

BusinessPlan



serving the community through the administration of justice

serving the community through the administration of justice

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Introduction by the Director

This Business Plan outlines our priorities for the period April 2011 until March 2012. Implementation of the Plan will be monitored by the Board of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS).

The NICTS provides administrative support for Northern Ireland's courts and many of Northern Ireland's tribunals. We measure the performance of our courts and tribunals against a comprehensive set of performance standards. Our performance standards for 2011/12 are set out in **Annex A** to this Business Plan.

David A Lavery

Director, Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service

Background

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an Agency of the Department of Justice of Northern Ireland.

The role of the NICTS is to:

- provide administrative support for all courts and most tribunals in Northern Ireland;
- · support an independent judiciary;
- enforce civil court judgments through the Enforcement of Judgments Office;
- manage funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients; and
- deliver effective and affordable public funded legal services, through the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission.

Corporate Values

We aim, at all times, to demonstrate the following corporate 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

Corporate Aim

'Serving the Community through the Administration of Justice'

Strategic Objectives

Our Corporate Aim is supported by a number of Strategic Objectives, which are:

- To deliver efficient and effective court, tribunal and enforcement services
- To deliver high quality services that meet the needs of court and tribunal users
- To contribute to public confidence in the administration of justice
- To deliver a controlled financial and commercial environment achieving value for money
- To continuously improve our business processes and services
- To develop and lead our people to achieve our objectives
- To maximise our organisational capacity and capability
- To deliver effective and affordable publicly funded legal services to those who cannot otherwise afford access to justice

Performance against the delivery targets outlined in this Business Plan will be reported on in our Annual Report which will be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Departmental Information

Who we are

The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is an Agency of the Northern Ireland Department of Justice. We are responsible for the operation of 21 courthouses across Northern Ireland (an overview of Northern Ireland's courts and tribunals can be found at Annex B). Contact details are also available as an Appendix to this Plan.

All of our courthouses have received the Customer Service Excellence Standard in recognition of the high level of service provided to court users.

While our core business is the provision of administrative support for the courts and tribunals, we are also responsible for –

- the Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO) which provides a centralised service for the enforcement of civil court judgments;
- the Coroners Service for Northern Ireland;
- the Court Funds Office which manages funds held in court on behalf of minors and patients.

A statistical overview of our business can be found at **Annex C**.

The NICTS Board

The Director of the NICTS, **David Lavery**, is the Agency's Chief Executive and Accounting Officer. He is supported by a Board which consists of the NICTS Divisional Heads, a Department of Justice Representative, two Independent Board Members and four Judicial Representatives:

David Lavery, Director of NICTS

Jacqui Durkin, Head of Business Operations

Geraldine Fee, Head of Criminal & Coroners Policy

Siobhan Broderick, Head of Civil Policy & Tribunal Reform

Anthony Carleton, Head of Business Support

Robert Crawford, Head of Public Legal Services

The Honourable Mr Justice Deeny, Judicial Representative

His Honour Judge Burgess, Recorder of Belfast, Judicial Representative

District Judge Bagnall, Presiding District Judge (Magistrates' Courts), Judicial Representative

Mr Conall MacLynn, President of the Appeals Tribunal, Judicial Representative

Carol Moore, Department of Justice Representative

PJ Fitzpatrick, Independent Board Member

Colm McKenna, Independent Board Member

Our organisational chart is attached at **Annex D**.

Staffing and Resources

The NICTS employs 830 staff, the majority of whom deliver frontline services at courthouses and tribunal hearing centres throughout Northern Ireland and in the Enforcement of Judgments Office. This number will increase to over 900 when the remaining tribunal staff transfer.

We recognise that a skilled and committed workforce is essential to the successful achievement of our corporate aims. In 2009 we received the Investor in People 10 year award, which recognises our ongoing commitment to staff development and continuous business improvement. As an organisation, we are committed to learning and development, and ensuring that staff have the right skills to deliver our business priorities.

