
GPS Tagging Interim Evaluation Report

September 2017
MOPAC Evidence and Insight



M O P A C

MAYOR OF LONDON
OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME

1. Introduction

Background to the Pilot

In early 2016 the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) announced its intention to pilot the use of GPS tags. The MOJ agreed to work with the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) to test the use of mandatory GPS tagging for prolific offenders through the GtO pilot. Although GPS tags have been used on a voluntary basis in several small scale pilots across London, this is the first time mandatory use has been piloted.

An electronic monitoring requirement has been available in Thames Magistrates Court and Highbury Corner Magistrates Court and the local Crown Courts since 20 March 2017. Two dedicated pre-sentence report writers from the National Probation Service based at Thames and Highbury have the option to recommend GPS tags as a requirement of a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order. It is envisaged that the electronic monitoring requirement is aligned with other rehabilitative measures (e.g., a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement).

The main aims of the MOPAC GPS tagging pilot are to:

1. Increase compliance with the requirements of a Community Order or Suspended Sentence Order
2. To offer sentencers an alternative to custody
3. To support crime detection and/or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders by providing information on an offender's location at a specific date and time

Up to 100 prolific offenders in the 8 GtO pilot boroughs¹ will be tagged during the 12 month pilot. The Evidence and Insight team at MOPAC have been asked to evaluate the proof of concept pilot, capturing learning around the implementation and design of the pilot, gaining insight into the experiences of practitioners and offenders, and measuring success.

GPS Tagging Evaluation

The evaluation of the GPS tagging pilot forms part of the wider GtO evaluation. The overarching aims of the evaluation are to explore:

Performance

Monitoring the key performance indicators, including numbers receiving the tag, types of orders, compliance rates, violations, breaches, order completions.

Process

Understanding the experiences of practitioners and offenders involved in the pilot through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

¹ Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest

Indicative Impact

A robust impact evaluation is not possible due to the projected sample size. The evaluation will capture indicators of success (e.g., compliance rates) and will use qualitative methods to gain learning about the success of the pilot. GPS tagging will be included in the wider impact evaluation of GtO.

Interim Report

This report shares findings and learning from the first six months of the GPS tagging pilot. It consists of performance and process aspects, including feedback from offender managers, magistrates and police officers, and initial feedback from tag wearers.

2. Results

Performance

GPS tags imposed

- Between 20 March and 31 August 2017 a total of **25** GPS tags were imposed by the courts (**18** at Highbury Corner and **7** at Thames): an average of **1** tag per week (see Figure 1).

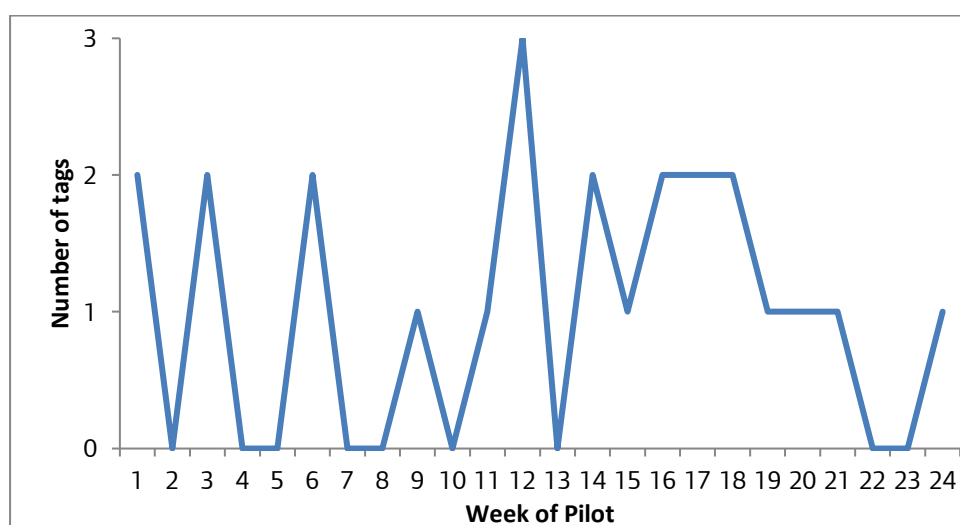


Figure 1. GPS tags imposed per week of the pilot

- A total of **36** GPS tags were recommended as sentencing options by the dedicated report writers based at these courts, which equates to a success rate of **69%** (25 tags imposed of the 36 recommended).
- Of the GPS tags imposed, **11** were imposed as a requirement of a Community Order and **14** as part of a Suspended Sentence Order. Alongside the electronic monitoring requirement, all orders also included a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement, and a

handful also included an Alcohol Treatment Requirement or a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement.

