AN INSPECTION OF

WITNESS ATTENDANCE IN CRIMINAL COURT PROCEEDINGS

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WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURING WITNESS ATTENDANCE AT COURT?

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the Victim Witness Care Unit (VWCU) within the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPS) and the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) have a shared responsibility to ensure those required to do so, attend Court proceedings to give evidence.

1. The PSNI records victim and witness details and this information is then submitted electronically by the PSNI to the PPS.

2. The PPS Prosecutor takes the decision to prosecute and decides what witnesses are required. The VWCU within the PPS obtains availability for the witnesses (including professional witnesses) and issue witness invitations (in some circumstances a witness summons) when the contest/trial is scheduled.

3. To set a hearing date, the Judge uses witness availability provided by the PPS and Court availability.

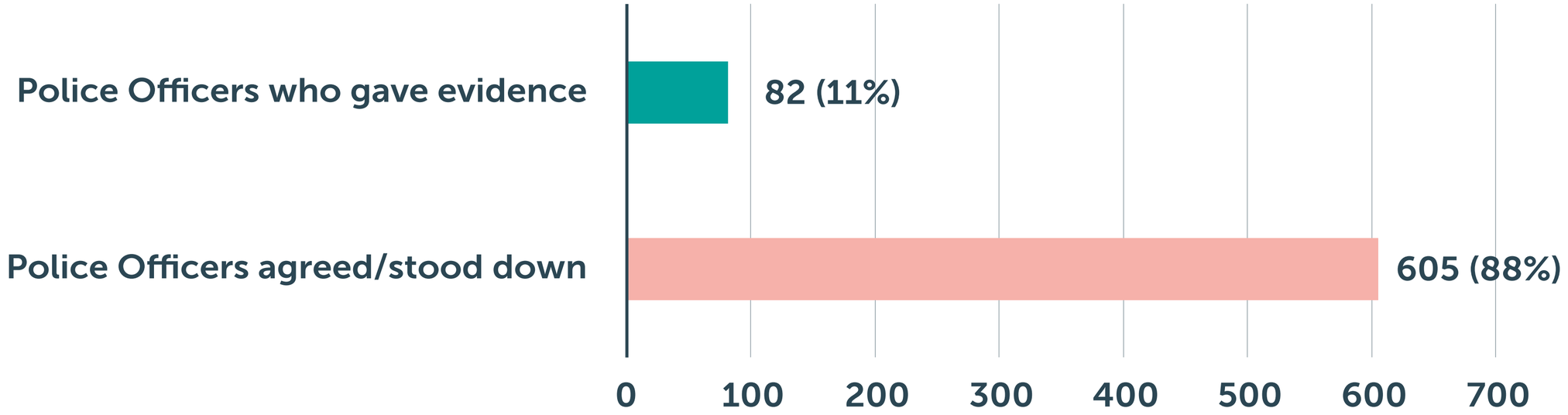
4. The NICTS provide Court access and facilities/ technology to support witness attendance at Court proceedings, whether online by video link or in person.

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PERCENTAGE OF POLICE OFFICERS DETAILED TO ATTEND BELFAST COURTS
FROM 1 SEPTEMBER TO 30 NOVEMBER 2025



* When witness evidence is agreed, it means that the defence and prosecution have accepted the contents of the witnesses' statement. This can be read as oral evidence without the witness having to attend Court.

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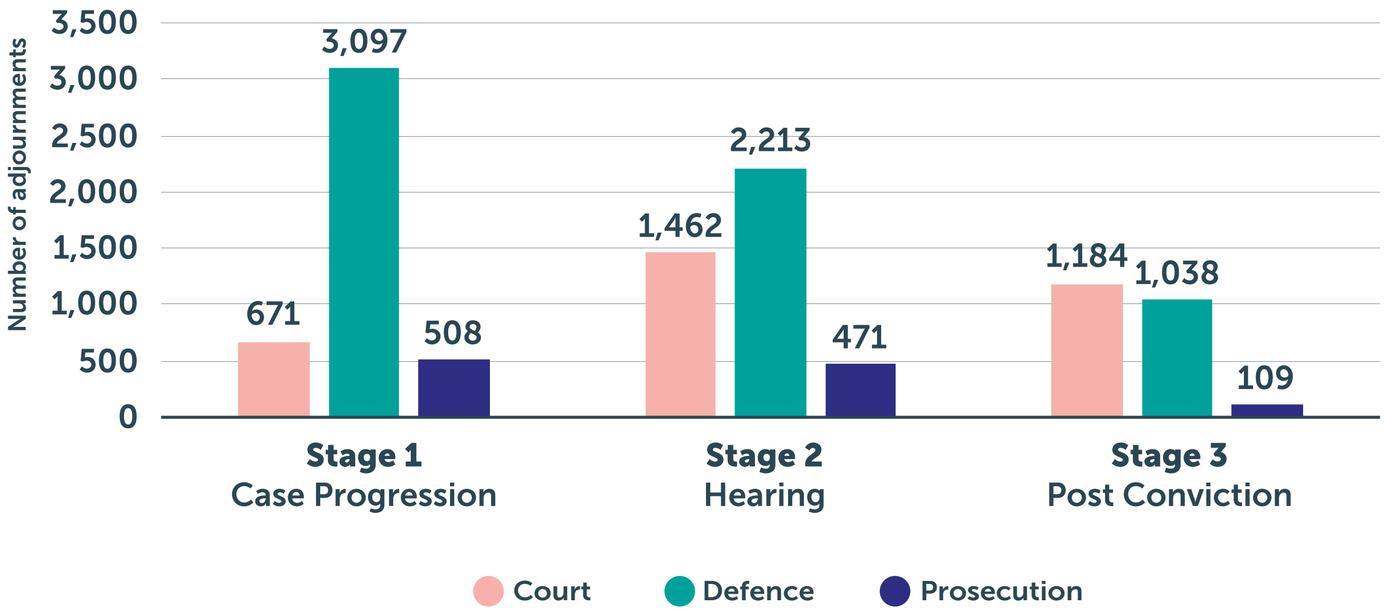
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TOTAL ADJOURNMENTS ACROSS ALL CROWN COURTS FROM OCTOBER 2025 – MARCH 2026 INCLUDING WHO MADE THE APPLICATION

Of all adjournments recorded, 39% occurred at Stage 1 (Case Progression), 38% at Stage 2 (Hearing) and 21% at Stage 3 (Post Conviction).

The majority of adjournment applications were made by the defence, accounting for 59% of the total. Applications by the Court represented 30%, while the PPS was responsible for 10% of adjournment requests.



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COST OF WITNESS ATTENDANCE AT COURT

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the total number of hours attributed to Police Officer attendance at Court was **147,860.05 hours.**

Using the 2024-25 payment scale, the cost is approximately **£4.1 million.**

LSA Legal Services Agency NORTHERN IRELAND

In 2024-25, the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland paid **£2.67 million** in expert witness fees.

Public Prosecution Service | Independent Fair Effective

In 2025, the PPS incurred **£136,489** in witness expenses for civilian and prosecution expert witnesses.

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4 RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR IMPROVEMENT



2 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

2 OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS