

**USER VOICE**

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING



HM Inspectorate  
of Probation

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

**MAY 2023**

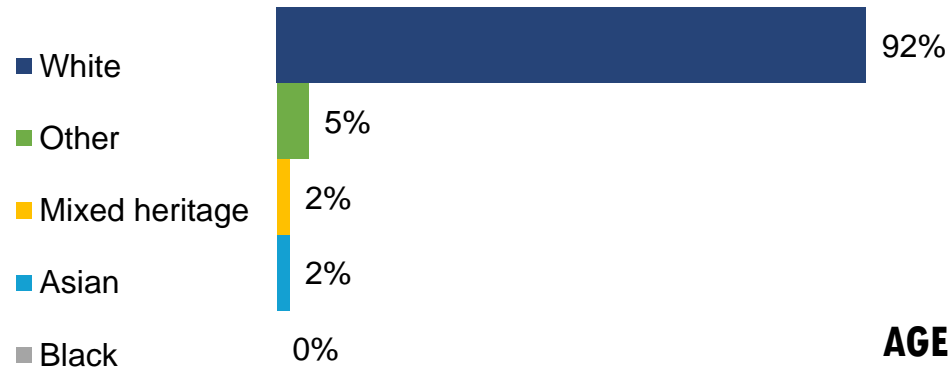
# 61 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

12 ONLINE SURVEYS

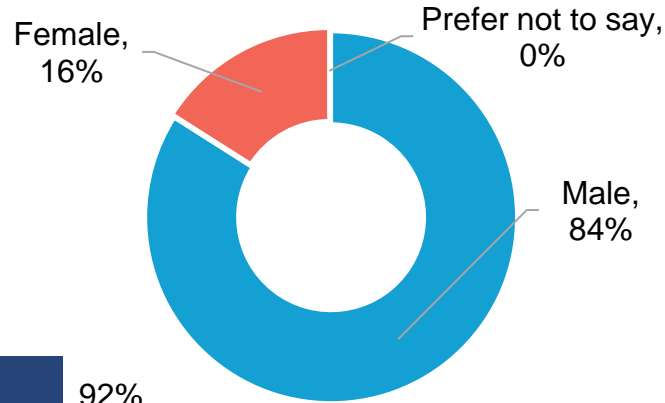
49 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

