

PART 24

TRIAL AND SENTENCE IN A MAGISTRATES' COURT

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[Note. Part 3 contains rules about case management that apply at trial as well as during preparation for trial. The rules in this Part must be read in conjunction with those rules.]

When this Part applies

24.1.—(1) This Part applies in a magistrates' court where—

- (a) the court tries a case;
- (b) the defendant pleads guilty;
- (c) under section 14 or section 16E of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a), the defendant makes a statutory declaration of not having found out about the case until after the trial began;
- (d) under section 142 of the 1980 Act(b), the court can—
 - (i) set aside a conviction, or
 - (ii) vary or rescind a costs order, or an order to which Part 31 applies (Behaviour orders).

(2) Where the defendant is under 18, in this Part—

- (a) a reference to convicting the defendant includes a reference to finding the defendant guilty of an offence; and
- (b) a reference to sentence includes a reference to an order made on a finding of guilt.

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 14 was amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 205 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39). Section 16E was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

(b) 1980 c. 43; section 142 was amended by sections 26 and 29 of, and Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (c. 35).

[Note. A magistrates' court's powers to try an allegation of an offence are contained in section 2 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a). In relation to a defendant under 18, they are contained in sections 45, 46 and 48 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933(b).

See also section 18 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963(c), section 47 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998(d) and section 9 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000(e).

The exercise of the court's powers is affected by—

- (a) the classification of the offence (and the general rule, subject to exceptions, is that a magistrates' court must try—
 - (i) an offence classified as one that can be tried only in a magistrates' court (in other legislation, described as triable only summarily), and*
 - (ii) an offence classified as one that can be tried either in a magistrates' court or in the Crown Court (in other legislation, described as triable either way) that has been allocated for trial in a magistrates' court); and**
- (b) the defendant's age (and the general rule, subject to exceptions, is that an allegation of an offence against a defendant under 18 must be tried in a magistrates' court sitting as a youth court, irrespective of the classification of the offence and without allocation for trial there).*

Under sections 10, 14, 27A, 121 and 148 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(f) and the Justices of the Peace Rules 2016(g), the court—

- (a) must comprise at least two but not more than three justices, or a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts) (but a single member can adjourn the hearing);*
- (b) must not include any member who adjudicated at a hearing to which rule 24.17 applies (defendant's declaration of no knowledge of hearing);*
- (c) when reaching a verdict, must not include any member who was absent from any part of the hearing;*
- (d) when passing sentence, need not include any of the members who reached the verdict (but may do so).*

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 2 was substituted by section 44 of the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39) and amended by section 41 of, and paragraph 51 of Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Justice 2003 (c. 44).

(b) 1933 c. 12; section 45 was substituted by section 50 of the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39) and amended by section 15 of, and paragraph 20 of Schedule 4 to, the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4); section 46 was amended by section 46 of, and Schedule 7 to, the Justices of the Peace Act 1949 (c. 101), section 72 of, and paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 to, the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 (c. 54), section 154 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 7 to, the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (c. 43), sections 68 and 100 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 8 and paragraph 40 of Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and section 109 of, and paragraph 74 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39); and section 48 was amended by section 79 of, and Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1948 (c. 58), section 132 of, and Schedule 6 to, the Magistrates' Courts Act 1952 (c. 55), section 64 of, and paragraph 12 of Schedule 3 and Schedule 5 to, the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c. 37), sections 72, 79 and 83 of, and Schedules 6, 9 and 10 to, the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 (c. 54), sections 68 and 100 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 8 and paragraph 40 of Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53), section 106 of, and Schedule 15 to, the Access to Justice Act 1999 (c. 22) and section 109 of, and paragraph 75 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39).

(c) 1963 c. 37; section 18 was amended by section 100 of, and paragraph 40 of Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and section 168 of, and paragraph 5 of Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33).

(d) 1998 c. 37; section 47 was amended by section 165 of, and Schedule 12 to, the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 (c. 6), section 332 of, and Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and article 2 of, and paragraph 59 of the Schedule to S.I. 2005/886.

(e) 2000 c. 6; section 9 was amended by article 2 of, and paragraph 63 of the Schedule to S.I. 2005/886.

(f) 1980 c. 43; section 10 was amended by section 59 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48), section 68 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and section 47 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37). Section 14 was amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 205 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39). Section 27A was inserted by section 46 of the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39). Section 121 was amended by section 61 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33), section 92 of, and paragraph 8 of Schedule 11 to, the Children Act 1989 (c. 41), section 109 of, and paragraph 237 of Schedule 8 and Schedule 10 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39). Section 148 was amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 248 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39).

(g) S.I. 2016/709.

Under section 16A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a), the court may comprise a single justice where—

- (a) the offence charged is a summary offence not punishable with imprisonment;*
- (b) the defendant was at least 18 years old when charged;*
- (c) the court is satisfied that specified documents giving notice of the procedure under that section and containing other specified information have been served on the defendant; and*
- (d) the defendant has not served notice of an intention to plead not guilty, or of a desire not to be tried in accordance with that section.*

Under section 45 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933(b) and under the Justices of the Peace Rules 2016, where the court is a youth court comprising justices each member must be authorised to sit as a member of that youth court.

Under section 150 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(c), where two or more justices are present one may act on behalf of all.

Section 59 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933(d) requires that—

- (a) the expressions 'conviction' and 'sentence' must not be used by a magistrates' court dealing with a defendant under 18; and*
- (b) a reference in legislation to a defendant who is convicted, to a conviction, or to a sentence, must be read as including a reference to a defendant who is found guilty of an offence, a finding of guilt, or an order made on a finding of guilt, respectively.*

Under section 14 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, proceedings which begin with a summons or requisition will become void if the defendant, at any time during or after the trial, makes a statutory declaration that he or she did not know of them until a date after the trial began. See rule 24.17.

Under section 142 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980—

- (a) where a defendant is convicted by a magistrates' court, the court may order that the case should be heard again by different justices; and*
- (b) the court may vary or rescind an order which it has made when dealing with a convicted defendant,*

if in either case it appears to the court to be in the interests of justice to do so. See rule 24.18.

See also Part 32 (Breach, revocation and amendment of community and other orders). Rule 32.4 (Procedure on application by responsible officer) applies rules in this Part to the procedure with which that rule deals.]

General rules

24.2.—(1) Where this Part applies—

- (a) the general rule is that the hearing must be in public; but
- (b) the court may exercise any power it has to—
 - (i) impose reporting restrictions,
 - (ii) withhold information from the public, or
 - (iii) order a hearing in private; and

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 16A was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

(b) 1933 c. 12; section 45 was substituted by section 50 of the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39) and amended by section 15 of, and paragraph 20 of Schedule 4 to, the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4).

(c) 1980 c. 43; section 150 has been amended but none is relevant to the note to this rule.

(d) 1933 c. 12; section 59 was amended by sections 79 and 83 of, and Schedules 9 and 10 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1948 (c. 58) and section 18 of the Costs in Criminal Cases Act 1952 (c. 48).

- (c) unless the court otherwise directs, only the following may attend a hearing in a youth court—
- (i) the parties and their legal representatives,
 - (ii) a defendant’s parents, guardian or other supporting adult,
 - (iii) a witness,
 - (iv) anyone else directly concerned in the case, and
 - (v) a representative of a news-gathering or reporting organisation.
- (2) Unless already done, the justices’ legal adviser or the court must—
- (a) read the allegation of the offence to the defendant;
 - (b) explain, in terms the defendant can understand (with help, if necessary)—
 - (i) the allegation, and
 - (ii) what the procedure at the hearing will be;
 - (c) ask whether the defendant has been advised about the potential effect on sentence of a guilty plea;
 - (d) ask whether the defendant pleads guilty or not guilty; and
 - (e) take the defendant’s plea.
- (3) The court may adjourn the hearing—
- (a) at any stage, to the same or to another magistrates’ court; or
 - (b) to a youth court, where the court is not itself a youth court and the defendant is under 18.
- (4) Paragraphs (1) and (2) of this rule do not apply where the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules).

