

Judicial Statistics



serving the community through the administration of justice

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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.

Queen's Bench Division

Chancery Division

Family Division

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.

The Crown Court

Hears all serious criminal cases.

Magistrates' Courts

(including youth courts and family proceedings courts)

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.

The Enforcement of Judgments Office

Enforces money and other judgments.

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 their 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 ([UK Government Statistics Release Calendar](#)). 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.
[Proposed increase in court fees](#)
- Consultation on proposals for the rationalisation of the court estate.
[Rationalisation of Courts Estate](#)
- Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Annual Report and Resource Accounts 2019-2020
[NICTS Annual Report and Resource 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
[DOJ Digest of Information on Criminal Justice System](#)
- Department for Communities – Northern Ireland Housing Statistics
[Northern Ireland 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 2020 and direct comparisons to 2019 have been outlined within the text. Detailed figures for 2019 can be accessed by following the link to the Judicial Statistics 2019 publication within the summary section of each chapter or by accessing the link below.

Judicial Statistics 2019:

[Link to Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

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 2020 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:

- Checking consistency over time and between variables;
- Reliability of data using logic checks;
- Checking that variables fall within accepted ranges; and
- 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; and
- 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 year's 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 2%. Bankruptcy disposals did show a larger change due to a delay in the entering of final orders to install the Official Receiver as the Trustee, due to staff pressures experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Court Tier	Business Area	Disposals (provisional data as published in quarterly bulletins)	Disposals (final year data)	% change
High Court	Chancery cases disposed	395	400	+1.3%
	Bankruptcy cases disposed	454	417	-8.1%
	Companies cases disposed	221	220	-0.5%
	Queen's Bench Writs disposed	1368	1342	-1.9%
	Judicial Reviews disposed	252	252	-
	Probate Grants issued	5240	5244	+0.1%
	Divorce Decrees granted	508	508	-
	Wardship & Adoption applications disposed	67	67	-
	Bails	1299	1251	-3.7%
Crown Court	Cases disposed	971	965	-0.6%
	Defendants disposed	1197	1187	-0.8%
County Court	Civil Bills cases disposed	5902	5813	-1.5%
	Ejectment cases disposed	258	257	-0.4%
	Small Claims cases disposed	4025	3937	-2.2%
	Divorce Decrees granted	1073	1075	+0.2%
Magistrates	Adult Defendants disposed	26504	26516	<+0.1%
	Youth Defendants disposed	827	828	+0.1%
	Civil / Family Applications disposed	3454	3416	-1.1%
Children Order	Applications disposed	2915	2934	+0.7%

5. Data extract

The statistics in this report are taken from the latest available data that are held on the NICTS systems as of 17 May 2021. 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 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.

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 ODS. 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 to 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 a fourteen 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: [NICTS National Statistics Consultation on Children Order](#)) 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 been 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: [Children Order Back Series](#)

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 court houses, on the telephone or 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 with preceding years for Larne and Bangor court houses. For more information on the consultation exercise undertaken, please use the link below:

Consultation on proposals to close Hearing Centres

[Rationalisation of Courts 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:

[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:

[England and Wales Court Statistics](#)

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

[Scottish Crime and Justice Statistics](#)

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

[Republic of Ireland Court Statistics](#)

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

Department of Justice (Northern Ireland)

[Northern Ireland Department of Justice Statistics](#)

Police Service of Northern Ireland

[PSNI Statistics](#)

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

[PPS Statistics](#)

Youth Justice Agency

[Youth Justice Agency Statistics](#)

Northern Ireland Prison Service

[Northern Ireland Prison Service Statistics](#)

Probation Board for Northern Ireland

[Northern Ireland Probation Board Statistics](#)

Key Highlights

This report covers data from January to December 2020, so court activity during this period has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Figures published show that the impact of COVID-19 is clear to see. It is expected that the limited operation of the criminal, civil and family courts during the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on many of the published figures in this report.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

High Court

- Between 2016 and 2018 the number of Chancery cases received generally decreased, with an 11% decrease overall, however in 2019 this trend reversed with an increase of 65% in Chancery cases received. These figures reflect an increase of 87% in cases received in relation to mortgages from 946 in 2018 to 1,766 in 2019. (Mortgages made up 87% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2019). In 2020 Chancery cases received fell to their lowest level across the time series due to the COVID-19 pandemic, decreasing by 70% between 2019 and 2020.
- Queen's Bench writs received have fluctuated between 2016 and 2020, experiencing an increase of 6% overall. The increase in writs received in 2017 was primarily due to an influx of writs (approximately 360) regarding the Voluntary Exit Scheme and how it applied to members of the NI Prison Service.
- There was a 55% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2016 and 2020. Various manual exercises were carried out during this period to deal with old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court, therefore caution should be taken comparing data between years. In 2020, there was a large decrease of 50% in Writs disposed compared to 2019, due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Crown Court

- The number of defendants committed between 2016 and 2020 has generally decreased, with an overall decrease of 30%. The highest number of committals to the Crown Court occurred in 2019 (1,781). The fall in defendants committed during 2020 will have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There was a decrease of 41% in the number of defendants disposed of between 2016 and 2020. However the 2020 data figures should be treated with caution as they will have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and impacted on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process. As the dispute ended and cases began to progress through the system again, this led to a spike in disposals in 2016. Then disposals began to decline in 2017 and again in 2018, as the majority of the backlog had been cleared. Disposals increased again by 8% in 2019, before decreasing by 25% in 2020.

- Average waiting times between committal and start of trial decreased between 2016 and 2019 by 30%, to 118 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 as the backlog was cleared. In 2020 the average waiting times for Committal to start of trial increased again by 8%, however again these times will have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

County Court

- Ordinary civil bill cases received remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 20% in 2020. Civil bills disposed also remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019, peaking at 9,885 disposals in 2017, before decreasing by 41% between 2017 and 2020.
- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. Between 2016 and 2019, both receipts and disposals increased by 18% and 25% respectively, before decreasing by 62% and 73% respectively in 2020. The increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the changing economic conditions experienced during the period, however the significant drop in 2020, was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The number of small claims received decreased on a yearly basis between 2016 and 2019, apart from a spike in 2017. There was a 3% decrease in receipts overall between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 49% in 2020. There has also been a fluctuating trend in the number of small claims disposed between 2016 and 2019, and disposals then decreased by 55% between 2019 and 2020. 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 2016 and 2020 with an overall decrease of 38% during the period. The total number of decrees granted across the High Court and County Court decreased between 2016 and 2020 by 40% overall.

Magistrates' Court

- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received have increased by 7% and decreased by 12% respectively between 2016 and 2019. Receipts for both Adult and Youth defendants then decreased by 30% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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:
 - [PSNI Statistics](#)
 - [PPS Statistics](#)
- Adult criminal disposals have increased by 2% and Youth disposals have decreased by 10% between 2016 and 2019 with a decrease of 34% being observed for both Adult and Youth disposals between 2019 and 2020.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in the Adult court increased by 55% and increased by 66% in the Youth court between 2016 and 2020. Between 2016 and 2019, average waiting times remained relatively stable before increasing by 47% and 42% respectively between 2019 and 2020.
- Civil & Family business received generally decreased annually between 2016 and 2019, with an overall decrease of 16%, before increasing by 3% in 2020. Disposals have followed the same pattern as the receipts, generally decreasing between 2016 and 2019, with a decrease of 9% in

2020 compared to 2019, and an overall decrease of 22% compared to 2016.

The Children's Order

- Applications received increased by 2% between 2016 and 2017 before decreasing by 20% between 2017 and 2020. The applications received declined by 18% overall between 2016 and 2020.
- Applications disposed generally decreased between 2016 and 2020, apart from a small increase of 1% in 2018. Between 2016 and 2019 applications disposed decreased by 10%, however in 2020 there was a sharp decline of 34%, compared to 2019.
- The number of children involved also generally decreased between 2016 and 2020, with an overall decrease of 44%.

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 increased by 15% between 2016 and 2017, before decreasing by 33% between 2017 and 2020. Between 2016 and 2020 there was a 23% decrease in Criminal Appeal receipts.
- Criminal Appeals disposed fluctuated between 2016 and 2019, peaking at 122 in 2017, before decreasing by 37% between 2017 and 2020.
- Civil Appeals received have fluctuated over the period with an overall decrease of 27% between 2016 and 2020. Civil Appeals disposed also fluctuated between 2016 and 2020, peaking at 101 in 2019. Between 2016 and 2020 there was a 14% decrease in Civil Appeals disposed.
- Civil Appeal Court sitting days have fluctuated between 2016 and 2020, peaking in 2019 with 136 sitting days. Between 2016 and 2018 the number of civil appeals sitting days decreased by 17%, from 134 to 111 days, before increasing by 23% to 136 in 2019 and then decreasing by 35% in 2020. Criminal Appeal Court sitting days remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2020, apart from a dip in 2017, with an overall increase of 8%. The highest number of Criminal Appeal Court sitting days occurred in 2019 with 89 days.

Summary Table 1: Court of Appeal 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Criminal Appeals Received	93	107	102	89	72
Criminal Appeals Disposed	91	122	104	97	77
Civil Appeals Received	75	90	94	89	55
Civil Appeals Disposed	92	68	79	101	79
Criminal Appeal Court Sitting Days	80	65	83	89	86
Civil Appeal Court Sitting Days	134	129	111	136	88

Section 1: Criminal appeals

There were 72 criminal appeals received during 2020, this was a 19% decrease when compared to 2019 when 89 criminal appeals were received (Table A.1).

Table A.1: Criminal appeals received and disposed of in 2020

Type of Appeal	Received	Disposed of
Scheduled	10	5
Non-Scheduled	62	72
Total	72	77

In 2020, there were 50 appeals received against sentence only, 12 were against conviction, 8 were against both conviction and sentence and there were 2 appeals received pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004. This compares with 64 appeals received against sentence only, 16 against conviction, 6 against both conviction and sentence, and 3 appeals received pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004, in 2019. Of the 72 appeals received during 2020, 10 resulted from trials dealing with scheduled offences (Table A.2)

Table A.2: Types of criminal appeals received in 2020

Type of Appeal	Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004	Appeal Against Sentence	Appeal against Conviction	Appeal against Conviction and Sentence	Total
Scheduled	0	4	3	3	10
Non-Scheduled	2	46	9	5	62
Total	2	50	12	8	72

There were 25 successful appeals (where either the conviction was quashed or the sentence was varied) in 2020, with 16 appeals abandoned/withdrawn/stayed (Table A.3). In comparison, there were 33 successful appeals in 2019 and 22 appeals abandoned or withdrawn.

Table A.3: Results of criminal appeals by type in 2020

Outcome	Appeal pursuant to Article 17 of Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2004	Conviction only or conviction & sentence (Scheduled)	Conviction only or conviction & sentence (Non-Scheduled)	Sentence only (Scheduled)	Sentence only (Non-Scheduled)	Total
Conviction Quashed	0	1	2	0	0	3
Appeal Dismissed – Sentence Affirmed	3	3	10	1	19	36
Sentence Varied	3	0	1	0	18	22
Withdrawn/ Abandoned/ Stayed	0	0	2	0	14	16
Refused	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	4	15	1	51	77

Section 2: Civil appeals

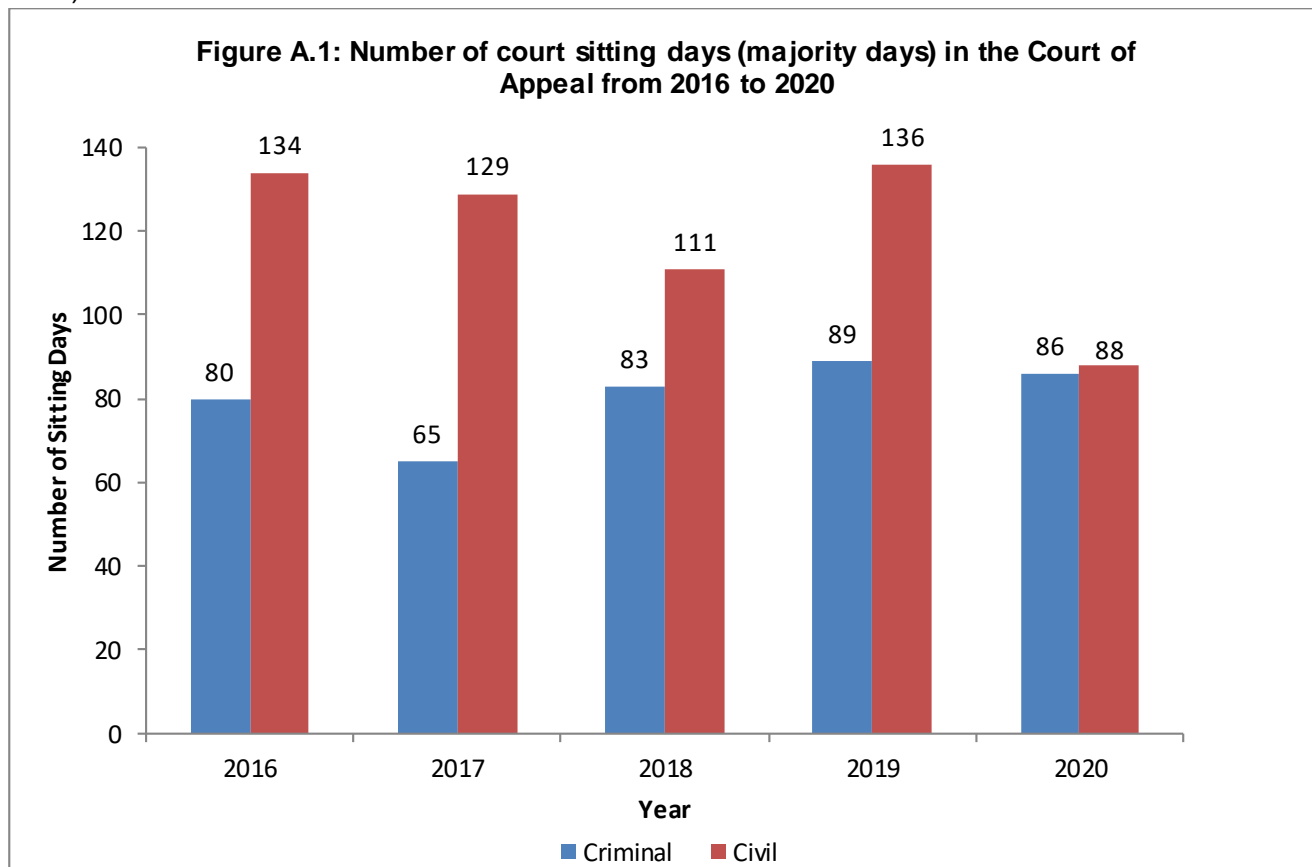
There were 55 civil appeals received in 2020, 34 less than the 2019 total of 89. As in previous years, the main source of civil appeals was the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court with 30 cases received. A total of 79 appeals were disposed of during the year (Table A.4) which compares with the 101 appeals disposed of in 2019.

Table A.4: Appeals received and disposed of by origin and type in 2020

Type of Appeal	Received	Disposed
Chancery Division: Final	6	11
Chancery Division: Interlocutory	1	1
Family Division: Final	5	5
Family Division: Interlocutory	0	0
Queen's Bench Division: Judicial Review: Final	19	23
Queen's Bench Division: Judicial Review: Interlocutory	1	2
Queen's Bench Division: Commercial: Final	2	2
Queen's Bench Division: Commercial: Interlocutory	0	0
Queen's Bench Division: Other: Final	8	4
Queen's Bench Division: Other: Damages	0	0
Queen's Bench Division: Other: Interlocutory	0	0
Magistrates' court (Section 44 of Judicature Act)	0	0
Court of Appeal Cross Appeal	2	0
Case Stated: Court of Appeal (Appeal or Case Stated)	7	26
Case Stated: By Outside Body	2	1
Case Stated: By High Court Judge	1	2
Case Stated: By County Court Judge	1	1
Case Stated: By District Judge	0	0
Case Stated: By District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	0	1
Motions on Notice	0	0
Other	0	0
Total	55	79

Section 3: Court sitting times

The number of court sitting days spent on criminal appeals (by majority type of work) decreased from 89 days in 2019 to 86 days in 2020. A total of 120 hours were spent in court hearing criminal appeals in 2020 compared with 110 court hours in 2019. There were 88 court sitting days (by majority type of work) spent on civil appeals during 2020, compared with 136 in 2019. A total of 116 hours were spent in court hearing civil appeals in 2020 compared with 150 court hours during 2019 (Figure A.1 & Table B.42).



