

## **House Arrest**

A report into the rise in the number of homeless people arrested each year.

## Key Findings:

- A 27% rise in the number of homeless arrests over the past 5 years\*.
- Taking this average and applying it across forces in England, Wales and Scotland the total number of homeless people arrested would have risen from 30,675 in 2003 to 39,011 in 2007.
- In 2007, 27 forces reported a total of 33,464 arrests of people with no fixed abode. This report estimates that the number of homeless people arrested last year was as high as 63,209.

\* The Police Forces able to provide a full 5 year data set showed a 27% increase – a total of 2,125 - in the number of people being arrested and recorded with no fixed abode.

## Introduction

Current policy has notably failed in providing the homes which our country's population needs. Indeed less housing has been built each year under this government than each year under the previous two Conservative administrations.

*Under Labour, an average of 147,956 homes have been built a year (in England, permanent dwellings completed, 1997 to 2007).*

*Across the whole Thatcher and Major Governments, the average was 171,315 a year (1979 to 1996).<sup>1</sup>*

This situation has been compounded by the lack of social and affordable housing built. There has not, for example, been a single year since 1997 when as much affordable housing was built as during any year under the previous Conservative administration.

The effect of these failures has been an increase in the number of "hidden homeless", people living on the margins of society in unsuitable living conditions. The hidden homeless live in overcrowded conditions – often with their families, sofa surf, squat or in the worst cases, end up rough sleeping on the streets<sup>2</sup>.

Research carried out over the last year estimates that the real numbers of rough sleepers may be up to 3 times greater than official government figures.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile Crisis estimates the number of hidden homeless to be 400,000 at the moment. This figure set to rise especially with more families facing problems retaining their homes in light of the current economic problems.<sup>4</sup> The government's street counts show 483

As part of our work on homelessness, working with the Conservative Homelessness Foundation, we have sought new indicators which highlight the extent of the current problem in the UK. All the evidence shows that the number of people who are currently without homes is on the rise. For example, research has shown:

- A 77% rise in women appearing on Council waiting lists between 2003 and 2007.<sup>5</sup>
- A 36% rise in the number of people recorded with no fixed abode when they are discharged from hospital over the last five years.<sup>6</sup>
- 130,000 children were homeless at the end of 2007, twice that of 10 years ago.<sup>7</sup>
- 12,000 prisoners were released onto the street with nowhere to go in 2005/06.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (Source: DCLG, Live Tables: Housebuilding, Table 244, as of August 2008).

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/Roughly%20Sleeping.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/Roughly%20Sleeping.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/hidden\\_homeless.html](http://www.crisis.org.uk/policywatch/pages/hidden_homeless.html)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.shapps.com/reports/Women\\_and\\_Homelessness.pdf](http://www.shapps.com/reports/Women_and_Homelessness.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/Discharged-to-no-fixed-abode-v10.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/NoPlaceLikeHomev8.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/PrisonBreak.pdf>

This report seeks to create an additional indicator to work with when analysing homelessness. By taking the raw data available from Police Forces across the country and creating an overview of the nationwide picture this report breaks new ground and paints a dramatic picture of the rise in homelessness amongst those who are brought into police custody.

The social impact of this situation is the creation of a vicious cycle which can lead its victims into a life of crime through necessity or desperation. An alarming number of those people who are in prison or have been in prison come from a background of homelessness and a significant number of them will return to the same situation<sup>9</sup>.

Under current rules individuals who commit low level crime such as begging or being drunk and disorderly can be issued on the spot fines. However as homeless people are unable to pay there are other judicial measures which end up being taken. ASBOs and prison time are all too common in these cases despite the fact that such low level criminality is not usually punished in this way.

This report therefore seeks to provide further accurate data on homelessness. We cannot address the problems faced by people urgently seeking homes without first beginning to quantifying how many people are affected. With the widespread acceptance that the Government's figures on homelessness are inaccurate we have developed this new source of primary data as an indicator of the severity of the problem.

Having understood the problem, the report's authors also offer some recommendations to help alleviate what has become an increasingly alarming vicious cycle of arrest, followed by discharge into ongoing homelessness.

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<sup>9</sup> ibid

## Methodology

This report was conducted by sending out a Freedom of Information request to 51 Police Forces throughout the UK, of which 30 reported back with some or all of the data requested. Due to the way data is stored not all forces were able to give us full data, however this has been factored in throughout this report and statistics have been adjusted accordingly. We took averages of the available data in order to ensure that all results are proportional.

Further information has also been included from submissions received from charitable organisations involved with the Conservative Homelessness Foundation. These organisations have fulfilled an important role in creating this report and have provided invaluable support.

