

## Belfast Combined Courts

### Location

Belfast Combined Courts comprises three locations:

- **Laganside Courts** which houses Crown, County, Family Care and Magistrates Courts, Fixed Penalty Office, Civil Processing Centre and Fine Recovery Team
- **The Old Town Hall** which houses Youth Court, Family Proceedings and Domestic Courts
- **May's Chambers** which houses the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland.

**Laganside Courts** is situated in Oxford Street in the centre of Belfast opposite the Waterfront Hall and beside the Royal Courts of Justice. The **Old Town Hall Building** is located on the junction of Chichester Street and Victoria Street and the Coroners Service is at **May's Chambers**, 73 May Street. The Coroners court also sits at various locations throughout the Province including Belfast.

### Transport

All three locations are close to Central Railway Station and Laganside bus station at Donegall Quay which is one of the two city centre terminals for Ulsterbus. The other is in Glengall Street. At the moment, there is no link between the two terminals so the quickest route is along Great Victoria Street to Wellington Place, leading directly into Chichester Street which meets Victoria Street at its junction. Go straight ahead to Oxford Street. This is about a 15 minute walk. There is a taxi rank at the City Hall. The nearest Citybus stop to the court is in Oxford Street, just before the Waterfront Hall. The main terminus is around the City Hall area in Donegall Square.

For information about bus and rail timetables contact Translink on 028 9066 6630 or [www.translink.co.uk](http://www.translink.co.uk)

### Car parking

There is no public car parking at any of the three locations (there is some limited on-street parking at May Street).

However there are a number of car parks nearby e.g. Donegall Quay and Hilton Hotel. Average daily charges are about £7 to £10. It may be possible to make arrangements for Disabled Court Users if the Customer Service Officer is contacted at least 1 day in advance of planned attendance.

### Opening hours

The buildings are open from 9.00am. The offices are open to the public from 9.30am to 4.30pm. The courts generally start at 10.0am/10.30am and continue until the daily business is finished. Laganside Court office is open for fine or fixed penalty payments and any other business during lunch.

### Refreshments & other facilities

#### Laganside Courts

There is a cafe on the ground floor level in Laganside Courts. It offers a varied menu, hot and cold beverages and confectionery. There are also vending machines located on each court level.

**The Old Town Hall and May's Chambers** have vending machines which offer crisps and chocolate. If something more substantial is required, users are welcome to use the cafe in Laganside. There are a number of restaurants and coffee shops nearby.

#### Toilet facilities

There are public toilets on all levels in Laganside

There are public toilets on the ground floor in Old Town Hall

There are public toilets on the ground floor in Mays' Chambers

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### Phones and Photographic equipment

There are public phones available on all levels in Laganside Courts.

There is a public phone available on the ground floor in Old Townhall.

There is no public phone available in May's Chambers. If you require assistance, please contact a member of Resource Staff.

Care must be taken in the use of mobile phones whilst in the precincts of the court. It is prohibited to use any photographic or recording device within the court building and the area immediately surrounding it. Some mobile phones are capable of performing this function and therefore you are advised not to use mobile phones for this purpose whilst attending court. Mobile phones must be switched off before entering a courtroom.

Within Laganside Courts there is free remote internet connection for use with a laptop (available in Cafe Legal, Jury Lounge and Legal Representative Area 3rd Floor). This facility is available to anyone with a BT "Open Account".

### Note Taking in Court

Anyone wishing to take notes in court must obtain the judge's prior permission.

### What services are provided?

Photocopying facilities are available at the reception desk in Laganside Courts. This service does carry a charge. Language Line is available at the counter in Laganside Courts for non-English speaking customers. This facility allows a 3-way conversation to take place via a phone line, between the customer, and interpreter and the member of court staff. If you require this service and are attending court in Old Townhall or Coroners Service, staff at the public counter will be happy to direct you to Laganside Courts

### Help and information

The staff in the main offices on the ground floors will help with any queries you may have. There are notice boards and plasma screens outside each courtroom at Laganside which display lists of the daily business. If you require additional information or need to meet

someone on arrival, you can get help from either the reception desk or the Payments and Enquiries Office on the ground floor. This facility will be available from 9.30am each court day in Laganside Courts). If you have not already done so, you may wish to contact a solicitor before coming to court.

Please note that you must attend court at the time you have been given, although you may not be called until after this. If you feel you have been waiting too long, please contact a court official.

In Laganside Courts, talking information signs are available on levels 0, 2 and 4. Choice of languages includes English, Irish and Cantonese and Polish

There is also an information kiosk located in Cafe Legal on the ground floor where you can access Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service website and e-mail your comments.

