About us

1. The Howard League for Penal Reform is the oldest penal reform charity in the world. We conduct and commission original research, review policy and practice across the penal system and, through our legal team, represent children and young adults in custody. We work towards less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison. For more information about the Howard League please visit www.howardleague.org

2. The Howard League welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Justice Committee’s inquiry into courts and tribunals fees. Our submission is focussed on the criminal courts charge.

Key Points

3. The criminal courts charge came into force on 13 April 2015. The charge is applied to anyone found guilty and is not means-tested or related to the nature of the offence. In a magistrates’ court, it rises from £150 for pleading guilty to a summary offence to £520 for a conviction after a not guilty plea. In the crown court, the charge stands at £900 for a guilty plea and £1,200 for a conviction after a not guilty plea.

4. The Howard League has been concerned about the criminal courts charge since its introduction and we have been collating evidence from a range of sources, including reviewing local newspaper reports of cases.

5. Based on this evidence the charity is calling for the charge to be suspended immediately and for the promised review to be brought forward as a matter of urgency.

6. The criminal courts charge is both unfair and unrealistic. Taken as a whole, the charge is unjust. The mandatory nature of the charge means that sentencers must impose it even when it is clear the person before them does not have the means to pay.

7. Magistrates resigned in protest at the criminal courts charge and it is coming under increasing criticism from judges.

8. The charge is bringing the justice system into disrepute. There are allegations that the escalating nature of the charges puts pressure on people to plead guilty, even if they have not, in fact, committed an offence. If this proves to be true, even in one case, it is contrary to the basic principles of British Justice.

9. There is evidence that some courts are circumnavigating justice to avoid imposing the charge. We have seen a report of a case where an absolute discharge rather than a conditional discharge has been ordered so that the charge did not have to be imposed.

10. Although the criminal courts charge is not meant to affect other costs, we have found examples where costs and compensation orders have not been made as the charge is mandatory and sentencers have taken the defendant’s limited means into account by limiting other financial penalties.
11. It is important that the public is confident that the courts are dealing with the right cases in the right way and the media attention around the criminal courts charge is drawing the system into disrepute.

Who is the criminal courts charge being given to?

12. Since the introduction of the charge the Howard League has been collating evidence from local news reports. A full list of cases we have collated is attached at Annex A. These examples show that the criminal courts charge is being imposed on the homeless, the mentally ill and the poor.

- A 26-year-old man from Sunderland, who tried to kill himself by throwing himself in front of a car, admitted causing criminal damage to the car’s windscreen and possession of a class A drug. He was given a 12-month community order and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge and £425 compensation.¹
- A 32-year-old woman admitted stealing a four-pack of Mars Bars, worth 75p, from a shop in Kidderminster. Her solicitor told the court that she took the item because she “had not eaten in days” after her benefits were sanctioned. Magistrates fined her £73 and ordered that she pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs, a £20 victim surcharge and 75p compensation. The chairman of the magistrates told the defendant: “We do not readily accept you go into a shop to steal just for being hungry”.²
- A 30 year-old homeless woman was convicted in her absence of begging in a car park in Coventry. She was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, a £30 fine and a £20 victim surcharge.³
- A 26-year-old homeless man who stole a can of Red Bull worth 99p from a supermarket in South Shields, was given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge. His solicitor told the court that “he intended to drink the can”.
- A 20-year-old man who was living in a hostel in Stoke-on-Trent kicked out at a flower pot after being stabbed with a needle by a fellow resident. He became homeless. He admitted criminal damage, which placed him in breach of two previous conditional discharges. He was fined £70 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.⁴

13. These cases raise fundamental and far-reaching questions about who is being brought before the courts and why. Across England and Wales, people are being arrested, charged and brought to court for minor misdemeanours that arguably could be dealt with more expeditiously and cheaply through out of court disposals. The criminal courts charge illustrates how unfair our justice system has become and that too many people are ending up in the justice system because of mental health problems, poverty and homelessness. The Howard League urges the Committee to take this opportunity to expand the remit of its inquiry to consider the role the magistrates’ courts in a wider context.

Right to a fair trial

14. The mandatory and escalating nature of the criminal courts charge undermines the right to a fair trial as it may put pressure on people to plead guilty, even if they have not committed an offence.

- A woman in South Shields wrote to her local paper: “I am due to appear in Newcastle Crown Court in two weeks for an offence that I did not commit. I had planned on pleading not guilty, however I have been told that if I am found guilty I will have over £1,000 in costs to pay. Is this true?”

