



**Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland**  
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Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP,  
Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice,  
Ministry of Justice,  
102 Petty France,  
London,  
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9 May 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

I write to you today after deep reflection on the Channel 4 *Dispatches* report, *Britain's Criminal Tagging Scandal: Undercover*, broadcast on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

The assertions made in the programme regarding electronic monitoring were deeply concerning, highlighting serious failings in:

- Operations management, including recruitment, staff morale, and staff training.
- Technology, related to the reliability and availability of the electronic tags.
- Backlogs, including failures to fit equipment to people assessed as presenting a high-risk of harm to the public in the required timeframes.
- Contract management arrangements
- The perceived lack of response from the Probation Service to breach notifications.

It was particularly upsetting that much of the investigation took place in the Cleveland Police force area; thus, affecting the very community I reside in and represent as the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Both in my capacity as the PCC and the Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board, justifiably this has left me with pressing concerns that I seek urgent assurances from the Ministry of Justice.

Public confidence in our justice system is built on trust and accountability. When the protection and safety of our communities, including victims and survivors, is compromised that trust is at risk of being severely undermined and eroded.

I stand firmly behind the expansion of electronic monitoring as an essential tool to bolster public safety, ease the escalating pressures on our overwhelmed prison system, and reinforce the Probation reset.

Locally, we have embraced critical opportunities to extend its use through the Intensive Supervision Court and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPO) pilots. However, the shocking failures exposed in *Dispatches* require immediate remedial action, and I seek urgent reassurance on the following points:

- Public Reassurance - What steps are being taken to address fears in Cleveland and ensure victim-survivor safety following the troubling findings in *Dispatches*?
- Technology Standards - How is the Ministry responding to reports of low-quality tags that can be easily removed?
- Probation Service Performance - What assurances can be provided regarding their response to breaches of electronic monitoring conditions?
- Backlog Reduction - When can the public expect a return to standard levels of monitoring without delays?
- Contract Oversight - What actions are being taken to strengthen contract management and address issues with providers delivering this service?

Furthermore, the *Dispatches* investigation underscores broader concerns about the detrimental effects of privatisation in critical public sector services. Time and again, we see high-value contracts awarded to low-cost bidders with histories of underperformance - even fraud - ultimately placing further strain on the very communities these services are meant to protect.

It is always the most vulnerable who suffer the greatest consequences of these failures, and this must end. I urge Government departments to end the practice of awarding contracts for essential public services to private companies that prioritise profit over the quality of service.

Instead of continuing down a path of failed privatisation, we must restore accountability and service provision to local public sector, voluntary and community organisations. If contracts are to be awarded externally, they should go only to organisations with proven commitment to public good and social value in keeping our communities safe.

I look forward to your response on these urgent matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt', with a stylized, cursive script.

Matt Storey  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland