

WHO'S KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR?

Local councils and their use of bailiffs and debt recovery agencies¹

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■ Toplines

- Between 2007 and 2010, local councils passed a total of **almost six million** (5,939,003) cases to third-party debt recovery agencies such as bailiffs for the late payment of council taxes and parking fines.

The local authorities who utilised the largest number of bailiffs and debt recovery agencies are:

		Total
1	City of Edinburgh	287,315
2	Glasgow City	281,718
3	Birmingham	223,810
4	Liverpool	167,039
5	Manchester	149,635
6	Newham	131,542
7	Leeds	124,379
8	Barnet	114,011
9	Fife	91,423
10	Redbridge	82,718

*A full breakdown of the number of cases passed to bailiffs **by local authority** by a) overall number, b) non-payment of council tax c) parking infringements, can be found from page 8 onwards.*

- The figure is comprised of **4,527,917 cases for the non-payment of council tax** and **1,411,086 cases for the non-payment of fines for parking infringements.**

Commenting on the figures Daniel Hamilton, Director of Big Brother Watch said:

“Sending in bailiffs to recover debts should always be the absolute last resort. The fact local councils have passed more than six million cases to bailiffs for matters as trivial as the late payment of council taxes and parking fines is truly shocking.

“In many cases, bailiffs are a law unto themselves; barging their way into people’s homes, intimidating vulnerable members of the public and imposing rip-off charges.

“The Coalition Government must act now to end the culture of bully-boy debt collection which has taken hold in Town Halls across the country”.

¹ This report is by Daniel Hamilton, who received assistance with the research from Frank Manning. Previous Big Brother Watch reports can be found at <http://www.bigbrotherwatch.org.uk>.

■ Introduction

The debt recovery industry is booming in the United Kingdom. Across the country, there are in excess of 500 companies engaged in recovering unpaid debts with a collective turnover of more than £3 billion per annum. In total, 17 million debt recovery cases were processed last year².

In many cases, the largest single customers of these debt recovery agencies are local councils, who use them to recover unpaid debts from individuals and businesses based inside their boundaries. As our report suggests, more than a third of the 17 million cases processed by debt recovery agencies are direct referrals from local authorities.

Back in March 2010, an investigation by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) revealed that there had been a 30% increase³ in the number of people seeking help following aggressive demands from bailiffs for the payment of debts.

After examining 500 cases which had been brought to them by members of the public complaining about their treatment at the hands of bailiffs, the CAB concluded that:

- 64% of bailiffs were guilty of harassment or intimidation;
- 40% misrepresented their powers of entry;
- A quarter threatened debtors with imprisonment; and
- 42% charged excessive fees⁴.

It is clear that many debt recovery agencies frequently charge exorbitant fees for their services and adopt highly threatening tactics in their effort to recover unpaid debts.

In this report, Big Brother Watch exposes which local councils are most willing to utilise the services of bailiffs and debt recovery agencies in order to recover unpaid council taxes and fines for parking infringements.

Bailiffs and the law

The National Standards for Enforcement Agents were introduced by HMCS in May 2002. They are good practice guidelines that set out general rules on how bailiffs should behave and what procedures they should follow. They are not enforceable by law⁵.

Since 1st April 1998, local authorities must send a letter giving 14 days notice of a proposed bailiff visit to collect Council Tax, while County Court bailiffs must issue a warning notice allowing 7 days for the debtor to pay.

The majority of bailiffs do not have the right to force their way into a private property. Her Majesty's Courts Service did, however, provide guidance for bailiffs in 2004 which said that breaking into homes can be used as a last resort to obtain court fines⁶.

² <http://www.qck.com/debt-collection.html>

³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8578793.stm>

⁴ http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_20070305

⁵ http://www.insolvencyhelpline.co.uk/debt_basics/bailiff-guide.php#bg2

Ordinarily, bailiffs can only enter a home by means of a peaceful entry. This includes entering a property through an open door or window and the climbing of fences or gates (without breaking them). If a bailiff is met at the door, they can be invited in or refused entry by the occupants. However, bailiffs have been known to utilise their limited powers in a variety of nefarious ways, such as asking to use the telephone or toilet. These are designed to trick householders into inviting the bailiff in⁷.

Once they have gained entry to the house, their powers increase exponentially.

They can search all rooms in the house, break open locked doors or cupboards and find and seize any goods of value belonging to the debtor. The only exceptions to this are:

“Such clothing, bedding, furniture, household equipment or provisions as are necessary for satisfying the basic domestic needs of the debtor and his/her family” and “such tools, books, vehicles, and other items of employment as are necessary to the debtor for use personally in their employment, business and vocation”.

They are also able to return to the property at any future date and enter without permission. Any attempt to remove a bailiff from a property once they have gained entry is considered assault and could be punished by prosecution.

A forced entry can only be performed by bailiffs from the Collector of Taxes (Inland Revenue) when they have a warrant empowering them to do so. They will only utilise this as a last resort. Representatives of Debt Collection Agencies have no powers at all, as they are not authorised to collect a debt on behalf of a creditor⁸.

Bailiffs and financial charges

Council Tax

When pursuing a debt in respect of unpaid council tax, bailiffs are not permitted to charge the recipient for the cost of sending letters. They are, however, allowed to charge two visits to the property, billable at £24.50 for the first visit and £18.00 for the second.

When seizing property, bailiffs are entitled to impose a 'levy charge' on any goods they obtain. This amount is variable depending on the total amount of debt an individual must pay. While the rules governing the levy are complicated, figures outlined by Advice Now, a not-for-profit group providing advice on legal issues, suggests that if an individual owes less than £100 the charge will be £24.50, rising to £40.05 for a £500 debt and £78 for a £2000 debt⁹.

