



PUBLIC PROSECUTION SERVICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Statistical Bulletin: **Quarters 1-3 2018/19**

1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018



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Note:

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

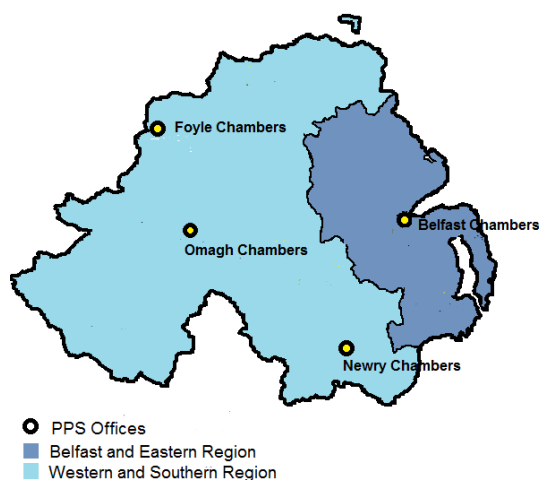
Introduction

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 National Driver Alertness Scheme or to a Community Restorative Justice Scheme.

PPS Regional Structure



There are two PPS regions. Each of the regions, Belfast and Eastern Region and Western and Southern Region, is headed by an Assistant Director (AD). The AD is responsible for working with the courts and the police to provide a high quality prosecution service in their area. The regions deal with a wide range of cases, from the less serious summary cases, which are heard in the Magistrates' Courts, through to more serious indictable cases which are heard in the Crown Court.

In addition there are four legal sections, based in PPS Headquarters, which are also headed at AD level. These are as follows:

- The Serious Crime Unit which deals with a range of the most serious offences including murder, manslaughter, rape and serious sexual offences and human trafficking.
- Central Casework Section which deals with some of the most high profile and difficult cases in Northern Ireland, including files relating to terrorism and organised crime;
- Fraud and Departmental Section which deals with serious and complex fraud files submitted by the police, as well as files from public bodies; and
- High Court and International Section which deals with a range of specialist legal matters (for example, High Court bail applications, extradition and appeals to the Court of Appeal).

Corporate Services is responsible for the organisation's support services such as Policy and Information, Finance, Resource Management and ICT, as well as the Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU).

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 three quarters of the 2018/19 financial year (i.e. 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018) and includes comparisons for the equivalent period in 2017/18. 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 21.

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

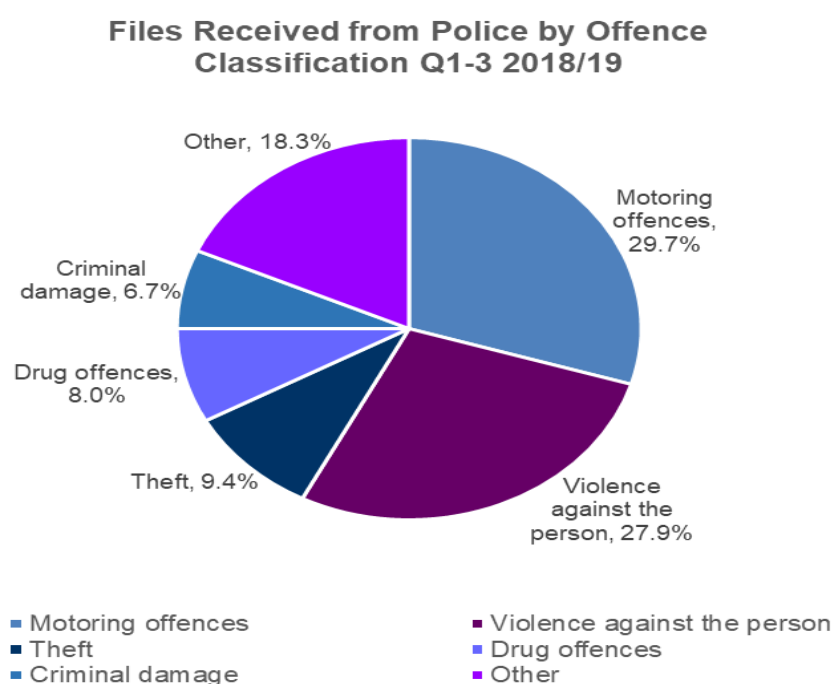
Figures quoted are for the first three quarters of the financial year, 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018, unless otherwise stated. This summary should be read together with the explanatory notes and user information provided (see pages 17 - 21).

