

**USER VOICE**

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

# **CAPTURING THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE SHEFFIELD INSPECTION**

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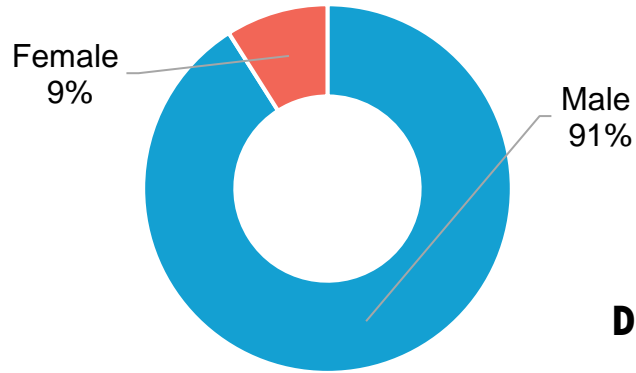
# 64 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

7 ONLINE SURVEYS

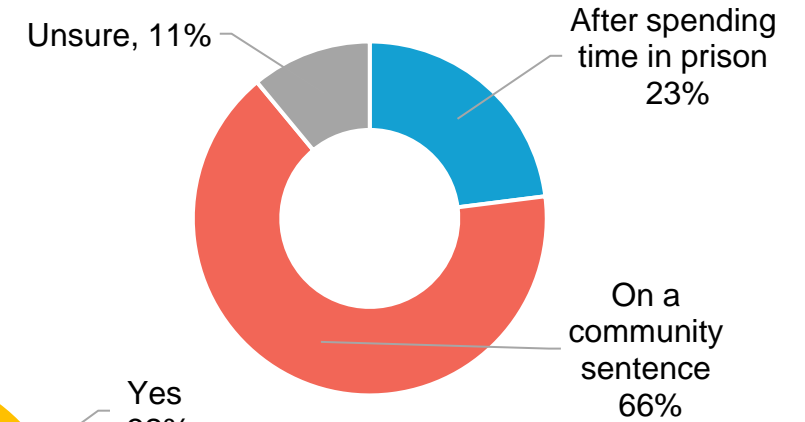
49 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