8 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

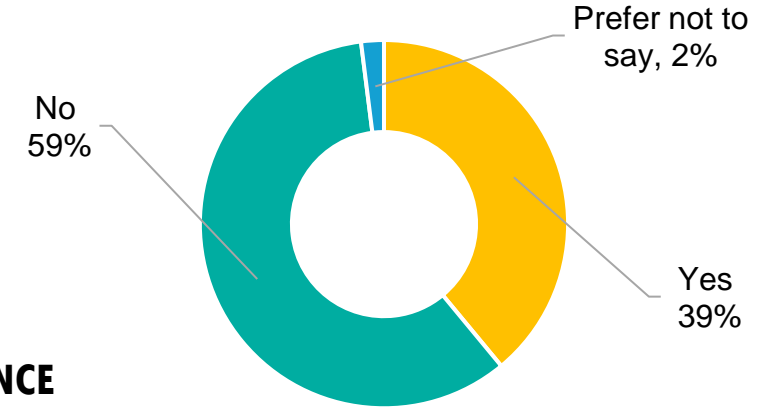
## ETHNICITY



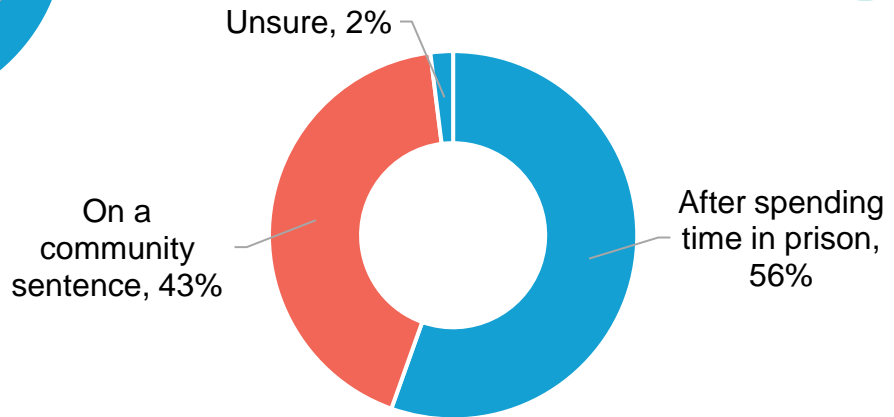
## GENDER



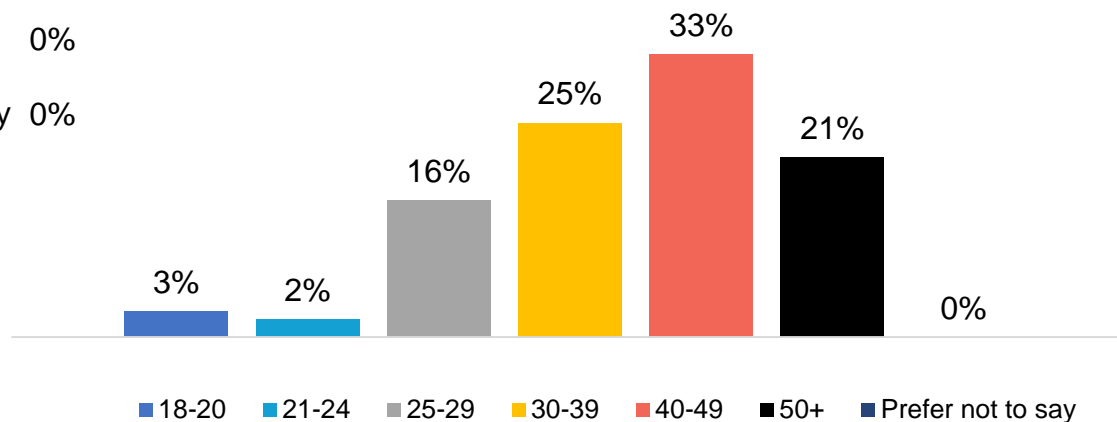
## DISABILITY



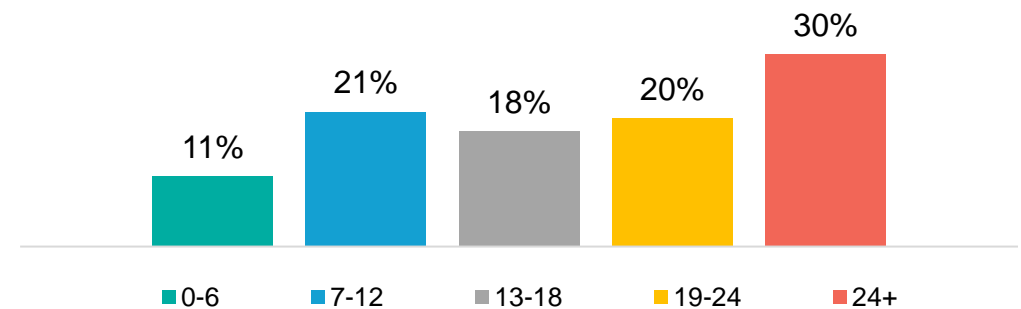
## SENTENCE



## AGE



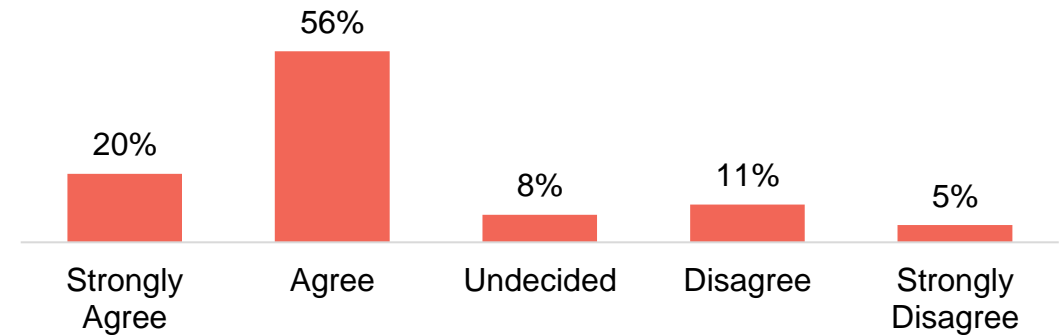
## TIME ON PROBATION (MONTHS)