Further to the 'levy charge', bailiffs are also entitled to charge for imposing a 'Walking Possession Agreement' at a cost of £12. A 'Walking Possession Agreement'¹⁰ is imposed in cases where a bailiff decides to leave goods he has formally seized in a property for a period

⁶ <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article5375668.ece>

⁷ <http://www.dca.gov.uk/enforcement/agents02.htm>

⁸ <http://www.payplan.com/debt-library/bailiffs-bailiff-law.php>

⁹ <http://www.advicenow.org.uk/advicenow-guides/consumer-and-money-problems/dealing-with-bailiffs/what-bailiffs-can-charge-html,621,FP.html>

¹⁰ http://www.insolvencyhelpline.co.uk/debt_basics/bailiff-guide.php

of time prior to removing them. During this period of time, the goods are legally the possession of the bailiff and cannot be sold on or otherwise removed from the property.

When goods have been formally seized, bailiffs are then able to charge the debtor for any 'reasonable costs' incurred when selling their possessions. This charge stands at £24.50 or up to a maximum of 5% of the total value of the goods in question.

Parking infringements

When seeking to recover unpaid parking fines, bailiffs are entitled to charge an initial fee of £13.16 for sending the debtor a letter informing them that they have scheduled a date to visit the property.

If the bailiff opts to impose a 'Walking Possession Agreement' or seizes an individual's goods on the spot, they can impose a charge for "levying distress". For a debt of £100, this fee is £28, rising to £56 for a £200 fine and £100 for a £1000 fine.

If an individual refuses to grant a bailiff access to their property, they are able to impose "reasonable costs" on the debtor for that visit. While they can only impose such costs for the first three visits to a property, these costs can run to hundreds of pounds per visit as many bailiffs have large vehicles with them at all times.

When selling goods at auction, bailiffs are entitled to 15% of total amount earned from the sale of the goods or 7.5% if the goods are auctioned from inside the debtor's home¹¹.

■ Over-stepping the mark

Examples of council incompetence in respect of debt recovery and abusive behaviour on the part of bailiffs are numerous:

Islington Borough Council – 102 year old with dementia threatened by bailiffs

A 102 year old woman living in a residential nursing home in Islington was threatened with bailiff action having failed to pay £262 in outstanding council tax charges. A judge awarded Islington Borough Council a total of £150 in costs, increasing her debt to more than £400. After complaints from her son, the council retracted their demands and offered the lady £50 in compensation. Her 80 year old son said, "I was incensed when I saw that letter. It threatens her with bailiffs and insolvency, which is very alarming for someone of mum's age. She could have had a heart attack and dropped down dead."¹²

Rushmoor Borough Council – Bailiffs attempt to seize mobility scooter

A disabled woman in her 70s faced threats by bailiffs working on behalf of Rushmoor Borough Council after failing to pay costs associated with a £35 parking ticket. After being unable to pay the initial £35 parking debt in the permissible two week period as

¹¹ <http://www.advicenow.org.uk/advicenow-guides/consumer-and-money-problems/dealing-with-bailiffs/what-bailiffs-can-charge-html,621,FP.html>

¹² <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23826889-appalling-council-threatens-102-year-old-woman-with-bailiffs.do>

a result of being hospitalised for several weeks, the fine doubled to £70. Having failed to contact the woman, the fine then rose to £360 once the bailiff's administration fees and other charges were taken into account. A report from the Rushmoor Citizens Advice Bureau suggests that, in pursuit of the debt, bailiffs threatened to seize the elderly lady's mobility scooter¹³.

Rossendale Borough Council - £166 debt results in £400 of charges

According to a report in the Manchester Evening News, the bailiff agency Equita attempted to claim £400 of charges for council debts accrued while a pregnant woman was in hospital. The woman in question, 28 year old Catherine Boyes, admitted failing to pay one £166.09 instalment of council tax to Rossendale Borough Council, yet faced a total demand of £454 from Equita. Aside from threatening to remove property from Ms Boyes' home, Equita also said they would remove an Audi parked near her home - which did not belong to either her or her partner. After six months, the Citizens Advice Bureau secured a reduction in the charges payable to £85.

Croydon Borough Council – Bailiff illegally forces his way into home

A Croydon couple were awarded £2,000 compensation after their home was broken into in the early hours of the morning by an Equita bailiff seeking to recover an unpaid £50 parking fine accrued by a previous resident of the property. According to a report in the Croydon Guardian, the bailiffs "unplugged electrical appliances and threatened to take them away, despite being told repeatedly that the people they were looking for had gone". They only left after the Police were called¹⁴.

South Oxfordshire District Council – Elderly man harassed for debt he didn't owe

South Oxfordshire District Council was forced to issue a formal apology to an 80 year old man after appointing bailiffs to pursue him for a debt of £475 which he did not owe. The bailiffs were only called off after the gentleman's family stepped in and alerted the council to their error. Dennis Reeves, the man in question, said: "Even if a doorbell rang I would wonder who it was, so I wouldn't answer the door"¹⁵.

Mid Sussex District Council - £25 parking ticket results in £1,600 in charges

A Sussex woman was handed a bailiff bill of £1,600 after refusing to pay a £25 parking fine she incurred after returning to her car three minutes later. After disputing the ticket with the local council for seventeen months, bailiffs removed and sold her BMW estate, yet demanded a further £1,600 in charges for removing, storing and selling the vehicle¹⁶.

¹³ http://www.gethampshire.co.uk/news/s/2086073_elderly_woman_threatened_with_bailiff_action

¹⁴ http://www.croydonguardian.co.uk/news/1578835.breakin_bailiff_banned/

¹⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/oxfordshire/8403673.stm>

¹⁶ <http://www.thisissussex.co.uk/news/Driver-s-car-towed-sold-163-25-fine/article-3365337-detail/article.html>

Drakes Group – Bailiff tells explicit untruths in order to recover £400

Bailiffs are only allowed to seize property from individuals at the address at which they live. Nonetheless, a BBC undercover reporter witnessed a representative of Drakes Group, one of the UK's largest bailiff firms, deliberately lie to a woman when attempting to recover a debt her son had run up. The reporter witnessed the bailiff inform the woman he was a "court enforcement officer" and say, "*the problem is at the moment madam, the court has issued a warrant against him at this address... unless we can gain £400 this morning... we do have a warrant to remove goods*". After entering her home to record details of her property, the bailiff informed her that "*if it's not paid by this afternoon we will come back with a locksmith if necessary to remove the property*"¹⁷. The fine was paid that day.