With thanks to the Advisory Panel members of the Conservative Homelessness Foundation for their input. The Advisory Panel is made up of the following organisations and individuals:

Jenny Edwards (chair of Advisory Panel), Chief Executive of Homeless Link  
John Bird, Founder and Editor of The Big Issue  
Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive of Thames Reach  
Adam Sampson, Chief Executive of Shelter  
Lesley Morphy, Chief Executive of Crisis  
Charles Fraser, Chief Executive of St Mungo's  
Matt Peacock, Chief Executive of Streetwise Opera  
Mick Clarke, Chief Executive of The Passage  
Maff Potts, Chief Executive of Salvation Army  
Athol Hallé, Chief Executive of Groundswell UK  
Jo Grant, Chief Executive of Aquila Way, Newcastle  
Sue Frost, Chief Executive of Herts Young Homeless

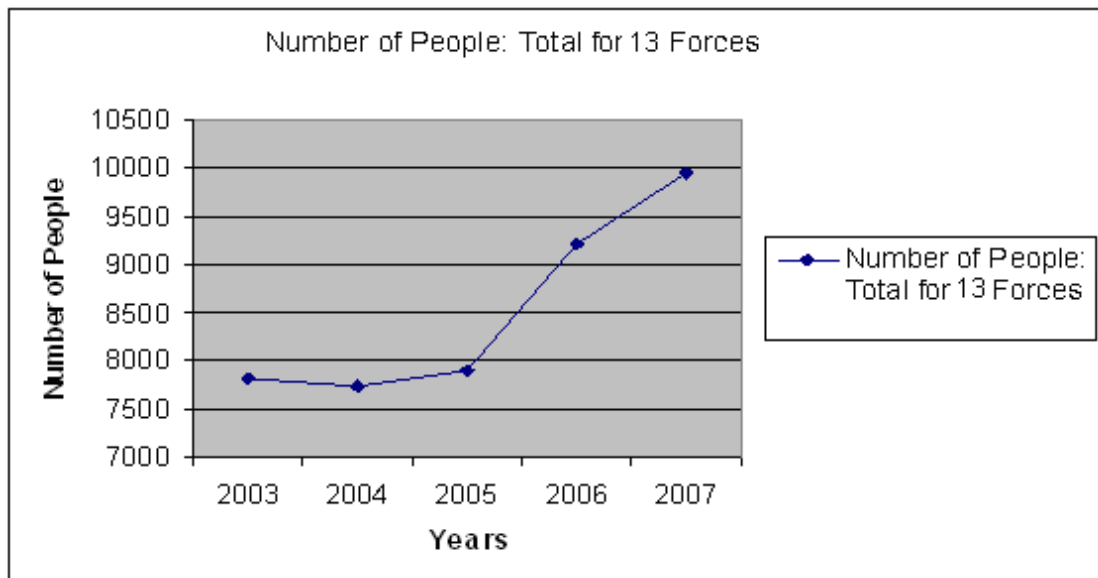
## Results

All data below is an average collated from the number of forces reporting back, it is therefore indicative of a trend, rather than a confirmed total across the UK. Due to the different ways in which forces collect data not all forces were able to provide full data throughout the period. A breakdown of each force and their reporting is contained elsewhere in this document.

### Complete 5 Year Data Set on 13 Forces

This data is the raw information drawn from the 13 forces who were able to provide complete records for the period 2003 – 2007. It shows a 27% from the total data received. This data has been used throughout the report to form our estimates of other data.

Year	Total from 13 Forces providing complete data
2003	7819
2004	7744
2005	7899
2006	9212
2007	9944



## Complete 3 Year Data Set on 21 Forces

The data below gives a breakdown of the increase from 2005 to 2007 across all forces which provided us with complete information over this period. With over 2000 new people appearing on records in 2007 across the 21 forces in this list it shows the scope of the problem being faced nationwide.