- A 44 year-old man from Mansfield Woodhouse, who was advised by a solicitor to plead not guilty, changed his plea after being told he faced having to pay more than £1,400 if convicted after trial. He was charged with using threatening, abusive or insulting words and behaviour after defending his son during an altercation between football fans.

Judicial criticism

15. There are press reports that more than 50 magistrates have resigned from the bench since the introduction of the criminal courts charge. In one resignation letter an experienced magistrate, who had just been forced to impose hundreds of pounds in financial penalties on unemployed young men who had committed very low level offences said that: ‘[a]fter over 21 years as a magistrate, I cannot impose a sentence without fear. I am afraid these new court charges are going to destroy ordinary people’s conception of a fair British judicial system.’ The Howard League suggests that the Committee attempts to establish how many magistrates have resigned, or have voiced concerns, over the charge.

16. Concern is also being expressed by members of the senior judiciary.

- A judge at Truro Crown Court criticised government policy when he was forced to impose a £900 criminal courts charge on a defendant. Judge Christopher Harvey Clark QC told the defendant: “The charge has no bearing on your ability to pay. It is totally inappropriate for people of no means to have to pay this charge. It happens to be current government policy but as an independent judge I regard it as extremely unfair and although I have to impose it, I do so with immense reluctance.”

- A judge at Exeter Crown Court questioned the viability of the criminal courts charge after imposing a mandatory £900 fee on a homeless shoplifter. As the 29-year-old defendant was led away, Judge Alan Large asked: “He cannot afford to feed himself, so what are the prospects of him paying £900?”

- A judge at Leicester Crown Court said the charge doesn’t have “any merit” after imposing a £900 charge on a penniless man. “I will make the order only because it’s down to statute and not because I think it has any merit. Those who impose these things may have the responsibility of collecting it and whether or not they can achieve anything is a moot point. I wonder how much that will cost the country in terms of administration?”

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5 http://www.shieldsgazette.com/opinion/columnists/legal-eagle-should-i-plead-guilty-because-i-can-t-afford-court-costs-1-7346138
Circumnavigating justice – sentencing decisions

17. The Howard League is aware of cases where magistrates have circumnavigated the sentencing process in order to avoid awarding the criminal courts charge.

- A Berkshire magistrate gave a 51-year old man on disability benefits an absolute discharge after he was caught with around £5 worth of cannabis at home. The defending solicitor had argued: “If you give him a conditional discharge he will still have to pay the £150 criminal courts charge – that’s an awful lot for a tiny amount of cannabis. If you were to give him an absolute discharge he wouldn’t have to pay it.” The presiding magistrate, Robert Lynch, agreed to the recommendation: “That’s only the second time in 10 years I’ve done that.”

- Magistrates in Newbury avoiding giving the charge to a 21-year-old who already owed more than £1,000 in court costs and fines by detaining him in the courthouse until the bench rose for lunch. The presiding magistrate said: “We will consider that paid if you are held here until lunchtime. That way you will not incur costs or the criminal courts charge.” The man then waited the remaining 45 minutes within the court precincts and left without incurring any further penalty.

Undermining justice – other costs

18. The Howard League is aware of examples where magistrates have imposed the mandatory criminal court charge and then not awarded other costs in order to take into account the defendant’s limited means. As a consequence, the CPS and victims are bearing the financial brunt of propping up the injustice of the charge.

- A 50-year-old man who was living in a tent admitted stealing a £2.99 bottle of wine from a supermarket in Newbury, Berkshire. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge. Magistrates made no order of costs, owing to the man’s “limited means”.

- A 37-year-old man from Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, threw a glass bottle through a car window, causing a 21-year-old woman to be scarred for life. The judge said he was unable to award compensation to the victim because he had to impose a £900 criminal courts charge on her attacker.

Collection rates

19. Given the high level of public interest and the controversy surrounding the charge, it is particularly disappointing to see no specific figures in the latest quarterly criminal courts statistics. The figures suggest, however, that more than £5m of criminal court charges may have been billed to people in the first three months of its operation, and that less than six per cent of it has been collected.

20. We suggest that the Committee attempts to establish the true figures regarding collection rates. The Howard League is concerned that millions of pounds worth of unrealistic

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14 http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/news/15425/Shoplifter-was-living-in-tent-.html
charges have been imposed on people with little or no hope of this money ever being collected.