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 Lord 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 - 2020 Data

Section 2: The Queen's Bench Division

2.1 Key Facts

2.2 Queens' Bench Division - 2020 Data

Section 3: Family Division

3.1 Key Facts

3.2 Family Division - 2020 Data

Section 4: Sitting Days

4.1 Key Facts

4.2 Sitting Days - 2020 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; and
- 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 creditor's 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:

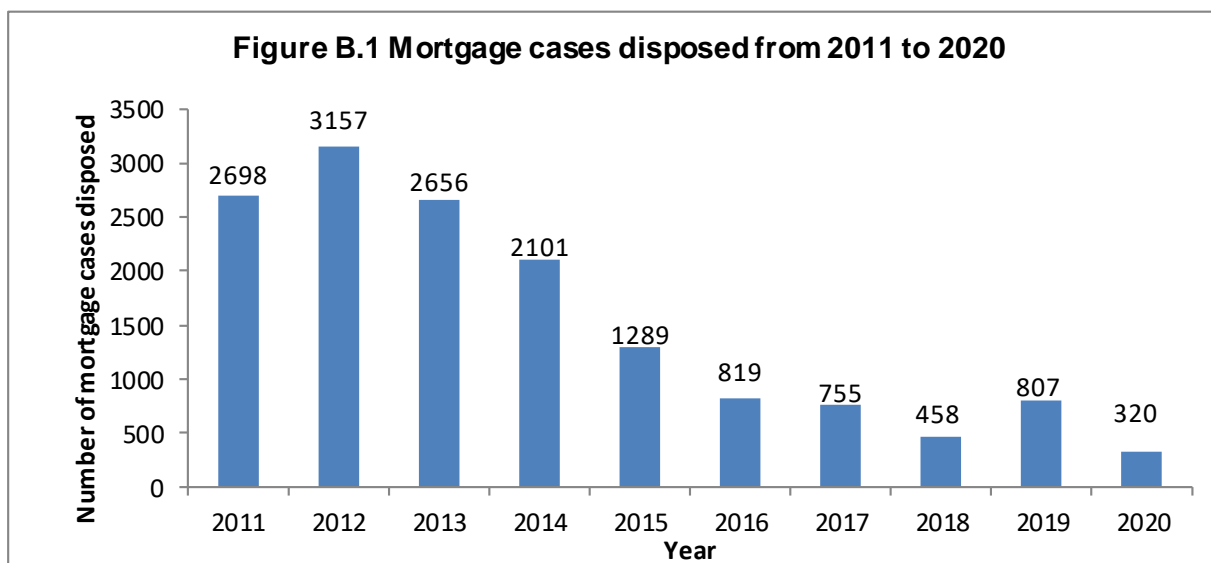
- The Principal Registry in Belfast (located in the Royal Courts of Justice); and
- The District Registry in Londonderry (located in Londonderry Courthouse).

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

1. Key Facts

- Between 2016 and 2018 the number of Chancery cases received generally decreased, with an 11% decrease overall, however in 2019 this trend reversed with an increase of 65% in Chancery cases received. These figures reflect an increase of 87% in cases received in relation to mortgages from 946 in 2018 to 1,766 in 2019. (Mortgages made up 87% of cases received into the Chancery division in 2019). The increase in mortgages received in 2019 may be attributed to the removal of two limiting factors from previous years: compliance with the judgment of Master Ellison requiring the implementation of a new computer system for many lending institutions and a major lending institution being required to change the name on any cases it submits to the court. A further source of cases received may have been the consolidation of a number of cases listed as 'pending' on ICOS into a third party debt company, who is now pursuing these instead of the original lending institution. In 2020 Chancery cases received fell to their lowest level across the time series due to the COVID-19 pandemic, decreasing by 70% between 2019 and 2020.
- The chart below indicates the trend for the last ten years of mortgage cases disposed in the High Court. The numbers of disposals generally decreased between 2011 and 2018, this was followed by an increase of 76% in mortgage cases disposed between 2018 and 2019. Mortgage cases disposed declined to their lowest levels over the time series in 2020, and decreased by 60% compared to 2019.
- The UK Finance statistics for 2020 indicate unprecedentedly low figures for mortgage arrears during 2020 as a direct result of payment deferrals and support provided by lenders to customers which has helped customers to continue to meet their monthly mortgage payments. Payment deferrals provided short-term solutions to customers to help change their economic circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[UK Finance Statistics](#)



- There has been a downward trend in the number of Bankruptcy cases received between 2016 and 2019, with an overall decrease of 28%, this was followed by a sharp decline in 2020 of 64%.
- There has been a similar trend in Bankruptcy cases disposed with disposals decreasing each year between 2016 and 2020, with an overall decrease of 76% over the period. Figures published by the Insolvency Service show that Bankruptcy orders in Northern Ireland decreased by 67% between 2019 and 2020.

[Insolvency Statistics](#)

- A 2016 amendment to the Insolvency (NI) Order 1989 increased the amount a creditor must be owed by a debtor before the creditor may petition to have the debtor made bankrupt. The increase was from £750 to £5,000. Amendments to the Insolvency (Monetary Limits) Order (NI) have also increased the amount of debt a debtor may owe before applying for a Debt Relief Order (DRO) from £15,000 to £20,000 and also increased the value of the property they may own from £300 to £1,000. This would have reduced the number of applications for Bankruptcy coming through the Debt Relief Scheme. There has also been an increase in the number of Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs) between debtors and creditors, where if the debtor owes more than £12,000 and cannot afford to repay the debt, they enter into an agreement without the involvement of the court. A combination of all these factors, will have had an impact on the numbers of Bankruptcy cases proceeding to court.
- The number of companies cases received fluctuated between 2016 and 2020 with an overall decrease of 62%. There was a 23% decrease between 2016 and 2017, followed by a further 7% decrease in 2018, but an increase of 19% between 2018 and 2019, before a 55% decrease in 2020. The number of companies cases disposed decreased by 65% between 2016 and 2020. The reason for the declines may be linked to the uptake of Company Voluntary Arrangements for which there is no court involvement in earlier years, however the decline in 2020 will be due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Probate grants issued increased each year between 2016 and 2018, but decreased by 6% between 2018 and 2019, and a further 20% in 2020.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2019:

[Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

Summary Table 2: Chancery Division cases received 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Chancery	1376	1439	1226	2029	618
Bankruptcy	1755	1506	1150	1268	459
Companies	659	510	474	564	251
Probate grants	6688	6758	6989	6547	5244

Summary Table 3: Chancery Division cases disposed 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Chancery	1048	956	653	948	400
Bankruptcy	1755	1498	1271	1215	417
Companies	622	538	500	476	220

2. Chancery Division - 2020 Data

Table B.1 shows that during 2020, a total of 618 Chancery cases were received. This was a decrease of 70% from 2,029 in 2019. Mortgage suits accounted for the majority (69%) of cases received in 2020. The number of mortgages received has decreased by 76% during 2020 (1,766 in 2019 compared with 424 in 2020).

Table B1: Chancery cases and applications received in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Total
Case	Mortgages	424
	Other land and property	15
	Trusts	2
	Other	177
	Total	618
Application	Notice of appointment	407
	Summons	168
	Notice of motion	26
	Exparte application	112
	Injunction	9
	Transfer to Commercial List	8
	Total	730

There were 662 cases and applications disposed of in 2020 compared with 1,614 in 2019, representing a 59% decrease. Mortgages accounted for the majority of disposals with 320 cases disposed of (Table B.2).

Table B.2: Chancery cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Disposed of by office disposal	Total
Case	Mortgages	3	308	9	320
	Other land and property	5	2	1	8
	Trade and business	1	1	0	2
	Other	43	17	10	70
	Total	52	328	20	400
Application	Notice of appointment	0	34	0	34
	Summons	20	89	1	110
	Notice of motion	3	6	0	9
	Exparte application	7	97	0	104
	Injunction	5	0	0	5
	Total	35	226	1	262

Bankruptcy

There were 766 Bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2020 compared with 2,021 in 2019 – a decrease of 62%. In 2020 these included 298 Bankruptcy petitions, 60% of which were creditor petitions (petition by another person). Figures for 2019 revealed that there were 1,024 Bankruptcy petitions, of which 80% were creditor petitions. In 2020, other Bankruptcy proceedings included 123 originating applications and 256 ordinary applications (Table B.3). Corresponding figures were 131 and 671 respectively in 2019.

Table B.3: Bankruptcy cases and applications received in 2020

Case or application	Type of case or application	Total
Case	Petition by another person	178
	Petition by debtor	118
	Other petition	2
	Originating application	123
	Other	38
	Total	459
Application	Notice of motion	6
	Ordinary application	256
	Certificate of automatic discharge	37
	Other	8
	Total	307

The Master dealt with a total of 609 Bankruptcy cases and applications in 2020 compared with 1,846 the previous year, a decrease of 67%. The main area of work disposed of by the Master was Bankruptcy petitions, a total of 275 in 2020 (Table B.4). This was a decrease of 73% on the 1,007 Bankruptcy petitions disposed of by the Master in 2019.

Table B.4: Bankruptcy cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Disposed of by Office disposal	Total
Case	Petition by another person	1	162	37	200
	Petition by debtor	0	109	2	111
	Other petition	0	4	0	4
	Originating application	0	52	0	52
	Other	0	50	0	50
	Total	1	377	39	417
Application	Notice of motion	0	5	0	5
	Ordinary application	0	214	1	215
	Certificate of automatic discharge	0	5	28	33
	Other	0	8	0	8
	Total	0	232	29	261

Companies

Table B.5 and B.6 show the companies cases and applications received and disposed of in 2020. There were 281 companies cases and applications received and 256 disposed of. This represented a 57% decrease for cases and applications received (647) and a 53% decrease for cases and applications disposed of (541) in 2019.

Table B.5: Companies cases and applications received in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Total
Case	Winding up petition	136
	Other petitions	2
	Originating summons	22
	Other	91
	Total	251
Application	Notice of motion	7
	Ordinary application	21
	Other	2
	Total	30

Table B.6: Companies cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Total
Case	Winding up petition	3	124	127
	Other petitions	0	3	3
	Originating summons	3	15	18
	Other	8	64	72
	Total	14	206	220
Application	Notice of motion	3	3	6
	Ordinary application	2	26	28
	Other	1	1	2
	Total	6	30	36

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 66 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2020, the same as in 2019 (66). It took 24 weeks on average for a Bankruptcy case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2020, eight weeks more than 2019 (16), and 13 weeks for a companies case, two weeks more than in 2019 (11).

Table B.7: Average time intervals in weeks for business in the Chancery Division in 2020

Points of process	Chancery case	Chancery application	Bankruptcy case	Bankruptcy application	Companies case	Companies application
Issue to first listing	57	7	8	3	8	7
First listing to disposal	9	7	15	6	5	20
Issue to disposal	66	14	24	9	13	27

Due to rounding, individual time intervals may not equal the overall time taken to progress through the courts. Due to lenders not being able to submit more recent mortgage cases, mortgages disposed of in 2018 and 2019 had a higher proportion of older cases than in previous years, with a consequent effect on waiting times.

Probate

The number of grants of probate issued during 2020 decreased by 20% from 6,547 in 2019 to 5,244 in 2020 (Table B.8).

Since 30 September 2015, the Principal Registry in Belfast manages all probate applications in Northern Ireland, however pending applications received 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 2020

Type of application	Probate application made by solicitor	Probate application made by applicant	Northern Ireland
Grant of administration	3	0	3
Pendente Lite	1	0	1
Letters of administration with will annexed	164	2	166
Letters of administration with will annexed (DBN)	9	1	10
Letters of administration	859	57	916
Grant of probate	3864	266	4130
Letters of administration (DBN)	18	0	18
Total grants issued	4918	326	5244

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. These cases 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 fluctuated between 2016 and 2020, experiencing an increase of 6% overall. The increase in writs received in 2017 was primarily due to the administration of the Voluntary Exit Scheme and its application to members of the NI Prison Service.
- There was a 55% decrease in the number of Queen's Bench writs disposed of between 2016 and 2020. Various manual exercises were carried out during this period to deal with old cases which were withdrawn or settled out of court, therefore caution should be taken comparing data between years. There was a large decrease of 50% in writs disposed in 2020 compared to 2019, due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There was a 35% decrease in the number of Judicial Review applications received and a 43% decrease in the number disposed of between 2016 and 2020. The number of applications received and disposed decreased by 3% and 27% respectively between 2019 and 2020.
- The number of High Court bail applications received decreased by 5% between 2016 and 2020. There was a 7% decrease in both receipts and disposals between 2019 and 2020.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2019:
[Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

Summary Table 4: Queen's Bench cases received 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Queen's Bench Division - writs	3068	3469	3285	3347	3265
Commercial List set-down ^R	78	94	52	55	21
Judicial Reviews (applications)	101	92	72	68	66
Masters' appeals	86	87	68	51	32
High Court bails (applications)	1668	1449	1609	1714	1586

^R Revised figures. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below: [Queens Bench Revised Back Series](#)

Summary Table 5: Queen's Bench cases disposed 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Queen's Bench Division – writs	3009 ^[1]	1970	2298 ^[1]	2708	1342
Commercial List	149	121	124	137	34
Judicial reviews (applications) ^[R]	86	95	88	67	49
Masters' appeals	68	83	80	55	26
High Court bails (applications)	1387	1241	1308	1351	1251

^[1] 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.

^[R] Revised figures. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series please click on the following link: [Judicial Reviews Revised Back Series](#)

2.2 Queen's Bench Division - 2020 Data

There were 4,778 Queen's Bench cases and applications received during 2020, 68% of these were made up of writs and originating summonses. This was 15% less than the figure relating to 2019, when there were 5,644 cases and applications received of which 59% were writs and originating summonses. There has been a 2% decrease in the number of writs received from 3,347 in 2019 to 3,265 in 2020 (Table B.9).

Table B.9: Queen's Bench cases and applications received in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Total
Writs and originating summonses	Negligence	1618
	Breach	120
	Road injuries	670
	Personal injuries	515
	Monies due	139
	Foreign judgment	1
	Other	202
	Total	3265
Miscellaneous	Foreign judgment	82
	Other	27
	Total	109
Applications	Summons/interlocutory applications	845
	Remittals and removals	176
	Exparte applications	183
	Other	200
	Total	1404

Table B.10 shows the breakdown of the amount claimed in writs and originating summonses in 2020. The majority of writs and originating summonses were unliquidated in 2020 – 98%, one percentage point more than in 2019 (97%).

Table B.10: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses received by amount claimed in 2020

Type of writ and originating summons received	No value	Less than £15,000	£15,000-29,999	£30,000-49,999	£50,000 and over	Total
Negligence	1618	0	0	0	0	1618
Breach	118	0	0	0	2	120
Road injuries	669	0	0	1	0	670
Personal injuries	515	0	0	0	0	515
Monies due	92	1	8	13	25	139
Foreign judgment	1	0	0	0	0	1
Other	201	0	0	1	0	202
Total	3214	1	8	15	27	3265

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

There were 635 Queen's Bench writs (excluding commercial actions) set-down for trial during 2020 (Table B.11) compared with 857 the previous year, which represented a decrease of 26%. 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 60% from 1,605 in 2013 to 635 in 2020. 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:

[Queens Bench Revised Back Series](#)

Table B.11: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses set-down by amount claimed in 2020

Type of writ and originating summons set down	No value	Less than £15,000	£15,000-29,999	£30,000-49,999	£50,000 and over	Total
Negligence	381	0	0	4	0	385
Breach	8	0	1	3	0	12
Road injuries	157	0	2	1	0	160
Personal injuries	61	1	1	1	0	64
Monies Due	1	0	1	0	0	2
Other	12	0	0	0	0	12
Total	620	1	5	9	0	635

Excludes commercial actions.

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

There were 669 writs dealt with in court and 613 writs disposed of as office disposals. Actions set-down as negligence constituted 51% of writs disposed of (Table B.12). In 2019, there were 988 writs dealt with in court and 1,604 writs disposed of as office disposals while negligence also accounted for 51% of writs disposed.

Table B.12: Queen's Bench cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Case or Application	Type of case or application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Disposed of by office disposal	Disposed of by default judgment	Total
Writs & Originating summonses	Negligence	291	58	315	20	684
	Breach	15	1	28	9	53
	Road injuries	118	16	151	6	291
	Personal injuries	61	51	72	1	185
	Monies due	7	5	18	21	51
	Other	32	14	29	3	78
	Total	524	145	613	60	1342
Miscellaneous	Foreign judgment	0	0	4	0	4
	Other	11	0	0	0	11
	Total	11	0	4	0	15
Applications	Summons/ Interlocutory applications	39	587	1	0	627
	Remittals and removals	2	148	0	0	150
	Exparte applications	16	118	1	0	135
	Other	79	66	0	0	145
	Total	136	919	2	0	1057

Excludes commercial actions.

Of the 729 writs disposed of in 2020, either in court or by way of a default judgment, 34% were for £15,000 or more (Table B.13). The proportion of writs disposed of that were £15,000 and over in 2019 was 41% (453 out of 1,104).