8 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

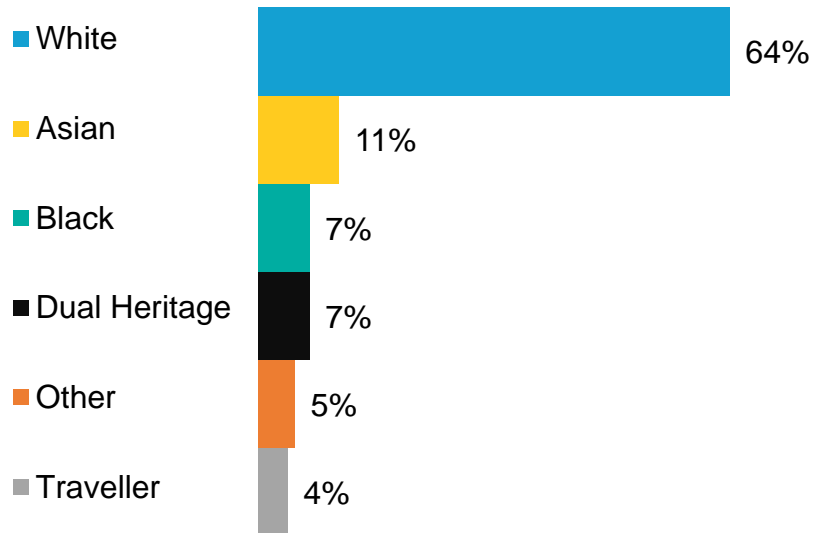
### GENDER



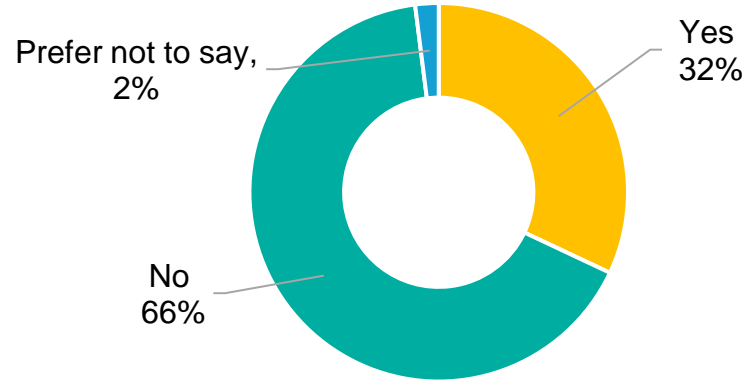
### SENTENCE



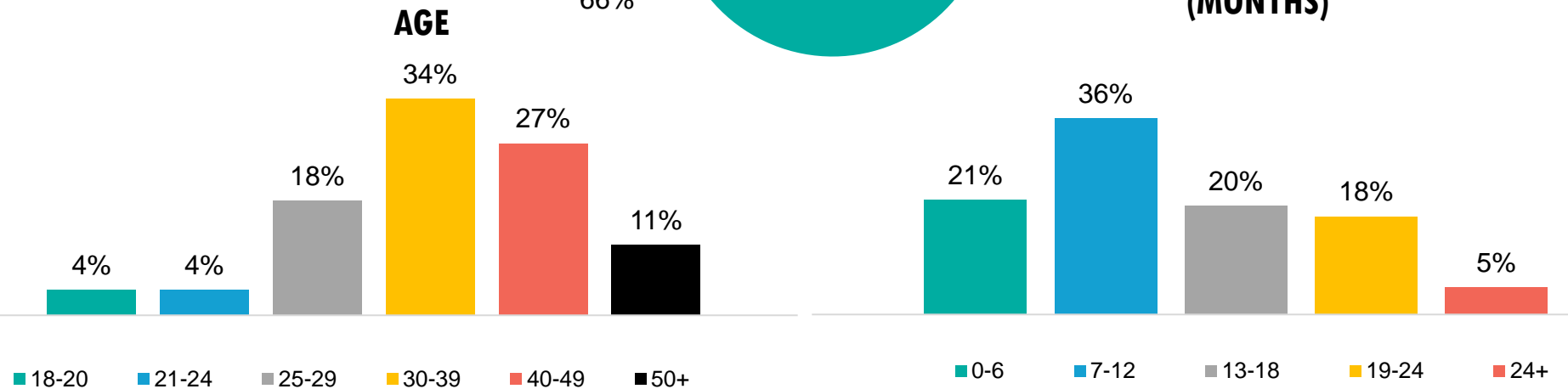
### ETHNICITY



### DISABILITY



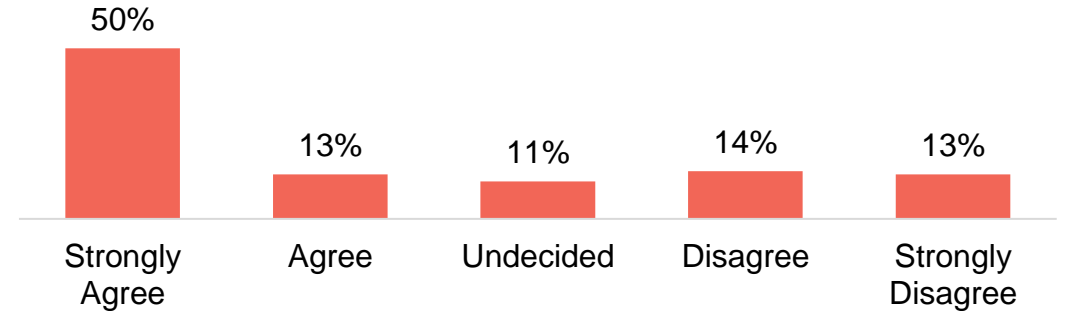
### TIME ON PROBATION (MONTHS)



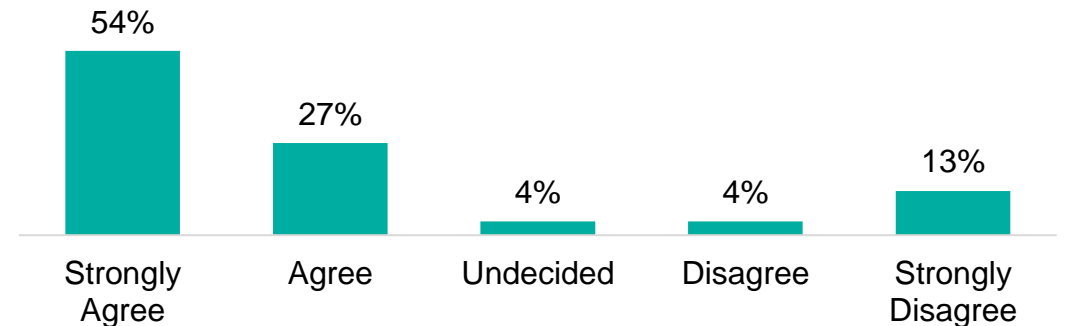
# APPOINTMENTS ARE PEOPLE'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE WHILST ON PROBATION IN SHEFFIELD

