

When a crime is committed and criminal charges are made by the police, it is the job of a Procurator Fiscal to decide which type of court to refer the case to.

The least serious offences such as speeding and petty theft are dealt with by Justice of the Peace Courts.

Penalties often include fines and the maximum prison sentence that can be issued is 60 days.

More serious cases, including most assaults, are heard in the Sheriff Court.

So-called summary cases are heard by the sheriff alone and are limited to 12 month sentences and £10,000 fines.

While solemn cases are heard by a sheriff with a jury and can lead to a prison sentence of up to five years or an unlimited fine.

The more serious cases such as murder and armed robbery are heard in the High Court.

At this court, there are no limits on the length of prison sentences or the fines that may be imposed.

Beyond prison, courts have used alternatives to try and reduce re-offending rates.

Through community payback schemes, offenders give back to their community through unpaid work like cleaning wasteland.

This noticeably improves local areas and allows the public to see justice being done.

Another alternative to prison is a Restriction of liberty order.

The offender is fitted with an electronic tag and is restricted to a specific place, for example their home, for a set amount of time.

Rehabilitation through drug treatment and testing orders is another way courts tackle crime.

Courts can impose a drug treatment and testing order when criminal behaviour is related to drug misuse.

When a crime has been committed by a child over the age of 12, the Procurator Fiscal will decide whether to refer them to a court or to the Children's Hearing system.

Hearings can be held when a young person has been in trouble with the police or at school, but most often they are held when someone is worried about a young person's wellbeing.

The hearing functions as an informal meeting where the young person feels comfortable to share their thoughts and experiences with a panel of three trained local volunteers.

The Children's Hearing System aims to ensure that the best interests of the young person are met, which could involve support at home or school from social workers or moving them to a safer setting.

The different parts of the Scottish criminal justice system reflect the severity of offences and the personal circumstances of its offenders.

Its ultimate aim is to reduce criminal activity across Scotland.