



Justice and Home Affairs Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Investigation into electronic monitoring

Tuesday 9 September 2025

noon

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Members present: Lord Foster of Bath (The Chair); Lord Bach; Baroness Bertin; Baroness Buscombe; Lord Dubs; Lord Henley; Baroness Hughes of Stretford; Baroness Prashar.

Evidence Session No. 4

Heard in Public

Questions 28 – 40

Witnesses

I: David Byrne, President, Allied Universal Electronic Monitoring; Aled Hughes, VP R&D Allied Universal Electronic Monitoring.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

David Byrne and Aled Hughes.

Q28 The Chair: Welcome to the second session of the Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee on electronic monitoring. Due to various technical problems at this end, Baroness Bertin and Lord Dubs are currently online but unable to be heard, although they can hear us. I know they will be listening intently and with interest to the debate. We are pleased that our second set of witnesses today are from Allied Universal Electronic Monitoring, and I am enormously grateful to them for their patience, having waited nearly an hour. I apologise for that. To get us under way, I would be grateful if you could both just introduce yourselves and the organisation you represent.

David Byrne: I am very pleased to meet you all this morning. I am the president of Allied Universal Electronic Monitoring. Our responsibility, as Serco representatives described earlier, is to provide the electronic monitoring devices. We provide quite a large part of the monitoring system as well. That is the part of the system that deals with the event data that comes from the devices. It is the part of the system where you set the curfew restrictions or inclusion and exclusion zones in the GPS devices. We support both of those aspects, whether through repairing equipment or providing technical support or training for any of those.

Unlike Serco, we do this globally. We are a global organisation: we deliver electronic monitoring programmes in about 40 countries—including the US, in about 42 states—with our technology. Hopefully we can help with some of the questions that came up earlier on the variations across different programmes.

Aled Hughes: I am the vice-president of research and development for Allied Universal Electronic Monitoring. I have been in the business for 20 years. Funnily enough, I introduced the first GPS tracking device to the business 20 years ago. That is my claim to fame.

Q29 The Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Can you start by talking us through the contract arrangements that you have within the UK? Obviously, you have different contractual arrangements in other parts of the world, but, within the UK, can you just explain to us how the contract works, what it is for, what type of tags it covers and how the technological developments that we were talking about that might come into play in the UK would fit into an existing contract? Would have to change? Give a brief summary, if you could.

David Byrne: In England and Wales, as I described, we are the technology provider. It is a separate contract with the MoJ, as Serco will have its own contract too. But we work together in tandem, as a co-ordinated unit with the MoJ and other stakeholder parties. On Scotland—that was one of the questions earlier—we are involved in that programme, but the difference there is that we are doing everything: we operate the monitoring centre, we run the field service and we provide the technology. So, it is a single vendor providing all aspects of the programme.

The Chair: Did you apply for the monitoring contract that was won by Serco alongside the equipment contract?

David Byrne: Yes, we did.

The Chair: Presumably, you would make an argument that a single organisation that provides the equipment and then uses that equipment to monitor individuals would be a better package than two separate organisations.

David Byrne: I think that is the argument we would have made here, but we work in every single shape you can imagine. It is not possible for us in every country—we do not have the resources—to do all aspects of the electronic monitoring programme. For example, in France, where we provide the technology and parts of the system, we work with local French partners. The ministry of justice is delivering the interaction with those monitored persons.

We always try to make a push not to split the technology—that is, not to split the system. We try to make the system work together and try not to create an integration that you do not need to have because, 10 times out of 10, that can cause a delay.

The Chair: Help me out here, because common sense tells me that a Government or department wishing to have this service provided would be better off having a system whereby the equipment and use of that equipment is done by one organisation. Can you assure me that your relationship with Serco and the way you work together is the equivalent of it just being one organisation?

