 2017 (4,089 in 2017 compared to 4,025 in 2016). The number of inquests increased from 120 in 2016 to 130 in 2017.

Table G.14: Coroners' caseload in 2017

| | |
|--|------|
| | |
| Number of deaths reported | 4089 |
| Number of inquests held | 130 |
| No inquest with post mortem | 1081 |
| No inquest and no post mortem | 2311 |
| Other disposals of registered entries | 594 |

Appendix 1: Judge court sitting days

| Judge type | Business area ^[1] | Sitting days |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| High Court Judge | Crown | 168 |
| | Queen's Bench | 496 |
| | Children Order | 261 |
| | Other Family | 50 |
| | Appeals | 24 |
| | Chancery | 220 |
| | Bails | 270 |
| | Callover | - |
| | Judicial Reviews | 289 |
| | Court of Appeal - Civil | 129 |
| | Court of Appeal - Criminal | 65 |
| Total | | 1972 |
| County Court Judge | Crown Court | 2184 |
| | County court judge day | 1180 |
| District Judge | County court judge day | 105 |
| | District judge day | 662 |
| Deputy District Judge | District judge day | 32 |
| Deputy County Court Judge | County court judge day | 83 ^[2] |
| Total | | 4246 |
| District Judge (Magistrates' Court) | Criminal | 3032 |
| | Youth | 421 |
| | Civil/Family | 913 |
| Total | | 4366 |
| Social Security Commissioners | Oral hearings | 22 |
| Total | | 22 |
| Total number of sitting days | | 10606 |

^[1]Days are classified on the basis of the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates' court. In the Magistrates' court, days are classified based on the earliest scheduled sitting, except when the start time for two or more sittings is the same, in which case the days are classified on the majority of business undertaken.

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.

^[2]Includes 65 days when a Deputy County Court Judge sat on Crown Court Business.

Appendix 2: Experimental Statistics on Cracked and Ineffective Trials in the Crown and Magistrates' Court

What are experimental statistics?

Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. The statistics are in the testing phase and are not fully developed, but they are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

According to the Office of National Statistics - When are statistics experimental?

Defining what is experimental and non-experimental is largely a matter of statistical judgment, but typically experimental series arise when:

- they are being produced part way through a well-defined development program - whether these statistics are new or changed versions of existing statistics
- statistics are new but still subject to testing in terms of their volatility and ability to meet customer needs;
- the statistics do not yet meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics, or
- a rich variety of new measures are available from a new set of statistics, with components that have considerable immediate value to users. These users are aware of the statistics' theoretical quality and can make use before all operational testing is completed. The testing is designed to fully validate the measures to the standard expected of National Statistics.

Data sources

These statistics carry the status of 'experimental statistics', as they are still in the development phase. They should, therefore, be treated with caution. The statistics presented in this section are derived from the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS). The datasets are downloaded directly from ICOS, and the data are validated and subject to the same stringent checks outlined within the Introduction section.

The ICOS system is a live operating system, used to process every part of court business from the receipt of payments through to the production of final orders made. The system is therefore not specifically designed as a statistical data collection tool, and the data extracted are subject to complex computations using SPSS syntax. The data are being published as an experimental statistics series, so remain in a developmental phase and subject to review. The user should take appropriate caution when using them.

User Consultation

These statistics are experimental and after their first publication in Judicial Statistics 2013 a full consultation with users was undertaken. Details on the feedback from this consultation can be found at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/nicts-statistics-and-research>

Why are these 'experimental statistics' being published? The NICTS have agreed to develop and publish this data upon recommendation by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate for Northern Ireland in their report 'The use of Early Guilty Pleas'.

Within this report there are a number of recommendations for various Criminal Justice Agencies to consider implementing. As shown below, one of these recommendations refers directly to the implementation of a data collection system to facilitate the recording of cracked and ineffective trials in a similar manner to England and Wales.

Recommendation 3 Para1.36 -

Inspectors recommend that data is collected by NICTS (on the same basis as that in England and Wales) on cracked, effective and ineffective trials and that this is made available publicly on an annual basis (more often for justice agencies by arrangement).

