

USER VOICE

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE WIGAN INSPECTION

PUBLISHED MAY 2023

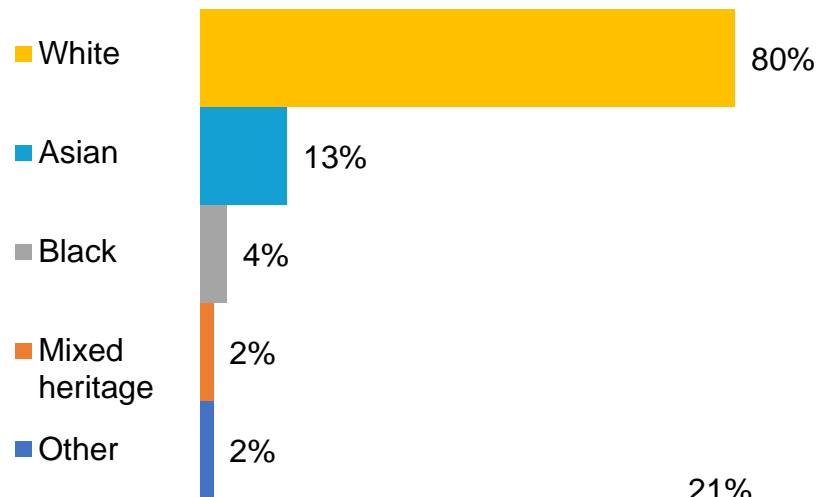
66 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

12 ONLINE SURVEYS

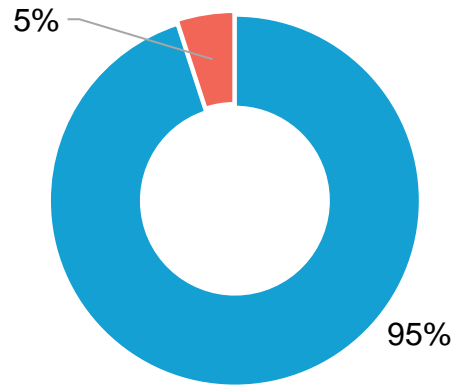
44 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