Debtors’ prisons

21. The criminal courts charge legislation allows for the imprisonment of those who cannot pay the money they owe. The government’s impact assessment predicts £5m a year will be spent on the additional prison places required to lock up these people. Prisons are dangerously and chronically overcrowded. Locking up people for being poor risks going back to the days of the debtors’ prisons.

Conclusion

22. The criminal courts charge is unfair, unrealistic and unjust. It should be suspended and the review should be undertaken by the Ministry of Justice expeditiously.

23. The charge has illustrated the problems in magistrates courts and raises serious questions about who is brought before the courts and why. The media attention the charge has attracted has raised public awareness and concern and there is an opportunity for radical reform of the system. More people should be dealt with more effectively, cheaply and quickly by being diverted from the system. Magistrates’ powers should be reformed so the courts are focussed on problem-solving, rather than punishment.

24. The Howard League would be happy to provide the committee with any further information to assist with its inquiry and to provide oral evidence.

30 September 2015

Annex A

The Criminal Courts Charge was introduced in April 2015. The following court cases are among hundreds that have been reported by local media.

- A 37-year-old homeless man, who jumped in front of a car in breach of an Asbo, was jailed for 12 weeks by magistrates in Taunton, Somerset, and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge. (Thisisthewestcountry.co.uk, 9 May 2015) http://www.thisisthewestcountry.co.uk/news/12937282.Thief_gets_sent_down_for_99_days___more_from_Taunton_Magistrates_Courts/

- A 26-year-old homeless man who stole a can of Red Bull worth 99p from a supermarket in South Shields, Tyne and Wear, was given a conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge.

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A 26-year-old homeless man who admitted stealing drinks and chocolate worth £4.80 from a shop in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, was jailed for four weeks because of his lengthy record and made to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge. *(Mansfield and Ashfield Chad, 18 May 2015)*

A 50-year-old homeless man breached an Asbo by entering an area in Taunton, Somerset, he was barred from. He was detained in the courthouse and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge. *(Thisisthewestcountry.co.uk, 8 June 2015)*

A 41-year-old man who stole two tubs of ice cream worth £9.58 from a shop in Coventry, Warwickshire, was given a six-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge. *(Coventry Telegraph, 9 June 2015)*

A 27-year-old man who “trespassed” at a shop in Poole, Dorset, and stole three cans of drink to a value of £6.64 was ordered to pay £6.64 in compensation, a £15 victim surcharge and a £180 criminal courts charge. *(Bournemouth Daily Echo, 10 June 2015)*

A 19-year-old man admitted stealing sweets and ice cream to the value of £5 from a supermarket in Torquay, Devon, whilst subject to a conditional discharge imposed for two thefts. He was ordered to pay a £35 fine, a £180 criminal courts charge, a £20 victim surcharge and £85 costs. *(Herald Express, 10 June 2015)*

A 33-year-old woman who stole shampoo worth £2.39 from a shop in Banbury, Oxfordshire, was given a six-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £35 costs and a £15 victim surcharge. *(Banbury Cake, 11 June 2015)*

A 33-year-old man pleaded guilty to stealing two gammon steaks from a shop in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a
• £150 criminal court charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.
  (Stoke Sentinel, 13 June 2015)

• A 43-year-old man admitted breaching a criminal behaviour order by sitting on the ground within five metres of a shop without a reasonable excuse in Oxford, Oxfordshire. He was fined £100 and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.
  (Witney Gazette, 15 June 2015)

• A judge at Exeter Crown Court questioned the viability of the criminal courts charge after imposing a mandatory £900 fee on a homeless shoplifter. As the 29-year-old defendant was led away, Judge Alan Large asked: “He cannot afford to feed himself, so what are the prospects of him paying £900?”
  (Exeter Express & Echo, 18 June 2015)

• A 21-year-old man from Ilkeston, Derbyshire, was committed to prison for 28 days for breaching an existing court order and stealing a sandwich and a bottle of cider from a shop. He was ordered to pay compensation of £15.21 and a £150 criminal courts charge.
  (Ilkeston Advertiser, 19 June 2015)
  http://www.ilkestonadvertiser.co.uk/news/local/who-from-ilkeston-has-been-before-the-courts-1-7316840

• A 38-year-old homeless man admitted persistently begging in Oxford, Oxfordshire, and breached an Asbo prohibiting him from sitting within 10 metres of a cash machine. He was jailed for 30 days and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge.
  (Oxford Mail, 22 June 2015)

