

Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland

Statistical Bulletin

Quarters 1-3 2015/16

(April to December 2015)



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Note:

All statistics for the current financial year are provisional and may be subject to change.

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.

About this Bulletin

This bulletin presents key statistics on the activity of the PPS, including caseloads and prosecutorial decisions. It also includes data on the outcomes of prosecutions at court. The report provides information for the first nine months of the 2015/16 financial year (i.e. 1 April to 31 December 2015) and includes comparisons for the equivalent period in 2014/15. 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 are provisional and may be subject to change. For further details, see 'User Information' on page 20.

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Summary of Key Points

Figures quoted are for the first nine months of the financial year, 1 April to 31 December 2015, unless otherwise stated. This summary should be read together with the explanatory notes provided (see pages 17 - 19).

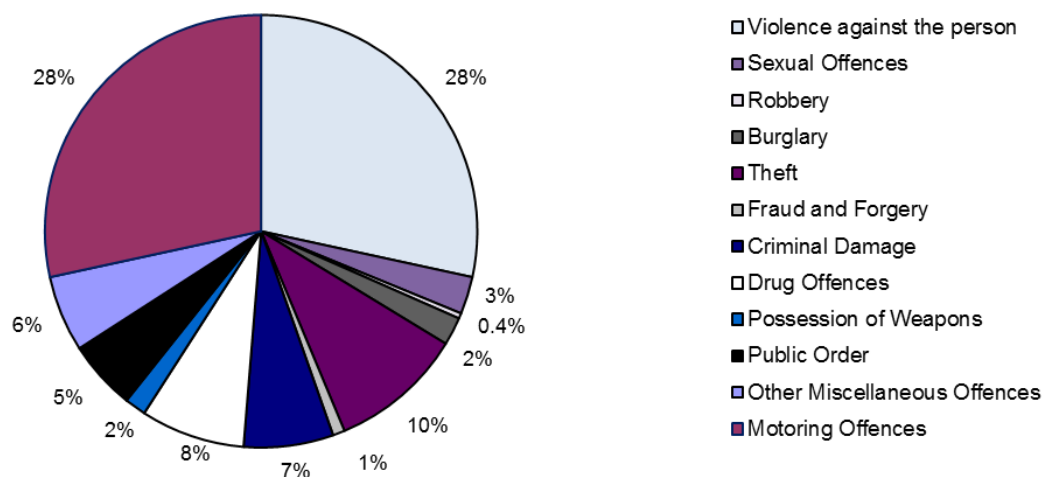
Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function (Table 1a)

- The PPS received 32,767 files during the first three quarters of this financial year. This was a decrease of 3.5% on the corresponding period of 2014/15 (33,956).
- Almost half (49%) of all files received during the current period related to hybrid offences, 46% to summary offences and the remainder to indictable offences.

Files Received from Police by Offence Classification (Table 1b)

- During the first nine months of 2015/16, PPS received a total of 31,744 files from police. This represents a 3.5% decrease on the first three quarters of 2014/15 (32,899).
- In terms of files received by offence classification, around two-thirds fell into three categories; 'motoring' (28%), 'violence against the person' (28%) and 'theft' (10%).
- Four offence classifications have shown an increase in the number of files received compared with the corresponding period of 2014/15. These are 'violence against the person', 'criminal damage', 'possession of weapons' and 'drug offences'.