10 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

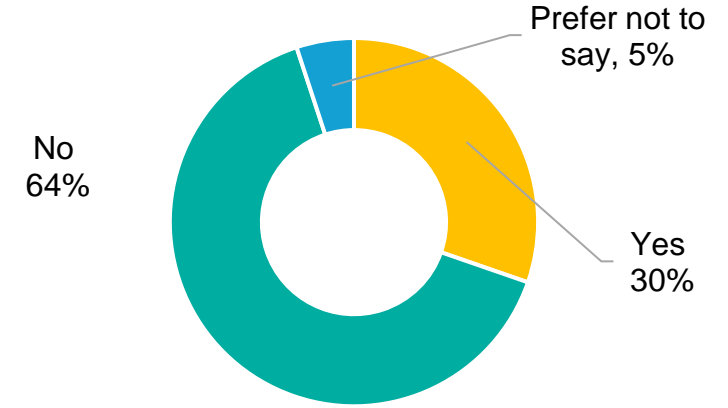
ETHNICITY



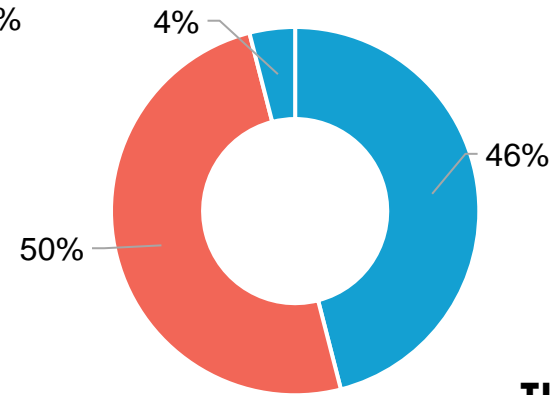
GENDER



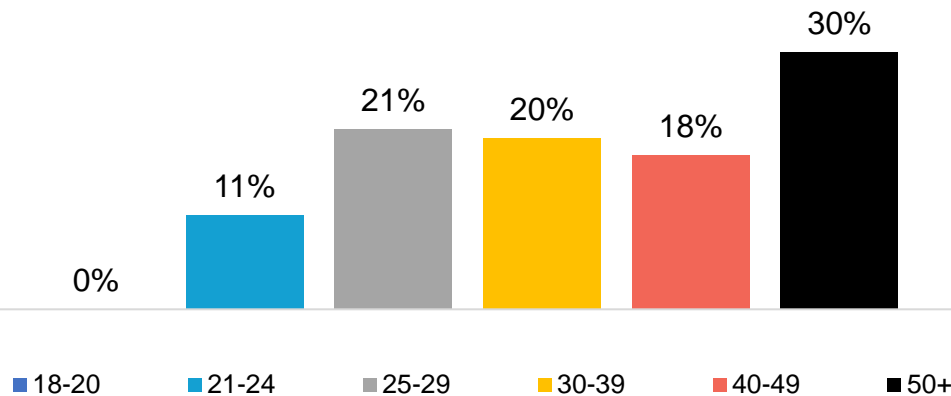
DISABILITY



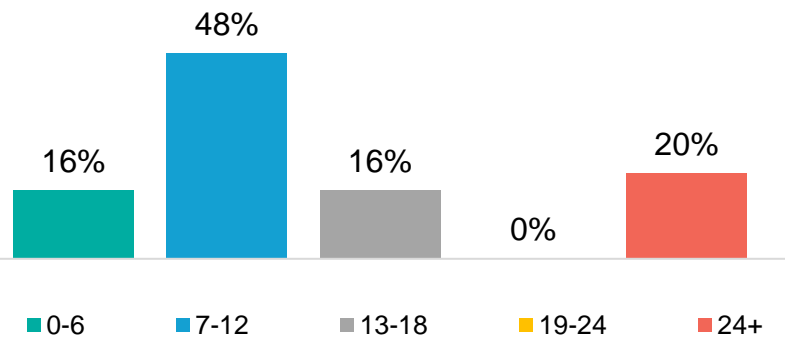
SENTENCE



AGE



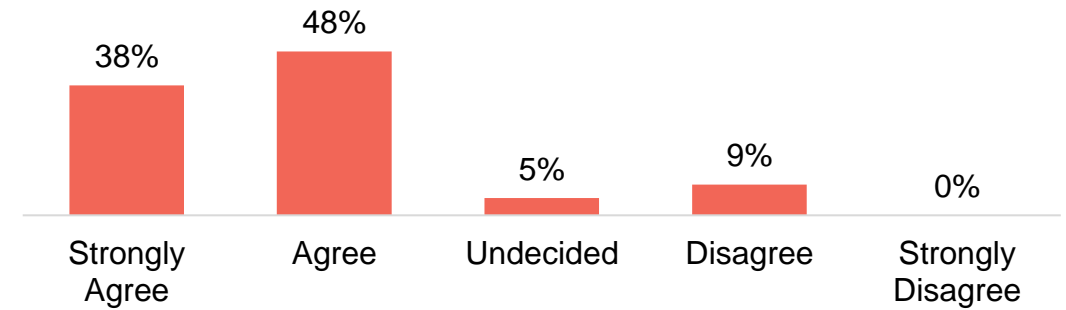
TIME ON PROBATION (MONTHS)