Table B.13: Queen's Bench writs and originating summonses disposed by amount in 2020

Method of disposal	Type of case or application	No value	Less than £15,000	£15,000-29,999	£30,000-49,999	£50,000 and over	Total
High Court Judge	Negligence	154	27	34	31	45	291
	Breach	10	1	0	3	1	15
	Road injuries	23	3	19	32	41	118
	Personal injuries	54	0	2	3	2	61
	Monies due	7	0	0	0	0	7
	Other	25	0	1	3	3	32
Master	Negligence	57	0	1	0	0	58
	Breach	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Road injuries	15	0	1	0	0	16
	Personal injuries	51	0	0	0	0	51
	Monies due	5	0	0	0	0	5
	Other	14	0	0	0	0	14
Default judgment	Negligence	19	0	0	1	0	20
	Breach	3	0	0	2	4	9
	Road injuries	6	0	0	0	0	6
	Personal injuries	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Monies due	1	3	2	6	9	21
	Other	1	0	1	1	0	3
Total		447	34	61	82	105	729

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 2020, the average length of time for a writ from first listing to disposal was 31 weeks (Table B.14). In 2019, this was 23 weeks.

Table B.14: Average time intervals in weeks for Queen's Bench cases and applications in 2020

Points of process	Writs and originating summonses	Miscellaneous	Applications
Issue to first listing	121	1	6
First listing to disposal	31	4	10
Issue to disposal	152	6	16

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 2020, there were 21 cases set-down compared with 55 in 2019. In 2020, 34 cases were disposed of with 28 of these disposed of by a High Court Judge. Comparable figures in 2019 were 137 and 95 respectively.

Table B.15: Queen's Bench commercial actions received in 2020

Type of case	Total
Negligence	21
Breach of Contract	10
Monies due	10
Other	16
Total	57

Table B.16: Queen's Bench commercial actions set-down in 2020

Type of commercial action	Total
Negligence	10
Breach of Contract	2
Monies due	6
Other	3
Total	21

Table B.17: Queen's Bench commercial actions disposed of in 2020

Type of commercial action	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by office disposal	Total
Negligence	11	0	11
Breach of Contract	6	3	9
Monies due	6	3	9
Other	5	0	5
Total	28	6	34

In 2020, the average length of time for a commercial action from first listing to disposal was 46 weeks (Table B.18). In 2019, this was 34 weeks.

Table B.18: Average time intervals in weeks for commercial actions in 2020

Points of process	Commercial actions
Received to Entry to commercial list	66
Entry to commercial list to first listing	36
First listing to disposal	46
Received to disposal	148

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 66 applications for Judicial Review in 2020 compared with 68 in 2019. There were 80 applications for leave to apply for Judicial Review granted (41%). The proportion in 2019 for this was 47%. Of the 49 applications for Judicial Review that were disposed in 2020, 33% were granted. In 2019, there were 67 applications for Judicial Review and 46% of these were granted. Please note that Judicial Reviews disposed for 2018 and 2019 have been revised. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series click on the following link: [Judicial Reviews Revised Back Series](#)

Table B.19: Judicial Review applications received in 2020

Type of application	Total
Application for leave to apply for judicial review	268
Application for judicial review	66
Ancillary applications	5

Table B.20: Judicial Review applications disposed of in 2020

Type of application	Granted	Withdrawn /Refused /Dismissed	Other	Total
Application for leave to apply for judicial review	80	117	0	197
Application for judicial review	16	31	2	49
Ancillary Applications	2	4	0	6

In 2020, the average length of time from issue to disposal of applications for Judicial Review was 47 weeks (Table B.21) which was an increase on the 45 weeks in 2019.

Table B.21: Average time intervals in weeks for Judicial Review applications in 2020

Points of process	Application for leave to apply for judicial review	Application for judicial review	Ancillary applications
Issue to first listing	28	33	17
First listing to disposal	8	14	10
Issue to disposal	36	47	27

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 32 Masters' appeals received and 26 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2020 (Tables B.22 and B.23). This compares with the 51 Masters' appeals received and the 55 Masters' appeals disposed of in 2019.

Table B.22: Masters' appeals received in 2020

Division of Masters' appeal	Number of appeals
Queen's Bench Masters' Appeals	23
Chancery Masters' appeals	9
Total	32

Table B.23: Masters' appeals disposed of in 2020

Division of Masters' appeal	Number of appeals
Queen's Bench Masters' Appeals	13
Chancery Masters' appeals	13
Total	26

High Court Bails

There were 1,586 applications for bail received in the High Court during 2020, a decrease of 7% from 1,714 in 2019. Of the 544 applications disposed in court in 2020, 53% were granted (Table B.26). In 2019, 1,243 applications were disposed in court. Of these, 59% (729) were granted.

Table B.24: Number of bail applications received in 2020

Type of application	Total
Bail application	1318
Bail pending appeal to county court	14
Compassionate bail application	20
Application to revoke bail	2
Bail variation	232
Total	1586

Table B.25: Number of bail applications disposed of in chambers in 2020

Type of application	Granted	Refused	Other	Total
Bail application	184	346	18	548
Bail pending appeal to county court	0	4	1	5
Compassionate bail application	6	3	0	9
Bail variation	78	61	6	145
Total	268	414	25	707

Table B.26: Number of bail applications disposed of in court in 2020

Type of application	Granted	Refused	Revoke	Other	Total
Bail application	257	187	4	38	486
Bail pending appeal to county court	3	3	0	1	7
Compassionate bail application	0	5	0	0	5
Bail variation	26	14	0	6	46
Total	286	209	4	45	544

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 – A Person can apply to end ('dissolve') their civil partnership if they have been in the partnership for at least a year.

There are 3 main steps to ending a civil partnership:

- File a dissolution petition - apply to court for permission to end the civil partnership, and show reasons why the parties want to split up.
- Apply for a conditional order - if the civil partner agrees to the petition, parties will get a document saying there's no reason they can't divorce.
- Apply for a final order - this legally ends the civil partnership - parties need to wait 6 weeks after they get the conditional order before they 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) (Patient's 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 Solicitor's 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 2016 and 2020, with an overall decrease of 6%. The number of divorce petitions received was at its highest in 2018 at 2,556. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of divorce petitions granted decreased by 43% overall. Divorce petitions granted peaked in 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 generally decreased, peaking in 2016. Orders issued decreased by 32% between 2016 and 2020.

Summary Table 6: High Court Family cases received 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Divorce petitions ^[1]	2418	2322	2556	2411	2271
Wardship and adoption	77	73	79	110	70
Family Homes & Domestic Violence	63	57	30	39	31
Mental Health Proceedings (Orders Issued) ^[2]	1519	855	1331	1283	1028
Official Solicitor's Office – live patient Cases ^{[3] [4]}	147	141	130	123	119
Official Solicitor's Office – current Minor Cases ^[3]	88	104	181	176	225

^[1] Data include civil partnership petitions.

^[2] 2018 figures have increased compared to 2017, however 2017 figures were lower than usual due to staffing challenges during the period.

^[3] Please note that Minors and Patients caseloads for 2018 were revised. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

[Minors and Patients Revised Caseloads](#)

^[4] Live Patient cases reflects where the Official Solicitor acts as a Full Controller.

Summary Table 7: High Court Family cases disposed 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Divorce petitions granted ^[1]	884	768	804	759	508
Wardship and adoption	89	58	70	88	67
Family Homes & Domestic Violence	48	46	18	35	19
Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' cases Disposed ^[2]	34	46	47	142	44

^[1] Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

^[2] Please note that Minors and Patients caseloads for 2018 were revised. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

[Minors and Patients Revised Caseloads](#)

3.2 Family Division – 2020 Data

Matrimonial

The number of divorce petitions received decreased by 6%, from 2,411 in 2019 to 2,271 in 2020 (Table B.27). 40% (906) of the divorce petitions received in 2020 were as a result of 2 years separation with consent, compared with 38% in 2019 (912).

Table B.27: Divorce petitions received in 2020

Grounds for petition	Filed by wife	Filed by husband	Total
2 years with consent	541	365	906
5 years separation	351	284	635
Adultery	21	7	28
Unreasonable behaviour	364	69	433
Combination of grounds/other	192	77	269
Total	1469	802	2271

Data include civil partnership petitions.

There were 508 decrees granted in the High Court during 2020, a decrease of 33% on the 759 granted during 2019. The most common ground for dissolution continued to be separation (2 years with consent) accounting for 28% of all decrees granted in 2020 (Table B.28), compared to 31% in 2019.

Table B.28: Divorce petitions by type of decrees granted in 2020

Type of decree	Grounds for decree	Granted - wife	Granted - husband	Granted - both	Total
Decree Nisi	2 years with consent	84	60	0	144
	5 years separation	56	34	0	90
	Adultery	8	2	0	10
	Unreasonable behaviour	108	17	0	125
	Combination of grounds/other	74	38	23	135
Nullity	Combination of grounds/other	3	1	0	4
Total		333	152	23	508

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

Table B.29: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2020

Type of petition	Grounds for petition	Granted - wife	Granted - husband	Granted - both	Total
Divorce Petition	2 years with consent	84	56	0	140
	5 years separation	46	23	0	69
	Adultery	5	2	0	7
	Unreasonable behaviour	88	17	0	105
	Combination of grounds/other	82	37	26	145
Total		305	135	26	466

Data include civil partnership dissolutions.

During 2020, there were 754 matrimonial applications received, 27% less than the 1,030 received in 2019. In total, 50% of applications were for ancillary relief in 2020 (Table B.30) compared to the 52% in 2019.

Table B.30: Matrimonial applications received in 2020

Type of application	Grounds for application	Total
Application	Combination of grounds/other	5
	Ancillary relief	379
	Matrimonial application	345
	Other	25
Total		754

Of the 439 matrimonial applications disposed of during 2020, 204 (46%) were for ancillary relief (Table B.31). The corresponding number of matrimonial applications disposed of in 2019 was 838 of which 458 (55%) were for ancillary relief.

Table B.31: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2020

Type of application	Grounds for application	Disposed of by Judge	Disposed of by Master	Total
Application	Combination of grounds/other	3	0	3
	Ancillary relief	4	200	204
	Matrimonial application	8	216	224
	Other	5	3	8
Total		20	419	439

The average time from the issue of a petition to the date the decree was granted was 51 weeks in 2020 (Table B.32) compared with 45 weeks in 2019.

Table B.32: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2020

Points of process	Divorce Petition
Issue to first listing	48
First listing to date decree granted	3
Issue to date decree granted	51

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

During 2020, the average time from issue to disposal of a matrimonial application was 9 weeks which was less than the average time of 10 weeks in 2019. Applications for ancillary relief took on average 61 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal in 2020 (Table B.33) which was more than the 57 weeks in 2019.

Table B.33: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2020

Points of process	Combination of grounds/ other	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application	Other
Issue to first listing	72	14	6	5
First listing to disposal	1	46	4	20
Issue to disposal	73	61	9	24

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

Wardship and Adoption

During 2020, adoption order applications accounted for 36% (25) of the total applications received (Table B.34) compared with 37% (41) in 2019.

Table B.34: Adoption cases and applications received in 2020

Type of application	Total
Adoption Order Application	25
Child Abduction Originating Summons	8
Freeing Order Application	11
Originating Summons (General)	2
Human Fertilisation Originating Summons	3
Interlocutory Application	4
Wardship Originating Summons	17
Total	70

Of the cases disposed in 2020, 96% were disposed of by a High Court Judge. The majority of applications disposed of (54%) were adoption order applications (Table B.35). In 2019, 88% of cases were disposed by a High Court Judge with 39% (34) being adoption order applications.

Table B.35: Adoption cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type of application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Total
Adoption Order Application	36	0	36
Child Abduction Originating Summons	12	0	12
Freeing Order Application	7	0	7
Human Fertilisation Originating Summons	3	0	3
Interlocutory Application	2	0	2
Wardship Originating Summons	4	3	7
Total	64	3	67

Ex-parte applications for occupation/non-molestation orders accounted for 52% (16) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2020 (Table B.36). The number of ex-parte applications was also 16 in 2019, and accounted for 41% of cases and applications received.

Table B.36: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications received in 2020

Type of application	Total
App For Occupation/Non-Molestation	15
Ex-parte Application For Occupation/Non-Molestation	16
App to extend/discharge/vary occupation/ non-molestation	0
Total	31

The Master disposed of 89% (17) of the total number of Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2020 compared with 80% (28) in 2019. Table B.37 shows that 42% (8) of all cases in 2020 were ex-parte compared with 46% (16) the previous year.

Table B.37: Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type of application	Disposed of by High Court Judge	Disposed of by Master	Total
App For Occupation/Non-Molestation	1	9	10
Ex-parte Application For Occupation/Non-Molestation	1	7	8
App to extend/discharge/vary occupation/ non-molestation	0	1	1
Total	2	17	19

Table B.38 shows the average time in weeks for adoption and Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications during 2020. It took on average 25 weeks for an adoption case from date of issue to date of disposal in 2020, less than the 34 weeks in 2019.

Table B.38: Average time intervals in weeks for Family Homes and Domestic Violence cases and applications in 2020

Points of process	Adoption	Family Homes And Domestic Violence
Issue to first listing	21	23
First listing to disposal	4	15
Issue to disposal	25	38

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

Care and Protection

There were 1,745 Patients referred to the Office of Care and Protection in 2020 for investigation under the Mental Health Order, representing a 10% decrease on the 2019 total of 1,929 Patients. The total live caseload for 2020 was 1,662 (Table B.39) a decrease of 6% on the previous year (1,768).

Table B.39: Office of Care and Protection – Mental Health proceedings in 2020

Business Type	Total
New referrals ^[1]	1745
EPA applications received	1112
Orders issued	1028
Certificates issued	4108
Reviews completed	1416
Visits ^[2]	0
Live caseload at 31st December 2020 ^[3]	1662

^[1]The figure for 'New Referrals' includes all new cases, including applications to register EPA detailed separately in the line below

^[2]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.

^[3] Live caseload is the number of active Full Controller Orders at 31 December 2020.

Official Solicitor's Office

Tables B.40 and B.41 demonstrate the caseload of the Official Solicitor's Office. In preparation for a new computer system, together with the variation of roles carried out by the Official Solicitor, the recording of cases has been updated. Statistics now show the type of proceedings and where applicable, the role carried out in those cases. Up to December 2018 all Parental Incapacity cases were received in the Minor Statistics. In 2019, a change in recording split the cases into Minor Parents and Parental Incapacity (over 18).

During 2019 a manual review exercise of outstanding cases was conducted, and as a result a number of cases were disposed. Caution should therefore be taken when comparing disposals to other years.

There were 119 live full controller cases relating to Patients and 225 current cases relating to minors in 2020. In 2019, there were 123 live full controller cases relating to Patients and 176 current cases relating to minors. Please note that Minors and Patients caseloads for 2018 were revised. For more information about these revisions and to view the amended back series follow the link below:

[Minors and Patients Revised Caseloads](#)

Table B.40: Official Solicitor's Office – Patient caseload in 2020

Business Area	Type of application	Received [1]	Current Caseload [2]	Disposed [3]
Chancery Court	As Amicus Curiae	1	3	0
	As Controller ad Interim	1	1	0
	As Guardian ad Litem	0	5	0
	As Next Friend	0	2	0
	Total	2	11	0
Declaratory Proceedings	Deprivation of Liberty	3	33	2
	Medical	8	13	0
	Other	4	7	0
	Annual Review DOL	2	2	0
	Total	17	55	2
Judicial Review		1	1	0
Matrimonial	As Guardian ad Litem	2	11	0
	As Next Friend	2	3	0
	Total	4	14	0
Miscellaneous		4	10	0
Non-Molestation Orders	As Guardian ad Litem	2	3	0
	As Next Friend	3	6	2
	Total	5	9	2
Office of Care & Protection	As Amicus Curiae	0	1	0
	As Controller ad Interim	11	39	5
	As Full Controller	2	119	6
	As Guardian ad Litem	1	2	1
	As Next Friend	0	2	0
	Total	14	163	12
Parental Incapacity (over 18)		33	38	3
Queen's Bench	As Guardian ad Litem	0	1	0
	As Next Friend	1	2	1
	Total	1	3	1
Trustee		0	12	0
Total		81	316	20
Certificates Drafted		679		
General Enquiries		34		
Post Received (combined)		5790		

[1] Received during 2020

[2] Current Caseload – total number of live cases – received in current year and all previous years, which are not yet “disposed” of (closed/deceased/completed)

[3] Disposed – total number of cases closed in 2020, regardless of when they were received.

During 2019 a manual review exercise of outstanding cases was conducted, and as a result a number of cases were disposed. Caution should be therefore be taken when comparing disposals to other years.

Note: due to COVID-19, cases were not referenced in line with the normal process – therefore a reduction of cases disposed of.