- **29%** (13/49) reported '**Appointments**' as the biggest challenge whilst on probation, this was the most popular response to the question.
- Whereas **25%** (13/51) cited '**Appointments**' as what has been good regarding their probation experience.
- Those that had an issue with appointments, did so for the following reasons:
  - Failures in communication or difficulties contacting the probation office that result in frustration.
  - The infrequency of appointments.
  - Appointments being cancelled at the last minute.
  - Few experience lack of flexibility and consideration to their needs and commitments.

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



# PEOPLE ON PROBATION'S VOICE REGARDING WHETHER OR NOT THEY GET WHAT THEY NEED FROM APPOINTMENTS

*"My PO has been really good, I know a lot can't say that but mine has. I got help from my very first appointment, they knew that I was homeless, and they helped me get housing, my PO is kind and always talks to me with respect which helps, like she does not look down her nose at me she treats me as an equal, if I can't make it then I can just ring her, and she understands and will just make another appointment where in the past I may have been threatened with a breach."*

*"They should be able to make appointments that suit us rather than just them."*

*"When I come here, I have to wait for too long like 20 minutes but for me that is a long time as I have mental health issues. They don't seem to care, I don't kick off, I keep quiet, so I think because of that they just do what they want with me. I have asked for help but don't get nowhere."*

*"I have difficulty getting to probation for my appointments on time due to transport and when I get there, they are sometimes cancelled or pointless."*

*"I do now as my PO tailors my appointments to my needs. He knows I suffer with anxiety so doesn't give me an appointment at a busy time for example."*

*"They could be better at telling you in advance if they are unable to see me because of work sometimes I will miss work to have an appointment cancelled."*

*"Actually start appointments on time. I don't mind waiting for 10 - 15 mins if she is running late with another person but every time I have been so far, which is 5 appointments, I have waited over an hour and up to two hours on two occasions."*

*"No, I don't feel like I get what I need as I haven't had an appointment in months."*

# 1 IN 2 THINK THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PO IS THE BEST PART OF THEIR PROBATION EXPERIENCE

- **53%** (27/51) of responses cited the 'relationship with their Probation Officer' when asked 'what has been good about your probation experience'. This was the most cited positive aspect of probation experience in Sheffield.
  - An effective and caring PO results in better signposting and improved mental health for People on Probation.
- However, **24%** (11/45) see their relationship with their Probation Officer as their biggest challenge whilst on probation. These are for the following reasons:
  - A revolving door of Probation Officers.
  - A lack of lived experience.
  - A feeling of being treated unfairly by their Probation Officers.

*Probation have been amazing for me, I am now Mappa 1 and am on life licence I have been out 17 months and can't fault probation, my PO helped me get a flat, helped me on my benefits and helped me get furniture for my flat, I got signposted for support with my mental health also."*

*I needed help with my mental health, and they didn't help me and won't help me, I find my PO rude and can't do anything about it because they just breach you, they just speak to you like your scum."*