David Byrne: It can work both ways. Obviously, my preference, because we did bid for the service element, would have been to keep them together. It removes that two-party discussion and keeps everything very tight. The counterarguments are, of course, around competition: how many people can do that? How many people can cover the technology aspect, the monitoring centre and the field service?

The Chair: The world is going to move on, as you know, with the increased number of tags of one sort or another likely to be needed in the future. How we make that operate is what we are interested in.

Q30 **Baroness Hughes of Stretford:** Returning to an issue that was raised a number of times in the last session, I am thinking about the very significant increase in the number of people that we expect to be electronically monitored in the future. Can you tell us whether you have the capacity to meet that demand? If you think that is case, what estimates have you made for what that will mean in terms of where you have to expand, regarding not just the provision of the equipment but the people to implement that?

David Byrne: We are probably less impacted by people. Our advantage for the challenge ahead is that we are a global organisation. Every day, we are monitoring over 150,000 people in multiple countries. We have a global supply chain, and it is very resilient and scalable. We can fire up new production lines and apply additional

shifts. We have multiple sources we can access. That includes manufacturing in the UK—we can fire that up too.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: Aled, have you got anything to add to that?

Aled Hughes: No, I think David answered the question exactly right. We have redundancy in our supply chain, whether that is overseas or in the UK. We have selected those suppliers very carefully to make sure that they are large enough and have the right capacity for growth.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: To be clear, as well as the provision of the equipment, is it not your company that fits the equipment on to the offender?

David Byrne: We do not do that here, but we do in Scotland.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: So that is why you are less impacted by the people side of things. It is simply the hardware.

David Byrne: Exactly—that is my point. It is literally component parts, taking advance action, following the forecast and making sure we can hack the volume.

Q31 The Chair: Can you outline the discussions you have had with the MoJ about the implications of the Sentencing Bill, soon to be the Sentencing Act, and the increased number of people likely to be tagged? Have you been involved in discussions about other tags or other ways of doing it that you have learned from your experiences in other parts of the world?

David Byrne: Yes, we have. For everybody's benefit, we tried to get some of the devices in today to help the discussion, but unfortunately they did not get through security.

The Chair: Yes, let us pause for a second while I put on the record that we are enormously grateful that you brought a number of different tags to show us but the security system at the Palace of Westminster—people on the outside might be interested to know this—is now so tight that they were confiscated from you, and you were unable to bring them into the building. Perhaps we should be grateful for that. On the other hand, we will find an alternative way of seeing the tags. I am sorry.

David Byrne: To answer your question, it is an open discussion with the MoJ. We like to share what we are seeing overseas, whether that is new technologies or new caseloads. An example we should perhaps touch on today is victim protection and how it is being used. It is a growing issue in many countries where we are using GPS technology to monitor a potential aggressor and protect a potential victim. It is not just about the technologies but the caseload opportunities, too.

The Chair: You shared that advice with the MoJ. Are there any examples of advice you have offered to cater for that increased demand that has been rejected by the MoJ and, if so, for what reason?

David Byrne: No, I am not aware of any being rejected.

The Chair: Which recommendations have you made that have been accepted?

David Byrne: We have not made any specific technology recommendations connected with the advance in the volumes but, of course, we are looking across the whole spectrum of devices. We are looking at curfew tags, GPS tags and the non-fitted devices, too.

The Chair: We will come on to that a little later.

Q32 Lord Bach: I am afraid I have to go back to the last decade and ask some questions about that. You both worked before the merger. Of course, I accept that this is a new company but, quite clearly, G4S is an important part of the new company, and you both have quite a lot of experience in that firm, so you will forgive the questions. They are inevitable, of course.

From what we can read, G4S paid a total of £121 million to settle the MoJ's claims some years ago. Perhaps the important figure for today is that there was a financial penalty that the DPA provided, which asked for the sum of £38 million. That is a lot of money. Certainly, as far as the £38 million was concerned, that seems to have been the result of some fraudulent work that happened with the old G4S.