Table B.41: Official Solicitor's Office – Minors' caseload in 2020

Business Area	Type of application	Received	Current Caseload ^[1]	Disposed ^[2]
Adoption		0	1	0
Chancery Court	Administration of Estate	0	3	1
	Other	0	2	0
	Total	0	5	1
Child Abduction (Hague)		7	8	0
Children's Order Article 7 (Parental Responsibility)	As Guardian ad Litem	0	0	0
	As Next Friend	0	0	1
	As Amicus Curiae Nominal Respondent	1	1	0
	Total	1	1	1
Children's Order Article 8 (Contact/Residency)	As Legal Rep/Guardian ad Litem	32	48	4
	As Next Friend	0	0	0
	As Nominal Respondent	7	7	0
	Total	39	55	4
Children's Order Article 13 (Relocation)		5	11	1
Children's Order Other		2	41	29
Compensation Cases	Criminal Injury	0	5	0
	Personal Injury	1	5	1
	Total	1	10	1
Declaration of Parentage		2	2	0
Declaratory Proceedings	Deprivation of Liberty	1	2	0
	Medical	0	1	0
	Other	0	1	0
	Total	1	4	0
Guardian of the Fortune		0	6	0
Judicial Review		4	5	1
Minor Parent	Acting in adoption	0	3	0
	Acting in Children's Order	9	23	2
	Total	9	26	2
Miscellaneous Cases		0	1	0
Non-Molestation Orders	As Guardian ad Litem	2	4	0
	As Next Friend	11	17	0
	Total	13	21	0
Queen's Bench	House Purchase	4	10	0
	Other	0	8	2
	Total	4	18	2
Trustee		0	2	1
Wardship		5	8	1
Total		93	225	44
Total Cases involving Personal Litigants		16		

^[1] Current Caseload – total number of live cases – received in current year and all previous years, which are not yet “disposed” of (closed/deceased/completed)

^[2] Disposed – total number of cases closed in 2020, regardless of when they were received. Due to COVID-19, many cases are not concluded within the normal timescale, hence fewer cases closed than expected.

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 Lord 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 generally decreased between 2016 and 2019, decreasing by 2% overall. In 2020 the sittings decreased by a further 24%.
- Overall sitting times have decreased between 2016 and 2019, by 9% before decreasing by a further 26% over the last year, and decreasing by 32% overall when compared with 2016.

Summary Table 8: High Court Judge Sitting Days 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Court Sitting Days	2045	1972	2001	2013	1524
Total Court Sitting Time (hrs:mins)	3995:23	3810:02	3559:45	3631:47	2697:09

4.2 Sitting Days – 2020 Data

Court sitting days and court sitting times

High Court Judges sat a total of 1,524 court sitting days, a decrease of 24% on the 2,013 days sat during 2019. By majority type of work, High Court Judges sat for a total of 297 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 146 in the Crown Court in 2020 (Table B.42). In 2019, High Court Judges sat for a total of 445 days hearing Queen's Bench business and 155 in the Crown Court.

Table B.42 High Court Judges court sitting days and court sitting times in 2020 (hrs:mins)

Type of Business	Total number of sitting days	Total sitting time
Children Order	234	472:24
Other Family	57	64:54
Appeals	11	15:46
Queen's Bench	297	543:35
Chancery	214	441:56
Bails	256	370:22
Crown	146	313:20
Judicial Reviews	135	239:15
Criminal Appeals	86	120:00
Civil Appeals	88	115:37
Total	1524	2697:09

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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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.

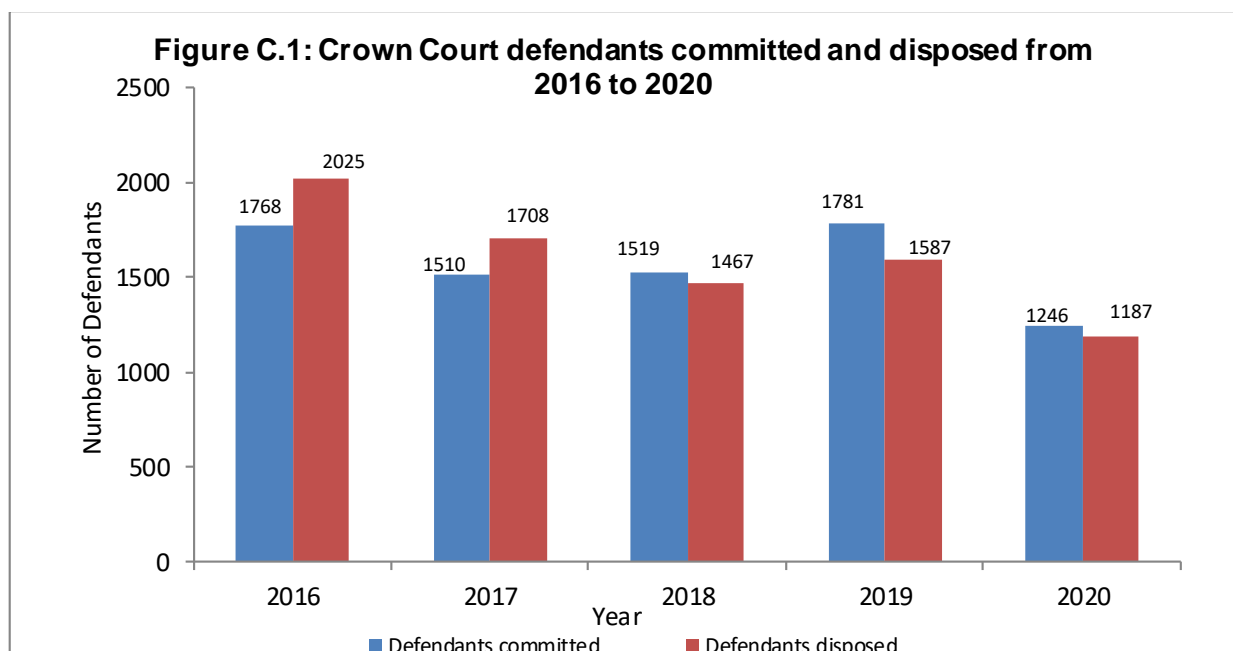
The prosecution has no right to appeal against the acquittal of a defendant who has been tried on indictment. The Attorney-General can refer a point of law to the Court of Appeal for its opinion, but even if the Court of Appeal considers that the trial judge made an error of law resulting in an acquittal, 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. With the exception of 2019, the number of defendants committed between 2016 and 2020 has generally decreased, with an overall decrease of 30%. The highest number of committals to the Crown Court occurred in 2019 (1,781). The fall in defendants committed during 2020 will have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There was a decrease of 41% in the number of defendants disposed of between 2016 and 2020. However the 2020 figures should be treated with caution as they will have been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 affected defendants' access to legal aid representation and had an impact on disposals and delay within the Crown Court process. As the dispute ended and cases began to progress through the system again, this led to a spike in disposals in 2016. The disposals began to decline in 2017 and again in 2018, as the majority of the backlog had been cleared. Disposals increased again by 8% in 2019, before decreasing by 25% in 2020.



- Average waiting times between committal and start of trial decreased between 2016 and 2019 by 30%, to 118 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 as the backlog was cleared. In 2020 the average waiting times for committal to start of trial increased again by 8%, however again these times will have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Crown Court sittings have remained constant over the last 5 years apart from a large dip in 2020. This was due to the inability to hold jury trials for a number of months during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2016 and 2019 sittings decreased by less than 1%, however in 2020 sittings decreased by 38%. (See table C.9).
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2019:
[Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

Summary Table 9: Crown Court 2016 to 2020

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Cases received	1438	1214	1237	1434	1037
Cases disposed	1640	1408	1181	1295	965
Defendants committed	1768	1510	1519	1781	1246
Defendants disposed	2025	1708	1467	1587	1187
Average time from committal to start of trial	168	135	128	118	127
Average time from conviction to disposal	55	63	60	57	71
Sittings	2539	2536	2448	2521	1569

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

Crown Court – 2020 Data

Section 1: Cases received and disposed of

Table C.1 shows the number of cases received in 2020. There were 1,037 cases received in 2020 compared with 1,434 in 2019, a decrease of 28%. In 2020, there were 965 cases disposed of (Table C.2), a 25% decrease on the 1,295 disposed of in 2019.

Table C.1: Crown Court cases received in 2020

Processing Office	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	0	93	0	93
Belfast	6	425	0	431
Craigavon	0	138	0	138
Downpatrick	0	76	0	76
Dungannon	0	95	0	95
Londonderry	0	99	0	99
Newry	0	105	0	105
Total	6	1031	0	1037

^[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 2020

Processing Office	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	0	101	0	101
Belfast	9	364	0	373
Craigavon	0	109	0	109
Downpatrick	0	105	0	105
Dungannon	0	91	0	91
Londonderry	0	91	0	91
Newry	0	95	0	95
Total	9	956	0	965

^[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 2020

Processing Office	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	0	112	0	112
Belfast	6	515	0	521
Craigavon	0	176	0	176
Downpatrick	0	86	0	86
Dungannon	0	116	0	116
Londonderry	0	121	0	121
Newry	0	114	0	114
Total	6	1240	0	1246

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

In 2020, there were 1,246 defendants committed to the Crown Court (Table C.3). This was a 30% decrease on the 1,781 committed in 2019. There was a total of 1,187 defendants disposed of during 2020 (Table C.4). This was a decrease of 25% when compared with the 1,587 defendants disposed of in 2019.

Table C.4: Crown Court defendants disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Justice & Security Act ^[1]	Non-Scheduled	Scheduled	Total
Antrim	0	125	0	125
Belfast	18	452	0	470
Craigavon	0	126	0	126
Downpatrick	0	124	0	124
Dungannon	0	113	0	113
Londonderry	0	108	0	108
Newry	0	121	0	121
Total	18	1169	0	1187

^[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 and start of trial was 127 days (Table C.5). This was an increase of 8% on the 118 days in 2019. The average waiting time between conviction and disposal was 71 days, 25% more than in 2019 (57 days).

Table C.5: Average waiting time in the Crown Court in days in 2020

Processing Office	Committal to start of trial – days	Conviction to disposal – days	Total defendants disposed of
Antrim	150	76	117
Belfast	119	81	443
Craigavon	101	72	122
Downpatrick	121	67	119
Dungannon	156	67	106
Londonderry	157	57	105
Newry	113	50	113
Total	127	71	1125

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 (98%) (Table C.6). This was less than 2019 when 99% of defendants were disposed of by a county court judge.

Table C.6: Crown Court defendants disposed of by judge type in 2020

Processing Office	County Court Judge	High Court Judge	Total
Antrim	125	0	125
Belfast	449	21	470
Craigavon	126	0	126
Downpatrick	121	3	124
Dungannon	112	1	113
Londonderry	108	0	108
Newry	121	0	121
Total	1162	25	1187

Table C.7: Crown Court defendants disposed of by charge type in 2020

Charge Type	Total
All Offences Against the Person	107
All Sexual Offences	104
All Burglary Offences	37
All Robbery Offences	7
All Theft Offences	41
All Fraud and Forgery Offences	94
All Criminal Damage Offences	8
All Offences Against the State	13
All Other Offences	36
All Drug Offences	138
All Motoring Offences	49
All Non-Police Offences	1
Combination of Charges	552
Total	1187

In total, 33% of defendants made a plea of guilty on all charges (33% in 2019) and 9% were acquitted on all charges (14% in 2019). (Table C.8).

Table C.8: Outcome of Crown Court defendants in 2020

Processing Office	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	41	73	11	0	125
Belfast	160	268	41	1	470
Craigavon	52	64	10	0	126
Downpatrick	33	82	9	0	124
Dungannon	31	70	11	1	113
Londonderry	34	60	14	0	108
Newry	40	69	12	0	121
Total	391	686	108	2	1187

Section 4: Crown Court sittings and times

There were 1,569 sittings in the Crown Court in 2020. This was a 38% decrease on the number in 2019 (2,521). The total time spent on Crown Court business (3133:35) has decreased by 48% from 2019 (5979:19).

Table C.9: Crown Court sittings and total Crown Court time in 2020 (hrs : mins)

Venue	Number of sittings	Total time
Antrim	149	284:44
Armagh	9	6:08
Ballymena	2	0:35
Belfast	677	1306:16
Craigavon	143	279:37
Downpatrick	70	144:59
Dungannon	176	444:26
Enniskillen	3	1:52
Lisburn	2	1:05
Londonderry	151	363:03
Newry	113	161:37
Omagh	17	44:19
Royal Courts of Justice	57	94:54
Total	1569	3133:35

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

Total Crown Court 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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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 or 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 2016 and 2020 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 increased by 6% and 5% respectively between 2016 and 2019, and then decreasing by 51% and 42% respectively between 2019 and 2020.
- Ordinary civil bill cases received remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 20% in 2020. Civil bills disposed also remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2019, peaking at 9,885 disposals in 2017, before decreasing by 41% between 2017 and 2020.
- Ejectment cases received and disposed fluctuated over the last 5 years. Between 2016 and 2019, both receipts and disposals increased by 18% and 25% respectively, before decreasing by 62% and 73% respectively in 2020. The increases and declines in ejectment cases disposed are likely to be due to the changing economic conditions experienced during the period, however the significant drop in 2020, was due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Equity cases received remained relatively stable between 2016 and 2020, apart from a spike in 2019, while equity cases disposed increased by 27% between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 45% in 2020.
- The number of small claims received decreased on a yearly basis between 2016 and 2019, apart from a spike in 2017. There was a 3% decrease in receipts overall between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 49% in 2020. There has been a fluctuating trend in the number of small claims disposed between 2016 and 2019, and disposals then decreased by 55% between 2019 and 2020. 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 2016 and 2020 with an overall decrease of 38% during the period. The total number of decrees granted across the High Court and County Court decreased between 2016 and 2020 by 40% overall.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2019:
[Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

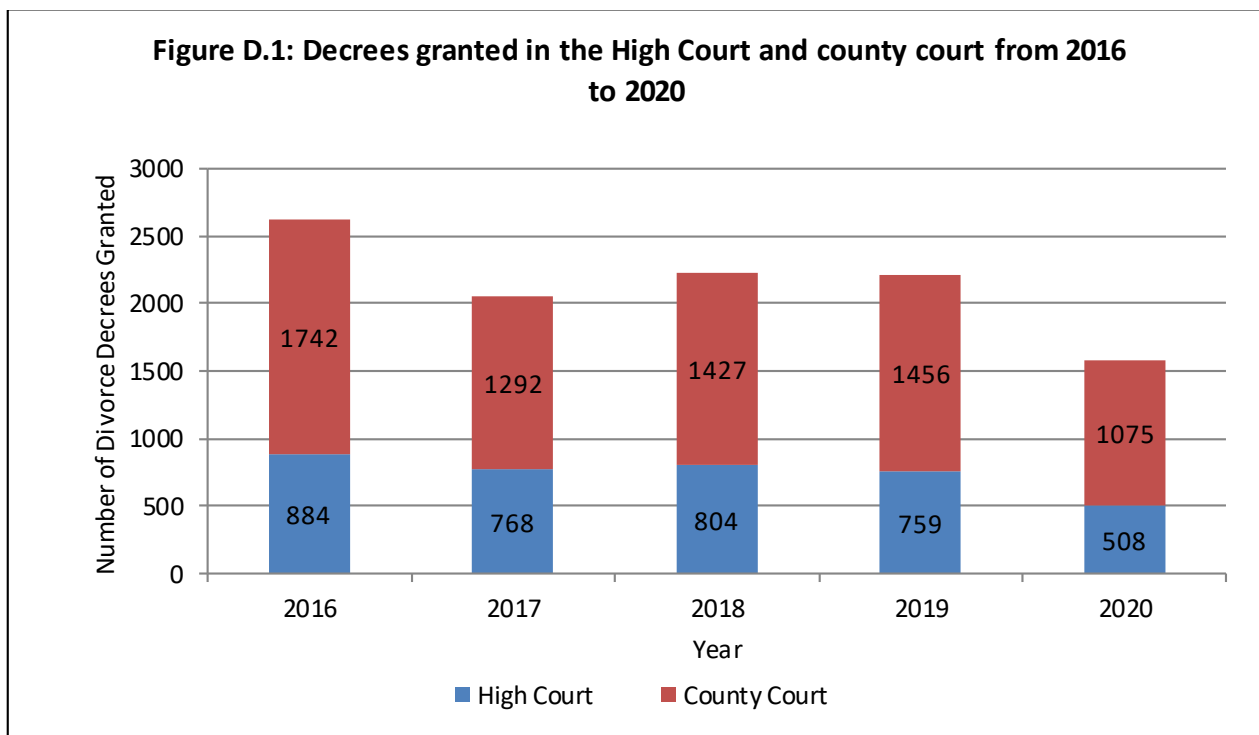
Summary Table 10: County court cases received 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Appeals from the magistrates' courts	3623	3444	3701	3857	1891
Criminal damage cases	30	30	21	18	9
Licences	204	227	249	255	143
Ordinary civil bills	10702	10600	10708	10751	8630
Equity	136	135	131	150	132
Ejectment	989	1105	1189	1164	441
Small claims	10073	11720	10180	9744	4993

Summary Table 11: County court cases disposed 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Appeals from the magistrates' courts	3530	3188	3298	3691	2128
Criminal damage cases	20	14	23	16	8
Licences	214	217	231	233	133
Ordinary civil bills	9172	9885	9322	9156	5813
Equity	91	104	101	116	64
Ejectment	750	797	988	936	257
Small claims	8389	9462	8903	8722	3937
Divorce cases (decrees absolute)	1691	1318	1322	1520 ^[R]	1057
Divorce cases (decrees granted)	1742	1292	1427	1456	1075

^[R] Decrees Absolute for 2019 have been revised.