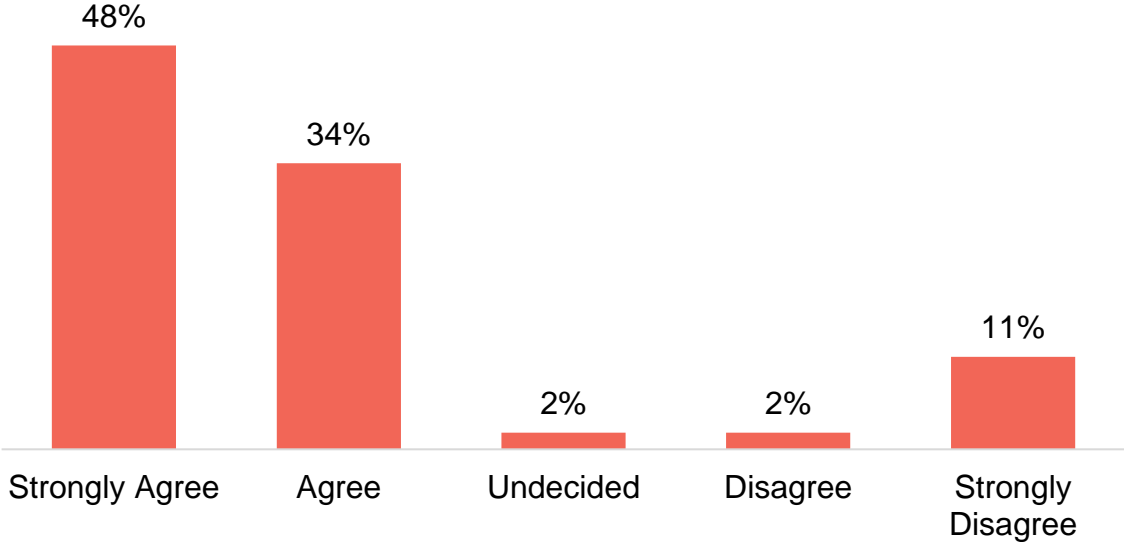
*"I feel that she is a supportive person in fact to be honest I will be sad when it is over I will miss the chats with Probation, she is fabulous at helping me."*

*"My last officer was useless but after kicking off I have finally got another officer that is very supportive of my anxiety and PTSD and books my appointments at only quiet times, now I have been referred to alcohol support group and I am having therapy."*

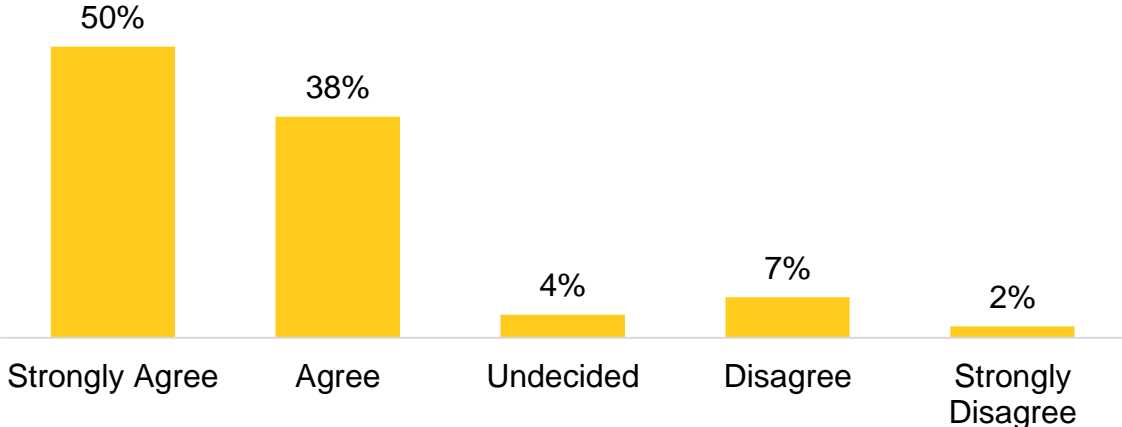
*"I have been on probation for one year now and have only had two appointments as my PO keeps on changing and I just don't hear from them so I can't really say anything. My order finishes in March and that's it. I do get the odd phone call saying that they haven't forgotten about me and that I have a new officer and will hear from them but don't hear from them."*

# IN GENERAL, PEOPLE FEEL SAFE ACCESSING THEIR LOCAL PROBATION OFFICE

Q: When needed, I have been able to have conversations in private with my Probation Officer