[Note. See sections 10, 16A, 27A, 29 and 121 of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980(a) and sections 46 and 47 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

Where the case has been allocated for trial in a magistrates’ court, part of the procedure under rule 24.2(2) will have taken place.

Part 6 contains rules about reporting, etc. restrictions. For a list of the court’s powers to impose reporting and access restrictions, see the note to rule 6.1.

Under section 34A of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933(b), the court—

- (a) may require the defendant’s parents or guardian to attend court with the defendant, where the defendant is under 18; and*
- (b) must do so, where the defendant is under 16,*

unless satisfied that that would be unreasonable.

Part 7 contains rules about (among other things) the issue of a summons to a parent or guardian.

Part 46 (Representatives) contains rules allowing a parent, guardian or other supporting adult to help a defendant under 18.]

Procedure on plea of not guilty

24.3.—(1) This rule applies—

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- (a) 1980 c. 43; section 29 was amended by sections 68 and 100 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 and paragraph 40 of Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53), section 168 of, and paragraph 41 of Schedule 10 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33) and section 41 of, and paragraph 51 of Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44). Section 16A was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).
 - (b) 1933 c. 12; section 34A was inserted by section 56 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and amended by section 107 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 5 to, the Local Government Act 2000 (c. 22).

- (a) if the defendant has—
 - (i) entered a plea of not guilty, or
 - (ii) not entered a plea; or
 - (b) if, in either case, it appears to the court that there may be grounds for making a hospital order without convicting the defendant.
- (2) If a not guilty plea was taken on a previous occasion, the justices' legal adviser or the court must ask the defendant to confirm that plea.
- (3) In the following sequence—
- (a) the prosecutor may summarise the prosecution case, concisely identifying the relevant law, outlining the facts and indicating the matters likely to be in dispute;
 - (b) to help the members of the court to understand the case and resolve any issue in it, the court may invite the defendant concisely to identify what is in issue;
 - (c) the prosecutor must introduce the evidence on which the prosecution case relies;
 - (d) at the conclusion of the prosecution case, on the defendant's application or on its own initiative, the court—
 - (i) may acquit on the ground that the prosecution evidence is insufficient for any reasonable court properly to convict, but
 - (ii) must not do so unless the prosecutor has had an opportunity to make representations;
 - (e) the justices' legal adviser or the court must explain, in terms the defendant can understand (with help, if necessary)—
 - (i) the right to give evidence, and
 - (ii) the potential effect of not doing so at all, or of refusing to answer a question while doing so;
 - (f) the defendant may introduce evidence;
 - (g) a party may introduce further evidence if it is then admissible (for example, because it is in rebuttal of evidence already introduced);
 - (h) the prosecutor may make final representations in support of the prosecution case, where—
 - (i) the defendant is represented by a legal representative, or
 - (ii) whether represented or not, the defendant has introduced evidence other than his or her own; and
 - (i) the defendant may make final representations in support of the defence case.
- (4) Where a party wants to introduce evidence or make representations after that party's opportunity to do so under paragraph (3), the court—
- (a) may refuse to receive any such evidence or representations; and
 - (b) must not receive any such evidence or representations after it has announced its verdict.
- (5) If the court—
- (a) convicts the defendant; or
 - (b) makes a hospital order instead of doing so,
- it must give sufficient reasons to explain its decision.
- (6) If the court acquits the defendant, it may—
- (a) give an explanation of its decision; and
 - (b) exercise any power it has to make—
 - (i) a behaviour order,

- (ii) a costs order.

[Note. See section 9 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a).

Under section 37(3) of the Mental Health Act 1983(b), if the court is satisfied that the defendant did the act or made the omission alleged, then it may make a hospital order without convicting the defendant.

Under section 35 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994(c), the court may draw such inferences as appear proper from a defendant's failure to give evidence, or refusal without good cause to answer a question while doing so. The procedure set out in rule 24.3(3)(e) is prescribed by that section.

The admissibility of evidence that a party introduces is governed by rules of evidence.

Section 2 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1865(d) and section 3 of the Criminal Evidence Act 1898(e) restrict the circumstances in which the prosecutor may make final representations without the court's permission.

See rule 24.11 for the procedure if the court convicts the defendant.

Part 31 contains rules about behaviour orders.]

Evidence of a witness in person

24.4.—(1) This rule applies where a party wants to introduce evidence by calling a witness to give that evidence in person.

(2) Unless the court otherwise directs—

(a) a witness waiting to give evidence must not wait inside the courtroom, unless that witness is—

- (i) a party, or
(ii) an expert witness;

(b) a witness who gives evidence in the courtroom must do so from the place provided for that purpose; and

(c) a witness' address must not be announced unless it is relevant to an issue in the case.

(3) Unless other legislation otherwise provides, before giving evidence a witness must take an oath or affirm.

(4) In the following sequence—

- (a) the party who calls a witness must ask questions in examination-in-chief;
(b) every other party may ask questions in cross-examination;
(c) the party who called the witness may ask questions in re-examination.

(5) If other legislation so permits, at any time while giving evidence a witness may refer to a record of that witness' recollection of events.

(6) The justices' legal adviser or the court may—

- (a) ask a witness questions; and in particular

(a) 1980 c. 43.

(b) 1983 c. 20; section 37(3) was amended by sections 1 and 55 of, and paragraphs 1 and 7 of Schedule 1 and Schedule 11 to, the Mental Health Act 2007 (c. 12). 37(3) was amended by sections 1 and 55 of, and paragraphs 1 and 7 of Schedule 1 and Schedule 11 to, the Mental Health Act 2007 (c. 12).

(c) 1994 c. 33; section 35 was amended by sections 35 and 120 of, and Schedule 10 to, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37). The Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) amendment to section 35 is not relevant to procedure in magistrates' courts.

(d) 1865 c. 18; section 2 was amended by section 10(2) of, and Part III of Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Law Act 1967 (c. 58).

(e) 1898 c. 36; section 3 was amended by section 1(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Right of Reply) Act 1964 (c. 34).

- (b) where the defendant is not represented, ask any question necessary in the defendant's interests.

[Note. Section 53 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999(a) provides that everyone is competent to give evidence in criminal proceedings unless unable to understand questions put or give intelligible answers. See also section 1 of the Criminal Evidence Act 1898(b).

Sections 1, 3, 5 and 6 of the Oaths Act 1978(c) provide for the taking of oaths and the making of affirmations, and for the words that must be used. Section 28 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963(d) provides that in a youth court, and where a witness in any court is under 18, an oath must include the words 'I promise' in place of the words 'I swear'. Under sections 55 and 56 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, a person may give evidence without taking an oath, or making an affirmation, where that person (i) is under 14 or (ii) has an insufficient appreciation of the solemnity of the occasion and of the particular responsibility to tell the truth which is involved in taking an oath.