<b>Force</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>
Bedfordshire Police	265	282
City of London Police	495	458
Dorset Police	1583	1769
Dyfed Powys	105	100
Greater Manchester Police	5494	4934
Hertfordshire Constabulary	948	1126
Humberside Police	616	703
Lancashire Constabulary	1950	2076
Lincolnshire Police	494	835
Met Police	1268	1675
Norfolk Constabulary	306	812
North Yorkshire Police	522	487
Northamptonshire Constabulary	697	863
Northern Constabulary (Scotland)	232	300
South Yorkshire Police	81	138
Surrey Police	822	1326
Sussex Police	6509	6359
Tayside Police	106	163
Warwickshire Police	830	1050
West Mercia Constabulary	693	571
West Midlands Police	536	614
<b>Total</b>	<b>24552</b>	<b>26641</b>

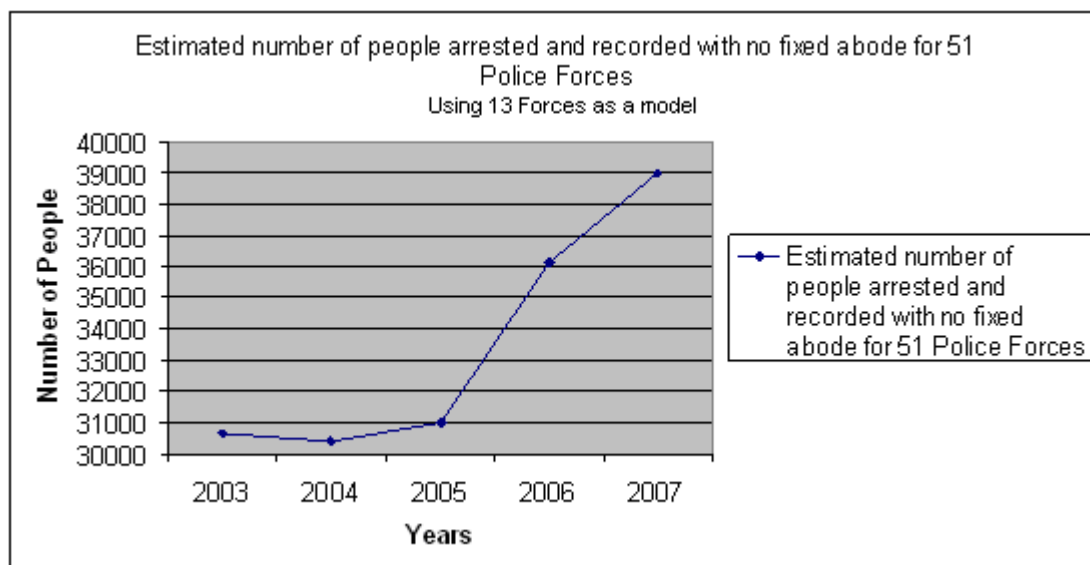
## Average Results from 51 forces

The averages below are based upon the results from the 13 forces that were able to report with a full 5 years worth of data. From this we have been able to extrapolate to form a picture of what the average would look like if all 51 forces had provided stats.

The data we have extrapolated out suggests that the 13 forces able to report over the last 5 years may represent some of the forces at the lower end of the count. This means that using these 13 forces as an average projects a figure of 39011 homeless people arrested, which when compared with the raw data from 27 forces in 2007 seems unrealistically low.

Taking the raw data from the 27 forces which responded in 2007 the real number could be as many as 63,209.

Year	Average for all 51 Police Forces
2003	30675
2004	30380
2005	30988
2006	36139
2007	39011



**Report by Shadow Housing Minister Grant Shapps MP  
Conservative Homelessness Foundation**

## Regional Raw Data

The table below contains all results received from forces across the UK in their raw form. Greyed out areas represent data which was unavailable upon request.

<b>Name of Force</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Bedfordshire Police				265	279	282
Cambridgeshire Constabulary			669	1227	700	
City of London Police				495	509	458
Cleveland Police						
Cumbria Constabulary					285	438
Derbyshire Constabulary						
Dorset Police		1594	1645	1583	1701	1769
Durham Constabulary					105	348
Dyfed Powys		86	100	105	82	100
Greater Manchester Police				5494	6549	4934
Hertfordshire Constabulary	750	866	923	948	932	1126
Humberside Police				616	409	703
Kent Police					1094	1090
Lancashire Constabulary				1950	1888	2076
Lincolnshire Police			90	494	874	835
Merseyside Police					2169	2447
Met Police		1842	1363	1268	1701	1675
Norfolk Constabulary		314	301	306	682	812
North Yorkshire Police		441	487	522	504	487
Northamptonshire Constabulary		611	618	697	606	863
Northern Constabulary (Scotland)		213	236	232	287	300
South Yorkshire Police		115	104	81	114	138
Staffordshire Police						1000
Surrey Police	369	481	612	822	1168	1326
Sussex Police			5753	6509	6610	6359
Tayside Police		98	122	106	175	163
Thames Valley Police						1500
Warwickshire Police			910	830	1000	1050
West Mercia Constabulary		643	672	693	683	571
West Midlands Police		515	561	536	577	614
<b>TOTAL</b>	1119	7819	15166	25779	31683	33464
<b>Number of Forces</b>	2	13	17	22	26	27

## Conclusion

Rough sleepers often lead chaotic, disordered lives and are particularly vulnerable to becoming involved in drug and alcohol and crime. For example St Mungos, a leading London-based homeless charity, reported last year that 82% of their clients had drug problems, while 40% were ex-offenders<sup>10</sup>.