“Mr Ladders” – Bailiff doesn't bother knocking, enters home through open window

During an investigation into the debt recovery industry, the Daily Mail encountered a bailiff with a background in the sales industry whose "favourite method was to double or triple the debt owed, then offer the tenants a £100 discount as if doing so out of the kindness of his heart".

The individual in question was known as "Mr Ladders" by colleagues, given his penchant for entering properties through open windows. Jim Wheble, the journalist who conducted the investigation said, "*Instead of making for her front door, 'Mr Ladders' decided on another approach. As I looked on in astonishment, he took a ladder from the back of the van and proceeded to climb into the house via an open window. The next thing I heard was screaming coming from the house after the tenant had discovered her intruder. But although there was no conceivable justification for terrifying this entirely innocent woman alone at home with her two small children, [this person's behaviour was] thanks to an old law... completely legal.*"¹⁸

■ Putting the figures in context

Overall:

- At 5,939,003, the total number of cases passed to bailiffs and debt recovery agencies is larger than the entire population of Finland, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand and Ireland¹⁹.
- The total number of cases passed to bailiffs is larger than the population of 11 of the 27 European Union countries.
- The total number of cases that have been passed to bailiffs across the UK is equal to double the population of Wales (2,903,085²⁰) and is greater than the number of people living in Scotland (5,062,011²¹).

¹⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/5377488.stm>

¹⁸ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-406678/Blowing-whistle-violent-corrupt-world-bailiffs.html>

¹⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>

²⁰ <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=185>

²¹ <http://gro-scotland.gov.uk/scrol-maintenance.html?profile=Population&mainArea=beauty&mainLevel=Locality>

- Only eighteen of the fifty states of the United States have a larger population than the total number of cases passed to bailiffs and debt recovery agencies.

Council tax:

- Lambeth Council were the biggest users of bailiffs in London, racking up over 60,000 cases, or enough people to fill the Emirates Stadium²².
- Glasgow City Council sent 228,769 cases to bailiffs, more than a third of the city's total population and more than enough people to fill Rangers' Ibrox Stadium four times over²³.
- Birmingham City Council sent 168,801 on to bailiffs, almost the entire population of Dudley²⁴ and enough to fill Aston Villa's Villa Park Stadium four times over²⁵.
- Nottingham Council sent 41,915 cases to bailiffs, around twice the population of the city's suburb of Beeston²⁶.
- In sending 71,908 cases to bailiffs, North Ayrshire passed on the details of a number equivalent to 53% of the people living in the Borough.

Parking infringements:

- Barnet Borough Council passed on 93,680²⁷ cases of non-payment of parking fines on to bailiffs over the last 3 years. That's more than any other council and more than enough people to fill the entire Wembley Stadium.
- Newham Council passed 87,327 cases to bailiffs and debt-recovery agencies, a figure equivalent to more than a third of their total population of 249,500²⁸.
- Fife Council passed 5,707 cases to bailiffs for parking infringements while neighbouring Aberdeenshire sent only 4.

■ Methodology

Each London Borough (32 in total), English Metropolitan (36), English District (201), English Unitary (56), Scottish Unitary (32) and Welsh Unitary (22)²⁹ council was sent a Freedom of Information request by Big Brother Watch on 31st January 2011.

The Freedom of Information request asked that Councils provide, for the financial years 2007/8, 2008/2009 and 2009/10, the following information:

- 1) The total number of residents whose details have been passed to third-party debt recovery agencies for non-payment of council tax.

²² <http://www.stadiumguide.com/emirates.htm>

²³ http://www.rangerspedia.org/index.php/Ibrox_Stadium

²⁴ <http://www.dudley.gov.uk/council--democracy/statistics--census-information>

²⁵ <http://www.stadiumguide.com/villapark.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.broxtowe.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5054>

²⁷ http://www.wembleystadium.com/ask_wembley.htm

²⁸ <http://www.apfo.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=92164>

²⁹ <http://www.lgcareers.com/what-is-local-government/facts-and-figures/types-of-council/>

- 2) The total number of residents whose details have been passed to third-party debt recovery agencies for non-payment of fines arising from parking infringements in areas under the jurisdiction of the council.

In many cases, councils stated that they were unable to segment their responses into residents and non-residents. In these cases, the numbers listed reflect the total number of cases councils have passed to third-parties as opposed to simply the number of residents of the local government area whose details were transferred to third-parties.

County Councils were not included in the research as they do not have responsibility for collecting council tax rates with this responsibility falling to the District and Borough Councils contained within their administrative boundaries.

Similarly, councils in Northern Ireland were not included in the research as they continue to operate a modified system of domestic rates, based on the capital value of individual properties similar to that formerly used in the rest of the United Kingdom³⁰.

Responses received from local councils after 29th March have not been incorporated into this research paper.