The questions that may be put to a witness—

- (a) *by a party are governed by rules of evidence, for example—*
- (i) *the rule that a question must be relevant to what is in issue,*
 - (ii) *the rule that the party who calls a witness must not ask that witness a leading question about what is in dispute, and*
 - (iii) *the rule that a party who calls a witness may contradict that witness only in limited circumstances (see section 3 of the Criminal Procedure Act 1865)(e);*
- (b) *by the justices' legal adviser or the court are in their discretion, but that is subject to—*
- (i) *rules of evidence, and*
 - (ii) *rule 1.3 (the application by the court of the overriding objective).*

Under sections 34, 35 and 36 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999(f), a defendant who is not represented may not cross-examine a witness where—

- (a) *the defendant is charged with a sexual offence against the witness;*
- (b) *the defendant is charged with a sexual offence, or one of certain other offences, and the witness is a child; or*
- (c) *the court prohibits the defendant from cross-examining the witness.*

Part 23 contains rules relevant to restrictions on cross-examination.

Under section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(g), a witness may refresh his or her memory by referring to a record made before the hearing, either contained in a document made or verified by the witness, or in the transcript of a sound recording, if—

- (a) *the witness states that it records his or her recollection of events at that earlier time; and*

(a) 1999 c. 23.

(b) 1898 c. 36; section 1 was amended by section 1 of the Criminal Evidence Act 1979 (c. 16), section 78 of, and Schedule 16 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48), sections 80(9) and 119(2) of, and Schedule 7 to, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (c. 60), sections 31 and 168 of, and paragraph 2 of Schedule 10, and Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33), section 67 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 4, and Schedule 6 to, the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (c. 23) and sections 331 and 332 of, and paragraph 80 of Schedule 36, and Part 5 of Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44).

(c) 1978 c. 19.

(d) 1963 c. 37; section 28 was amended by section 2 of the Oaths Act 1978 (c. 19) and section 100 of, and paragraph 40 of Schedule 11 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53).

(e) 1865 c. 18.

(f) 1999 c. 23; section 35 was amended by sections 139 and 140 of, and paragraph 41 of Schedule 6 and Schedule 7 to, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (c. 42) and section 148 of, and paragraphs 35 and 36 of Schedule 26 to, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4).

(g) 2003 c. 44.

- (b) *that recollection is likely to have been significantly better when the record was made than at the time of the hearing.*

In some circumstances, a witness may give evidence in accordance with special measures directed by the court under section 19 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999(a), or by live link under section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988(b) or section 51 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003. Part 18 contains relevant rules.]

Evidence of a witness in writing

24.5.—(1) This rule applies where a party wants to introduce in evidence the written statement of a witness to which applies—

- (a) Part 16 (Written witness statements);
- (b) Part 19 (Expert evidence); or
- (c) Part 20 (Hearsay evidence).

(2) If the court admits such evidence—

- (a) the court must read the statement; and
- (b) unless the court otherwise directs, if any member of the public, including any reporter, is present, each relevant part of the statement must be read or summarised aloud.

[Note. See Parts 16, 19 and 20, and the other legislation to which those Parts apply. The admissibility of evidence that a party introduces is governed by rules of evidence.]

Evidence by admission

24.6.—(1) This rule applies where—

- (a) a party introduces in evidence a fact admitted by another party; or
- (b) parties jointly admit a fact.

(2) Unless the court otherwise directs, a written record must be made of the admission.

[Note. See section 10 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967(c). The admissibility of evidence that a party introduces is governed by rules of evidence.]

Procedure on plea of guilty

24.7.—(1) This rule applies if—

- (a) the defendant pleads guilty; and
- (b) the court is satisfied that the plea represents a clear acknowledgement of guilt.

(2) The court may convict the defendant without receiving evidence.

[Note. See section 9 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(d).]

Written guilty plea: special rules

24.8.—(1) This rule applies where—

- (a) the offence alleged—

(a) 1999 c. 23.
(b) 1988 c. 33; section 32 was amended by section 55 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53), section 29 of, and paragraph 16 of Schedule 2 to, the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (c. 35), section 62 of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (c. 25), section 67 of, and Schedule 6 and paragraph 3 of Schedule 7 to, the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (c. 23) and paragraphs 24 and 26 of the Schedule to S.I. 2004/2035.
(c) 1967 c. 80.
(d) 1980 c. 43.

- (i) can be tried only in a magistrates' court, and
- (ii) is not one specified under section 12(1)(a) of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a);
- (b) the defendant is at least 16 years old;
- (c) the prosecutor has served on the defendant—
 - (i) the summons or requisition,
 - (ii) the material listed in paragraph (2) on which the prosecutor relies to set out the facts of the offence,
 - (iii) the material listed in paragraph (3) on which the prosecutor relies to provide the court with information relevant to sentence,
 - (iv) a notice that the procedure set out in this rule applies, and
 - (v) a notice for the defendant's use if the defendant wants to plead guilty without attending court; and
- (d) the prosecutor has served on the court officer—
 - (i) copies of those documents, and
 - (ii) a certificate of service of those documents on the defendant.
- (2) The material that the prosecutor must serve to set out the facts of the offence is—
 - (a) a summary of the evidence on which the prosecution case is based;
 - (b) any—
 - (i) written witness statement to which Part 16 (Written witness statements) applies, or
 - (ii) document or extract setting out facts; or
 - (c) any combination of such a summary, statement, document or extract.
- (3) The material that the prosecutor must serve to provide information relevant to sentence is—
 - (a) details of any previous conviction of the defendant which the prosecutor considers relevant, other than any conviction listed in the defendant's driving record;
 - (b) if applicable, a notice that the defendant's driving record will be made available to the court;
 - (c) a notice containing or describing any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, which will be made available to the court.
- (4) A defendant who wants to plead guilty without attending court must, before the hearing date specified in the summons or requisition—
 - (a) serve a notice of guilty plea on the court officer; and
 - (b) include with that notice—
 - (i) any representations that the defendant wants the court to consider, and
 - (ii) a statement of the defendant's assets and other financial circumstances.
- (5) A defendant who wants to withdraw such a notice must notify the court officer in writing before the hearing date.
- (6) If the defendant does not withdraw the notice before the hearing date, then on or after that date—
 - (a) to establish the facts of the offence and other information about the defendant relevant to sentence, the court may take account only of—
 - (i) information contained in a document served by the prosecutor under paragraph (1),
 - (ii) any previous conviction listed in the defendant's driving record, where the offence is under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984(a), the Road Traffic Act 1988(b), the

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 12(1)(a) was amended by sections 308 and 332 of, and Part 12 of Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44).

Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Act 1988(c) or the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989(d),

(iii) any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, of which the prosecutor served notice under paragraph (1), and

(iv) any representations and any other information served by the defendant under paragraph (4)

and rule 24.11(3) to (9) inclusive must be read accordingly;

(b) unless the court otherwise directs, the prosecutor need not attend; and

(c) the court may accept such a guilty plea and pass sentence in the defendant's absence.

(7) With the defendant's agreement, the court may deal with the case in the same way as under paragraph (6) where the defendant is present and—

(a) has served a notice of guilty plea under paragraph (4); or

(b) pleads guilty there and then.

[Note. The procedure set out in this rule is prescribed by sections 12 and 12A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(e). Under section 12(1)(a), the Secretary of State can specify offences to which the procedure will not apply. None has been specified.]

Under section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(f) a justice of the peace may issue a summons requiring a defendant to attend court to answer an allegation of an offence. Under section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(g) a prosecutor authorised under that section may issue a written charge alleging an offence and a requisition requiring a defendant to attend court. Part 7 contains relevant rules.

For the court's power, where this rule applies, to take account of a previous conviction listed in a defendant's driving record, see section 13(3A) of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988(h).

The Practice Direction sets out forms of notice for use in connection with this rule.]