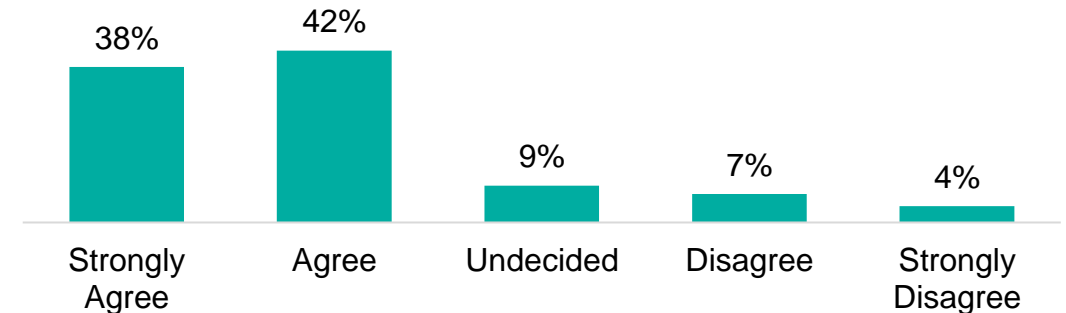
PEOPLE ARE WAITING LONG PERIODS OF TIME FOR OFTEN “POINTLESS” APPOINTMENTS IN WIGAN

- **15%** (8/56) reported ‘**Appointments**’ as the biggest challenge whilst on probation.
- The main cause of dissatisfaction with appointments was the long waiting time for people. Others also felt like they had to commit a lot of time to what seem like pointless appointments that are just “tick-box exercises.”
- **13%** (7/56) reported ‘**Appointments**’ as what has been good regarding their probation experience.
- Many people struggle with getting to appointments. ‘**Travel**’ was the biggest issue for **15%** (8/56) of people in Wigan.

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 IN WIGAN REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE ATTENDING APPOINTMENTS

"Not really, they make me come in and ask the same questions. I get anxiety but they still make me come in."

"I don't, no! I'm just made to jump through hoops, but I get nothing from it".

"Nowt, I've taken time off work to come here, and I've just been told my PO is off sick so I've wasted a trip and lost hours work for nowt."

"Going over things again and again and changing appointments, I've got a letter here that says Tuesday 09:30 and it was changed to today by phone last minute both slot and day were changed."

"Not really, they're a waste of time."

"I received help and support from my probation worker during appointments, especially regarding domestic violence issues."

"Having to take time off work to come here especially for no reason."

"I can ask anything, genuine concern for me and we have a chat, always answers my questions."

"Coming in for appointments that aren't really necessary just to tick a box really."

PEOPLE ON PROBATION STRUGGLE WITH TRAVEL COSTS IN WIGAN

- Travel was the biggest issue for **15%** (8/54) of those surveyed which is high compared to other regions.
- While one person had an issue with travel because it makes them anxious, the rest found it financially burdensome.

“Travel to appointments is a pain.”

“Transport is a problem and bus fare.”

“Travel is an issue. I get a bus pass home but it costs me £4 to get here in the first place.”

“Not getting any bus fares back is an issue.”

“I suffer severe social anxiety and am forced to spend 4 hours a week on crowded trains.”

PEOPLE IN WIGAN GENERALLY HAVE POSITIVE OPINIONS OF THEIR PROBATION OFFICER

- **29%** (16/55) stated that '**PO/Service user relationships**' are what has been good about their probation experience.

This was for the following reasons:

- Nice, supportive and helpful POs.
 - Friendly PO and staff in general.
-
- The **6%** (3/54) who had any issues did so mostly due to the frequent changing of Probation Officers.

"My officer is very helpful; my last officer was very unhelpful and they both contradicted each other."

"Quite good, I have changed officers a few times but this one is OK."

"Excellent, very helpful, punctual, never had to wait."

"I've had 3 different Probation Officers already and I've not been on probation long."

"My Probation Officer is OK I suppose, he's a bit forgetful though."

"Alright, social services have gotten involved and I feel them, and probation have decided I can't have a family."

MENTAL HEALTH WAS THE BIGGEST ISSUE FOR PEOPLE ON PROBATION IN WIGAN

- **19%** (10/55) said that 'mental health' is their biggest challenge during their probation experience – The most popular response for those with issues other than 'Nothing can be improved.'

The most common causes of dissatisfaction were:

- Being made to take part in group sessions.
- Travelling causes anxiety.
- Due to memory issues, it's hard to remember appointments which causes anxiety.
- Not being given realistic advice about the consequences of sexual convictions.