Obviously, you have put those times behind you, but a lot of people would say that they find it incredible that you were able, given that history—the same applies to Serco; I am not making a distinction—to bid for the contracts that you have with the UK MoJ. That is incredible. How can you justify it, do you think? How would you put the case now? Have things changed completely? When did they change? That is quite a history, I am afraid, that cannot just be wiped away as far as the public is concerned. I wonder what you would say about it now in your new capacity. I accept that this is a new role that you are playing that perhaps you did not play before. Obviously, these are not personally addressed questions.

David Byrne: Of course; I appreciate that comment. In the case of the former G4S, I should probably explain that Allied Universal acquired G4S in 2021, but, in the former G4S organisation, the events you described relate back to a period at the end of 2011 to early 2012. Obviously, the company accepted its responsibility and settled its commercial issues with the MoJ. It then entered the deferred prosecution agreement with the SFO. Similarly to what you heard earlier from Serco, it went through a whole corporate renewal process. Although we were on the periphery of that, we have observed it in the organisation. We have observed the changes and the tightness of the controls in assurance and delegated authority and the refresh of the company from that period. The DPA obviously expired and the company completed its obligations. They were all underwritten by the UK Government, so it was open to audit and transparency. Personally, I cannot recognise the company then compared to the company now.

Aled Hughes: We have always been in the business of designing and doing all the research and development of the electronic kit, and the incident back then was

more around the service. I think the public should have pride in what has happened under this award. It is a British home-grown research and development business, on our home turf. We should have pride in the fact that we are developing and promoting engineering in our own country.

Lord Bach: I think I will leave it there.

Q33 Lord Henley: Can you tell us a little about the availability of tags for people with different body types? I mean women, children, fat people, thin people, disabled people and so on.

David Byrne: We do not design it by type, as such, but when we are developing the device, we take all of that into account. There is definitely a trend now for the devices to be smaller. When I first observed devices in the US, they looked medieval. I could not believe the size and wearability of the device. I give credit to Aled and his team for their attention to this; a lot of the design work is exactly about that point. It has to sit comfortably and be as inoffensive-looking as possible. The new developments around non-fitted devices, such as smartwatches, which we are looking at now, are all to give a broader spectrum of options and to take into account how people feel about not just wearing it but how it looks. A tremendous amount of care goes into that. On the sizing, we have a wide range of straps to fit a wide range of people, and we have very few problems with the ankle-based devices.

Aled Hughes: Yes, the main design is around the strap and how small we can go with it. There is obviously a physical constraint because you have to fit the electronics into the tag at some point. But we have variation, with straps of around 14 centimetres to 40 centimetres, with 1-centimetre increments, so I do not think there is a problem.

Q34 The Chair: We use electronic monitoring for a wide range of different purposes and, clearly, further developments are coming down the line, which we will come on to in a moment. Just so that I am absolutely clear, can you say what sort of work you do—or perhaps you leave it to somebody else—to find out whether preventing somebody on a sobriety tag from entering a pub, for instance, does not lead them into doing other things, as it were, to overcome the frustration of not being able to use alcohol? Is there any evidence that people on sobriety tags move into other drugs, for instance?

David Byrne: There is not any that we have observed, but we participate in any related study that the MoJ involves us in with other interested parties, including probation, and make our contribution that way.

The Chair: I am just interested. You are a global company, so one assumes that, as well as your research into tagging, the tags themselves, developing new tags for different purposes or improving existing tags for existing purposes, you start to look at the interaction of the tag with the behaviour of the people who are tagged by them.

David Byrne: We do.

The Chair: Is it published internationally?

David Byrne: Yes—it is the feedback we get from the many countries and customers.

The Chair: From the research your company has done, what lessons have been learned that have then fed into the development of the tag? Can you give me an example?

David Byrne: Specifically on alcohol?

The Chair: Yes, please use that as an example.