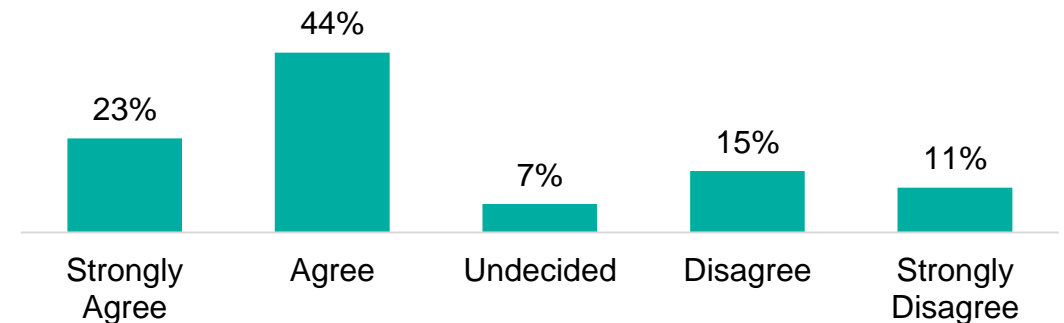
# THERE IS POLARITY IN PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE WITH APPOINTMENTS IN CUMBRIA

- **15%** (9/60) reported '**appointments**' as what has been good regarding their probation experience.
- However, **18%** (11/61) reported '**appointments**' as their biggest challenge whilst on probation. When people on probation had an issue, appointments was one of the most frequently cited issue.
- This shows the variety of experiences of people on probation.
- The main causes of dissatisfaction with appointments were:
  - Lack of consideration of their circumstances by their probation officer
  - Lack of communication
  - The frequency of appointments

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.



# WHILE MANY HAD A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE REGARDING APPOINTMENTS, PEOPLE ON PROBATION WHO FACED CHALLENGES HAD MORE TO SAY

*“Appointments were adjusted to allow me to work.”*

*“Travel to the office, they send me a warrant and I don’t always get it as I live in a block so it costs me to get here.”*

*“Continually having to come in here now I’m on IPP.”*

*“Same questions, making me to come all this way just to ask if I’m OK.”*

*“Having to come in for useless questions to be asked it’s a bit pointless. I’ve mentioned it and I was told it was the way it works and that’s it.”*

*“I was released last year and I’m still on weekly appointments. They didn’t help me with housing so I was homeless I found my own place but they say I’m still homeless and have to come every week.”*

*“Could do with slightly better communication, why not send all appointment updates by letter email and phone, never mind ‘wasting paper’ if I miss an appointment it’s a possibility of prison. Make sure we get appointment updates.”*

*“Provide suitable time or reason when cancelling appointments, us as offenders have to.”*

# POSTIVE EXPERIENCES WITH PROBATION OFFICERS OUTWEIGH NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES IN CUMBRIA

- Only **11%** (7/61) people reported the relationship with their probation officer as their biggest issue during their probation experience.
- **37%** (22/60) stated that '**PO/Service user relationships**' are what has been good about their probation experience, making it the most popular answer.
- Those that did have a positive experience attributed it to the friendliness and helpfulness of their probation officer.

*"My PO is good, he's worked around my mental health."*

*"They're keeping me on track at the moment and have some good advice."*

*"Excellent support and relationship."*

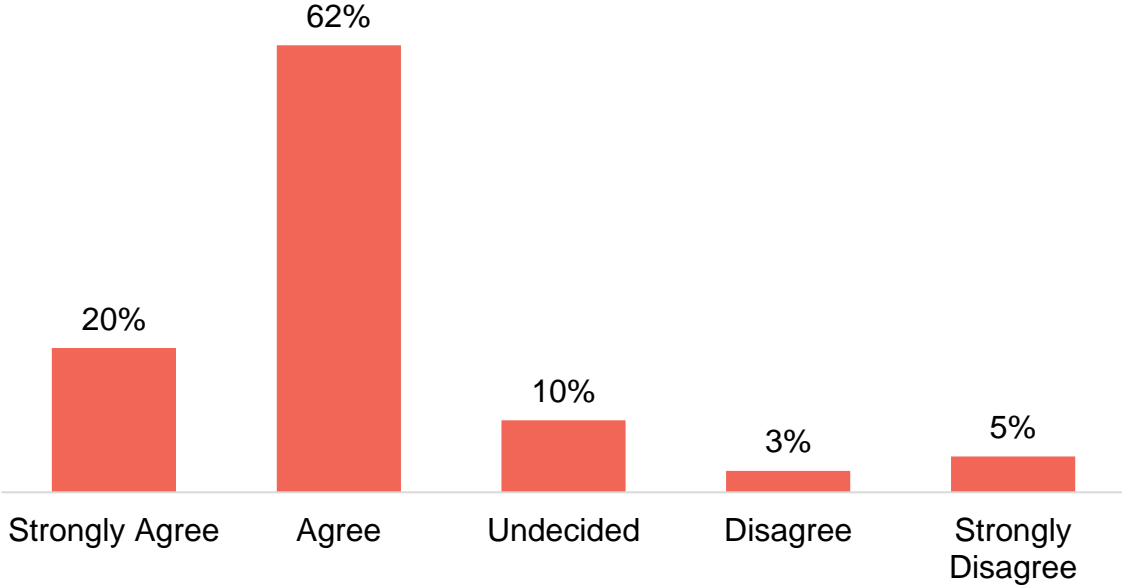
*"My PO and I formed a good relationship and I've had the same one throughout."*