Single justice procedure: special rules

24.9.—(1) This rule applies where—

(a) the offence alleged—

(i) can be tried only in a magistrates' court, and

(ii) is not one punishable with imprisonment;

(b) the defendant is at least 18 years old;

(a) 1984 c. 27.

(b) 1988 c. 52.

(c) 1988 c. 54.

(d) 1989 c. 22.

(e) 1980 c. 43; section 12 was amended by section 45 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 5 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33), section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts (Procedure) Act 1998 (c. 15), section 109 of, and paragraph 203 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), section 308 of, and Part 12 of Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and section 81 of the Deregulation Act 2015 (c. 20). Section 12A was inserted by section 45 of, and paragraph 2 of Schedule 5 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33) and amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 204 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39).

(f) 1980 c. 43; section 1 was amended by section 68 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53), sections 43 and 109 of, and Schedule 10 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), section 31 of, and paragraph 12 of Schedule 7 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and section 153 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. It is further amended by paragraphs 7 and 8 of Schedule 36 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), with effect from a date to be appointed.

(g) 2003 c. 44; section 29 has been brought into force for certain purposes only (see S.I. 2007/1999, 2008/1424, 2009/2879, 2010/3005, 2011/2188, 2012/825 and 2014/633). It was amended by section 50 of, and paragraph 130 of Schedule 4 to, the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (c. 11), section 59 of, and paragraph 196 of Schedule 4 to, the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), section 15 of, and paragraph 187 of Schedule 8 to, the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (c. 22), S.I. 2014/834 and section 46 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

(h) 1988 c. 53; section 13(3A) was inserted by section 2 of the Magistrates' Courts (Procedure) Act 1998 (c. 15).

- (c) the prosecutor has served on the defendant—
 - (i) a written charge,
 - (ii) the material listed in paragraph (2) on which the prosecutor relies to set out the facts of the offence,
 - (iii) the material listed in paragraph (3) on which the prosecutor relies to provide the court with information relevant to sentence,
 - (iv) a notice that the procedure set out in this rule applies,
 - (v) a notice for the defendant’s use if the defendant wants to plead guilty,
 - (vi) a notice for the defendant’s use if the defendant wants to plead guilty but wants the case dealt with at a hearing by a court comprising more than one justice, and
 - (vii) a notice for the defendant’s use if the defendant wants to plead not guilty; and
- (d) the prosecutor has served on the court officer—
 - (i) copies of those documents, and
 - (ii) a certificate of service of those documents on the defendant.
- (2) The material that the prosecutor must serve to set out the facts of the offence is—
 - (a) a summary of the evidence on which the prosecution case is based;
 - (b) any—
 - (i) written witness statement to which Part 16 (Written witness statements) applies, or
 - (ii) document or extract setting out facts; or
 - (c) any combination of such a summary, statement, document or extract.
- (3) The material that the prosecutor must serve to provide information relevant to sentence is—
 - (a) details of any previous conviction of the defendant which the prosecutor considers relevant, other than any conviction listed in the defendant’s driving record;
 - (b) if applicable, a notice that the defendant’s driving record will be made available to the court;
 - (c) a notice containing or describing any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, which will be made available to the court.
- (4) Not more than 21 days after service on the defendant of the documents listed in paragraph (1)(c)—
 - (a) a defendant who wants to plead guilty must serve a notice to that effect on the court officer and include with that notice—
 - (i) any representations that the defendant wants the court to consider, and
 - (ii) a statement of the defendant’s assets and other financial circumstances;
 - (b) a defendant who wants to plead guilty but wants the case dealt with at a hearing by a court comprising more than one justice must serve a notice to that effect on the court officer;
 - (c) a defendant who wants to plead not guilty must serve a notice to that effect on the court officer.
- (5) If within 21 days of service on the defendant of the documents listed in paragraph (1)(c) the defendant serves a notice to plead guilty under paragraph (4)(a)—
 - (a) the court officer must arrange for the court to deal with the case in accordance with that notice; and
 - (b) the time for service of any other notice under paragraph (4) expires at once.
- (6) If within 21 days of service on the defendant of the documents listed in paragraph (1)(c) the defendant wants to withdraw a notice which he or she has served under paragraph (4)(b) (notice to plead guilty at a hearing) or under paragraph (4)(c) (notice to plead not guilty), the defendant must—

- (a) serve notice of that withdrawal on the court officer; and
 - (b) serve any substitute notice under paragraph (4).
- (7) Paragraph (8) applies where by the date of trial the defendant has not—
- (a) served notice under paragraph (4)(b) or (c) of wanting to plead guilty at a hearing, or wanting to plead not guilty; or
 - (b) given notice to that effect under section 16B(2) of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a).
- (8) Where this paragraph applies—
- (a) the court may try the case in the parties' absence and without a hearing;
 - (b) the court may accept any guilty plea of which the defendant has given notice under paragraph (4)(a);
 - (c) to establish the facts of the offence and other information about the defendant relevant to sentence, the court may take account only of—
 - (i) information contained in a document served by the prosecutor under paragraph (1),
 - (ii) any previous conviction listed in the defendant's driving record, where the offence is under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Road Traffic Act 1988, the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Act 1988 or the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989,
 - (iii) any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, of which the prosecutor served notice under paragraph (1), and
 - (iv) any representations and any other information served by the defendant under paragraph (4)(a)
- and rule 24.11(3) to (9) inclusive must be read accordingly.
- (9) Paragraph (10) applies where—
- (a) the defendant serves on the court officer a notice under paragraph (4)(b) or (c); or
 - (b) the court which tries the defendant under paragraph (8) adjourns the trial for the defendant to attend a hearing by a court comprising more than one justice.
- (10) Where this paragraph applies, the court must exercise its power to issue a summons and—
- (a) the rules in Part 7 apply (Starting a prosecution in a magistrates' court) as if the prosecutor had just served an application for a summons to be issued in the same terms as the written charge;
 - (b) the rules in Part 8 (Initial details of the prosecution case) apply as if the documents served by the prosecutor under paragraph (1) had been served under that Part;
 - (c) except for rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) and this rule, the rules in this Part apply.

[Note. The procedure set out in this rule is prescribed by sections 16A to 16D of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(b) and section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(c). Under section 16A of the 1980 Act, the court may comprise a single justice. Under section 29 of the 2003 Act, a prosecutor authorised under that section may issue a written charge alleging an offence and a single justice procedure notice. Part 7 contains relevant rules.]

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 16B was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).
(b) 1980 c. 43; sections 16A to 16D were inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).
(c) 2003 c. 44; section 29 has been brought into force for certain purposes only (see S.I. 2007/1999, 2008/1424, 2009/2879, 2010/3005, 2011/2188, 2012/825 and 2014/633). It was amended by section 50 of, and paragraph 130 of Schedule 4 to, the Commissioners for Revenue and Customs Act 2005 (c. 11), section 59 of, and paragraph 196 of Schedule 4 to, the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (c. 15), section 15 of, and paragraph 187 of Schedule 8 to, the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (c. 22), S.I. 2014/834 and section 46 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

Under section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a) a justice of the peace may issue a summons requiring a defendant to attend court to answer an allegation of an offence. Under sections 16C and 16D of the 1980 Act, a justice may issue a summons requiring a defendant to attend court in the circumstances listed in rule 24.9(9).

For the court's power, where this rule applies, to take account of—

- (a) information contained or described in a document served by the prosecutor under rule 24.9(1), see section 16F of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(b);*
- (b) a previous conviction listed in a defendant's driving record, see section 13(3A) of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988(c).*

The Practice Direction sets out forms of notice for use in connection with this rule.]

