

serving the community  
through the administration  
of justice

Northern Ireland Court Service

# Annual Report 2007 - 2008

Northern Ireland Court Service  
[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

Should you require any further information about the Court Service please visit our Website at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk) or Alternatively contact us at our Information Centre.

This document will be made available in a wide range of alternative formats. Requests for alternative formats should be made to the Information Centre.

From November 2008 we will be relocating to the following address;  
Laganside House,  
23-27 Oxford Street,  
Belfast,  
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Northern Ireland Court Service

# Annual Report

2007 - 2008

Annual report presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor  
and Secretary of State for Justice in pursuance of section 68A of  
the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978



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# Foreword

by the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP,  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice



**The Rt Hon Jack Straw MP**  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State  
for Justice

I am pleased to be able to lay this report before both Houses of Parliament as a record of the performance and effectiveness of the court system in Northern Ireland.

As Lord Chancellor I am accountable for ensuring that there is an efficient and effective system to support the business of the Supreme Court, County Courts, Magistrates' Courts and Coroners' Courts in Northern Ireland.

It was a pleasure to be able to return to Northern Ireland this September to attend the opening of the new Legal Year.

During my visit, I had the opportunity to meet a number of staff at Laganside Courts and to see at first hand the excellent work they do to support the courts and the justice system.

The Northern Ireland Court Service has been at the cutting edge of court technology and has delivered a highly successful court based IT system 'ICOS' (Integrated Court Operations System) which has transformed the way court business is transacted in Northern Ireland.

I am confident that the Court Service will continue to play an important role in the justice system and continue to deliver high quality services to the public of Northern Ireland in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Jack Straw'.

Jack Straw MP  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State



# Introduction





Introduction



# Introduction

## by the Director of the Northern Ireland Court Service

The 2007–2008 business year has seen some very significant developments in the work of the Northern Ireland Court Service. It has been a year in which we have been able to test our new ICT business platform – the Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS) – to the full, with excellent results. ICOS now supports all court administrative processes in the civil, criminal and family courts. It allows us to manage cases electronically and to redesign how pre-court and post-court administrative activity is organised. The challenge for the next few years will be to use ICOS to innovate and not simply to automate court business.

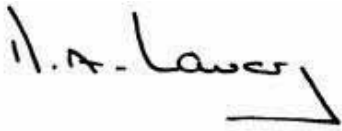
ICOS has allowed us to introduce a number of Service Centres which handle “back office” administration for Northern Ireland’s courts. Our Service Centre in Londonderry handles all jury administration for Northern Ireland. The Service Centre in Derry also processes all payments received by the Court Service. In Belfast, our Civil Processing Centre handles the pre-court initiation of all County Court civil cases irrespective of where the case will eventually be heard. We plan to build on these models to modernise how we provide administrative support for the court system in Northern Ireland.

ICOS has been designed to link seamlessly into the new Causeway ICT platform for the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice system. Once up and running later this year, Causeway will provide a ‘paperless’ information exchange between all of the criminal justice organisations in Northern Ireland. It will allow cases to be transferred electronically between the Police Service, the Forensic Science Agency, the Public Prosecution Service, the Prison Service, the Probation Service and the Court Service. The effect will be to speed up the processing of case-related information and improve the efficiency of the administration of justice.

Work has continued during the year to pave the way for the Court Service assuming administrative responsibility for Northern Ireland’s tribunals. The Northern Ireland Executive has decided that the Court Service should assume responsibility for providing administrative support for all tribunals. This will allow the Court Service to become a unified Courts and Tribunals Service.

Finally, we have published our new Corporate Plan for 2008/09 to 2010/11 setting out our key priorities for the

next three years. In these future years, as in the 2007/08 business year, our priority will be to continue to achieve a high standard of professionalism while 'Serving the Community Through the Administration of Justice'.



**David A. Lavery**

Director, Northern Ireland Court Service



David A. Lavery

Who We Are



# Who We Are





Who We Are



## Who We Are



Laganside House

The Northern Ireland Court Service is the Lord Chancellor's department in Northern Ireland. It is an independent Civil Service in its own right. Its role is to –

- provide administrative support for the Northern Ireland courts, i.e. the Supreme Court (Court of Appeal, High Court and Crown Court), the county courts, magistrates' courts and coroners' courts;
- provide administrative support for tribunals;
- enforce civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office; and

- support the Lord Chancellor in discharging his ministerial responsibilities in Northern Ireland including responsibility for judicial appointments and legal aid.

The Director of the Court Service, is Head of Department and Principal Accounting Officer. He is supported by a Management Board responsible for the following business areas –

- Court Operations
- Tribunal Reform
- Public Funded Legal Services
- Policy and Legislation; and
- Finance.

An organisational structure for the department is attached at **Annex A**.

## Court Operations



**Jacqui Durkin**  
Head of Court Operations

Court Operations is responsible for –

- providing administrative support for criminal, civil and family court business and the Coroners Service;
- the Enforcement of Judgments Office which provides a centralised service for the enforcement of civil court judgments;
- business modernisation;
- customer service improvement;
- judicial support and liaison, including sponsorship of the NI Judicial Appointments Commission; and
- business support functions including Human Resources.

## Tribunal Reform



**Siobhan Broderick**  
Head of Tribunal Reform

Tribunal Reform is responsible for –

- the delivery of the tribunal reform programme to achieve a unified tribunals service;
- the efficient running of existing tribunals; and
- the establishment of new tribunals.

## Public Funded Legal Services



**Paul Andrews**  
Head of Public Funded  
Legal Services

Public Funded Legal Services is responsible for –

- sponsorship of the NI Legal Services Commission;
- reform of public funded legal services in partnership with the NI Legal Services Commission; and
- formulating and implementing legal aid policy.

