

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE WEST KENT INSPECTION

PUBLISHED MARCH 2024

86 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

21 ONLINE SURVEYS

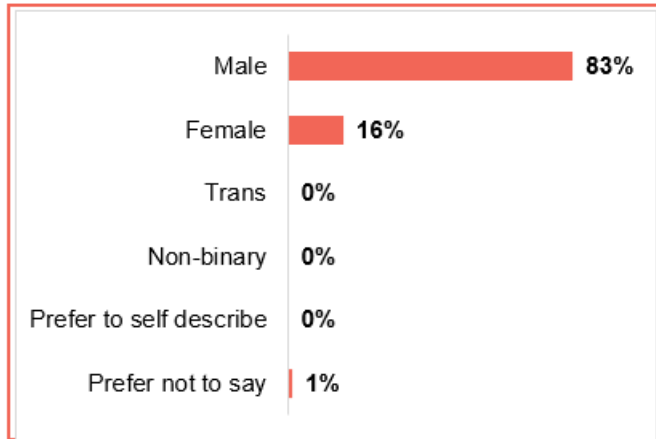
60 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

7 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

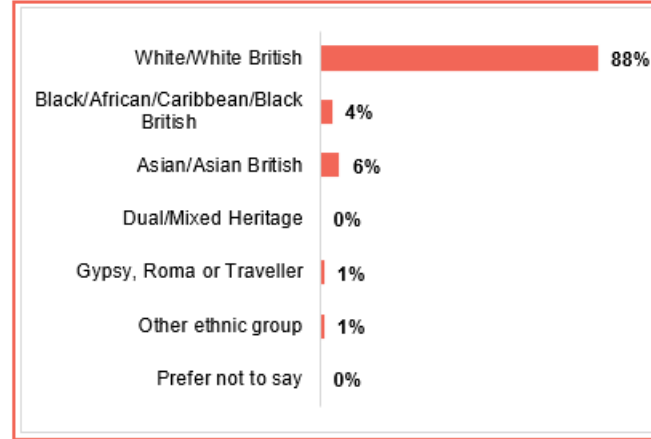
***ALL DATA IN THIS REPORT HAS BEEN CHECKED
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE. SOME PERCENTAGES DO NOT
TOTAL TO 100% SOLELY FOR REASONS OF ROUNDING**