Action

The NICTS will develop a statistical methodology to closely replicate the collection of cracked and ineffective trials undertaken in England and Wales through the secondary analysis of data currently collected.

Target Date

June 2014

Cracked and Ineffective trials

The purpose of the collection and accurate reporting of the Cracked and Ineffective and Trials data is to provide accurate information as to the main reason (i) why trials do not take place when listed; (ii) why they have been taken out of the list before the trial date; and (iii) why pleas of guilty are not made earlier. This will assist in efficient management of cases, and improve public confidence in the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

While it is not possible to exactly replicate these data in Northern Ireland without the implementation of a dedicated data collection system similar to England and Wales, a secondary analysis of data recorded on ICOS can provide some data on cracked and ineffective trials. **However, these statistics carry the status of 'experimental statistics', as they are still in the development phase. They should, therefore, be treated with caution.**

Cracked Trial - on the trial date, the defendant offers acceptable pleas or the prosecution offers no evidence. A cracked trial requires no further trial time, but as a consequence the time allocated has been wasted, and witnesses have been unnecessarily inconvenienced thus impacting confidence in the system.

On the basis of this definition used in England and Wales, we recommend that cracked trials in Northern Ireland should be measured as follows:

((Defendants who changed their plea to guilty + defendants who plead not guilty but guilty of a lesser offence + defendants who had all charges withdrawn) / (All Defendants dealt with who were listed for trial)) * 100

Ineffective Trial - on the trial date, the trial does not go ahead due to action or inaction by one or more of the prosecution, the defence or the court and a further listing for trial is required.

On the basis of this definition used in England and Wales, we calculated that ineffective trials in Northern Ireland should be measured as follows:

((Defendants who were adjourned on their first listing for trial / (All Defendants dealt with who were listed for trial)) * 100

Cracked Trials - Experimental Data

Crown Court

Cracked trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of contest | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| 2013 | 1509 | 521 | 34.5% | 517 | 99.2% | 4 | 0.8% |
| 2014 | 1215 | 406 | 33.4% | 400 | 98.5% | 6 | 1.5% |
| 2015 | 848 | 273 | 32.2% | 270 | 98.9% | 3 | 1.1% |
| 2016 | 1079 | 359 | 33.3% | 355 | 98.9% | 4 | 1.1% |
| 2017 | 1088 | 376 | 34.6% | 372 | 98.9% | 4 | 1.1% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of contest | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| Antrim | 133 | 46 | 34.6% | 46 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Ards | 109 | 49 | 45.0% | 49 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Armagh & South Down | 77 | 26 | 33.8% | 26 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Belfast | 406 | 139 | 34.2% | 137 | 98.6% | 2 | 1.4% |
| Craigavon | 159 | 55 | 34.6% | 55 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 130 | 45 | 34.6% | 43 | 95.6% | 2 | 4.4% |
| Londonderry | 74 | 16 | 21.6% | 16 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Total | 1088 | 376 | 34.6% | 372 | 98.9% | 4 | 1.1% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Adult Magistrates' Court

Cracked trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of contest | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| 2013 | 7885 | 3083 | 39.1% | 1769 | 57.4% | 1314 | 42.6% |
| 2014 | 6985 | 2552 | 36.5% | 1526 | 59.8% | 1026 | 40.2% |
| 2015 | 6981 | 2309 | 33.1% | 1395 | 60.4% | 914 | 39.6% |
| 2016 | 7003 | 2359 | 33.7% | 1417 | 60.1% | 942 | 39.9% |
| 2017 | 6542 | 2079 | 31.8% | 1185 | 57.0% | 894 | 43.0% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of contest | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| Antrim | 739 | 230 | 31.1% | 136 | 59.1% | 94 | 40.9% |
| Ards | 708 | 244 | 34.5% | 122 | 50.0% | 122 | 50.0% |
| Armagh & South Down | 628 | 205 | 32.6% | 102 | 49.8% | 103 | 50.2% |
| Belfast | 2226 | 634 | 28.5% | 361 | 56.9% | 273 | 43.1% |
| Craigavon | 856 | 265 | 31.0% | 174 | 65.7% | 91 | 34.3% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 808 | 272 | 33.7% | 164 | 60.3% | 108 | 39.7% |
| Londonderry | 577 | 229 | 39.7% | 126 | 55.0% | 103 | 45.0% |
| Total | 6542 | 2079 | 31.8% | 1185 | 57.0% | 894 | 43.0% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Youth Magistrates' Court

