



Public
Prosecution
Service

Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR

[REDACTED]

FOI 71/25-26

23 June 2025

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 29 May 2025 in which you asked for information in relation to criminal damage offences. Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act creates rights of access for any person making a request for information to a public authority. The rights of access are twofold. First, to be informed by the public authority if it holds information of the description specified in the request, and if that is the case, secondly, to be provided with that information. These rights are subject to important limitations, which are designed to achieve a proper balance between the right to know and considerations of law and policy in the broader public interest.

You had asked the following:

“Over the past five years:

1. *How many criminal damage cases have been passed by police to the PPS for a decision?*
2. *How long on average does it take for the PPS to make a decision on whether or not to prosecute on criminal damage cases?*
3. *Can you provide me with the 20 cases (without naming anyone) which took the longest time to a decision on whether or not to prosecute on a criminal damage case?*
4. *Can you provide me with the 20 cases (without naming anyone) which took the shortest time to a decision on whether or not to prosecute on a criminal damage case?”*

Independent, fair and effective

In response to questions 1 and 2, please see **Table 1 and Table 2** below which provide the number of files received from the PSNI and the *median* number of days taken for the first decision to be issued in relation to cases involving an offence of criminal damage. The data refer to the financial years 2020/21 to 2024/25.

Offences considered in the analysis can be found at **Annex A**.

Table 1: Files received from the PSNI involving criminal damage offences 2020/21 to 2024/25

Based on first papers received date

Financial Year	Number of Files	Number of Suspects
2020/21	4,503	4,889
2021/22	4,600	4,951
2022/23	4,990	5,408
2023/24	4,914	5,286
2024/25	4,154	4,491
Total	23,161	25,025

Table 2: Median number of calendar days taken for the first decision to be issued in relation to criminal damage offences for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25

Based on date decision issued for first decision issued on suspect

Median: Indictable Prosecution*	Median: Summary Prosecution**	Median: Diversion	Median: No Prosecution
165	14	6	20

* Prosecution in the Crown Court. ** Prosecution in the Magistrates' / Youth Courts.

Note: Figures reflect the time taken to issue a decision per suspect - cases under consideration may have included other offences in addition to criminal damage.

In response to questions 3 and 4, we are unable to provide this information as there is a potential risk of disclosure in respect of individual cases. Nevertheless, we can advise that in relation to question 3, the 20 cases with the longest times from file received date to decision issued date all took over 850 calendar days. However, it should be noted that in some of these cases there were other offences involved in the case, some of which were more serious than the offence of criminal damage (e.g. indictable only offences).

In relation to question 4, we can advise that the 20 cases with the shortest times from file received date to decision issued date all took 0 days, the first decision being issued on the same day the file was received by the PPS.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review in accordance with our review procedure. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of this response and you can do so by writing to the Head of Policy and Information, Public Prosecution Service, Belfast Chambers, 93 Chichester Street, BELFAST, BT1 3JR or alternatively by sending an e-mail to info@ppsni.gov.uk. You should state the grounds on which you are requesting the review.

Alternatively, you may wish to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Information Management Team
Public Prosecution Service

Annex A: Offences considered in the analysis

Offence Description	Offence Legislation
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	Article 3(1) of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
CRIMINAL DAMAGE- ENDANGERING LIFE WITH INTENT	Article 3(2) of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977.
CRIMINAL DAMAGE - ENDANGERING LIFE - RECKLESS	Article 3(2) of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977