

USER VOICE

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE DORSET INSPECTION

JUNE 2023

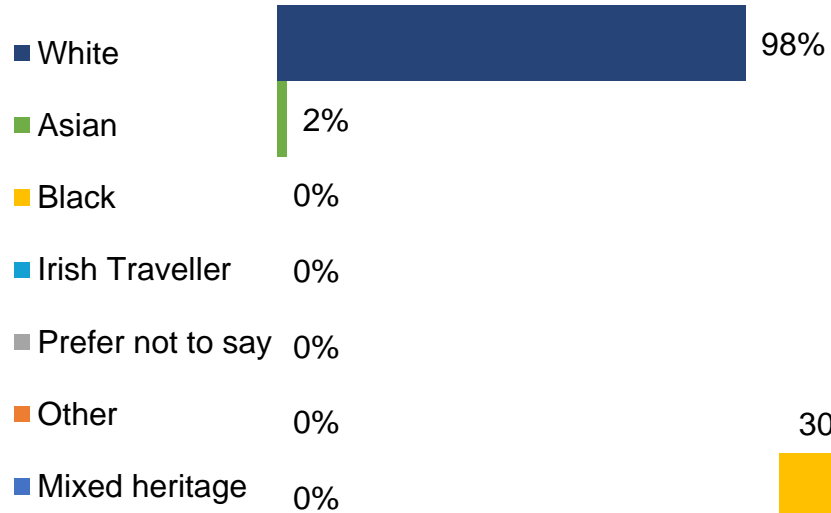
71 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

21 ONLINE SURVEYS

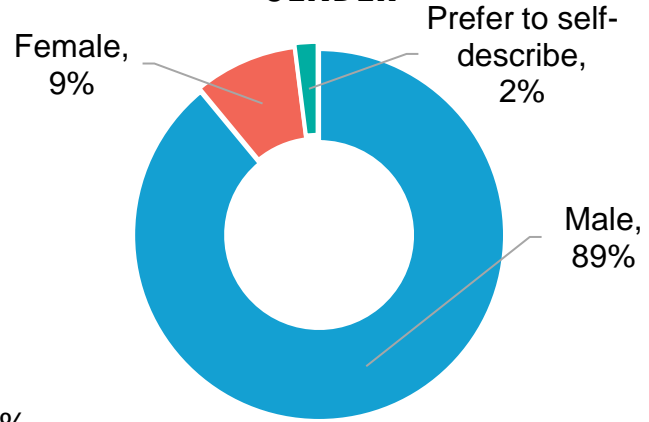
43 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

