

MAGISTRATES' SENTENCING COURT PILOT - LAGANSIDE ONLY

ISSUED 8th July 2020

The OLCJ issued updated guidance and announced on 12th May 2020 that, as part of the business recovery process, our aim is to gradually increase the disposal of business while adhering to public health guidance.

The Presiding District Judge has agreed with the profession to pilot contingency procedures for a **daily sentencing court in Laganside** commencing on Wednesday 22nd July 2020. This will commence with the listing of **Court 9 summons matters in Belfast Magistrates Court for pleas and sentencing** where the defendant does not need to be present or require a Pre-Sentence Report (PSR).

This will require solicitors to view Court 9 lists online on a DAILY basis from Wednesday 15th July to identify their cases listed for that day the following week, to identify which of their cases meet the criteria for the sentencing court and **email** the court office at BelfastSummonsCourt@courtsni.gov.uk no later than 5pm the following day confirming the details of which, if any, cases are to be listed in the sentencing court for each day. There is no need to email PPS – they will use the court list details to check for criminal records and will liaise directly with the Victim & Witness Care Unit (VWCU) as appropriate. The subject line of the email should state **'Sentencing Court Pilot' and the court date**. The body of the email should contain the ICOS number and the names of the defendant of each case to be listed for sentencing on that date. It is not possible to move cases between dates at this stage. **It is NOT necessary for legal representatives to also complete an MCI1 form.** Solicitors can also view public lists online 1 week in advance and therefore will be able to identify any new cases for their clients and come on record for them by email.

Court staff will collate the replies, group by solicitor and move the cases for sentencing into **Court 6** by close of play the following day. **The sentencing list** will brigade cases by solicitor and also the time slot allocated. There will be a maximum of 15 minutes per slot with a maximum of 5 cases in each slot. If a solicitor has only 1 or 2 cases then the slots will be reduced to 5 or 10 minutes. The listing details will be available **for Court 6 Sentencing Court** on ICOS Case Tracking and [Court Lists Online](#) from that point giving 4 days' notice before the court date.

PPS will send both the court and solicitor a copy of the defendant's record no later than 5pm the following working day – allowing 1 clear day in advance of the hearing.

Set out below is a sample schedule for courts commencing 22nd July to assist with action dates. This pattern will repeat until further notice.

Court 9 lists available 1 week in advance for solicitors to view on ICOS / Court Lists Online	Legal Reps email office of sentencing cases no later than 5pm	Sentencing court lists (COURT 6) published on ICOS and CLOL by 5pm	PPS Issue Criminal Records (if applicable) by 5pm	Sentencing Court Sightlink 20 / Court 6
Wednesday <i>(eg 15 July)</i>	Thursday <i>(eg 16 July)</i>	Friday <i>(eg 17 July)</i>	Monday <i>(eg 20 July)</i>	Wednesday <i>(eg 22 July)</i>
Thursday <i>(eg 16 July)</i>	Friday <i>(eg 17 July)</i>	Monday <i>(eg 18 July)</i>	Tuesday <i>(eg 19 July)</i>	Thursday <i>(eg 23 July)</i>
Friday <i>(eg 17 July)</i>	Monday <i>(eg 20 July)</i>	Tuesday <i>(eg 21 July)</i>	Wednesday <i>(eg 22 July)</i>	Friday <i>(eg 24 July)</i>
Monday <i>(eg 20 July)</i>	Tuesday <i>(eg 21 July)</i>	Wednesday <i>(eg 22 July)</i>	Thursday <i>(eg 23 July)</i>	Monday <i>(eg 27 July)</i>
Tuesday <i>(eg 21 July)</i>	Wednesday <i>(eg 22 July)</i>	Thursday <i>(eg 23 July)</i>	Friday <i>(eg 24 July)</i>	Tuesday <i>(eg 28 July)</i>

Sightlink 20 will be used for this sentencing court. The **user guide** will be issued in advance via the Law Society and Bar Library. **Courtroom 6** will be the physical location for the sentencing court should a legal representative need to appear in person. **The legal representative** must be on **Sightlink 20** (or in **Courtroom 6** if appearing in person) by the time allotted to them - if they are late the cases cannot be heard because this will cause a backlog for the rest of the list.

Correspondence to the court must only be sent to belfastsummonscourt@courtsni.gov.uk

This pilot will operate for Laganside Court 9 cases initially and may be expanded to other areas thereafter.