■ A) Total number of cases passed to a debt recovery agency or bailiff by council

		Total
1	City of Edinburgh	287315
2	Glasgow City	281718
3	Birmingham	223810
4	Liverpool	167039
5	Manchester	149635
6	Newham	131542
7	Leeds	124379
8	Barnet	114011
9	Fife	91423
10	Redbridge	82718
11	Hounslow	82710
12	Renfrewshire	81903
13	North Ayrshire	71908
14	Ealing	71500
15	North Lanarkshire	70609
16	Wolverhampton	65966
17	Barking and Dagenham	65119
18	Waltham Forest	64545
19	Nottingham	61088
20	Hackney	58827
21	Lewisham	57792
22	Perth and Kinross	52731

³⁰ <http://www.which.co.uk/money/tax/guides/council-tax/council-tax-bands/>

23	Highland	50877
24	Croydon	50047
25	Sefton	48580
26	Southampton	47987
27	Falkirk	47656
28	Bromley	46885
29	West Dunbartonshire	46387
30	West Lothian	42414
31	Tower Hamlets	41162
32	Coventry	40684
33	Bristol, City of	39976
34	Havering	39665
35	Plymouth	36982
36	Trafford	36009
37	Derby	35741
38	Bolton	34886
39	Walsall	31314
40	Cornwall	31217
41	Wandsworth	30105
42	Swindon	29403
43	East Ayrshire	29178
44	Wirral	28551
45	Inverclyde	28097
46	Sutton	27618
47	Stoke-on-Trent	27434
48	Thanet	27191
49	Islington	26891
50	Oldham	26516
51	Aberdeenshire	26483
52	Northampton	24174
53	South Ayrshire	23710
54	Newcastle upon Tyne	23151
55	Richmond upon Thames	22916
56	Bexley	22777
57	Kingston upon Hull, City of	22515
58	Angus	22422
59	Rochdale	22326
60	Middlesbrough	22133
61	Dumfries and Galloway	22036
62	Bedford Borough	21989
63	Hillingdon	21681
64	Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	21016
65	Blackpool	20979
66	Knowsley	20977

67	Peterborough	20955
68	Milton Keynes	20731
69	Barnsley	20684
70	Wiltshire	19881
71	Argyll and Bute	19853
72	Basildon	18760
73	St. Helens	18557
74	Colchester	18253
75	Neath Port Talbot	18250
76	Kensington and Chelsea	18163
77	Wakefield	17653
78	North East Lincolnshire	17617
79	Solihull	17310
80	Dudley	17140
81	Slough	16858
82	Rotherham	16823
83	Torbay	16675
84	Redcar and Cleveland	16473
85	Gravesham	16465
86	Sandwell	16360
87	Stirling	16265
88	Carmarthenshire	16136
89	Gateshead	16057
90	North Somerset	16000
91	Isle of Wight	15917
92	South Tyneside	15883
93	Bath and North East Somerset	15382
94	Clackmannanshire	14657
95	Stockton-on-Tees	14550
96	Dundee City	14550
97	Hyndburn	14486
98	Preston	14065
99	Wycombe	13992
100	Midlothian	13875
101	Canterbury	13696
102	Norwich	13493
103	East Dunbartonshire	13426
104	Brighton and Hove	13199
105	North Lincolnshire	12716
106	Moray	12698
107	Portsmouth	12432
108	York	12412
109	East Lothian	12301
110	Scarborough	12298

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111	Hastings	12067
112	Bournemouth	11997
113	Northumberland	11661
114	Sheffield	11522
115	North Hertfordshire	11359
116	Pendle	11346
117	Braintree	11147
118	East Lindsey	10938
119	Herefordshire	10878
120	East Riding of Yorkshire	10862
121	Dartford	10751
122	Kirklees	10665
123	Gloucester	10589
124	Merthyr Tydfil	10560
125	Barrow-in-Furness	10545
126	Welwyn Hatfield	10452
127	Caerphilly	10338
128	Ipswich	10321
129	Hertsmere	10210
130	Stockport	10084
131	Elmbridge	9757
132	Newcastle-under-Lyme	9681
133	Broxbourne	9577
134	Bridgend	9537
135	Swale	9502
136	Lancaster	9177
137	Kettering	9115
138	Mansfield	9046
139	Powys	8979
140	Flintshire	8939
141	Maidstone	8932
142	South Gloucestershire	8849
143	Gosport	8743
144	Poole	8704
145	Harlow	8670
146	Cheshire West and Chester	8647
147	Epping Forest	8635
148	Oxford	8485
149	Worcester	8485
150	Cannock Chase	8436
151	Tendring	8397
152	Dover	8395
153	Conwy	8297
154	Salford	8213

155	Gwynedd	8141
156	Newport	8091
157	Stratford-on-Avon	7976
158	Torfaen	7942
159	Nuneaton and Bedworth	7874
160	Stafford	7855
161	Exeter	7819
162	Windsor and Maidenhead	7776
163	Broxtowe	7659
164	Pembrokeshire	7548
165	Carlisle	7544
166	Basingstoke and Deane	7466
167	Chelmsford	7146
168	Darlington	7126
169	Great Yarmouth	7092
170	Sevenoaks	7055
171	East Hertfordshire	6988
172	Calderdale	6754
173	Eastbourne	6730
174	New Forest	6730
175	East Staffordshire	6704
176	Tonbridge and Malling	6587
177	Watford	6524
178	Winchester	6504
179	Huntingdonshire	6490
180	Fenland	6374
181	Cheshire East	6310
182	South Oxfordshire	6302
183	Rossendale	6204
184	Mendip	6071
185	Charnwood	6006
186	Rugby	5998
187	Fylde	5950
188	Newark and Sherwood	5912
189	Cheltenham	5899
190	Test Valley	5831
191	Bassetlaw	5779
192	Selby	5775
193	Sedgemoor	5760
194	Monmouthshire	5734
195	Doncaster	5700
196	Lincoln	5693
197	South Lakeland	5623
198	Chorley	5616

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199	Rushmoor	5602
200	Erewash	5595
201	South Cambridgeshire	5468
202	Rushcliffe	5401
203	Ashford	5324
204	South Ribble	5262
205	St Edmundsbury	5253
206	Three Rivers	5215
207	Rother	5008
208	Blackburn with Darwen	4945
209	Amber Valley	4925
210	Waveney	4908
211	Torridge	4867
212	Taunton Deane	4863
213	Staffordshire Moorlands	4807
214	Corby	4736
215	North Norfolk	4716
216	Tamworth	4711
217	Shropshire	4699
218	Worthing	4688
219	South Lanarkshire	4566
220	Mid Sussex	4558
221	Eastleigh	4544
222	Teignbridge	4526
223	Surrey Heath	4460
224	Wokingham	4399
225	Runnymede	4387
226	Chichester	4382
227	Ashfield	4372
228	Wychavon	4325
229	Lewes	4231
230	Fareham	4169
231	Scottish Borders	4091
232	West Lancashire	3992
233	South Norfolk	3961
234	Weymouth and Portland	3955
235	Dacorum	3929
236	Vale of White Horse	3927
237	South Derbyshire	3909
238	East Northamptonshire	3905
239	Daventry	3897
240	South Hams	3886
241	Lichfield	3844
242	Rochford	3828

