

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

Statistical Bulletin

Quarters 1- 4 2012/13

(April 2012 to March 2013)



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Note:

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

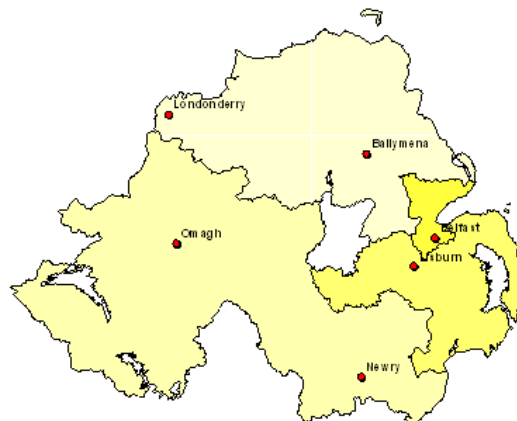
Introduction

The Public Prosecution Service

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS), which is headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland. In addition to taking decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the police, it also considers cases investigated by other statutory authorities, such as HM Revenue and Customs.

The primary role of the PPS is to reach decisions to prosecute or not to prosecute and to have responsibility for the conduct of criminal proceedings. A range of options is also available for dealing with offenders other than through prosecution. These options include restorative cautioning, informed warnings and youth conferencing. Prosecutors may also refer offenders to the NI Driver Improvement Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme.

PPS Regional Office Locations



The PPS is a regionally based organisation. There are four regions, each of which is headed by a Regional Prosecutor. The Regional Prosecutor has overall responsibility for decisions as to prosecution in that region, with the exception of those cases which are considered by prosecutors in Headquarters. Headquarters Sections deal with specialised areas of work and include Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental Prosecutions, Policy Section and High Court and International Matters.

About this Bulletin

This bulletin presents key statistics on the activity of the PPS, including caseloads and prosecutorial decisions. It provides information for the full 2012/13 financial year (i.e. 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013) and includes comparisons for the equivalent period in 2011/12. Where appropriate detailed notes have been provided, which give an explanation of the relevant PPS processes and procedures.

All statistics for the current financial year have now been finalised. For further details, see 'User Information' on page 18.

If you have any feedback, questions or requests for further information about this bulletin, please contact us as follows:

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Summary of Key Points

Figures quoted are for the full financial year, 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, unless otherwise stated. This summary should be read together with the explanatory notes provided (see pages 15 -17).

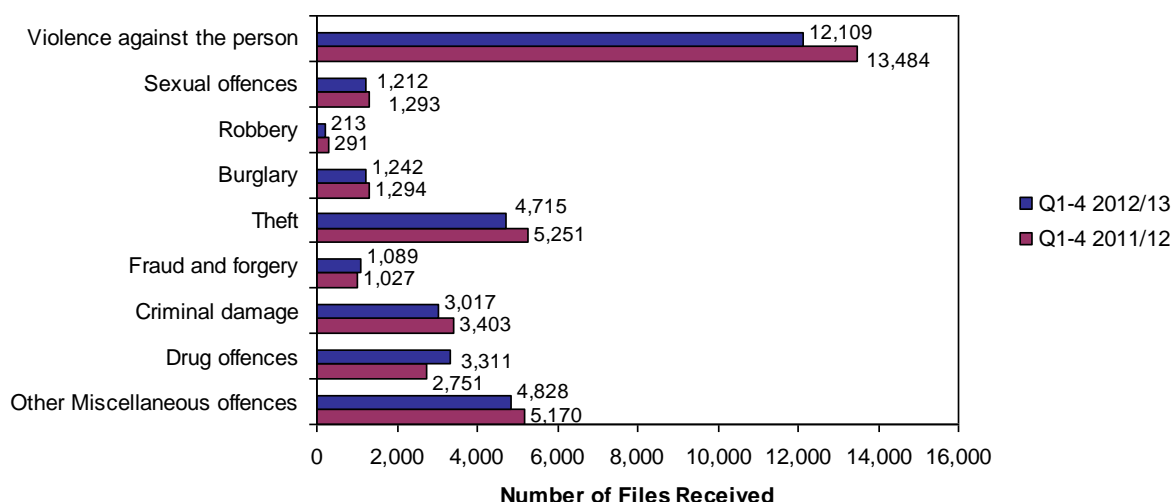
Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 1a)