DEMOGRAPHICS

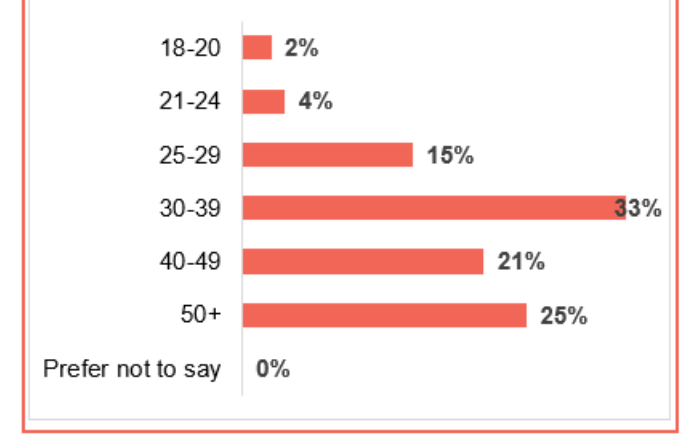
Gender



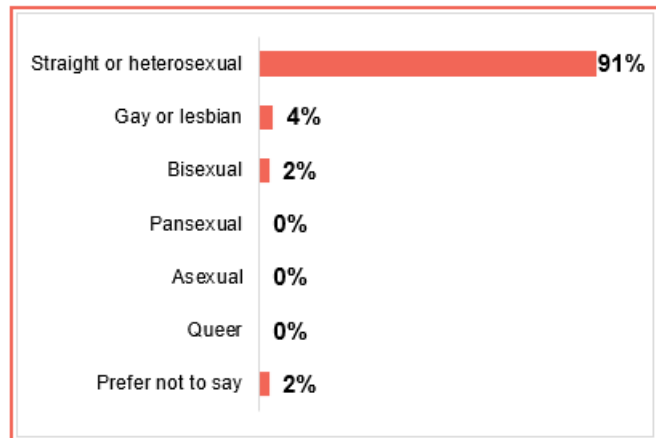
Ethnicity



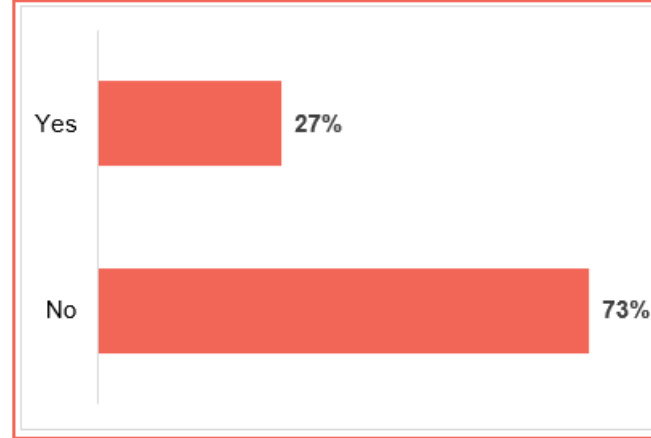
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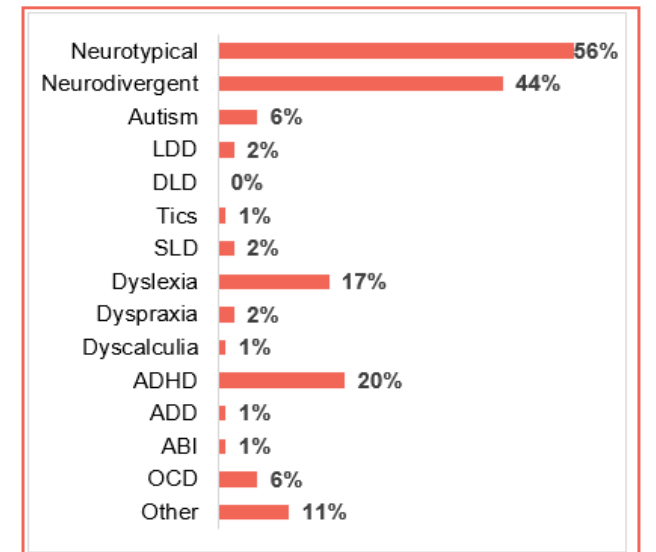
Sexual orientation



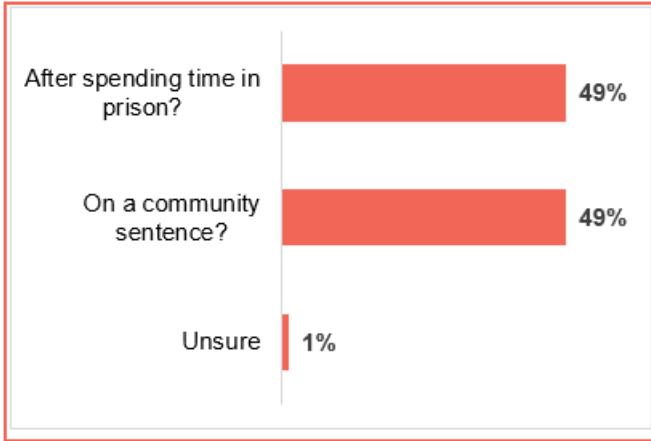
Disability



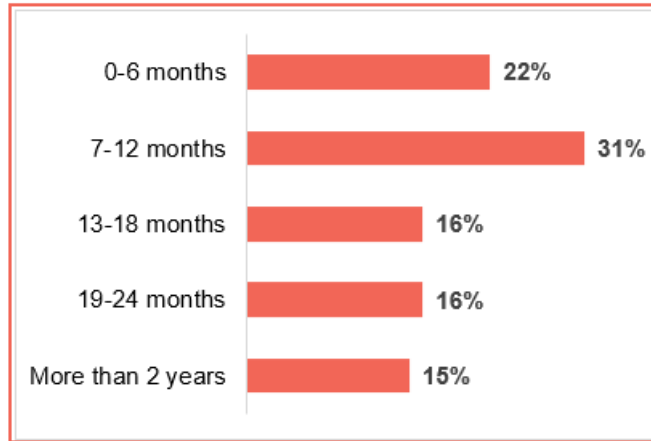
Neurodiversity



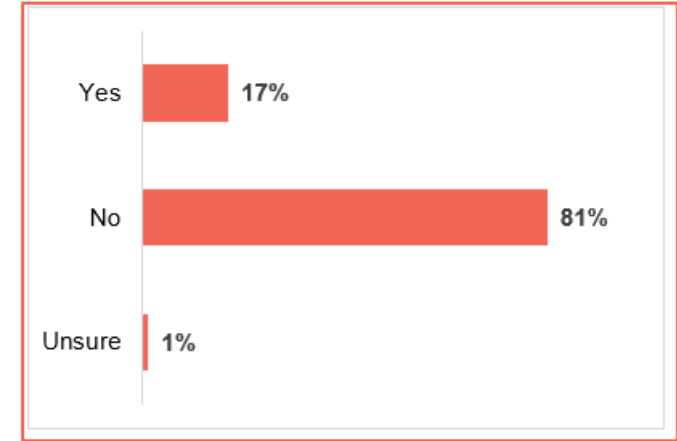
Are you on probation...