• A 45-year-old man admitted two counts of begging, and failing to comply with a police officer’s request to stop drinking in public in Coventry, Warwickshire. He was given a 12-month Criminal Behaviour Order and ordered to pay a £300 criminal courts charge, a £150 fine and a £40 victim surcharge.
  (Coventry Telegraph, 29 June 2015)

• A 31-year-old woman from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, admitted stealing shower gel worth £2.39 from a pharmacy. She was jailed for 14 days and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, a £20 victim surcharge and £2.39 in compensation.
  (Worksop Guardian, 29 June 2015)
A 30-year-old homeless woman was convicted in her absence of begging in a car park in Coventry, Warwickshire. She was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, a £30 fine and a £20 victim surcharge. *(Coventry Telegraph, 2 July 2015)*

A 40-year-old man pleaded guilty to selling tissues on a train in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, without the written permission of the operator. He was fined £100 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge. *(Bucks Herald, 2 July 2015)*

A 28-year-old woman from Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, pleaded guilty to stealing a bottle of wine and two pasta pots from a supermarket. She was discharged conditionally for 18 months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge. *(Leicester Mercury, 4 July 2015)*

A Shields Gazette reader writes: “I am due to appear in Newcastle Crown Court in two weeks for an offence that I did not commit. I had planned on pleading not guilty, however I have been told that if I am found guilty I will have over £1,000 in costs to pay. Is this true?” *(Shields Gazette, 7 July 2015)*

An 18-year-old man who admitted to stealing a bottle of lager worth £2.09 from a supermarket in Poole, Dorset. He was ordered to pay compensation of £2.09 and a £150 criminal courts charge. *(Bournemouth Daily Echo, 9 July 2015)*

A 29-year-old homeless man was jailed for 14 days for stealing a bottle of wine worth £8 from a store in Chelmsford, Essex. He committed the offence a day after being released from court for the same offence. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge. *(Essex Chronicle, 12 July 2015)*
• A 34-year-old man from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, who stole two ice creams, to the value of £2.50, from a shop was discharged conditionally for six months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, a £15 victim surcharge and £2.50 in compensation. (Worksop Guardian, 13 July 2015) http://www.worksopguardian.co.uk/news/local/court-results-worksop-and-retford-1-7355807

• A 33-year-old homeless man pleaded guilty to three counts of breaching a criminal behaviour order after he was found holding “an open container of alcohol”. Magistrates in Folkestone, Kent, sentenced him to 12 weeks in prison, suspended for 12 months, and ordered him to pay a £185 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £100 victim surcharge. (Folkestone Herald, 14 July 2015) http://www.folkestoneherald.co.uk/Justice-seen-Folkestone-criminals/story-26898442-detail/story.html

• A 44-year-old man from Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, who was advised by a solicitor to plead not guilty changed his plea after being told he faced having to pay more than £1,400 if convicted after a trial. He was charged with using threatening, abusive or insulting words and behaviour following an altercation between football fans. He changed his plea after being warned he could be ordered to pay more than £600 in court costs and an £800 criminal courts charge. (Mansfield and Ashfield Chad, 22 July 2015) http://www.chad.co.uk/news/crime/football-fan-changes-plea-over-violent-clash-after-being-warned-about-court-costs-1-7372221

• A 27-year-old man from Downham Market, Norfolk, stole shower gel from a shop because he “needed a wash”, magistrates heard. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, plus £5.25 in compensation to the shop. (Lynn News, 24 July 2015) http://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/local/latest-local-news/downham-market-man-stole-shower-gel-from-shop-because-he-needed-a-wash-court-told-1-6868611

• A 27-year-old man stole meat products worth £24 from a supermarket in King’s Lynn, Norfolk. His solicitor told the court that he sold the products on to pay for gas and electricity. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £24 in compensation. (Lynn News, 25 July 2015) http://www.lynnnews.co.uk/news/local/latest-local-news/king-s-lynn-man-stole-meat-to-pay-for-gas-and-electricity-1-6868670

• A 21-year-old homeless man admitted to being drunk and disorderly in a public place in Weymouth, Dorset. He was discharged conditionally for six months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge. (Dorset Echo, 28 July 2015) http://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/13503059.IN_THE_DOCK__See_who_has_been_befo re_the_courts_this_week___July_28/
- A 20-year-old man who was living in a hostel in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, kicked out at a flower pot after being stabbed with a needle by a fellow resident. He became homeless. He admitted criminal damage, which placed him in breach of two conditional discharges that were imposed on him for thefts. He was fined £70 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.  
  