- The PPS received 49,628 files during this financial year. This was a decrease of 6.8% on 2011/12 (53,271). In particular, the number of indictable files received fell by 14.1%.
- Half (50%) of all files received during the current period related to summary offences, 45% to hybrid offences and the remaining 5% to indictable offences.

Files Received from Police by Recorded Crime Offence Group (Table 1b)

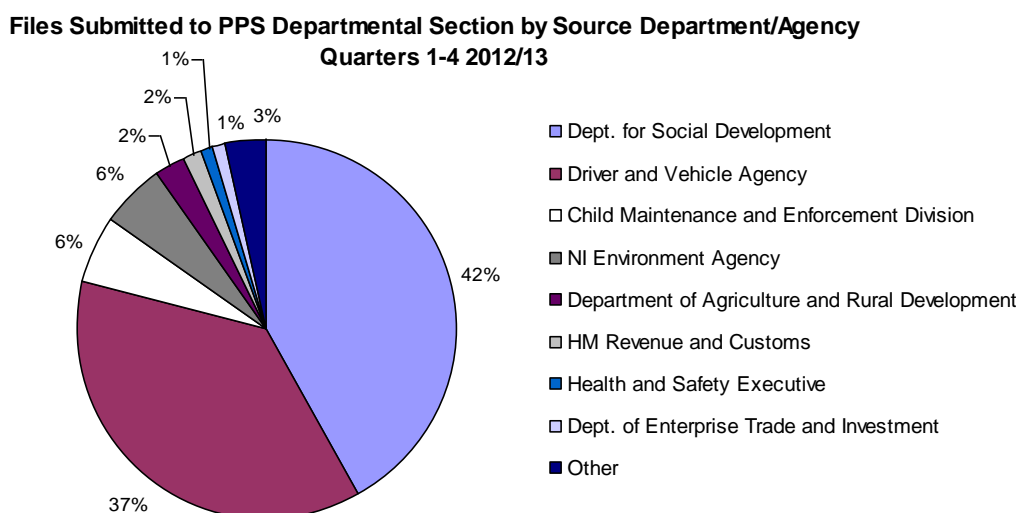
- During 2012/13, PPS received a total of 47,913 files from police. This was a 6.4% decrease on 2011/12 (51,183). The number of files relating to recorded ('notifiable') offences and other ('non-notifiable') offences decreased by 6.6% and 6.1% respectively.
- In terms of files received by recorded crime offence group, nearly seven tenths fell into three categories; 'violence against the person' (38%), 'theft' (15%) and 'other miscellaneous offences' (15%).
- All recorded crime offence groups, with the exception of drug offences and fraud and forgery, have shown a reduction in the number of files received compared with 2011/12.

Files Received from Police (Notifiable Offences) by Recorded Crime Offence Group
Q1-4 2011/12 and Q1-4 2012/13



Files Submitted to PPS Departmental Section by Source Department / Agency (Table 1c)

- A total of 1,441 files were submitted to PPS Departmental Section by departments and agencies during this financial year, representing a 21.0% decrease on 2011/12 (1,824).
- During the financial year, almost four-fifths of the files were submitted either by the Department for Social Development (42%) or the Driver and Vehicle Agency (37%).