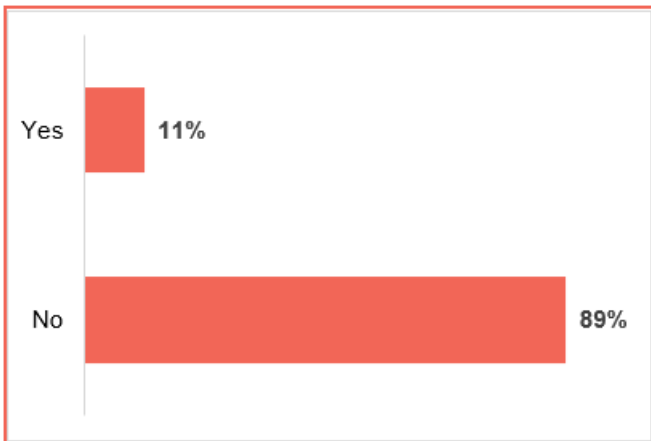
Time on probation



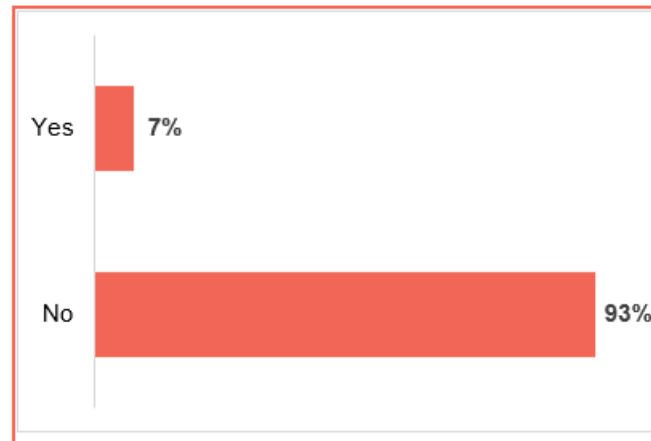
Experience of breach



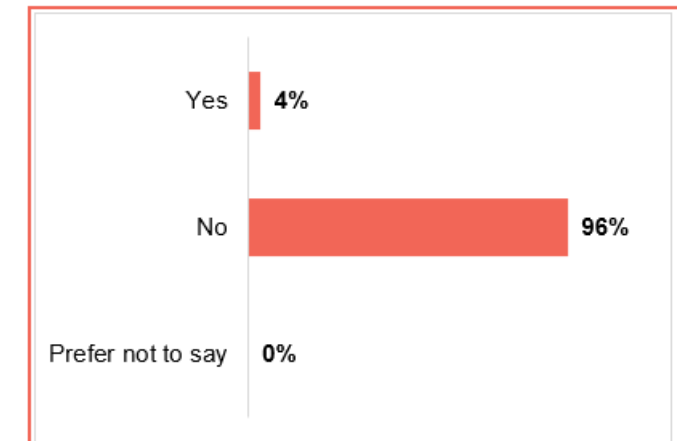
Experience of care as a child



Veteran status



Foreign national status

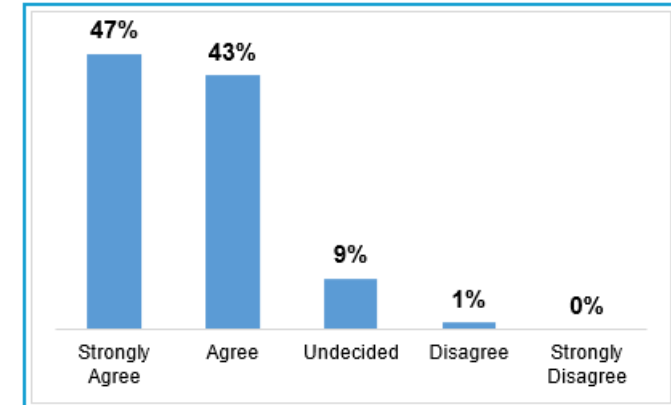


EXPERIENCE WITH INDUCTIONS

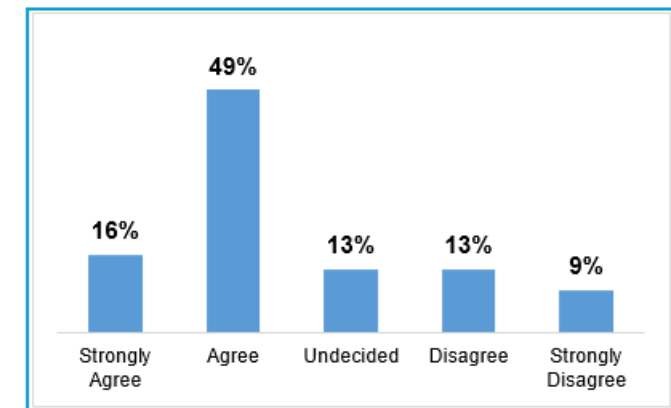
THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM ON PROBATION

- **90%** (73/81) of survey participants stated that they understand what is expected of them whilst on probation
- Of those people that stated they did have a sentence plan, **65%** (45/69) stated that they felt involved in creating their sentence plan with their probation practitioner.
- Whereas **22%** (15/69) stated that they either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' that they were involved in creating their sentence plan.

Q1. I understand what is expected of me whilst on probation



Q2. I was involved in creating my sentence plan with my probation practitioner

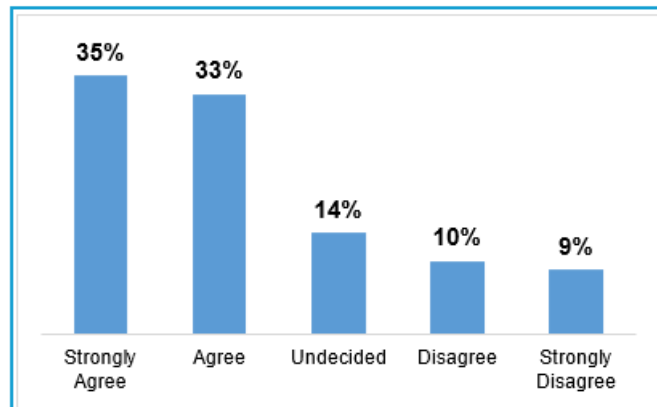


12/81 respondents stated that they are not aware of having a sentence plan. These responses are not included above.