Our budget for 2011/12 is -

	£m
NICTS gross expenditure	81.9
NICTS projected fee income	(27.1)
NICTS net expenditure	54.8
Total Resource Budget	138.7
Capital Budget	4.5

Our Sponsorship Role

The NICTS sponsors the **NI Legal Services Commission (NILSC)** which is responsible for the administration of public funded legal services in Northern Ireland under the Legal Aid Scheme.

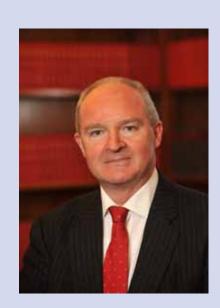


The NILSC budget for 2011/12 is £83.9m

The Commission publishes its own Corporate and Business Plans, which can be found on their website www.nilsc.org.uk

Support for the NI Judiciary

The NICTS is responsible for providing administrative support to the Northern Ireland judiciary. The Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon Sir Declan Morgan, is head of the Judiciary and President of the courts of Northern Ireland. We support the Lord Chief Justice in the effective deployment of judicial resources.



There are 72 fulltime members of the judiciary across the various courts and tribunals judicial tiers.

Lord Chief Justice	1
Lord Justices of Appeal	3
High Court Judges	10
County Court Judges	17
District Judges (County Court)	4
District Judges (Magistrates' Courts)	21
High Court Masters	7
Social Security and Child Support Commissioners	2
Lands Tribunal member	1
Appeal Tribunal President & Chairman	2
Coroners	4

Business Planning Context

Business Planning 2011/12

The NICTS Business Plan has been developed using the Balanced Scorecard methodology. A copy of our summary Scorecard can be found at **Annex E**.

This approach will be cascaded to Divisional and Branch plans linking through to individual forward job plans to ensure that everyone is clear on their role in contributing to our strategic objectives.

Our Business Plan complements the Department of Justice (DOJ) Business Plan for 2011/12.

Corporate Governance

As an Agency of the Department of Justice, the NICTS operates under a **Framework Document** which sets out the governance arrangements for the Agency.

The Framework Document outlines the role of the Board and its committees and provides details of our internal control and assurance procedures. A copy of the NICTS Framework Document can be found on our website (www.courtsni.gov.uk).

Delivering the Plan

The NICTS Board will review progress against the 2011/12 Business Plan throughout the year. The NICTS will publish an Annual Report on our performance during 2011/12.

Business Priorities 2011/12

Business Operations

Business Operations Division is responsible for providing administrative support for criminal, civil and family court business and for the Coroners Service, as well as the Enforcement of Judgments Office. The Northern Ireland courts deal with approximately 100,000 criminal, civil and family cases each year. The statistical highlights for 2009/10 can be found at **Annex C**.



Jacqui Durkin, Head of Business Operations

To deliver efficient and effective courts, tribunals and enforcement services during 2011/12 we shall:

- Meet our business performance standards (our standards are set out in Annex A of this Business Plan);
- Support the Lord Chief Justice in the effective deployment of judicial resources;
- Contribute to speeding up justice;
- Ensure that court orders are recorded accurately and produced in a timely fashion:
- Review court business processing.

To deliver high quality services that meet the needs of court and tribunal users during 2011/12 we shall:

- Maintain Customer Service Excellence accreditation for all our courthouses;
- Review our court estate;
- Support victims, witnesses, children and young people as they come into contact with the court and tribunal system.

To contribute to public confidence in the administration of justice during 2011/12 we shall:

- Deliver a programme of outreach activity to schools and community groups;
- Support the work of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate and give effect to the recommendations in any reports touching on the work of the NICTS.

To maximise our organisational capacity and capability during 2011/12 we shall:

Review the NICTS structure to ensure it meets our business needs.



