

serving the community  
through the administration  
of justice

The Northern Ireland Court Service

# Customer Service Standards

Standards for Key Users

[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Standards for Key Users

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Do you have a suggestion to make?  
Tell us what you think of our standards.  
We will monitor our performance against the service standards and publish the results.  
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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Defendants Attending Court

- If you receive a fine you will receive written notification within 2 working days of the date of the decision.
- If you apply for an extension of time within which to pay a fine, you will be given written notification within 4 working days of a decision being made on your application.
- If an order is imposed for example, Custody Probation Order or Community Orders, a copy will be sent to the Probation Board within 4 days of the date of the hearing.

In addition to the above service standards, you can also expect that –

- You are entitled to be present in court when your case is called. However, if you fail to appear, your case may be dealt with in your absence;
- If you are called to give evidence the court clerk will offer you the choice of either taking an oath or making an affirmation (this is explained in the leaflet "Attending as a Defendant in a Criminal Court");
- Defendants under 18 will be treated in accordance with Youth Court Guidelines. Details of these guidelines can be found on the website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk).

### How you can help us to help you

Please let us know if you have any particular needs in relation to your attendance at court in advance, so that we can do our best to put them in place.

Please let us know if you have changed address so that we can update your details and send out orders to the correct address.

Let us know if you have a particular requirement in relation to the swearing of an oath so that the Court Clerk can have the relevant books on oath wording ready.

Let us know if you are not happy with the standard of the premises.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Jurors

- You will receive a Jury Summons at least 21 days before your first date of attendance.
- All written and e-mail requests for excusal from jury service will be considered and replied to within 3 working days.
- Requests can also be e-mailed to the court office which issued the Jury Summons your e-mail will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt.
- You can expect to receive payment for expenses 10 days after you have submitted your claim correctly. We aim to process 95% of claims in this timeframe.

In addition to the above service standards, you can also expect that –

### Calling you for Jury Service

- Additional information will accompany your Jury Summons on:
  - financial allowances;
  - exemption from jury service;
  - general information on the courthouse you will be attending;
- You will be able to confirm when your attendance is next required by either phoning the jury information line after 5.00pm each day or by accessing the NI Court Service website at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk).

### When you come to court

- You will be directed to the Jury Assembly Area or courtroom;
- A court official will introduce themselves to you and will be available to deal with any queries you have;
- On the first day of service, you will be shown a jury information video and afterwards you can ask a court official any questions you have;
- Court staff will treat you with courtesy and give prompt and accurate information on request;
- Before leaving the court, you will be told how to obtain information of when you will next be required to attend court. If you are unsure, please ask a court official;
- Forms for comments or complaints will be available in the Jury Assembly Area and in each of the jury retiring rooms.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Jurors

### During a trial

If you are serving on a jury:

- You will be met on arrival at court by a jury keeper and will be accompanied to a jury retiring room;
- Jury retiring rooms will be clean, heated, well-lit and comfortable;
- Refreshment facilities will be available in all jury retiring rooms;
- You will be given lunch which will cater for those with special dietary requirements;
- You will be accompanied when inside the court building;
- You can send a note or ask to speak to the Judge if there is something about the trial you are particularly concerned about. Although you may not discuss any aspect of the case with the Jury keeper, you can ask any general questions or tell them any concerns you might have;
- You will be told by the Judge when you need to come back or you can get this information by contacting the jury information line after 5.00pm each day, or by accessing the NI Court Service website at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk).

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## Legal Profession

- Fees and documents sent in by post (with the exception of Default Decrees) will be processed and the endorsed documents returned to you within 4 working days.
- Requests for copy court orders will be processed in 4 days. If not, we will provide you with an explanation for the delay.

In addition to the above service standards, you can also expect that –

- A designated solicitor and barrister room will be provided in all main court venues, which will be clean, heated, well lit, and comfortable;
- Courtrooms will be open 15 minutes prior to the commencement of court;
- The court clerk will be available in court 15 minutes before the court commences to liaise with members of the legal profession regarding court business;
- Staff at the court office will assist with any queries.