243	East Hampshire	3800
244	Bolsover	3769
245	Ceredigion	3760
246	Crawley	3665
247	Blaby	3616
248	Arun	3587
249	Wyre Forest	3561
250	Denbighshire	3558
251	Reigate and Banstead	3532
252	Wrexham	3528
253	West Devon	3491
254	Hinckley and Bosworth	3480
255	Mole Valley	3439
256	Suffolk Coastal	3401
257	North Warwickshire	3300
258	Uttlesford	3290
259	Tewkesbury	3266
260	Maldon	3252
261	Blaenau Gwent	3178
262	Stevenage	3177
263	East Devon	3158
264	Harborough	3152
265	Central Bedfordshire	3079
266	Forest Heath	3079
267	St Albans	3022
268	Epsom and Ewell	2982
269	Woking	2979
270	Hambleton	2972
271	South Northamptonshire	2887
272	Brentwood	2862
273	East Cambridgeshire	2855
274	Malvern Hills	2809
275	South Staffordshire	2806
276	South Bucks	2787
277	South Kesteven	2775
278	Adur	2734
279	Stroud	2660
280	Babergh	2645
281	Broadland	2635
282	Richmondshire	2618
283	West Somerset	2616
284	Cambridge	2588
285	Burnley	2404
286	Isle of Anglesey	2377

287	Mid Suffolk	2375
288	Orkney Islands	2365
289	Forest of Dean	2332
290	South Holland	2288
291	Mid Devon	2262
292	Wyre	2244
293	West Lindsey	2125
294	Cotswold	2090
295	Tandridge	2045
296	Waverley	2013
297	Allerdale	1901
298	Ribble Valley	1892
299	West Dorset	1742
300	Wellingborough	1639
301	Aylesbury Vale	1505
302	Rutland	1458
303	Ryedale	1427
304	Cardiff	1338
305	Wealden	1315
306	Eden	1296
307	Chiltern	1292
308	North Tyneside	1220
309	Hart	1037
310	Melton	842
311	Derbyshire Dales	793
312	Purbeck	728
313	City of London	486
314	Craven	486
315	West Berkshire	427
316	Hartlepool	425
317	Spelthorne	383
318	Castle Point	307

The following do not use third-party debt recovery agencies:

- Isles of Scilly
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk

The following local authorities replied to our Freedom of Information request after the finalisation of this report on 29th March:

- Copeland
- North Devon

The following local authorities failed to reply to our Freedom of Information request in either a timely or appropriate manner:

- Aberdeen City
- Boston
- Bracknell Forest
- Bradford
- Breckland
- Brent
- Bromsgrove
- Camden
- Cherwell
- Chesterfield
- Christchurch
- Durham
- East Dorset
- East Renfrewshire
- Eilean Siar
- Enfield
- Gedling
- Greenwich
- Guildford
- Halton
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Haringey
- Harrogate
- Harrow
- Havant
- High Peak
- Horsham
- Isles of Scilly
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk
- Kingston upon Thames
- Lambeth
- Leicester
- Luton
- Medway
- Merton
- North Devon
- North Dorset
- North East Derbyshire
- North Kesteven
- North West Leicestershire
- Oadby and Wigston
- Reading
- Redditch
- Shepway

- Shetland Islands
- South Somerset
- Southend-on-Sea
- Southwark
- Sunderland
- Swansea
- Tameside
- Telford and Wrekin
- The Vale of Glamorgan
- Thurrock
- Tunbridge Wells
- Warrington
- Warwick
- West Oxfordshire
- Westminster
- Wigan

■ B) Total number of council tax cases passed to a debt recovery agency or bailiff by council

		Total
1	Glasgow City	228769
2	City of Edinburgh	218483
3	Birmingham	168801
4	Liverpool	140391
5	Manchester	130625
6	Fife	85716
7	Renfrewshire	81903
8	North Ayrshire	71908
9	Leeds	70727
10	North Lanarkshire	70609
11	Aberdeen City	70390
12	Lambeth	60035
13	Lewisham	57792
14	Hackney	54991
15	Croydon	50047
16	Highland	49768
17	Perth and Kinross	49732
18	Falkirk	47656
19	West Dunbartonshire	46387
20	Newham	44215
21	West Lothian	42414
22	Nottingham	41915
23	Bristol, City of	35029
24	Camden	33164

25	Havering	31880
26	Cornwall	31217
27	Waltham Forest	30739
28	Redbridge	30503
29	East Ayrshire	29178
30	Walsall	29159
31	Wirral	28551
32	Bromley	28520
33	Hounslow	28472
34	Southampton	28317
35	Inverclyde	28097
36	Derby	27933
37	Wandsworth	27393
38	Coventry	27022
39	Islington	26891
40	Aberdeenshire	26479
41	Bolton	26309
42	Sefton	26117
43	Tower Hamlets	26065
44	Trafford	25390
45	Northampton	24174
46	South Ayrshire	23695
47	Barking and Dagenham	23412
48	Bexley	22777
49	Plymouth	22762
50	Wolverhampton	22554
51	Thanet	22524
52	Angus	22403
53	Dumfries and Galloway	22036
54	Hillingdon	21681
55	Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	21016
56	Ealing	20941
57	Milton Keynes	20731
58	Oldham	20417
59	Barnet	20331
60	Knowsley	20266
61	Stoke-on-Trent	20137
62	Argyll and Bute	19853
63	Swindon	19607
64	Barnsley	19183
65	Newcastle upon Tyne	18057
66	Middlesbrough	17964
67	Kensington and Chelsea	17730
68	Wakefield	17653