MAJORITY SAID PROBATION PRACTITIONERS TOOK THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND THEIR NEEDS

- **68%** (54/80) of survey participants stated that their probation practitioner took the time to understand their personal needs during an induction.
- **1** person surveyed stated that they did not have an induction.

Q3. My probation practitioner took the time to understand my personal needs during my induction



1 respondent stated that they did not have an induction. This response is not included above.

“It's okay, he's only a kid with not very much life experience. He was a car mechanic before he did this. I can get hold of him, if I need to. I've had 2 probationer workers. Not sure there was a handover, I had to explain everything twice.”

“She's alright. It's good in that I can tell her anything, but you just get to the point where it's like ‘what's the point if she can't do anything’ so you just end up not putting the effort in, and that's not even her fault. I can get hold her of on WhatsApp.”

“First one was good, really good, I felt listened to. I think I'm just another caseload for my second one. He nods and listens but I don't think he's really invested in my future. A good probation officer would listen and find real ways to help. It's no good giving out leaflets and phone numbers, we could get that ourselves.”

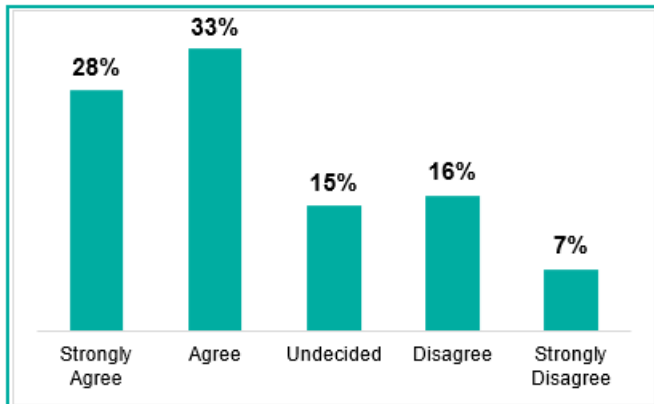
“It's difficult because sometimes she's alright and then sometimes she is just difficult for the sake of being difficult its weird.”

EXPERIENCE WITH APPOINTMENTS

TWO-THIRDS SAID APPOINTMENTS HELPED THEIR REHABILITATION

- **62%** (50/81) of survey participants stated that their appointments are useful in helping them and their rehabilitation.
- Whereas **23%** (19/81) stated that they either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' that that their appointments are useful.
- Some service users spoke about the distance they had to travel to attend appointments having a negative impact on them.

Q4. I find my appointments useful in helping me and my rehabilitation



“No! If the appointments were useful, I'd be housed, not freezing from sofa to sofa. I don't know where I'm going to sleep over Christmas so how can they be any use? And they're miles away. I'm based in South East London so it's a massive train journey and one I can't afford. Even if I get vouchers, I've got to get from wherever I'm living to the train station and then from the train station to probation.”

“Because it's part of the whole progress of rehabilitation I am getting what I need but it still feels pointless sometimes.”

“I did at first, when I had big problems and needed to talk but now, I'm not sure. It's an hour out of the hostel which is good but that's about it. I can be in and out in 10 mins but I don't feel like anything is actually achieved.”

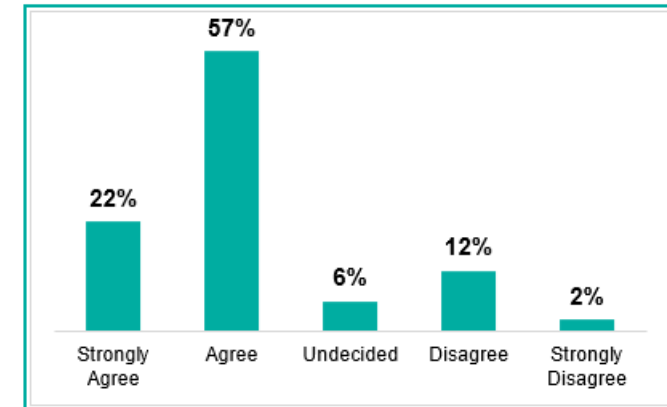
“I struggle with people though and I did say that from the beginning so if my appointments are with people I don't get on with or who have threatened me it's not going to help me.”

“The feeling that I have someone I can talk to.”

