
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1981 No. 1675

The Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981

PART V

CRIMINAL JURISDICTION AND PROCEDURE

Summary trial

Non-appearance of accused: plea of guilty

24.—(1) Subject to paragraph (7), to this Article shall apply where a summons has been issued requiring a person to appear before a court of summary jurisdiction, other than a^[F1] youth] court, to answer to a complaint charging a summary offence, not being—

- (a) an offence which is also triable on indictment; or
- (b) an offence for which the accused is liable to be sentenced to be imprisoned for a term exceeding six months,

and the clerk of petty sessions is notified by or on behalf of the complainant that the^[F2] documents mentioned in paragraph (1A)] have been served upon the accused with the summons,^{F2} . . .

^[F2](1A) The documents referred to in paragraph (1) are—

- (a) a notice containing such statement of the effect of this Article as may be prescribed; and
- (b) either of the following—
 - (i) a concise statement in the prescribed form of such facts relating to the charge as will be placed before the court by or on behalf of the complainant if the accused pleads guilty without appearing before the court; or
 - (ii) a copy of such written statement or statements complying with subsections (2)(a) and (b) and (4) of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 (c. 28) (proof by written statement) as will be so placed in those circumstances.]

(2) Subject to paragraphs (3) to (5), where the clerk of petty sessions receives a notification in writing purporting to be given by the accused or by a solicitor acting on his behalf that the accused desires to plead guilty without appearing before the court, the clerk shall inform the complainant of the receipt of the notification and if at the time and place appointed for the hearing or adjourned hearing of the complaint the accused does not appear it is proved to the satisfaction of the court, on oath or by affidavit or in the prescribed manner, that the^[F2] documents mentioned in paragraph (1A)] have been served upon the accused with the summons, the—

- (a) subject to this Article and article 23 (3) the court may proceed to hear and dispose of the case in the absence of the accused, whether or not the complainant is also absent, in like manner as if both parties had appeared and the accused had pleaded guilty; or

Status: Point in time view as at 19/01/2020.

Changes to legislation: The Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, Section 24 is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 14 July 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

(b) if the court decides not to proceed as mentioned in sub-paragraph (a), the court shall adjourn or further adjourn the trial for the purpose of dealing with the complaint as if that notification had not been given.

(3) If at any time before the hearing the clerk of petty sessions receives an intimation in writing purporting to be given by or on behalf of the accused that he wishes to withdraw the notification given under paragraph (2) the clerk shall inform the complainant of that withdrawal and the court shall deal with the complaint as if this Article had not been made.

[^{F2}(4) Before accepting the plea of guilty and convicting the accused in his absence under paragraph (2), the court shall cause the following to be read out before the court—

- (a) in a case where a statement of facts as mentioned in paragraph (1A)(b)(i) was served on the accused with the summons, that statement;
- (b) in a case where a statement or statements as mentioned in paragraph (1A)(b)(ii) was served on the accused with the summons and the court does not otherwise direct, that statement or those statements;
- (c) the notification given under paragraph (2); and
- (d) any submission received with the notification which the accused wishes to be brought to the attention of the court with a view to mitigation of sentence.

(4A) Where the court gives a direction under paragraph (4)(b), the court shall read aloud the purport of so much of any statement as is not read out under that paragraph.

(4B) Whether or not a direction under sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph (4) is given in relation to any statement served as mentioned in that sub-paragraph, the court need not cause to be read out the declaration required by section 1(2)(b) of the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1968.]

(5) If the court proceeds under paragraph (2)(a) to hear and dispose of the case in the absence of the accused, the court shall not—

- (a) except on a resumption of the hearing after an adjournment under Article 50, permit any statement to be made by or on behalf of the complainant with respect to any facts relating to the offence charged other than the [^{F2} statements referred to in paragraph (1A)(b)];
- (b) without adjourning under that Article order him to be subject to any disqualification.

(6) Where the court adjourns in pursuance of this Article, notice of the adjournment shall be served on the accused and that notice shall specify the reason for the adjournment.

(7) The Lord Chancellor may by order provide that this Article shall not apply in relation to such offences in addition to those specified in paragraph (1) (a) and (b) as may be specified in the order, and an order under this paragraph shall be subject to [^{F3}negative resolution].

F1 1998 NI 9

F2 2003 NI 13

F3 Words in art. 24(7) substituted (12.4.2010) by Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Devolution of Policing and Justice Functions) Order 2010 (S.I. 2010/976), arts. 1(2), 15(5), **Sch. 18 para. 134** (with arts. 28-31); S.I. 2010/977, **art. 1(2)**

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