

**Andy Slaughter MP**

Chair, Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11 April 2025

Dear Mr Slaughter

Channel 4 Dispatches *Undercover: The Great Tagging Scandal*

I understand that the Committee recently received a briefing from the Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, Lord Timpson OBE on the Channel 4's *Dispatches* broadcast about the Electronic Monitoring Service (EMS), due to be aired on Monday 14 April.

As you will be aware, Serco is the provider of EMS on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and wanted to share our views on the expected contents of the documentary and the statement that we have shared with the producers for publication.

Over the past few weeks we have been in correspondence with Hardcash Productions, whose journalists worked undercover in EMS in December 2024. They put a number of accusations to us which we have thoroughly investigated and were shocked by the level of inaccuracy. It is also clear that they had misunderstood how the criminal justice system works, and have labelled accusations at Serco for which we are not responsible, nor do we have influence over. I would be happy to share our correspondence with Hardcash on a confidential basis, if this would be of interest to you and the Committee.

Statement for publication

Anthony Kirby, Chief Executive of Serco, said: "Serco is proud of the work we have been doing for the last 10 months in providing the Electronic Monitoring Service for the Ministry of Justice.

"We inherited a significant backlog of untagged prisoners, record numbers of people being monitored in the community and the introduction of two prisoner early release schemes to address challenges with prison overcrowding.

"Despite these challenges, we fully acknowledge the responsibility we have to get it right and are committed to protecting public safety. Serco has invested heavily in this contract and has not made a penny in profit to date.

"We are tagging a record number of people and by the end of last year our performance had improved and it was publicly recognised to be at an acceptable level. Importantly, despite challenges with tag supply, which is not Serco's responsibility, our performance continues to improve this year, and we are determined that it will continue to do so, and at pace.

"Our colleagues perform a challenging role with dedication and professionalism. At the same time, we expect the highest standards of behaviour from our people".

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"Serco has always been open and transparent with the MoJ and the Cabinet Office regarding our performance under this contract. This is an important principle for Serco, and we will not compromise on those standards and our values."

Ends

As you will note, we have publicly acknowledged that we faced a challenging initial few months after we took over the service on 1 May 2024, and that we did not get everything right. However, these challenges were compounded by an existing backlog, record numbers of people being monitored in the community and the introduction of two early release schemes. We have, and continue to, work closely with the Ministry of Justice and I am pleased that the service has improved significantly thanks to the hard work of my colleagues, which has been recognised in Parliament on several occasions by the Lord Chancellor.

We have at all times been open and transparent with both the Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Office. My colleagues delivering this service are working incredibly hard often in challenging circumstances, to ensure the safety of the public.

I welcomed the opportunity to brief Josh Barbarinde MP, who has been interviewed by the producers of the documentary and extended an invitation to him to join one of our teams as they fit devices to those who require them. I would be delighted to extend that invitation to the whole Committee so they can see first-hand the work our colleagues do to maintain public safety. Alternatively, I remain available to meet you at a time convenient to you to talk through our response to those inaccurate and misleading accusations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antony King", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Antony King

Manging Director, Citizen Services
Serco UK & Europe