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

- The PPS received 32,017 files during the first three quarters of 2018/19. This was an increase of 2.1% on the same period in 2017/18 (31,365).
- Just under half (48.0%) of all files received during the current period related to hybrid offences, 47.5% to summary offences and 4.5% to indictable offences.

Files Received from Police¹ by Offence Classification (Table 1b)

- During the first three quarters of this financial year, PPS received a total of 31,293 files from police. This represents a 2.3% increase on the previous financial year (30,591).
- In terms of files received by offence classification, the majority fell into two categories; 'motoring offences' (29.7%) and 'violence against the person' (27.9%).
- The offence classification that has shown the largest increase in the number of files received compared with the corresponding period in 2017/18 was 'violence against the person' (+463). The largest decrease in the number of files received was for 'motoring offences' (-724). The largest percentage increase was for 'drugs offences' (+10.7%), while 'motoring offences' had the largest percentage decrease in files received (-7.2%).



The 'Other' category consists of 'Other Miscellaneous offences' 5.3%, 'Public order' 4.4%, 'Sexual offences' 3.5%, 'Burglary' 1.9%, 'Possession of weapon' 1.7%, 'Fraud and forgery' 1.1% and 'Robbery' 0.3%.

¹ 'Police' includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast/Londonderry Harbour Police and British Transport Police.

Files Submitted to PPS by Other Departments / Agencies (Table 1c)²

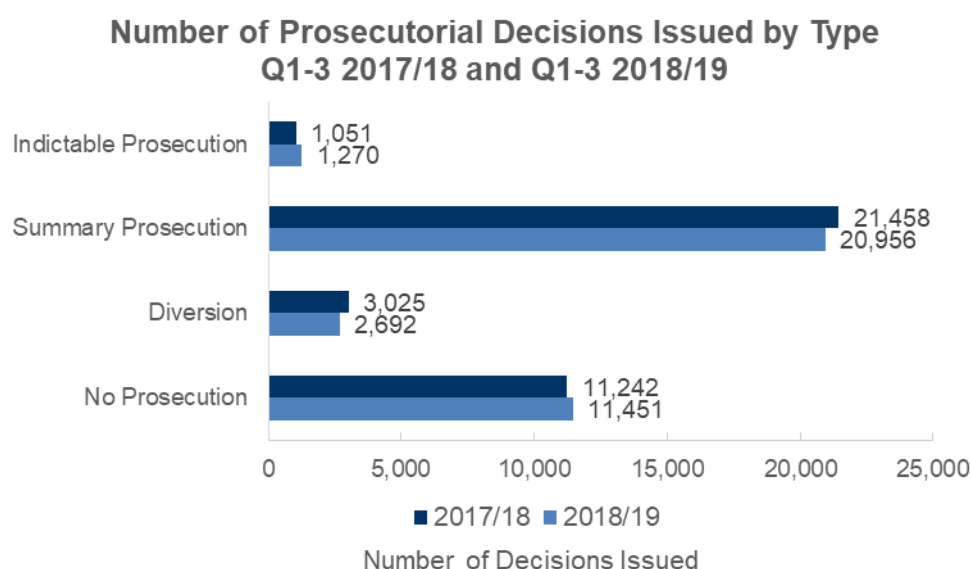
- A total of 724 files were submitted to PPS by departments and agencies during the first nine months of 2018/19, representing a 6.5% decrease on 2017/18 (774).
- During this period, the majority of files were submitted either by the Driver and Vehicle Agency (48.2%) or the Department for Communities (22.2%).

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

- A total of 20,396 information requests were submitted to police during the first three quarters of 2018/19, an increase of 3.3% on the same period in the previous financial year (19,748).
- More than half of all requests submitted during the current period were 'Post Decision Information Requests' (57.9%), 27.9% were 'Decision Information Requests' and 14.0% were 'Full File Requests'.