**Files Received from Police by Offence Classification
Quarters 1-3 2015/16**



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

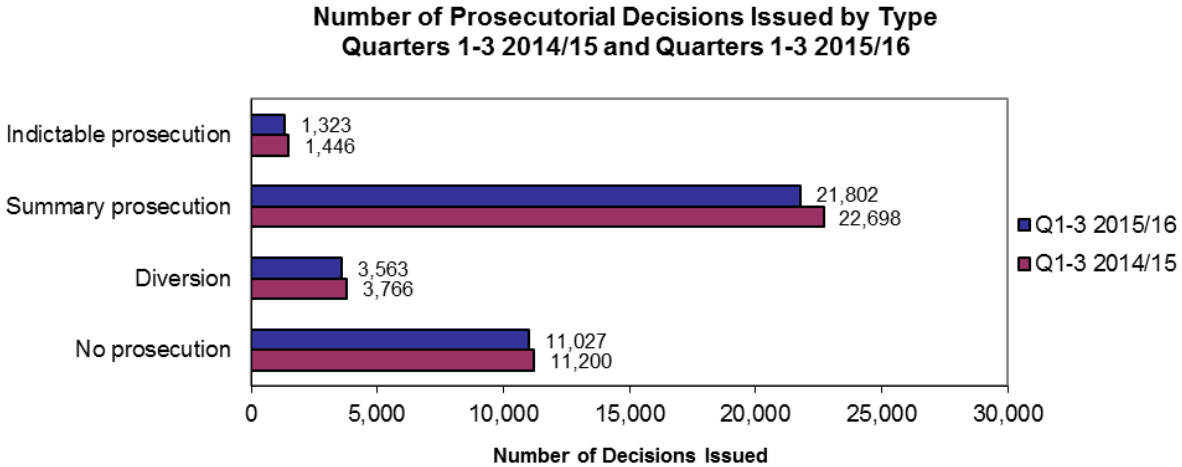
- A total of 874 files were submitted to PPS Departmental Section by departments and agencies during the first three quarters of 2015/16, representing a 1.0% decrease on the corresponding period of 2014/15 (883).
- During the current period, the majority of the files were submitted either by the Department for Social Development (38%) or the Driver and Vehicle Agency (34%).

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

- A total of 18,440 information requests were submitted to police during the first nine months of 2015/16, an increase of 0.4% on the first three quarters of 2014/15 (18,370).
- Fifty-five percent of all requests submitted during the current period were 'Post Decision Information Requests', 30% were 'Decision Information Requests' and 14% were 'Full File Requests'.

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

- During the first three quarters of this financial year, 37,715 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS, a decline of 3.6% on the corresponding period of 2014/15 (39,110).
- The evidential Test for Prosecution was met in the majority of cases considered by public prosecutors during the current period. Of the 37,715 decisions issued, more than seven-tenths (71%) were issued with a decision for prosecution (23,125) or for diversion from the courts (3,563). This was in line with the first nine months of 2014/15 (71%).



- Comparing the first nine months of 2014/15 and 2015/16, there was a decrease of 4.2% in the number of decisions to prosecute. This comprised of a decrease of 8.5% in indictable prosecution decisions and a decline of 3.9% in summary prosecution decisions. The numbers of diversionary and no prosecution decisions fell by 5.4% and 1.5% respectively.

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

- Of the 11,027 no prosecution decisions issued during the first three quarters of 2015/16, the vast majority (96%) did not pass the evidential test. The remaining 4% did not pass the public interest test.

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 the first nine months of this financial year was 168, which compared with 158 days during the equivalent period in 2014/15.
- During the current period, summary prosecution decisions required an average of 25 days. This was 4 days more than during the first three quarters of 2014/15 (21).
- The time taken for diversionary decisions varied according to the type of diversion issued, with cautions requiring an average of 22 days, youth conferences an average of 21 days and informed warnings 13 days.
- It should be noted that the average figures above include the time taken for police to respond to PPS decision information requests.

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

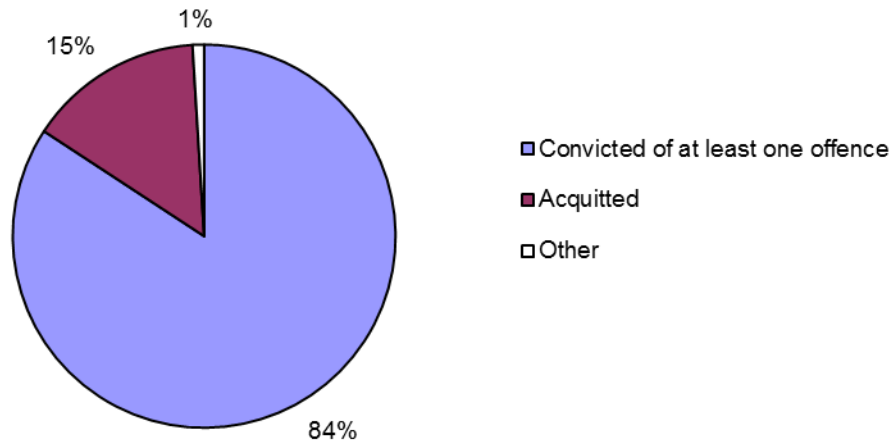
- A total of 20,384 summonses were issued in police cases during the first three quarters of the financial year, a decrease of 7.3% on the same period of 2014/15. Comparing the first nine months of 2014/15 and 2015/16, the number of summonses issued via personal service experienced a greater decline than those issued by postal service, down 14.6% and 3.8% respectively.
- Seven-tenths (70%) of summonses issued during the current period were served on the defendant by post and the remainder via personal service by police.