## Finance Division



**David Thompson**  
Head of Finance Division

Finance Division is responsible for –

- the management and oversight of the department's finances;
- financial oversight of the NDPB sponsorship arrangements with the NI Legal Services Commission and the NI Judicial Appointments Commission;
- the management and oversight of the department's capital investment strategy including the court estate;
- delivery of a Shared Services Programme;
- procurement services;
- Audit and Risk management; and
- the Court Funds Office

## Policy and Legislation



**Laurene McAlpine**  
Head of Civil Policy



**Geraldine Fee**  
Head of Criminal Policy

Policy and Legislation is responsible for –

- advising the Lord Chancellor on the policy and legislative framework within which the Northern Ireland courts operate;
- preparing legislation for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible in Northern Ireland;
- providing legal advice to the Court Service;
- providing support to the Director on the planning for devolution; and
- providing the secretariat to Court Rules Committees.

## Our Ministers

The Court Service is accountable to Parliament at Westminster through the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice at the Ministry of Justice, the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP. The Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, the Rt Hon David Hanson MP, has day to day responsibility for the courts in Northern Ireland.



The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP and the Rt Hon David Hanson MP meet staff at Laganside Courts



# Corporate Aims and Values

# Organisational Aims and Values

## Our Organisational Aim is –

‘Serving the Community through the Administration of Justice’

## Organisational Values

We aim, at all times, to demonstrate the following organisational values –

### **Integrity**

to interact with our customers with the highest degree of integrity, promoting an atmosphere of honesty and trust

### **Openness**

to undertake our work in an open and transparent manner

### **Professionalism**

to conduct our business to the highest standards

### **Accountability**

to be responsible for delivering a high quality service to the public

### **Fairness**

to treat everyone fairly

We have incorporated our Organisational Values into our performance management system for our staff so that we can continuously measure the way in which we demonstrate our values.

How We Are  
Structured



How We Are  
Structured





How We Are Structured



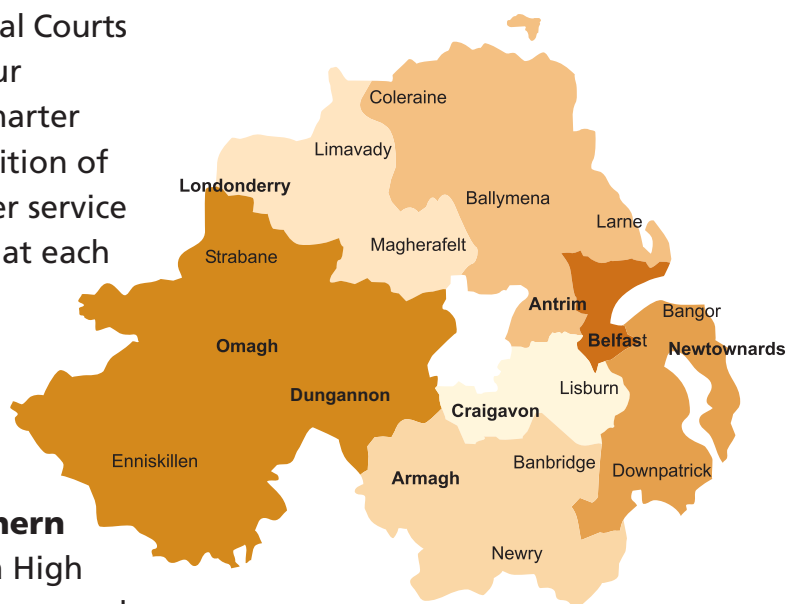
## How We Are Structured

There are 21 courthouses across Northern Ireland, the largest being Laganside Courts and the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. All of our courthouses have received Charter Mark accreditation in recognition of the high standard of customer service being provided to the public at each of these venues.

The Court Service is also responsible for the administration of the **Coroners Service for Northern Ireland** which is headed by a High Court Judge as Presiding Coroner and comprises a full-time coroners judiciary. The Coroners Service includes a number of 'Coroners Liaison Officers' who support bereaved families and liaise with the other agencies involved in death investigation and certification.

While our core business is the provision of administrative support for the courts in Northern Ireland, we are also responsible for –

- the **Enforcement of Judgments Office** (EJO) – which provides a centralised service for the enforcement of civil court judgments;



- the **Court Funds Office** – which manages funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients;
- a number of **tribunals** including – the Office of the Social Security and Child Support Commissioners and Pension Appeals Tribunal, the Traffic Penalty Tribunal, the NI Valuation Tribunal and the Criminal Injury Compensation Appeal Panel for Northern Ireland.

## Our Staffing and Resources

### Staffing

The Court Service staff complement for 2007/08 was 747 posts, the majority of which are in front line services. We operate a number of family friendly policies including a range of flexible working patterns to accommodate those with caring and other responsibilities. An accredited Investors in People employer, we have adopted a range of policies and initiatives to support the development of our staff, in particular an extensive NVQ programme aimed at administrative and managerial staff. 103 of our staff have received NVQ accreditation in a range of areas including Customer Service, Business Administration and Health and Safety.

The Court Service has made a public commitment to achieve a workforce reflective of the community we serve. We have published a three-year Employment Equality Plan developed in consultation with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Further information on our staff complement can be found at **Annex B**.

### Resources

We receive our funding from Parliament and our resources for 2007/08 were –

	<b>2007/08</b> <b>£m</b>
Resource total	138.4
Near Cash	16.0
Non Cash	122.4
Capital	1.7

We have developed a financial strategy to help us manage our spending allocation for the next three years (the CSR07 spending period) and we have established a Capital Strategy Investment Board to oversee the management of our capital funding.

Further details of our resources and how they were deployed during 2007/08 can be found at **Annex C**. The Court Service also produces detailed Resource Accounts and a copy of these can be found on our website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

## Sponsorship Role

The Court Service is the sponsor department for two Non Departmental Public Bodies – the **Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission** and the **Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission**.

The NI Legal Services Commission was established in November 2003 and is responsible for the provision of publicly funded legal services in Northern Ireland under the Legal Aid Scheme.

