



April 24 2017

FEWER DEBT JUDGMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The number of debt judgments in Northern Ireland fell slightly during the first three months of 2017, according to figures released today by Registry Trust.

Registry Trust is the non-profit organisation which collects judgment information from jurisdictions across the British Isles and Ireland. In Northern Ireland it collects information on defaults and small claims judgments, and High Court judgments. A judgment is incontrovertible proof of unmanaged debt.

There were 1,925 small claims judgments in Q1 2017, three percent fewer than the first quarter of 2016. The total value rose by six percent, however, to £3.9m. The average value of a small claims judgment rose by nine percent to £2,049.

The number of judgments issued by the High Court increased by a quarter during the first quarter of the year, with 45 registered judgments worth a total of £8.5m. The average High Court judgment was £187,874.

Only 3.35 percent of judgments in Northern Ireland were marked as satisfied in Q1 2017. This contrasts with 11.83 percent in England and Wales, where satisfaction rates are generally higher owing to differences between the legal systems.

Under a new initiative developed by Registry Trust, lenders are being encouraged to notify the Trust directly when a judgment has been settled to their satisfaction. This will make an immediate difference in Northern Ireland, helping transform access to credit for thousands of consumers.

"At the moment it is up to consumers to tell us if they have satisfied a judgment," said Registry Trust chairman Malcolm Hurlston CBE. "The system works but the relative figures show it is far from perfect. If lenders notify us everybody will benefit."

In Q1 2017 Registry Trust received 8,150 requests to search the register for Northern Ireland online at www.trustonline.org.uk. Through TrustOnline people in Northern Ireland can search for judgments and similar information registered against businesses and consumers anywhere in the British Isles and the Republic. "It is a unique benefit for consumers to be able to check the debt record of any person or

business with which they may be transacting,” said Mr Hurlston. “Negative information would certainly make me think twice.”

ENDS

Statistics

- Defaults and small claims Q1 2017 (compared with Q1 2016)
 - Total: 1,925 (down three percent)
 - Value: £3.9m (up six percent)
 - Average: £2,049 (up nine percent)
- High Court judgments
 - Total: 45 (up 25 percent)
 - Value: £8.5m (up 120 percent)
 - Average: £187,874 (up 76 percent)

Notes for editors

Registry Trust is a non-profit company established in 1985. In England and Wales, it is the Registrar for Judgments, Orders and Fines, appointed by the Lord Chancellor. It maintains public records of judgment and decree information for most jurisdictions in the British Isles and Ireland. These records are an important factor in avoiding debt and in supporting responsible lending decisions, which in turn underpin a modern and stable economy.

Registry Trust holds a public register of Northern Ireland judgments. It collects details of undefended default, small claims and High Court judgments directly from the Northern Ireland Courts Service with their agreement.

Judgments can be removed from the register if paid in full within one calendar month of the issue date and Registry Trust is informed, but will otherwise remain registered for six years. If fully paid outside the one calendar month, the defendant can apply to have the judgment marked as ‘satisfied’, which will be taken into account in their credit rating. Failure to pay within one month is proof of unmanaged debt.

Anyone may search for entries against a named person or business at a stated address or a corporate body in Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland by visiting Registry Trust’s website www.trustonline.org.uk or by writing to Registry Trust, 153–157 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6QW.

To view the full set of annual statistics, please visit www.trustonline.org.uk/press.

For more information about Registry Trust's aims, structure and accountability as well as information about its range of products beyond the register of judgments please visit www.registry-trust.org.uk.

For more information, please contact Daniel Helen at dhelen@hurlstons.com or call 020 7239 4971.