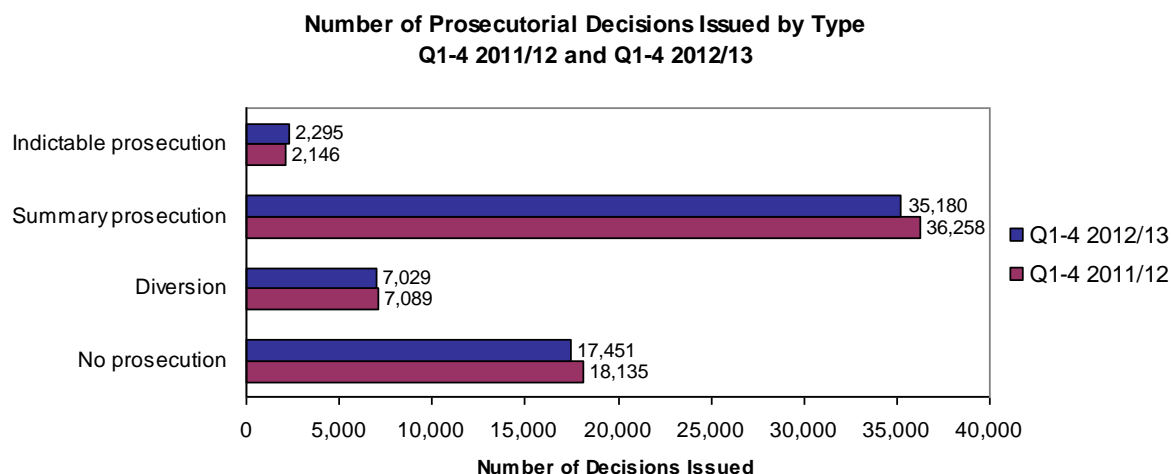


Information Requests Submitted to Police by Request Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 2)

- A total of 25,486 information requests were submitted to police during this financial year, a decrease of 4.4% on 2011/12 (26,658).
- Fifty-eight percent of all requests submitted during the current period were 'Post Decision Information Requests', 28% were 'Decision Information Requests' and 13% were 'Full File Requests'.

Prosecutorial Decisions Issued by Decision Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 3a)

- During 2012/13, 61,955 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS. This was a decrease of 2.6% on the total issued during 2011/12 (63,628).
- The evidential Test for Prosecution was met in the majority of cases considered by public prosecutors during this financial year. Of the 61,955 decisions issued, almost three-quarters (72%) were issued with a decision for prosecution (37,475) or for diversion from the courts (7,029). This is in line with 2011/12 (71%).
- Comparing 2011/12 and 2012/13, there was a decrease of 2.4% in the number of decisions to prosecute. However, while there was a 3.0% decrease in summary prosecution decisions, the number of indictable prosecution decisions increased by 6.9%. The number of diversionary and no prosecution decisions also experienced a decline of 0.8% and 3.8% respectively.



Prosecutorial Decisions Issued – Reasons for No Prosecution by PPS Region / Function (Table 3b)

- Of the 17,451 no prosecution decisions issued during this financial year, the vast majority (95%) did not pass the evidential test. The remaining 5% did not pass the public interest test. These percentages remained unchanged from 2011/12.

Average Days Required for the Issue of Prosecutorial Decisions by Decision Type – PPS Regions (Table 3c)

- The average number of calendar days required for the issue of an indictable prosecution decision during this financial year was 212, an increase on 2011/12 (185 days).
- During the current period, summary prosecution decisions required an average of 29 days. This was similar to 2011/12 (27 days).
- The time taken for diversionary decisions varied according to the type of diversion issued, with cautions requiring an average of 19 days, informed warnings 16 days and youth conferences 25 days.

Summonses Issued in Police Cases by Service Method and PPS Region (Table 4)

- A total of 35,494 summonses were issued in police cases during this financial year, a decrease of 6.0% on 2011/12. The number of summonses issued via personal service experienced a greater decline than those issued by post, down 8.6% and 4.6% respectively.
- Sixty-six percent of summonses issued during 2012/13 were served on the defendant by post and the remainder via personal service by police.