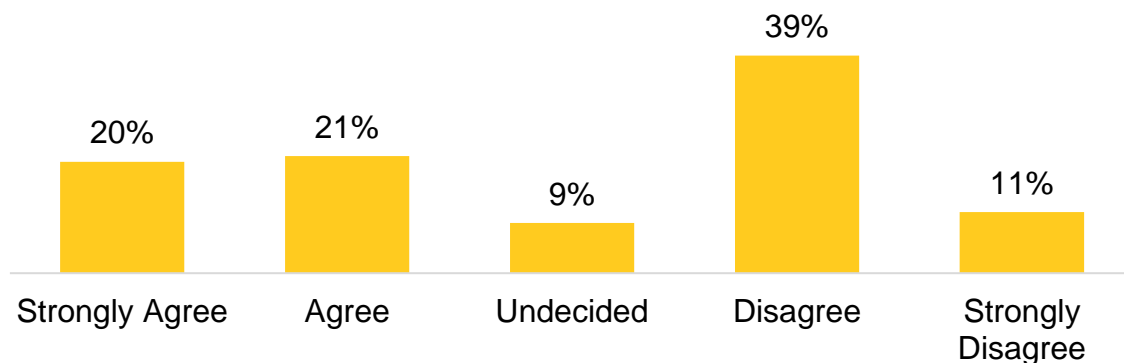
“I suffer severe social anxiety and am forced to spend 4 hours a week on crowded trains.”

“Find it hard going, get very anxious and have panic attacks.”

NOBODY OF THE 10 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A SAY IN HOW PROBATION IS RUN

- **50%** (28/56) of those surveyed felt like Probation Services had not asked for their views about being on supervision.
- **4 in 5** of people interviewed had no experience of UPW. Those who had attended, said it was disorganized.
- Only **1 in 5** interviewed knew a pathway to make complaints.

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



"Not at all, I've never been asked for my opinion."

"No, people aren't interested in your opinion."

"No, I don't need to complain but wouldn't know how to either."

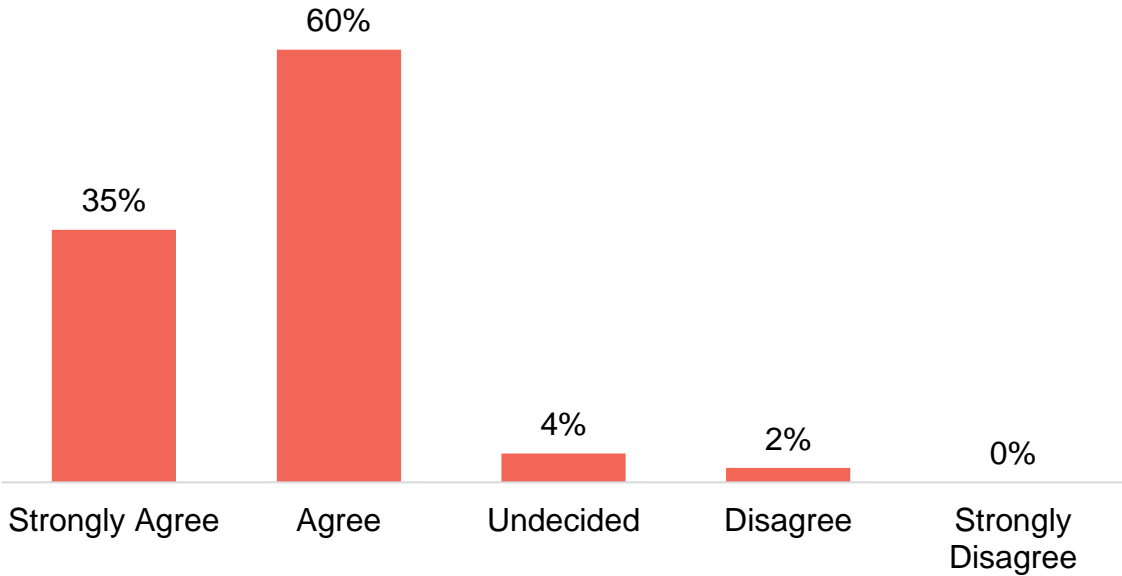
"You must be joking. No one has asked for my opinion."