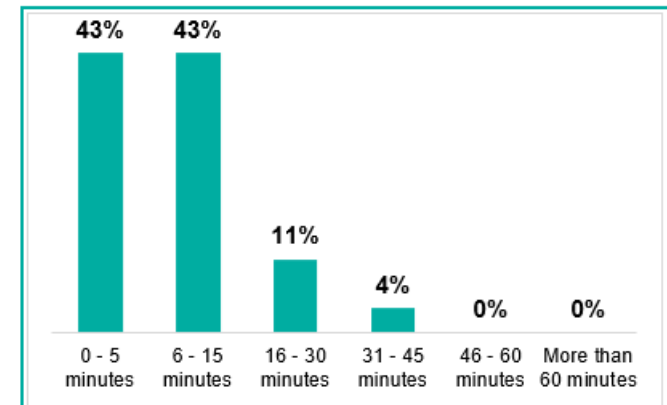
APPOINTMENTS START ON TIME FOR THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE

- **79%** (64/81) of survey participants stated that more often than not, their appointments start on time.
- Furthermore, **43%** (34/80) people stated that they have to wait less than 5 minutes for their appointment to start and, **43%** (34/80) people stated that their average wait time is between 6 and 15 minutes.

Q6. More often than not, my appointments start on time

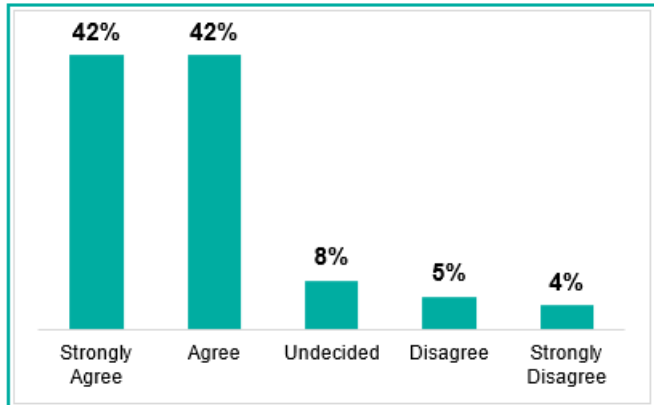


Q6a. What is the average length of time you wait for your appointments after the scheduled time

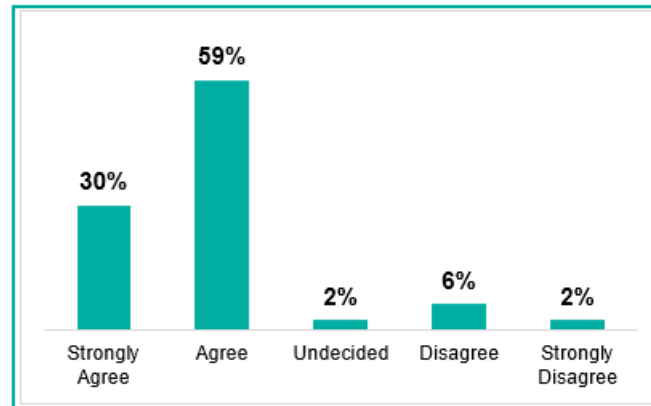


MOST ARE ABLE TO HAVE AN APPOINTMENT AT A TIME THAT SUITS THEM

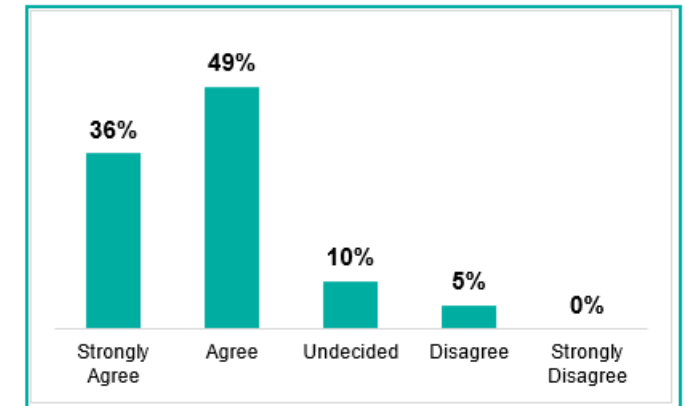
Q5. I have been able to have appointments with my probation practitioner at a time that suits me



Q7. The distance I have to travel to get to appointments is reasonable



Q8. I feel safe accessing the probation office

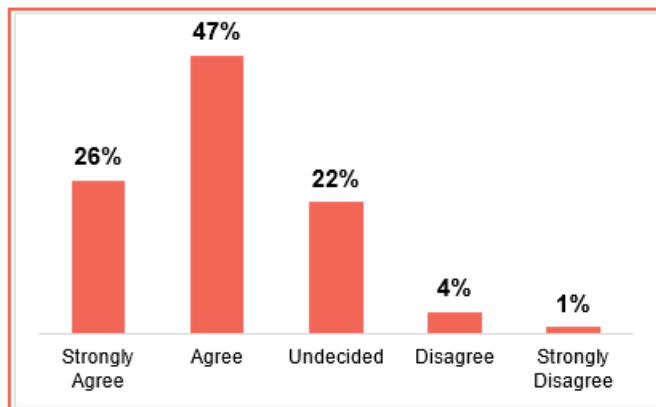


RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROBATION PRACTITIONERS

ALMOST THREE QUARTERS HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PROBATION OFFICER

- **73%** (59/81) of survey participants stated that they have a good relationship with their probation practitioner.
- Whereas **5%** (4/81) stated that they either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' that they have a good relationship.

Q11. I have a good relationship with my probation practitioner



"It was unrealistic. I had a 1-2-1 and thought that they'd be able to sort my biggest problem (housing), but all they can really do is hand me a load of leaflets for charities who are trying to help too many people with the same problem. You start off positive and end up disappointed. I don't think I have a sentence plan."