Cracked trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| 2013 | 551 | 265 | 48.1% | 110 | 41.5% | 155 | 58.5% |
| 2014 | 446 | 193 | 43.3% | 90 | 46.6% | 103 | 53.4% |
| 2015 | 421 | 170 | 40.4% | 83 | 48.8% | 87 | 51.2% |
| 2016 | 330 | 120 | 36.4% | 67 | 55.8% | 53 | 44.2% |
| 2017 | 335 | 121 | 36.1% | 75 | 62.0% | 46 | 38.0% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Cracked trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of cracked trials | % cracked trials | Reason for cracked trial | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | Plea of guilty on day of contest | % | All charges withdrawn | % |
| Antrim | 28 | 11 | 39.3% | 8 | 72.7% | 3 | 27.3% |
| Ards | 55 | 21 | 38.2% | 15 | 71.4% | 6 | 28.6% |
| Armagh & South Down | 10 | 6 | 60.0% | 2 | 33.3% | 4 | 66.7% |
| Belfast | 122 | 40 | 32.8% | 26 | 65.0% | 14 | 35.0% |
| Craigavon | 34 | 11 | 32.4% | 5 | 45.5% | 6 | 54.5% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 41 | 12 | 29.3% | 7 | 58.3% | 5 | 41.7% |
| Londonderry | 45 | 20 | 44.4% | 12 | 60.0% | 8 | 40.0% |
| Total | 335 | 121 | 36.1% | 75 | 62.0% | 46 | 38.0% |

¹These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective Trials - Experimental Data

Crown Court

Ineffective trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| 2013 | 1509 | 283 | 18.8% | 68 | 24.0% | 115 | 40.6% | 100 | 35.3% |
| 2014 | 1215 | 218 | 17.9% | 55 | 25.2% | 91 | 41.7% | 72 | 33.0% |
| 2015 | 848 | 122 | 14.4% | 40 | 32.8% | 51 | 41.8% | 31 | 25.4% |
| 2016 | 1079 | 110 | 10.2% | 42 | 38.2% | 45 | 40.9% | 23 | 20.9% |
| 2017 | 1088 | 125 | 11.5% | 33 | 26.4% | 58 | 46.4% | 34 | 27.2% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| Antrim | 133 | 20 | 15.0% | 3 | 15.0% | 14 | 70.0% | 3 | 15.0% |
| Ards | 109 | 14 | 12.8% | 3 | 21.4% | 6 | 42.9% | 5 | 35.7% |
| Armagh & South Down | 77 | 3 | 3.9% | 2 | 66.7% | - | 0% | 1 | 33.3% |
| Belfast | 406 | 43 | 10.6% | 13 | 30.2% | 16 | 37.2% | 14 | 32.6% |
| Craigavon | 159 | 16 | 10.1% | 4 | 25.0% | 9 | 56.3% | 3 | 18.8% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 130 | 19 | 14.6% | 7 | 36.8% | 7 | 36.8% | 5 | 26.3% |
| Londonderry | 74 | 10 | 13.5% | 1 | 10.0% | 6 | 60.0% | 3 | 30.0% |
| Total | 1088 | 125 | 11.5% | 33 | 26.4% | 58 | 46.4% | 34 | 27.2% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Adult Magistrates' Court