- The majority of tags were 24 hour whereabouts (**92%**; n=23), with two including a restrictive requirement (i.e., an Exclusion Zone).
- The average length of the tag order was just over **3 months** (range 1- 6 months).
- Tags were imposed for a range of offences, including theft (**29%**; n=7), violence (**17%**; n=4), public order (**13%**; n=3), burglary (**8%**; n=2), criminal damage (**8%**; n=2), breach (**4%**; n=1), driving related (**4%**; n=1) and drug possession/supply (**4%**; n=1).
- The vast majority of cases were tagged at court on the day of sentencing (**92%**; n=23).

Compliance

- Of the 25 GPS tags imposed, only **4 Points of Interest** have been set up by offender managers. **No Inclusion Zones** have been set up.
- In total, there have been **349 violations** of the GPS tag, the majority for 'No Communication', 'No Location' and 'Low Battery' (see Table 1). In addition, there were 13 violations of an Exclusion Zone. The number of violations has steadily increased over time, reflecting the increase in the number of people subject to a tag.
- A total of **389 confirmed alerts** have been escalated to offender managers.

Table 1. Types of GPS tag violations

Type of Violation	April '17	May '17	June '17	July '17	Aug '17	Total
Low Battery	6	9	20	41	33	109
No Communication	10	15	22	40	35	122
No Location	10	18	21	30	26	105
Exclusion Zone	0	10	0	1	2	13
Total	26	52	63	112	96	349

- The violations reported to the offender manager resulted in **six breaches** of the tag order, the majority for not charging the tag.
- As of 31 August 2017, **five offenders had successfully completed** their tag order and **seven orders had been revoked**. Orders were revoked for a combination of non-compliance with the GPS tag or other order requirements and for committing new offences.

Process Findings

Practitioner feedback

Feedback was captured from a range of practitioners, including offender managers, police and magistrates.

Initial views of GPS tagging

Prior to the pilot going live, a number of training sessions were held with practitioners. Overall, feedback collected from these sessions revealed initial positive views about the pilot.² The

² Based on feedback from 16 probation officers, 32 magistrates and 17 police officers (total n=65).

majority of people who attended the trainings agreed: they would use GPS tagging (**92%**; n=60); that they see GPS tagging as a useful way to tackle prolific offending (**87%**; n=57); that they understand the aims and objectives of GPS tagging (**83%**; n=54); and that they understand how to use GPS tagging in their role (**86%**; n=56).

Magistrates who attended the training sessions agreed they would feel confident imposing a GPS tag (**83%**; n=27) and police officers agreed it would be a useful additional tool in their role (**88%**; n=15).

Uses of GPS tagging

A survey was sent to practitioners in August 2017, five months after the pilot went live. A total of 20 practitioners responded to the survey: 11 probation staff and 9 practitioners from local IOM teams (i.e., police officers, local authority staff). Furthermore, a questionnaire was administered to offender managers in late – early September 2017 (n=7).

Respondents were asked to rank what they believed to be the most important uses of GPS tagging. The highest ranked use of the tags was *“as an alternative to custody”* followed by *“to monitor compliance with exclusion zone or other restrictive requirement”*. Other highly ranked uses included *“to deter service users from reoffending”* and *“to use location data to match with potential new offences”*.

Offender managers were asked how they are using the tags as part of their work with offenders. Of the 16 offender managers surveyed, 12 had experience managing an offender on a GPS tag. Most offender managers had some awareness of the tag, but only as a requirement to be enforced rather than something that could be used proactively to manage cases. To illustrate, only one offender manager reported having logged on to Buddi’s Eagle platform and none reported having set up an Inclusion Zone or Point of Interest. When asked why they had not set up an Inclusion Zone or Point of Interest, the most common reasons given were: they were not aware that they could, they did not know how to, or that IT problems were causing issues.