Defendants Dealt with in the Crown Court by Outcome and PPS Region / Function (Table 5a)

- During the first three quarters of 2015/16, 824 defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court. This was a decrease of 40.9% on the equivalent period in 2014/15 (1,394 – see note 3 to Table 5a).
- Of these defendants, 84.2% were convicted, 14.8% were acquitted and the remaining 1.0% had an 'other' outcome.

- Comparing the first nine months of 2014/15 and 2015/16, the conviction rate declined by 0.2% from 84.4%.

**Defendants Dealt with in the Crown Court by Outcome
Quarters 1-3 2015/16**



Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome and PPS Region / Function (Table 5b)

- A total of 21,988 defendants were dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts during the first three quarters of this financial year, a decrease of 3.2% on 2014/15 (22,722).
- Of the defendants dealt with during the current period, 78.9% were convicted, 6.2% were acquitted and 14.9% had an 'other' outcome.
- The conviction rate fell by 1.1% from 80.0% during the equivalent period in 2014/15.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 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	
Q1-3 2015/16	Indictable	426	329	402	306	15	1,478	
	Hybrid	4,734	3,672	3,688	3,619	488	16,201	
	Summary	3,965	3,657	3,451	3,601	414	15,088	
	All Files	9,125	7,658	7,541	7,526	917	32,767	
Q1-3 2014/15	Indictable	391	334	405	322	14	1,466	
	Hybrid	4,549	3,916	3,650	3,600	422	16,137	
	Summary	3,766	4,227	3,821	4,051	488	16,353	
	All Files	8,706	8,477	7,876	7,973	924	33,956	
% Change (Files Received) 2014/15 to 2015/16		4.8%	-9.7%	-4.3%	-5.6%	-0.8%	-3.5%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

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 17.

Table 1b: Files Received from Police by Offence Classification

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

Offence Classification ²	Number of files					
	Q1-3 2015/16		Q1-3 2014/15		Change (2014/15 to 2015/16)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Violence against the person	9,025	28.4%	8,515	25.9%	510	6.0%
Sexual offences	885	2.8%	950	2.9%	-65	-6.8%
Robbery	129	0.4%	134	0.4%	-5	-3.7%
Burglary	666	2.1%	737	2.2%	-71	-9.6%
Theft	3,179	10.0%	3,338	10.1%	-159	-4.8%
Fraud and forgery	285	0.9%	290	0.9%	-5	-1.7%
Criminal damage	2,111	6.7%	2,016	6.1%	95	4.7%
Drug offences	2,475	7.8%	2,448	7.4%	27	1.1%
Possession of weapons	507	1.6%	493	1.5%	14	2.8%
Public order	1,645	5.2%	1,979	6.0%	-334	-16.9%
Other Miscellaneous offences	1,812	5.7%	1,982	6.0%	-170	-8.6%
Motoring offences	9,025	28.4%	10,017	30.4%	-992	-9.9%
All Files	31,744		32,899		-1,155	-3.5%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

² See explanatory notes, page 17.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

Department / Agency	Number of files					
	Q1-3 2015/16		Q1-3 2014/15		Change (2014/15 to 2015/16)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Dept. for Social Development	333	38.1%	260	29.4%	73	28.1%
Driver and Vehicle Agency	301	34.4%	337	38.2%	-36	-10.7%
NI Environment Agency	66	7.6%	62	7.0%	4	6.5%
Child Maintenance and Enforcement Division	37	4.2%	53	6.0%	-16	-30.2%
HM Revenue and Customs	28	3.2%	33	3.7%	-5	-15.2%
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	23	2.6%	39	4.4%	-16	-41.0%
Dept. of Enterprise Trade and Investment	12	1.4%	15	1.7%	-3	-20.0%
Health and Safety Executive	8	0.9%	6	0.7%	2	33.3%
Other	66	7.6%	78	8.8%	-12	-15.4%
All Departments / Agencies	874		883		-9	-1.0%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 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	
Q1-3 2015/16	Full File Request	694	548	531	883	10	2,666	
	Decision Information Request	1,286	1,519	1,566	1,225	26	5,622	
	Post Decision Information Request	3,229	2,557	2,044	2,239	13	10,082	
	No Decision	18	9	13	29	1	70	
	All Requests Submitted	5,227	4,633	4,154	4,376	50	18,440	
Q1-3 2014/15	Full File Request	731	642	547	997	10	2,927	
	Decision Information Request	1,162	1,338	1,533	1,440	43	5,516	
	Post Decision Information Request	3,215	2,275	1,965	2,377	11	9,843	
	No Decision	16	15	5	48	0	84	
	All Requests Submitted	5,124	4,270	4,050	4,862	64	18,370	
% Change (Requests Submitted) 2014/15 to 2015/16		2.0%	8.5%	2.6%	-10.0%	-21.9%	0.4%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

