

Introduction of PPS Case Progression Hubs

The purpose of this note is to provide information and guidance in respect of new 'Case Progression Hubs' (CPHs) which are now being introduced by the Public Prosecution Service, initially on a pilot basis.

What is the Purpose of the Case Progression Hubs?

The PPS's Belfast and Eastern Region recommenced the issue of new summonses in Magistrates' Court cases on 8 June. New summonses are being listed to separate courts sitting at the Laganside Court Hub (i.e. in addition to the amalgamated lists), but strictly organised by the *original* venue (i.e. Antrim, Ards, Ballymena and Downpatrick). The first court listing for Belfast and Eastern (for Belfast cases) is on 6 July. Arrangements for the PPS's Western and Southern Region have not as yet been finalised. However it is anticipated that court listing practices will broadly mirror Belfast and Eastern.

The CPHs are seen as an effective way to support the listing of these new summons cases and have the following broad aims:

- To maximise the effectiveness of the first appearance where possible.
- To seek to reduce the number of hearings required.
- To act as a contact point for direct engagement on issues between PPS and legal representatives.
- To allow for the early identification of cases that are likely to result in a guilty plea.
- To provide for early discussions to identify key issues in contested cases and to narrow witness lists accordingly.

How will the Case Progression Hubs Operate?

Two CPHs are being established, one for Belfast and Eastern Region and one for Western and Southern.

A central email address has been provided for each CPH, to be used to facilitate initial contacts with the PPS. These are as follows:

- BelfastandEasternCPH@ppsni.gov.uk
- WesternandSouthernCPH@ppsni.gov.uk

It must be emphasised that these email addresses are to be used in respect of new summons business only.

PPS support for the CPHs will be provided by experienced court prosecutors. In order to facilitate queries, these prosecutors will be allocated to cover particular areas / court venues. For Belfast and Eastern, a three-way split in responsibilities has been agreed, as follows:

- Antrim / Ballymena.
- Ards / Downpatrick.
- Belfast.

Prosecutors designated for each of the areas will only deal with cases from those venues. A similar brigading of courts will be agreed for Western and Southern.

It should be noted that all email requests to the CPHs will be acknowledged by a CPH administrator who will allocate the query to the appropriate prosecutor. Enquiries which are not related to new summons business may not be acknowledged or forwarded on.

CPH prosecutors will be appointed on a 6 week rotational basis. This is to allow for an element of continuity, so that in most instances your queries can be followed through by the same prosecutor.

When will the CPHs become Operational?

The Belfast and Eastern CPH was established on [Monday 6 July](#).

It is planned to commence the Western and Southern CPH from [Monday 10 August](#). *However the date remains provisional at this stage and further information will follow in due course.*

The initial phase of the Belfast and Eastern CPH will be used to pilot the new arrangements.

What Information do I need to provide?

The PPS will require the following information via email prior to engagement:

- Confirmation that you are the solicitor on record for the specific case, for example by providing the PPS reference number.
- An indication as to:
 - Your client's attitude to the charges.
 - The nature of your request (e.g. disclosure, representations etc.).
 - The basis of a plea should your client not accept all facts as stated.
 - The required witness list if it is a contested matter.

Can I ask for a Copy of the Case Papers?

The CPHs are primarily designed to support case progression and not to facilitate requests for copy papers. Normal arrangements will apply whereby the defendant instructs a solicitor who contacts the PPS on foot of the instructions and papers received from their client. The PPS is working on a significantly reduced staffing complement at present due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore the Service's management team is keen to ensure that duplication of effort is minimised.

However, limited sharing of papers will be permitted, particularly where a request is made for a copy of an Outline of Case, a criminal record or common law disclosure and where the material is required to support effective case progression. Sharing of other papers will only be considered *in exceptional circumstances*, for example where your client is ill and unable to pass on the papers directly to you. All such requests should be made in writing to the email addresses provided.

Further Information

If you require any further information regarding the CPHs or related procedures, please contact the PPS Policy and Information Unit via email at policy@ppsni.gov.uk.

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