7 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

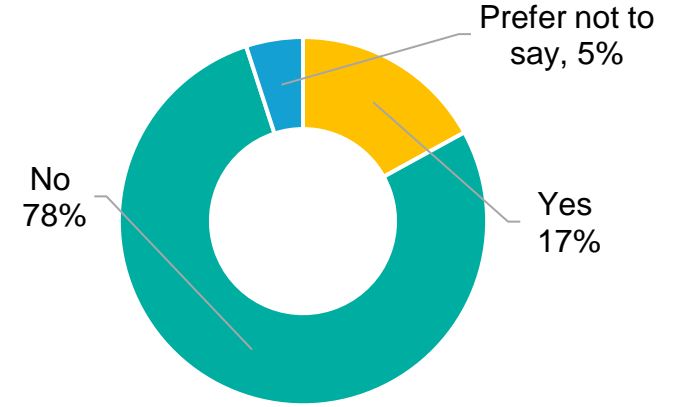
ETHNICITY



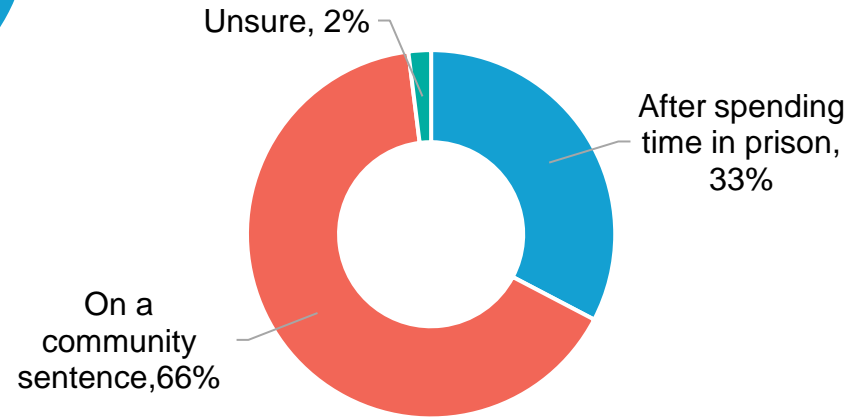
GENDER



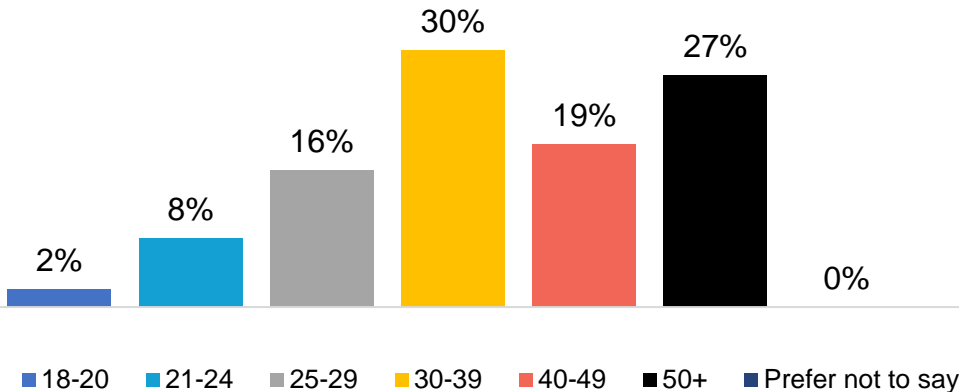
DISABILITY



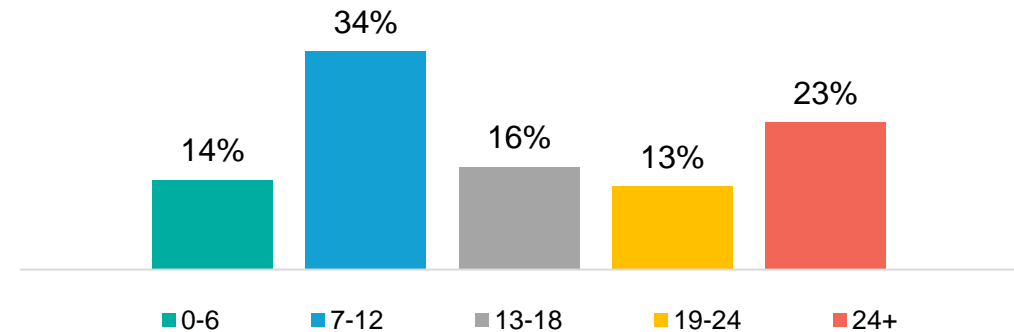
SENTENCE



AGE



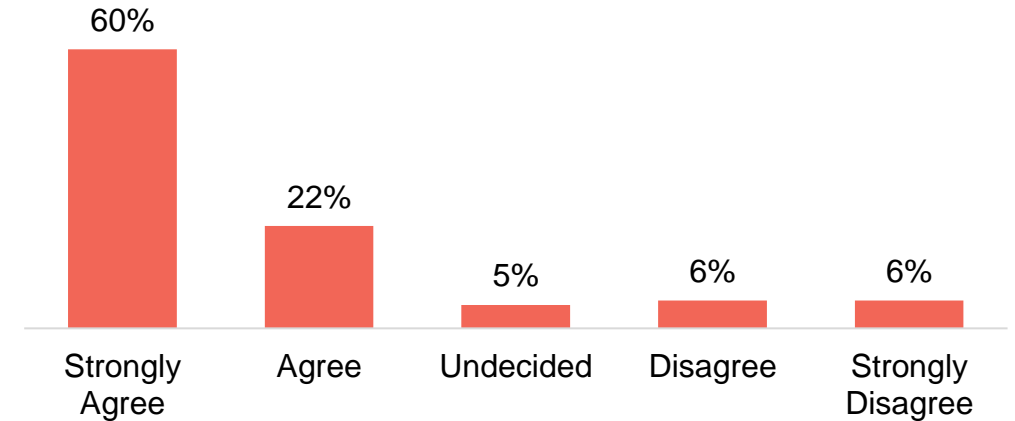
TIME ON PROBATION (MONTHS)