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| 2013 | 7885 | 1928 | 24.5% | 1020 | 52.9% | 672 | 34.9% | 236 | 12.2% |
| 2014 | 6985 | 1491 | 21.3% | 767 | 51.4% | 512 | 34.3% | 212 | 14.2% |
| 2015 | 6981 | 1570 | 22.5% | 856 | 54.5% | 524 | 33.4% | 190 | 12.1% |
| 2016 | 7003 | 1773 | 25.3% | 996 | 56.2% | 584 | 32.9% | 193 | 10.9% |
| 2017 | 6542 | 1566 | 23.9% | 816 | 52.1% | 602 | 38.4% | 148 | 9.5% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' adult court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| Antrim | 739 | 150 | 20.3% | 83 | 55.3% | 48 | 32.0% | 19 | 12.7% |
| Ards | 708 | 198 | 28.0% | 87 | 43.9% | 104 | 52.5% | 7 | 3.5% |
| Armagh & South Down | 628 | 115 | 18.3% | 69 | 60.0% | 36 | 31.3% | 10 | 8.7% |
| Belfast | 2226 | 677 | 30.4% | 378 | 55.8% | 227 | 33.5% | 72 | 10.6% |
| Craigavon | 856 | 191 | 22.3% | 95 | 49.7% | 75 | 39.3% | 21 | 11.0% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 808 | 122 | 15.1% | 36 | 29.5% | 71 | 58.2% | 15 | 12.3% |
| Londonderry | 577 | 113 | 19.6% | 68 | 60.2% | 41 | 36.3% | 4 | 3.5% |
| Total | 6542 | 1566 | 23.9% | 816 | 52.1% | 602 | 38.4% | 148 | 9.5% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Youth Magistrates' Court

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland, by reason: 2013 to 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| 2013 | 551 | 114 | 20.7% | 68 | 59.6% | 35 | 30.7% | 11 | 9.6% |
| 2014 | 446 | 103 | 23.1% | 66 | 64.1% | 28 | 27.2% | 9 | 8.7% |
| 2015 | 421 | 108 | 25.7% | 57 | 52.8% | 38 | 35.2% | 13 | 12.0% |
| 2016 | 330 | 69 | 20.9% | 41 | 59.4% | 25 | 36.2% | 3 | 4.3% |
| 2017 | 335 | 72 | 21.5% | 33 | 45.8% | 33 | 45.8% | 6 | 8.3% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Ineffective trials in the magistrates' youth court in Northern Ireland, by reason and Division: 2017¹

| | Number of defendants listed for trial | Number of ineffective trials | % ineffective trials | Reason for ineffective trial | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | Prosecution Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Defence Reasons | % of all ineffective trials | Court Reasons | % of all ineffective trials |
| Antrim | 28 | 7 | 25.0% | 2 | 28.6% | 5 | 71.4% | - | 0% |
| Ards | 55 | 11 | 20.0% | 5 | 45.5% | 4 | 36.4% | 2 | 18.2% |
| Armagh & South Down | 10 | 1 | 10.0% | - | 0% | 1 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Belfast | 122 | 35 | 28.7% | 20 | 57.1% | 14 | 40.0% | 1 | 2.9% |
| Craigavon | 34 | 8 | 23.5% | 4 | 50.0% | 1 | 12.5% | 3 | 37.5% |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 41 | 5 | 12.2% | - | 0% | 5 | 100% | - | 0% |
| Londonderry | 45 | 5 | 11.1% | 2 | 40.0% | 3 | 60.0% | - | 0% |
| Total | 335 | 72 | 21.5% | 33 | 45.8% | 33 | 45.8% | 6 | 8.3% |

¹ These data are experimental statistics and may be subject to change

Glossary of terms

Adjourn Generally

A putting off or postponing of proceedings.

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.

Amount awarded

This relates to the monetary value awarded in cases such as small claims and ordinary civil bills. On occasion the amount awarded may be unliquidated which means that the claim was not made for a specific amount of money, but rather, for example, damage caused to a property, for repairs for damage caused or for faulty workmanship.

Ancillary application

An additional application made in existing proceedings.