"You're ignored if you do. I don't know how to do it [complain] really but when I have said things, I have been ignored."

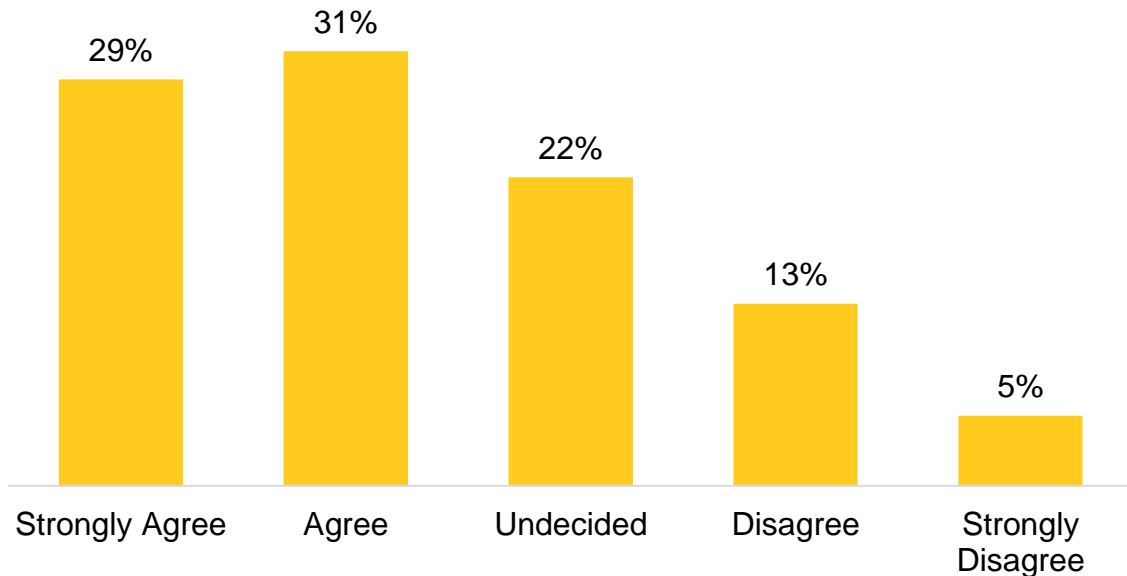
"I would start with my Probation Officer, other than that, no idea how to make a complaint."

3 IN 5 PEOPLE IN WIGAN FEEL SAFE WHEN ACCESSING THEIR LOCAL PROBATION OFFICE

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



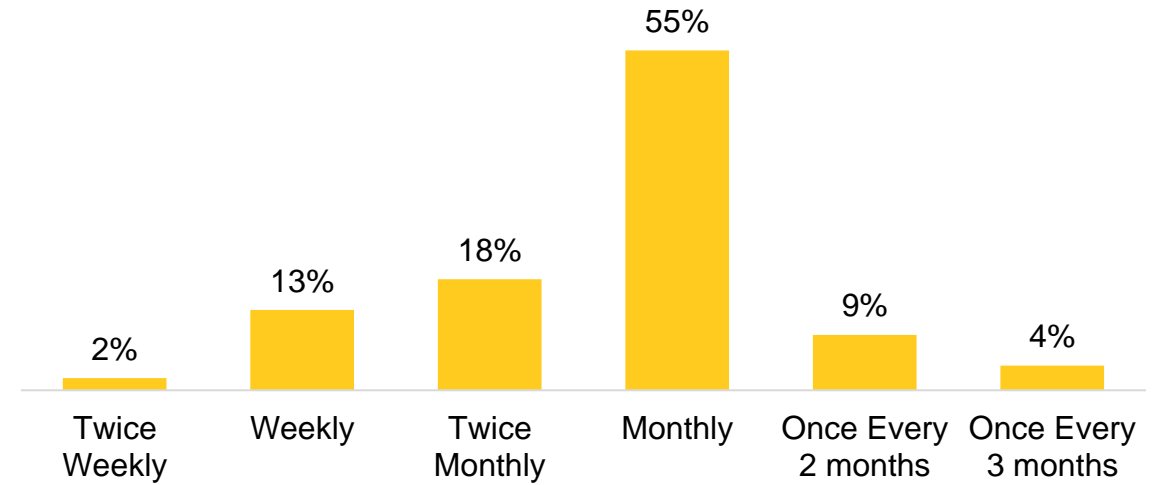
Q: I feel safe accessing the Probation Office