Application to withdraw a guilty plea

- 24.10.**—(1) This rule applies where the defendant wants to withdraw a guilty plea.
- (2) The defendant must apply to do so—
- (a) as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the reasons for doing so; and
 - (b) before sentence.
- (3) Unless the court otherwise directs, the application must be in writing and the defendant must serve it on—
- (a) the court officer; and
 - (b) the prosecutor.
- (4) The application must—
- (a) explain why it would be unjust not to allow the defendant to withdraw the guilty plea;
 - (b) identify—
 - (i) any witness that the defendant wants to call, and
 - (ii) any other proposed evidence; and
 - (c) say whether the defendant waives legal professional privilege, giving any relevant name and date.

Procedure if the court convicts

- 24.11.**—(1) This rule applies if the court convicts the defendant.
- (2) The court—
- (a) may exercise its power to require—
 - (i) a statement of the defendant's assets and other financial circumstances,
 - (ii) a pre-sentence report; and
 - (b) may (and in some circumstances must) remit the defendant to a youth court for sentence where—
 - (i) the defendant is under 18, and
 - (ii) the convicting court is not itself a youth court.
- (3) The prosecutor must—

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 1 was amended by section 68 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53), sections 43 and 109 of, and Schedule 10 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), section 31 of, and paragraph 12 of Schedule 7 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and section 153 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. It is further amended by paragraphs 7 and 8 of Schedule 36 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44), with effect from a date to be appointed.

(b) 1980 c. 43; section 16F was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

(c) 1988 c. 53; section 13(3A) was inserted by section 2 of the Magistrates' Courts (Procedure) Act 1998 (c. 15).

- (a) summarise the prosecution case, if the sentencing court has not heard evidence;
 - (b) identify any offence to be taken into consideration in sentencing;
 - (c) provide information relevant to sentence, including any statement of the effect of the offence on the victim, the victim's family or others; and
 - (d) where it is likely to assist the court, identify any other matter relevant to sentence, including—
 - (i) the legislation applicable,
 - (ii) any sentencing guidelines, or guideline cases,
 - (iii) aggravating and mitigating features affecting the defendant's culpability and the harm which the offence caused, was intended to cause or might foreseeably have caused, and
 - (iv) the effect of such of the information listed in paragraph (2)(a) as the court may need to take into account.
- (4) The defendant must provide details of financial circumstances—
- (a) in any form required by the court officer;
 - (b) by any date directed by the court or by the court officer.
- (5) Where the defendant pleads guilty but wants to be sentenced on a different basis to that disclosed by the prosecution case—
- (a) the defendant must set out that basis in writing, identifying what is in dispute;
 - (b) the court may invite the parties to make representations about whether the dispute is material to sentence; and
 - (c) if the court decides that it is a material dispute, the court must—
 - (i) invite such further representations or evidence as it may require, and
 - (ii) decide the dispute.
- (6) Where the court has power to order the endorsement of the defendant's driving record, or power to order the defendant to be disqualified from driving—
- (a) if other legislation so permits, a defendant who wants the court not to exercise that power must introduce the evidence or information on which the defendant relies;
 - (b) the prosecutor may introduce evidence; and
 - (c) the parties may make representations about that evidence or information.
- (7) Before the court passes sentence—
- (a) the court must—
 - (i) give the defendant an opportunity to make representations and introduce evidence relevant to sentence, and
 - (ii) where the defendant is under 18, give the defendant's parents, guardian or other supporting adult, if present, such an opportunity as well; and
 - (b) the justices' legal adviser or the court must elicit any further information relevant to sentence that the court may require.
- (8) If the court requires more information, it may exercise its power to adjourn the hearing for not more than—
- (a) 3 weeks at a time, if the defendant will be in custody; or
 - (b) 4 weeks at a time.
- (9) When the court has taken into account all the evidence, information and any report available, the court must—
- (a) as a general rule, pass sentence there and then;
 - (b) when passing sentence, explain the reasons for deciding on that sentence, unless neither the defendant nor any member of the public, including any reporter, is present;

- (c) when passing sentence, explain to the defendant its effect, the consequences of failing to comply with any order or pay any fine, and any power that the court has to vary or review the sentence, unless—
 - (i) the defendant is absent, or
 - (ii) the defendant’s ill-health or disorderly conduct makes such an explanation impracticable;
 - (d) give any such explanation in terms the defendant, if present, can understand (with help, if necessary); and
 - (e) consider exercising any power it has to make a costs or other order.
- (10) Despite the general rule—
- (a) the court must adjourn the hearing if the defendant is absent, the case started with a summons, requisition or single justice procedure notice, and either—
 - (i) the court considers passing a custodial sentence (where it can do so), or
 - (ii) the court considers imposing a disqualification (unless it has already adjourned the hearing to give the defendant an opportunity to attend);
 - (b) the court may exercise any power it has to—
 - (i) commit the defendant to the Crown Court for sentence (and in some cases it must do so), or
 - (ii) defer sentence for up to 6 months.

[Note. See sections 9, 10 and 11 of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980(a), and sections 143, 158, 164, 172 and 174 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(b).

Under section 11(3A) of the 1980 Act, a custodial sentence passed in the defendant’s absence does not take effect until the defendant is brought before the court.

Under sections 57D and 57E of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998(c), the court may require a defendant to attend a sentencing hearing by live link.

Under section 162 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(d), the court may require a defendant who is an individual to provide a statement of assets and other financial circumstances if the defendant—

- (a) serves notice of guilty plea, where rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) applies;
or
- (b) is convicted.

Under section 20A of the Criminal Justice Act 1991(e), it is an offence for a defendant knowingly or recklessly to make a false or incomplete statement of assets or other financial circumstances, or

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 10 was amended by section 59 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48), section 68 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and section 47 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37). Section 11 was amended by section 123 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (c. 33), section 168 of, and paragraph 39 of Schedule 10 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33), section 119 of, and paragraph 39 of Schedule 8 to, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37), section 304 of, and paragraphs 25 and 26 of Schedule 32 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and section 54 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4).

(b) 2003 c. 44; section 143 was amended by section 378 of, and paragraph 216 of Schedule 16 to the Armed Forces Act 2006 (c. 52). Section 158 was amended by section 64 of, and Part 4 of Schedule 5 to, the Children Act 2004 (c. 31), article 3 of, and paragraph 19 of Schedule 1 to, S.I. 2008/912 and section 12 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4). Section 164 was amended by section 14 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (c. 28). Section 174 was substituted by section 64 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10).

(c) 1998 c. 37; sections 57A to 57E were substituted for section 57 as originally enacted by section 45 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 (c. 48), and amended by sections 106, 109 and 178 of, and Part 3 of Schedule 23 to, the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (c. 25).

(d) 2003 c. 44; section 162 was amended by paragraph 24 of Schedule 16 to the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (c. 22).

(e) 1991 c. 53; section 20A was inserted by section 168 of, and paragraph 43 of Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33) and amended by sections 95 and 109 of, and paragraph 350 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39) and section 44 of, and paragraph 26 of Schedule 16 to, the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (c. 22).

to fail to provide such a statement, in response to a request by a court officer on behalf of the court.

Under section 156 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(a), the general rule (subject to exceptions) is that the court must obtain and consider a pre-sentence report—

- (a) where it is considering a custodial sentence or a community sentence;*
- (b) where it thinks the defendant may pose a significant risk of causing serious harm to the public by further offending.*

Under section 159 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(b), where the court obtains a written pre-sentence report about a defendant who is under 18, it may direct that information in it must be withheld, if it would be likely to create a risk of significant harm to the defendant.