### Do you have a disability or a special need?

If you have a disability or a special need, please contact the Customer Service Officer (for the building you are attending) who will provide you with information on the facilities available. For those with a hearing difficulty, necklaces are provided at Laganside to enable access to the Infrared hearing system facility. There is an induction loop system at the Old Town Hall.

### Giving Evidence

If you are aged 14 or over and have to give evidence in court, you will be required either to take a religious oath or 'affirm' that you will tell the truth. The court clerk will ask you which method you want to use, and invite you to repeat after them the appropriate words. A religious oath is a sworn promise to tell the truth and is made on a holy book. An affirmation is a declaration to tell the truth but it is not sworn on a holy book.

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### Court Witness Service

If you are a victim or witness for the prosecution, Victim Support Northern Ireland offers a Court Witness Service at all the Crown, Magistrates' and Youth courts.

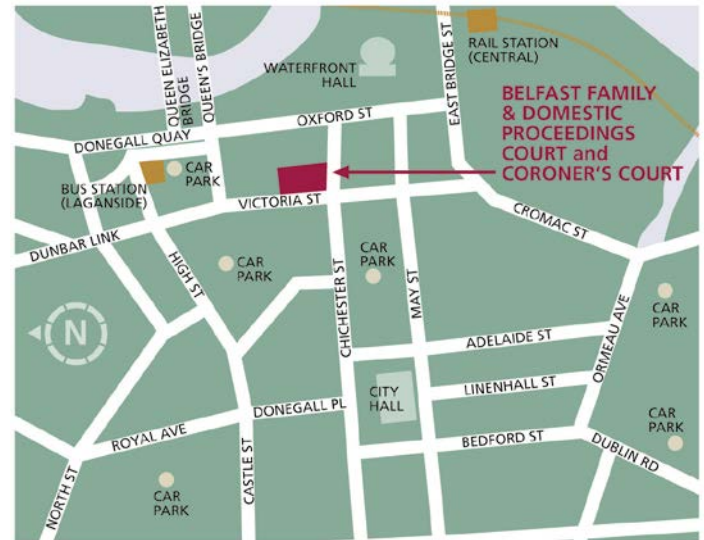
**Before the Trial:** opportunity to talk to someone; pre-trial familiarisation visit to court; information on court procedures

**During the Trial:** safe waiting area; liaison with court officers and legal representatives; arrangements for witnesses with special needs; accompanying witnesses into court

**After the Trial:** preparing victims for case outcome; encouraging continued contact with Victim Support Community Service; referral on to other agencies

### Witness Service

Laganside Court Witness Service:  
028 9023 2523



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### NSPCC Young Witness Service

The Young Witness service is a free, independent and confidential service provided by a team of social work staff and trained volunteers. We provide direct support, assistance and information to children and young people under the age of 18 who may have to give evidence for the Prosecution in criminal courts in Northern Ireland.

They provide support before, during and after trial including a pre-trial visit to the court and undertaking the role of accompanying adult in TV link cases. The service includes:

- Practical and emotional support to young witnesses and their families;
- Minimising the stress of giving evidence by ensuring young witnesses needs are met;
- Ensuring that onward referral to other agencies is organised if needed;
- Providing an advisory/consultancy role to other professionals working with young witnesses.

### NSPCC Young Witness Service

Contact details: - 028 9024 0847.

## Belfast Combined Courts

### Contact Information

For further information on Belfast Combined Courts please contact:  
Customer Service Officer  
Laganside Courts  
Oxford Street  
Belfast BT1 3LL

Telephone 028 9032 8594  
Fax 028 9031 0227  
Email: csmlaganside@courtsni.gov.uk

### Contact Information

For further information on Old Townhall Building please contact:  
Old Townhall Building  
Victoria Street  
Belfast BT1 3FA

Telephone 028 9072 4519/028 9072 8211  
Facsimile 028 9072 4555

Email: BelfastFamily&Domestic@courtsni.gov.uk

### Contact Information

For further information on Coroners Service please contact:  
Customer Service Officer  
May's Chambers,  
73 May Street  
Belfast BT1 3JL

Telephone 028 9044 6800  
Facsimile 028 9044 6801

Email: coronersoffice@courtsni.gov.uk  
Website: www.coronersni.gov.uk

This information sheet will be made available in a range of alternative formats. Requests for alternative formats should be made to Communications Group. For further information on other courthouses please contact:

NI Courts and Tribunals Service  
Communications Group  
Laganside House,  
Oxford Street,  
Belfast BT1 3LA

Telephone: 028 9032 8594  
Facsimile: 028 9072 8942  
Email: communicationsgroup@courtsni.gov.uk  
www.courtsni.gov.uk

**The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to improving its quality of service to all court users. By making comments about our services, you enable us to improve them. By making a complaint, you enable us to put things right.**