Positive learning and challenges

Positive themes that emerged from offender manager feedback were: the good communication with the GPS tagging provider Buddi; and the easy access to Buddi’s Eagle system (although only one offender manager reported having logged on to the Buddi system). In addition, a number of positive case examples were given. For example, one offender manager reported an example of a tag wearer being more conscious of his alcohol problem and the need to avoid certain pubs due to the GPS tag. Another example was given of the tag providing the offender manager information about where the tag wearer spends his time in order to protect a vulnerable victim.

Despite these positive case examples, offender managers mentioned a number of areas for improvement, including: charging issues undermining several cases; a lack of knowledge about how to make use of GPS tags for Inclusion Zones or Points of Interest; a lack of knowledge about GPS when being allocated cases; cases being given a tag who were not suitable (i.e., chaotic cases with severe learning disabilities and mental health issues); the need for the whole

GtO system to support the tag (i.e., Police and partner agencies) not just the responsible officer; and the clash between needing the offender to be on the tag for a long time to bring about behaviour change and the unwillingness of the Court to impose long tags because it was felt to be too punitive.

“My personal experience is that it was issued to an offender where it was not really required or necessary”

“Good communication from tagging team and support staff in the field”

To address the above issues, additional training was delivered to offender managers in August – September 2017. The training was designed to give offender managers information on how to make full use of the GPS tag. Following the training, offender managers reported a much clearer understanding of how they can use GPS tags to manage their cases, including how to use Inclusion Zones and Points of Interest and how and when they can share GPS tag data with partner agencies.³ Ongoing training and support will be offered to offender managers to enable them to integrate the management and information received from the tag into their existing offender management and risk reduction plans for each case.

Offenders

A questionnaire is administered to offenders at the time of fitting and removing the GPS tag. The survey is voluntary and some choose not to respond. In total, 9 fitting surveys and 1 removal survey were completed at the time of writing this report. Only findings from the fitting survey are reported here.

At the time of fitting the tag, offenders were asked about their thoughts on being given a GPS tag and their expectations of the order. Findings showed that:

- **All** offenders understood why they had received the GPS tag
- **All** understood how the GPS equipment works
- **All** understood what they must do to comply with the tag order
- **All** understood how the tag fits in with their other order requirements
- **Most** (6/9) stated they were worried about what their friends and family would think of the tag
- **All** were fairly or very confident they would successfully complete the tag order

Offenders were also asked about their expectations of how the tag will affect various aspects of their life:

- **All** thought it would make their life in general better
- **All** thought it would lead to them committing less offences
- **5 out of 9** tag wearers thought the tag would improve relationships with their family
- **4 out of 9** tag wearers thought the tag would improve their ability to go out and socialise

³ Based on feedback collected from 8 offender managers who received training.

- The majority of tag wearers thought the tag would have no impact on: their relationship with friends; their financial situation; their physical health and mental wellbeing; they housing situation; and their employment situation.

“Wearing this tag is going to help me stop driving illegally”

“My drug and alcohol addiction is getting worse so anything to help stop me offending will be welcomed. I hope to have my own family in the future so am positive with help I can get back on track”

3. Discussion

Since the GPS tagging pilot went live on 20 March 2017, a total of 36 electronic monitoring requirements have been proposed by the dedicated pre-sentence report writers based at Thames and Highbury Corner Magistrates Courts’ and 25 tags have been imposed: a success rate of 69%. All electronic monitoring requirements have been imposed alongside a rehabilitative requirement, consistent with the intended use of the tags as a package of support, monitoring and punishment.

Overall, there were positive initial views on the GPS tagging pilot from offender managers, police officers and magistrates and the most popular use of the tag was that it provided an alternative to custody. Feedback collected from offender managers suggested more information was needed around how GPS tags could be used to manage their cases. Very few offender managers had set up an Inclusion Zone or Point of Interest on Buddi’s Eagle system due to a lack of awareness about the full use of the tags. Recent training to address these issues has led to an increased awareness from offender managers.

Offenders themselves had positive expectations of the tag. They were confident they would successfully complete the tag order and knew what they needed to do to comply. Furthermore, all tag wearers thought the tag would have a positive impact on their life and lead to them committing less crime.

Overall, findings from the first six months of the pilot show that GPS tagging has been well received by practitioners and offenders’ expectations of being subject to a tag order are mostly positive. Steps are currently being taken by the implementation team to address the issues identified in this report, including more training and awareness raising for offender managers and ensuring the suitability of cases given a tag. The next interim evaluation report is scheduled for March 2018.