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 17.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

			PPS Region / Function ²					Number of persons (decisions issued)
			Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Type of Decision ³		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2015/16	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	281	340	287	322	93	1,323
		Summary prosecution	6,701	4,856	4,633	4,779	833	21,802
	Diversion	Caution	575	620	697	610	3	2,505
		Informed warning	83	88	128	80	0	379
		Youth conference	107	162	88	85	0	442
		Other	33	31	96	77	0	237
	No Prosecution		2,848	2,558	2,772	2,707	142	11,027
	All Decisions Issued		10,628	8,655	8,701	8,660	1,071	37,715
Q1-3 2014/15	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	428	305	277	320	116	1,446
		Summary prosecution	6,082	5,591	4,939	5,310	776	22,698
	Diversion	Caution	592	688	733	740	3	2,756
		Informed warning	97	138	121	57	2	415
		Youth conference	106	59	72	70	0	307
		Other	27	56	132	73	0	288
	No Prosecution		2,753	2,791	2,679	2,827	150	11,200
	All Decisions Issued		10,085	9,628	8,953	9,397	1,047	39,110
% Change (Decisions Issued) 2014/15 to 2015/16			5.4%	-10.1%	-2.8%	-7.8%	2.3%	-3.6%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

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 18.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 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	
Q1-3 2015/16	Did not pass the evidential test	2,679	2,443	2,697	2,632	127	10,578	
	Did not pass the public interest test	169	115	75	75	15	449	
	All no prosecution decisions	2,848	2,558	2,772	2,707	142	11,027	
Q1-3 2014/15	Did not pass the evidential test	2,601	2,673	2,611	2,749	135	10,769	
	Did not pass the public interest test	152	118	68	78	15	431	
	All no prosecution decisions	2,753	2,791	2,679	2,827	150	11,200	
% Change (No prosecution decisions issued) 2014/15 to 2015/16		3.5%	-8.3%	3.5%	-4.2%	-5.3%	-1.5%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

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 18.

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

			Average (calendar) days
Quarters	Type of Decision ²		All Regions
Q1-3 2015/16	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	168
		Summary prosecution	25
	Diversion	Caution	22
		Informed warning	13
		Youth conference	21
		Other	23
	No Prosecution		43
Q1-3 2014/15	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	158
		Summary prosecution	21
	Diversion	Caution	16
		Informed warning	15
		Youth conference	17
		Other	17
	No Prosecution		39

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

² Average days includes time taken for police to respond to decision information requests (see explanatory notes, page 18).

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

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

		PPS Region					Number of summonses
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	All Regions	
Quarters	Service Method ²	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-3 2015/16	Postal Service	4,536	3,708	2,806	3,233	14,283	
	Personal Service	1,587	1,957	1,255	1,302	6,101	
	All Summonses	6,123	5,665	4,061	4,535	20,384	
Q1-3 2014/15	Postal Service	3,857	4,171	3,017	3,803	14,848	
	Personal Service	2,549	2,173	1,143	1,281	7,146	
	All Summonses	6,406	6,344	4,160	5,084	21,994	
% Change (Summonses Issued) 2014/15 to 2015/16		-4.4%	-10.7%	-2.4%	-10.8%	-7.3%	

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

² See explanatory notes, page 19.