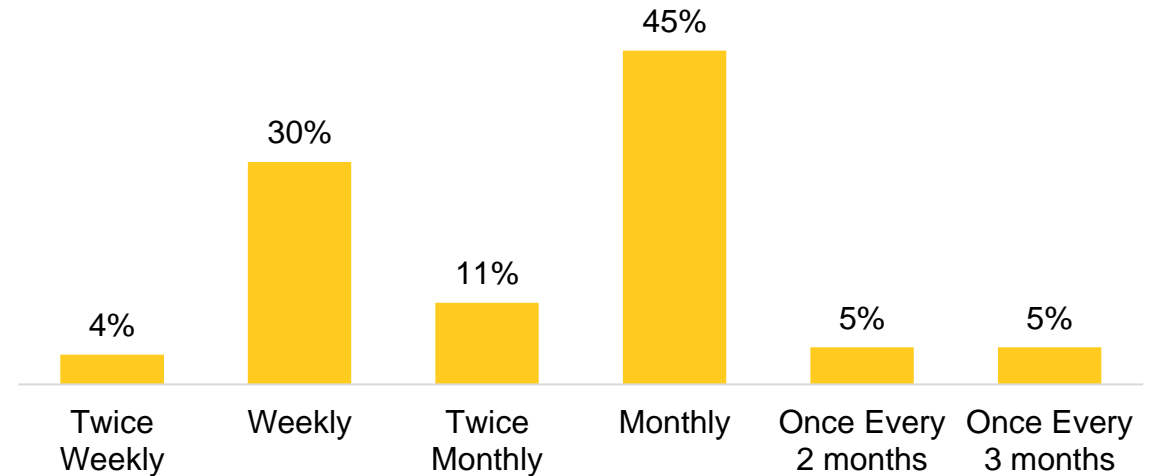
Q: I feel safe accessing the probation office



# PEOPLE ON PROBATION WANT AN APPROACH TAILORED TO THEIR NEEDS

- The type of contact People On Probation want varies, with the slight majority preferring telephone contact over face-to-face contact.
- **45%** (25/56) stated that they should see their Probation Officer monthly; About a third feel they get the best out of their service with weekly appointments.
- A tailored approach based on what works for both the Person On Probation and Probation Officer is recommended.

Q: How often do you think you should see your Probation Officer?



*“Face to face and twice monthly because we get on and it helps me and we can really focus on the support I need.”*

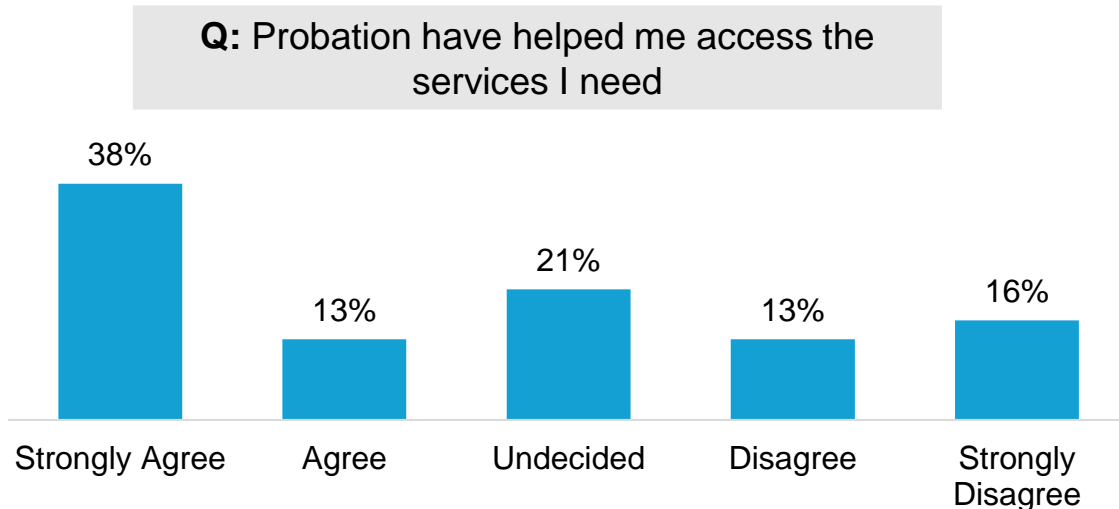
*“Face to face monthly then phone calls suit me and that's what works.”*

*“I think it should be a combination of both, I like to see my PO face to face but not all of the time.”*

*“Having contact once every 2 weeks with once a month face to face suits both our needs.”*

# ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES IS DEPENDANT ON A COMPETENT PROBATION OFFICER

- **Half** (28/56) of those on probation in Sheffield feel that probation have helped them access the services they need.
- Some people are in great need for services that probation aren't signposting them to in specific areas, such as: **housing, mental health support, substance misuse** amongst others.