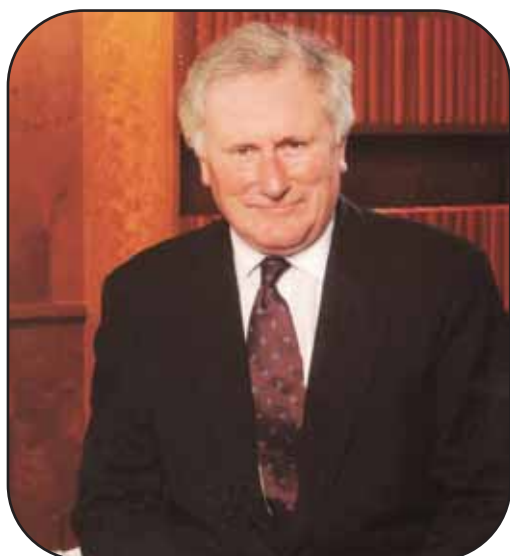
The NI Judicial Appointments Commission was established in June 2005 and is responsible for judicial appointments up to and including High Court Judge.

The Legal Services Commission and the Judicial Appointments Commission publish their own Annual Reports and Corporate Plans. Their websites can be found at [www.nilsc.org](http://www.nilsc.org) (NI Legal Services Commission) and [www.nijac.org](http://www.nijac.org) (NI Judicial Appointments Commission).



## Support for the NI Judiciary

The Court Service provides administrative support for the Northern Ireland judiciary. There are 68 full-time members of the judiciary across the various judicial tiers. In addition there are 239 Lay Magistrates and panels of part-time deputy judges.



**Sir Brian Kerr**  
Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland

- dealing with complaints against members of the judiciary. The Code of Practice on Complaints and Protocol on Judicial Discipline are published on the Court Service website;
- maintaining arrangements for the welfare, training and guidance of the judiciary;
- representing the views of the Northern Ireland judiciary to Parliament and to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Lord Chief Justice is supported by the Presiding County Court Judge (His Honour Judge Burgess, Recorder of Belfast), the Presiding District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), Mrs Fiona Bagnall, and the Presiding Lay Magistrate, Mr David Moore.

The Lord Chief Justice, Sir Brian Kerr, is President of the Courts of Northern Ireland and Head of the Judiciary. In addition, he is responsible for:

- assigning the judiciary to the courts, distribution of business within the courts, and determining sitting times;

## **Judicial Appointments Ombudsman**

Mr Karamjit Singh CBE was appointed Judicial Appointments Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in September 2006. The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints from applicants for judicial appointment where maladministration or unfairness is alleged to have occurred. The Ombudsman's Annual Report can be found at [www.nijao.gov.uk](http://www.nijao.gov.uk)



**Karamjit Singh**  
Judicial Appointments Ombudsman



Business  
Performance



# Business Performance



Business  
Performance



## Business Performance

The Court Service Business Plan for 2007/08 contained three overarching strategic aims –

- to modernise court business;
- to improve access to justice;
- to promote confidence in the justice system.

To deliver these strategic aims, we set-out a number of targets in our 2007/08 Business Plan. The way in which we delivered this work is explained in this report.



Paul Goggins MP, Criminal Justice Minister and David Hanson MP, Minister for the NI Court Service

### MODERNISING COURT BUSINESS

We successfully delivered a new electronic business support system – **ICOS** (Integrated Court Operations System). ICOS provides for the IT-enabled transaction of court business in the civil, criminal and family courts, resulting in improved service delivery and efficiency. The ICOS platform facilitates the sharing of information across all of the court tiers making the court system more accessible to court users.

ICOS will allow us to modernise the way in which we deliver our court business in the future. It has already enabled us to create a number of Service Centres to centralise pre-court and post-court administrative activity. In 2007 we established a Jury Management Centre in Londonderry to centralise jury administration for Northern Ireland.

We have expanded the range of online services we provide. We are currently developing a Business Modernisation Strategy which will issue for public consultation. The Strategy will explain how we will re-design our business to make it more cost effective and efficient. It will also explain how we will improve our court estate.

## Causeway Programme

The Causeway IT Programme is an IT platform which will enable the transfer of information across all of the criminal justice agencies, such as the police, prisons, probation service and the courts. We achieved all of our Causeway development targets in 2007/08.

## Customer Service Delivery

We have continued to meet all our targets under our Customer Service Strategy and are currently developing new targets for the next three years to ensure we have a continual improvement programme for customer service delivery.

## Review of Civil Court Fees

Following a period of public consultation, a new civil court fee structure came into operation in September 2007.

## Court Funds Office

The Court Funds Office manages funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients. During the year we

commenced a modernisation project for the Court Funds Office. Currently in excess of £250m investments are managed by the Court Funds Office.

## The Coroners Service

The Coroners Service for Northern Ireland is part of the Northern Ireland Court Service. The Coroners Service is responsible for investigating sudden or unexplained deaths. During 2007 we invited Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA) to inspect the Coroners Service. HMICA reported on their findings in October 2007 welcoming the progress that has been made and highlighting a number of areas for improvement. The Coroners Service has developed an action plan to ensure its continual improvement against this report. The report and the associated action plan can be found on our website, [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)



Coroners Service, Mays Chambers

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### Legal Services

The Court Service is the sponsor department for the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission and as such works closely with the Commission to support its legal aid reform programme.

We have worked with the NI Legal Services Commission to develop a Funding Strategy to help manage the legal aid budget over the next three years.

We have developed proposals for the introduction of a new criminal legal aid remuneration structure for the Magistrates' Courts.

### Tribunal Reform

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced, in March 2006, that the Northern Ireland Court Service would assume administrative responsibility for all Northern Ireland tribunals as part of a new unified Courts and Tribunals Service. It was also announced that any new tribunals would become the responsibility of the Court Service.



Staff from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel

The Court Service has assumed administrative responsibility for two new tribunals the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (established October 2006) and the Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal (established April 2007).

Administrative responsibility for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeal Panel for Northern Ireland transferred to the Court Service in December 2007.

We have developed new performance targets for those tribunals for which we are currently responsible and these will be introduced in 2008.