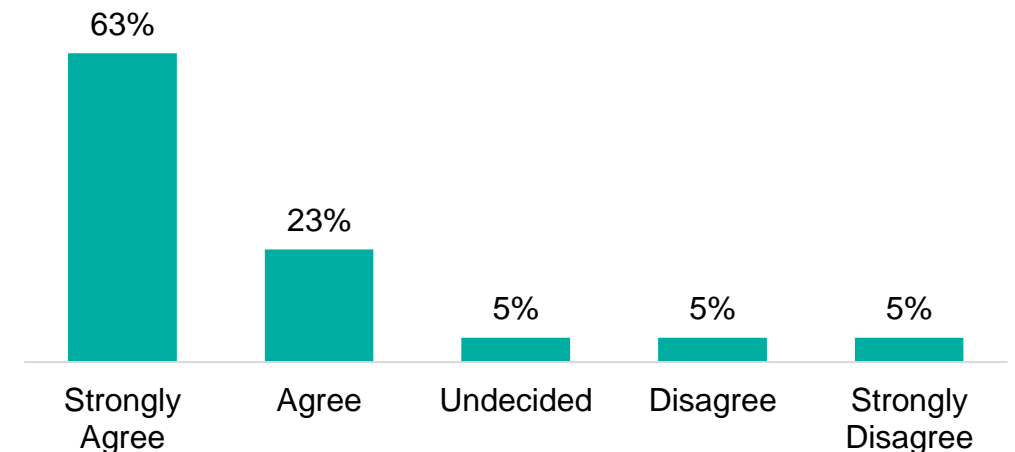
PEOPLE ON PROBATION IN DORSET HAVE FLEXIBILITY WITH APPOINTMENTS

- **25%** (16/64) reported '**Appointments**' as being a positive aspect of probation. It was the third most popular response to the question '*If anything, what has been good about your probation experience?*'
- The flexibility of appointments was a popular theme among the positive responses from people on probation with appointments fitting around their commitments (childcare, employment etc).
- However, **13%** (8/63) reported 'Appointments' as their biggest issue whilst being on probation.
- Waiting times and last-minute cancellations of appointments were the top themes among service users.

Q: I have been able to contact my probation officer when needed



Q: I have been able to have appointments with my probation officer at a time that suits me



THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE OF APPOINTMENTS IN DORSET

"They are decent, as I'm working they're flexible with appointments and she's pretty good with me to be fair."

"They are flexible around appointments as I work 6-7 days a week so can choose when I come."

"Yeah I am always getting the most out of it, food bank vouchers, travel and trying to sort me a place to stay."

"Its good, she's really flexible around appointments especially as i have kids. Wendy is nice to me and always wants to try her best for me."

"They are always late seeing us, I'm always waiting ages and feels like know one ever knows what's going on."

"They are so slow in seeing me, always sitting out here waiting and my probation officer has changed so many times. It's obvious they can't keep staff here as they are always leaving."

"I've been here at times and no ones has shown up to see me for my appointment. The power they have is crazy, they can be late or cancel last second but it's not okay for me to be 5 minutes late. I've tried complaining too but nothing happens you get passed around. They turn around and say to you "I've got 100 people to deal with". I think they need a lot more organising."

FREQUENT CHANGES IN PROBATION OFFICERS IMPACT RELATIONSHIPS NEGATIVELY IN DORSET

- **33%** (21/64) stated that '**PO/Service user relationships**' has been a good part about their probation experience – The most popular response to the question other than '**No positives.**'
- This was for the following reasons:
 - POs listen and are non-judgmental
 - POs have helped people on probation access services
- However, there is polarity in experience with probation officers in Dorset. **24%** (15/63) reported that '**PO/Service user relationships**' were their biggest issue whilst being on probation. This was mainly due to a frequent change of PO.

"Karen is really lovely, we work well together. She's flexible around appointments and she's helping me get drug and alcohol support. She's also helped me with council housing so now I'm on the list."

"It's been really good, my probation worker is great with me listens to what I have to say and doesn't judge me."