69	Rochdale	17259
70	St. Helens	16604
71	North East Lincolnshire	16367
72	Sandwell	16360
73	Sutton	16342
74	Stirling	16265
75	North Somerset	16000
76	Basildon	15784
77	Dudley	15738
78	Wiltshire	15673
79	Kingston upon Hull, City of	15664
80	Bedford Borough	15478
81	Redcar and Cleveland	15174
82	Solihull	14791
83	Blackpool	14689
84	Clackmannanshire	14657
85	Dundee City	14550
86	Hyndburn	14486
87	Carmarthenshire	14049
88	Preston	13899
89	Midlothian	13875
90	Peterborough	13839
91	South Tyneside	13837
92	Gateshead	13531
93	East Dunbartonshire	13426
94	Rotherham	13396
95	Portsmouth	12432
96	Slough	12401
97	East Lothian	12301
98	North Lincolnshire	12243
99	Neath Port Talbot	12058
100	Colchester	11838
101	Northumberland	11661
102	Stockton-on-Tees	11601
103	Sheffield	11522
104	Pendle	11346
105	East Riding of Yorkshire	10862
106	Merthyr Tydfil	10560
107	Ipswich	10321
108	Stockport	10084
109	North Hertfordshire	9805
110	Caerphilly	9712
111	Newcastle-under-Lyme	9681
112	Braintree	9563

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113	Isle of Wight	9562
114	Bridgend	9537
115	Swale	9502
116	East Lindsey	9436
117	Welwyn Hatfield	9361
118	Kettering	9115
119	Gravesham	9011
120	Flintshire	8939
121	Mansfield	8924
122	Gosport	8743
123	Barrow-in-Furness	8730
124	South Somerset	8722
125	Bath and North East Somerset	8647
126	Norwich	8569
127	Cheshire West and Chester	8523
128	Oxford	8485
129	Cannock Chase	8436
130	Tendring	8397
131	York	8299
132	Powys	8189
133	Gwynedd	8141
134	Newport	8091
135	Lancaster	8029
136	Stratford-on-Avon	7976
137	Torfaen	7942
138	Herefordshire	7917
139	Stafford	7855
140	Pembrokeshire	7548
141	Broxtowe	7540
142	Gloucester	7407
143	Nuneaton and Bedworth	7401
144	Exeter	7308
145	Hertsmere	7255
146	Dartford	7175
147	Canterbury	7174
148	Darlington	7126
149	Great Yarmouth	7092
150	Wycombe	7012
151	South Gloucestershire	6859
152	Eastbourne	6730
153	Maidstone	6645
154	Harlow	6562
155	Huntingdonshire	6490
156	Broxbourne	6434

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157	Fenland	6374
158	South Oxfordshire	6302
159	Rossendale	6204
160	New Forest	6081
161	Mendip	6071
162	Conwy	6058
163	Scarborough	6045
164	Basingstoke and Deane	6011
165	Charnwood	6006
166	Fylde	5950
167	Newark and Sherwood	5912
168	Sevenoaks	5815
169	Bassetlaw	5779
170	Sedgemoor	5760
171	Selby	5754
172	Monmouthshire	5734
173	Chorley	5616
174	Erewash	5595
175	Dover	5481
176	South Cambridgeshire	5468
177	Rushcliffe	5401
178	Ashford	5324
179	South Ribble	5232
180	Torbay	5223
181	Lincoln	5214
182	Rother	5008
183	St Edmundsbury	4991
184	Test Valley	4976
185	Amber Valley	4925
186	Windsor and Maidenhead	4917
187	Waveney	4908
188	Chelmsford	4889
189	Winchester	4882
190	East Staffordshire	4863
191	Corby	4736
192	North Norfolk	4716
193	Worthing	4688
194	Three Rivers	4576
195	South Lanarkshire	4566
196	Poole	4546
197	Teignbridge	4526
198	East Hertfordshire	4494
199	Chichester	4382
200	South Lakeland	4382

201	Ashfield	4372
202	Staffordshire Moorlands	4268
203	Tamworth	4262
204	Lewes	4231
205	Tonbridge and Malling	4206
206	Carlisle	4164
207	Worcester	4099
208	Scottish Borders	4091
209	Elmbridge	4071
210	Wokingham	4047
211	West Lancashire	3992
212	South Norfolk	3961
213	Torridge	3944
214	Rugby	3928
215	Vale of White Horse	3927
216	South Derbyshire	3909
217	East Northamptonshire	3905
218	Daventry	3897
219	South Hams	3886
220	Mid Sussex	3865
221	Lichfield	3844
222	Bournemouth	3778
223	Bolsover	3769
224	Ceredigion	3760
225	Epping Forest	3749
226	East Hampshire	3703
227	Crawley	3665
228	Blaby	3616
229	Calderdale	3593
230	Taunton Deane	3590
231	Arun	3587
232	Reigate and Banstead	3532
233	West Devon	3491
234	Hinckley and Bosworth	3480
235	Runnymede	3463
236	Suffolk Coastal	3401
237	North Warwickshire	3285
238	Tewkesbury	3266
239	Cheshire East	3215
240	Fareham	3205
241	Blaenau Gwent	3178
242	Stevenage	3177
243	Wyre Forest	3155
244	Harborough	3152

245	Allerdale	3135
246	Forest Heath	3079
247	Cheltenham	3043
248	St Albans	3022
249	Woking	2979
250	Hambleton	2972
251	South Northamptonshire	2887
252	Brentwood	2862
253	East Cambridgeshire	2855
254	Surrey Heath	2810
255	South Staffordshire	2796
256	South Kesteven	2775
257	Rochford	2738
258	Wrexham	2707
259	Maldon	2674
260	East Devon	2673
261	Babergh	2645
262	Broadland	2635
263	Uttlesford	2634
264	Rushmoor	2632
265	Malvern Hills	2628
266	Richmondshire	2618
267	Kirklees	2494
268	South Bucks	2480
269	Adur	2444
270	Hastings	2439
271	Wychavon	2413
272	Burnley	2404
273	West Somerset	2388
274	Mid Suffolk	2375
275	Forest of Dean	2332
276	Richmond upon Thames	2318
277	Orkney Islands	2305
278	South Holland	2288
279	Wyre	2244
280	Central Bedfordshire	2218
281	Eastleigh	2196
282	Epsom and Ewell	2164
283	Mid Devon	2130
284	Cotswold	2090
285	Weymouth and Portland	2004
286	Mole Valley	2000
287	Stroud	1976
288	Isle of Anglesey	1974