David Byrne: On alcohol and where our direction of travel is—I think it was mentioned earlier—if you have an order that involves control of movement as well as alcohol, we do not really want people wearing two devices. As an example, the latest development, which we will incorporate later this year, will incorporate movement and alcohol sensing in a single device. So we are trying to listen to what people are telling us. The alcohol monitoring tag is obviously uncomfortable; it is quite a large device currently, and if you also have a movement-based tag and are having to wear them both, that is obviously not any fun for anybody. That has directly fed into our development—to try to create a single integrated tag that negates that need. That is one example.

The Chair: That is enormously helpful. Perhaps you could write to us with some further examples of how that goes. Baroness Hughes will delve into that in a bit more detail, I will just pursue this with one other thought. One of our earlier witnesses talked about the way in which tags, which are about the individual and ultimately helping that individual as well as providing punishment, can also be used in the detection of crime by using the information and data from them. In your research, what thought have you given to the issue of how data that is collected ostensibly for one purpose can actually be used for another?

David Byrne: The acquisitive crime programme in the UK has been, to my mind, very successful. Obviously, that uses our GPS technology and all the statistics, including from the monitored person, have all been incredibly positive. It has had an effect on re-offending—I think the MoJ is quoted as saying 20%. There are lots of interviews with individuals who were subject to that control, and the feedback I have seen so far is very positive.

The Chair: How do you see the relationship between all that work, on the one hand, and the work that is also taking place—with some people having significant reservations about it—on the growth of the use of live facial recognition, and whether there is the potential for joining the two bits of data together?

Aled Hughes: The NFD programme we have at the moment uses a fingerprint and biometric for identification of the person carrying the device. We have facial recognition built into that device as well. It is a technology we are already

addressing, researching and making use of. We have options in the contract for what we want to use.

- Q35 **Lord Dubs:** What are the different tags and what are they used for? You have partly covered that. Do GPS tags offer a significant benefit over RF tags and are they worth the additional costs?

David Byrne: I will just run through the tags and their basic variants. The RF tag, as it is often described, or the curfew tag, is a very simple ankle bracelet that is used in home curfew. It measures whether you are at home or not at home for set periods of time related to your curfew. It communicates with a base station that communicates with the monitoring centre.

A more controlled monitoring is continuous monitoring with GPS. That is another ankle bracelet. Again, that is sampling position, not just when you are at home or not at home but continuously, and reporting it back at whatever frequency the particular administration requires.

We also have in the UK, as we talked about earlier, transdermal alcohol monitoring, which monitors alcohol events and reports back to a monitoring centre. We also have what we describe as a non-fitted device, which is, in effect, a mobile phone-type device. It is not really a mobile phone because it is locked down. You cannot change the apps on it. It has only the app that is doing the monitoring. It is obviously not an ankle bracelet, so it is not attached to you physically. You can leave it somewhere, which is different and maybe one of the drawbacks. At the moment, it is used for foreign national offenders as a monitoring mechanism.

Lord Dubs: Are there any cost implications between the different types of tags, and are they worth the difference?

David Byrne: At the equipment level there is less difference. There are differences—there is obviously more functionality in the GPS tags. A bigger consideration for the GPS tags is that there are more alarms, more things for the monitoring centre to take care of and more things to observe and attend to. The advantage with GPS of course is that it opens up new caseload possibilities. I mentioned earlier victim protection as an example. There is also the acquisitive crime programme, which has been very successful in England and Wales. It opens up new possibilities.

There is some cost differential. It is not huge at the equipment level, but a further consideration is what it means in the wider sense of electronic monitoring at the monitoring centre and the interaction with those being monitored.

- Q36 **Baroness Hughes of Stretford:** I have a follow-up to the question about the different tags and sizes. In particular, you said there was a very wide range of size of straps. You will be aware of the case of Gaie Delap, who had to be returned to prison because there was no tag small enough for her wrist. Has that prompted you to look again, Aled, at whether it is possible to reduce further the size of the straps within the constraints of the electronics you have to house?