Ancillary relief application

During or after a divorce, the annulment of a marriage (nullity) or judicial separation, there may still be a need for the court to settle disputes over money or property. The court can make a financial order. This is known as ancillary relief and may deal with the sale or transfer of property, maintenance payments (for example weekly or monthly maintenance), a lump sum payment and/or a pension sharing or attachment order.

Application

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

Application for leave to apply for judicial review

The first step in the judicial review procedure involves the mandatory 'leave stage'. At this stage an application for leave to bring judicial review proceedings must first be made. The leave stage is used to identify and filter out, at an early stage, claims which may be trivial or without merit.

Appointment of Guardian ad Litem

Appointment of a guardian by the court - The High Court or a county court may appoint an individual to be a child's guardian if the child has no parent with parental responsibility for him or a residence order has been made with respect to the child in favour of a parent or guardian of his who has died while the order was in force. A person appointed as a guardian under this Article shall have parental responsibility for the child.

Arraignment

The procedure by which the defendant has criminal charges formally put to him before the judge at the Crown Court and he enters his plea of guilty or not guilty.

Article 53 Contact with a child in care

Where a child is in care of an authority, the authority shall (subject to the provisions of this article) allow the child reasonable contact with: (a) parents; (b) any guardian; (c) persons named in residence orders made immediately prior to the child being placed in care; and (d) persons who had care of the child by virtue of an order made in the exercise of the High Court's inherent jurisdiction immediately before the care order was made.

Article 8 Contact

Relates to Article 8 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. A 'contact order' means an order requiring the person with whom a person lives, or is to live, to allow the child to visit or stay with a person named in the order, or for that person and the child to have contact with each other.

Bail variation

A change in the conditions of bail.

Call-over

An occasion in court where dates for all the cases in the next few months are fixed. It is important for the parties or their lawyers to attend the call-over.

Care Order

A care order places a child in the care of a designated authority. A court may only make a care order if it is satisfied the child is suffering or at risk of harm etc.

Case

The proceedings, arguments and evidence in court and the court hearing.

Child Assessment

Application by an authority to request an order to authorise an assessment of a child's circumstances.

Certificate of automatic discharge (Bankruptcy)

A document certifying the period of bankruptcy is at an end

Certificate of Readiness (COR)

When a small claim or civil bill is contested by the respondent, the matter will proceed to the county court for judgment. Before the case can be heard, both parties must contribute to the completion of a Certificate of Readiness (COR) which informs the court that the cases is ready to heard and can therefore be listed by the court for hearing.

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.

Commercial actions

The definition of 'commercial action' is broad and so a wide range of cases may be dealt with under those arrangements. Broadly speaking, they include any transaction or dispute of a commercial or business nature.

Committal

The procedure by which a person 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.

Compassionate bail application

An application for bail, usually for a short period of time, for personal reasons, such as to attend a family funeral.

County Court Judge (CCJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court and the Crown Court. In the County Court, they will sit on business such as ordinary civil bills (with a value over £10,000 and up to £30,000), criminal damage, licences, equity, ejection and divorces.

Court Disposal

Includes all cases issued with a final order by a Judge.

Court order

The enforceable decision of the court.

Creditor

A person who is owed money by a debtor.

Criminal Damage

These are cases in which there is an allegation that a property has been destroyed or damaged or where a person is alleged to have made threats, had intent, or was found to have anything on their property with intent to cause damage to another property.

Day sat

This is a day on which a judge sat to hear court business. The information is organised into the various types of court business that a judge hears. The judge's day may consist of one or more sittings, at one or more court venues.

Declaration of Parentage order

Order made to determine parentage on foot of an application for maintenance in respect of a person who denies that he/she is a parent of the child.

Debtor

A person who owes money to a creditor.

Decree Absolute

The decree absolute is the legal document that ends your marriage. You need to wait at least 6 weeks after the date of the decree nisi before you can apply for a decree absolute.

Decree Nisi

A document that says that the court doesn't see any reason why you can't divorce.