"My probation worker is lovely, she's really been trying with me. She understands and doesn't judge."

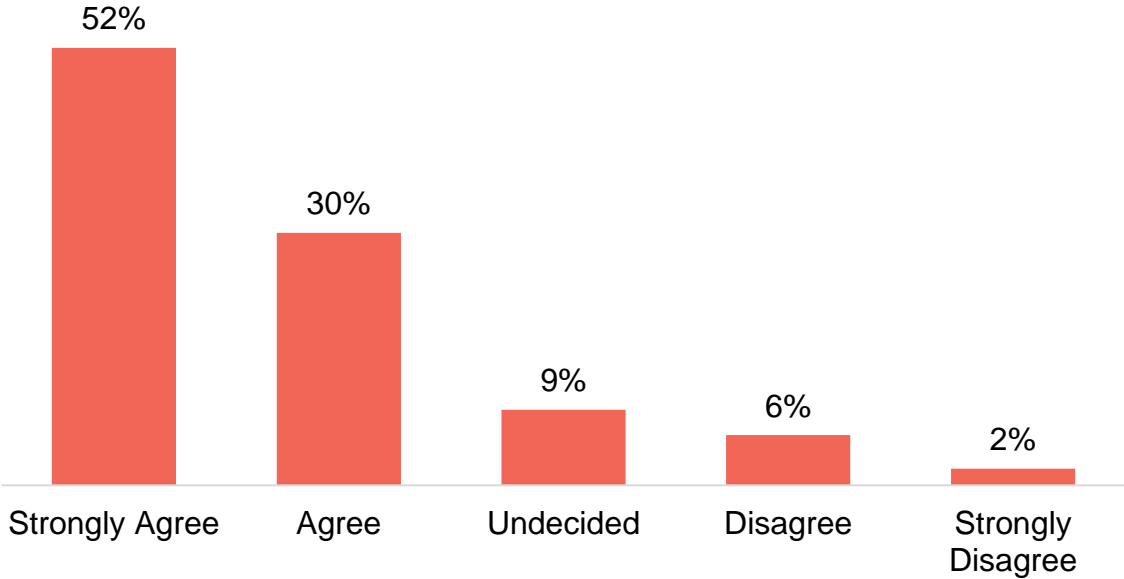
"In a period of 18 months, I have had 5 different probation officers."

"The issue is my probation officer has changed 4 times already. It would be nice to keep the same one as I build up a relationship with one then gotta start again."

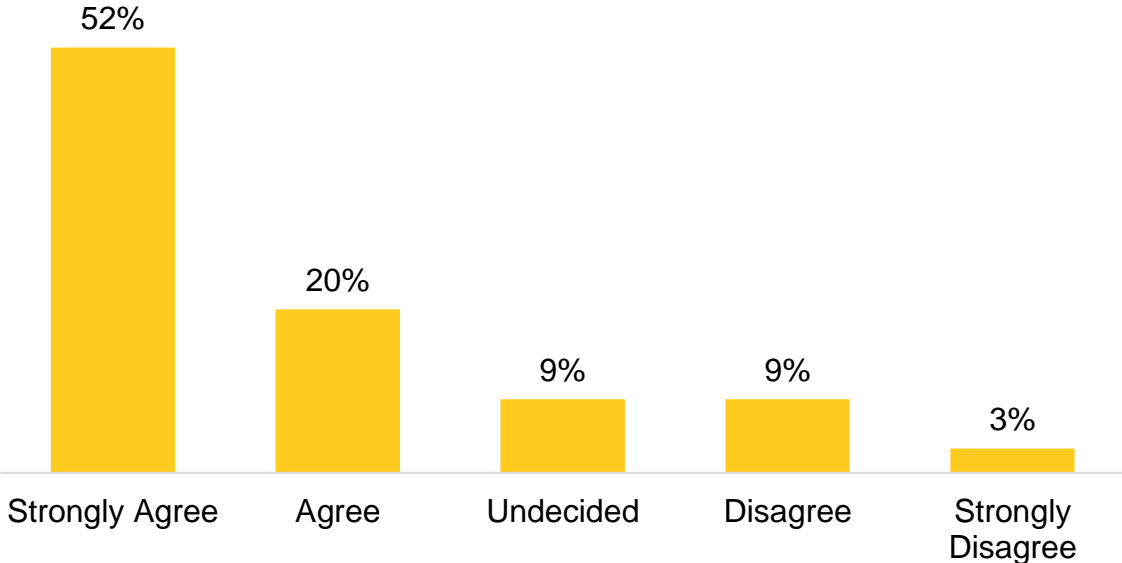
"I've changed probation officers 3 times, I can't build any relationships up with them. It's also impossible to get housing. They should give me one probation officer longer term"