PEOPLE WANT AN APPROACH TAILORED TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- **53%** of People on Probation mentioned that they want telephone contact and **21%** mentioned that they want to have appointments face-to-face. Many others wanted a blend of both forms of contact.
- The frequency of contact wanted depends on the individual and their need for support.
- **55%** (31/55) prefer monthly appointments.
- **78%** (43/55) people on Probation ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘Agreed’ that appointments, courses and/or support have been within a reasonable travelling distance.

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



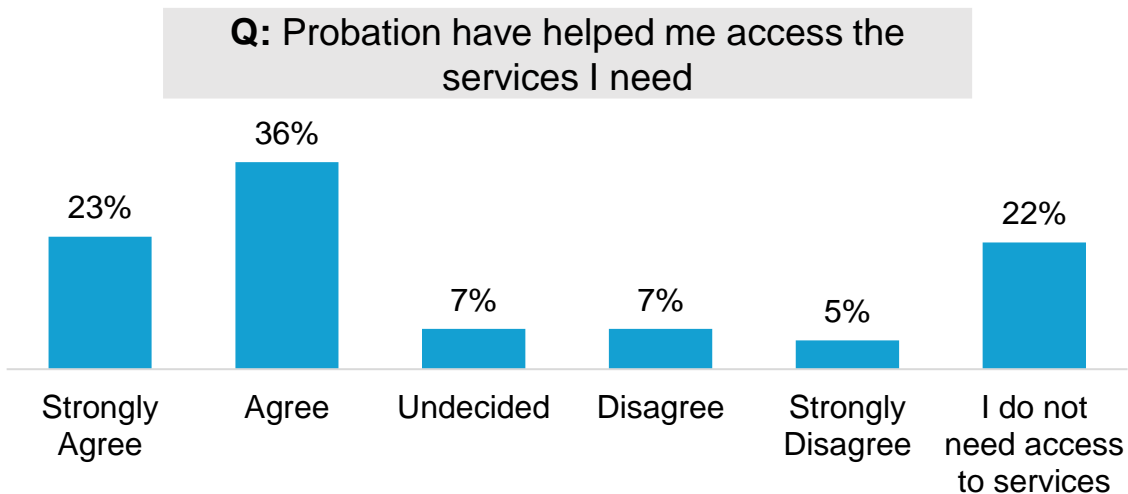
“We shouldn’t have to come in for no reason just to tick a box, we should only have to come in if it’s needed.”

“Monthly telephone appointments would be what I want but they just tell me what’s what, I don’t have a say.”

“Fortnightly or monthly alternating between phone and face to face.”

GOOD ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES IN WIGAN

- **3/4** (33/56) of those who need support accessing services in Wigan feel that probation have helped them access it.
- Signposting for **substance misuse** and **mental health** support is effective and well appreciated in the area. However, a few wish they could have gained access to it sooner.
- **Housing** is high in demand and some people seem to be waiting long periods of time for accommodation.



"They have helped me with housing, this one, my previous one was just telling me I was going to be homeless."

"CFO hub, I was referred by my PO. I got my house through the council, moved from communal housing to my own place."

"They helped with Universal Credit and getting free prescriptions."

"Not really, I need housing help but they aren't doing much really."

"They helped me with alcohol support which was OK."

"They have tried but things take forever."

