

# London's use of GPS Tags for Domestic Abuse

## Final process and performance summary

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### London's use of GPS Tags for Domestic Abuse (DA)

- There is significant political interest in the use of electronic monitoring to enhance the management of people on probation. Legislation over the last 20 years has enabled it to be used in what the Probation Inspectorate describe as 'increasingly inventive and intrusive ways'. There is, however, 'an overall lack of evidence about the longer-term effectiveness of such interventions'.<sup>1</sup>
- The Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) has been at the forefront in the use of electronic monitoring, piloting the Alcohol Abstinence Monitoring Requirement (AAMR) tags in 2014. Since February 2019, MOPAC has been piloting the use of the GPS tags for individuals released from prison on licence who have committed knife-related offences<sup>2</sup>, which was extended in March 2021 to include offences of domestic abuse (DA) across London.
- The aims of the domestic abuse GPS pilot are to:
  - challenge the thinking and behaviour of offenders subject to GPS through the use of location data in supervision;
  - use GPS data as an integral part of risk management plans;
  - use GPS data to improve the management of the risk posed to past, current and future partners and other known adults and children;
  - act as a deterrent to domestic abuse perpetrators;
  - increase the effectiveness of enforcement action and managing compliance with licence conditions, particularly exclusion zones; and
  - develop best practice learning in the use of GPS with this group.
- The service model for DA is the same as introduced for knife crime tags. Fitting takes place usually at prisons on the morning of release or else at probation offices or approved premises.
- Additional data can be supplied by the monitoring provider (Buddi) to the probation practitioner (PP), such as real time key location notifications and summary reports, with heatmaps and top addresses visited, etc. The police are also provided with a list of current tag wearers to support joint risk management with probation and to enable data requests to be considered in appropriate circumstances.
- The pilot also involves a crime mapping element - where the movements of those tagged are matched against the location of reported serious crimes and details of matches are provided to the police for further analysis.

### Tagged individuals are most likely to be White, males, in their 30's, who had committed violence

- To date (mid-October 2022) 261 DA GPS tags have been fitted.
- 98% (n255) of those tagged were male, 2% (n6) female.

<sup>1</sup>HM Inspectorate of Probation (2022) 'The use of electronic monitoring as a tool for the Probation Service in reducing reoffending and managing risk'.

<sup>2</sup> [Interim knife crime tag evaluation report available on MOPAC website](#). Final impact evaluation due in 2023.

- Recipients of DA tags were aged between 19 to 70, with a mean age of 36. Where ethnicity was known (n=244), 49% were White, 33% were Black, 10% were Mixed White / Black, 7% Asian and 1% 'Other' ethnicity.
- Data for April 2022 for a similar cohort of those sentenced to custody, returning to London and meeting the same risk threshold, showed that the DA tag sample is equally likely to be male, more likely (6 percentage points) to be White and slightly less likely to be Black (3 percentage points) than the comparison group.
- The most common main sentencing offence for tagged individuals were:
  - Violent offences: 54% (n142);
  - Breaches of victim protection orders: 24% (n62); and
  - Stalking and harassment offences: 7% (n19).

#### Around half of the tagged individuals successfully completed their order

- Of the 190 individuals who had finished on the tag<sup>3</sup> - 51% (n97) of the cohort had successfully completed their order while 49% (n93) had been recalled.
- The reasons for recall were:
  - General non-compliance – reasons unrelated to GPS: 35 (38% of those recalled);
  - Breach of other conditions identified using GPS: 23 (25% of those recalled);
  - New incident detected through crime mapping or evidenced through EAR: 13 (14% of those recalled);
  - Breach of GPS monitored exclusion zone: 10 (11% of those recalled);
  - Multiple reasons with GPS as secondary reason: 10 (11% of those recalled); and
  - Primarily for GPS related non-compliance: 1 (1% of those recalled).
- The proportion of those completing is noticeably lower than the comparative figure of MOPAC's knife crime tag (which is typically completed in just under 2/3rds of cases), but similar to that reported in E&I's 2018 Interim report on GPS tagging for an IOM cohort (56% compliance rate).

#### Probation practitioners believe the tags help them and partners manage the offender

- PPs outlined the primary benefits of using GPS DA tags, the most popular were:
  - to establish if the tag wearer had been in an exclusion zone(s);
  - the ability to monitor the risk to the victim;
  - to monitor and share information about breaches of victim protection orders (Restraining Orders, Non-Molestation Orders), and
  - the ability to challenge the tag wearer in supervision.
- PP's preferred email alerts from Buddi about individual incidents, followed by looking at the weekly reports. Less popular were contacting Buddi via email or phone for specific data (such as heat maps, data snapshots etc); logging onto the Eagle system<sup>4</sup> to look at GPS data directly; and/or speaking the MOPAC GPS Project team directly.
- PPs contacted other agencies/bodies in relation to the GPS DA tags, most frequently the police, but also MARAC, victim liaison officers, social services, independent domestic violence advisors and (less frequently) MAPPA and housing.
- Contact with the agencies tended either to be for either of the following:
  - *Information purposes* - informing that an individual was on a tag, providing licence conditions/exclusion zone details, victim safety information, breach

<sup>3</sup> 71 were still 'live'.