"Sometimes she can be alright when we talk about stuff and life but when I ask for direct help with things it feels like she's not listening, or her manager can't help and even being more understanding, but they can't be relatable or understand really that's the problem."

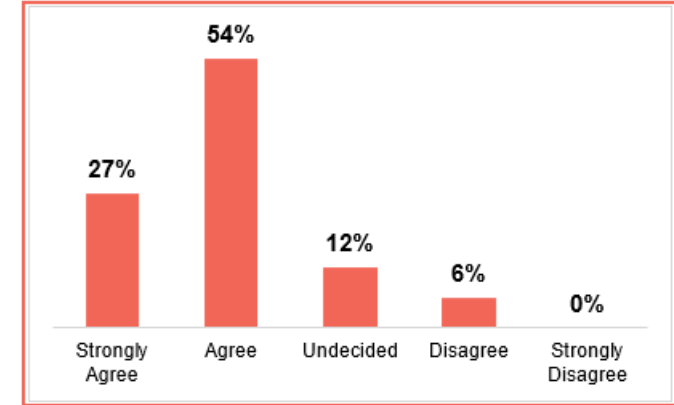
"Really good. I feel like I can be open with her, I tell her my problems and she does sort anything she can. She's trying to sort out that I don't have to go to court because I stopped going to the group. The stand in worker didn't understand that it's when I feel threatened, I do stupid things."

"Induction was good, I feel like my probation worker listened to me. She told me why I had to come and said I'd have to do these group sessions. I didn't realise this was a sentence plan, the stand in probation worker explained that."

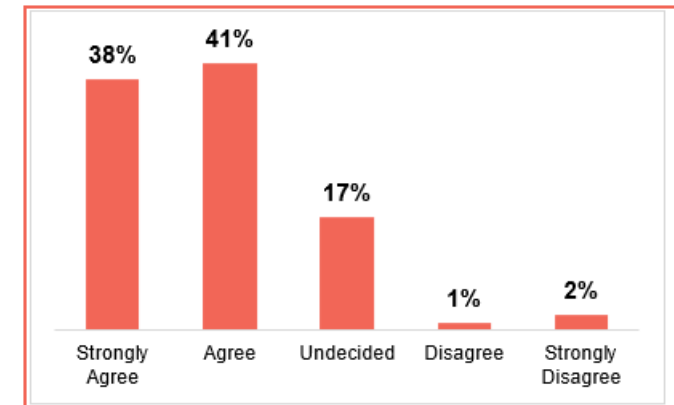
THE MAJORITY ARE ABLE TO CONTACT THEIR PROBATION OFFICER WHEN NEEDED

- **81%** (66/81) of survey participants stated that have been able to contact their probation practitioner when they have needed to.
- **79%** (64/81) participants feel that have enough contact time with their probation practitioner to help them and their rehabilitation.
- However, **3%** (3/81) stated that they either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to the question 'I have enough contact time with my probation practitioner to help me and my rehabilitation'.

Q9. I have been able to contact my probation practitioner when I have needed to (e.g., to change appointments)



Q10. I have enough contact time with my probation practitioner to help me and my rehabilitation

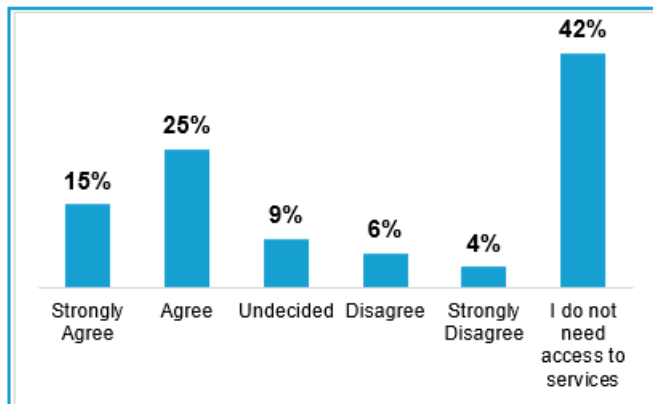


ACCESS TO SERVICES

THE MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO NEED SERVICES RECEIVE SUPPORT TO ACCESS THEM

- More than **two-fifths** (34/81) of people surveyed stated that they 'do not need access to services' in West Kent.
- Of those that stated they do need access to services, **68%** (32/47) stated that probation have helped them access services relevant to their personal needs, strengths and circumstances.

Q12. Probation have helped me access services relevant to my personal needs, strengths and circumstances



“At first, I got help with mental health straight away, but I ended up sorting housing myself. The problem is that probation expect me to tell them everything honestly but I don't feel like I can tell them anything at all in case it's held against me.”

“I only needed help with one thing, just one, and they can't do anything.”

“Yes, I did the debt course and I get that the group would be good if I had attended because they talk about feelings and how when we feel bad we do stupid stuff but I had to stop going.”