If your husband or wife doesn't agree to the divorce, you can still apply for a decree nisi. However, you'll have to go to a hearing at the court to discuss the case, where a judge will decide whether to grant you a decree nisi.

Default Judgment

This is a judgment in favour of one party due to some failure to take action by the other party. In most cases this will be a judgment in favour of the applicant due to the failure of the respondent to contest the claim brought against them. The failure to take action is the default. The default judgment is the relief requested in the party's original petition.

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

District Judge (DJ)

This is a judge who sits in the County Court or Magistrates' Court. In the County Court they will sit on business such as small claims and ordinary civil bills (with a value up to £10,000).

Divorces

These are proceedings initiated in order to dissolve a marriage. Dissolutions of civil partnerships are also included within these figures. Following the issue of a divorce petition in the High Court, if it is a defended case it will be heard in the High Court and if it is an undefended case it may be heard either in the High Court or the County Court (depending on the choice of the individuals involved). Initially a Decree Nisi, judicial separation or nullity is granted, which is an initial order for divorce. Providing that no reason is provided to the court to challenge the nisi, a Decree Absolute, which is a final order for divorce that dissolves a marriage and permits an individual party to remarry, is made. A defended divorce is a proceeding in which an individual (the petitioner) applies for a divorce and the other party (the respondent) indicates that they wish to contest a divorce being granted at all, or on the reasons stated by the petitioner.

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 bring the terms of the order to an end.

Education Supervision order

Puts the child under the supervision of a designated education and library board. The education and library board may make an application in respect of a child of compulsory school age who is not being educated properly.

Ejectment

A legal document which seeks to recover possession of land and/or a dwelling house (e.g. where a tenant has stopped paying rent). Similar matters relating to properties owned with a mortgage are dealt with through proceedings within the Chancery Division of the High Court.

Emergency Protection order

Gives the applicant parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18. It authorises the removal of the child at any time to accommodation provided by or on behalf of the applicant, and being kept there. The court may make 'an emergency protection order' if it is satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is likely to suffer significant harm.

EPA applications

Application to register an Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA).

Equity

Any type of proceeding which seeks a court judgement on disputes relating to property disputes i.e. who owns it, and should damages be paid.

Ex-parte application

An application made to a judge by a party to a case without the other parties being required to be there.

Family Assistance order

This is a short term order made by agreement, under which an authority is required to make available a suitably qualified person to advise, assist and (where appropriate) befriend any person named in the order.

Family Business

Non-criminal court proceedings generally relating to matters between a husband and wife, common-law partners, or children.

Family Care Centre

A county court which generally hears appeals from Family Proceedings Courts, or family cases which are more complex in nature.

Family Proceedings Court

A court of summary jurisdiction (constituted as a Youth Magistrates Court) which hears proceedings under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 e.g. residence, contact with children.

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.

Financial Provision order

An order requiring either or both parents to make periodical payments or a lump sum payment to the applicant (the person with whom the child resides) for the benefit of the child.

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.

First listing

The date of first hearing of a case.

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.

Foreign judgement

An Act to make provision for the enforcement in the United Kingdom of judgments given in foreign countries, which accord reciprocal treatment to judgments given in the United Kingdom, and vice versa.

Hearing

The trial of a case or preliminary issue in court.

High Court Judge (HCJ)

A judge who sits in the High Court and Crown Court to hear and determine civil, family and criminal business.

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 a defendant can be tried in the Crown Court but may in some instances be tried in a magistrates' court.

Injunction

A legal order which stops someone from doing or continuing to do something, or which requires them to take certain positive action.

Interlocutory application

An application made at any time after proceedings have issued and before the final hearing. For example, a challenge to one party's refusal to give discovery, or an application for substituted service are interlocutory applications.

Issue

This is the process by which a complaint or claim is lodged with the court. It can also be described as the 'Received Date'.

Judicial Review

A procedure by which someone can challenge in the High Court, the decisions or actions of:-

- A Government Department
- A public body
- The Magistrates' Court
- The County Court
- Certain tribunals

Judicial Review is only available if there is no other legal remedy.