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

- During the first three quarters of 2018/19, 36,369 prosecutorial decisions were issued by the PPS, a small decrease of 1.1% on the total issued during the corresponding period in 2017/18 (36,776).
- The evidential Test for Prosecution was met in the majority of cases considered by public prosecutors during the current period. Of the 36,369 decisions issued, 68.5% were for prosecution (22,226) or for diversion from the courts (2,692). This was slightly lower than 2017/18 (69.4%).
- Comparing the first three quarters of 2018/19 with the same period of 2017/18, there was a 1.3% decrease in the number of decisions to prosecute. This is comprised of a 20.8% increase in indictable prosecution decisions while summary prosecution decisions decreased by 2.3%. The number of diversionary decisions fell by 11.0% while no prosecution decisions increased by 1.9%.



² Please note that Table 1c has been revised to include all files submitted to the Public Prosecution Service from Departments or Agencies (i.e. excluding Police – see Table 1b) rather than files submitted to Departmental section only. This change was made as of the 'Statistical Bulletin Quarters 1-3 2018/19'. Previously published figures for Quarters 1-3 2017/18 have been revised to reflect this change.

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

- Of the 11,451 no prosecution decisions issued during the first three quarters of 2018/19, 97.0% did not pass the evidential test. The remaining 3.0% did not pass the public interest test.

Average Days Required³ 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 has increased during the current period to 244 days, up from 189 days in the equivalent period in 2017/18.
- During the first three quarters of the year, summary prosecution decisions required an average of 26 days, one day less than the previous financial year (27).
- The time taken for diversionary decisions has decreased across all types of diversions issued. Cautions required an average of 24 days (25 days in the first three quarters of 2017/18), informed warnings 16 days (20 days in the first three quarters of 2017/18) and youth conferences 14 days (16 days in the first three quarters of 2017/18).

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

- A total of 23,345 summonses were issued in police cases during the April - December 2018/19, a decrease of 1.8% on the same period in 2017/18 (23,769). Comparing the first three quarters of 2018/19 with the first three quarters of 2017/18, the number of summonses issued via postal service decreased by 5.1% while those issued via personal service increased by 3.0%.
- During this period 56.8% of summonses issued were served on the defendant by post (58.8% in the first three quarters of 2017/18) and the remainder (43.2%) via personal service by police (41.2% in the first three quarters of 2017/18).

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

- During the first three quarters of 2018/19, 1,010 defendants were dealt with in the Crown Court. This was a decrease of 10.5% on the corresponding period of 2017/18 (1,128).
- Of these defendants, 83.9% were convicted and 15.4% were acquitted.
- At 83.9%, the conviction rate represents a 1.8 percentage point decrease on the corresponding period of 2017/18 (85.6%).

³ The average figures are based on calendar days and include the time taken for the police to respond to PPS decision information requests. For indictable prosecution decisions, PPS case preparation time is also included (see explanatory notes, page 19).

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

- A total of 21,994 defendants were dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts during the first three quarters of 2018/19, an increase of 5.5% on the first three quarters of 2017/18 (20,841).
- Of the defendants dealt with during the current period, 81.3% were convicted (79.7% in the same period in 2017/18), 6.1% were acquitted (6.0% in the first three quarters of 2017/18) and 12.6% had an 'other' outcome (14.3% in the same period in 2017/18).
- At 81.3%, the conviction rate has increased by 1.6 percentage points from the first three quarters of 2017/18 (79.7%).

Defendants Dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts by Outcome Q1-3 2018/19

