



What is Problem Solving Justice?

Problem-Solving Courts put District Judges at the centre of rehabilitation. Problem-Solving Courts bring together the authority of the Court and the services necessary to get beneath the symptoms of the problem to address the issues which drive the negative behaviour.

What is a Substance Misuse Court?

Substance Misuse Courts are specialised as they only work with individuals whose offending behaviour is driven by drug and/or alcohol misuse. The Substance Misuse Court Programme focuses on interventions which target factors that lead individuals to crime. The progress of the participants is reviewed and monitored by the Court to ensure they are engaging with the Programme. The Substance Misuse Court commenced at Belfast Magistrates' Court in April 2018.



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Substance Misuse Court

Information Leaflet

Who are the Substance Misuse Court Team?

The Substance Misuse Court Team consists of professional staff from the Probation Board of Northern Ireland and Inspire Wellbeing. The team supports the Court and the participant through the Problem- Solving process, to achieve positive outcomes in relation to offending and to reduce the impact of substance misuse for individuals, families and communities.

What can an individual expect whilst being a part of the Substance Misuse Court?

- Individual therapeutic intervention for substance misuse
- Opportunities to address issues underlying offending behaviour
- Access to social support
- Random Drug/Alcohol testing
- Regular reviews scheduled in Court with District Judge to evaluate progress.

Substance Misuse Court Process

Initial Screening completed by Substance Misuse Court Team to determine initial suitability. If suitable, individual referred on for full assessment. If unsuitable, District Judge determines sentencing.



Full assessment completed with Substance Misuse Court Team and assessment report completed for Court. If suitable, Substance Misuse Court commences. If unsuitable, District judge determines sentencing.



Engagement with Substance Misuse Court, including randomised testing & attendance at Court for regular progress reviews with District Judge. Duration is individual based on participant's needs but typically is between 6-12 months. If progress is deemed satisfactory individual remains on Substance Misuse Court. If progress is unsatisfactory, District Judge determines sentencing.



Following successful completion of Substance Misuse Court, a final report is submitted to District Judge, who will determine final sentencing outcome.



Who is eligible for the Substance Misuse Court?

Following referral by a District Judge (Magistrates' Court), assessment for the Substance Misuse Court is based upon the following criteria:

An individual who is -

- Aged 18 or over
- Has pleaded guilty or been convicted of an offence linked to substance misuse,
- Willing to co-operate with supervision, stop offending, avail of appropriate substance misuse treatment, and fully participate on the programme
- Willing to consent to the sharing of personal information between participating agencies/bodies
- Does not have chronic alcohol and/or drug problem that requires medical intervention
- Does not have a co-existing serious mental illness, which would impact on their ability to participate in the programme.

Some offences will affect whether an individual can be included on the Substance Misuse Court Programme - this can be discussed further with the Substance Misuse Court Team on an individual basis.