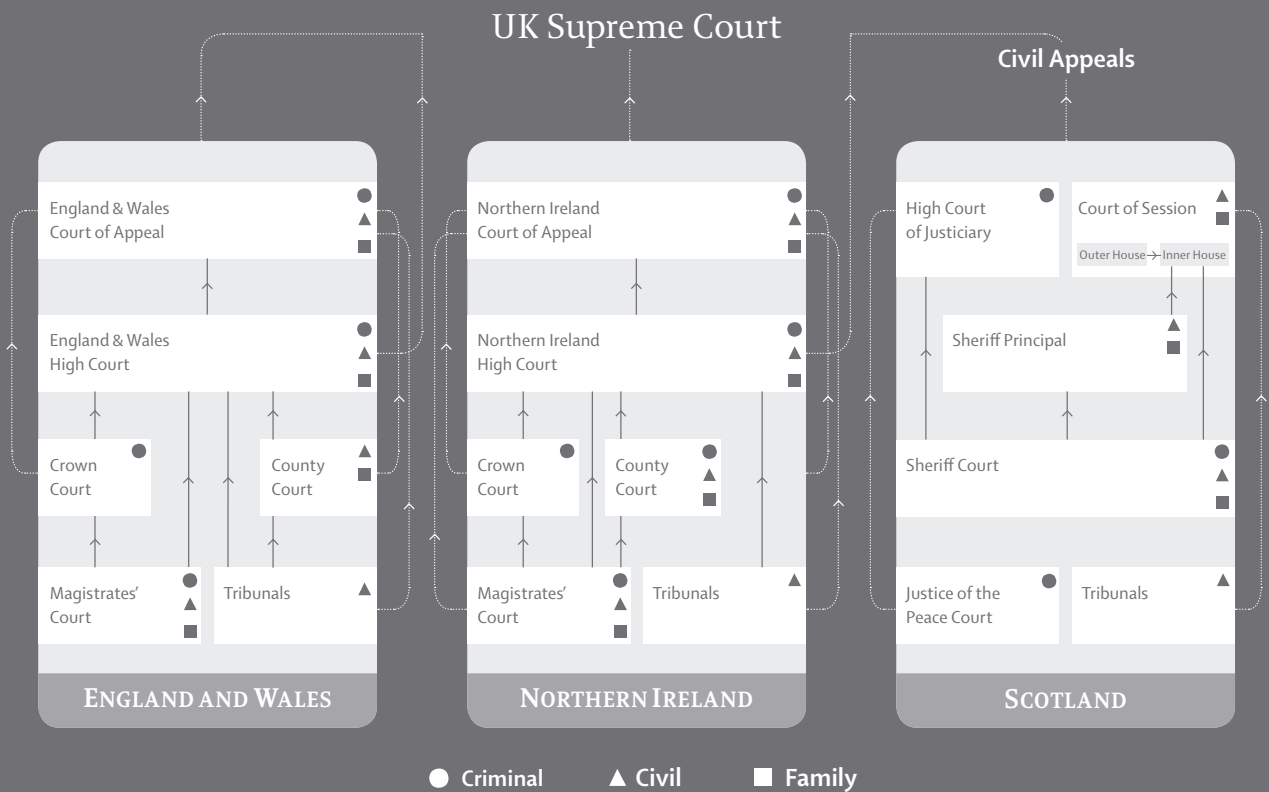


The Supreme Court and the United Kingdom's legal system

The Supreme Court sits at the apex of the United Kingdom's legal system, hearing appeals from courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



Devolution issues

The Supreme Court also decides "devolution issues", that is issues about whether the devolved executive and legislative authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have acted or propose to act within their powers (this includes not acting compatibly with their rights and duties under the European Convention on Human Rights and European Community law) or have failed to comply with any other duty imposed on them.

Devolution cases can reach the UK Supreme Court in three ways:

- Through a reference from someone who can exercise relevant statutory powers such as the Attorney General, whether or not the issue is the subject of litigation.
- Through an appeal from certain higher courts in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Through a reference from certain appellate courts.