*“There could be a little more support for people with mental health issues.”*

*“They don't help me with anything here. I have asked for help, I think I need counselling and my mate said to me that they can help you but they don't do anything with me, I feel like they just want me out, I am in and out of appointments if I am lucky enough to see them and my po talks to me like an idiot.”*

*“I can never get through to probation they never answer and also I am homeless and they can't help me.”*

*“I can't fault them they have been really supportive and helped me get housing and support with my mental health, they have referred me to other services also to help me mix with other people.”*

*“I have had support from po getting housing, they helped get me a flat and getting it furnished also, they also helped me get to an alcohol support group which I wanted and helped me get medical help for my anxiety.”*

*“I was referred for counselling but that was useless also, apart from that no none at all.”*



# **OVER HALF FEEL UNSUPPORTED IN REGARD TO ACCESSING SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS**

**46% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS**

**54% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN A REASONABLE TIME**

**54% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN THEIR LOCAL AREA**

# MANY FACE ISSUES WITH COMMUNICATION THAT IS AFFECTING THEIR ORDERS

- **22%** (10/45) of those surveyed raised 'Communication on order/ license' as their biggest issue they experience whilst on probation.
- This is mostly due to little contact from their Probation Officer which led to uncertainties and worry about their future.
- People rely on probation services for their rehabilitation and feel they are ignored and unable to get help they need.

*"They don't help me with anything here, I have asked for help I think I need counselling and my mate said to me that they can help you but they don't do anything with me, I feel like they just want me out, I am in and out of appointments if I am lucky enough to see them and my po talks to me like an idiot what can i do though, mostly they phone me and tell me someone will ring me with an appointment but it don't happen"*

*"I have come to the end of my order community sentence 1 year but I still have to do a group course and also have 60 hours unpaid work outstanding. I did get a breach letter a couple of months ago but don't hear anything from them, I don't know what to do, I work full time 6 days a week and have kids so not sure when I can fit anything else in... I just don't hear from them at all, will have to just see what happens."*

*"I have been on my order now for 2 years and have only met a po on a couple of occasions, I cannot get through to probation, I have 200 community hours and got them 2 years ago but still haven't heard anything I don't know what to do, I leave messages and get nothing, it's like I am lost in the system, I got told 4 months ago that my last PO is gone and I have a new one but have heard nothing so can't get any help at all."*

*"I was given 200 hours 2 years ago but no-one has ever contacted me about the hours so I really don't know what to think anymore."*

# INDUCTION EXPERIENCE VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON

- **Half** of those interviewed felt their induction process was beneficial.
- Some people didn't have an induction at all and others felt like when they did, they didn't receive enough information.

*"I was expecting prison and got suspended sentence, tag wasn't explained properly, I breached it and nothing happened so that was ok, I had it on for 3 weeks longer than I had to though because I didn't know, they did explain unpaid work though and the fact that I had to be drug tested weekly so yes I think it was ok."*

*"It was just leaflets thrown at me, threats of what would happen if I missed appointments, she wasn't personal with me at all."*

*"I never had an induction, it was when covid come, my officer went off sick and I didn't hear from anyone at all."*

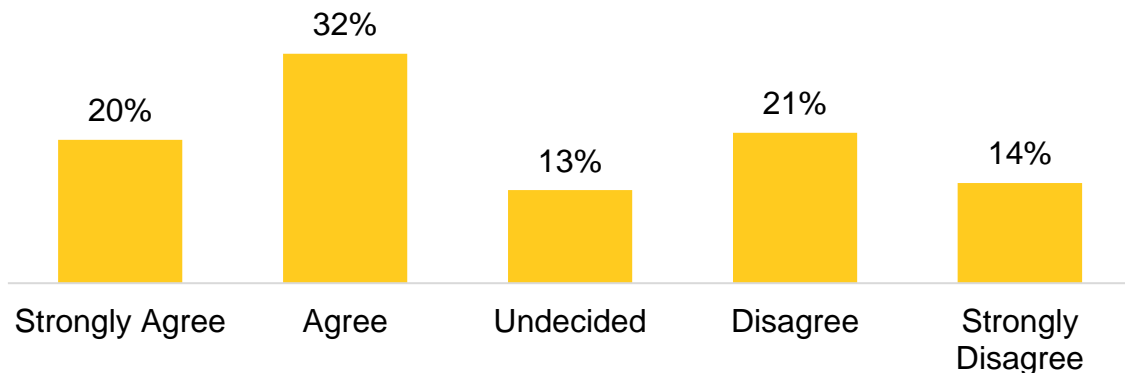
*"Just before I come out of prison they come up to me and explained my probation order, 3 year license, when released they read me the riot act, just coming out of lock down it was over the phone."*

*"No one come to me in prison, I was released and come to probation because I knew I had to, I had nothing explained to me because she said I wasn't fit to answer the questions."*

# HALF OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION IN SHEFFIELD FEEL LIKE THEIR VOICE IS HEARD

- **52%** (29/56) of those surveyed felt like Probation Services had asked for their views about being on supervision; a relatively high score compared to previous inspections.
- Only **one** person interviewed felt they could raise a complaint if they had to. The majority did not know a direct pathway to complain and felt their efforts would be futile.