289	West Lindsey	1955
290	Brighton and Hove	1919
291	Ribble Valley	1892
292	Tandridge	1872
293	West Dorset	1742
294	Wellingborough	1639
295	Waverley	1617
296	Watford	1430
297	Ryedale	1427
298	Cardiff	1338
299	Rutland	1308
300	Chiltern	1292
301	North Tyneside	1200
302	Wealden	1172
303	Doncaster	863
304	Melton	842
305	Derbyshire Dales	793
306	Purbeck	728
307	Eden	668
308	Aylesbury Vale	580
309	Denbighshire	539
310	Craven	486
311	Hart	437
312	Hartlepool	425
313	Spelthorne	383
314	City of London	350
315	Shropshire	248
316	Castle Point	174

The following do not use third-party debt recovery agencies for council tax collection:

- Isles of Scilly
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk

The following councils were unable to specify the number of cases they transferred to third-party debt recovery agencies for the non-payment of council tax:

- Cambridge
- Dacorum
- Moray
- Salford
- Sunderland
- Warrington

■ **C) Total number of parking infringement cases passed to a debt recovery agency or bailiff by council**

		Total
1	Barnet	93680
2	Newham	87327
3	City of Edinburgh	68832
4	Birmingham	55009
5	Hounslow	54238
6	Leeds	53652
7	Glasgow City	52949
8	Redbridge	52215
9	Ealing	50559
10	Wolverhampton	43412
11	Barking and Dagenham	41707
12	Waltham Forest	33806
13	Aberdeen City	31386
14	Liverpool	26648
15	Sefton	22463
16	Richmond upon Thames	20598
17	Southampton	19670
18	Nottingham	19173
19	Manchester	19010
20	Bromley	18365
21	Tower Hamlets	15097
22	Plymouth	14220
23	Coventry	13662
24	Moray	12698
25	Torbay	11452
26	Brighton and Hove	11280
27	Sutton	11276
28	Trafford	10619
29	Swindon	9796
30	Hastings	9628
31	Bolton	8577
32	Bournemouth	8219
33	Salford	8213
34	Kirklees	8171
35	Derby	7808
36	Havering	7785
37	Gravesham	7454
38	Stoke-on-Trent	7297
39	Peterborough	7116
40	Wycombe	6980
41	Kingston upon Hull, City of	6851
42	Bath and North East Somerset	6735
43	Thanet	6703

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44	Canterbury	6522
45	Bedford Borough	6511
46	Colchester	6415
47	Blackpool	6290
48	Scarborough	6253
49	Neath Port Talbot	6192
50	Oldham	6099
51	Fife	5707
52	Elmbridge	5686
53	Newcastle upon Tyne	5094
54	Watford	5094
55	Rochdale	5067
56	Bristol, City of	4947
57	Blackburn with Darwen	4945
58	Norwich	4924
59	Epping Forest	4886
60	Doncaster	4837
61	Slough	4457
62	Shropshire	4451
63	Worcester	4386
64	Wiltshire	4208
65	Middlesbrough	4169
66	Poole	4158
67	York	4113
68	Dacorum	3929
69	Hackney	3836
70	Dartford	3576
71	Rotherham	3427
72	Carlisle	3380
73	Gloucester	3182
74	Calderdale	3161
75	Broxbourne	3143
76	Cheshire East	3095
77	Denbighshire	3019
78	Perth and Kinross	2999
79	Basildon	2976
80	Rushmoor	2970
81	Herefordshire	2961
82	Hertsmere	2955
83	Stockton-on-Tees	2949
84	Dover	2914
85	Windsor and Maidenhead	2859
86	Cheltenham	2856
87	Wandsworth	2712

88	Cambridge	2588
89	Gateshead	2526
90	Solihull	2519
91	East Hertfordshire	2494
92	Tonbridge and Malling	2381
93	Eastleigh	2348
94	Maidstone	2287
95	Chelmsford	2257
96	Conwy	2239
97	Walsall	2155
98	Harlow	2108
99	Carmarthenshire	2087
100	Rugby	2070
101	South Tyneside	2046
102	South Gloucestershire	1990
103	St. Helens	1953
104	Weymouth and Portland	1951
105	Isle of Wight	1921
106	Wychavon	1912
107	Allerdale	1909
108	East Staffordshire	1841
109	Barrow-in-Furness	1815
110	Surrey Heath	1650
111	Winchester	1622
112	Braintree	1584
113	North Hertfordshire	1554
114	East Lindsey	1502
115	Barnsley	1501
116	Basingstoke and Deane	1455
117	Mole Valley	1439
118	Dudley	1402
119	Redcar and Cleveland	1299
120	Taunton Deane	1273
121	North East Lincolnshire	1250
122	South Lakeland	1241
123	Sevenoaks	1240
124	Lancaster	1148
125	Highland	1109
126	Welwyn Hatfield	1091
127	Rochford	1090
128	Fareham	964
129	Aylesbury Vale	925
130	Runnymede	924
131	Torridge	923

