



# LAY MAGISTRATES

## COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF JUSTICE

### Inside the Courts

Understanding where Lay Magistrates sit and the role they play across Northern Ireland.

The Justice Northern Ireland Act 2015 created a single jurisdiction. This means Lay magistrates can sit anywhere in Northern Ireland, but each is assigned to a specific Administrative Court Division, or ACD.

There are three Administrative Court Divisions: South Eastern, North Eastern, and Western. Within each division, Lay Magistrates are assigned to a county court division, supported by a local Liaison Officer who acts as their main point of contact.

Lay Magistrates sit in two courts, the Family Proceedings Court, and the Youth Court. Family Proceedings Court: The Family Proceedings Court is led by a District Judge, sitting with two Lay Magistrates. It deals with family matters, such as child arrangements, safeguarding, and domestic abuse cases. These proceedings are confidential and focused on the welfare of children. Please pause the video to view the typical layout of the Family Proceedings Court.

Youth Court: The Youth Court is a criminal court, also made up of a District Judge and two Lay Magistrates. It deals with offences involving young people aged 10 to 17. The focus is on preventing reoffending, supporting young people, and helping victims understand the impact of a crime. Please pause the video to view the typical layout of a Youth Court.

To find out more, please visit the Lay Magistrates Hub at [www.nijac.gov.uk/laymagistrateshub](http://www.nijac.gov.uk/laymagistrateshub).