Following the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly in May 2007 the Northern Ireland Executive endorsed the continuation of the tribunal reform programme including the transfer of administrative responsibility for all Northern Ireland tribunals to the Court Service. Work is well advanced to achieve this transfer.

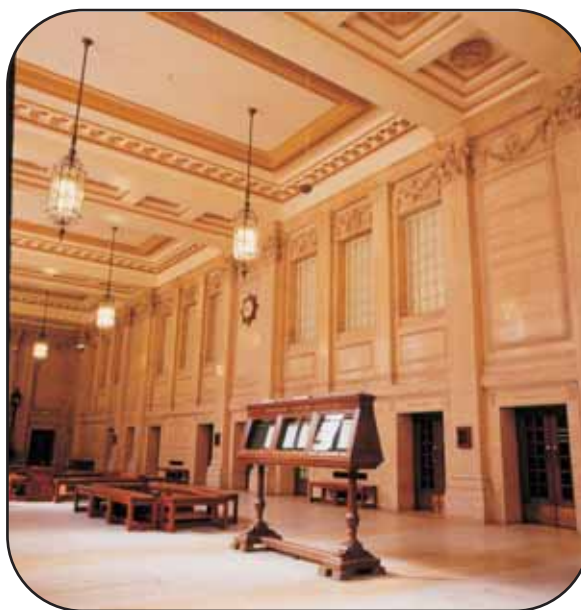
## PROMOTING CONFIDENCE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

### Court Business

The Court Performance Standards set out in our Business Plan for 2007/08 were delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland judiciary.

Our aim was to –

- facilitate the efficient disposal of criminal court, civil court and family court business.



The Great Hall of the Royal Courts of Justice

Our business volumes during 2007/08 were as follows –

	Business Received	Business Disposed
Criminal Court Business	59,890	59,189
Civil Court Business	23,870	23,546
Family Court Business	6,988	6,333

Details of our performance in these areas can be found at **Annex E**.

## **The Enforcement of Judgments Office**

The Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) provides a centralised service for all aspects of the civil judgment enforcement process in Northern Ireland. Its purpose is to enforce orders in relation to the recovery of money, property and goods obtained by plaintiffs in the civil courts in Northern Ireland.

In April 2007 the EJO published a Charter explaining its standards in terms of customer service delivery. This can be found on our website, [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

In June 2007 the EJO achieved ISO 9001:2000, an International Standard for a Quality Management System which promotes continuous review and improvement of organisational processes.

## **Tackling Delay in the Justice System**

Tackling delay and the reasons which can cause delay is an important factor in improving the public's confidence in the criminal justice system. The Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland published a Report on Avoidable Delay in May 2006. In response an inter-agency Delay Action Team was established to develop a Delay Reduction Strategy.

We appointed a number of Case Progression Officers in April 2007 to work closely with the judiciary, prosecution and defence to reduce avoidable delay. The Case Progression Officers are responsible for monitoring and tracking cases when they reach the courts. The initial pilot study proved successful and additional Case Progression Officers were appointed across the seven court divisions in 2008.

## Victims and Witnesses

We have co-operated with the other criminal justice agencies in Northern Ireland to produce a five-year strategy for Victims and Witnesses which was launched in September 2007. We will play our part in the delivery of this strategy by supporting the roll out of a Victim Support Witness Service to all Magistrates' Youth and County Courts. We have also worked with the NSPCC to produce a booklet to help children and young people who appear as witnesses in civil courts.

## Fine Collection

In November 2007, we established a six month pilot study, for the Divisions of Belfast and Ards – to trial the use of more proactive fine enforcement procedures. The pilot study was jointly funded by the Court Service, the Police Service and the Prison Service. Fine Collection Officers were appointed to Laganside Courts, to encourage payment of outstanding fines.

Preliminary analysis has shown some positive results with the number of fines paid increasing by 21%. We will be reviewing this pilot study with a view to extending it across all of Northern Ireland.

## Judicial Appointments

We work closely with the NI Judicial Appointments Commission and the Judicial Appointments Ombudsman. We have developed protocols with the NI Judicial Appointments Commission to ensure the timely notification of judicial vacancies.



Judicial Appointments Commission,  
Headline Building

## Outreach

The Court Service Outreach Programme underpins our commitment to promote knowledge and understanding of the courts and the wider justice system.

During 2007/08 we organised a wide range of educational and community based activities throughout Northern Ireland including a range of court visits tailored to meet the needs of schools, colleges, community groups and the general public.

In 2007/08 we facilitated almost 200 court visits and work experience placements throughout our courts.

We continue to support the Citizenship Curriculum in the classroom through Education Online on our website. The website provides information about the courts and criminal justice system and is aimed at primary school, key stage 2 & 3 and post 16 level. During 2007/08 we had 24,000 visitors to our Education Online website.

In February 2008, we supported Northern Ireland's Criminal Justice Week by inviting local schools and community groups to a range of open days at seven court venues. These events gave local communities the opportunity to learn more about the courts and the criminal justice system with representatives in attendance



Pupils Participating in a Mock Trial

from the police, prisons and voluntary sector. The open days covered issues such as crime prevention, public safety, victims and witnesses, working with the community and the role of the judiciary and legal profession.

The National Magistrates' Courts Mock Trial Competition is a highlight of the Court Service's Outreach programme. Each year it involves up to 5,000 young people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland heats of this Competition in 2008 were hosted by the Court Service in Laganside Courts. This event provides young people with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the justice system in an exciting and innovative way.

Our commitment to outreach has continued to be recognised at the Northern Ireland Criminal Justice Awards. In 2007 we received several awards – Laganside Courts Outreach Team won the team category for Engaging with Local Communities, and staff from Londonderry and Dungannon Courthouses were highly commended in the Engaging with Local Communities category.

## Looking Ahead

We have produced a new three-year Corporate Plan to align with our spending allocation from Parliament – 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11.

We have refreshed our strategic aims and set a new range of objectives over the next three years to work towards these goals.

