

## Introduction

### Contents of this volume

The statistics of this volume relate to the criminal and civil business of those courts in England and Wales for whose administration the Lord Chancellor is responsible. They also cover the work of some associated offices including the Public Guardianship Office, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and certain tribunals. Statistics relating to Northern Ireland courts are available separately from the Northern Ireland Court Service.

Each of chapters 1-8 includes a brief description of the function, constitution and jurisdiction of the courts or tribunals concerned together with an explanation of some of the procedures involved. Chapters 9 and 10 deal with the judiciary and taxation of costs and publicly funded legal services, respectively. In addition, commentary highlighting the major features of the statistics and any notable trends is included. All data relates to the calendar years shown, unless otherwise indicated. Reference to related statistical publications, where appropriate, is included.

### The court structure

The present arrangements for the organisation and administration of the superior courts date from 1 January 1972, when the Courts Act 1971 came into operation.

The Lord Chancellor is responsible for the administration of the Supreme Court, which consists of the Court of Appeal, the High Court, and the Crown Court, and of the county courts (see chart on page 3). Administrative responsibility is exercised through the Court Service which became an executive agency on 3 April 1995. Court Service staff are headed by a Circuit Administrator in each of the six circuits in England and Wales. These circuits are the Midland and Oxford (renamed the Midland Circuit in April 2001) with its headquarters in Birmingham, the North Eastern (Leeds), the Northern (Manchester), the South Eastern (London), the Wales and Chester (Cardiff) and the Western (Bristol). The map on page 4 shows the area covered by each circuit.

The Crown Court mainly deals with the more serious criminal offences which are committed for trial by magistrates' courts. The judges of the Crown Court are High Court judges (who also sit in the High Court to take civil business), circuit judges (who also sit in the county courts to try the less important civil cases), and part-time recorders. Overall supervision of the judicial work on each circuit is the responsibility of two High Court judges nominated by the Lord Chief Justice to act as Presiding Judges on the circuit, under the Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales.

Below the level of the High Court there are around 220 county courts, each of which has jurisdiction within its own district. They are presided over by circuit judges and district judges.

Judges are specially nominated by the Lord Chancellor for family work. This is referred to in more detail in Chapter 5.

One of the main features of the system is the flexible way in which it enables the judges to be deployed. High Court judges, circuit judges, and recorders are all judges of the Crown Court. As well as dealing with civil cases in the county courts, circuit judges may also be invited by the Lord Chancellor to sit from time to time as judges of the High Court for civil business. Recorders sit primarily in the Crown Court, but they may also sit on civil business.

## Magistrates' Court

From April 1992 the Lord Chancellor assumed responsibility for the administration of magistrates' courts. Statistics relating to criminal proceedings in these courts are published annually in the Home Office publication *Criminal Statistics*. Statistics relating to the family proceedings courts and the appointment of justices of the peace are dealt with in chapters 5 and 9 respectively in this edition of *Judicial Statistics*.

## Symbols and conventions used

The following symbols are used in the tables of this volume:

- nil
- .. not available or not appropriate

Estimated figures based on sample data are rounded and distinguished by italic type.

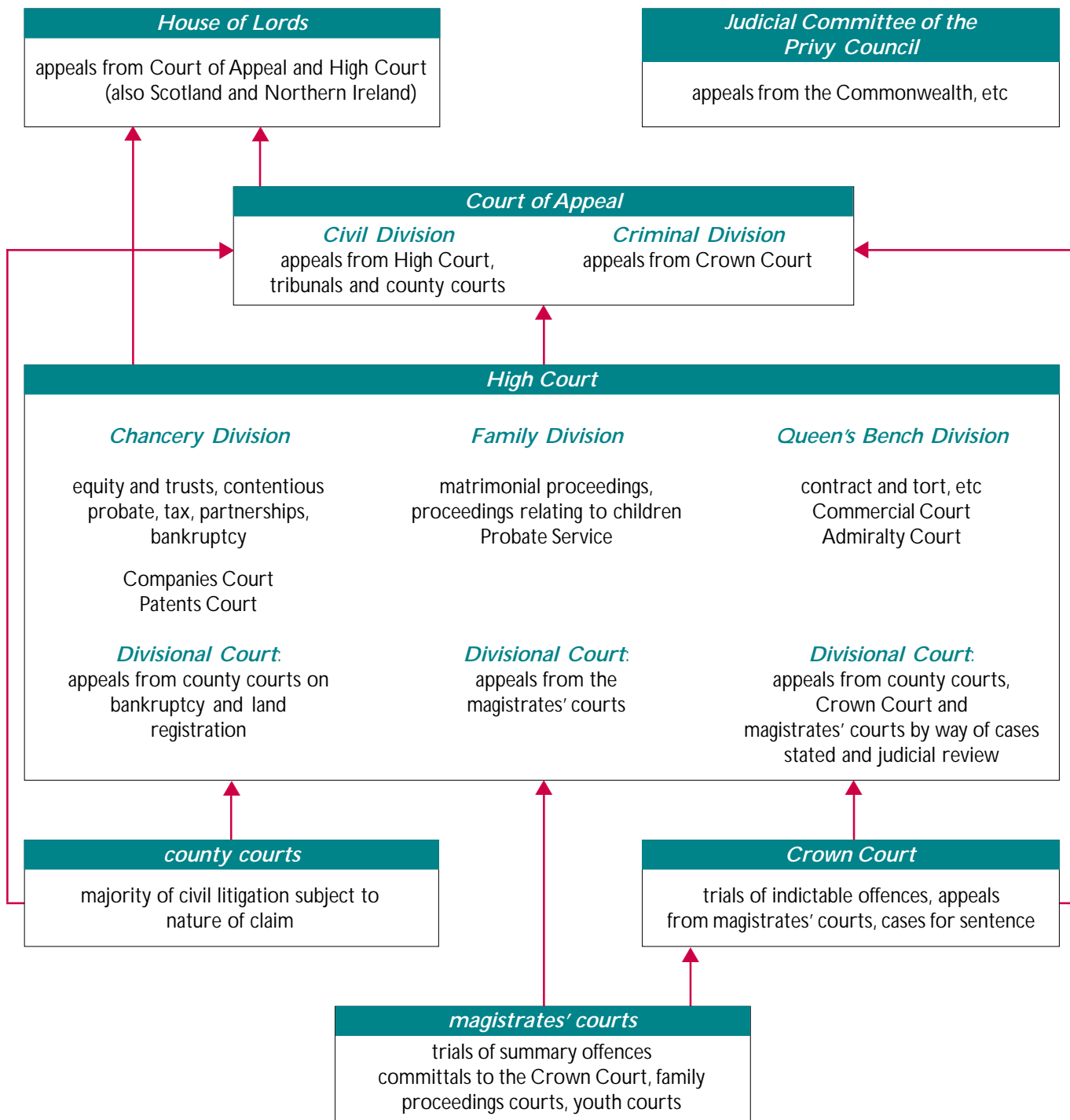
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## An outline of the court structure in England and Wales



This diagram is, of necessity, much simplified and should not be taken as a comprehensive statement on the jurisdiction of any specific court

# Circuit Boundaries of England and Wales