Aled Hughes: Yes, of course. That is exactly what we did. We had to go through a development process to reduce the size of the strap again and were able to release a new and shorter strap to fit Gaie and get her back into the community as soon as possible.

David Byrne: It was done quite quickly

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: Excellent. That is good news.

To pick up on the issue you just raised about the mobile app technology and non-fitted devices more generally, you mentioned that they tend to be used at the moment for foreign nationals. Do you think there is potential for the UK to be using those more?

David Byrne: Yes, there is potential. There are always pros and cons with a lot of these choices. That is why it is really important for us as a technology provider to provide a very broad portfolio that can match the case and situation in an individual country.

On the plus side, the non-fitted device obviously does not have the same stigma as wearing an ankle bracelet. You can interact with the offender. You can speak to them and text them, which is a positive. But, of course, if you want a greater level of control, it can be left behind. How many people leave their phone somewhere and do not know where it is or forget about it? So, there is that aspect to it as well, which is why we think there will always be a portfolio that has a mix of fitted and non-fitted devices. But it is working very well in that programme.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: Picking up on something I asked last time, how do you see AI fitting into the future developments of electronic monitoring?

Aled Hughes: We have started using AI. In fact, AI goes beyond the IT systems that you see in everyday usage: Open AI, ChatGPT and so on. It also goes down into the devices themselves. That is where we are seeing the biggest value in AI. We have things such as movement sensors and patterns that are created by movement sensors, whether they are vibrations, gyroscopes and so on. The AI inside the devices is learning those patterns and detecting exactly what is happening with the subject and the device wearer.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: Therefore, they are developing analysis to give you some—

Aled Hughes: Exactly. Then we have a bit more insight into the behaviour analysis. But it is more than that. We are now looking at this for the alcohol side of things as well, because we have data coming in from the alcohol sensors about behaviour and so on. You have to tackle environmental challenges, such as people walking into public houses or an area that is full of alcohol vapours. Artificial intelligence helps to filter that type of data out and make sure that you get the right results and what you intended to get.

David Byrne: On the movement and behaviours, the intention is to make good use of the data that we are collecting in the devices in the system, analysing it really quickly and presenting it in a meaningful way to probation. In a way it is giving them a head start, to hopefully help them intervene at an earlier point. That is our target: to be of benefit.

Baroness Hughes of Stretford: That is really interesting, thank you. Finally, thinking more generally about the future of EM technology, how do you see that developing? From your work internationally on the way it is being used and thought about in other countries, are there any things we should be thinking about here in terms of its deployment?

David Byrne: As I said earlier, there will always be a range of technology options that we need to be able to provide from a fitted device, whether that is in its basic form as an RF tag or a GPS tag. We have to embrace alcohol monitoring. That is coming as a new caseload now; it is very widespread in the US, and it is relatively new in the UK. The non-fitted device is interesting because it opens up new caseload opportunities. We talked a bit about victim protection earlier. Again, that makes use of GPS technology but, in the case of the potential victim, it is a handheld device. Then there is artificial intelligence, of course, to make use of all that data along the way.

Q37 **Baroness Buscombe:** May I say, before moving on to my question, that some people listening to this might be concerned about the fact that we are using devices that you can remove for foreign national criminals? Why is that?

David Byrne: It is a decision about the use of the technology which is driven by the MoJ. It originally used a bracelet and then NFD was selected as it became available as an option. Aled will correct me if I am wrong, but in the first case of that particular cohort, we used a GPS tracking device.

Aled Hughes: I will jump in, David. Different risk analysis is done on that cohort. The higher risk cohort is still using fitted devices. There is a split based on the risk level.

The Chair: Who conducts that risk assessment?

Aled Hughes: I believe it is the Home Office.