Judicial separation

An alternative to divorce is a decree of judicial separation. This does not dissolve the marriage but absolves the parties from the obligation to live together. This procedure might, for instance, be used if religious beliefs forbid or discourage divorce.

Justice & Security Act 2007

Legislation which replaced the Terrorism Act 2000 which makes provision for non-jury trials.

Leave to change surname by which child is known

An application for leave (permission) to change a child's name without a parent's consent. The court will give permission if it believes it is in the child's best interests to allow the name change.

Licences

These are applications for intoxicating liquor licences and certificates of registration for public houses and clubs, enabling their legal operation.

Lodge documents

Send documents to the court office.

Master

A judicial post, where the individual must have been a legal practitioner for at least 10 years. The Master determines a range of court proceedings in the High Court, and manages procedural elements of more complex cases before they are heard by a High Court judge.

Matrimonial Application

These are applications attached to divorce proceedings such as Ancillary Relief applications that relate to financial relief to one or both parties following a petition for divorce, for example, maintenance and the division of property/finances.

Monies due

Financial compensation or money owed.

Negligence

Conduct that falls below the standards of behaviour established by law for the protection of others against unreasonable risk of harm. A person has acted negligently if he or she has departed from the conduct expected of a reasonably prudent person acting under similar circumstances.

NOD

When a small claim is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Dispute. This means that the case will then be listed before a judge in court for resolution.

Non court disposal

Includes all disposals not completed in court, for example settlements or withdrawals.

Non molestation order

This order prevents a person from molesting another person with whom they have had a relationship or they are related to.

Molestation encompasses any form of serious pestering or harassment and applies to any conduct which could properly be regarded as such a degree of harassment as to call for the intervention of the court. A 'non-molestation' order may contain one or both of the following:

- (a) A provision prohibiting a person from molesting another person.
- (b) A provision prohibiting the respondent from molesting a child.

Notice of appointment

The notification of a date, time and location for a court hearing.

Notice of Intention to Defend (NID)

When a civil bill is taken by an applicant against a respondent, the respondent may contest the claim and signal their intention to dispute the claim through a Notice of Intention to Defend. This means that the case will then go to the court for resolution.

Notice of motion

A notification issued to one or more parties by the individual or company that has filed a motion before a court, with a date for hearing which will take place on the date stated on the notice.

No Value

No Value includes unliquidated cases and cases with no amount awarded recorded on ICOS. No amount awarded can arise when a case has been settled and the value was not notified to the court or the terms of the settlement do not include a monetary value.

Nullity

A Decree of Nullity of Marriage is granted where the petitioner proves that the marriage is either void or voidable. A void marriage is one which should never have been celebrated (by reason of the relationship or incapacity of the parties and which therefore never had legal status). A voidable marriage is one which is legal but may be nullified by order of the court.

Occupation order

Occupation orders declare, confer or regulate occupation (not ownership) rights in the family home between those in certain family or domestic relationships. These orders, if combined with a non-molestation order, may be used for protective purposes. Alternatively, they may be used to declare or regulate the right of occupation in the home in cases where protection is not an issue. An occupation order is available between parties who have had a relationship or are related.

Office disposal

See 'Non court disposal'.

Order 53 Statement

The document which starts a judicial review case. It is named after Order 53 of the Rules of the Court of Judicature, which states what must be in an Order 53 Statement.

Ordinary application

See 'Application'.

Ordinary civil bills

A legal document which seeks to recover damages for (i) personal injury claims (injuries caused by negligence), for example, traffic accidents, falls on pavements and accidents at work and (ii) consumer disputes, for example, faulty goods or services. There have been a number of changes in the threshold for ordinary civil bills in recent years. Until 25 February 2013 ordinary civil bills related to cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £15,000 (prior to May 2011, the lower limit was £2,000). Following changes made on 25 February 2013, the upper limit for civil bills was extended to include cases seeking damages between £3,000 and £30,000.