Geraldine Fee, Head of Criminal and Coroner's Policy

Criminal and Coroners Policy

To deliver efficient and effective courts, tribunals and enforcement services during 2011/12 we shall:

- Ensure the effective implementation of the Justice Act 2011;
- Develop the courts related proposals for the next Justice Bill;
- Work with other relevant agencies to speed up justice;
- Commence a review of coroners law;
- · Review court jurisdictional boundaries;
- Consult on proposals to reform the upper age limit jury service;
- Support the work of the Criminal Court Rules Committees.

Civil Policy & Tribunal Reform

The NICTS is responsible for the majority of Northern Ireland's tribunals (details can be found in **Annex B**). Tribunals in Northern Ireland hear more than 16,000 cases each year.



Siobhan Broderick, Head of Civil Policy and Tribunal Reform

To deliver efficient and effective courts, tribunals and enforcement services during 2011/12 we shall:

- Meet our tribunal business performance standards (our standards are set out in **Annex A** of this Business Plan);
- Increase the financial jurisdiction of the County Court;
- Give effect to the statutory transfer of tribunals to the NICTS;
- Modernise and improve service delivery for users of tribunals;
- Develop proposals for the establishment of an Office of Public Guardian;
- Implement EU Directives in relation to civil and family matters within the remit of the Department of Justice;
- Support the protection of children under the Hague Convention;
- Support the work of the Civil Court Rules Committee.



Anthony Carleton, Head of Business Support

Business Support

To contribute to public confidence in the administration of justice during 2011/12 we shall:

- Support the Minister in all court and tribunal related Assembly Business;
- Communicate with customers and stakeholders in a way that is accessible;
- Respond to media enquiries in an efficient and timely manner.

To deliver a controlled financial and commercial environment achieving value for money during 2011/12 we shall:

- Produce financial plans, accounts and reports in accordance with DOJ and NI Executive requirements;
- Deliver effective risk management, assurance and compliance strategies;
- Support the monitoring, reporting and development of corporate governance.

To continuously improve our business processes and services during 2011/12 we shall:

- Review the work of the Court Funds Office:
- Embed and monitor compliance with Information Assurance policies and meet NICS accreditation requirements.

To develop and lead our people to achieve our objectives during 2011/12 we shall:

Maintain our status as an Investor in People.

To maximise our organisational capacity and capability during 2011/12 we shall:

- Deliver our commitments under the DoJ workforce strategy in 2011/12;
- Deliver our commitments under the DoJ Equality Scheme and associated Action Plan for 2011/12.

Public Funded Legal Services

To deliver effective and affordable publicly funded legal services to those who cannot otherwise afford access to justice during 2011/12 we shall:

- Publish the report of the Access to Justice Review in Northern Ireland;
- Develop an overarching strategic plan for public legal services that takes account of the recommendations of the Access to Justice review and other reform proposals;
- Maintain a robust governance, probity and challenge function over the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission in relation to financial management, business planning and strategic decision making.



Robert Crawford, Head of Public Funded Legal Services

ANNEX A

Courts and Tribunals Performance Standards

Some of the Courts Performance Standards are set by the Lord Chief Justice while others are set by the NICTS as indicated below –

Criminal Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of criminal business¹

- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be arraigned within six weeks of committal.
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will start their trial within 18 weeks of committal.
- 80% of Crown Court defendants will be sentenced within six weeks of a plea or a finding of guilt.
- 80% of magistrates' courts adult defendants will have their case disposed of within nine weeks of first listing.
- A finding will be reached within 12 weeks from first listing for 80% of youth court defendants.
- 90% of Court of Appeal defendants will have their appeal against sentence listed within three weeks of receipt of the papers.
- 98% of Causeway Service Level Agreement resulting targets will be achieved.
- 98% of Court of Appeal, Crown Court, magistrates' court and youth court orders will be produced and issued within five working days.

These standards, with the exception of the Court of Appeal, Causeway and court order standards, are set by the Lord Chief Justice

Civil Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of civil business

- 98% of Queen's Bench writs will be listed within three months of being set down.
- 98% of Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence writs will be listed within three months of receipt of the Certificate of Readiness.
- 98% of civil bills will be listed for hearing within 16 weeks of receiving a Certificate of Readiness.
- 97% of small claims default decrees will be issued within five working days of applicant's request.
- 97% of mortgage applications will be listed for hearing within six weeks.
- 97% of creditors' petitions will be listed for hearing within six weeks.
- 95% of High Court and county court orders will be produced and issued within five working days of request or requisition.