Table 1a: Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

		PPS Region / Function ²						Number of files
Quarters	File Type ³	Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS	
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-4 2012/13	Indictable	725	463	561	484	35	2,268	
	Hybrid	6,755	4,722	5,343	4,954	791	22,565	
	Summary	6,102	5,475	5,943	6,595	680	24,795	
	All Files	13,582	10,660	11,847	12,033	1,506	49,628	
Q1-4 2011/12	Indictable	844	574	638	545	39	2,640	
	Hybrid	7,059	5,381	5,173	5,515	976	24,104	
	Summary	6,315	5,946	6,044	7,330	892	26,527	
	All Files	14,218	11,901	11,855	13,390	1,907	53,271	
% Change (Files Received) 2011/12 to 2012/13		-4.5%	-10.4%	-0.1%	-10.1%	-21.0%	-6.8%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² Headquarters Sections deal with specialist work and include Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental Prosecutions, Policy and High Court and International Matters.

³ See explanatory notes, page 15.

Table 1b: Files Received from Police by Recorded Crime Offence Group

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

Recorded Crime Offence Group ²	Number of files					
	Q1-4 2012/13		Q1-4 2011/12		Change (2011/12 to 2012/13)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Violence against the person	12,109	38.2%	13,484	39.7%	-1,375	-10.2%
Sexual offences	1,212	3.8%	1,293	3.8%	-81	-6.3%
Robbery	213	0.7%	291	0.9%	-78	-26.8%
Burglary	1,242	3.9%	1,294	3.8%	-52	-4.0%
Theft	4,715	14.9%	5,251	15.5%	-536	-10.2%
Fraud and forgery	1,089	3.4%	1,027	3.0%	62	6.0%
Criminal damage	3,017	9.5%	3,403	10.0%	-386	-11.3%
Drug offences	3,311	10.4%	2,751	8.1%	560	20.4%
Other Miscellaneous offences	4,828	15.2%	5,170	15.2%	-342	-6.6%
All Recorded Crime Files	31,736		33,964		-2,228	-6.6%
Other files (Non-notifiable offences)	16,177		17,219		-1,042	-6.1%
All Files	47,913		51,183		-3,270	-6.4%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² See explanatory notes, page 15.

Table 1c: Files Submitted to PPS Departmental Section by Source Department / Agency

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

Department / Agency	Number of files					
	Q1-4 2012/13		Q1-4 2011/12		Change (2011/12 to 2012/13)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Dept. for Social Development	605	42.0%	730	40.0%	-125	-17.1%
Driver and Vehicle Agency	531	36.8%	729	40.0%	-198	-27.2%
NI Environment Agency	81	5.6%	106	5.8%	-25	-23.6%
Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division	85	5.9%	88	4.8%	-3	-3.4%
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	33	2.3%	59	3.2%	-26	-44.1%
HM Revenue and Customs	26	1.8%	17	0.9%	9	52.9%
Health and Safety Executive	14	1.0%	12	0.7%	2	16.7%
Dept. of Enterprise Trade and Investment	18	1.2%	20	1.1%	-2	-10.0%
Other	48	3.3%	63	3.5%	-15	-23.8%
All Departments / Agencies	1,441		1,824		-383	-21.0%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

Table 2: Information Requests Submitted to Police by Request Type and PPS Region / Function