(Stoke Sentinel, 29 July 2015)  

- A 42-year-old homeless man was discharged conditionally for six months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge for begging in Derby, Derbyshire.  
  
(Derby Telegraph, 29 July 2015)  

- A 32-year-old woman was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £15 victim surcharge for begging in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire.  
  
(Nottingham Post, 30 July 2015)  

- A 31-year-old homeless man who admitted stealing stationery worth £15 from a supermarket in Bicester, Oxfordshire, was fined £75 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £20 victim surcharge.  
  
(Oxford Mail, 3 August 2015)  
http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/13526546.Scales_of_Justice_16_cases_heard_at_Oxf ord_and_Banbury_Magistrates_Court/

- A 25-year-old man admitted stealing chicken and garlic mushrooms, worth £1.78, and aftershave, worth £7.98, from shops in Ilkeston, Derbyshire. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.  
  
(Nottingham Post, 4 August 2015)  

- A 40-year-old homeless woman with addictions to heroin and alcohol admitted breaching a criminal behaviour order after she was caught trying to steal cheese and socks from a supermarket in Ludlow, Shropshire. She was jailed for six months and ordered to pay a £900 criminal courts charge.  
  
(Ludlow and Tenbury Wells Advertiser, 4 August 2015)  
http://www.ludlowadvertiser.co.uk/news/13565428.Woman_given_prison_sentence_for_L udlow_supermarket_breach/

- A 39-year-old woman who stole body cream worth £9.95 from a pharmacy in Longton, Staffordshire, was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150
criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.
(Stoke Sentinel, 5 August 2015)

- A 41-year-old woman from Worksop, Nottinghamshire, was fined £40 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £60 costs and a £20 victim surcharge for not having a TV licence.
(Retford Today, 10 August 2015)
http://www.retfordtoday.co.uk/news/local/worksop-see-latest-court-results-1-7401633

- A 37-year-old man from Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, threw a glass bottle through a car window, causing a 21-year-old woman to be scarred for life. The judge said he was unable to award compensation to the victim because he had to impose a £900 criminal courts charge on her attacker.
(Huddersfield Examiner, 11 August 2015)
http://www.examiner.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/suspended-jail-sentence-holmfirth-bottle-9836093

- A 25-year-old man who stole deodorant, baby milk and milkshakes worth a total of £25 from a shop in Snodland, Kent, was jailed for seven days and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge.
(Kent and Sussex Courier, 11 August 2015)

- A 32-year-old woman admitted stealing a four-pack of Mars bars, worth 75p, from a shop in Kidderminster, Worcestershire. Her solicitor told the court that she took the item because she “had not eaten in days”. Magistrates fined her £73 and ordered that she pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs, a £20 victim surcharge and 75p in compensation.
(Halesowen News, 11 August 2015)
http://www.halesowennews.co.uk/news/worcestershire/13587194.Hungry_Kidderminster_woman_stole_Mars_bars_afterBenefit_sanctions_left_her_with_no_money_for_food/

- A 50-year-old man who was living in a tent admitted stealing a £2.99 bottle of wine from a supermarket in Newbury, Berkshire. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge. Magistrates made no order of costs, owing to the man’s “limited means”.
(Newbury Today, 12 August 2015)
http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/news/15425/Shoplifter-was-living-in-tent-.html

- A 38-year-old man was handed a 12-month conditional discharge and was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge for begging in a car park in Derby, Derbyshire.
(Derby Telegraph, 12 August 2015)
A 38-year-old woman who tried to steal meat worth £20 from a supermarket was given a six-week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and an £80 victim surcharge by magistrates in Telford, Shropshire. 
*(Shropshire Star, 13 August 2015)*

A 51-year-old homeless man admitted being drunk and disorderly in Oxford, Oxfordshire. He was fined £50 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £20 victim surcharge. 
*(Oxford Mail, 13 August 2015)*

A 64-year-old homeless man admitted being drink and consuming alcohol at a park-and-ride site in Oxford, Oxfordshire. This was in breach of an order. He was sent to prison for 18 weeks and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge and £80 victim surcharge. 
*(Oxford Mail, 13 August 2015)*