The Enforcement of Judgments Office will:

- Issue 90% of Notices of Intention within three days.
- Accept 90% of enforcement applications within eight days.
- Complete 85% of repossessions within 26 weeks of acceptance.
- Issue summonses for interview in 90% of all debt cases within 25 days of acceptance.
- Accept 90% of taxation applications within 22 days.
- Issue 95% of taxation assessments within 13 days.

Family Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of family business²

- 90% of Children Order applications will be listed within six weeks of receipt of correct papers.
- 95% of Office of Care and Protection annual case reviews will be carried out within six weeks of receipt of complete Controllers accounts.
- 95% of applications for controllership orders [where no objection has been lodged] will be issued within 14 days of receipt of all required paperwork.
- 97% of undefended divorces will be listed for hearing within six weeks of receipt of certificate of readiness.
- 95% of High Court orders will be produced and issued within 15 working days of the court hearing.
- 95% of Family Care Centre and Family Proceedings court orders will be produced and issued within five working days of the court hearing.

Coroners Service Business

To facilitate the efficient disposal of Coroners Service business:

- 97% of all deaths investigated that do not require a post mortem examination will have the certificate of registration issued to the Registrar of Deaths within 3 working days of the death being reported to the Coroner.
- 92% of all deaths that require a post mortem examination and that examination reveals a natural cause of death will have the certificate of registration issued to the Registrar of Deaths within five working days of receipt of the post mortem report.
- 90% of inquests will have a hearing fixed within 28 days of the Coroner's direction to list.

The courts seek to attain the requirement prescribed in the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 that any matter relating to children will be dealt with expeditiously. Any steps in the process will be informed by that statutory imperative and by the provisions of the Case Management Protocol for Public Law cases.

Tribunal Business

Some of the Tribunal Performance Standards are set by the relevant Tribunal President while others are set by the NICTS. These standards are measured from the date the appeal is lodged with the tribunal.

To facilitate the efficient disposal of tribunal business:

Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal

 98% of NIVT cases will be listed within eight weeks of agreed papers being received.

Social Security and Child Support Commissioner

- 98% of applications for leave to appeal to the Social Security Commissioner will be listed within eight weeks of a direction.
- 98% of appeals to the Social Security Commissioner will be listed within eight weeks of a direction.

Pension Appeals Tribunal

• 90% of pension appeals will be listed for hearing within 25 weeks of receipt of the statement of case.

Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal

 99% of TPT postal/in person applications will be listed within 8 weeks of agreed papers being received.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel NI

• 95% of CICAPNI cases will be listed within 16 weeks of agreed evidence bundle being received.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

 95% of SENDIST appeals will be listed within eight weeks from the end of the case statement period.

Mental Health Review Tribunal

83% of MHRT appeals will be disposed of within eight weeks of receipt 3.3

Care Tribunal

- 97% Care appeals will be listed for preliminary hearing within 18 weeks of receipt.
- 97% of Care appeals will be listed for hearing within 18 weeks of preliminary hearing.

Lands Tribunal

- 95% of notice parties to cases before the Lands Tribunal will be sent notification of a case within three working days of registration.
- 90% of referrals will have the date of first mention / review fixed within three working days of the Lands Tribunal's direction to list.

The Appeals Tribunal⁴

- The first hearing for Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance appeals will be within [nine] weeks of receipt of appeal by the Appeals Tribunal.
- The first hearing for Employment and Support Allowance appeals will be within [eight] weeks of receipt of appeal by the Appeals Tribunal.
- The first hearing for Income Support; Job Seekers Allowance; Social Fund and Incapacity Benefit will be within [eight] weeks of receipt of appeal by the Appeals Tribunal.
- The first hearing for all jurisdictions will be within [nine] weeks of receipt of appeal by the Appeals Tribunal.