<sup>4</sup> The Buddi portal that allows practitioners direct access to GPS data and alerts.

information, arrested or recalled, or information that an individual had not breached an exclusion zone.

- *operational purposes* - particularly with the police. This could include updates of location to facilitate arrest, sharing information about a breach/entry into exclusion zones; provide integrated offender management/gangs intelligence<sup>5</sup>.
- Practitioner feedback highlighted the benefits of interest zones for cases when a victim or person at risk had been relocated and the tag wearer had not been informed about the new address to enhance protection for the person. Having a defined exclusion zone on the licence would alert the tag wearer to the new address whereas having a non-enforceable interest zone allowed the area to be monitored without the tag wearer being necessarily informed of this specific location.

### There are suggested improvements for the service model

- General feedback was the service model worked well, although there were concerns about the model's resilience (essentially relying on one seconded probation officer to manage the process).
- Most PPs were happy with the system, but areas for improvement were:
  - maps could be clearer as some staff were unfamiliar with the locations;
  - more awareness of, and support to use, the Eagle platform to access to live map data;
  - improvements to the portal, which was seen as '*confusing and sometimes clunky*'. It was highlighted data was not always provided over the course of a day, so difficult to gain a big picture where individuals go.
- Communication issues with fitting tags for DA remain consistent with prior issues found within the knife crime tagging evaluation. Some tag wearers reported that they had not been told by probation that they were going to receiving a tag prior to release, and as a result were unhappy, something confirmed by the tag supplier.
- There were issues with the accuracy and completeness of lists provided to police detailing who is currently on tag (e.g. missing PNC reference number). The tagging supplier also identified there was scope to reduce the number of short notice referrals from probation to ensure resources can be planned and deployed as required. In 44% of cases time between referral and tag fitting was 5 days or less, in 19% 2 days or less.
- When asked, PPs preferred the MOPAC GPS tag to that introduced by the MoJ, largely on the basis that there was better, quicker communication from Buddi.

### Perceptions of the DA tag are generally positive across staff and offenders <sup>6</sup>

#### *Police & probation stakeholders & probation practitioners*

- Feedback from PPs about the DA tag was overwhelmingly positive – it was felt tags play a role in more robust risk management; public protection; providing reassurance to professionals and victims and was more suited for DA (compared to knife crime).
- Senior police and probation stakeholders were also supportive – commenting it was a useful tool in monitoring high risk DA perpetrators.

<sup>5</sup> PP feedback was obtained from an online survey that was completed by 17 respondents.

<sup>6</sup> PP feedback was obtained from the online survey above. Tag wearer data is taken from an online survey completed when the tag was removed. 30 tag wearers responded, data on perceptions of the tag's impact was available for 24. This small sample precludes firm findings.

- Stakeholders and most PPs would like to see the use of tags expanded to cover other offence types (notably stalking); to include Life Sentences; as well as Indeterminate Sentences for Public protection; and to additional prisons.

#### *Tag wearers*

- To date, only a relatively small number of those tagged (n=24) have completed the online survey undertaken when the tag is removed. This limits our confidence in the findings. However, of those to answer – they were generally positive it improved their offending behaviour, but that it made no difference to others (i.e., housing, employment situation, mental health, or relationship with friends and family).
- They attributed the offending result to the fact that it served as a reminder they were being monitored and of the consequences of reoffending or because they were less likely to mix with people they might get into trouble with.

#### The 'Crime mapping' aspect for DA has significant limitations

- The crime mapping for the DA tags is the same process used for knife crime tags with one exception – knife offences have a SPOC at the BCU level, who receives significant match details and those currently on the tag, for DA these details are sent to the predatory offender unit (POU) email inbox.
- Both models have the same limitations - high levels of attrition from the crimes uploaded to the number of hits generated; and few or no arrests from the hits provided to the BCUs. The process involves a lot of administration and resource for little apparent reward.
- It is currently unclear if the lack of significant matches and consequent prosecutions is due to low/reduced levels of offending by tag wearers. Impact analysis has not been undertaken for this group, but it will be possible when the number of individuals who complete the tag increase.
- There is little certainty within the central MPS governance structure for DA about what is happening in various BCUs with the data provided (the hits, and details of those on the DA tag).

#### Stakeholder and practitioner feedback on the future and sustainability of the model

- Senior stakeholders (and practitioners) were keen for the DA element to continue, and to be expanded with an associated concern that without an appropriate replacement there would be a gap in service provision.
- However, there was also concern about the duplication of electronic monitoring systems, and the confusion that might arise from different systems; providers; platforms; and criteria for inclusion on a GPS tag. Ideally a 'one system' approach is required (for London and nationally).
- Stakeholders (particularly the police) emphasised this should continue to be a probation-led system to which the police respond.
- Service sustainability in terms of design, funding and governance should be addressed.
- For this review it has not been possible to ascertain whether self-reported opinions on the effect of the tag on offending behaviour has transferred through to police recorded contact or offending. This aspect will be looked at within E&I's final Knife Crime tag evaluation (due in 2023).