It is clear that there is a cycle of homelessness – particularly rough sleeping – which many find it very hard to break. Breaking this cycle involves public services across the board and a good example is our previous research which investigated the role that hospitals might play.<sup>11</sup>

Prison is frequently associated with homelessness. In the report “Prison Break” - released by Grant Shapps in March 2008 – research showed that in 2005/6 12,000 prisoners were released onto the streets.<sup>12</sup>

When looking at ways to tackle homelessness it is vital that we interrupt this cycle wherever possible. Worklessness and homelessness go hand in hand and the overarching aim is to find ways to get people back into work and off the streets. Whereas 25 years ago, 86% of those living in hostels were in employment, figures from St Mungos show that only 4% of their clients are working nowadays<sup>13</sup>. It is, of course, up to individuals to take responsibility for their lives, but we must do more to help them find the means to take that responsibility. The benefit to society as a whole is evident.

In order to interrupt the sequence of events leading to a downward spiral of crime and substance abuse, which will frequently lead to police involvement and arrest, it is vital to grasp opportunities as they come along. One such opportunity is at the point of arrest because the authorities are in direct contact with the homeless; here is a juncture where it is possible to have a system to liaise with the voluntary sector and local authority services to provide help where it is appropriate.

More joined up working could also be done between prisons and voluntary agencies. Mick Clarke of The Passage has cited the lack of clear dates of release mean that voluntary agencies are unable to intervene to assist newly released offenders. This further adds to the cycle of homelessness where unsupported individuals return to the streets without any chance of altering their fundamental circumstances.

There is a concern that the information on homelessness is not collected and collated in a standard or detailed way. This report recognises the importance of not burdening Police Forces with additional bureaucracy and therefore proposes a light touch approach with cost-benefit savings by addressing homelessness at the earliest opportunity. By being pro-active about homelessness and rough-sleeping the police can limit their future interaction, saving time and money, and prevent an escalation in the serious of crimes being committed. We will look to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) to drive forward a co-ordinated approach, rather than place this burden on the local police force.

<sup>10</sup> St Mungo's Clients Needs Survey 2007

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.shapps.com/reports/Discharged-to-no-fixed-abode-v10.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Prison Break, available at [www.shapps.com/reports](http://www.shapps.com/reports)

<sup>13</sup> Charles Fraser, Chief Executive of St Mungos

In short there is an opportunity to save a considerable amount of time and money by grasping this issue and the benefit to the individuals involved in starting to rebuild their life is of course self-evident.

## **Recommendations**

1. The opportunity to interrupt homelessness at this juncture needs to be recognised by recognised by CDRP's, the Police and local authorities and the various organisations involved in homelessness. We will look to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP's) to drive forward a co-ordinated approach, rather than place this burden on the local police force.

2. Police Forces should be asked to liaise with the voluntary sector and Local Authorities to put in place guidelines for addressing homelessness as early as possible.

3. Best practice examples need to be widely disseminated from any Police Forces who already using homelessness intervention where possible with the aim of encouraging other Forces to adopt their approach within existing budgets and structures.

4. Work by the Homelessness Foundation has shown that the voluntary sector is often uniquely positioned to provide the bridge between public services and a secure housing solution. We therefore recommend that Police Forces actively seek to engage with relevant organisations in order to maximise outcomes at the earliest possible stage following arrest.

5. There needs to be a recognition that intervention by the appropriate organisations following arrest will usually provide both cost and social savings for the Police Forces and the homeless individual.

## Quotes

*“The significant rise in the number of people arrested who report having no fixed abode should be troubling for everyone. A disproportionate amount of police time is currently being spent re-arresting the same group of people and without really getting to the heart of the problem this approach occupies valuable police resources, fails to resolve the root causes of the crime and does nothing to alter the life or behaviour of the homeless individual.*

*“It’s time for a new, more intelligent, approach to this problem where the Police are encouraged to work closely with the many outstanding voluntary organisations in order to arrest the depressing cycle of crime, custody and release back into homelessness.*

*“The current system generates more victims of crime, wastes police time and fails to address the deep-seated issues which continue to exacerbate these rising statistics.”*

Grant Shapps MP