*"I've had 2 changes of PO and I don't like my new one, and I didn't like changing after I opened up to her. My new one only works 3 days a week."*

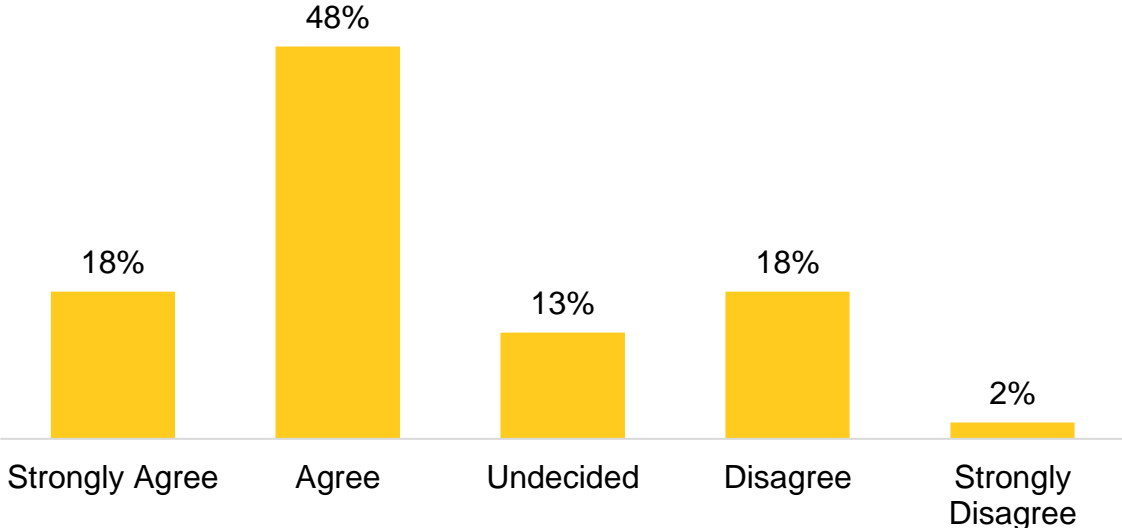
*"My PO leaving without telling me he's going and having to go over it all again."*

# 2 IN 3 PEOPLE IN CUMBRIA FEEL SAFE WHEN ACCESSING THEIR PROBATION OFFICE

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



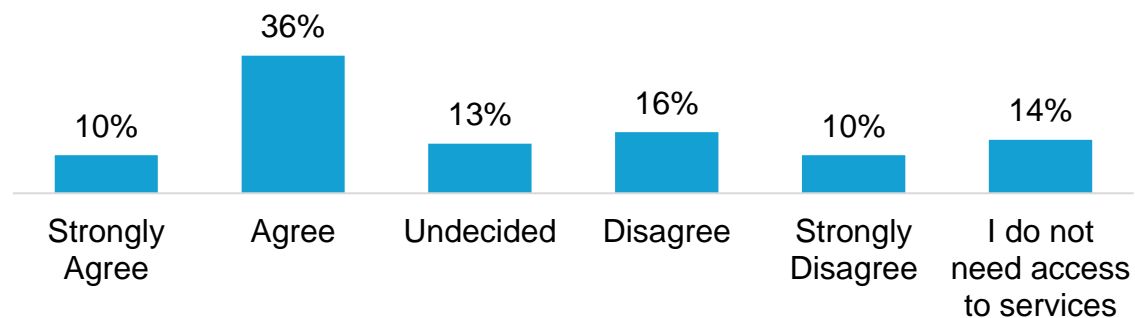
Q: I feel safe accessing the probation office.