County Court – 2020 Data

Section 1: Appeals from magistrates' courts

There were a total of 1,891 appeals received during 2020 (Table D.1) and 2,128 appeals disposed of in the county court during 2020 (Table D.2).

Table D.1: Appeals received in 2020

Processing Office	Appeals Received
Antrim	172
Armagh	18
Ballymena	108
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	441
Coleraine	141
Craigavon	106
Downpatrick	17
Dungannon	124
Enniskillen	12
Limavady	27
Lisburn	263
Londonderry	203
Magherafelt	1
Newry	61
Newtownards	121
Omagh	66
Strabane	10
Total	1891

The number of appeals received in 2020 (1,891) decreased from 3,857 in 2019 – a decrease of 51%. The highest number of appeals received was in Belfast (441) which represented 23% of cases. In 2019, Belfast was also the highest and represented 24% of cases.

Table D.2: Appeals disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Appeals Disposed
Antrim	157
Armagh	32
Ballymena	138
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	542
Coleraine	178
Craigavon	97
Downpatrick	14
Dungannon	157
Enniskillen	24
Limavady	34
Lisburn	225
Londonderry	228
Magherafelt	5
Newry	77
Newtownards	145
Omagh	51
Strabane	24
Total	2128

The number of appeals disposed of in 2020 (2,128) decreased from 3,691 in 2019 – a decrease of 42%. The highest number of appeals disposed was in Belfast (542) which represented 25% of cases. In 2019, this office also disposed the highest number of cases (22%).

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 2020 were criminal cases, and 1% were civil cases, the same proportion as 2019. Of the criminal appeals, 77% were against sentence only and 23% were against conviction and sentence in 2020. These percentages were 78% and 22% respectively in 2019.

Table D.3: Number of magistrates' court appeals against conviction and sentence in 2020

Processing Office	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	7	2	5	0	14
Armagh	5	5	2	0	12
Ballymena	2	9	18	0	29
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	37	39	64	7	147
Coleraine	7	4	10	0	21
Craigavon	3	3	11	0	17
Downpatrick	0	0	1	0	1
Dungannon	4	21	10	0	35
Enniskillen	6	4	0	0	10
Limavady	0	0	4	0	4
Lisburn	4	36	20	0	60
Londonderry	17	7	19	0	43
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0
Newry	4	8	9	0	21
Newtownards	2	19	9	2	32
Omagh	3	13	7	0	23
Strabane	0	9	0	0	9
Total	101	179	189	9	478

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence decreased by 40% from 2019 – 798 compared with 478.

The number of appeals against conviction and sentence in 2020 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 179 – 37% of all appeals against conviction and sentence. In 2019, the corresponding proportion was 39% (313 out of 798).

Table D.4: Number of magistrates' court appeals against sentence only in 2020

Processing Office	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied on Appeal	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Abandoned/ Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	22	97	24	0	143
Armagh	0	4	14	2	20
Ballymena	0	49	59	0	108
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	6	191	155	34	386
Coleraine	0	60	96	1	157
Craigavon	0	30	43	5	78
Downpatrick	0	13	0	0	13
Dungannon	0	81	39	0	120
Enniskillen	0	10	3	1	14
Limavady	0	13	14	3	30
Lisburn	3	87	69	4	163
Londonderry	0	90	90	4	184
Magherafelt	0	5	0	0	5
Newry	0	32	22	0	54
Newtownards	5	64	41	0	110
Omagh	0	24	4	0	28
Strabane	0	8	7	0	15
Total	36	858	680	54	1628

The number of appeals against sentence decreased by 43% from 2019 – 1,628 compared with 2,873.

The number of appeals against sentence only in 2020 which resulted in the appeal being allowed and in an Order being varied was 858 – 53% of all appeals against sentence only. In 2019, the corresponding proportion was 52% (1,491 out of 2,873).

Table D.5: Number of magistrates' court civil appeals in 2020

Processing Office	Appeal Dismissed – Affirm Order	Appeal Allowed – Order Varied	Appeal Allowed – Order Reversed	Appeal Withdrawn	Total
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0
Armagh	0	0	0	0	0
Ballymena	1	0	0	0	1
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	6	0	3	0	9
Coleraine	0	0	0	0	0
Craigavon	0	1	0	1	2
Downpatrick	0	0	0	0	0
Dungannon	2	0	0	0	2
Enniskillen	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	2	0	0	0	2
Londonderry	1	0	0	0	1
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0
Newry	0	2	0	0	2
Newtownards	0	2	0	1	3
Omagh	0	0	0	0	0
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	5	3	2	22

The number of civil appeals in 2020 (22) increased by 10% from the number of civil appeals in 2019 (20).

Section 2: Criminal damage cases

There were 9 criminal damage cases received during 2020, compared to 18 received in 2019. Belfast accounted for 44% of all cases received in 2020 (39% in 2019). Table D.7 shows that there were 8 criminal damage cases disposed of in 2020, compared with 16 disposed of in 2019.

Table D.6: Number of criminal damage cases and applications received in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Total
Cases	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	4
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	0
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	1
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	0
	Londonderry	2
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	1
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	1
	Strabane	0
	Total	9
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	0
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	0
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	0
	Londonderry	0
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	0
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	0
	Strabane	0
	Total	0

Table D.7: Number of criminal damage cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Court disposal	Non court disposal	Total
Cases	Antrim	0	0	0
	Armagh	0	0	0
	Ballymena	0	0	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0
	Belfast	2	1	3
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	0
	Coleraine	1	0	1
	Craigavon	0	0	0
	Downpatrick	0	0	0
	Dungannon	0	1	1
	Enniskillen	0	0	0
	Limavady	0	0	0
	Lisburn	0	0	0
	Londonderry	0	1	1
	Magherafelt	0	0	0
	Newry	0	0	0
	Newtownards	0	0	0
	Omagh	1	1	2
	Strabane	0	0	0
	Total	4	4	8
Applications	Antrim	0	0	0
	Armagh	0	0	0
	Ballymena	0	0	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0
	Belfast	0	0	0
	Civil Processing Centre	0	0	0
	Coleraine	0	0	0
	Craigavon	0	0	0
	Downpatrick	0	0	0
	Dungannon	0	0	0
	Enniskillen	0	0	0
	Limavady	0	0	0
	Lisburn	0	0	0
	Londonderry	0	0	0
	Magherafelt	0	0	0
	Newry	0	0	0
	Newtownards	0	0	0
	Omagh	0	0	0
	Strabane	0	0	0
	Total	0	0	0

The average time from issue to disposal for criminal damage cases was 90 weeks in 2020. The corresponding time interval was 134 weeks in 2019. 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 2020

Type	Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	145
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	40
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	0
	Londonderry	0
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	0
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	31
	Strabane	0
	Total	90
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	0
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	0
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	0
	Londonderry	0
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	0
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	0
	Strabane	0
	Total	0

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

Section 3: Licences

There were 143 licence applications received in the county court in 2020, 44% less than were received in 2019 (255).

In 2020, 133 licence applications were disposed of, a decrease of 43% from the previous year (233). Belfast accounted for 25% of licences received and 28% of licences disposed of in 2020, compared to 26% and 30% respectively in 2019.

Table D.9: Licences received and disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Licences received	Licences disposed of
Antrim	0	0
Armagh	0	0
Ballymena	0	0
Banbridge@Newry	0	0
Belfast	36	37
Civil Processing Centre	0	0
Coleraine	37	18
Craigavon	6	6
Downpatrick	0	0
Dungannon	0	0
Enniskillen	0	0
Limavady	0	0
Lisburn	0	0
Londonderry	9	10
Magherafelt	0	0
Newry	18	17
Newtownards	26	26
Omagh	11	19
Strabane	0	0
Total	143	133

Section 4: Ordinary civil bills

There were 8,630 ordinary civil bill cases and 3,427 applications received in 2020. In 2019 there were 10,751 cases received and 4,866 applications received. This represents a decrease in the number of cases by 20% and a decrease of the number of applications by 30%.

Table D.10: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications received in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	148
	Armagh	121
	Ballymena	187
	Banbridge@Newry	2
	Belfast	2909
	Civil Processing Centre	2125
	Coleraine	315
	Craigavon	318
	Downpatrick	315
	Dungannon	147
	Enniskillen	49
	Limavady	5
	Lisburn	263
	Londonderry	339
	Magherafelt	54
	Newry	527
	Newtownards	401
	Omagh	397
	Strabane	8
	Total	8630
Applications	Antrim	13
	Armagh	81
	Ballymena	20
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	760
	Civil Processing Centre	1567
	Coleraine	116
	Craigavon	99
	Downpatrick	83
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	41
	Londonderry	162
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	164
	Newtownards	189
	Omagh	132
	Strabane	0
	Total	3427

The number of ordinary civil bill cases where Notices of Intention to Defend were received has decreased from 7,519 in 2019 to 6,323 in 2020, representing a decrease in business of 16% (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 53% of civil bills with an NID lodged in 2020, 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 2020

Processing Office	County court judge level	District judge level	Total
Antrim	68	75	143
Armagh	51	57	108
Ballymena	78	109	187
Banbridge@Newry	0	1	1
Belfast	1484	1248	2732
Civil Processing Centre	105	110	215
Coleraine	115	157	272
Craigavon	130	171	301
Downpatrick	241	45	286
Dungannon	85	47	132
Enniskillen	21	32	53
Limavady	0	5	5
Lisburn	96	167	263
Londonderry	114	202	316
Magherafelt	21	32	53
Newry	210	282	492
Newtownards	13	358	371
Omagh	150	235	385
Strabane	6	2	8
Total	2988	3335	6323

The number of cases disposed of decreased by 37%, from 9,156 cases in 2019 to 5,813 in 2020. Of the ordinary civil bill cases disposed of in 2020, 10% were default judgments. A further 22% were disposed of at district judge level and 15% were disposed of at county court judge level (Table D.12). Comparable figures for 2019 were 11%, 30% and 28% respectively.

Table D.12: Number of ordinary civil bill cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Court result - CCJ	Court result - DJ	Non court disposals	Default judgment	Total
Cases	Antrim	7	31	65	1	104
	Armagh	9	13	36	1	59
	Ballymena	12	54	74	0	140
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0
	Belfast	435	316	1085	14	1850
	Civil Processing Centre	3	2	200	526	731
	Coleraine	40	109	203	6	358
	Craigavon	57	84	181	2	324
	Downpatrick	62	2	175	1	240
	Dungannon	13	23	38	0	74
	Enniskillen	1	10	24	1	36
	Limavady	0	2	3	0	5
	Lisburn	46	66	169	0	281
	Londonderry	45	131	152	0	328
	Magherafelt	7	20	26	0	53
	Newry	82	96	230	4	412
	Newtownards	13	184	219	3	419
	Omagh	67	117	208	4	396
	Strabane	1	0	2	0	3
	Total	900	1260	3090	563	5813
Application	Antrim	3	0	4	0	7
	Armagh	4	2	18	0	24
	Ballymena	0	0	11	0	11
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0
	Belfast	104	43	295	0	442
	Civil Processing Centre	0	1	123	0	124
	Coleraine	15	7	57	0	79
	Craigavon	10	2	50	0	62
	Downpatrick	32	0	35	0	67
	Dungannon	0	0	0	0	0
	Enniskillen	0	0	0	0	0
	Limavady	0	0	0	0	0
	Lisburn	3	1	27	0	31
	Londonderry	2	11	50	0	63
	Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0
	Newry	22	13	63	0	98
	Newtownards	9	5	68	0	82
	Omagh	17	7	73	0	97
	Strabane	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	221	92	874	0	1187

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 2020. There were 45% awarded between £3,000 and £14,999.

Table D.13: Number of ordinary civil bill cases by amount awarded in 2020

Processing Office	No Value	Less than £3000	£3000 - 14999	£15000 - 29999	£30000 and over	Total
Antrim	6	14	17	1	0	38
Armagh	0	5	13	4	0	22
Ballymena	18	16	31	1	0	66
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	248	159	327	16	1	751
Civil Processing Centre	2	1	2	0	0	5
Coleraine	44	33	68	4	0	149
Craigavon	24	45	68	4	0	141
Downpatrick	10	8	41	5	0	64
Dungannon	5	9	20	2	0	36
Enniskillen	0	2	8	1	0	11
Limavady	1	0	1	0	0	2
Lisburn	21	39	46	6	0	112
Londonderry	44	55	64	13	0	176
Magherafelt	1	7	17	2	0	27
Newry	31	48	85	13	1	178
Newtownards	28	79	83	6	1	197
Omagh	46	49	76	11	2	184
Strabane	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	529	569	968	89	5	2160

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 54 weeks from date of issue to date of disposal for civil bill cases to progress through the county court in 2020 (Table D.14), compared to 53 weeks in the previous year.

Table D.14: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill cases disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Antrim	62
Armagh	40
Ballymena	54
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	57
Civil Processing Centre	39
Coleraine	53
Craigavon	47
Downpatrick	48
Dungannon	41
Enniskillen	31
Limavady	23
Lisburn	48
Londonderry	64
Magherafelt	39
Newry	51
Newtownards	40
Omagh	67
Strabane	39
Total	54

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

The average time interval in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2020 was 17 weeks, one week more than the length of time for applications disposed of in 2019, which was 16 weeks.

Table D.15: Average time intervals in weeks for civil bill applications disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Antrim	16
Armagh	3
Ballymena	0
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	19
Civil Processing Centre	27
Coleraine	12
Craigavon	16
Downpatrick	12
Dungannon	0
Enniskillen	0
Limavady	0
Lisburn	44
Londonderry	18
Magherafelt	0
Newry	18
Newtownards	12
Omagh	10
Strabane	0
Total	17

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

Section 5: Equity

During 2020, there were 132 equity cases received, a decrease of 12% from 2019 (150 equity cases). There were also 63 equity applications received during 2020, a decrease of 6% from 2019 (67 equity applications).

Table D.16: Equity cases and applications received in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Total
Cases	Antrim	1
	Armagh	1
	Ballymena	3
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	25
	Civil Processing Centre	7
	Coleraine	8
	Craigavon	9
	Downpatrick	10
	Dungannon	11
	Enniskillen	1
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	1
	Londonderry	9
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	16
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	30
	Strabane	0
	Total	132
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	1
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	5
	Civil Processing Centre	4
	Coleraine	7
	Craigavon	1
	Downpatrick	6
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	1
	Londonderry	4
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	10
	Newtownards	1
	Omagh	23
	Strabane	0
	Total	63

Table D.17 shows that there were 64 equity cases disposed of in 2020 which is 45% fewer than the 116 cases disposed of in 2019. During 2020 the majority of equity cases were disposed of in court (70%). 84% of cases were disposed of in court during 2019.

Table D.17: Equity cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Court result	Non court disposals	Total
Cases	Antrim	0	0	0
	Armagh	1	0	1
	Ballymena	0	0	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0
	Belfast	7	3	10
	Civil Processing Centre	0	1	1
	Coleraine	5	0	5
	Craigavon	2	2	4
	Downpatrick	1	1	2
	Dungannon	2	0	2
	Enniskillen	1	0	1
	Limavady	0	0	0
	Lisburn	1	1	2
	Londonderry	6	1	7
	Magherafelt	0	0	0
	Newry	5	5	10
	Newtownards	0	0	0
	Omagh	14	5	19
	Strabane	0	0	0
	Total	45	19	64
Applications	Antrim	0	0	0
	Armagh	0	0	0
	Ballymena	0	0	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0
	Belfast	0	2	2
	Civil Processing Centre	0	2	2
	Coleraine	1	1	2
	Craigavon	0	1	1
	Downpatrick	1	3	4
	Dungannon	0	0	0
	Enniskillen	0	0	0
	Limavady	0	0	0
	Lisburn	3	0	3
	Londonderry	2	2	4
	Magherafelt	0	0	0
	Newry	4	0	4
	Newtownards	0	0	0
	Omagh	15	2	17
	Strabane	0	0	0
	Total	26	13	39

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 2020, it took 77 weeks for an equity case to progress through the county courts. In 2019, the corresponding figure was 95 weeks.