Our new Strategic Aims for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11 are:

- Delivering Responsive Customer Services
- Improving Access to Justice
- Promoting Confidence in the Justice System
- Supporting an Independent Judiciary

Our new Corporate Plan which includes our Year One Business Plan for 2008/09 can be found on our website, [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)



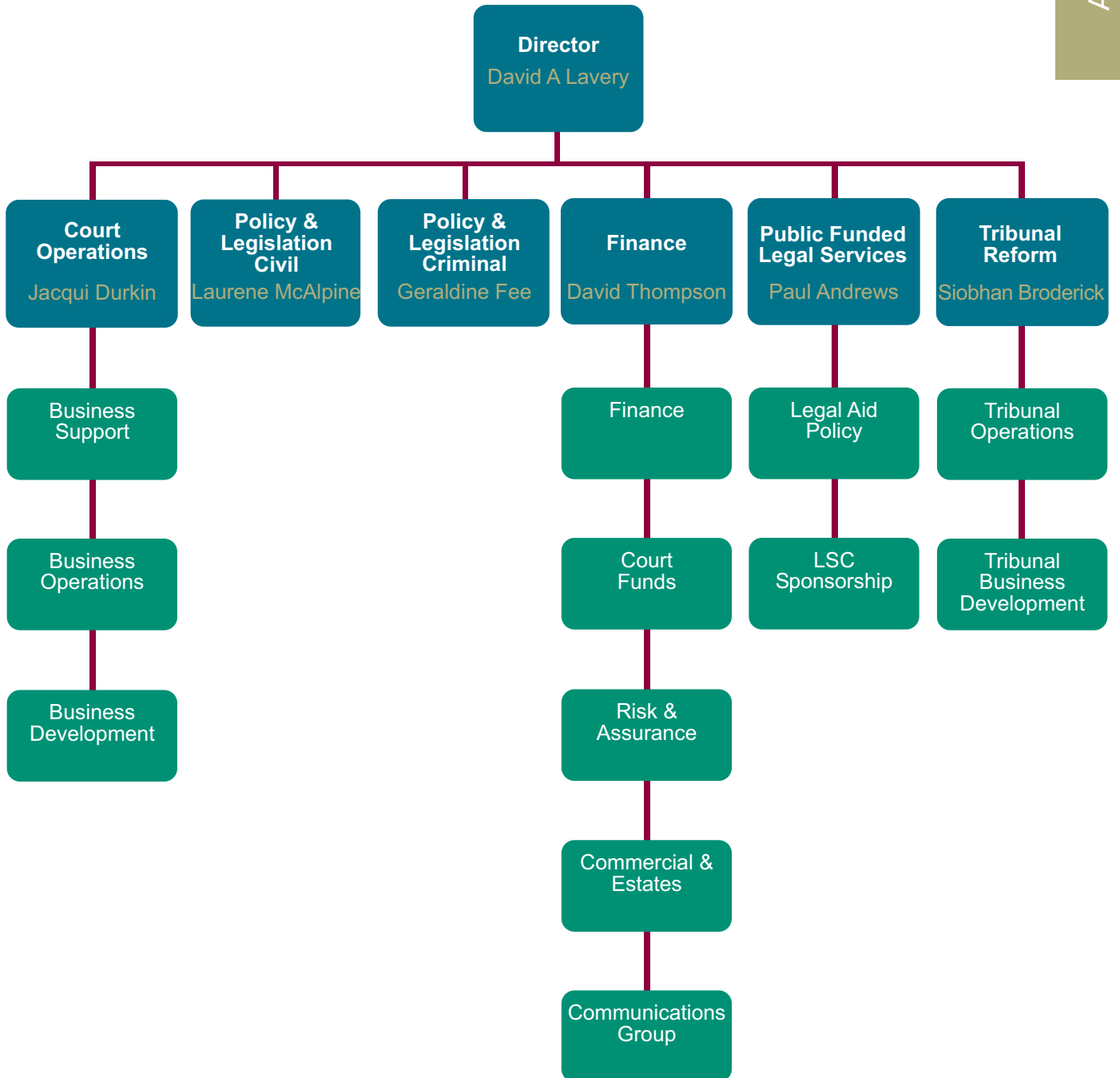


# Annex A



# Annex A

## Organisational Structure



# Annex B



# Annex B

## STAFFING

At end March 2008, the Court Service staffing complement was 747 posts, the majority of whom work within our core business of delivering front line services at each of our courthouses.

The majority of our staff join the department at the entry grade of Administrative Officer. We also recruit people to a number of specialised posts, which are advertised as required throughout the year, such as legal staff and accountants.

Our staff complement by grade is –

<b>(by business area)</b>	<b>Staff Complement</b>	<b>(by grade)</b>	<b>Staff Complement</b>
Court Operations	555	Administrative Officer	355
Policy and Legislation	24	Executive Officer	202
Finance Directorate	71	Staff Officer	86
Public Funded Legal Services	20	Deputy Principal	51
Tribunal Reform	16	Principal Officer	36
Office of the Lord Chief Justice	30	Grade 6	8
Communications Group	23	Grade 5	8
Management Board	8	Grade 3	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>747</b>

# Annex C



# Annex C

## Resources

### Resources 2007/08

The Northern Ireland Court Service receives its funds from Parliament, supplemented by income from civil court fees.

### Financial Position

This year was the third year of the Spending Review 2004 period (2005/06 to 2007/08). During the course of the year we worked closely with the Ministry of Justice and HM Treasury to secure our spending for the next spending round – CSR07 – which covers the period 2008/09 to 2010/11.

Our spending is divided into three different categories –

- Administration – which supports normal operational or support costs;
- Programme – which supports the costs of frontline services including the provision of Legal Aid; and
- Capital – which includes building improvements and major Information Technology programmes.