# 1 IN 2 HAVE GOOD ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES IN CUMBRIA

- **54%** (28/52) of people on probation that self reported as needing support from probation felt that have been able to access services relevant to their most pressing needs.
- Several aspects were mentioned when discussing the services accessed:
  - Positive - Mental Health: **8%** / Issue - Mental Health: **15%**
  - Positive - Signposting: **3%** / Issue - Signposting: **3%**
  - Positive - Housing: **3%** / Issue - Housing: **13%**
  - Positive - ETE: **3%** / Issue - ETE: **5%**
  - Positive - Programmes: **3%** / Issue - Programmes: **3%**

Q: Probation have helped me access the services I need.



*"Probation helped me with my phone calls for application to local council for housing and also rang Universal Credit and other places such as BDA and tried to get me a referral to Duddon house for an assessment for mental health. They are currently in the process of trying to help me with work."*

*"I was signposted to outside organisations for things to do as I have retired and get lonely."*

*"I haven't really needed anything. I've been lucky like that."*

*"They are good for referrals to outside services."*

*"Referred me to the women's centre."*

# THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN CUMBRIA CAN ACCESS SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS

**85% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS**

**56% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN A REASONABLE TIME**

**56% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN THEIR LOCAL AREA**



# INDUCTION EXPERIENCE VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON IN CUMBRIA

*"My PO got to know me and she was from the same area and she was OK."*

*"There was a very good induction by my PO back in 2018 and he was excellent, unfortunately he left and then the confusion and issues started."*

*"There wasn't one as such I can recall."*

*"Not sure it was an induction but my first appointment was on the most stressful day possible and it was unnecessary. I was just told how it was going to be and threatened with recall if I didn't tow the line."*

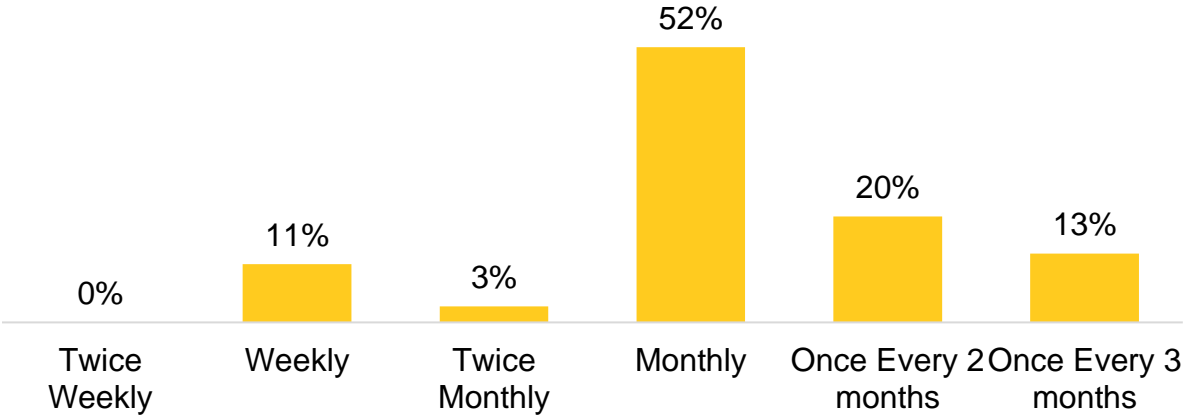
*"A bit hit and miss really, not very consistent."*

*"It was a one-way transmission, I wasn't consulted about anything. I think there's a form that says 2 weekly for a while then monthly regardless of what's the score."*

# PEOPLE ON PROBATION WANT AN ORDER TAILORED TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- **52%** (32/61) of people in Cumbria prefer monthly appointments – This was the most popular response to the question: ‘How often do you think you should see your probation officer?’
- **45%** (25/61) people mentioned their preference for remote appointments rather than face-to-face appointments.
- People on probation need contact, that is both flexible to their employment.

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



*“I shouldn’t have to miss work to come in and be threatened when I bring it up, they should open Saturdays for workers, every couple of months by phone would do me.”*

