

Almost 1,000 prison leavers tagged in first year of drive to cut booze-fuelled crime

- one year since world-first launch of alcohol tagging of prison leavers in Wales
- offenders tagged for up to a year face prison for breaching drink rules
- tags tackling alcohol-fuelled crime which costs society £21 billion a year

Under the scheme, offenders released from prison are fitted with alcohol monitoring tags if their probation officer thinks they are likely to reoffend when drinking. Those who break the rules set by the Probation Service around their drinking face being sent back to jail.

The initiative was launched in Wales last November and rolled out to England in June as part of government plans to stamp out the scourge of alcohol-related crime.

Alcohol plays a part in 39 per cent of all violent crime in the UK and roughly 20 per cent of offenders supervised by the Probation Service are classed as having an alcohol problem.

Around 12,000 orders requiring offenders to wear alcohol tags are expected to be issued over the next three years, covering both prison leavers and those serving community sentences.

Prisons and Probation Minister, Damian Hinds MP, said:

When more than a third of all violent crime is fuelled by alcohol, these tags provide vital monitoring to help cut reoffending and protect our communities.

Roughly 12,000 offenders will have benefitted from these innovative tags by 2025 – helping them to make positive changes to their lives and making the streets safer.

The tags help probation officers monitor offenders' behaviour and support them to turn their backs on crime. They also provide offenders with the incentive to break bad habits as breaching their licence condition could see them back in prison.

Natasha (not her real name), aged 22, from Cardiff, has been on a tag since the beginning of September. She said:

I was nervous about being tagged but it does help. It's a physical

reminder for me not to drink.

I've been on probation before but this time I'm doing really well.
I'm sober and not getting in trouble.

An offender's licence will stipulate that the alcohol tag must be worn for a minimum of 30 days up to a maximum of one year. Those getting tagged either have a licence condition which requires them to go teetotal or have their drinking levels monitored during this time.

Judges and magistrates have handed down 5,939 alcohol tagging orders to offenders serving community sentences since October 2020.

Last year, the government launched another world-first, [using GPS tags](#) to track robbers, thieves and burglars. Around 10,000 tagging orders are expected to be made over the next three years to help stop criminals from reoffending and help police catch them if they carry on.

The move is part of the government's plan to tackle crime, expanding the use of innovative technology to protect the public and drive down reoffending. The £183 million investment over the next 3 years will nearly double the number of defendants on tags at any one time from 13,500 in 2021 to 25,000 by 2025.

Notes to editors

- Reviews are carried out every 3 months to ensure the tag is still necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the risk they pose (a legal requirement).
- The amount of time an offender is required to wear the tag is flexible and could be reintroduced after a year if deemed necessary and proportionate to the risk they pose.
- Recently published [statistics](#) show 97% compliance with alcohol bans on community orders.
- [Statistics](#) show that around 20% of offenders managed in the community by the Probation Service had alcohol assessed as a being likely to cause criminal behaviour.