### Resources 2007/08

	£000's
Administration Costs (salaries, capital charges, general administrative expenses and maintenance of buildings, computers and other equipment)	11,592
Programme Costs (mainly expenditure of court buildings, juries and administration costs of front line services)	59,966
Legal Aid (including administrative costs)	79,861
Income	20,477
Net Costs	130,942
Capital	1,759
Consolidated Fund (judicial salaries and related costs)	7,424

Details of the Court Service accounts can be found in our Resource Accounts for 2007-08, which is available on our website at [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

# Annex D



# Annex D

## NORTHERN IRELAND TRIBUNALS

The Court Service currently has responsibility for the following tribunals –

- Social Security Commissioners
- Child Support Commissioners
- Pension Appeals Tribunal
- Traffic Penalty Tribunal
- NI Valuation Tribunal
- Criminal Injuries Compensation Panel for Northern Ireland
- Tribunal under s.91 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

In addition, responsibility for the Police Medical Pensions Appeal Tribunal will transfer from the NIO to the Court Service later in 2008.

It is planned to transfer the following NI departmental tribunals as part of our programme of tribunal reform –

- Appeal Tribunals for Northern Ireland
- Care Tribunal
- Fair Employment Tribunal
- Industrial Tribunals
- Lands Tribunal
- Mental Health Review Tribunal
- Planning Appeals Commission
- Rent Assessment Panel
- Reserve Forces Reinstatement Committee
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal
- Tribunal established under Schedule 11 of Health and Social Services (NI) Order 1972
- Water Appeals Commission

# Annex E



## COURT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS 2007/08

### Criminal Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of 80% of criminal business<sup>1</sup> –

- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be arraigned within six weeks of committal;  
(In 2007/08 we achieved 93%).
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will start their trial within eighteen weeks of committal;  
(In 2007/08 we achieved 77%).
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be sentenced within six weeks of finding of guilt;  
(In 2007/08 we achieved 73%).
- 80% of Magistrates' courts defendants will have their case disposed of within nine weeks of first listing;  
(In 2007/08 we achieved 77%).
- A finding will be reached within twelve weeks from first listing for 80% of youth court defendants.  
(In 2007/08 we achieved 71%).

Criminal court business is on the increase in Northern Ireland – with growth of around 10% since 2004/05 (approx 60k criminal cases were received by the courts in 2007/08 as compared to 54k in 2004/05).

<sup>1</sup> These Performance standards for criminal cases are set by the Lord Chief Justice

## Criminal Court Business – Volumes, Disposals and Performance

<b>Business volumes received</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>% difference</b>
Total criminal business	59,890	-11%
Crown Court cases	1,447	+7%
Magistrate's adult defendants	55,046	-12%
Magistrate's youth defendants	3,397	+11%
<b>Business volumes disposed</b>		
Total criminal business	59,189	no change
Crown Court cases	1,394	+8%
Magistrate's adult defendants	54,445	-1%
Magistrate's youth defendants	3,350	+12%
<b>Sittings</b>		
Total criminal sittings	6,267	+1%
Crown Court	2,466	-9%
Magistrate's adult	3,245	+9%
Magistrate's youth	556	+9%
<b>Performance against a target of 80% compliance</b>		
Crown Court <sup>1</sup>	77%	+2%
Magistrate's adult	77%	no change
Magistrate's youth	71%	no change

\* Compared to equivalent data for the 2006/07 period

<sup>1</sup> Committal to hearing target

## Civil Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of 97% of civil business –

- 97% of writs and civil bills will be listed for hearing within twenty weeks from lodgement of appropriate documentation; (In 2007/08 we achieved 100%).
- 97% of small claims default decrees will be processed within five working days of appropriate issue date; (In 2007/08 we achieved 99%).
- 97% of mortgage applications will be listed for hearing within four weeks of lodging appropriate documentation; (In 2007/08 we achieved 99%).

Around 24k civil cases are managed by the courts in Northern Ireland. Civil court business is showing a slight increase in volume since last year (23.8k cases received in 2007/08 as compared to 23.3k cases in 2006/07).

## Civil Court Business – Volumes, Disposals and Performance

<b>Business volumes received</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>%</b>
Total civil business	23,870	+2%
Civil Bills (NIDS)	6,362	-10%
Small Claims	12,729	+5%
Writs set down	1,934	+5%
Mortgages received	2,845	+18%
<b>Business volumes disposed</b>		
Total civil business	23,546	+1%
Ordinary Civil Bills	9,663	-1%
Small Claims	10,705	+6%
Writs disposed	1,801	+9%
Mortgages disposed	1,377	-19%
<b>Sittings</b>		
Total sittings	3,002	+9%
County Court	2,277	-1%
Queen's Bench	511	-4%
Chancery	214	+25%
<b>Performance against target of 97% compliance</b>		
Civil Bills	100%	-
Small Claims	99%	4%
Writs set down	99%	-
Mortgages received	91%	+29%

\* Compared to equivalent data for the 2006/07 period

## Family Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of 95% of family business –

- 95% of Children Order applications will be listed for hearing within ten weeks of receipt; (In 2007/08 we achieved 98%).
- 95% of Office of Care and Protection annual case reviews will be carried out within six weeks of receipt of complete Controllers' accounts; (In 2007/08 we achieved 66%).
- 95% of applications under the Mental Health Order will be listed within five weeks of receipt; (In 2007/08 we achieved 95%).
- 95% of divorces (decree nisi) will be awarded within 10 weeks of pleading. (In 2007/08 we achieved 96%).