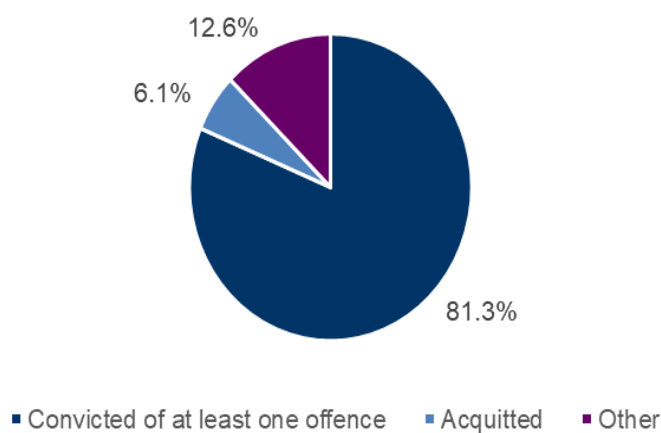


Table 1a: Files Received by File Type and PPS Region / Function

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		PPS Region / Function ²					Number of files
Quarters	File Type ³	Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS	
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-3 2018/19	Indictable	547	403	464	23	1,437	
	Hybrid	8,671	5,972	479	250	15,372	
	Summary	7,561	7,233	5	409	15,208	
	All Files	16,779	13,608	948	682	32,017	
Q1-3 2017/18	Indictable	488	409	496	10	1,403	
	Hybrid	7,571	5,695	614	418	14,298	
	Summary	8,154	7,224	3	283	15,664	
	All Files	16,213	13,328	1,113	711	31,365	
% Change (Files Received)							
Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		3.5%	2.1%	-14.8%	-4.1%	2.1%	

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ See explanatory notes, page 17.

Table 1b: Files Received from Police by Offence Classification

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

Offence Classification ^{2,3}	Number of files					
	Q1-3 2018/19		Q1-3 2017/18		Change (Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Motoring offences	9,282	29.7%	10,006	32.7%	-724	-7.2%
Violence against the person	8,716	27.9%	8,253	27.0%	463	5.6%
Theft	2,953	9.4%	2,699	8.8%	254	9.4%
Drugs offences	2,511	8.0%	2,268	7.4%	243	10.7%
Criminal damage	2,106	6.7%	1,915	6.3%	191	10.0%
Public order	1,387	4.4%	1,387	4.5%	0	0.0%
Sexual offences	1,085	3.5%	1,070	3.5%	15	1.4%
Burglary	598	1.9%	545	1.8%	53	9.7%
Possession of weapons	536	1.7%	487	1.6%	49	10.1%
Fraud and forgery	355	1.1%	328	1.1%	27	8.2%
Robbery	95	0.3%	100	0.3%	-5	-5.0%
Other miscellaneous offences	1,669	5.3%	1,533	5.0%	136	8.9%
All Files	31,293		30,591		702	2.3%

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

² A review of offence classifications has been conducted to ensure continued alignment with the Department of Justice Northern Ireland. Therefore, some revisions have been made to previously published figures for Q1-3 2017-18. For example, miscellaneous sexual offences have been moved from 'Sexual offences' to 'Other miscellaneous offences.'

³ See explanatory notes, page 17.

Table 1c: Files Submitted to PPS by Other Departments / Agencies ⁴

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

Department / Agency	Number of files					
	Q1-3 2018/19		Q1-3 2017/18		Change (Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19)	
	Number	% Share	Number	% Share	Number	% Change
Driver and Vehicle Agency	349	48.2%	244	31.5%	105	43.0%
Department for Communities	161	22.2%	340	43.9%	-179	-52.6%
Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland	83	11.5%	71	9.2%	12	16.9%
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs ²	27	3.7%	21	2.7%	6	N/A
British Airports Authorities	23	3.2%	23	3.0%	0	N/A
NI Environment Agency	21	2.9%	15	1.9%	6	N/A
NI Statistical Research Agency	19	2.6%	12	1.6%	7	N/A
HM Revenue and Customs	11	1.5%	14	1.8%	-3	N/A
Child Maintenance Service	9	1.2%	18	2.3%	-9	N/A
Companies House	7	1.0%	1	0.1%	6	N/A
Health and Safety Executive	7	1.0%	6	0.8%	1	N/A
Department for the Economy	4	0.6%	5	0.6%	-1	N/A
Other	3	0.4%	4	0.5%	-1	N/A
All Departments / Agencies	724		774		-50	-6.5%

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

² Figures for NI Environment Agency are presented separately.

³ Some percentage changes are stated as 'N/A' due to base number being too small to allow for the calculation of a percentage.

