# Met Police Commissioner warns electronic tagging risks rising crime without extra resources



Sir Mark Rowley, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, has raised serious concerns regarding the UK Government's approach towards the use of electronic tagging as an alternative to prison for offenders. In a recent interview, Rowley expressed that such measures would fail to curb re-offending rates, thereby leading to increased workloads for police. The Commissioner articulated that fewer criminals serving time in jail could result in more criminals returning to the streets, creating the potential for a surge in crime, which police forces would have to manage.

The backdrop of Rowley's comments is the Labour Party's recent overhaul of sentencing laws, which includes provisions for early release of certain offenders, including those guilty of violent and sexual offences, based on good behaviour. This paradigm shift will see courts increasingly impose community sentences rather than short prison terms, fundamentally altering the landscape of criminal justice. As part of this strategy, the Probation Service is also set to expand its electronic monitoring capabilities with the acquisition of nearly 30,000 additional devices.

However, the efficacy of electronic monitoring in reducing recidivism is a contentious issue. A comprehensive review by the College of Policing revealed mixed outcomes, noting that while some studies indicated a reduction in re-offending rates, others found no statistically significant difference in comparisons of rearrest or parole violations. Furthermore, this review highlighted that programme design and the technological capacity of the monitoring systems play a critical role in determining effectiveness.

Despite claims that electronic tagging can offer a more rehabilitative approach, particularly in the case of sex offenders where it may deter further offences, experts caution against viewing it as a standalone solution. An examination by the Scottish Government indicated that while there are instances of reduced reoffending among monitored individuals, the evidence remains limited and calls for electronic monitoring to be employed as part of a broader support framework rather than as a replacement for traditional sentencing.

Moreover, the National Audit Office has pointed to significant shortcomings within the HM Prison & Probation Service’s electronic monitoring system, reporting inefficiencies that have led to substantial financial losses. Reports of technological failures and a lack of comprehensive evaluation further complicate the discussion on the viability of electronic tagging as an effective tool for managing offenders and promoting public safety.

With the Chancellor's spending review on the horizon, Rowley and other police chiefs have urged the Government for significant investment in policing to address the rising challenges they are facing. They have articulated that Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer’s ambitions to combat issues such as knife crime and violence against women would be unviable without a substantial increase in resources.

In light of these developments, the current debate over electronic tagging and community sentencing continues to unfold. As police leaders advocate for a reconfiguration of UK policing structures and call for a more resilient system capable of meeting modern challenges, the long-term ramifications of these legislative changes and their potential impact on public safety remain to be seen. The pressing question now is whether the Government will heed these warnings and ensure the necessary resources and research are allocated to create a system that genuinely reduces re-offending while effectively protecting communities.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14759433/Electronic-tags-criminals-offending-Met-chief.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/electronic-monitoring-offenders)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14759433/Electronic-tags-criminals-offending-Met-chief.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/electronic-tagging-sex-offences)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/electronic-monitoring-uses-challenges-successes/pages/9/), [[5]](https://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/electronic-monitoring-a-progress-update/), [[7]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmpubacc/34/report.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10725617/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14759433/Electronic-tags-criminals-offending-Met-chief.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmpubacc/34/report.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14759433/Electronic-tags-criminals-offending-Met-chief.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/electronic-monitoring-offenders> - The College of Policing's review of electronic monitoring (EM) effectiveness indicates that, overall, EM has not had a statistically significant effect on crime reduction. The review analysed 33 studies, finding mixed results: some showed decreases in reoffending, while others showed increases. Notably, studies using reconviction or re-imprisonment as outcome measures showed a statistically significant reduction in these outcomes for participants on EM compared to control groups. However, studies using rearrest or parole violations as outcome measures showed no statistically significant difference. The review suggests that EM's effectiveness may vary based on the specific context and implementation.
3. <https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/electronic-tagging-sex-offences> - The College of Policing's examination of electronic tagging for sex offenders reveals that EM can decrease reoffending compared to those not monitored electronically. The review highlights that EM may increase the risk of being caught and the effort required to offend, but also allows the participant to spend more time with family, in employment, and less time in prison exposed to influences that may contribute to criminal behaviours. The review emphasizes the importance of clear programme design, good communication among all involved, and the availability of correct technological capabilities for effective EM implementation.
4. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/electronic-monitoring-uses-challenges-successes/pages/9/> - The Scottish Government's report on electronic monitoring (EM) discusses the varying effectiveness of EM in reducing reoffending. It cites studies from France and Australia showing reductions in reoffending rates among monitored individuals. However, the report also notes that the evidence base remains limited due to varied research designs and small sample sizes. It concludes that EM should be considered as one tool within a broader package of community supervision and support, rather than a standalone solution for reducing reoffending.
5. <https://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/electronic-monitoring-a-progress-update/> - The National Audit Office's report on electronic monitoring highlights that HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) has not managed to transform the system for electronically tagging offenders as intended, resulting in a loss of £98 million. The report criticizes HMPPS for failing to deliver a new case management system (Gemini) and for relying on outdated technology, leading to fundamental inefficiencies in tagging services. The report underscores the need for a more effective and efficient electronic monitoring system to achieve value for money and improve offender management.
6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10725617/> - A study published in the International Journal of Law and Psychiatry examines the use of GPS tracking technology in forensic mental health settings in the UK. The study discusses the increasing use of electronic monitoring (EM) in the UK, with nearly 14,000 cases recorded in the year ending March 2021, a 34.3% increase on the previous year. It highlights the controversy surrounding EM, questioning its cost-efficiency and ethical basis. The study calls for clear principles for EM use, emphasizing the need for tailored, proportionate, and transparent approaches to its implementation.
7. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmpubacc/34/report.html> - The Committee of Public Accounts' report on electronic monitoring discusses the insufficient evidence base for tagging in reducing re-offending or promoting rehabilitation. It notes that, despite previous recommendations, the Home Office has not conducted comprehensive research to establish the role of electronic monitoring in minimising reoffending. The report calls for rigorous evaluation of current and future programmes to assess their impact on long-term outcomes, including reducing reoffending, and highlights the need for robust evidence to inform sentencing decisions.