

Nacro's response to the House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee's Call for Evidence: Electronic Monitoring, September 2025

About Nacro

1. Our response to this call for evidence is based on our experience of supporting thousands of people across the criminal justice system (CJS) every year and our commitment to ensuring their voices and experiences are heard. We support over 30,000 people every year across all Nacro's services. We directly support people in the CJS who are on a community order or on release from prison, including advice with accommodation, personal wellbeing and finance, benefits and debt. We deliver the Community Accommodation Service (CAS-2) on behalf of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), housing prison leavers on Home Detention Curfew and those bailed from court in need of an address, as well as a range of supported housing projects for people leaving prison. And we run a Criminal Record Support Service providing professional advice to thousands of individuals and employers.
2. This response is informed by a survey we conducted from April to July 2025. 48 people with experience of electronic monitoring completed the survey: 77% were subject to a curfew tag, 15% were subject to a GPS (location) tag and 8% were subject to an Alcohol tag. We have restricted our answers to areas where we have the most knowledge and expertise.
3. For more information about our response please contact andrew.yates@nacro.org.uk

Our response

Q 1: What is the purpose of electronic monitoring? Is it punitive, rehabilitative, controlling, or something else?

4. Electronic monitoring (also known as 'tagging') is used to monitor curfews and conditions of a court or prison order. It is punitive, as it restricts freedom, but can offer a cost-effective alternative to custody and can support effective management of people in the community. Where electronic monitoring is used as part of a community sentence as an alternative to imprisonment, it can mean that people are able to keep their home (where they have one), maintain family and community ties, retain contact with support networks and services, keep jobs, and continue with any caring responsibilities.
5. ***Electronic monitoring plays an important role, but it must not be seen as a replacement for personal relationships and rehabilitative work, both of which are key to reducing reoffending. It must support not hinder rehabilitation.*** We set out in our response how we believe more can be done to ensure electronic monitoring supports individual rehabilitation journeys.

Q 2: What is the evidence base for the use of electronic monitoring? Does it actually work, and how is this measured (both whilst subject to electronic monitoring and afterwards)?

6. Evidence on the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in reducing offending is limited, and more work is needed to understand the impact on reoffending.¹ The Home Detention Curfew (HDC) Policy Framework notes that research evidence about the impact on reoffending rates of using electronic monitoring in HDC "is inconclusive but promising."² A recent evaluation of the acquisitive crime project which uses GPS

¹ [National Audit Office: Electronic monitoring: A progress update \(2022\)](#)

² [Home Detention Curfew \(HDC\) Policy Framework \(2025\)](#)

monitoring has demonstrated a 7% reduction in reoffending in the 12 months after release from prison.³

7. From our survey, more than four in 10 (43%) thought that electronic monitoring had helped them to stay on track and make better choices (31% said it did not, and 26% were unsure). One person commented: “Before when I was not on tag, I would have left the city whereas now I have made the choice to do better in life” whilst another said, “it hasn’t affected my choices, only made certain things and plans I have harder.”
Further evaluation on the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in reducing reoffending is required.

Q 4: To what extent is electronic monitoring being used consistently and proportionately?

8. We hear from those we support that there is a lack of consistency around the timing of the fitting of electronic tags. From our survey, only 65% of those released from prison had their tag fitted that day, and 23% said their tag was fitted more than two days after release.
9. We also hear of inconsistency in the approach to amendment of curfew times. Standard curfew times of 7pm to 7am⁴ can prevent people from working in certain roles. We often hear from people we support who want warehouse jobs or similar, which are often more accessible to them due to their criminal record, but who struggle to get amendments to their curfew times to accommodate their shift patterns. It is well evidenced that being in employment is a key factor in reducing the risk of reoffending and electronic monitoring should facilitate and not hinder this. For example, for those released from prison between July and September 2023 the proven reoffending rate for those who were unemployed at six weeks post release was 36.5%, compared to 20.2% for those who were employed.⁵ **We must ensure that electronic monitoring does not act as a barrier to people maintaining or obtaining employment.**

Q 5: What is the impact of electronic monitoring on the individual, their family, and (where applicable) victims? How is this considered, and how is this assessed?

10. Over half of those surveyed (55%) who were subject to a curfew and had family or caring commitments said their curfew impacted those commitments. One person said, “There needs to be more relaxed curfews or travel allowances to ensure curfew cut off times are not missed and family time is not cut short.” People have told us they are unable to care for children, take them to school or to care for elderly parents. It is important to ensure that being subject to electronic monitoring does not have a detrimental impact on people’s ability to rebuild their lives including maintaining their family connections, a known preventative factor for reoffending.
11. We have heard from people who tell us they live in continuous fear of unavoidable breach (such as breaching curfew due to transport problems) or technical failures that are outside their control. And that this significantly hinders them taking steps which would be positive for their rehabilitation journey. **To address this, ensuring flexibility to support family contact and engagement with work and other services is important, and improving the technologies and systems available to minimise the reality and fear of technical failures.**

³ [Ministry of Justice Impact Evaluation of the Acquisitive Crime Electronic Monitoring Project: 12 month+ cohort 2025](#)

⁴ [Home Detention Curfew \(HDC\) Policy Framework \(2025\)](#)

⁵ [Proven reoffending statistics: July to September 2023](#)

12. Many people tell us they feel stigma and shame from wearing a tag, including assumptions that those wearing tags are dangerous, regardless of the nature of their offence. This can impact people's reintegration into communities and, ultimately, their rehabilitation. **As Government explores new technologies for electronic monitoring, we would recommend that more discrete options are explored.**

Q 6: To what extent is informed consent being gained from those subject to electronic monitoring (particularly with reference to those on immigration bail)?