⁴ Please note that Table 1c has been revised to include all files submitted to the Public Prosecution Service from Departments or Agencies (i.e. excluding Police – see Table 1b) rather than files submitted to Departmental section only. This change was made as of the 'Statistical Bulletin Quarters 1-3 2018/19'. Previously published figures for Quarters 1-3 2017/18 have been revised to reflect this change. See explanatory notes, page 17.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		PPS Region / Function ²					Number of requests
Quarters	Request Type ³	Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS	
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
Q1-3 2018/19	Full File Request	1,366	1,391	90	13	2,860	
	Decision Information Request	1,935	3,244	453	61	5,693	
	Post Decision Information Request	5,916	5,406	469	17	11,808	
	No Decision	7	9	18	1	35	
	All Requests Submitted	9,224	10,050	1,030	92	20,396	
Q1-3 2017/18	Full File Request	1,198	1,317	141	6	2,662	
	Decision Information Request	2,223	3,194	432	45	5,894	
	Post Decision Information Request	5,503	5,210	405	40	11,158	
	No Decision	4	23	7	0	34	
	All Requests Submitted	8,928	9,744	985	91	19,748	
% Change (Requests Submitted)							
Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		3.3%	3.1%	4.6%	1.1%	3.3%	

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ See explanatory notes, page 18.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

Number of persons (decisions issued)

Quarters	Type of Decision ³	PPS Region / Function ²				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2018/19	<i>Indictable prosecution</i>	519	406	189	156	1,270
	<i>Summary prosecution</i>	11,174	9,137	62	583	20,956
	Total Prosecution	11,693	9,543	251	739	22,226
	<i>Caution</i>	823	796	*	*	1,639
	<i>Informed warning</i>	79	128	*	*	211
	<i>Youth conference</i>	243	175	*	*	423
	<i>Other</i>	151	268	*	*	419
	Total Diversion	1,296	1,367	22	7	2,692
	No Prosecution	5,740	4,717	848	146	11,451
	All Decisions Issued	18,729	15,627	1,121	892	36,369
Q1-3 2017/18	<i>Indictable prosecution</i>	455	346	148	102	1,051
	<i>Summary prosecution</i>	11,608	9,025	111	714	21,458
	Total Prosecution	12,063	9,371	259	816	22,509
	<i>Caution</i>	917	888	*	*	1,823
	<i>Informed warning</i>	92	165	*	*	258
	<i>Youth conference</i>	268	191	*	*	463
	<i>Other</i>	181	300	*	*	481
	Total Diversion	1,458	1,544	19	4	3,025
	No Prosecution	5,426	4,910	754	152	11,242
	All Decisions Issued	18,947	15,825	1,032	972	36,776
% Change (Decisions Issued)						
Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		-1.2%	-1.3%	8.6%	-8.2%	-1.1%

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ See explanatory notes, page 18.

“*” refers to a category where a detailed breakdown cannot be provided due to small numbers involved.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		Number of persons (decisions issued)				
		PPS Region / Function ²				
Quarters	Reason for no prosecution ³	Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
		Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2018/19	Did not pass the evidential test	5,518	4,619	833	141	11,111
	Did not pass the public interest test	222	98	15	5	340
	All no prosecution decisions	5,740	4,717	848	146	11,451
Q1-3 2017/18	Did not pass the evidential test	5,152	4,834	737	147	10,870
	Did not pass the public interest test	274	76	17	5	372
	All no prosecution decisions	5,426	4,910	754	152	11,242
% Change (No prosecution decisions issued)						
Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		5.8%	-3.9%	12.5%	-3.9%	1.9%

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section

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 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

			Average (calendar) days ²
Quarters	Type of Decision ³		All Regions
Q1-3 2018/19	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	244
		Summary prosecution	26
	Diversion	Caution	24
		Informed warning	16
		Youth conference	14
		Other	22
	No Prosecution		48
Q1-3 2017/18	Prosecution	Indictable prosecution	189
		Summary prosecution	27
	Diversion	Caution	25
		Informed warning	20
		Youth conference	16
		Other	35
	No Prosecution		53

¹ 'Quarter' refers to the financial year; i.e. Quarters 1-3 (Q1-3) reflects 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 19).

