



London Criminal Justice Board Press release

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Tagged Magistrate features in new training DVD

A London Magistrate who agreed to be tagged for a week features in a new training DVD outlining the implications of tagging as a sentencing option.

Wimbledon Magistrate Yvonne Powell MBE JP was tagged and filmed for a week as part of the London Criminal Justice Board's (CJB's) *Tag-a-mag* initiative.

The training DVD, available from today, aims to give probation court report writers, youth offending teams and magistrates a better insight into the effect that tagging can have on a person's everyday life, and to address some of the common myths surrounding tagging.

Andrew Morley, Chief Executive of the London CJB said:

"It is important that those passing sentence and those who advise them are able to access information on the full range of penalty options available to them and the effectiveness of those options. In certain situations, tagging can be a helpful sentencing option or condition of bail.

"There is also a growing body of evidence which shows that enforced curfews can help reduce the likelihood of re-offending, by allowing the person to continue with their family life, work and education. At the same time, this DVD shows that tagging does restrict a person's liberty and it can be an effective form of punishment."

Yvonne said she took part in the initiative to learn at first-hand about the tagging process, how it affects daily life, and how much of a punishment was really involved.

"As a magistrate I have had the opportunity to find out a great deal about the other sort of sentencing options available, for example by visiting probation, community payback programmes, domestic violence programmes, prisons and remand centres," Yvonne said.

"I had attended a presentation about tagging and, although it was informative, I thought that experiencing the process from beginning to end would be a worthwhile exercise.

"That is why when the London CJB asked if I would be interested in taking part in this project, I thought, 'this would be helpful in my role as a magistrate and it's only a week!'"

On 6th November staff from Serco, the company which manages tagging in London, arrived at Yvonne's home to set up the tag and monitoring system.

Yvonne's home curfew ran from 7pm to 6am and didn't extend into the garden.

"In the interests of authenticity I asked the London CJB not to tell me when I would be tagged until 48 hours before," Yvonne said.

"As a result I already had a fully booked diary for the week, which caused some problems. On a practical level, the tag on my ankle made things such as bathing and getting dressed a challenge. I wore trousers every day so people would be less likely to see it.

"There were also many parts of my normal routine which proved impossible. For example, I couldn't pick up my daughters or groceries outside of curfew hours. On many occasions I had to rely on the rest of my family to do things. I think if you were living on your own the tag would be an even greater imposition.

"I was also lucky that I was tagged in November. I think being tagged in summer would be a greater punishment because of the desire to go out and enjoy the longer night and the garden!"

Throughout the week, Yvonne also purposely tested the reliability of the system to see what, if anything would happen.

"I did violate the curfew a few times, and also tried moving the monitoring box and switching off the electricity to see if it would be picked up by the monitoring company," she recalls.

"When I visited the Serco monitoring centre in Norwich after the initiative, they produced a print-out that had registered all the violations, right down to the second."

Andy Homer, Assistant Director of Operational Support at SERCO, explained what would have happened to Yvonne had she been a real offender.

"In a real situation, If Yvonne had switched off or tampered with the tag or box, Serco would take instant action. Depending on the type of order Yvonne was on, this would involve raising a court summons for a breach, or contacting her offender manager or the police."

Yvonne said she had improved confidence in using tagging as a result of the initiative.

"Even though I was only tagged for a week, I was very relieved when the tag came off. Tagging someone for two or three months would be quite a punishment and severe restriction on their liberty," she said.

"I think the tag would be a constant reminder day in day out if I had done something wrong.

"I have used tagging as a sentencing option and condition of bail on many occasions where appropriate and always thought quite highly of it. I will now be able to use tagging with more confidence, however, as I know at first-hand

that it can be a real punishment and that violations are monitored and dealt with effectively and efficiently.”

The *Tag-a-mag* DVD was funded by the London Probation Service Impact Project and developed by the London CJB.

More information:

- The *Tag-a-mag* DVD can be viewed on the London Criminal Justice Board's [website](#).
- Find out more about Yvonne's [first-hand account](#) of being tagged for a week (article courtesy of Benchmark magazine).

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