Table D.18: Average time intervals in weeks for equity cases disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	0
	Armagh	91
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	49
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	115
	Craigavon	28
	Downpatrick	14
	Dungannon	32
	Enniskillen	41
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	106
	Londonderry	114
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	150
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	52
	Strabane	0
	Total	77
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	0
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	9
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	11
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	2
	Londonderry	8
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	34
	Newtownards	0
	Omagh	4
	Strabane	0
	Total	9

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

Section 6: Ejectment

There were 441 ejectment cases received during 2020 compared with 1164 in 2019 – a decrease of 62% (Table D.19).

19% of ejectment cases were received in Belfast in 2020, compared to 37% the previous year.

Table D.19: Ejectment cases received in 2020

Processing Office	Total
Antrim	3
Armagh	7
Ballymena	2
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	85
Civil Processing Centre	225
Coleraine	17
Craigavon	13
Downpatrick	6
Dungannon	0
Enniskillen	1
Limavady	0
Lisburn	10
Londonderry	17
Magherafelt	0
Newry	18
Newtownards	28
Omagh	8
Strabane	1
Total	441

In 2020, there were 257 ejectment cases disposed of in the county court compared with 936 the previous year – a decrease of 73% (Table D.20). The majority of ejectment cases were disposed of in court – 94% of cases in 2020, similar to 2019 (96%).

Table D.20: Ejectment cases disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Court result	Non court disposals	Total
Antrim	0	0	0
Armagh	1	0	1
Ballymena	1	0	1
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0
Belfast	101	8	109
Civil Processing Centre	0	0	0
Coleraine	12	0	12
Craigavon	5	1	6
Downpatrick	4	1	5
Dungannon	0	0	0
Enniskillen	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0
Lisburn	24	0	24
Londonderry	19	2	21
Magherafelt	0	0	0
Newry	19	0	19
Newtownards	36	2	38
Omagh	19	2	21
Strabane	0	0	0
Total	241	16	257

Table D.21 shows the average time in weeks for ejectment cases to progress through the courts during 2020. On average, it took 25 weeks for a case from date of issue to date of disposal, compared with 22 weeks in 2019.

Table D.21: Average time intervals in weeks for ejectment cases disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Antrim	0
Armagh	19
Ballymena	21
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	25
Civil Processing Centre	0
Coleraine	23
Craigavon	13
Downpatrick	38
Dungannon	0
Enniskillen	0
Limavady	0
Lisburn	31
Londonderry	19
Magherafelt	0
Newry	16
Newtownards	30
Omagh	27
Strabane	0
Total	25

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 4,993 in 2020, a decrease of 49% from 9,744 in 2019. There were 91 applications received in small claims during 2020 compared with 139 in 2019 – a decrease of 35%.

Table D.22: Number of small claims cases and applications received in 2020

Type	Processing Office	Total
Cases	Antrim	1
	Armagh	10
	Ballymena	19
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	234
	Civil Processing Centre	4357
	Coleraine	52
	Craigavon	30
	Downpatrick	94
	Dungannon	2
	Enniskillen	5
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	46
	Londonderry	31
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	38
	Newtownards	16
	Omagh	58
	Strabane	0
	Total	4993
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	2
	Ballymena	0
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	35
	Civil Processing Centre	21
	Coleraine	6
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	2
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	5
	Londonderry	3
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	5
	Newtownards	7
	Omagh	5
	Strabane	0
	Total	91

In 2020, there were 705 small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received which was a decrease of 34% from the previous year (1,074).

Table D.23: Number of small claims cases with a Notice of Dispute received in 2020

Processing Office	Total
Antrim	1
Armagh	7
Ballymena	15
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	204
Civil Processing Centre	136
Coleraine	46
Craigavon	30
Downpatrick	79
Dungannon	2
Enniskillen	4
Limavady	0
Lisburn	44
Londonderry	29
Magherafelt	0
Newry	43
Newtownards	16
Omagh	49
Strabane	0
Total	705

In total, 3,937 small claims cases were disposed of in 2020. This was a decrease of 55% on the 8,722 cases disposed of during 2019 (Table D.24).

Table D.24: Number of small claims cases and applications disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing office	Court disposal	Non court disposal	Default judgment	Total
Cases	Antrim	0	0	0	0
	Armagh	2	1	2	5
	Ballymena	9	3	1	13
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0
	Belfast	61	54	10	125
	Civil Processing Centre	5	1052	2538	3595
	Coleraine	32	10	1	43
	Craigavon	16	6	0	22
	Downpatrick	0	3	8	11
	Dungannon	1	0	0	1
	Enniskillen	0	2	0	2
	Limavady	0	0	0	0
	Lisburn	4	5	1	10
	Londonderry	15	3	2	20
	Magherafelt	0	0	0	0
	Newry	15	9	1	25
	Newtownards	15	22	0	37
	Omagh	15	11	2	28
	Strabane	0	0	0	0
	Total	190	1181	2566	3937
Application	Antrim	0	0	0	0
	Armagh	0	2	0	2
	Ballymena	1	0	0	1
	Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0
	Belfast	15	3	0	18
	Civil Processing Centre	0	1	0	1
	Coleraine	2	0	0	2
	Craigavon	0	0	0	0
	Downpatrick	0	1	0	1
	Dungannon	0	0	0	0
	Enniskillen	0	0	0	0
	Limavady	0	0	0	0
	Lisburn	0	1	0	1
	Londonderry	1	0	0	1
	Magherafelt	0	0	0	0
	Newry	1	2	0	3
	Newtownards	1	7	0	8
	Omagh	1	0	0	1
	Strabane	0	0	0	0
	Total	22	17	0	39

Table D.25 shows that during 2020, it took on average 19 weeks for a small claims case to progress from date of issue to date of disposal, less than in 2019 (22 weeks).

Table D.25: Average time intervals in weeks for small claims cases disposed of in 2020

Type	Processing office	Issue to disposal
Cases	Antrim	0
	Armagh	14
	Ballymena	18
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	16
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	25
	Craigavon	17
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	13
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	27
	Londonderry	28
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	16
	Newtownards	14
	Omagh	27
	Strabane	0
	Total	19
Applications	Antrim	0
	Armagh	0
	Ballymena	9
	Banbridge@Newry	0
	Belfast	6
	Civil Processing Centre	0
	Coleraine	4
	Craigavon	0
	Downpatrick	0
	Dungannon	0
	Enniskillen	0
	Limavady	0
	Lisburn	0
	Londonderry	11
	Magherafelt	0
	Newry	5
	Newtownards	9
	Omagh	19
	Strabane	0
	Total	7

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

Section 8: Divorce cases

There were 1,075 decrees granted in undefended divorce cases in the county court in 2020 (Table D.26). The number of decrees granted has decreased by 26% from 1,456 in 2019.

Table D.26: Divorce petitions by number of decrees granted in 2020

Processing Office	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/ other	Total
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armagh	2	0	0	1	0	3
Ballymena	0	0	0	0	0	0
Banbridge@ Newry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	138	115	3	27	20	303
Coleraine	84	66	4	26	19	199
Craigavon	61	41	2	13	5	122
Downpatrick	52	35	0	8	6	101
Dungannon	4	7	0	2	1	14
Enniskillen	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	1	1	0	0	0	2
Londonderry	49	44	1	12	10	116
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newry	49	40	0	17	5	111
Newtownards	0	0	0	0	0	0
Omagh	44	37	1	13	9	104
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	484	386	11	119	75	1075

Table D.27: Divorce petitions by number of decrees absolute issued in 2020

Processing Office	2 years with consent	5 years separation	Adultery	Unreasonable behaviour	Combination of grounds/ other	Total
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0	0
Armagh	2	1	0	0	1	4
Ballymena	0	0	0	0	0	0
Banbridge@ Newry	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belfast	120	113	2	26	17	278
Coleraine	96	69	4	38	9	216
Craigavon	63	45	0	11	2	121
Downpatrick	56	39	1	7	7	110
Dungannon	3	4	0	2	1	10
Enniskillen	0	0	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	2	0	0	0	0	2
Londonderry	46	45	3	16	15	125
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newry	45	29	0	13	5	92
Newtownards	0	0	0	0	0	0
Omagh	41	36	1	10	11	99
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	474	381	11	123	68	1057

In 2020, there were 1,057 decrees absolute issued compared with 1,520 the previous year – a decrease of 30%.

Tables D.28 and D.29 show that there were 147 matrimonial applications received and 118 disposed of during 2020. Comparable figures in 2019 were 181 and 168 respectively.

Table D.28: Matrimonial applications received in 2020

Processing Office	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application	Other	Total
Antrim	0	0	0	0
Armagh	9	0	2	11
Ballymena	0	0	1	1
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0
Belfast	26	2	3	31
Coleraine	32	0	1	33
Craigavon	2	0	5	7
Downpatrick	1	0	1	2
Dungannon	1	0	0	1
Enniskillen	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	0	0	0	0
Londonderry	14	3	10	27
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0
Newry	12	0	0	12
Newtownards	4	0	0	4
Omagh	18	0	0	18
Strabane	0	0	0	0
Total	119	5	23	147

Table D.29: Matrimonial applications disposed of in 2020

Processing Office	Ancillary relief	Matrimonial application	Other	Total
Antrim	0	0	0	0
Armagh	0	0	0	0
Ballymena	2	0	0	2
Banbridge@Newry	0	0	0	0
Belfast	19	3	0	22
Coleraine	29	0	0	29
Craigavon	6	0	4	10
Downpatrick	1	0	0	1
Dungannon	2	0	0	2
Enniskillen	0	0	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0
Lisburn	0	0	0	0
Londonderry	11	2	10	23
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0
Newry	16	0	0	16
Newtownards	1	0	0	1
Omagh	12	0	0	12
Strabane	0	0	0	0
Total	99	5	14	118

County court divorce petitions took on average 37 weeks from date of issue to the date decree nisi granted in 2020, more than the 33 weeks taken in 2019. Matrimonial applications took on average 50 weeks to progress through the county courts during 2020 compared to 42 weeks in 2019.

Table D.30: Average time intervals in weeks for divorce petitions in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to date decree nisi granted	Date decree nisi granted to date absolute issued
Antrim	0	0
Armagh	43	10
Ballymena	0	0
Banbridge@Newry	0	0
Belfast	36	12
Coleraine	36	15
Craigavon	33	13
Downpatrick	32	15
Dungannon	37	14
Enniskillen	0	0
Limavady	0	0
Lisburn	15	43
Londonderry	44	13
Magherafelt	0	0
Newry	41	15
Newtownards	0	0
Omagh	37	14
Strabane	0	0
Total	37	14

Table D.31: Average time intervals in weeks for matrimonial applications in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to disposal
Antrim	0
Armagh	0
Ballymena	103
Banbridge@Newry	0
Belfast	55
Coleraine	56
Craigavon	25
Downpatrick	0
Dungannon	53
Enniskillen	0
Limavady	0
Lisburn	0
Londonderry	30
Magherafelt	0
Newry	59
Newtownards	18
Omagh	60
Strabane	0
Total	50

Section 9: Court sitting days and court sitting times

Table D.32 shows that there were 3,065 court sitting days in 2020. This is a decrease of 29% on the 4,303 court sitting days in 2019.

46% of the county court judges and district judges sitting time was spent on criminal cases, 24% of time was spent on civil cases and 30% of time was spent on family cases in 2020. In 2019, the proportion of time spent on each of these court areas was 55%, 27% and 19% respectively.

Table D.32: County court judge and district judge sitting days and court sitting times in 2020 (hrs : mins)

Processing Office	Number of court sitting days	Average court sitting time	Total court time	Total court criminal time	Total court civil time	Total family time
Antrim	237	2:11	516:12	347:36	135:10	33:26
Armagh	200	2:41	535:26	6:39	248:03	280:44
Ballymena	12	3:20	40:02	0:35	39:27	0:00
Banbridge@Newry	0	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00	0:00
Belfast	1227	2:16	2771:28	1297:37	456:28	1017:23
Coleraine	17	2:52	48:44	6:04	35:05	7:35
Craigavon	263	2:15	593:36	310:00	35:21	248:15
Downpatrick	154	1:55	294:22	153:17	132:10	8:55
Dungannon	240	2:26	583:27	397:28	41:34	144:25
Enniskillen	23	1:42	39:15	12:27	17:10	9:38
Limavady	1	1:50	1:50	0:00	1:50	0:00
Lisburn	14	1:53	26:21	7:43	18:38	0:00
Londonderry	297	2:15	669:59	392:55	97:58	179:06
Magherafelt	5	1:49	9:05	3:10	5:55	0:00
Newry	147	1:23	204:19	166:20	28:12	9:47
Newtownards	71	1:44	123:05	3:00	119:35	0:30
Omagh	148	2:16	336:28	48:47	193:36	94:05
Royal Courts of Justice	2	1:06	2:11	0:11	2:00	0:00
Strabane	7	1:28	10:15	2:50	7:25	0:00
Total	3065	2:13	6806:05	3156:39	1615:37	2033:49

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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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.

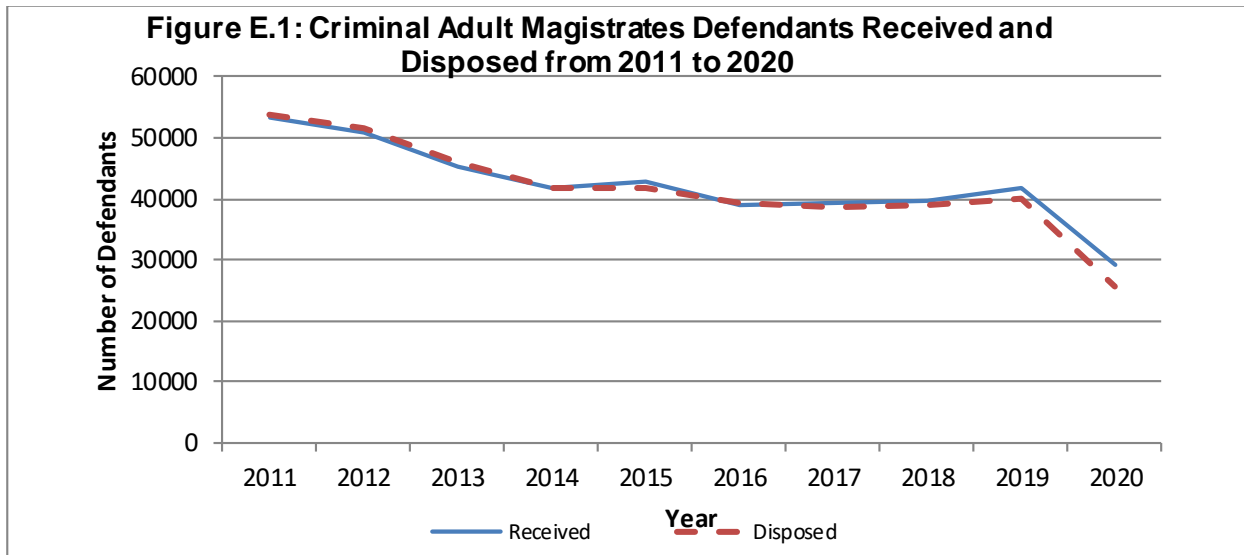
In addition to hearing criminal proceedings the youth court also hears proceedings relating to the care, protection and control of juveniles.

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, with a sharp decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure E.1).



- Adult and Youth criminal defendants received increased by 7% and decreased by 12% respectively between 2016 and 2019. Receipts for both Adult and Youth defendants then decreased by 30% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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:
 - [PSNI Statistics](#)
 - [PPS Statistics](#)
- Adult criminal disposals increased by 2% and Youth disposals decreased by 10% between 2016 and 2019 with a decrease of 34% being observed for both Adult and Youth disposals between 2019 and 2020.
- Average waiting times between a summons/charge and disposal in the Adult court increased by 55% and increased by 66% in the Youth court between 2016 and 2020. Between 2016 and 2019, average waiting times remained relatively stable before increasing by 47% and 42% respectively between 2019 and 2020.
- Civil & Family business received generally decreased annually between 2016 and 2019, with an overall decrease of 16%, before increasing by 3% in 2020. Disposals have followed the same pattern as the receipts, generally decreasing between 2016 and 2019, with a decrease of 9% in 2020 compared to 2019, and an overall decrease of 22% compared to 2016.
- Average waiting times between first hearing and disposal for Civil & Family business have generally increased over the last five years, with an overall increase of 30% between 2016 and 2020.
- The link below provides comparative figures for 2019:
 - [Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

Summary Table 12: Adult, youth and civil magistrates' courts 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Adult criminal defendants received	38916	39202	39588	41727	29310
Adult criminal defendants disposed	39162	38649	38837	39992	26516
Average waiting time between summons/ charge and disposal – adults (wks)	11.1	11.2	11.7	11.7	17.2
Youth criminal defendants received	1438	1518	1446	1270	895
Youth criminal defendants disposed	1398	1532	1443	1256	828
Average waiting time between summons/ charge and disposal – youths (wks)	14.0	15.0	15.6	16.4	23.3
Civil & Family business received	4797	5035	4530	4008	4111
Civil & Family business disposed	4371	4537	3999	3773	3416
Average civil and family waiting time	7.0	6.6	7.0	8.6	9.1

Magistrates Court – 2020 Data

Section 1: Business volumes received in the magistrates' court

In 2020, there were 29,310 adult defendants received, which represents a 30% decrease from the 41,727 received in 2019. In the youth court, there were 895 defendants received, also a 30% decrease from the 1,270 received in 2019 (Table E.1).