13. Consent is obtained when paperwork is provided at court or before being released from prison. However, whether the consent is truly 'informed' is not always clear. We hear from some people we support and staff that people are not always clear what they were consenting to or the detail of their licence and electronic monitoring conditions and that they feel they must sign what is put before them at a time that can be stressful or overwhelming. A significant proportion of people subject to electronic monitoring will experience challenges with literacy, language, or have neurodiverse needs.⁶ **It is therefore essential that all documentation is accessible, clearly written, and explained in straightforward terms to ensure understanding and compliance.**

Q 7: Is the use of electronic monitoring discriminatory, particularly in relation to age, gender, race, body composition, and language?

14. The impact of electronic monitoring will vary from person to person, dependant on a range of factors including lifestyle, age, their home and family circumstances, and whether they are able to reside close to their support networks or employment opportunities.
15. In relation to body composition and physical health, the people we have spoken to report a number of issues. These include swelling caused by tags being fitted too tightly, skin irritation, and sores around the ankle area. In one case, a tag was incorrectly fitted on a leg where a blood clot was present, which later had to be removed in A&E. Another person reported being advised by Electronic Monitoring Services (EMS) to cut off the device themselves due to swelling, with a replacement tag later fitted on the other leg.
16. The committee will also be aware of the case of Gaie Delap⁷ who was returned to prison because a device could not be fitted. Some of the women we have spoken to talked about to the challenge of adapting their clothing choices to conceal their ankle tag, which can restrict what they can wear, particularly during warmer weather.
17. It is therefore important to ensure that monitoring devices are suitable for all body compositions, fitted appropriately and that consideration is given to health needs to prevent harm. **As the Government explores new and enhanced technologies for electronic monitoring, they should ensure that these are practically appropriate for all groups.**

Q 9: What is the breach procedure? Is it effective? How is data transferred and relayed from service providers to public bodies (for example the police, probation, etc)?

18. When someone is subject to electronic monitoring, a breach is recorded if they break the conditions of their licence, such as a curfew or exclusion zone. This can also include

⁶ [Office for National Statistics: The education and social care background of young people who interact with the criminal justice system: May 2022](#)

⁷ [Just Stop Oil campaigner back in jail after ankle tag problem - BBC News](#)

interfering with the monitoring device or not meeting other specified requirements. The breach procedure involves the monitoring centre receiving a notification, followed by an investigation and potential action by the probation officer. Responses to breaches can range from issuing a warning to, in more serious cases, a recall to custody.

19. We heard from some people that we support and some support staff that they aren't always clear as to what the consequences of a breach are and how decisions are made. Some staff tell us that they are rarely consulted if someone breaches their licence conditions and can be unaware if someone is recalled to prison. **Voluntary sector organisations who are working with people who then breach should be involved in the decision-making process regarding breaches, particularly where this may result in a return to custody.**

Q 10: What is the future of electronic monitoring, particularly in light of the Independent Sentencing Review? How will the use of new and emerging technologies (for example, wrist-worn devices, phone tracking) change how electronic monitoring is used?

20. The Government proposal, announced on 2 September 2025, of a presumption that all prison leavers will be tagged on release, will significantly increase the numbers of people subject to electronic monitoring in the community. The Government confirmed an additional £100m investment into electronic monitoring to support this.⁸
21. The Committee will be aware of the issues that have plagued the delivery of electronic monitoring in recent years, including reliance on outdated IT systems, a lack of evidence and evaluation, inadequate data sharing and poor governance.⁹¹⁰
22. We believe electronic monitoring has an important role to play as an alternative to custody, but that it must support rehabilitation and mustn't simply increase in use for people who would otherwise have served community sentences without monitoring. ***Harnessing new and emerging technologies will be critical to the expansion, and improvement of, electronic monitoring. But we must ensure that the right balance is struck between monitoring people to ensure they can safely serve their sentence in the community rather than in prison, whilst also ensuring that we are not setting people up to fail if the conditions that people are expected to adhere to are too onerous and work against rehabilitation.***
23. ***It is vital that we do not allow electronic monitoring to replace the one-to-one human support that can make all the difference to someone's life chances. Therefore, investment in new and existing technologies and the Probation Service must go hand in hand with increased investment for the voluntary sector organisations that provide the person-centred support that is vital to support people to turn their lives around.***

Q 11: Does the Probation Service (and the Home Office in the case of immigration bail) have the capacity and capability to manage those subject to electronic monitoring?

24. The Probation Service remains under significant strain. HMI Probation's Annual Report of 2023/24 highlighted chronic understaffing impacting service delivery. Significant staff shortages have resulted in unmanageable caseloads, and the focus has shifted to the protection of the public against people who are considered high-risk. Whilst this is understandable, it is critical that people who are lower risk can also access support

⁸ [Ministry of Justice: Tens of thousands more to be tagged under biggest ever expansion September 2025](#)

⁹ [House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts: Transforming electronic monitoring services Oct 2022](#)

appropriate to their needs. Lower risk doesn't automatically correlate with lower need, and, in fact, those considered lower risk can often lead more chaotic lives and have higher support needs.

25. ***If the Probation Service are to have the capacity and capability to manage those subject to electronic monitoring then it is vital that the voluntary sector is adequately funded to play an increased role, which would both ease the pressure on probation and enhance service delivery.***