82% OF PEOPLE IN DORSET ARE ABLE TO HAVE PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH THEIR PROBATION OFFICER

Q: When needed, I have been able to have conversations in private with my probation officer



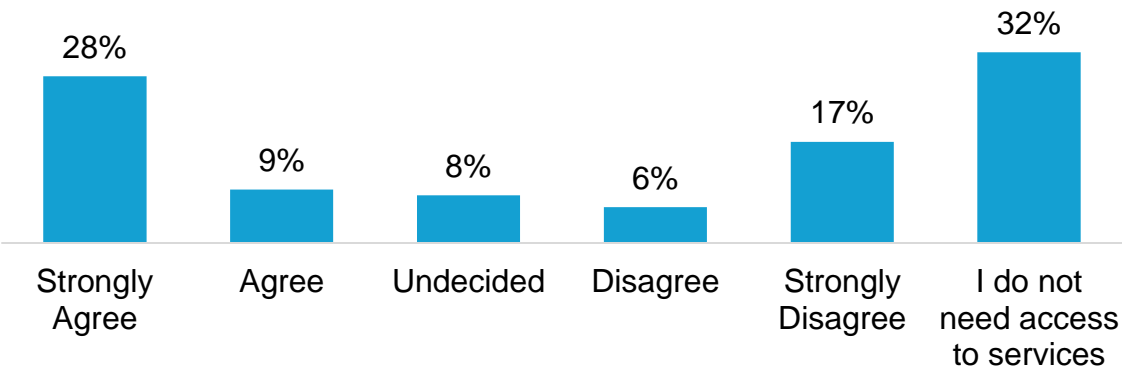
Q: I feel safe accessing the probation office



JUST OVER HALF THAT NEED SERVICES HAVE GOOD ACCESS TO SERVICES IN DORSET

- **55%** (24/44) who need support accessing services feel that probation have helped them in Dorset.
 - **General Signposting** - Positive: **9%** / Issue: **3%**
 - **Mental Health** - Positive: **20%** / Issue: **14%**
 - **Housing** - Positive: **16%** / Issue: **17%**
 - **Substance misuse** - Positive: **11%** / Issue: **3%**
 - **ETE** - Positive: **13%** / Issue: **11%**
 - **Programmes** - Positive: **14%** / Issue: **2%**

Q: Probation have helped me access the services I need



“Nothing at all. I only have services because of my own actions. I am working with catch 22 now but I did that.”

“My probation worker has been good communicating really well with me and got me a grant for a freezer and cooking equipment.”


“It's been good I have been referred to interventions alliance to get housing.”

“All of the additional services have been great. For example, CF03, Local council Housing Team, DWP work coach and OM).”

“There's the possibility of a grant to get stuff but my probation officer didn't tell me to me it feels like they have no idea what's available to us.”

“I can't get a place to stay going from prison to sleeping rough it's no wonder I keep getting in trouble. They need more housing especially for those coming out of prison.”

LESS THAN HALF FEEL SUPPORTED IN REGARD TO ACCESSING SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS



**48% HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES
RELEVANT TO
THEIR
PERSONAL
NEEDS**



**39% HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES IN A
REASONABLE
TIME**



**39% HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES IN
THEIR LOCAL
AREA**

PEOPLE ON PROBATION HAD A MIXED EXPERIENCE WITH INDUCTIONS IN DORSET

“Met my officer at a hostel and they made lots of promises for support, but this didn’t end up being the case. The conditions of my license were not clear at all.”

“They were good to me, explained things really well and clearly. Lots of forms though, I’m not sure those take into account people who might struggle reading and writing”

“It was fine, they sat down with me told me what was what and I was on my way. I was happy enough with everything.”