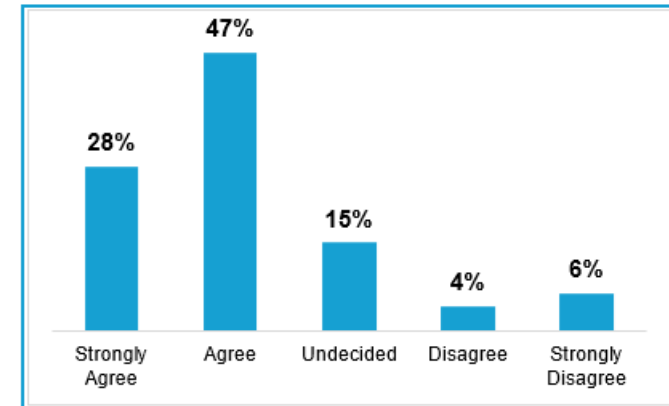
“Yes, mental health at first. That happened quickly but housing is obviously a big issue for everyone you must speak to - I'm no different but I feel like I'm down the pecking order because of the nature of my crime.”

“Not at all, I'm sure there is more things I could do, or they could offer me because it's so pointless but because I have to do it I do it.”

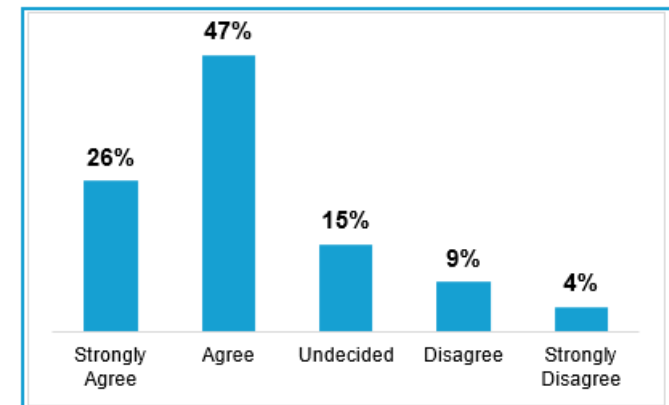
THREE QUARTERS CONSIDER THE DISTANCE TO SERVICES AS REASONABLE

- Of those who need to access services, **74%** (35/47) participants surveyed stated the distance they have to travel to get to services and programmes is reasonable.
- **72%** of people that need access to services (34/47) responded that they have been able to access support services within a reasonable amount of time.
- The top three types of services that participants responded access being either 'Poor' or 'Very Poor' in West Kent were: Housing/ Accommodation, Finance, Debt and Benefits, and Mental Health support.
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse support is noted as a positive in West Kent as **79%** (11/14) people we spoke to that need it, found access to be 'Very Good.'

Q13. The distance I have to travel to get to services and programmes is reasonable



Q14. I have been able to access support services within a reasonable amount of time



A BREAKDOWN OF WHAT SERVICES PEOPLE ON PROBATION NEED IN WEST KENT

Type of Service	15. Have you needed / do you still need access to any of the following services?						
	Resp.	Yes		No		I still need access	
Mental health support	47	25	53%	18	38%	4	9%
Finance, debt & benefits	47	16	34%	30	64%	1	2%
Education, training & employment	47	18	38%	28	60%	1	2%
Alcohol/substance misuse support	47	12	26%	33	70%	2	4%
Housing/accommodation	47	11	23%	33	70%	3	6%
Women specific services	45	2	4%	43	96%	0	0%
Children and childcare support	33	2	6%	31	94%	0	0%
Partner and family support	45	2	4%	43	96%	0	0%
Other important relationship support	44	1	2%	43	98%	0	0%

HOW PEOPLE ON PROBATION RATE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES IN WEST KENT

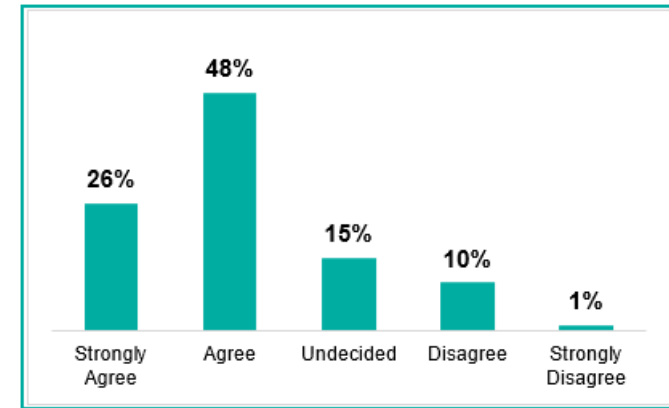
Type of Service	15. Have you needed / do you still need access to any of the following services?					
	Very Good / Good		Neutral		Very Poor / Poor	
Mental health support	16	55%	9	31%	4	14%
Finance, debt & benefits	9	53%	4	24%	4	24%
Education, training & employment	14	74%	3	16%	2	11%
Alcohol/substance misuse support	11	79%	1	7%	2	14%
Housing/accommodation	5	36%	3	21%	6	43%
Women specific services	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%
Children and childcare support	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%
Partner and family support	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%
Other important relationship support	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE AND BEING HEARD