132	Central Bedfordshire	861
133	Test Valley	855
134	Wrexham	821
135	Epsom and Ewell	818
136	Powys	790
137	Knowsley	711
138	Mid Sussex	693
139	Stroud	684
140	Uttlesford	656
141	New Forest	649
142	Three Rivers	639
143	Eden	628
144	Caerphilly	626
145	Hart	600
146	Maldon	578
147	Staffordshire Moorlands	539
148	Exeter	511
149	East Devon	485
150	Lincoln	479
151	North Lincolnshire	473
152	Nuneaton and Bedworth	473
153	Tamworth	449
154	Kensington and Chelsea	433
155	West Berkshire	427
156	Wyre Forest	406
157	Isle of Anglesey	403
158	Waverley	396
159	Monmouthshire	372
160	Wokingham	352
161	South Bucks	307
162	Adur	290
163	St Edmundsbury	262
164	West Somerset	228
165	Malvern Hills	181
166	Tandridge	173
167	West Lindsey	170
168	Preston	166
169	Rutland	150
170	Wealden	143
171	City of London	136
172	Castle Point	133
173	Mid Devon	132
174	Cheshire West and Chester	124
175	Mansfield	122

176	Broxtowe	119
177	East Hampshire	97
178	Orkney Islands	60
179	South Ribble	30
180	Selby	21
181	North Tyneside	20
182	Angus	19
183	South Ayrshire	15
184	North Warwickshire	15
185	South Staffordshire	10
186	Aberdeenshire	4

The following do not use third-party debt recovery agencies parking debt collection:

- Amber Valley
- Argyll and Bute
- Arun
- Ashfield
- Babergh
- Bexley
- Blaenau Gwent
- Bolsover
- Bridgend
- Broadland
- Cardiff
- Ceredigion
- Chichester
- Clackmannanshire
- Corby
- Cotswold
- Craven
- Crawley
- Darlington
- Derbyshire Dales
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Dundee City
- East Ayrshire
- East Cambridgeshire
- East Northamptonshire
- Eastbourne
- Erewash
- Falkirk
- Fenland
- Flintshire

- Forest Heath
- Gosport
- Great Yarmouth
- Hambleton
- Hartlepool
- Isles of Scilly
- Kettering
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk
- Lewes
- Lichfield
- Mendip
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Mid Suffolk
- Midlothian
- Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Newport
- North Ayrshire
- North Norfolk
- North Somerset
- Northampton
- Northumberland
- Pembrokeshire
- Pendle
- Purbeck
- Renfrewshire
- Richmondshire
- Rossendale
- Rother
- Ryedale
- Sedgemoor
- South Cambridgeshire
- South Derbyshire
- South Holland
- South Kesteven
- South Norfolk
- South Oxfordshire
- South Somerset
- Stafford
- Stockport
- Suffolk Coastal
- Sunderland
- Teignbridge
- Torfaen
- Vale of White Horse

- Wellingborough
- West Devon
- West Dorset
- West Lancashire
- West Lothian
- Wyre

The following councils were unable to specify the number of cases they transferred to third-party debt recovery agencies for the non-payment of parking infringement fines:

- Croydon
- Lewisham
- Cornwall
- Warrington
- Gwynedd
- Rhondda, Cynon, Taff
- East Dunbartonshire
- Inverclyde
- North Lanarkshire
- South Lanarkshire
- West Dunbartonshire
- Sandwell
- Sheffield
- Bassetlaw
- Blaby
- Brentwood
- Burnley
- Charnwood
- Chiltern
- Chorley
- Forest of Dean
- Harborough
- Hinckley and Bosworth
- Hyndburn
- Ipswich
- Melton
- Newark and Sherwood
- Oxford
- Ribble Valley
- Rushcliffe
- South Hams
- South Northamptonshire
- St Albans
- Stevenage
- Swale

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- Greenwich
- Lambeth

The following local authorities failed to reply to our Freedom of Information request in either a timely or appropriate manner:

- Blackburn with Darwen
- Boston
- Bracknell Forest
- Bradford
- Breckland
- Brent
- Bromsgrove
- Cherwell
- Chesterfield
- Christchurch
- Durham
- East Dorset
- East Renfrewshire
- Eilean Siar
- Enfield
- Gedling
- Greenwich
- Guildford
- Halton
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Haringey
- Harrogate
- Harrow
- Havant
- High Peak
- Horsham
- Kingston upon Thames
- Leicester
- Luton
- Medway
- Merton
- North Dorset
- North East Derbyshire
- North Kesteven
- North West Leicestershire
- Oadby and Wigston
- Reading
- Redditch
- Shepway

- Shetland Islands
- Southend-on-Sea
- Southwark
- Swansea
- Tameside
- Telford and Wrekin
- The Vale of Glamorgan
- Thurrock
- Tunbridge Wells
- Warwick
- West Berkshire
- West Oxfordshire
- Westminster
- Wigan

■ **About Big Brother Watch**

Big Brother Watch is a campaign from the founders of the TaxPayers' Alliance, fighting intrusions on privacy and protecting liberties.

Big Brother Watch produces regular investigative research papers on the erosion of civil liberties in the UK.

Whether it be by placing microchips in rubbish bins or snooping on your family using covert surveillance, we will name and shame the local authorities most prone to authoritarian abuse.

We champion individual cases. We want to use the legal system to help the man in the street fight injustice and regain his personal freedom; we are building up a legal fund to back such cases.

We will help you use the Freedom of Information Act to demand to see data held about yourself by the authorities, to extend our right to government information and to unearth the reality of the Big Brother state.

We want Big Brother Watch to become the central hub for the latest news and debates on personal freedom and civil liberty — a forum for information and discussion on something that directly affects British citizens in their everyday lives.

Big Brother Watch also aims to expose the extent to which the web has become the first line in state surveillance. The floodgates for the co-opting of internet activity into the state's control have opened, as companies are leant on to release online personal data. Safeguards are needed before it's too late.

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We hope Big Brother Watch will become the gadfly of the ruling class, a champion for civil liberties and personal freedom — and a force to help a future government roll back a decade of state interference in our lives.

To arrange broadcast interviews or discuss the research, please contact:

Daniel Hamilton, Director, Big Brother Watch

Daniel.Hamilton@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk

Mob (24 hrs): **07810 785 924** | Tel: **020 7340 6030**