Q: Probation services have asked for my views about being on supervision



*"No as they don't get back to you anyway."*

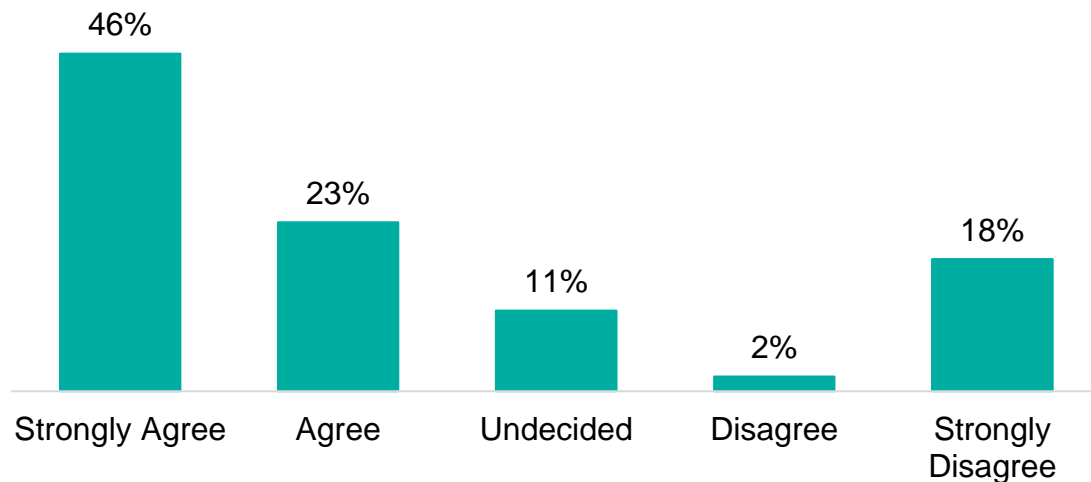
*"No, I wanted to but it ended up being more hassle than it was worth, and no-one explained to me how to do it anyway."*

*"No , I don't feel that they listen to me at all , they should explain the process to you so that you know what it is you have to do."*

*"No they just give you a leaflet no point at all, they wouldn't listen to me"*

# 7 IN 10 ARE HAPPY WITH THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM PROBATION

Q: Overall, I am happy with the support I have received from probation



*“There are a lot of drug problems around here and I think probation are good at getting you the support if you want it, I get lots of help through probation, they get me to the foodbank for vouchers and I am on a script because of the help I get off probation, my new officer has been much better for me.”*

*“My Po has been really good, I know a lot can't say that but mine has, I got help from my very first appointment, they knew that I was homeless and they helped me get housing, my PO is kind and always talks to me with respect which helps like she does not look down her nose at me she treats me as an equal, if I cant make it then I can just ring her and she understands and will just make another appointment where in the past I may have been threatened with a breach.”*

*“I feel that she is a supportive person in fact to be honest I will be sad when it is over I will miss the chats with Probation, she is fabulous at helping me .“*

# PEOPLE ON PROBATION'S SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES THEY FACE

- People on Probation want continuity and improved communication with their Probation Officers. Especially those that need support developing a stable lifestyle.
- Consistency in service delivery. Some People On Probation are well supported but experiences of receiving help varies greatly from person to person.
- People on Probation would like to work with someone with lived experience that can personally relate to their problems.
- People want more consideration of their personal needs and fair treatment during appointments.

*"Better communication between PO's and service users as it can be quite scary and of course you need the support but don't get it."*

*"Explain the complaint process making the process a lot easier, keep the same officers, when you start bonding with them they go and better support when on extended supervision."*

*"Probation to give you a chance and hear you out, if one doesn't see eye to eye with you then give you another one instead of just breaching you so that you can build trust."*

*"There could be a little more support for people with mental health issues."*

*"A few more agencies to be working with them, more mental health providers working with them."*

*"Ex-offenders working in probation and to give the right officer to the right client."*

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