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For immediate publication

PPS PUBLISHES ANNUAL STATISTICAL BULLETIN

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) has maintained strong conviction rates in both the Crown Court (84%) and Magistrates Court (81%), according to an independent statistical report.

The PPS today published the annual Statistical Bulletin 2018/19 compiled by Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) which presents key statistics on the activity of the organisation, including files received, caseloads and prosecutorial decisions. It also covers decision types, including reasons for no prosecution, and the outcomes of prosecutions at court.

The detailed breakdown of PPS performance shows a high conviction rate of 84.4% in the Crown Court, where the most serious criminal offences are tried. This compares to 84.8% in 2017/18. The conviction rate at the Magistrates' and Youth Courts rose slightly from 80.0% to 81.1%.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Stephen Herron, welcomed the detailed analysis of caseloads and outcomes provided by the Bulletin.

"This Bulletin contains information which assists us in analysing our performance and forward planning," he said.

"It is encouraging to see the continued robust court outcomes, which is due to the high-quality and dedicated work of our staff and our criminal justice partners. The maintenance of high outcome rates is significant when set against the demands of dealing with sustained levels of the more serious and complex casework.

"This year we have seen a rise in the number of investigation files submitted to PPS in 10 out of the 12 offence types considered, including offences in the violence against the person, sexual offences and drugs offences categories.

"We are very aware that crimes such as these often involve trauma to victims and we are committed to working closely with a wide range of representative groups and agencies to ensure that all possible supports are available at the right time through the prosecution process.

“A major focus of this work is also reducing avoidable delay, which is a complex issue requiring close partnership working between criminal justice stakeholders. Together with my colleagues on the Criminal Justice Board, I am committed to significantly improving the time taken to deal with serious crimes as part of a wider ongoing transformation programme.”

The statistics relate to the 2018/19 financial year (i.e. 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019) and include comparisons with the 2017/18 financial year.

Key findings for the 2018/19 financial year include:

- The PPS received a total of 43,298 files, an increase of 2.1% on 2017/18 (42,395). Of these 43,298 files, 42,324 were received from Police.
- The majority of files received from Police were within two offence classifications: 30.2% related to ‘motoring offences’ (12,777) and 27.8% related to ‘violence against the person’ offences (11,762). There was a rise of 9.2% in the number of files received involving fraud and forgery and a 5.4% decrease in motoring offences.
- A total of 50,336 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS. The Test for Prosecution was met for 68.5% of cases which included 30,898 decisions for prosecution and 3,566 for diversion from the courts.
- Of the 15,872 decisions for no prosecution, the vast majority (96.9%) did not pass the evidential test. The remaining 3.1% did not pass the public interest test.
- Comparing 2018/19 with 2017/18, there was a 0.6% increase in the number of decisions taken to prosecute. This was comprised of a 19.9% increase in indictable prosecution decisions (those dealt with by the Crown Court).
- On average it took 244 calendar days for the issue of indictable prosecution decisions (prosecution in the Crown Court) which is 43 days more than in 2017/18 (201 days). Summary prosecutions decisions (prosecution in the Magistrates’ or Youth Court) required on average 28 days, a decrease of 5 days on 2017/18 (33 days).
- There were 1,458 defendants dealt with in the Crown Court. This was a decrease of 3.4% on the previous financial year (1,510). The overall conviction rate in the Crown Court was 84.4% compared with 84.8% in 2017/18.

- A total of 29,155 defendants were dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts, an increase of 3.9% on 2017/18 (28,066). The conviction rate in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts was 81.1%, an improvement on 2017/18 (80.0%).

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

This summary should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes and user information provided (see pages 19 - 23 of the Statistical Bulletin).

These are 'Official Statistics' as defined in Section 6 of the Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007. Statisticians from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency are seconded to the PPS and are responsible for ensuring that the statistics produced comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The information presented in this bulletin is derived from the Case Management System, the main operational system within the PPS. This is a 'live' system with data being input on a daily basis.

The full bulletin may be viewed or downloaded here:

<https://www.ppsni.gov.uk/Branches/PPSNI/PPSNI/Files/Documents/Stats%20and%20Research/Statistical%20Bulletin%202018-19.pdf>

Any member of the public may comment on the report by contacting PPS as follows:

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