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## Witnesses and vulnerable victims and intimidated witnesses

The Northern Ireland Court Service understands that coming to court to give evidence can be a worrying and often traumatic experience. We aim to reduce those worries and trauma by providing victims and witnesses with clear information on the service they can expect from the Northern Ireland Court Service before and during court.

### Before attending court

- We can arrange for you to visit the courthouse before you come to give evidence and can send you an information leaflet (this can be arranged with the court manager or through Victim Support Northern Ireland). Alternatively the leaflet is available on the Court Service website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk).

### At court

- There will be supportive Court staff available to assist you;
- Information on case progression or disposal will be provided to witnesses on request.

### Additional Special Arrangements for vulnerable victims and intimidated witnesses

- We can arrange for you to access the building prior to other members of the public being permitted entry (before 9.30am);
- Cases may be listed at times to facilitate the witness;
- There will be special equipment available for use by witnesses e.g. screens, video links etc;
- A secure designated witness room will be made available;
- In Crown Court cases there may be the option of transferring the case to another court venue if the original venue poses a particular difficulty. You should raise such a difficulty with the party who has summonsed you as a witness.

Please note the Northern Ireland Court Service (NICtS) is not responsible for calling witnesses to court or for paying their expenses; the payment of any expenses should be referred to the party who has summonsed you as a witness.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## The Youth Court

We understand that coming to court can be worrying. We aim to reduce those worries by providing:

- An opportunity to visit the courthouse and view facilities and layout before you have to attend (you will need to contact the court manager to organise this);
- An information leaflet about the courthouse you are to attend and the Youth Court itself are available from the court office or from the Northern Ireland Court Service website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk).

### At the Youth Court

- Court lists will not contain your name or anything which may identify you;
- A notice will be clearly displayed on the court door to say who is allowed into the Youth Court;
- Separate waiting areas are available in all main court venues for youth courts;
- If you are a defendant - there will be a designated seating area in the courtroom for you and your parent or guardian. This will allow you to have a clear view of the court and to help you to understand what is happening to your case.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Small Claims

- Small claims application forms will be posted to you within 2 days of request.
- 90% of small claims applications which require a hearing date will be given one within 10 weeks of receiving a correctly completed application.
- 95% of decrees will issue within 4 days of court hearing.

In addition to the above service standards, you can also expect that -

### Before you come to court

- Each court office will have a supply of small claims application forms;
- A response to telephone queries from anyone involved in a Small Claims dispute will be made on the day of enquiry;
- Staff in court venues will help you by explaining the small claims process;
- Staff cannot provide legal advice; however they will help you complete the relevant forms on request;
- Anyone involved in a small claims dispute can visit the court house and view the courtroom before the hearing. Please contact the relevant court office.

### At court

- The hearing will be held in an informal environment.

### After court

- You will be provided with specific contact information including the direct dial telephone number and name of the member of staff who will either answer any query you may have about your case or direct your query to the most appropriate person.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Civil Processing Centre

- E-mails will be acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt.
- Requests for our online services will be activated within 24 hours from the time of request.
- Documents sent in by post for fee endorsement only, will be processed and the endorsed documents returned to you within 4 working days.
- Applications for decrees and orders will be processed and the resulting documents forwarded to you within 5 working days of the receipt of the correct documentation.
- Applications for Exemption or Remission of fees will be processed within 5 working days of receipt of the correct documentation.

In addition to the above service standards, you can also expect that –

- We will give advice about the county court administrative processes relating to small claims and civil bills, but not legal advice;
- We will only discuss specific details of a case with a party to the proceedings or their representative;
- Staff will help you complete the relevant forms on request.

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# NI Court Service Customer Standards

## Customer Service Centre

### Post Court

- Fine warrants will be issued within 10 working days of due date.
- Fines/maintenance payments will be processed on the day of receipt.
- All endorsement notifications and driving licences (if received by the Customer Service Centre from Court Offices) will be forwarded to DVLNI within 21 days from the date of the Court.

### Fixed Penalties

- Fixed Penalty notices received from the PSNI will be registered as fines and issued on the day they are received.

### Maintenance Payments

- Credit transfer spousal and child maintenance will be processed for payment on the day information is provided by Finance Branch.

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