THE VAST MAJORITY FEEL SUPPORTED IN REGARD TO ACCESSING SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS IN WIGAN

89% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS

73% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN A REASONABLE TIME

73% HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCESS SERVICES IN THEIR LOCAL AREA

EXPERIENCES WITH INDUCTIONS ARE FAIRLY NEGATIVE IN WIGAN

- **1 in 5** people interviewed received an insightful induction in which they were informed of probation's processes and the help available.
- While **1** person considered communication with their order and license to be a part of their positive experience whilst on probation, **2** people said that their experiences involved some issues regarding the clarity of their order.

"There wasn't one really. I don't remember a sentence plan being mentioned."

"OMU visited me internally but didn't introduce themselves. Outside probation were not helpful and I didn't really get an induction."

"I'm not sure I had an induction, the sentence plan you mentioned, I haven't seen that or had my licence conditions explained."

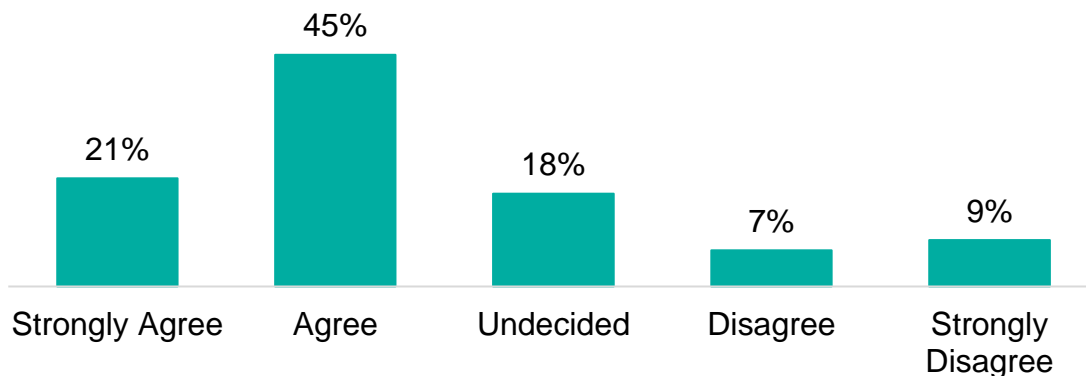
"I had my induction about 9 months ago, I don't think they covered the complaints procedure but did cover the licence conditions."

"I remember it, nothing of use was covered really. Didn't cover sentence plan or contact."

2 IN 3 ARE HAPPY WITH THE OVERALL SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM PROBATION

- **37%** (20/55) answered '**Nothing can be improved**' when asked about any issues they have whilst on probation.
- Whereas **35%** (19/55) stated that there were '**No positives**' regarding their probation experience.
- Amongst other things, People on Probation appreciated effective signposting to the women's centres and to domestic violence intervention programmes.

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



"I received help and support from my probation worker especially regarding DV issues."

"Alcohol support group is OK but I wish the teacher knew a bit more about what it was actually like being an addict."

"Probation helped me come to terms with the devastation of my life following my conviction. "

"They organized an employment meeting that helped."

"Speaking to my current Officer is helpful, she has explained my homelessness notice."

PEOPLE ON PROBATION'S SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES THEY FACE

- People on Probation would like to be listened to more and have more proportionate action/punishments.
- People on Probation want more flexibility according to their individual needs.
- Continuity with their Probation Officers is imperative. Those experiencing revolving doors of Probation Officers struggle to get the help they need.
- Poorly understood and explained order/license can be a source of misunderstandings and frustration.
- People on Probation should have clarity regarding the complaint process.

"To be asked how I feel about things and to be listened to if I have a problem. I called about unpaid work being closed but still got a warning."

"Probation could be more adaptive to change and have the ability to alter orders or licences as the individual is behaving."

"The experience is good. More concentrating on helping people move forward rather than looking back would be better."

"Proportionate action and punishment. I had a driving issue and they have gone way over the top."

"More help finding answers to benefits etc."

"A bit less pointless meetings because a flow chart says so and a more personal approach. If you don't need scrutinising, you should be bothered less."

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