For the circumstances in which a magistrates' court may (and in some cases must) remit the defendant to a youth court for sentence, see section 8 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000(c).

The Sentencing Council may issue sentencing guidelines under section 120 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009(d).

For the circumstances in which a court may (and in some cases must) order the endorsement of a defendant's driving record, or the disqualification of a defendant from driving, see sections 34, 35 and 44 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988(e). Under that legislation, in some circumstances the court has discretion not to make such an order. See also rule 29.1.

The evidence that may be introduced is subject to rules of evidence.

In addition to the specific powers to which this rule applies, the court has a general power to adjourn a trial: see rule 24.2.

Under section 174(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003(f), Criminal Procedure Rules may prescribe cases in which there do not apply the court's usual duties to give reasons and explanations. Written notice of the effect of some sentences is required by rule 28.2 (Notice of requirements of suspended sentence or community, etc. order), rule 28.3 (Notification requirements) and rule 30.2 (notice of fine or other financial order).

(a) 2003 c. 44; section 156 was amended by sections 6 and 149 of, and paragraphs 71 and 77 of Schedule 4 and Part 1 of Schedule 28 to, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4) and paragraphs 8 and 13 of Schedule 19, and paragraphs 20 and 22 of Schedule 21, to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10).

(b) 2003 c. 44; section 159 was amended by section 208 of, and paragraphs 145 and 147 of Schedule 21 to, the Legal Services Act 2007 (c. 29).

(c) 2000 c. 6; section 8 was amended by section 41 of, and paragraph 74 of Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and article 2 of, and paragraph 62 of the Schedule to S.I. 2005/886).

(d) 2009 c. 25.

(e) 1988 c. 53; section 34 was amended by section 29 of the Road Traffic Act 1991 (c. 40), section 3 of the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 (c. 11), section 165 of, and paragraph 121 of Schedule 9 to, the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 (c. 6), sections 56 and 107 of, and Schedule 8 to, the Police Reform Act 2002 (c. 30), section 25 of the Road Safety Act 2006 (c. 49), article 2 of S.I. 2007/3480, paragraphs 2 and 5 of Schedule 27 to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10) and section 56 of, and paragraphs 9 and 12 of Schedule 22 to, the Crime and Courts Act 2013 (c. 22). It is further amended by section 177 of, and paragraph 90 of Schedule 21 to, the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (c. 25) with effect from a date to be appointed. Section 35 was amended by section 48 of, and paragraph 95 of Schedule 4 to, the Road Traffic Act 1991 (c. 40), and section 165 of, and paragraph 122 of Schedule 9 to, the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 (c. 6). It is further amended by section 177 of, and 90 of Schedule 21 to, the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 (c. 25), with effect from a date to be appointed. Section 44 was amended by regulations 2 and 3 of, and paragraph 10 of Schedule 2 to, S.I. 1990/144 and section 9 of the Road Safety Act 2006 (c. 49). It is further amended by sections 10 and 59 of, and Schedule 7 to, the Road Safety Act 2006 (c. 49), with effect from a date to be appointed.

(f) 2003 c. 44; section 174 was substituted by section 64 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10).

For the circumstances in which a magistrates' court may (and in some cases must) commit a defendant to the Crown Court for sentence, see sections 3, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4, 4A and 6 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000(a).

Under section 1 of the 2000 Act(b), if (among other things) the defendant consents, the court may defer sentence for up to 6 months, for the purpose of allowing it to take account of the defendant's conduct after conviction, or any change in the defendant's circumstances.]

Procedure where a party is absent

24.12.—(1) This rule—

- (a) applies where a party is absent; but
- (b) does not apply where—
 - (i) the defendant has served a notice of guilty plea under rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules), or
 - (ii) the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules).

(2) Where the prosecutor is absent, the court may—

- (a) if it has received evidence, deal with the case as if the prosecutor were present; and
- (b) in any other case—
 - (i) enquire into the reasons for the prosecutor's absence, and
 - (ii) if satisfied there is no good reason, exercise its power to dismiss the allegation.

(3) Where the defendant is absent—

- (a) the general rule is that the court must proceed as if the defendant—
 - (i) were present, and
 - (ii) had pleaded not guilty (unless a plea already has been taken)and the court must give reasons if it does not do so; but
- (b) the general rule does not apply if the defendant is under 18;
- (c) the general rule is subject to the court being satisfied that—
 - (i) any summons or requisition was served on the defendant a reasonable time before the hearing, or
 - (ii) in a case in which the hearing has been adjourned, the defendant had reasonable notice of where and when it would resume;
- (d) the general rule is subject also to rule 24.11(10)(a) (restrictions on passing sentence in the defendant's absence).

(4) Where the defendant is absent, the court—

- (a) must exercise its power to issue a warrant for the defendant's arrest and detention in the terms required by rule 13.3(3) (Terms of a warrant for detention or imprisonment), if it passes a custodial sentence; and
- (b) may exercise its power to issue a warrant for the defendant's arrest in any other case, if it does not apply the general rule in paragraph (3)(a) of this rule about proceeding in the defendant's absence.

(a) 2000 c. 6; sections 3, 4 and 6 were amended, and sections 3A, 3B, 3C and 4A inserted, by paragraphs 21, 22A, 23, 24, 25 and 28 of Schedule 3 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44). Section 3A was amended by section 53 of, and paragraphs 1 and 9 of Schedule 13 to, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4) and paragraphs 7 and 8 of Schedule 21 to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10). Section 3C was amended by paragraphs 7 and 9 of Schedule 21 to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (c. 10). Section 6 was further amended by paragraphs 90 and 91 of Schedule 32, and Parts 7 and 9 of Schedule 37, to the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44).

(b) 2000 c. 6; section 1 was substituted, together with sections 1A to 1D, by section 278 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 23 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and amended by article 3 of, and paragraph 14 of Schedule 1 to, S.I. 2008/912.

[Note. See sections 11, 15 and 16 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a).

Under section 27 of the 1980 Act, where a magistrates' court dismisses an allegation of an offence classified as one that can be tried either in a magistrates' court or in the Crown Court (in other legislation, described as triable either way), that dismissal has the same effect as an acquittal in the Crown Court.

Under section 11 of the 1980 Act, the court may pass a custodial sentence in the defendant's absence if the case started with the defendant's arrest and charge (and not with a summons or requisition). Section 11(3A) requires that, in that event, the defendant must be brought before the court before being taken to a prison or other institution to begin serving that sentence: see also rule 13.3. Under section 7(1) of the Bail Act 1976(b), the court has power to issue a warrant for the arrest of a defendant released on bail who has failed to attend court when due to do so.

Under section 13 of the 1980 Act(c), the court has power to issue a warrant for the arrest of an absent defendant, instead of proceeding, where—

(1) the case started with—

(a) the defendant's arrest and charge, or

(b) a summons or requisition, if—

(i) the court is satisfied that that summons or requisition was served on the defendant a reasonable time before the hearing, or

(ii) the defendant was present when the hearing was arranged; and

(2) the offence is punishable with imprisonment; or

(3) the defendant has been convicted and the court considers imposing a disqualification.]

Provision of documents for the court

24.13.—(1) A party who introduces a document in evidence, or who otherwise uses a document in presenting that party's case, must provide a copy for—

(a) each other party;

(b) any witness that party wants to refer to that document;

(c) the court; and

(d) the justices' legal adviser.

(2) Unless the court otherwise directs, on application or on its own initiative, the court officer must provide for the court—

(a) any copy received under paragraph (1) before the hearing begins; and

(b) a copy of the court officer's record of—

(i) information supplied by each party for the purposes of case management, including any revision of information previously supplied,

(ii) each pre-trial direction for the management of the case,

(iii) any pre-trial decision to admit evidence,

(iv) any pre-trial direction about the giving of evidence, and

(v) any admission to which rule 24.6 applies.

