

## Crown Court Recovery Arrangements

To support an efficient return to business a Crown Court recovery plan has been implemented to restore business as an immediate and pressing priority.

Particular emphasis will be placed on cases involving the most vulnerable individuals, while recognising that vulnerability is widely experienced and that difficult but necessary prioritisation decisions must be made in order to address the most urgent cases first. During the recovery period it will be essential that effective communication between support agencies and victims and witnesses is maintained.

Recognising that the precise approach will vary between court venues, at a high level, the return to normality is expected to be sequenced in **three phases** along the following lines.

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Details</i>
<b>Phase 1</b>	<p><b>Pleas and sentences</b> - all cases that are ready for plea and sentence are listed and dealt with.</p> <p><b>Trials</b> - those taken out during the withdrawal of services will be relisted and offered an early trial date subject to witness and court availability. While listing is a matter of judicial discretion priority may be given as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U13/16 Protocol cases.</li> <li>• Rape, Serious Sexual Offence and Domestic Abuse cases and those involving a fatality.</li> <li>• All other cases.</li> </ul>
<b>Phase 2</b>	<p><b>Arraignments</b> - may be listed following the above order and with the oldest committed cases in each category taking priority.</p> <p>During this phase it is essential there is constructive engagement prior to arraignment and in cases proceeding to trial. Parties are encouraged to address and resolve outstanding matters and collaborate to narrow the core issues in cases.</p> <p>Where the PPS and Defence indicate a defendant is entering a plea of guilty to all proceeding charges, the court office must be notified and requested to list an early arraignment. This will allow appropriate Probation reports to be commissioned as quickly as possible.</p>
<b>Phase 3</b>	<p>A return to normal service, with courts operating a balanced mix of trials, pleas and sentences etc.</p>

### **Remote Attendance**

During Phase 1 and Phase 2, and subject to individual judicial views, judges may exercise a degree of flexibility for remote attendance of counsel and solicitors outside the LCJ's guidance of 20 October 2025 which can be found [here](#).

Where a defendant is in custody, whilst there is a preference for production to court for arraignment and sentence, there will be flexibility exercised to aid the logistics of transport management for NI Prison Service.

### **Summer Listings**

Any arraignments or pleas and sentences which can be listed and progressed over the Long Vacation<sup>1</sup> may, subject to the discretion of the judge, be taken forward following an agreed request by PPS and the defence.

*Lady Chief Justice's Office*  
22 June 2026

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to: [Arrangements for Crown Court, County Court and Family Care Centre during Long Vacation 2026](#)