A 45-year-old man admitted stealing a £6 pair of shoes and committing a further offence while subject to a conditional discharge. He was fined £35 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £20 victim surcharge. 
*(Lincolnshire Echo, 17 August 2015)*

A 44-year-old man who stole two packets of washing powder, worth £15.98, from a store in Lancing, West Sussex, was fined £35 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.  
*(Worthing Herald, 17 August 2015)*

A 34-year-old man who stole three bottles of baby milk from a supermarket in Derby, Derbyshire, was given a six-week community order with curfew and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £60 victim surcharge. 
*(Derby Telegraph, 18 August 2015)*

A 22-year-old man from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, was conditionally discharged for six months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge for
damaging a kitchen door. No order was made for costs due to his lack of means.
(Nottingham Post, 18 August 2015)

- A 30-year-old homeless man appeared before magistrates in Coventry, Warwickshire, and admitted resisting arrest. He was conditionally discharged for 12 months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge.
(Coventry Telegraph, 20 August 2015)

- A 38-year-old homeless man admitted stealing a pair of children’s shoes, worth £30, from a shop in Banbury, Oxfordshire. He was given a 12-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal court charge, £20 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.
(Witney Gazette, 20 August 2015)

- A 38-year-old man admitted stealing two bottles of wine, worth £14 in total, from a shop in Banbury, Oxfordshire, whilst subject to an order of conditional discharge. He was fined a total of £105 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £20 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.
(Witney Gazette, 20 August 2015)

- A 37-year-old man stole a lamb joint, worth £19.53, from a supermarket in Grantham, Lincolnshire. He told police that he had taken the meat to feed himself and his dog. Magistrates heard that he had referred himself to Addaction to tackle his alcohol misuse. He was fined £70 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal court charge, £85 prosecution costs and a £20 victim surcharge.
(Grantham Journal, 21 August 2015)

- A 32-year-old homeless man was fined £80 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £3.75 compensation, £45 costs and a £20 victim surcharge for stealing a bottle of
cider from a shop in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.  
(Ripon Gazette, 21 August 2015)  
http://www.ripongazette.co.uk/news/crime/magistrates-court-weekly-roundup-1-7420872

- A 38-year-old man stole chocolate buttons worth £1 from a shop in Waterlooville, Hampshire. He was ordered to pay £425, including a £150 criminal courts charge.  
(Portsmouth News, 22 August 2015)  

- A 34-year-old homeless man stole seven packs of bacon, to the value of £7, from a supermarket in Boston, Lincolnshire. He was discharged conditionally for 12 months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £15 victim surcharge.  
(Boston Standard, 25 August 2015)  
http://www.bostonstandard.co.uk/news/local/court-results-our-weekly-register-of-boston-cases-1-6923605

- A 41-year-old man who admitted stealing two sandwiches and a pot of fruit from a café in Oxford, Oxfordshire, was given a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge.  
(Oxford Times, 27 August 2015)  

- A 46-year-old woman from Hull, East Yorkshire, was sent to prison for eight weeks for stealing a shirt and a pair of gold sandals from a store. She was ordered to pay a £520 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge.  
(Hull Daily Mail, 27 August 2015)  

- A 40-year-old homeless man was jailed for four weeks for stealing meat, worth £30, from a supermarket in Hull, East Yorkshire. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge.  
(Hull Daily Mail, 27 August 2015)  

- A judge at Truro Crown Court criticised government policy when he was forced to impose a £900 criminal courts charge on a defendant. Judge Christopher Harvey Clark QC told the defendant: “The charge has no bearing on your ability to pay. It is totally inappropriate for people of no means to have to pay this charge. It happens to be current government policy but as an independent judge I regard it as extremely unfair and although I have to impose it, I do so with immense reluctance.”  
(West Briton, 29 August 2015)  
A 30-year-old man from Lincoln, Lincolnshire, pleaded guilty to stealing a bottle of wine from one supermarket and a packet of fish from another. He was fined £150 and ordered to pay a £300 criminal courts charge, £40 costs, a £40 victim surcharge and £19.56 compensation.  
*(Lincolnshire Echo, 31 August 2015)*  

A 25-year-old homeless man was jailed for 16 weeks and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £15 victim surcharge for stealing two bottles of wine from a supermarket in Derby, Derbyshire.  
*(Derby Telegraph, 31 August 2015)*  