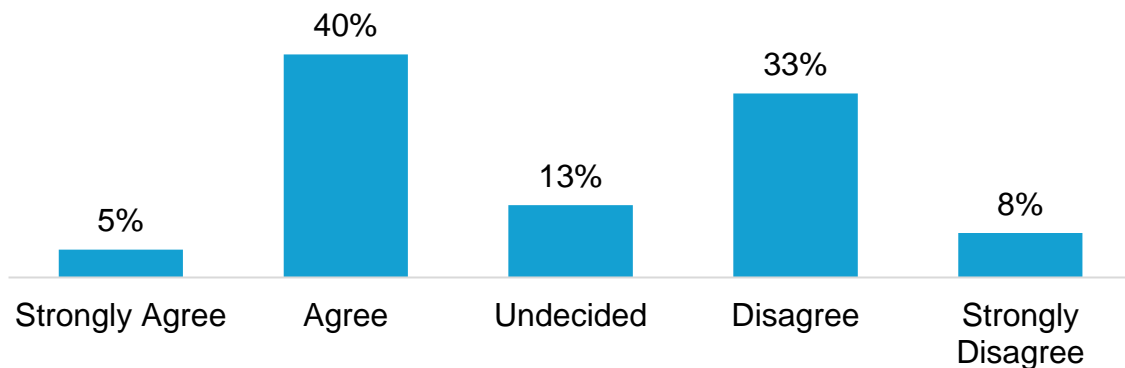
*“One a month on phone and every 2 months in person. I have been back in community for 3 years with no issues or concerns .”*

*“A call every month and come in if there’s something important.”*

# MANY FEEL LIKE THEY DON'T HAVE A SAY IN HOW THE PROBATION SERVICE IS RUN IN CUMBRIA

- **45%** (27/60) felt like probation services have asked for their views about being on supervision.
- Although some people feel heard, those who do not had more to say.
- People on probation have knowledge of how to make a complaint in Cumbria. However, they feel like nothing gets done when they complain.

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



*"It would be great if anyone asked your opinion but they don't care what convicts say. There's questionnaires but nothing's done about it its just there to meet some requirement so they can say they asked."*

*"Absolutely not, you're just told what to do and if you complain or have any suggestions your ignored."*

*"I complained a few times, it just got me an attitude from my PO and nothing was ever resolved so I've stopped complaining."*

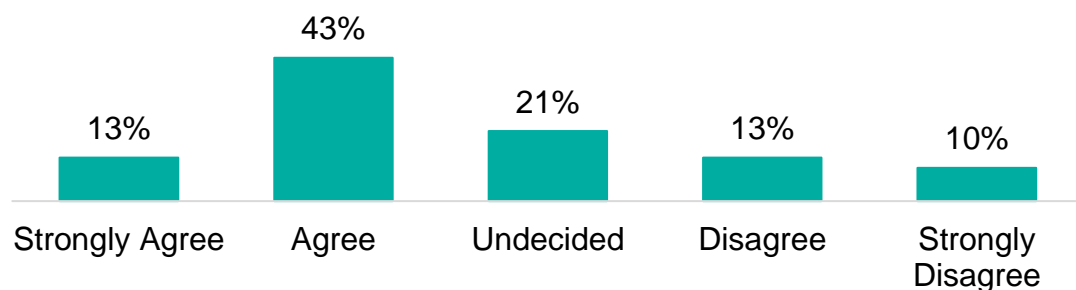
*"I tried to arrange a meet with my PO and their line manager, but I was dismissed."*

*"No I'm afraid I don't is that a thing that they take suggestions, I've not heard of that."*

# OVER HALF ARE HAPPY WITH THE OVERALL SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM PROBATION

- **56%** (34/61) of people were happy with the overall support received from probation.
- Whereas **28%** (17/61) stated 'Nothing can be improved' when asked about any issues they have whilst on probation.
- The top themes regarding positive experiences were: the relationship with their PO, appointments, and mental health support in Cumbria

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



*"My PO is good he's worked around my mental health."*

*"There keeping me on track at the moment and have some good advice."*

*"Mental health support my PO is easy to get on with."*

*"Appointments were adjusted to allow me to work."*

*"My PO and I formed a good relationship and I've had the same one throughout."*

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

- Regarding appointments, people want an improved means of communication.
- People want probation staff to be held accountable when it comes to adhering to appointments. It seems to be one rule of the officer and another for the person on probation.
- People want more consideration when it comes to scheduling appointments.
- People on probation want more support in accessing housing services in Cumbria.
- People in Cumbria want probation to listen to them and for their voice to be heard regarding the service and their individual orders.

*“Could do with slightly better communication, why not send all appointment updates by letter email and phone, never mind ‘wasting paper’ if I miss an appointment it’s a possibility of prison. Make sure we get appointment updates.”*

*“I haven’t been able to get the help needed especially with me recently being sleeping on the streets.”*

*“More independent accountability, this sort of thing here, and them actually listening to us.”*

*“I was released last year and I’m still on weekly appointments. They didn’t help me with housing so I was homeless I found my own place but they say I’m still homeless and have to come every week.”*

*“Provide suitable time or reason when cancelling appointments, us as offenders have to.”*



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