



NEWS RELEASE

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CONVICTION RATE RISES IN CROWN COURT

The conviction rate in the Crown Court reached 86.4% last year, the highest recorded level by the Public Prosecution Service. The conviction rate for the previous year was 81.6%.

A slight rise was also recorded year-on-year in the conviction rate in the Magistrates' Court at 78.9% (up from 78.8% in 2015-16).

The statistics are set out in the latest [PPS Annual Statistical Bulletin](#) which presents information on caseloads, prosecutorial decisions and data on the outcomes of prosecutions at court.

The report also highlights that 2,250 defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court, one of the highest figures recorded in recent years. This is largely attributed to the clearing of the backlog of cases following the settlement of the legal aid dispute in 2016.

A total of 28,128 defendants were dealt with in the Magistrates and Youth Courts, a slight decrease of 2.1% on the previous year.

Welcoming the findings the Director of Public Prosecutions Barra McGrory QC said:.

“The Bulletin provides important information about the work of the PPS. It contains data on the files submitted by various investigating agencies, including police, our decisions and outcomes at Court.

“This year has seen a rise in conviction rates at Crown Court level and this is important in demonstrating the effectiveness of the criminal justice system from investigation through to prosecution at court.

“Last year was a fairly exceptional year as we all dealt with the backlog of cases following the legal aid dispute.

“I want to take this opportunity to recognise the skill and professionalism of the staff in the PPS in making decisions properly, preparing cases well and prosecuting these robustly.

“We also work collaboratively with the investigation teams in the PSNI and other agencies, with Counsel, the Courts Service and victims’ representative groups.

“This is against a backdrop of a challenging financial context where we have worked with a reducing budget and a new operating model with around 20% less staff than in 2015.”

The statistical bulletin also noted an increase in files submitted to prosecutors in areas such as motoring offences, criminal damage and sexual offences. There were reductions in the number of offences relating to violence against the person, public order and drug offences.

Key findings include:

- The PPS received a total of 43,946 files. This was an increase of 0.1% on 2015/16 (43,914).
- Four offence classifications have shown an increase in the number of files received compared with 2015/16. These are ‘motoring offences’ (+1,442), ‘criminal damage’ (+53), ‘sexual offences’ (+41) and ‘fraud and forgery’ (+15). The largest reductions occurred in ‘violence against the person’ (-333), ‘public order’ (-289), ‘drug offences’ (-246) and ‘theft’ (-224).
- Of the total files received, 1095 were submitted by government departments and agencies including the Department for Communities (45%) and Driver Vehicle Agency (33%).
- 51,070 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS. The Test for Prosecution was met in the majority of cases; more than two-thirds (69%) were issued with a decision for prosecution (30,995) or for diversion from the courts (4,428). This was similar to 2015/16 (70%).

- Of the 15,647 decisions for no prosecution, the vast majority (97%) did not meet the evidential test.
- The average number of calendar days required for issue of a summary decision was 25 days; indictable prosecutions decisions were issued in 187 days (this includes case preparation and time taken by the investigating agency to information requests).

The statistics relate to the 2016/17 financial year (i.e. 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017) and includes comparisons with the previous financial year.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

This summary should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes provided (see pages 18 - 20 of the [Statistical Bulletin](#)).

Records going back to 2012 can be found [here](#) and records from 2007-2012 can be found [here](#). Information relating to the Crown and Magistrates' Courts is only available from April 2012.

In 2013-14 the conviction rate was 84.5% in the Crown Court and in 2014-15 it was 85.1%.

The highest number of defendants dealt with in the Crown Court was 2,488 in 2013-14.

Last year, 2,250 defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court. This was more than double that of the equivalent period in previous financial year (1026). This was in large part due to the backlog of cases following the settlement of legal aid fees dispute in February 2016.

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. All statistics for the current financial year have now been finalised.

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