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 14 was amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 205 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39).

(b) 1976 c. 63.

(c) 1980 c. 43; section 13 was amended by section 45 of, and paragraph 3 of Schedule 5 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33), section 48 of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (c. 25), section 3 of the Magistrates' Courts (Procedure) Act 1998 (c. 15), sections 31 and 332 of, and Part 12 of Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and sections 54 and 149 of, and Part 4 of Schedule 28 to, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (c. 4).

(3) Where rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) applies, the court officer must provide for the court—

- (a) each document served by the prosecutor under rule 24.8(1)(d);
- (b) the defendant's driving record, where the offence is under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984(a), the Road Traffic Act 1988(b), the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Act 1988(c) or the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989(d);
- (c) any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, of which the prosecutor served notice under rule 24.8(1); and
- (d) the notice of guilty plea and any representations and other information served by the defendant under rule 24.8(4).

(4) Where the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules), the court officer must provide for the court—

- (a) each document served by the prosecutor under rule 24.9(1)(d);
- (b) the defendant's driving record, where the offence is under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Road Traffic Act 1988, the Road Traffic (Consequential Provisions) Act 1988 or the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Act 1989;
- (c) any other information about the defendant, relevant to sentence, of which the prosecutor served notice under rule 24.9(1); and
- (d) any notice, representations and other information served by the defendant under rule 24.9(4)(a).

[Note. A written witness statement to which Part 16 applies may only be introduced in evidence if there has been no objection within the time limit to which rule 16.4 refers.

An expert report to which Part 19 applies may only be introduced in evidence if it has been served in accordance with rule 19.3.

See also rule 20.3 for the procedure where a party objects to the introduction of hearsay evidence, including such evidence in a document, and rules 21.3 and 21.4 for the procedure where a party objects to the introduction of evidence of bad character.

A direction about the giving of evidence may be made on an application to which Part 18 applies (Measures to assist a witness or defendant to give evidence).]

Place of trial

24.14.—(1) The hearing must take place in a courtroom provided by the Lord Chancellor, unless—

- (a) the court otherwise directs; or
- (b) the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules).

(2) Where the hearing takes place in Wales—

- (a) any party or witness may use the Welsh language; and
- (b) if practicable, at least one member of the court must be Welsh-speaking.

[Note. See section 3 of the Courts Act 2003(e), section 16A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(f) and section 22 of the Welsh Language Act 1993(a).

(a) 1984 c. 27.

(b) 1988 c. 52.

(c) 1988 c. 54.

(d) 1989 c. 22.

(e) 2003 c. 39.

(f) 1980 c. 43; section 16A was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

In some circumstances the court may conduct all or part of the hearing outside a courtroom. The members of the court may discuss the verdict and sentence outside the courtroom.]

Duty of justices' legal adviser

24.15.—(1) A justices' legal adviser must attend the court and carry out the duties listed in this rule, as applicable, unless the court—

- (a) includes a District Judge (Magistrates' Courts); and
- (b) otherwise directs.

(2) A justices' legal adviser must—

- (a) before the hearing begins, by reference to what is provided for the court under rule 24.13 (Provision of documents for the court) draw the court's attention to—
 - (i) what the prosecutor alleges,
 - (ii) what the parties say is agreed,
 - (iii) what the parties say is in dispute, and
 - (iv) what the parties say about how each expects to present the case, especially where that may affect its duration and timetabling;
- (b) whenever necessary, give the court legal advice and—
 - (i) if necessary, attend the members of the court outside the courtroom to give such advice, but
 - (ii) inform the parties (if present) of any such advice given outside the courtroom; and
- (c) assist the court, where appropriate, in the formulation of its reasons and the recording of those reasons.

(3) A justices' legal adviser must—

- (a) assist an unrepresented defendant;
- (b) assist the court by—
 - (i) making a note of the substance of any oral evidence or representations, to help the court recall that information,
 - (ii) if the court rules inadmissible part of a written statement introduced in evidence, marking that statement in such a way as to make that clear,
 - (iii) ensuring that an adequate record is kept of the court's decisions and the reasons for them, and
 - (iv) making any announcement, other than of the verdict or sentence.

(4) Where the defendant has served a notice of guilty plea to which rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) applies, a justices' legal adviser must—

- (a) unless the court otherwise directs, if any member of the public, including any reporter, is present, read aloud to the court—
 - (i) the material on which the prosecutor relies to set out the facts of the offence and to provide information relevant to sentence (or summarise any written statement included in that material, if the court so directs), and
 - (ii) any written representations by the defendant;
- (b) otherwise, draw the court's attention to—
 - (i) what the prosecutor alleges, and any significant features of the material listed in paragraph (4)(a)(i), and
 - (ii) any written representations by the defendant.

(a) 1993 c. 38.

(5) Where the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules), a justices' legal adviser must draw the court's attention to—

- (a) what the prosecutor alleges, and any significant features of the material on which the prosecutor relies to prove the alleged offence and to provide information relevant to sentence; and
- (b) any representations served by the defendant.

[Note. Section 28 of the Courts Act 2003(a) provides for the functions of a justices' legal adviser. See also sections 12 and 16A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(b).

Under section 12(7ZA) of the 1980 Act(c), Criminal Procedure Rules may specify which of the documents listed in section 12(7) of that Act(d), if any, must be read aloud, and may require them to be read aloud only in circumstances specified in the rules.]

Duty of court officer

24.16. The court officer must—

- (a) serve on each party notice of where and when an adjourned hearing will resume, unless—
 - (i) the party was present when that was arranged,
 - (ii) the defendant has served a notice of guilty plea to which rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) applies, and the adjournment is for not more than 4 weeks, or
 - (iii) the court tries a case under rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules), and the adjourned trial will resume under that rule;
- (b) if the reason for the adjournment was to postpone sentence, include that reason in any such notice to the defendant;
- (c) unless the court otherwise directs, make available to the parties any written report to which rule 24.11 (Procedure if the court convicts) applies;
- (d) where the court has ordered a defendant to provide information under section 25 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988(e), serve on the defendant notice of that order unless the defendant was present when it was made;
- (e) serve on the prosecutor—
 - (i) any notice of guilty plea to which rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) applies,
 - (ii) any declaration served under rule 24.17 (Statutory declaration of ignorance of proceedings) that the defendant did not know about the case;
- (f) serve on the prosecutor notice of any hearing date arranged in consequence of such a declaration, unless—
 - (i) the prosecutor was present when that was arranged, or
 - (ii) the court otherwise directs;
- (g) serve on the prosecutor—

(a) 2003 c. 39; section 28 was amended by section 15 of, and paragraphs 308 and 327 of Schedule 4 to, the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4).

(b) 1980 c. 43; section 12 was amended by section 45 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 5 to, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (c. 33), section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts (Procedure) Act 1998 (c. 15), section 109 of, and paragraph 203 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39), section 308 of, and Part 12 of Schedule 37 to, the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (c. 44) and section 81 of the Deregulation Act 2015 (c. 20). Section 16A was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

(c) 1980 c. 43; section 12(7ZA) was inserted by section 81 of the Deregulation Act 2015 (c. 20).

(d) 1980 c. 43; section 12(7) was amended by section 81 of the Deregulation Act 2015 (c. 20).