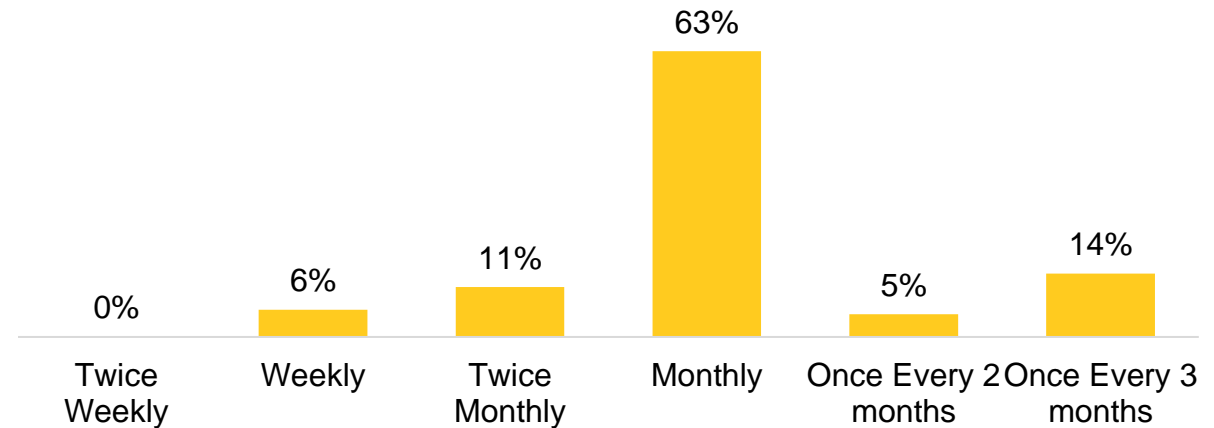
“It’s okay she explained things really well and I was happy with everything.”

“It was okay, I did it a while back now but I got introduced to my officer and it was decent although what annoyed me is she changed a few weeks later so it was like starting again.”

THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION WANT MONTHLY APPOINTMENTS

- **63%** (40/64) of people in Dorset prefer monthly appointments – This was the most popular response to the question: ‘How often do you think you should see your probation officer?’
- People on probation need a type of contact that is agreed with their probation officer that is both flexible and relevant to their personal needs.

Q: How often do you think you should see your probation officer?



“Telephone is best for me because of my jobs.”

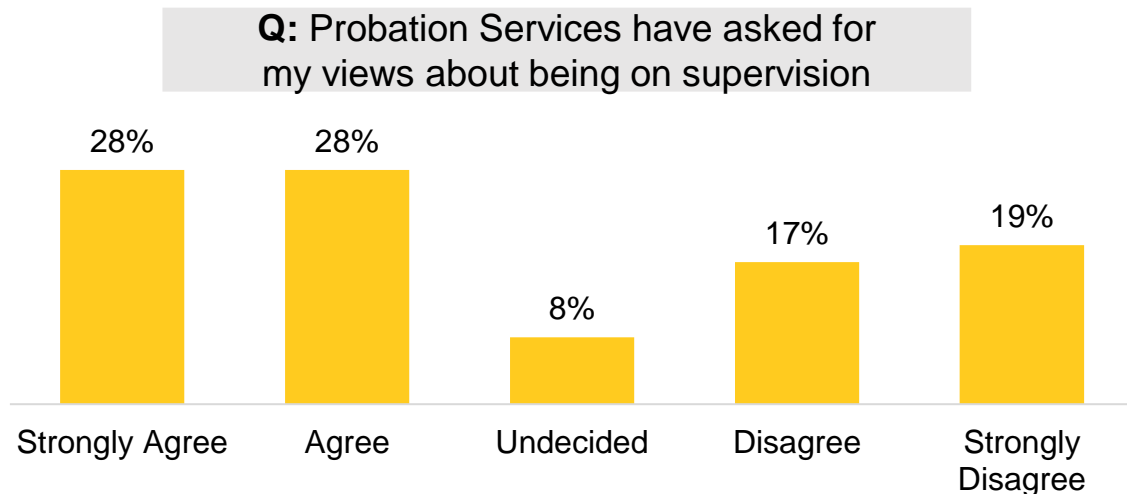
“All comes down to the individual.”