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

		PPS Region / Function ²						Number of requests
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS	
Quarters	Request Type ³	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-4 2012/13	Full File Request	934	709	660	1,105	23	3,431	
	Decision Information Request	1,993	1,153	2,540	1,327	73	7,086	
	Post Decision Information Request	5,435	2,732	3,178	3,531	15	14,891	
	No Decision	13	19	5	40	1	78	
	All Requests Submitted	8,375	4,613	6,383	6,003	112	25,486	
Q1-4 2011/12	Full File Request	1,038	816	841	1,329	43	4,067	
	Decision Information Request	2,237	1,348	2,681	1,311	40	7,617	
	Post Decision Information Request	5,536	2,842	3,078	3,452	6	14,914	
	No Decision	9	30	4	17	0	60	
	All Requests Submitted	8,820	5,036	6,604	6,109	89	26,658	
% Change (Requests Submitted) 2011/12 to 2012/13		-5.0%	-8.4%	-3.3%	-1.7%	25.8%	-4.4%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² Headquarters Sections deal with specialist work and include Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental Prosecutions, Policy and High Court and International Matters.

³ See explanatory notes, page 15.

Table 3a: Prosecutorial Decisions Issued by Decision Type and PPS Region / Function

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

			Number of persons (decisions issued)					
			PPS Region / Function ²					
			Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Type of Decision ³		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-4 2012/13	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	741	428	476	470	180	2,295
		Summary prosecution	9,974	7,075	7,847	8,994	1,290	35,180
	Diversion	Caution	1,308	1,284	1,414	1,363	3	5,372
		Informed warning	270	218	272	133	0	893
		Youth conference	89	101	147	101	0	438
		Other	71	48	141	66	0	326
	No Prosecution		4,758	4,123	4,059	4,280	231	17,451
	All Decisions Issued		17,211	13,277	14,356	15,407	1,704	61,955
Q1-4 2011/12	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	641	436	437	476	156	2,146
		Summary prosecution	10,017	7,651	7,979	9,063	1,548	36,258
	Diversion	Caution	1,412	1,368	1,334	1,323	1	5,438
		Informed warning	316	265	246	131	0	958
		Youth conference	94	115	108	115	0	432
		Other	56	40	126	39	0	261
	No Prosecution		4,664	4,667	4,029	4,464	311	18,135
	All Decisions Issued		17,200	14,542	14,259	15,611	2,016	63,628
% Change (Decisions Issued)								
2011/12 to 2012/13			0.1%	-8.7%	0.7%	-1.3%	-15.5%	-2.6%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² Headquarters Sections deal with specialist work and include Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental Prosecutions, Policy and High Court and International Matters.

³ See explanatory notes, page 16.

Table 3b: Prosecutorial Decisions Issued - Reasons for No Prosecution by PPS Region / Function

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

		PPS Region / Function ²						Number of persons (decisions issued)
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS	
Quarters	Reason for no prosecution ³	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-4 2012/13	Did not pass the evidential test	4,449	3,845	3,907	4,131	223	16,555	
	Did not pass the public interest test	309	278	152	149	8	896	
	All no prosecution decisions	4,758	4,123	4,059	4,280	231	17,451	
Q1-4 2011/12	Did not pass the evidential test	4,295	4,445	3,895	4,294	280	17,209	
	Did not pass the public interest test	369	222	134	170	31	926	
	All no prosecution decisions	4,664	4,667	4,029	4,464	311	18,135	
% Change (No prosecution decisions issued) 2011/12 to 2012/13		2.0%	-11.7%	0.7%	-4.1%	-25.7%	-3.8%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² Headquarters Sections deal with specialist work and include Central Prosecutions, Fraud and Departmental Prosecutions, Policy and High Court and International Matters.

³ See explanatory notes, page 16.

**Table 3c: Average Days Required for the Issue of Prosecutorial Decisions
by Decision Type (PPS Regions)**

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

			Average (calendar) days
Quarters	Type of Decision ²		All Regions
Q1-4 2012/13	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	212
		Summary prosecution	29
	Diversion	Caution	19
		Informed warning	16
		Youth conference	25
		Other	28
	No Prosecution		51
Q1-4 2011/12	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	185
		Summary prosecution	27
	Diversion	Caution	17
		Informed warning	10
		Youth conference	14
		Other	23
	No Prosecution		51

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² Average days includes time taken for police to respond to decision information requests (see explanatory notes, page 16).

