

No Christmas tipples for 770 alcohol-tagged offenders

- Alcohol bans mean mulled wine and brandy are off the menu for offenders with drink problems
- Alcohol tags monitoring around 770 offenders this Christmas
- New technology is helping the Probation Service crackdown on alcohol-fuelled crime.

The tags enforce alcohol bans either handed down by a judge or by the Probation Service as an extra licence condition for those coming out of prison.

Alcohol plays a part in 39 per cent of all violent crime in the UK, including domestic abuse which charities say rises significantly during the festive period.

Offenders with an alcohol ban have stayed sober on 97 percent of the days they were tagged but those who do drink face returning to court or prison for further punishment.

Alcohol tags have proved an important new tool helping the Probation Service to keep the public safe since first used in Wales last October.

Since then their use has expanded to England and the Government recently announced plans to use them on prison leavers. Over 12,000 offenders will have to wear an alcohol tag over the next three years.

Crime, Policing and Probation Minister Kit Malthouse said:

Alcohol-fuelled violence ruins too many lives and families and creates mayhem in our town centres. It is a sad reality that over Christmas we see a worrying spike in domestic abuse and crimes fuelled by drink.

Sobriety tags have already brought enormous benefit helping offenders change their ways and the Probation Service to clamp down on this behaviour and protect victims from further violence.

Figures show that of all higher risk offenders managed by probation officers in the community, around 20 per cent had an alcohol problem.

Alcohol tags have been available for judges and magistrates to impose on offenders serving community sentences since last October.

Since November, as part of a national roll-out, the tags have been used on offenders coming out of prison under Probation Service supervision in Wales. The scheme will be rolled out to England next summer.

The tags help probation officers keep a closer eye on offenders' behaviour, support them to turn their backs on crime and provide offenders with the incentive to break bad habits.

The Government is investing £183 million to expand electronic monitoring over the next three years to improve public safety – the number of people tagged at any one time will double from around 13,500 this year to approximately 25,000 by 2025.