³ See explanatory notes, page 19.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		Number of summonses			
		PPS Region ²			
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	All Regions
Quarters	Service Method ³	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2018/19	Postal Service	6,739	6,482	36	13,257
	Personal Service	6,781	3,145	162	10,088
	All Summonses	13,520	9,627	198	23,345
Q1-3 2017/18	Postal Service	7,631	6,290	50	13,971
	Personal Service	6,745	2,969	84	9,798
	All Summonses	14,376	9,259	134	23,769
% Change (Summonses Issued)					
Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		-6.0%	4.0%	47.8%	-1.8%

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ See explanatory notes, page 19.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		Number of persons (defendants)				
		PPS Region / Function ²				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Outcome ³	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2018/19	Convicted of at least one offence	365	317	87	78	847
	Acquitted	40	54	38	24	156
	Other	0	4	3	0	7
	All defendants	405	375	128	102	1,010
	Conviction Rate (%) ³	90.1%	84.5%	68.0%	76.5%	83.9%
Q1-3 2017/18	Convicted of at least one offence	500	283	79	104	966
	Acquitted	59	47	42	9	157
	Other	3	1	0	1	5
	All defendants	562	331	121	114	1,128
	Conviction Rate (%) ³	89.0%	85.5%	65.3%	91.2%	85.6%
% Change (Defendants dealt with) Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		-27.9%	13.3%	5.8%	-10.5%	-10.5%

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ See explanatory notes, page 19.

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

Quarters 1-3 2017/18 and Quarters 1-3 2018/19 ¹

		Number of persons (defendants)				
		PPS Region / Function ²				
		Belfast and Eastern	Western and Southern	Serious Crime Unit	Headquarters	All PPS
Quarters	Outcome ³	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
Q1-3 2018/19	Convicted of at least one offence	9,719	7,654	69	448	17,890
	Acquitted	816	487	15	20	1,338
	Other	1,489	1,152	27	98	2,766
	All defendants	12,024	9,293	111	566	21,994
	Conviction Rate (%) ³	80.8%	82.4%	62.2%	79.2%	81.3%
Q1-3 2017/18	Convicted of at least one offence	8,909	7,125	43	536	16,613
	Acquitted	781	448	9	20	1,258
	Other	1,633	1,196	36	105	2,970
	All defendants	11,323	8,769	88	661	20,841
	Conviction Rate (%) ³	78.7%	81.3%	48.9%	81.1%	79.7%
% Change (Defendants dealt with) Q1-3 2017/18 to Q1-3 2018/19		6.2%	6.0%	26.1%	-14.4%	5.5%

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

² The Serious Crime Unit was established in January 2016. 'Headquarters' includes Central Casework Section and Fraud and Departmental Section.

³ 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 for Northern Ireland 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 for Northern Ireland 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.

In January 2019 a review of Offence Classifications was undertaken to ensure continued alignment with Department of Justice Northern Ireland. As a result, some revisions were made to the Offence Classifications in the Statistical publication for Q1-3 2018-19. For example, miscellaneous sexual offences have been moved from 'Sexual offences' to 'Other miscellaneous offences'. Previously published figures for Q1-3 2017-18 were also revised in this bulletin to reflect these changes. It should be noted that data published prior to 2017/18 will not be directly comparable with the updated 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 for Northern Ireland are included in Table 1c.

Table 1c

As of 'Statistical Bulletin Quarters 1-3 2018/19' Table 1c was amended to include all files submitted to the Public Prosecution Service from Departments or Agencies (excluding Police) rather than files submitted to Departmental section only. Previously published figures for Quarters 1-3 2017/18 were

revised in this bulletin to reflect this change. Therefore, data published prior to 2017/18 will not be directly comparable.

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.
- An *informed warning* is also a formal reprimand administered by police and is recorded on a person's criminal record.
- 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.
- '*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.

Rounding conventions

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and may not always sum to 100%. Where a base number is less than 50, percentages are not provided.

Disclosure control

Where small numbers (less than 3) within the tables have the potential to disclose sensitive information, disclosure controls have been applied and numbers less than three have been suppressed (see notes to individual tables).

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 2018 to 31 March 2019, will be published on 13 June 2019.

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