Table 4: Summonses Issued in Police Cases by Service Method and PPS Region

Quarters1-4 2011/12 and Quarters1-4 2012/13 ¹

		PPS Region					Number of summonses
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	All Regions	
Quarters	Service Method ²	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-4 2012/13	Postal Service	7,086	5,113	4,871	6,227	23,297	
	Personal Service	6,413	2,166	1,758	1,860	12,197	
	All Summonses	13,499	7,279	6,629	8,087	35,494	
Q1-4 2011/12	Postal Service	7,326	6,085	4,897	6,105	24,413	
	Personal Service	6,069	2,746	1,866	2,662	13,343	
	All Summonses	13,395	8,831	6,763	8,767	37,756	
% Change (Summonses Issued) 2011/12 to 2012/13		0.8%	-17.6%	-2.0%	-7.8%	-6.0%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters1-4 (Q1-4) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 March.

² See explanatory notes, page 17.

Explanatory Notes

Table 1a

A file may refer to one or more individuals. 'File type' is based on the 'primary' offence (generally the most serious offence in terms of the potential penalties in law) in each case at the time the file is submitted to PPS. In general, *summary offences* relate to less serious criminal behaviour and are tried in the Magistrates' Court before a District Judge. *Indictable offences* relate to more serious criminal behaviour and are tried at the Crown Court before a judge, and in most cases, a jury. There are a number of *hybrid offences* which may be tried at either the Magistrates' or Crown Court, for example: theft; assault occasioning actual bodily harm, etc. For these offences, on taking a decision to prosecute, the Public Prosecutor must also decide whether the defendant should be tried in the Magistrates' Court or the Crown Court. In making this decision the prosecutor will consider whether the Magistrates' Court is the appropriate venue in that it has sufficient sentencing powers in relation to the gravity of the offence. For a range of offences, the defendant may also elect for trial in the Crown Court.

The figures include all files submitted by police (Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast / Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police), the Office of the Police Ombudsman and a range of statutory authorities, for example the Driver and Vehicle Agency and HM Revenue and Customs. It should be noted that files submitted by the Office of the Police Ombudsman may be considered by prosecutors in the regional offices or Headquarters.

Table 1b

The classification used reflects the Home Office Recorded Crime Offence Categories. Recorded crime figures (sometimes referred to as 'notifiable' offences) detail those crimes and offences, including attempts, recorded by the police, which are deemed to be indictable, or triable-either-way (hybrid). Certain closely associated summary offences are also counted in the recorded crime figures.

Files have been assigned to the respective categories on the basis of the 'primary' offence (see above) in each case at the time the file is submitted to PPS from police.

'Police' includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast / Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police. Files received by the PPS Regions / Headquarters from the Office of the Police Ombudsman are excluded.

Table 2

The various types of request are defined as follows:

- *Full file requests* are designed to allow the PPS to ask the PSNI for a full file as defined in the relevant protocols.
- A *decision information request (DIR)* is issued by PPS to police where the evidence and information contained in an investigation file is incomplete and a further written report or action is required before a prosecutorial decision can be taken.
- *Post decision information requests* are designed to allow the PPS to ask the PSNI to gather additional evidential material or provide other information required at some further stage in the prosecution process (e.g. for trial).
- Finally a '*no decision*' *decision information request* may issue when, on the evidence submitted by police in an investigation file, it is not possible to take a prosecution decision and it is not reasonable to issue a detailed DIR having regard to the number or type of deficiencies in the file.

