

PRESS RELEASE
Thursday 3rd April 2008



Young legal eagles appear at Laganside Courts!
Magistrates' Court Mock Trial Competition

Laganside Courts will be taken over by almost 100 young legal eagles on Saturday 5th April in a bid to become this year's winner of the Northern Ireland heat of this national competition.

The young people aged 12 to 14 years take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, magistrates and court staff to act out a carefully developed criminal case. The teams from schools right across Northern Ireland have been busily preparing their defence and prosecutions skills and are now going to have their day in court.

Speaking about the event Eric Strain, Business Manager at Laganside Courts said;

'This event is a corner stone of the Court Service's Outreach programme which provides students with an excellent opportunity to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the justice system as well as many important life skills. '

The teams compete against each other in a real courtroom, with one team prosecuting and the other defending all in front of a Resident Magistrate and legal professionals who are judging their performances. The young people take their parts very seriously even getting dressed in business suits to get into their roles, giving the competition the atmosphere of a real court experience.

The winning team will get the chance to take part in the National Final on the 21st of June 2008 in Leeds Magistrates' Court.

Ends

Notes to Editor

1. The schools taking part are:
 - Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch
 - Bloomfield Collegiate, Belfast
 - Christian Brothers Grammar, Omagh
 - Foyle and Londonderry College, Londonderry
 - Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast
 - Limavady Grammar, Limavady
 - Oakgrove Integrated College, Londonderry
 - St Patrick's High School, Keady

2. The Magistrates' Court Mock Trial Competition is organised by the Citizenship Foundation in partnership with the Magistrates' Association and sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, Addleshaw Goddard and Wilkinson. Now in its 14th successful year, the Magistrates' Court Mock Trial Competition gives young people an exciting and innovative opportunity to discover how and why laws are made. Each year it involves 4,500 young people throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and 800 magistrates and other legal professionals.

3. More information can be found at www.courtsni.gov.uk about the Court Service's Outreach programme.

For any further information contact

**The Communications Group
Northern Ireland Court Service
Windsor House
9-15 Bedford Street
BELFAST
BT2 7LT
Telephone: 028 9032 8594
Fax : 028 9041 2390**

Email: communicationsgroup@courtsni.gov.uk