A 77-year-old homeless man was conditionally discharged for 12 months after being caught stealing groceries from a supermarket and failing to surrender to the custody of the court following his release on police bail. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and a £15 victim surcharge.  
*(Derby Telegraph, 1 September 2015)*  

A 52-year-old man from Chorley, Lancashire, breached a drinking banning order by having an “open container of alcohol in public”. He was fined £50 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £20 victim surcharge.  
*(Chorley Guardian, 4 September 2015)*  

A 38-year-old man was fined £50 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £20 victim surcharge for stealing cheese and anchovies, worth £2.64, from a supermarket in South Shields, Tyne and Wear.  
*(Shields Gazette, 4 September 2015)*  

A 26-year-old man from Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, who tried to kill himself by throwing himself through a car windscreen admitted causing criminal damage and possession of a Class A drug. He was given a 12-month community order and ordered to pay a £180 criminal courts charge and £425 compensation.  
*(Sunderland Echo, 4 September 2015)*  

A 34-year-old man from Worksop, Nottinghamshire, was discharged conditionally for six months and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and £4.98
A 36-year-old man from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, stole chocolate worth £14.25 from a supermarket. He was ordered to do 50 hours’ unpaid work and was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £85 costs and a £60 victim surcharge.

A 35-year-old homeless man admitted stealing washing powder and groceries from a shop in Chatham, Kent. He was sentenced to 42 days in prison, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £80 victim surcharge, £40 costs and £7 compensation.

A 44-year-old man from Huncoast, Lancashire, was given a 12-month community order and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge for stealing face cream from a pharmacy.

A 28-year-old man who stole nappies from a pharmacy in Lincoln, Lincolnshire, was sent to prison for six weeks and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and an £80 victim surcharge.

A 47-year-old man from Lincoln, Lincolnshire, was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge after pleading guilty to placing himself “in a public place to beg or gather alms”.

A 22-year-old man from Lincoln, Lincolnshire, who admitted stealing ice cream worth £1.67 from a supermarket was given a six-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge.

A 26-year-old homeless man who stole shower gel from a supermarket in Lincolnshire was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge. He was detained in the courthouse.
Magistrates in Newbury, Berkshire, decided to give an absolute discharge, rather than a conditional discharge, to a man who admitted possessing a small amount of cannabis. Imposing a conditional discharge would have required the bench to order the man to pay a criminal courts charge.

The chairman of the bench said: “That’s only the second time in 10 years I’ve done that.” (Newbury Today, 21 September 2015) http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/news/15827/Absolute-shambles-.html

A 22-year-old homeless man admitted stealing a chocolate milkshake from a supermarket in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. He was jailed for two weeks and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £1.25 compensation. (Worksop Guardian, 21 September 2015) http://www.worksopguardian.co.uk/news/local/worksop-and-retford-find-out-who-has-recently-appeared-before-the-courts-1-7472253

A 28-year-old man who admitted begging in Coventry, West Midlands, was fined £36 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge and £20 victim surcharge. (Coventry Telegraph, 25 September 2015) http://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/scales-justice-stealing-five-bottles-10077538

A judge at Plymouth Crown Court branded the criminal courts charge “ridiculous” after he was told he had no choice but to order a man with mental health problems to pay £900. (Plymouth Herald, 27 September 2015) http://www.plymouthherald.co.uk/Judge-sitting-Plymouth-calls-courts-charge/story-27876753-detail/story.html

A magistrate in Leicester, Leicestershire, was suspended, and subsequently resigned, after he tried to pay towards a £180 criminal courts charge imposed on a penniless man for fine-defaulting. (Leicester Mercury, 29 September 2015) http://www.leicestermirror.co.uk/Magistrate-suspended-trying-pay-defendant-s-court/story-27882474-detail/story.html

Magistrates in Newbury, Berkshire, ordered a man to remain with the precincts of the court for 45 minutes and issued no further penalty, to avoid having to impose a £150 criminal courts charge. (Newbury Today, 29 September 2015) http://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/news/15922/Magistrates-avoid-imposing-controversial-new-charge.html

A 30-year-old man from Hartlepool, County Durham, admitted stealing a packet of chocolate biscuits worth 70p. He was fined £15 and ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £40 costs and a £20 victim surcharge. (Hartlepool Mail, 29 September 2015)
A 34-year-old man from Hartlepool, County Durham, stole a coffee jar worth £6. He was ordered to pay a £150 criminal courts charge, £40 costs and £6 compensation. 

(Hartlepool Mail, 29 September 2015) 