Baroness Buscombe: Moving on, my question has in part been asked already. It is about the work that you do for other countries, because you are a global organisation. How does the work that you do for us differ from those other countries? For example, I am intrigued that South Korea, which uses 24/7 GPS monitoring for high-risk sex offenders, has figures that are indicative but show that the rate of sexual violence offenders recommitting the same crime was far greater before these devices were used. Before electronic monitoring was implemented, it was 14.1%, compared with a far more encouraging figure of 2.1% in 2015 to 2019, after the system was implemented. I do not know whether you are doing business in South Korea.

David Byrne: No, not at the moment.

Baroness Buscombe: Are you looking at and comparing with other countries? Australia also uses GPS monitoring. Would you like to talk about that?

David Byrne: We are involved in Australia, in two states. We try to take a feed from everything that we are seeing globally. Ideally, we do not want to develop multiple GPS products for multiple countries; we want to create a global product. But equally, we have to recognise that there are different scenarios with different Administrations. The way the contracts are let, as we discussed a little earlier, is very different. If you go to Australia, you will see a lot of variation because it is state-based, and it is the same in the US. In the US, there are a small number of federal contracts—you will have heard of ICE, because of the immigration programme—but then the rest are state-level contracts and even county-level contracts, so there is a tremendous amount of variety. You can imagine that we see almost every possible scenario and then try to compute that in terms of where we take the product.

Baroness Buscombe: I presume that you, Aled, are looking at some of these devices from further afield and thinking how you can adapt them, if they look good. Are you working on that? Presumably the intelligence you gather—

Aled Hughes: You mean the devices in other countries?

Baroness Buscombe: Yes.

Aled Hughes: Yes, for sure.

David Byrne: We are nosey. We go to all the trade shows. Whatever anybody is doing, we want to know about it because we want to stay ahead.

Baroness Buscombe: G4S has had the EM contract in Scotland for over a decade. How does your work there differ from the work you are doing in England? Again, I think you have in part answered that.

David Byrne: Yes, I partly answered it but perhaps I did not cover one point. The main difference is that it is what we describe as a full service contract. As we started saying to the Lord Chair, we do everything there; it is a single vendor. We operate the monitoring centre and we fit, recover and provide the devices and all of the monitoring system, not just part of it. It works well. The other difference is that they have not adopted GPS, so they are a bit behind England and Wales at the moment, but it is in the planning. In addition, they do not currently have alcohol monitoring, but again, that is in planning, so it is to come later.

Q38 The Chair: May I just take you back to your earlier answer to Baroness Buscombe? You operate all the way around the world, and you have different types of contract. Some of them are with states, some are with counties and some are with countries. I absolutely accept that you say that there are different scenarios, but the one thing that is universal is that there are sex offenders with different levels of risk who are

put back into the community. There are people who have created different types of offence, who are being released from prison, who have a risk assessment.

Broadly speaking, whichever country, jurisdiction or scenario you are in, there are very similar sets of circumstances, so the research that you do surely should be leading to there being a fair degree of uniformity in how countries can identify the best form of electronic monitoring for each scenario. Am I being oversimplistic, or have we got different countries with different Governments and jurisdictions putting their own spin on it for whatever reason they might have?

David Byrne: Electronic monitoring is growing globally, everywhere. In every programme we are involved in, the caseload is growing. New EM programmes in Africa and other continents are coming to the market, and that trend will continue. We have a view on uniformity. I have a preferred model, which we talked about at the beginning, which might be the Scottish model, but that is where we can make that happen. We cannot make that happen in all the countries. Sometimes the jurisdiction is a complication as well. As I say, when you go into a state-based country, it is very difficult. They talk to each other, but it is very difficult to drive a uniform approach.

The Chair: That I understand. What I am interested in is whether that evidence from the experience you have is helping the MoJ determine the best way of providing electronic monitoring in this country. Are we really learning from the experiences from around the world that you can feed in? Does the MoJ listen to you?