Table 3a

More than one prosecutorial decision may be recorded against any individual within a case. Therefore 'type of decision' refers to the most serious decision issued, in the following order: Indictable prosecution; summary prosecution; diversion; and no prosecution. A number of types of prosecutorial decision are available to the prosecutor, as follows:

- *Indictable prosecution* applies in the more serious offences which may be heard in the Crown Court.
- *Summary prosecution* applies to cases which may be heard in the Magistrates' Courts.
- A *caution* is a formal reprimand administered by the police. Whilst it is not a conviction it is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 30 months for youths and 5 years for adults.
- An *informed warning* is also a formal reprimand administered by police and is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 12 months.
- A *diversionary youth conference* is an alternative to prosecution in court and may be used in cases where the defendant is a youth. This type of restorative conference may involve a number of parties, including the defendant, the victim and police. A youth conference is a formal process, and although not a conviction, is recorded on a person's criminal record for a period of 30 months.
- '*Other*' *diversionary options* include referrals to the NI Driver Improvement Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme. It should be noted that diversionary options are only available to prosecutors if the defendant admits that he/she has committed the offence and agrees to accept and participate in the diversionary option.
- A *decision for no prosecution* will be taken if the prosecutor decides that in any case being considered there is insufficient evidence or that it is not in the public interest to prosecute (see note regarding the Test for Prosecution below).

Table 3b

Prosecutions are initiated where the prosecutor is satisfied that the Test for Prosecution is met. There are two aspects to the Test:

- a) Whether the evidence which can be offered in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction (the evidential test); and
- b) Whether prosecution is required in the public interest (the public interest test).

Each of these stages must be separately considered but a decision whether or not a prosecution is in the public interest can only arise when the evidential test has been satisfied.

Table 3c

As mentioned in note to Table 3a, more than one prosecutorial decision may be recorded against any individual within a case. Therefore these figures are based on the first decision issued. Monitoring covers the period in calendar days from date initial papers (charge cases only) or full file is received by the PPS to the date the prosecutorial decision is issued. This includes any time taken for police to respond to decision information requests (see note to Table 2 above). Average days for indictable prosecution decisions include the time taken for the prosecutor's decision and for case preparation (i.e. where appropriate, ensuring that the case is ready for court). In indictable cases case preparation includes time required for the preparation of committal papers which contain the evidence, such as statements, exhibits etc., to be presented to the Crown Court. It may also include consideration of duties of disclosure by the prosecutor and applications to be made to the court.

Table 4

Information refers to police cases only. A summons may be served on a defendant either by post, or via a personal summons served by the police. The defendant will be required to attend court on the date stated on the summons. Following the commencement of Rule 2(6) of the Magistrates' Courts (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2009, in early 2010, the large majority of offences can now be dealt with by way of a postal summons. The only exceptions relate to corporate defendants, vulnerable defendants and those defendants who have not responded to a postal summons.

More than one summons may be issued in respect of an individual defendant in a case. For example, if the defendant does not attend court on the day stated on an initial postal summons, this will generally be followed up by a personal summons served by police.

User Information

Data sources and validations

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

It should be noted that the CMS is also linked to the CJSNI's Causeway data sharing mechanism. The first phase of Causeway ('DSM 0'), introduced in 2005/06, allowed police to submit files to the PPS electronically. The most recent phase ('DSM 1') was launched at the end of November 2009 and broadened the portfolio of information shared electronically. For example PPS are now supplied with court results by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service which feed into the PPS Case Management System via Causeway.

The information is extracted using Business Objects. It is then validated and quality assured to ensure that the data is reliable and robust for use. Any inconsistencies are reported back to operational staff or to the PPS Information and Communications Technology Branch. If required, any necessary amendments are then made to the data.

All statistics for the current financial year have now been finalised. However, please note that figures for 2011/12 may differ from some of those previously published due to changes in the reports used to extract the information.

Rounding conventions

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a consequence some percentages may not sum to 100.

Official Statistics

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 PPS would value any feedback on this report and welcome recommendations on the future addition of data that may be of interest to readers. Contact details are provided overleaf.

Future publications

The next Statistical Bulletin, covering the period 1 April 2013 to 30 June 2013, will be published on 15 August 2013.

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