(e) 1988 c. 53; section 25 was amended by section 90 of, and paragraphs 140 and 142 of Schedule 13 to, the Access to Justice Act 1999 (c. 22), section 165 of, and paragraph 118 of Schedule 9 to, the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 (c. 6) and section 109 of, and paragraph 311 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39).

- (i) notice of any hearing date arranged in consequence of the issue of a summons under rule 37.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules), and in that event
- (ii) any notice served by the defendant under rule 37.9(2)(b) or (c);
- (h) record the court's reasons for not proceeding in the defendant's absence where rule 24.12(3)(a) applies; and
- (i) give the court such other assistance as it requires.

[Note. See sections 10, 11 and 12 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(a).]

Under section 25 of the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988, where the court does not know a defendant's sex or date of birth, then on convicting the defendant of an offence involving obligatory or discretionary disqualification, the court must order the defendant to provide that information.

Under Part 5, the magistrates' court officer must record details of a case and of the court's decisions.]

Statutory declaration of ignorance of proceedings

24.17.—(1) This rule applies where—

- (a) the case started with—
 - (i) an application for a summons,
 - (ii) a written charge and requisition, or
 - (iii) a written charge and single justice procedure notice; and
- (b) under section 14 or section 16E of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980(b), the defendant makes a statutory declaration of not having found out about the case until after the trial began.

(2) The defendant must—

- (a) serve such a declaration on the court officer—
 - (i) not more than 21 days after the date of finding out about the case, or
 - (ii) with an explanation for the delay, if serving it more than 21 days after that date;
- (b) serve with the declaration one of the following, as appropriate, if the case began with a written charge and single justice procedure notice—
 - (i) a notice under rule 24.9(4)(a) (notice of guilty plea), with any representations that the defendant wants the court to consider and a statement of the defendant's assets and other financial circumstances, as required by that rule,
 - (ii) a notice under rule 24.9(4)(b) (notice of intention to plead guilty at a hearing before a court comprising more than one justice), or
 - (iii) a notice under rule 24.9(4)(c) (notice of intention to plead not guilty).

(3) The court may extend that time limit, even after it has expired—

- (a) at a hearing, in public or in private; or
- (b) without a hearing.

(4) Where the defendant serves such a declaration, in time or with an extension of time in which to do so, and the case began with a summons or requisition—

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 10 was amended by section 59 of, and paragraph 1 of Schedule 9 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (c. 48), section 68 of, and paragraph 6 of Schedule 8 to, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (c. 53) and section 47 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (c. 37).

(b) 1980 c. 43; section 14 was amended by section 109 of, and paragraph 205 of Schedule 8 to, the Courts Act 2003 (c. 39). Section 16E was inserted by section 48 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (c. 2).

- (a) the court must treat the summons or requisition and all subsequent proceedings as void (but not the application for the summons or the written charge with which the case began);
 - (b) if the defendant is present when the declaration is served, the rules in this Part apply as if the defendant had been required to attend the court on that occasion;
 - (c) if the defendant is absent when the declaration is served—
 - (i) the rules in Part 7 apply (Starting a prosecution in a magistrates’ court) as if the prosecutor had just served an application for a summons in the same terms as the original application or written charge;
 - (ii) the court may exercise its power to issue a summons in accordance with those rules; and
 - (iii) except for rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules), the rules in this Part then apply.
- (5) Where the defendant serves such a declaration, in time or with an extension of time in which to do so, and the case began with a single justice procedure notice—
- (a) the court must treat the single justice procedure notice and all subsequent proceedings as void (but not the written charge with which the case began);
 - (b) rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules) applies as if the defendant had served the notice required by paragraph (2)(b) of this rule within the time allowed by rule 24.9(4); and
 - (c) where that notice is under rule 24.9(4)(b) (notice of intention to plead guilty at a hearing before a court comprising more than one justice) or under rule 24.9(4)(c) (notice of intention to plead not guilty), then—
 - (i) if the defendant is present when the declaration is served, the rules in this Part apply as if the defendant had been required to attend the court on that occasion,
 - (ii) if the defendant is absent when the declaration is served, paragraph (6) of this rule applies.
- (6) Where this paragraph applies, the court must exercise its power to issue a summons and—
- (a) the rules in Part 7 apply (Starting a prosecution in a magistrates’ court) as if the prosecutor had just served an application for a summons in the same terms as the written charge;
 - (b) except for rule 24.8 (Written guilty plea: special rules) and rule 24.9 (Single justice procedure: special rules), the rules in this Part apply.
- (7) A court officer may take the statutory declaration to which this rule refers if that officer—
- (a) is a justices’ legal adviser; or
 - (b) is nominated for the purpose by such a legal adviser.

[Note. Under sections 14 and 16E of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980, proceedings which begin with a summons, requisition or single justice procedure notice will become void if the defendant, at any time during or after the trial, makes a statutory declaration that he or she did not know of them until a date after the trial began.

Under section 14(3) or section 16E(9) of the 1980 Act, the court which decides whether or not to extend the time limit for serving a declaration under this rule may comprise a single justice.

Section 2 of the Commissioners for Oaths Act 1889(a) allows rules that regulate the procedure of a court to authorise the taking of a statutory declaration by an officer of that court.

The Practice Direction sets out a form of declaration for use in connection with this rule.]

(a) 1889 c. 10; section 2 was amended by section 59 of, and paragraph 15 of Schedule 11 to, the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 (c. 4).

Setting aside a conviction or varying a costs etc. order

24.18.—(1) This rule applies where under section 142 of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980(a), the court can—

- (a) set aside a conviction, or
- (b) vary or rescind—
 - (i) a costs order, or
 - (ii) an order to which Part 31 applies (Behaviour orders).

(2) The court may exercise its power—

- (a) on application by a party, or on its own initiative;
- (b) at a hearing, in public or in private, or without a hearing.

(3) The court must not exercise its power in a party’s absence unless—

- (a) the court makes a decision proposed by that party;
- (b) the court makes a decision to which that party has agreed in writing; or
- (c) that party has had an opportunity to make representations at a hearing (whether or not that party in fact attends).

(4) A party who wants the court to exercise its power must—

- (a) apply in writing as soon as reasonably practicable after the conviction or order that that party wants the court to set aside, vary or rescind;
- (b) serve the application on—
 - (i) the court officer, and
 - (ii) each other party; and
- (c) in the application—
 - (i) explain why, as appropriate, the conviction should be set aside, or the order varied or rescinded,
 - (ii) specify any variation of the order that the applicant proposes,
 - (iii) identify any witness that the defendant wants to call, and any other proposed evidence,
 - (iv) say whether the defendant waives legal professional privilege, giving any relevant name and date, and
 - (v) if the application is late, explain why.

(5) The court may—

- (a) extend (even after it has expired) the time limit under paragraph (4), unless the court’s power to set aside the conviction, or vary the order, can no longer be exercised;
- (b) allow an application to be made orally.

[Note. Under section 142 of the Magistrates’ Courts Act 1980—

- (a) where a defendant is convicted by a magistrates’ court, the court may order that the case should be heard again by different justices; and*
- (b) the court may vary or rescind an order which it has made when dealing with a convicted defendant,*

if in either case it appears to the court to be in the interests of justice to do so.

The power cannot be exercised if the Crown Court or the High Court has determined an appeal about that conviction or order.

(a) 1980 c. 43; section 142 was amended by sections 26 and 29 of, and Schedule 3 to, the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 (c. 35).

The Criminal Procedure Rules

as amended April 2016, October 2017, April 2018, October 2018, April 2019

& October 2019

See also rule 28.4 (Variation of sentence), which applies to an application under section 142 of the 1980 Act to vary or rescind a sentence.]