“Combination of phone and face to face.”

“One face to face meeting and a phone call.”

JUST OVER **HALF** OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A SAY IN HOW PROBATION IS RUN

- **56%** (36/64) of those surveyed felt like probation services have asked for their views about being on supervision.
- However, **36%** felt like their voice wasn't heard regarding how probation services should operate.
- People on probation seem to mostly complain on paper in Dorset. However, many feel they do not know how to file a complaint.



"The complaint system is a joke, I still haven't heard back since sending one last year. Its very unclear what the procedure is."

"Not sure how to really, got a phone number but told to write a letter to London."

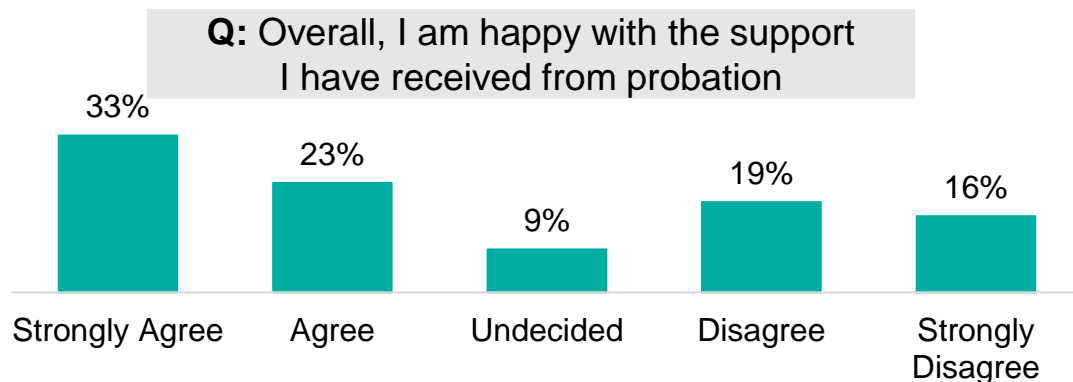
"If I did I would but I wouldn't know where to start."

"Not at all, do as I am told as I am too worried about recall."

"No, but I don't want to."

56% ARE HAPPY WITH THE OVERALL SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM PROBATION

- **27%** (17/63) answered **'Nothing can be improved'** when asked about any issues they have whilst on probation.
- However, **39%** (25/64) stated that there were **'No positives'** regarding their probation experience. This was the top answer to the question 'If anything, what has been good about your probation experience?'



"Everything has been so negative for me regarding probation. There's all these promises that they are going to start working with me now. But I don't believe it."

"Probation itself is a waste of time I check in monthly for 20 minute meetings which achieve nothing, I have to cycle from my work in Ferndown back home to Christchurch and then get a train to Bournemouth for a meeting that can be done over the phone."

"I find it helpful to talk it out with my probation officer every meeting, It helps me to deal with the stresses of the week ahead. I also felt that taking the opportunity to embark on online courses was a big step in the right direction and I found it rewarding."

"My probation officer is a massive positive, she's got me through a lot and at my lowest she's picked me up."

"I stuck to the rules and was left to my own devices, probation couldn't help with my bigger picture."

PEOPLE ON PROBATION'S SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES THEY FACE

- People on probation in Dorset want adjustments around diversity.
- People on probation would like to be listened to more with better communication from their POs.
- People want more support in general, but especially around housing.
- Continuity with their probation officers is imperative. Those experiencing revolving doors of probation officers struggle to get the help they need.
- Many feel there is a need for more lived experience in the probation service.

"Everything needs to be made a lot clearer. They should set things out a bit better like rules."

"Not as diverse as you might expect regarding certain offences. Unpaid Work is a joke and poorly managed."

"I went through 7 probation workers so far. One of the unpaid work staff members discriminated me due to my autism, making jokes about me during one of the sessions. They were also not very engaging with me, I think they need to employ better staff."

"The AP is dated. There are men here out of area who do not have any chance of being housed locally. The behaviour of residents goes unchecked until something happens and recall is initiated."

"I've changed probation officers 3 times, I can't build any relationships up with them. It's also impossible to get housing. They should give me one probation officer longer term and prioritise us for housing."

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