## Family Court Business - Volumes, Disposals and Performance

### Business volumes received

	2007/08	% difference*
Children Order applications	4,100	N/A
Divorces received	2,888	-8%

### Business volumes disposed

Children Order applications	3,465	N/A
Divorces disposed	2,868	+7%

### Sittings

Children Order	1,668	+4%
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### Performance

Children Order	98%	+1%
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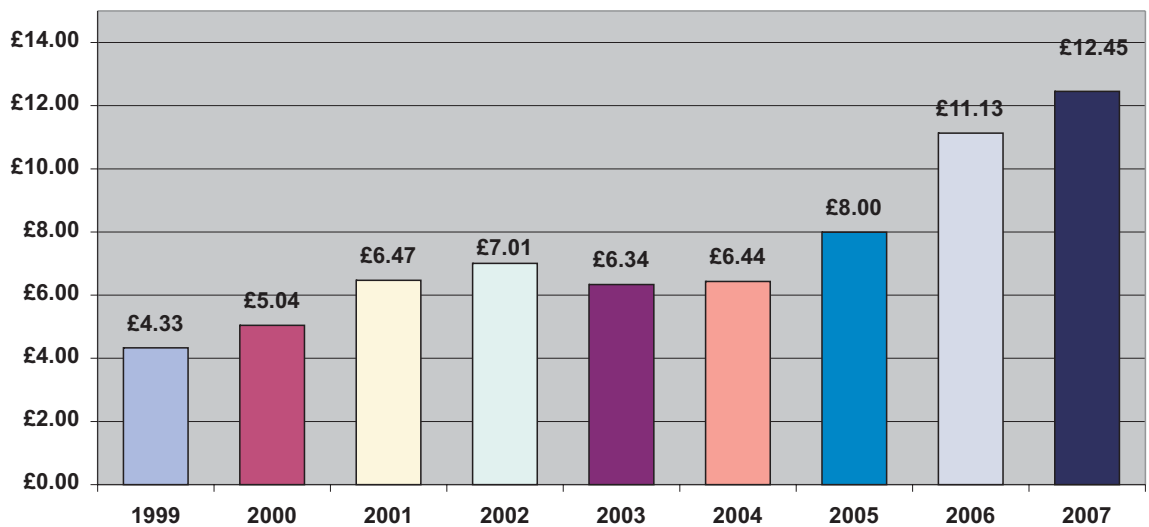
\* Compared to equivalent data for the 2006/07 period

## Enforcement of Judgments Office

Our targets for the Enforcement of Judgment's Office were to –

- issue 80% of Notices of Intention within two days of receipt:-  
88% issued
- accept 90% of Enforcement applications within nine days of receipt:- 98% accepted
- complete 95% of register searches within two days of receipt:- 99% completed
- recover £8.00 in judgment debt for every £1 spent in enforcement fees:-  
£10.64 recovered
- Recover by payment 80% of total debt lodged:- 84% was recovered
- reduce by 5% the average time from acceptance to satisfaction of a Possession Judgment:- 12% reduction in processing time

### EJO DEBT RATIO FIGURES 1999 - 2007



Laganside  
Courts

# Appendices

# Appendix 1

## Court Divisions in Northern Ireland

### **BELFAST**

**County Court Division:**

Belfast

**Petty Sessions District:**

Belfast and Newtownabbey

### **LONDONDERRY**

**County Court Division:**

Londonderry

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

Londonderry

Magherafelt

Limavady

### **CRAIGAVON**

**County Court Division:**

Craigavon

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

Craigavon

Lisburn

### **ANTRIM**

**County Court Division:**

Antrim

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

Antrim

Ballymena

Larne

North Antrim

### **ARMAGH**

**County Court Division:**

Armagh and South Down

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

Armagh

Banbridge (sitting at Newry)

Newry and Mourne

### **OMAGH**

**County Court Division:**

Fermanagh and

Tyrone

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

East Tyrone

Fermanagh

Omagh

Strabane

### **NEWTOWNARDS**

**County Court Division:**

Ards

**Petty Sessions Districts:**

Ards

North Down

Castlereagh

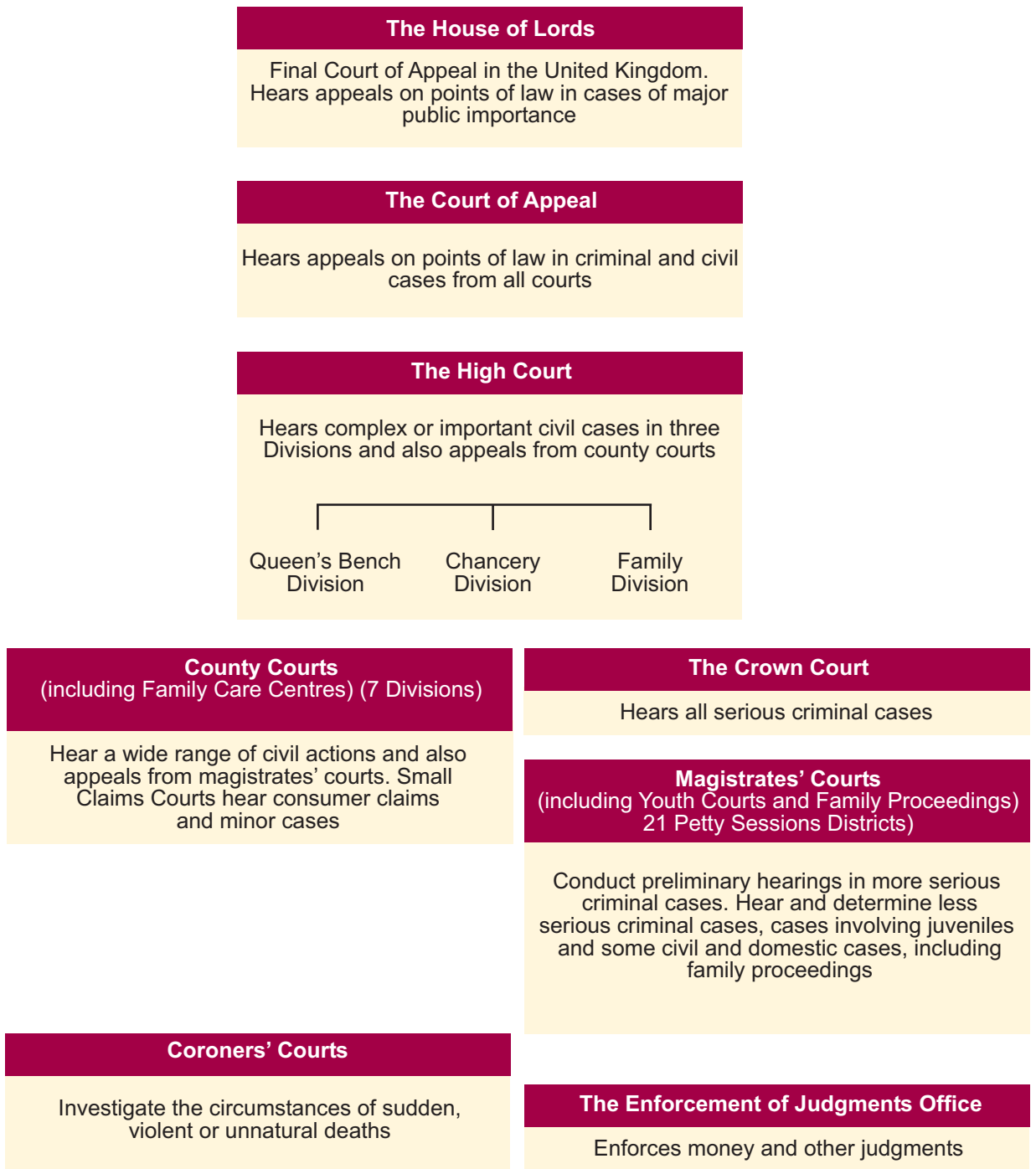
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# Court Locations across Northern Ireland