³ *This standard is set by the Tribunal President.

⁴ Reporting against these standards is based on averages.

ANNEX B

Courts and Tribunals in Northern Ireland

The Court of Appeal

Hears appeals on points of law in criminal and civil cases from all courts

The High Court

Hears complex civil cases and appeals from appeals from county courts

County Courts

Hear a wide range of civil actions including small claims and family cases

Coroners' Courts

Investigate unexplained deaths

The Crown Court

Hears all serious criminal cases

Magistrates' Courts

(including Youth Courts and Family Proceedings Courts)

Hears the majority of criminal cases and civil and family cases

Northern Ireland Tribunals

Social Security & Child Support Commissioners

Appeals Tribunal*

Care Tribunal

Charities Tribunal

Criminal Injuries Compensation
Appeals Panel

Health & Safety Tribunals

Mental Health Review Tribunal

Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal

Northern Ireland Valuation Tribunal

Pensions Appeal Tribunal

Rent Assessment Panel*

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

The Lands Tribunal

Tribunal under Schedule 11 of the HSS (NI) Order 1972 (Schedule 11)

*These tribunals are administered by NICTS under an Agency agreement with DSD

ANNEX C

Statistical Highlights 2010/11

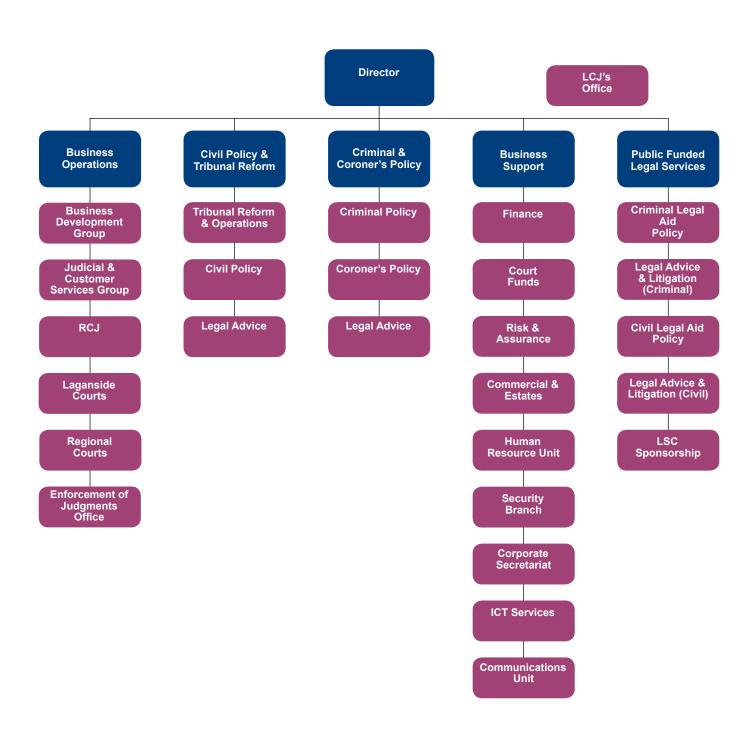
The NICTS is responsible for the operation of 21 courthouses and a number of tribunal hearing centres across Northern Ireland. The Crown Court, County Courts, Magistrates' Courts and Coroner's Courts are held throughout Northern Ireland. The Court of Appeal and High Court sit in the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast.

During 2010/11:

- The Northern Ireland courts and tribunals dealt with almost 120,000 cases;
- Crown Court business received increased by 21% from the previous year (to 1,634 cases);
- The volume of Civil Court business increased by 3%;
- Almost 17,000 tribunal cases were disposed of;
- · £5.8m was collected in fines;
- 41% of Small Claims court cases were initiated online;
- 99% of public searches were carried out online;
- A new online case tracking service was introduced in August 2010;
- Demand for the provision of interpreters in court cases decreased by 18%.