Originating application

The first, provisional, or primary application in a legal process.

Originating motion

A document which starts some kinds of High Court cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature Order 5, rule 5 and Order 8.

Originating summons

A document which starts some kinds of High Court cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature Order 5, rule 3 and Order 8.

Outstanding case

A case that is currently active, for example, live cases not yet disposed.

Parental Responsibility order

Outlines the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his / her property. It may also include certain rights which a guardian may exercise.

Party

The plaintiff, defendant or third or other party in a court case.

Petition

The document which starts a divorce or civil partnership dissolution case, and some other kinds of cases, described in Rules of the Court of Judicature, Order 9 and the Family Proceedings Rules.

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.

Plea

The response a defendant gives after criminal charges have been put to him e.g. “guilty” or “not guilty.”

Proceedings

A shorthand term for all the court procedures and documents before the final court order.

Prohibited steps order

An order which prevents a parent from taking specific actions as part of their normal parental responsibilities to a child.

PSNI/PPS prosecution

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

Received

The date papers are lodged with the court.

Recovery order

An order which generally directs the return of a child who has been taken away unlawfully; has run away or is missing. The order may permit certain actions to be taken (like entering property) to enable it to be carried out.

Remittal

The process of transferring a case to a lower court e.g. transferring a case from the High Court to the County Court.

Removal

The process of transferring a case to a higher court e.g. transferring a case from the County Court to the High Court.

Residence order

An order detailing with whom a child shall live. This is generally following the breakdown of a relationship, but can arise in other circumstances e.g. if the child's parents have died.

Revoke

To invalidate or cause to no longer be in effect, as by voiding or canceling.

Scheduled

A scheduled offence is one which is listed in Schedule 9 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and which, if it is tried on indictment, will be heard by a judge sitting without a jury. This has been replaced by the Justice and Security Act 2007.

Scheduled sitting

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

Secure Accommodation order

Accommodation provided for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, designed to restrict liberty.

Setting down

Telling the court office a case is ready for hearing.

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 the majority business undertaken, except for the Magistrates court. It is based in the first instance, on the earliest scheduled sitting and 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.

Small claims

Small claims allow certain types of claims to be decided informally by the county court, usually without the need of a solicitor or barrister. In general a small claim is one where the value to be claimed is not more than £3,000 (before May 2011 the upper limit was £2,000). Examples of small claims are (i) compensation for faulty services by, for example, builders, dry cleaners and garages (ii) compensation for faulty goods such as electrical goods (iii) disputes between landlords and tenants for rent arrears or compensation for not doing repairs and (iv) debts or wages owed or money in lieu of notice.

Special sitting

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

Specific issue order

An order which addresses a specific matter that has arisen relating to the parental responsibility of a child e.g. which school shall they attend; what religion shall they be brought up in.

Strike out order

Striking out means the court ordering written material to be deleted so that it may no longer be relied upon.

Summary charge

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

Summons (civil)

A summons is served on a person involved in a legal proceeding and it indicates legal action may be in progress against the person, or the person's presence as witness may be required.

The summons usually announces a date by which the person or persons summoned must either appear in court, or respond in writing to the court or the opposing party or parties.

Summons (criminal)

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.

Supervision Order

Puts a child under the supervision of a designated authority. A supervision order may require a child:

- (i) To comply with direction given by a supervisor as regards residence, reporting and participating in activities.
- (ii) To keep the supervisor informed of any change in address and allow the supervisor to visit at the place where he is living.

Time intervals

This is the time taken (in weeks) between the case, application or claim being received by the court and the date it is finally resolved, by either the court, an arrangement between parties out of court or by being withdrawn by the applicant.

Unliquidated

An unliquidated sum is one for which the precise amount owed cannot be determined from the terms of the contractual agreement or another standard.

Winding up petition

An application to court seeking the liquidation of a company.

Withdrawn

An order which removes a case from court, for a variety of reasons. The court action then ceases.

Writ

A document which starts a case in the Queen's Bench Division.

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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