David Byrne: We have sessions with them. Whether they are as frequent as they should be is maybe a debating point, but we try to communicate as often as we can because it is in our interest, and it is in the MoJ's interest to hear that.

The Chair: "We try". What I am trying to get at is: can I feel confident that the MoJ is asking you to provide the right kit for the right purpose and has got the right form of monitoring of that kit sorted out? How confident can I be that the MoJ knows what it is doing in this field?

Aled Hughes: I think the right process is in place. During the bidding stage, where we were applying for the renewal of this contract, the right questions were asked. There was a discovery session, where all the competitors were in. They were finding out about the technology and what was on the road map and were making sure that we have got the right experience. That was then fed into what the requirements were for the contracts.

David Byrne: We do not hold anything back. We sell ourselves and everything that we think should be included in the electronic monitoring programme. For the current contract, the selection process was very rigorous. The devices were tested, and it was a very robust process. We put lots of options into that mix. We do our best to try and promote everything.

The Chair: Well, let us explore, finally, the way it is packaged. Baroness Prashar.

Q39 **Baroness Prashar:** Can I ask a more direct question, because you made reference to Scotland? Do you think that England and Wales have used electronic monitoring well?

David Byrne: The success, I suppose, is in the growth. I think the process has grown. For a period of time, it was static. If I compare it to a country not too far away—France, which is another one of our large programmes in Europe—France was growing very quickly, and England and Wales were not really growing. Then, going back to the Lord Chairman’s point, we were starting to ask, why is it not growing, and why are we not seeing some of the things we are seeing here? Thankfully, I think we are past that stage now. As we can see, with the new Sentencing Bill and so on, things are going to move in the right direction again. The technology, thankfully, is there to help that and provide more options.

Baroness Prashar: I will come back to my question. What do you think the right balance is in terms of private sector involvement in electronic monitoring? Should the services provided be solely run by the Probation Service?

David Byrne: Where private sector options exist, and they are good and capable companies and you have got competition, I think it is a good option. These are some of the things that the Serco representatives talked about earlier. The speed and the ability to implement things quickly is a good option, but it is not the only option. It is probably fair to say that the technology is always outsourced, because the people involved in it have been developing these products for 10, 20 or 30 years and provide better solutions. But it is a debating point around the field service and the interaction with an offender. Then, it is really just a measure of the quality of that interaction from probation and whether the benefit of that outweighs a private sector organisation undertaking that.

Baroness Prashar: But drawing from your global experience, what is your own personal observation?

David Byrne: I think we see a lot of jurisdictions where the probation services are having that interaction with the offender, so it is not entirely outsourced.

Baroness Prashar: Is it better or worse?

David Byrne: I probably have not got enough data to give you an honest answer on that, but it works and exists. That is probably the best answer. It can work well, but it is about the quality of the organisation involved, the options for competition for the organisation involved and the capability of the probation service involved.

Q40 **The Chair:** We are, I am afraid, going to have to bring it to a conclusion—apologies, Baroness Prashar. But just before we end, as I asked Mr King, given this is your golden moment and opportunity, what would either of you like to see as a recommendation in our report?

David Byrne: I think we mentioned it a couple of times: take a little look at victim protection and some of the schemes in Europe. It is a pertinent discussion item at

the moment. I am very happy to arrange some project information from some of those schemes that we are involved in. Maybe look at future procurements and at trying not to split systems. Things such as this would probably be my recommendation. Do not create an integration risk you do not need to have.

The Chair: Would you be kind enough to put both of those suggestions in writing to us as a matter of some urgency? Aled, is there anything you want to add?

Aled Hughes: There is nothing to add to those two points. Artificial intelligence is obviously an area we need to be investing in now—it is the future.

The Chair: On behalf of the entire committee, I apologise for the huge delay in this session. Thank you very much for your patience and forbearance. Thank you for the information you provided us and that you are going to provide in the future. The meeting is now concluded.