ANNEX D

Organisational Structure



ANNEX E

Corporate Scorecard

Access to Justice

AJ1: To deliver efficient and effective Courts, Tribunals and Enforcement Services

AJ2: To deliver effective and affordable publicly funded legal services to those who cannot otherwise afford access to justice

Customers and Services

CS1: To deliver high quality services that meet the needs of court and tribunal users

CS2: To contribute to public confidence in the administration of justice

Organisation and People

OP1: To develop and lead our people to achieve our objectives

OP2: To maximise our organisational capacity and capability

Finance and Processes

FP1:To deliver a controlled financial and commercial environment achieving value for money

FP2: To continuously improve our business processes and services

APPENDIX

Contact Details Courthouses and Tribunals in Northern Ireland

Courthouses

The Courthouse 30 Castle Way

Antrim BT41 4AQ

Phone: 028 9446 2661

antrimcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse 16 Quay Street

Bangor BT20 5EA

Phone: 028 9147 2626

bangorcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse

The Mall Armagh

BT61 9DJ

Phone: 0283752 2816

armaghcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

Laganside Courts
45 Oxford Street

Belfast

BT1 3LL

Phone: 028 9032 6260

csmlaganside@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse Albert Place Ballymena

BT43 5BS

Phone: 028 2564 9416

ballymenacourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse

46A Mountsandal Road

Coleraine BT52 1HY

Phone: 028 7034 3437

colerainecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse The Courthouse Central Way Railway Street

CraigavonBT64 1AP
BT28 1XR

Phone: 028 3834 1324 Phone: 028 9267 5336

craigavoncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk lisburncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse
English Street
BT30 6AD
BT48 6PQ
The Courthouse
Bishop Street
Londonderry
BT48 6PQ

Phone: 028 4461 4621 Phone: 028 7136 3448

downpatrickcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk londonderrycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse The Courthouse 46 Killyman Road Victoria Road

DungannonBT71 6DE
BT40 1RN

Phone: 028 8772 2992 Phone: 028 2827 2927

dungannoncourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk larnecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse

East Bridge Street

Hospital Road

Enniskillen

Magherafelt

BT74 7BP

BT45 5DG

Phone: 028 6632 2356 Phone: 028 7963 2121

enniskillencourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk magherafeltcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse
Main Street

The Courthouse
23 New Street

LimavadyBT49 0EY

Newry
BT35 6JD

Phone: 028 7772 2688 Phone: 028 3025 2040

limavadycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk newrycourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse Regent Street

Newtownards

BT23 4LP

Phone: 028 9181 4343

newtownardscourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse

High Street

Omagh

BT78 1DU

Phone: 028 8224 2056

omaghcourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

The Courthouse

Derry Road

Strabane

BT82 8DT

Phone: 028 7138 2544

strabanecourthouse@courtsni.gov.uk

Royal Courts of Justice

Chichester Street

Belfast BT1 3JF

Phone: 028 9023 5111

adminoffice@courtsni.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Tribunals

Social Security / Child Support Commissioners

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Pensions Appeal Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel NI

2nd Floor, Corn Exchange Building

31 Gordon Street

Belfast BT1 2LG

Phone: 028 9092 4400

Charities Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Health & Safety Tribunals

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

The Lands Tribunal

Royal Courts of Justice

2nd Floor

Chichester Street

Belfast BT1 3JJ

Phone: 028 9032 7703

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Care Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Mental Health Review Tribunal

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Tribunal under Schedule 11 of the HSS (NI) Order 1972 (Schedule 11)

3rd Floor Bedford House

Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7FD

Phone 028 9072 8731

Rent Assessment Panel*

Cleaver House

3 Donegall Square North

Belfast

BT1 5GA

Phone: (028) 9051 8518

The Appeals Tribunal

Cleaver House

3 Donegall Square North

Belfast

BT1 5GA

Phone: (028) 9051 8518

and

12-14 Dublin Road

Omagh

BT78 1ES

Phone: (028) 8224 9595



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