Table E.1: Business volumes received in adult criminal, youth and civil courts in 2020

Processing Office	Number of adult defendants	Number of youth defendants	Number of civil applications
Antrim	1109	18	82
Armagh	701	2	54
Ballymena	1592	31	242
Banbridge@Newry	433	2	42
Belfast	9444	248	1129
Coleraine	1378	29	273
Craigavon	2070	81	157
Downpatrick	979	11	135
Dungannon	1330	32	274
Enniskillen	735	30	61
Limavady	381	1	9
Lisburn	1335	66	450
Londonderry	2378	107	387
Magherafelt	627	0	1
Newry	1762	65	252
Newtownards	2039	153	424
Omagh	546	14	99
Strabane	471	5	40
Total	29310	895	4111

Section 2: Adult criminal business disposed of

There were 26,516 defendants disposed of in 2020 (Table E.2), a 34% decrease from the 39,992 disposed of in 2019. Belfast accounted for 33% of the business, a similar proportion to the 32% in 2019.

Table E.2: Number of adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2020

Processing Office	Number of adult defendants
Antrim	1024
Armagh	689
Ballymena	1461
Banbridge@Newry	408
Belfast	8675
Coleraine	1194
Craigavon	1870
Downpatrick	767
Dungannon	1197
Enniskillen	661
Limavady	340
Lisburn	1276
Londonderry	2026
Magherafelt	526
Newry	1606
Newtownards	1829
Omagh	529
Strabane	438
Total	26516

Table E.3 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2020. In total, there were 61,422 charges disposed of, which is a decrease of 30% from 87,138 in 2019. PSNI/PPS prosecutions accounted for 91% of charges in 2020 (56,103), this compares with 87% of charges in 2019 (76,191).

Table E.3: Number and type of charges brought for defendants disposed of in 2020

Type of charge	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
All Indictable Only Offences	2197	1	0	0	2198
All Hybrid Offences	22430	520	0	2	22952
All I/TS Offences	6442	0	0	13	6455
All Summary Offences	23182	4434	187	22	27825
Other Summary charges	1852	140	0	0	1992
Total	56103	5095	187	37	61422

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 2020. 44% of defendants pleaded guilty on all charges, compared to 40% in 2019 (15,812 out of 39,992).

Table E.4: Outcomes of defendants disposed of in 2020

Outcome	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Fixed penalty	Penalty Notice for Disorder	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	1228	0	0	0	1228
Plea of guilty on all charges	11174	556	0	0	11730
All charges withdrawn	3911	1343	0	0	5254
Fixed penalty default	0	0	187	0	187
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	4982	2176	0	0	7158
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	818	104	0	0	922
Penalty Notice for Disorder default	0	0	0	37	37
Total	22113	4179	187	37	26516

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.5 shows there were 79,528 final orders granted in the magistrates' adult court in 2020, a decrease of 31% from 114,883 in 2019.

Table E.5: Types of disposals from the magistrates' adult court in 2020

Type of disposal order	Total orders
Community Orders	3605
Custodial Orders	11134
Monetary Orders	20418
Non-Custodial Orders	2195
Road Traffic Orders	13158
Withdrawn	17369
Other Final Orders	11649
Total	79528

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 2020 between the date of summons and the date of first hearing was 5 weeks (5 weeks in 2019). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and disposal was 13 weeks. This was 7 weeks in 2019.

Table E.6: Average waiting times in weeks for adult defendants disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2020

Processing Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	First Hearing to Disposal (weeks)	Summons to Disposal (weeks)
Antrim	5.2	9.8	11.0	16.3
Armagh	6.2	11.5	12.9	19.1
Ballymena	4.4	9.9	11.9	16.3
Banbridge@Newry	4.5	9.5	10.6	15.1
Belfast	4.2	11.1	12.9	17.1
Coleraine	5.2	12.5	13.9	19.1
Craigavon	4.9	10.8	12.0	16.9
Downpatrick	4.8	10.8	12.2	17.0
Dungannon	5.7	7.9	8.8	14.5
Enniskillen	3.9	10.3	11.4	15.3
Limavady	5.3	10.9	12.0	17.3
Lisburn	4.1	13.6	15.3	19.4
Londonderry	4.3	11.1	13.1	17.4
Magherafelt	6.1	13.0	14.7	20.8
Newry	4.6	11.9	12.6	17.2
Newtownards	5.0	12.4	13.9	18.9
Omagh	4.0	10.9	12.0	15.9
Strabane	4.2	9.3	10.6	14.8
Total	4.6	11.1	12.6	17.2

Arrest warrants, adjourned generally and deferred sentences are excluded.

Section 3: Youth criminal business disposed of

In 2020, there were 828 youth defendants disposed of (Table E.7), with 32% disposed of in Belfast. This represents a 34% decrease from the total disposed of in 2019 (1,256), when 30% were disposed of in Belfast.

Table E.7: Number of defendants disposed of in the youth court in 2020

Processing Office	Number of youth defendants
Antrim	31
Armagh	1
Ballymena	35
Banbridge@Newry	2
Belfast	262
Coleraine	32
Craigavon	58
Downpatrick	8
Dungannon	30
Enniskillen	33
Limavady	0
Lisburn	53
Londonderry	85
Magherafelt	1
Newry	57
Newtownards	114
Omagh	22
Strabane	4
Total	828

Table E.8 shows the types of charges disposed of in 2020 for youth defendants. In total, there were 2,071 charges disposed of in 2020. This represents a 25% decrease from 2,771 charges disposed in 2019.

Table E.8: Number and type of charges brought for youth defendants disposed of in 2020

Type of charge	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
All Indictable Only Offences	58	0	58
All Hybrid Offences	1033	0	1033
All I/TS Offences	282	0	282
All Summary Offences	695	2	697
Other Summary charges	1	0	1
Total	2069	2	2071

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 2020. 51% of youth defendants pleaded guilty on all charges compared with 49% in 2019.

Table E.9: Outcomes for youth defendants disposed of in 2020

Outcome	PSNI/PPS prosecution	Departmental prosecution	Total
Committed to the Crown Court	5	0	5
Plea of guilty on all charges	424	0	424
All charges withdrawn	250	2	252
Plea not guilty - found guilty on at least one charge	114	0	114
Plea not guilty - acquitted on all charges	33	0	33
Total	826	2	828

Figures are based on the number of defendants disposed.

Table E.10 shows there were 2,482 final orders granted in the magistrates' youth court in 2020. This represents a 27% decrease from 3,404 granted in 2019.

Table E.10: Types of disposals from the youth courts in 2020

Type of disposal order	Total orders
Community Orders	569
Custodial Orders	184
Monetary Orders	135
Non-Custodial Orders	328
Road Traffic Orders	223
Withdrawn	789
Final Orders	254
Total	2482

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 2020. The average waiting time from the date of summons to the date of first hearing in 2020 was 3 weeks (4 weeks in 2019). The average waiting time between the date of first hearing and finding was 14 weeks (9 weeks in 2019). The average waiting time from date of first hearing to date of disposal was 20 weeks (13 weeks in 2019).

Table E.11: Average waiting times in weeks for youth defendants disposed of in the youth courts in 2020

Processing Office	Summons to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to finding (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Summons to disposal (weeks)
Antrim	2.6	11.0	14.7	17.3
Armagh	0.0	15.3	15.3	15.3
Ballymena	3.3	14.7	20.6	23.9
Banbridge@Newry	5.3	0.0	0.0	5.3
Belfast	4.2	15.7	23.4	27.6
Coleraine	5.0	19.0	21.5	26.5
Craigavon	3.8	11.2	14.9	18.6
Downpatrick	1.1	29.1	29.9	31.0
Dungannon	4.9	14.4	15.7	20.6
Enniskillen	3.9	14.5	17.9	21.8
Lisburn	1.2	16.5	23.0	24.2
Londonderry	3.2	7.7	13.3	16.5
Magherafelt	18.9	54.1	54.1	73.0
Newry	3.2	11.4	16.2	19.4
Newtownards	2.7	15.2	21.1	23.8
Omagh	3.3	11.5	15.8	19.1
Strabane	5.1	16.6	20.8	25.8
Total	3.4	14.1	19.9	23.3

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

Section 4: Civil & Family business disposed of

There were 3,416 applications disposed of during 2020 (Table E.12). This represents a 9% decrease from 3,773 applications disposed of in 2019.

Table E.12: Number of civil & family applications disposed of in the magistrates' court in 2020

Processing Office	Number of disposals
Antrim	86
Armagh	37
Ballymena	205
Banbridge@Newry	30
Belfast	936
Coleraine	220
Craigavon	122
Downpatrick	96
Dungannon	225
Enniskillen	45
Limavady	8
Lisburn	375
Londonderry	349
Magherafelt	1
Newry	212
Newtownards	359
Omagh	67
Strabane	43
Total	3416

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 2019). The average waiting time from the date of first hearing to disposal was 7 weeks. This was 9 weeks in 2019. The average waiting time from date of issue to disposal was 9 weeks, compared to 11 weeks in 2019.

Table E.13: Average waiting times in weeks in the civil and family magistrates' courts in 2020

Processing Office	Issue to first hearing (weeks)	First hearing to disposal (weeks)	Issue to disposal (weeks)
Antrim	1.6	12.4	14.0
Armagh	1.9	8.8	10.8
Ballymena	1.5	8.7	10.1
Banbridge@Newry	1.6	4.4	6.0
Belfast	2.1	3.5	5.6
Coleraine	1.4	7.0	8.4
Craigavon	1.6	6.1	7.8
Downpatrick	1.6	12.6	14.2
Dungannon	3.8	5.7	9.5
Enniskillen	1.3	10.3	11.7
Limavady	1.7	10.2	11.9
Lisburn	1.2	8.9	10.0
Londonderry	1.8	10.1	11.9
Magherafelt	3.0	43.0	46.0
Newry	3.7	6.9	10.6
Newtownards	1.7	8.4	10.1
Omagh	1.8	7.8	9.6
Strabane	1.8	8.5	10.3
Total	2.0	7.1	9.1

There were 3,263 applications under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence Order disposed of in 2020 (Table E.14), a 5% decrease from the 3,426 disposed of in 2019. The majority of applications were granted (52%) in 2020 slightly less than the previous year (58%).

Table E.14: Outcome of applications under the Family Homes & Domestic Violence Order in 2020

Type of Complaint	Granted	Dismissed or refused	Withdrawn	Vary or discharged	Other	Total
Non-molestation	1681	750	469	286	18	3204
Occupation	4	4	20	8	0	36
Vary discharge non-molestation / occupation	2	5	12	4	0	23
Total	1687	759	501	298	18	3263

Note- type of complaint based on first complaint recorded on ICOS.

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 2020. There were 3,689 scheduled and additional court sittings in the magistrates' court, a decrease of 5% from 3,873 scheduled and additional court sittings in 2019. The average court sitting time was 3 hours 6 minutes, a slightly lower sitting time than in 2019, which was 3 hours 39 minutes. There were 154 special criminal court sittings in 2020, with an average sitting time of 49 minutes, compared to 207 special sittings with an average sitting time of 38 minutes in 2019.

Table E.15: Scheduled and additional sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by venue in 2020 (hrs: mins)

Court Venue	Number of Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average Adult Criminal court sitting time	Number of Youth Criminal court sitting days	Average Youth Criminal court sitting time	Number of Civil and Family court sitting days	Average Civil and Family court sitting time	Total number of court sitting days	Total average court sitting time
Antrim	80	3:04	8	2:06	25	2:25	113	2:51
Armagh	69	2:46	0	0:00	7	1:36	76	2:40
Ballymena	85	3:31	12	3:19	42	2:35	139	3:13
Banbridge @Newry	59	2:09	0	0:00	5	2:41	64	2:12
Belfast	639	3:26	62	3:35	246	3:43	947	3:31
Coleraine	177	3:17	17	2:22	28	4:16	222	3:20
Craigavon	137	3:41	18	1:58	66	1:56	221	3:01
Downpatrick	102	2:28	1	1:00	0	0:00	103	2:27
Dungannon	144	3:35	10	3:30	45	3:21	199	3:31
Enniskillen	101	3:55	17	2:18	8	2:30	126	3:36
Limavady	52	2:24	0	0:00	0	0:00	52	2:24
Lisburn	154	3:23	23	2:02	80	2:19	257	2:56
Londonderry	234	3:33	9	3:00	78	3:54	321	3:37
Magherafelt	48	3:23	0	0:00	1	0:30	49	3:19
Newry	118	2:44	16	1:05	76	2:32	210	2:32
Newtownards	196	2:04	34	2:03	139	2:39	369	2:17
Omagh	70	3:15	14	1:31	38	2:42	122	2:53
Royal Courts of Justice	0	0:00	0	0:00	3	0:56	3	0:56
Strabane	84	2:35	8	2:23	4	1:51	96	2:32
Total	2549	3:11	249	2:32	891	3:01	3689	3:06

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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

Table E.16: Special sittings and average sitting times in the magistrates' courts by venue in 2020 (hrs: mins)

Court Venue	Number of special Adult Criminal court sitting days	Average special Adult Criminal court sitting time
Ballymena	21	0:44
Craigavon	1	1:10
Dungannon	33	1:04
Lisburn	42	0:45
Londonderry	35	0:48
Newry	7	0:46
Newtownards	6	0:31
Omagh	9	0:47
Total	154	0:49

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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the coronavirus contingency arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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; and

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 received increased by 2% between 2016 and 2017 before decreasing by 20% between 2017 and 2020. The applications received declined by 18% overall between 2016 and 2020.
- Applications disposed generally decreased between 2016 and 2020, apart from a small increase of 1% in 2018. Between 2016 and 2019 applications disposed decreased by 10%, however in 2020 there was a sharp decline of 34%, compared to 2019.
- The number of children involved also generally decreased between 2016 and 2020, with an overall decrease of 44%.
- **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:**
[Children Order Back Series](#)
For more information please see details on page 18 or alternatively contact the statistician responsible for this publication.
- Own motion orders made decreased by 20% from 1,047 in 2019 to 836 in 2020. Interim orders decreased by 13% from 9,274 in 2019 to 8,028 in 2020, and final orders decreased by 34% from 6,532 in 2019 to 4,313 in 2020.
- The number of court sitting days increased each year between 2016 and 2018, before decreasing by 4% in 2019 and a further 7% in 2020. There was an overall decrease of 3% between 2016 and 2020.
- The link below provides comparison figures for 2019:
[Judicial Statistics 2019](#)

Summary Table 13: Children Order 2016 to 2020

Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Applications received	5332	5443	5000	4654	4378
Applications disposed	4954	4702	4770	4472	2934
Children involved ^[1]	7349	6935	7174	6418	4095
Number of court sittings	1953	1970	2110	2019	1885

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2016 this accounted for 765 children of the total, in 2017 this accounted for 734 children of the total, in 2018 this accounted for 854 children of the total, in 2019 this accounted for 740 children of the total and in 2020 this accounted for 517 children of the total.

Children Order – 2020 Data

Section 1: Applications entered and disposed of

Tables F.1 and F.2, show that a total of 4,378 applications were received in designated courts in 2020. This was a decrease of 6% from 4,654 in 2019. The majority of business (89%) was received in family proceedings courts, with 4% received in the High Court and 7% received in family care centres. In 2019, 89% of business was received in family proceedings courts, 4% in the High Court and 6% received in family care centres.

Of the 2,934 applications disposed of in 2020, the family proceedings court accounted for 79% of all business dealt with, the High Court accounted for 6% and family care centres accounted for 16%. In 2019, 80% of business was dealt with in the family proceedings court, while the High Court accounted for 4% and family care centres accounted for 15%. The total number of applications disposed of in 2020 decreased by 34% compared with 2019 (4,472).