Table 5a: Defendants Dealt with in the Crown Court by Outcome and PPS Region / Function

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

		Number of persons (defendants)					
		PPS Region / Function					
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Outcome ²	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2015/16	Convicted of at least one offence	162	172	162	147	51	694
	Acquitted	26	22	25	33	16	122
	Other	2	2	0	2	2	8
	All defendants	190	196	187	182	69	824
	Conviction Rate (%) ²	85.3%	87.8%	86.6%	80.8%	73.9%	84.2%
Q1-3 2014/15	Convicted of at least one offence	369	220	247	223	118	1,177
	Acquitted	74	34	30	54	14	206
	Other	2	3	2	4	0	11
	All defendants	445	257	279	281	132	1,394
	Conviction Rate (%) ²	82.9%	85.6%	88.5%	79.4%	89.4%	84.4%
% Change (Defendants dealt with) 2014/15 to 2015/16 ³		-57.3%	-23.7%	-33.0%	-35.2%	-47.7%	-40.9%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

² See explanatory notes, page 19.

³ In May 2015 the Law Society and the Bar Council for Northern Ireland withdrew criminal defence services in response to the new Crown Court legal aid fee scheme introduced by the Department of Justice. As a result, no new cases were conducted in the Crown Court over the period May to December 2015.

Table 5b: Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome and PPS Region / Function

Quarters 1-3 2014/15 and Quarters 1-3 2015/16 ¹

		Number of persons (defendants)					
		PPS Region / Function					
		Belfast	Eastern	Northern	Western and Southern	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarter	Outcome ²	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2015/16	Convicted of at least one offence	4,749	4,007	3,894	4,090	603	17,343
	Acquitted	398	332	238	352	35	1,355
	Other	799	763	702	870	156	3,290
	All defendants	5,946	5,102	4,834	5,312	794	21,988
	Conviction Rate (%) ²	79.9%	78.5%	80.6%	77.0%	75.9%	78.9%
Q1-3 2014/15	Convicted of at least one offence	4,810	4,085	4,191	4,424	663	18,173
	Acquitted	425	243	255	235	35	1,193
	Other	825	828	753	801	149	3,356
	All defendants	6,060	5,156	5,199	5,460	847	22,722
	Conviction Rate (%) ²	79.4%	79.2%	80.6%	81.0%	78.3%	80.0%
% Change (Defendants dealt with) 2014/15 to 2015/16		-1.9%	-1.0%	-7.0%	-2.7%	-6.3%	-3.2%

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflect the period from 1 April to 31 December.

² See explanatory notes, page 19.

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 Offence Classifications used are standardised across the criminal justice organisations in Northern Ireland. While current classifications continue to mirror the Home Office Recorded Crime Offence Categories, there may be some variation in the offences included within each category. Therefore, data published on Recorded Crime Offence Groups prior to 2014/15 will not be directly comparable with the Offence Classifications.

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 excludes defendants for whom a warrant has been issued but 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.

Table 5a

Includes all defendants dealt with in the Crown Court during the period, based on results data supplied by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (via the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism). Proceedings in the Crown Court generally follow the issue of a decision by PPS to prosecute on indictment. The category 'acquitted' includes the following outcomes: acquittals, acquittals by direction, No Bills, no evidence offered – defendant acquitted, left on books, proceedings stayed, unfit to plead – but found that he/she did not do the act, no case to answer - granted. 'Other' Includes defendant deceased, withdrawal – all charges, bound over for not having shown cause, bound over where charge withdrawn, withdrawn due to diversionary route. It should be noted that if an individual is involved in more than one case which is resulted during this period, they will be counted as a separate defendant on each occasion.

Table 5b

Includes all defendants dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts during the period, based on results data supplied by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (via the Causeway Data Sharing Mechanism). Data reflect the number of persons where PPS has taken a decision to prosecute summarily; i.e. defendants against whom charges were withdrawn prior to decision are excluded. The category 'acquitted' includes the following outcomes: dismissed; no case to answer granted; and proceedings stayed. 'Other' includes: defendant deceased; withdrawal – all charges; bound over for not having shown cause; bound over where charge withdrawn; withdrawn due to diversionary route. Excludes persons returned for trial in the Crown Court. It should be noted that if an individual is involved in more than one case which is resulted during this period, they will be counted as a separate defendant on each occasion.

Tables 5a and 5b

Conviction rates are calculated on the basis of the number of persons convicted as a percentage of all persons dealt with during the period.

The Department of Justice publish conviction data on an annual basis; however this may not be directly comparable with data included in this report due to variations in data quality validations and counting rules.

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 are provisional and may be subject to change.

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 2015 to 31 March 2016, will be published on 16 June 2016.

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