# Appendix 2

## Court Structure in Northern Ireland



## THE WORK OF THE COURTS OF NORTHERN IRELAND

### The Court of Judicature

#### The Court of Appeal

The Court of Appeal sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. The Judges of the Court of Appeal are the Lord Chief Justice (who is the President of the Court of Appeal) and three Lord Justices of Appeal. The Court of Appeal hears appeals in criminal matters from the Crown Court and civil matters from the High Court. It also hears appeals on points of law from the county courts, magistrates' courts and certain appeal tribunals.

#### The High Court

The High Court sits at the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast. It consists of the Lord Chief Justice and ten High Court judges. The High Court hears high value and complex civil cases. The High Court comprises three Divisions: the Chancery Division, Queen's Bench Division and Family Division.

#### The Crown Court

The Crown Court has exclusive jurisdiction to try offences charged on indictment. Offences tried on indictment are the more serious offences. The Lord Chief Justice is President of the Court and the Lord Justices of Appeal, High Court judges and county court judges all sit in the Crown Court. The Crown Court normally sits at 13 venues throughout Northern Ireland.

### Taxation of Costs

The Supreme Court Taxing Office, which operates under the direction of a High Court Master, is responsible for the assessment of costs payable to solicitors and counsel in respect of all civil cases conducted before the Court of Appeal or the High Court (a procedure known as taxation).

### County Courts

In Northern Ireland there are seven county court divisions. There is a complement of 17 county court judges and four district judges. Civil cases are commenced in the county court if the value of the case is less than £15,000 (or less than £45,000 in equity matters).

Many cases in which the sum involved does not exceed £2,000 will be dealt with by a district judge by way of arbitration, called the small claims procedure, which is primarily designed to resolve simple consumer disputes based on a default procedure. Small claims arbitrations are informal and do not adhere strictly to the rules of evidence and county court procedure. Parties are encouraged to represent themselves rather than engaging solicitors, and legal aid is not available for representation in such cases. County courts also have jurisdiction to hear applications for adoptions and undefended divorces. Applications for the grant of intoxicating liquor licenses and certificates of registration for clubs are also made to the county courts. In addition to its original civil jurisdiction the county court hears appeals under

a number of statutory provisions from the magistrates' courts or from other tribunals.

### **Family Business**

Four county courts have been designated as Family Care Centres to deal with certain applications or appeals relating to the care or welfare of a child or young person under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

### **Magistrates' Courts**

There are 21 petty sessions districts in Northern Ireland. A magistrates' court (other than a youth court or family proceedings court) is presided over by a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts).

### **Criminal Business**

Magistrates' courts exercise two basic functions in respect of criminal proceedings:

- 1) the summary trial of relatively minor offences or of indictable offences which may be tried summarily. The vast majority of criminal cases in Northern Ireland are dealt with by the magistrates' courts. A preliminary examination of the case against an accused who is to be tried on indictment in the Crown Court.
- 2) Youth Courts are specially constituted courts of summary jurisdiction composed of a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) and two Lay Magistrates (of whom at least one must be a woman) which deal with criminal matters in relation to children.

### **Civil Business**

The main types of civil business transacted by the magistrates' courts are family and domestic cases, debt processes, and applications for certain licenses.

### **Coroners Courts**

There are three full-time Coroners in Northern Ireland - one of whom is a Senior Coroner. There is also a Presiding Judge for the Coroners Service.

### **Social Security Commissioners and Child Support Commissioner**

Social Security Commissioners are appointed under the Social Security Administration (Northern Ireland) Act 1992. They hear appeals from Appeal Tribunals in relation to matters arising under the social security system. Child Support Commissioners are appointed under the Child Support Act 1991 and they hear appeals from Child Support Appeal Tribunals. Apart from the Chief Commissioner there is one other fulltime Commissioner.

### **The Enforcement of Judgments Office**

The Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) deals with enforcing money judgments and also enforces other types of civil judgments such as those that are connected with the possession of land and property. It is not a debt-collecting agency.

# Appendix 3

## Judicial Complement in Northern Ireland

Judicial complement of salaried judicial officers in Northern Ireland as at 31 March 2008

Office	Complement
Lord Chief Justice	1
Lord Justices of Appeal	3
High Court Judges	10
High Court Masters	7
County Court Judges	17
District Judges	4
District Judge (Magistrates' Courts)	21
Social Security and Child Support Commissioners	2
Coroners	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>
Lay Magistrates	239

Number of Deputy and fee paid Judicial Officers, Tribunal Appointments and miscellaneous Appointments as at 31 March 2008

<b>Deputy Posts</b>	<b>Total</b>
Deputy County Court Judges	31
Deputy District Judges	5
Deputy District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)	19





INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

For further information on the work of the Northern Ireland Court Service please contact

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From November 2008 we will be relocating to the following address;  
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BT1 3LA  
Other contact details remain the same.