Table F.1: Applications received and disposed of in 2020

Type	Court Tier	Number of applications received	Number of disposals
Public Law ^[1]	Family Proceedings Court	788	368
	Family Care Centre	76	193
	High Court	50	69
	Total	914	630
Private Law ^[2]	Family Proceedings Court	3101	1936
	Family Care Centre	231	274
	High Court	132	94
	Total	3464	2304

^[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 processing office in 2020

Court Tier	Processing Office	Public Law: Number of applications received	Public Law: Transfers In	Public Law: Transfers Out	Public Law: Number of disposals	Private Law: Number of applications received	Private Law: Transfers In	Private Law: Transfers Out	Private Law: Number of disposals
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	8	0	3	2	45	2	2	25
	Ballymena	49	2	23	25	136	4	22	111
	Belfast	236	0	77	85	745	12	51	480
	Coleraine	47	0	22	5	142	4	11	92
	Craigavon	63	1	24	21	250	2	21	143
	Downpatrick	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
	Dungannon	64	2	14	37	191	1	27	79
	Enniskillen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Limavady	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Lisburn	79	0	24	40	295	5	42	189
	Londonderry	88	1	25	47	293	0	20	163
	Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Newry	51	1	20	21	360	6	32	216
	Newtownards	78	2	48	64	546	5	41	388
	Omagh	25	1	12	21	94	1	19	45
	Total	788	10	292	368	3101	42	288	1936
Family Care Centre	Belfast	30	155	37	106	79	103	21	115
	Craigavon	31	65	17	56	137	79	12	120
	Dungannon	5	24	10	15	12	42	13	22
	Londonderry	10	27	4	16	3	22	1	17
	Total	76	271	68	193	231	246	47	274
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	50	79	0	69	132	54	7	94
	Total	50	79	0	69	132	54	7	94
Total		914	360	360	630	3464	342	342	2304

^[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 76% of the reasons quoted for the transfer of cases between courts in 2020 (Table F.3) –in 2019 complexity accounted for 73% of reasons for transfer (572 out of 783 reasons).

Table F.3: Reasons for transfer in 2020

Court Tier transferred from	Complexity	Consolidation	Convenience	Gravity	Jurisdiction	Returned to Lower Court	Separate Representation for Child	Urgency	Point of Law	Public Interest	Other	Total
Family Proceedings	451	72	9	15	38	0	0	4	4	0	0	593
Family Care Centre	94	8	1	5	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	120
High Court	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
Northern Ireland	545	80	10	20	44	13	0	4	4	0	0	720

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. The table includes 702 cases.

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 836 own motion orders granted in 2020 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level. This was a decrease of 20% when comparing with figures for 2019 (based on the new methodology) when 1,047 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 30% and care orders accounted for 11% of orders made while Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 15% and residence orders counted for 11% of own motion orders in 2020 (Table F.4).

Table F.4: Own motion orders granted in 2020 (application level)

Type of Order	Own motion orders
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	250
Article 8 Contact	126
Authority to refuse contact with a child in care	0
Care	95
Contact with a child in care	0
Child Assessment	6
Declaration of Parentage	0
Education Supervision	1
Emergency Protection	8
Extension of an Emergency Protection Order	4
Family Assistance	0
Financial Provision	0
Leave to change surname by which the child is known	0
Non-Molestation Order	0
Occupation Order	0
Other orders	185
Parental Responsibility	1
Prohibited Steps	23
Recovery	2
Residence	95
Secure Accommodation	12
Specific Issues	27
Supervision	1
Total	836

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: [Children Order Back Series](#)

There were 8,028 interim orders made during 2020, which was a decrease of 13% on the previous year (9,274) based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level, 64% were interim care orders and 28% 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 2020 (application level)

Type of Order	Interim orders
Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	0
Article 8 Contact	2215
Care	5137
Contact with a child in care	0
Child Assessment	0
Education Supervision	0
Emergency Protection	0
Extension of an Emergency Protection Order	0
Family Assistance	0
Financial Provision	0
Non-Molestation Order	0
Occupation Order	0
Other orders	0
Parental Responsibility	14
Prohibited Steps	77
Recovery	0
Residence	400
Secure Accommodation	110
Specific Issues	13
Supervision	62
Total	8028

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: [Children Order Back Series](#)

Section 4: Final orders made

There were 4,313 final orders made in 2020, a decrease of 34% from 6,532 in 2019 based on the new methodology of counting orders at the application level (Table F.6). In 2020, Article 8 Contact orders accounted for 18% 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 – 2020 (application level)

Type of Order	Total
Adjourn Generally	15
Article 3 Legal Aid	279
Article 8 Contact	773
Authority to refuse contact with a child in care	1
Care Order	223
Contact with a child in care	17
Declaration of Parentage	8
Discharge Contact Order	15
Discharge of a Care Order	44
Discharge Interim Contact Order	16
Discharge Prohibited Steps Order	6
Discharge Residence Order	17
Dismissed	135
Education Supervision	23
Emergency Protection Order	54
Extension of an Emergency Protection Order	24
Family Assistance Order	2
Financial Provision	4
Leave to assist/arrange for child to live abroad	7
Leave to change surname by which the child is known	7
Order of No Order (Final Order)	38
Other Order	950
Parental Responsibility Order	67
Prohibit further proceedings for set period	1
Prohibited Steps	55
Recovery of a child	17
Refusal of Article 3 Legal Aid Certificate	3
Residence and Contact Order	6
Residence Order	574
Secure Accommodation Order	33
Specific Issues	127
Strike Out Order	55
Supervision Order	73
Terminating Appointment of Guardian ad Litem	257
Withdrawn	387
Total	4313

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: [Children Order Back Series](#)

Section 5: Age and gender of children

There were a total of 4,095 children involved in Children Order cases during 2020. In total, 32% of these were aged 0-4 and 30% were aged 5-8 (Table F.7).

Table F.7: Age and gender of children in applications disposed of in 2020

Gender	0-4 years	5-8 years	9-12 years	13-16 years	Total
Male	652	642	502	308	2104
Female	662	593	467	261	1983
Unknown	7	0	0	1	8
Total	1321	1235	969	570	4095

^[1] In 2012, there was a change in measurement of children involved to include children entered as 'respondent child' on ICOS. In 2020 this accounted for 517 children of the total.

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

The average disposal times for private law cases in 2020 was 51 weeks in the High Court, 57 weeks in the family care centres and 24 weeks in the family proceedings courts. In 2019, the corresponding average disposal times were 39 weeks in the High Court, 59 weeks in family care centres and 21 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 processing office in 2020

Court Tier	Processing Office	Public Law - Average time weeks	Public Law - Number of disposals	Private Law - Average time weeks	Private Law - Number of disposals
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	7.2	2	33.0	25
	Ballymena	28.8	25	41.3	111
	Belfast	30.8	85	19.5	480
	Coleraine	18.9	5	25.8	92
	Craigavon	30.6	21	20.0	143
	Downpatrick	0	0	5.6	3
	Dungannon	23.7	37	22.0	79
	Enniskillen	0	0	58.4	1
	Limavady	0	0	7.9	1
	Lisburn	25.8	40	21.0	189
	Londonderry	34.6	47	23.6	163
	Newry	30.2	21	24.7	216
	Newtownards	48.1	64	25.9	388
	Omagh	31.3	21	27.1	45
	Total	32.6	368	23.9	1936
Family Care Centre	Belfast	71.0	106	70.7	115
	Craigavon	64.1	56	39.7	120
	Dungannon	61.8	15	46.0	22
	Londonderry	57.2	16	96.9	17
	Total	67.2	193	56.8	274
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	90.7	69	51.2	94
	Total	90.7	69	51.2	94
Total		49.6	630	28.9	2304

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 2020, the family proceedings courts sat for over 2,422 hours, a decrease of 16% on the 2,899 hours in 2019. This was 53% of the total court sitting time for the Children Order in 2020 (53% in 2019).

Table F.9: Court sittings and court sitting times in 2020 (hrs : mins)

Court Tier	Venue	Total sitting time	Average sitting time	Total sittings
Family Proceedings Court	Antrim	62:25	2:36	24
	Ballymena	111:37	2:39	42
	Belfast	748:02	3:57	189
	Coleraine	168:25	3:35	47
	Craigavon	123:21	2:22	52
	Dungannon	152:52	2:50	54
	Enniskillen	0:40	0:13	3
	Limavady	0:25	0:06	4
	Lisburn	164:48	2:19	71
	Londonderry	276:25	3:30	79
	Newry	164:35	2:25	68
	Newtownards	344:10	2:38	131
	Omagh	101:30	2:49	36
	Royal Courts of Justice	2:50	0:57	3
	Total	2422:05	3:01	803
Family Care Centre	Armagh	249:32	3:34	70
	Belfast	811:17	2:53	281
	Craigavon	219:32	2:35	85
	Dungannon	102:41	1:58	52
	Enniskillen	8:56	1:47	5
	Londonderry	135:43	2:13	61
	Omagh	46:20	2:34	18
	Total	1574:01	2:45	572
High Court	Royal Courts of Justice	602:39	1:11	510
	Total	602:39	1:11	510
Total		4598:45	2:26	1885

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.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

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 received and the number of applications for enforcement accepted both decreased over the last 5 years. Notices of intention to enforce received decreased by 56% between 2016 and 2020. Applications for enforcement accepted decreased by 50% between 2016 and 2020.
- The number of applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners received and the number cleared have generally decreased over the last five years. The number received decreased by 53% overall between 2016 and 2020 and the number cleared decreased by 38% overall.
- The number of appeals to Social Security Commissioners received decreased by 10% and the number cleared decreased by 4% in the last five years, with appeals received at their highest levels in 2019 and appeals cleared peaking in 2016.
- The number of inquests held relating to the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland fluctuated between 2016 and 2019, before decreasing by 62% between 2019 and 2020.

Summary Table 14: Enforcement of Judgments Office, Social Security Commissioners, Pension Appeal Tribunals and Coroners 2016 to 2020

Business Area	Type of Business	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
EJO	Notices of Intention to enforce lodged	7682	11205	9933	7260	3368
	Applications for enforcement accepted	3675	5987	4952	3961	1833
	Repossessions Completed ^[1]	465	337	353	350	112
Social Security Commissioners	Leave to appeal to Commissioners received	132	126	137	112	62
	Leave to appeal to Commissioners cleared	165	126	103	127	102
	Appeals to Commissioners received	81	76	77	83	73
	Appeals to Commissioners cleared	92	79	66	90	88
Pensions Appeal Tribunals^[2]	Entitlement Appeals received	46	39	57	43	25
	Entitlement Appeals cleared	47	46	41	51	43
	Assessment Appeals received	64	56	72	37	32
	Assessment Appeals cleared	52	59	58	46	50
	Specified Decision Appeals received	12	3	6	8	7
	Specified Decision Appeals cleared	9	8	5	7	6
	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals received	21	16	20	38	14
	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Appeals cleared	6	16	20	25	26
Coroners	Number of deaths	4025	4089	4119	4433	3669
	Number of inquests	120	130	100	103	39
	No inquest with post mortem	1011	1081	1116	1142	1154
	No inquest and no post mortem	2297	2311	2386	2542	1550
	Other disposals of registered entries	555	594	489	461	929

^[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:

[NICTS Statistics and Research Useful Documents](#)

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

[EJO Back Series](#)

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

Miscellaneous – 2020 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 2020, 3,368 notices of intention to enforce were received and 1,833 applications for enforcement were accepted (Table G.1), a decrease of 54% from 7,260 and a decrease of 54% from 3,961 respectively in 2019.

Table G.1: Enforcement orders made and applications for enforcement in 2020

Type of Business	Orders made and applications for enforcement
Method of search :By EJO staff	172
Method of search :On-line (by customers)	58801
Notices of intention: Notices Issued	3368
Applications for enforcement accepted: Article 23 discovery	132
Applications for enforcement accepted: Money judgment	1546
Applications for enforcement accepted: Possession judgment	146
Applications for enforcement accepted: Possession of Goods	9
Applications for enforcement accepted: Total	1833

Table G.2 shows the 'Debt Ratio' which is the amount of debt recovered for every £1 paid in enforcement fees. In 2020, this was £10.47, the same as in 2019.

Table G.2: Money judgments and debt ratio in 2020

Debt	Debt Amount
Original debt lodged	£5,264,031.33
EJO fees paid	£529,826.63
Total debt registered	£5,793,857.96
Total debt recovered ^[1]	£5,546,936.21
% of debt recovered	96%
Debt ratio	£10.47

^[1]Creditors by law have to inform the EJO of any payments made by debtors on account or in satisfaction of a debt. EJO record the amount of debt that has been reduced by the enforcement process including payments received direct from debtors.

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 2020, 173 cases were completed. This represents a decrease of 70% from the 2019 figure of 579, with repossessions decreasing by 68% over the last year, from 350 in 2019 to 112 in 2020.

Table G.3 Possession judgments in 2020

Types of Judgment	Number of Judgments
Repossessions completed ^[1]	112
Cases withdrawn	12
Arrangement in place (case held)	49
Total	173

^[1] Repossessions completed were previously referred to as evictions completed. Repossessions have largely been suspended due to UK Government intervention with regard to mortgaged founded repossessions and NI Executive intervention in respect of social lenders in Northern Ireland as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 2: Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioners and Pensions Appeal Tribunals

There were 62 applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioners received during 2020, 50 less than the 112 received during 2019. There were 102 applications for leave cleared in 2020 compared with 127 cleared during 2019 (Table G.4).

Table G.4: Social Security Commissioners' applications for leave to appeal to the Commissioners in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	62	2	100	102

The number of appeals to the Commissioners received decreased from 83 in 2019 to 73 in 2020. In total, 88 were cleared in 2020 compared with 90 in 2019 (Table G.5).

Table G.5: Social Security Commissioners' appeals to the Commissioners in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	73	17	71	88

Table G.6 shows the number of applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2020.

Table G.6: Social Security Commissioners' Applications to the Commissioners for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	0	0	0	0

Tables G.7 to G.13 show the caseload of Pensions Appeal Tribunals in 2020. 43 entitlement appeals and 50 assessment appeals were dealt with in 2020. Corresponding figures for 2019 were 51 and 46 respectively. The majority of assessment appeals (78%) were dealt with after a hearing, compared to 80% in 2019.

Table G.7: Pensions Appeal Tribunals entitlement appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	25	34	9	43

Table G.8: Pensions Appeal Tribunals assessment appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	32	39	11	50

Table G.9: Pensions Appeal Tribunals specified decision appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	7	4	2	6

Table G.10: Pensions Appeal Tribunals armed forces compensation scheme appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	14	20	6	26

Table G.11: Pensions Appeal Tribunals late appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	1	0	2	2

Table G.12: Pensions Appeal Tribunals jurisdiction appeals in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	0	0	1	1

Table G.13: Pensions Appeal Tribunals leave to appeal applications in 2020

Year	Received	Cleared After hearing	Cleared Without hearing	Cleared Total
2020	0	0	0	0

Section 3: Coroners Service for Northern Ireland

Table G.14 shows the Coroners' caseload for 2020. There was a decrease of 17% in the number of deaths reported to the Coroner between 2019 and 2020 (3,669 in 2020 compared to 4,433 in 2019). The number of inquests decreased from 103 in 2019 to 39 in 2020.

Table G.14: Coroners' caseload in 2020

Coroners Caseload	Total
Number of deaths reported	3669
Number of inquests held	39
No inquest with post mortem	1154
No inquest and no post mortem	1550
Other disposals of registered	929

Appendix 1: Judge court sitting days

Judge type	Business area ^[1]	Sitting days
High Court Judge	Crown	146
	Queen's Bench	297
	Children Order	234
	Other Family	58
	Appeals	11
	Chancery	213
	Bails	256
	Callover	0
	Judicial Reviews	135
	Court of Appeal - Civil	88
	Court of Appeal - Criminal	86
Total		1524
County Court Judge	Crown Court	1317
	County court judge day	1201
District Judge	County court judge day	119
	District judge day	358
Deputy District Judge	District judge day	31
Deputy County Court Judge	County court judge day	39 ^[2]
Total		3065
District Judge (Magistrates' Court)	Criminal	2703
	Youth	249
	Civil/Family	891
Total		3843
Social Security Commissioners	Oral hearings	14
Total		14
Total number of sitting days		8446

^[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 3 days when a Deputy County Court Judge sat on Crown Court Business.

Administrative case management reviews were introduced by the Lord Chief Justice as part of the [coronavirus contingency](#) arrangements. This has resulted in Judges investing significant time reviewing cases and making directions or orders administratively (where appropriate), and this has continued even as courts have resumed to support business recovery. This extra time is not recorded on the courts operating system (ICOS), and therefore is not reflected within the sittings times published within this report.

Glossary of terms

Adjourn Generally

A putting off or postponing of proceedings.

Acquittal

A judgment 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 are ready to be 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, ejectment 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. Parties need to wait at least 6 weeks after the date of the decree nisi before they can apply for a decree absolute.

Decree Nisi

A document that says that the court doesn't see any reason why the parties can't divorce. If either party doesn't agree to the divorce, they can still apply for a decree nisi. However, they will have to go to a hearing at the court to discuss the case, where a judge will decide whether to grant 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 bringing 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 judgment 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 present.

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 judgment

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.

Notice of Dispute (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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