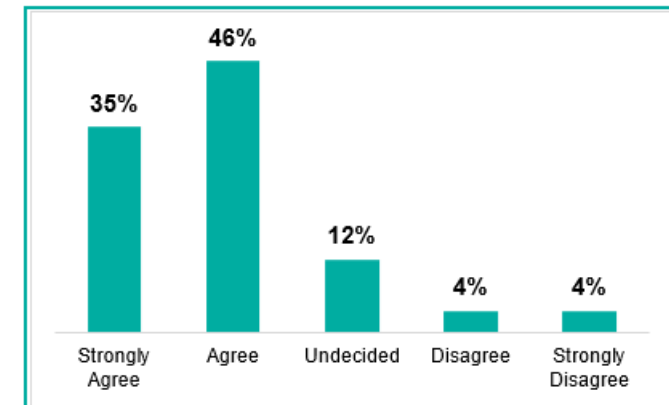
THE MAJORITY ON PROBATION IN WEST KENT KNOW HOW TO RAISE A COMPLAINT

- **74%** (60/81) of people in West Kent know how to raise complaints.
- **80%** (65/81) of survey participants stated that they feel like they have been treated fairly by probation staff.
- However, **7%** (6/81) stated that they either 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' that they have been treated fairly by probation staff.

Q16. I know how to raise complaints whilst on probation



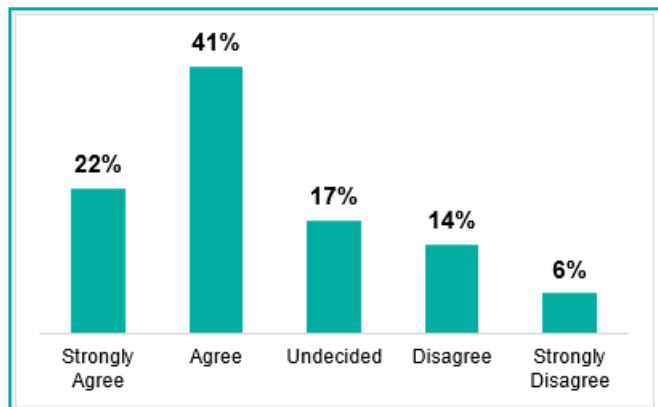
Q18. I have been treated fairly by probation staff



ALMOST TWO-THIRDS FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN ASKED THEIR VIEWS BY PROBATION

- **63%** (51/81) of survey participants feel like probation services have asked their views about being on supervision and that they feel listened to.
- Interview participants stated to User Voice that they did not think probation was set up to take their feedback and action it.

Q17. Probation services have asked for my views about being on supervision and I feel listened to



“Whoever has a say in how it's run should be ashamed. They make out they help people stop offending but they don't. It doesn't matter what experience anyone has if the people at the top don't understand or care.”

“You commit a crime and get put on probation; there's no having a say about it! No-one would want to listen to me, I have no qualifications.”

“No. I don't think I'd know what to do to. I don't know how to help myself never mind other people.”

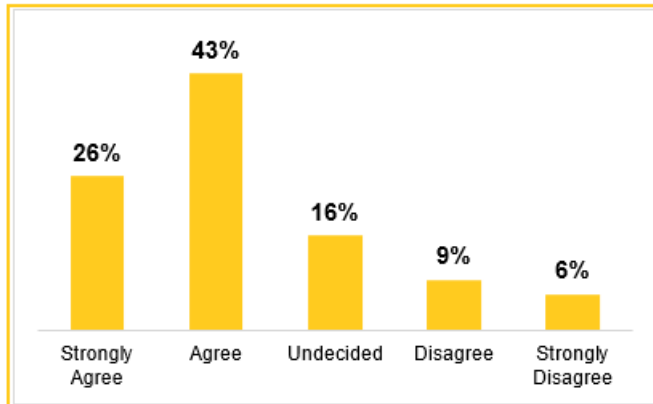
“Again, what's the point? If no-one can do anything, then no-one can fix anything. I wouldn't bother even if I knew the process because nothing will ever change.”

“I know you can, and actually I should have done that when I was struggling to attend the sessions but the leaflets they give you are a lot of reading, and my reading isn't great.”

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

THE MAJORITY FEEL SUPPORTED BY PROBATION

Q19. Overall, I feel well supported by probation in helping me and my rehabilitation



"Housing. Probation have put me in touch with loads of charities who have built false hope that they could help with housing, but you fill out forms then just get radio silence. I'm sofa surfing and have been doing for so long I can't remember."

"My probation worker does everything she can but mostly it's been soul destroying."

"The most positive thing is the distance I travel for appointments, it's only round the corner other than that, nothing."

"When I was doing my actual community service hours, the lady that took them helped me mentally when I was in a bad way."

"Not probation in a whole but I feel like my probation worker listens to my needs and concerns."

PEER-LED SOLUTIONS



THE ISSUE:

Participants spoke about their inability to access housing in West Kent.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

A more joined up service where probation has greater reach to engage with housing services in the region.

“Give probation more power with housing. I feel like my probation worker does do everything she can, but like I said, there's nothing she can do, it's out of her hands.”



THE ISSUE:

Lack of people in probation who have lived experience.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

More opportunities for people with lived experience to provide peer support.

“Having more people that our understanding and more opportunity for ex-offenders ”



THE ISSUE:

Those surveyed finding it hard to relate to probation staff.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Probation commit to hiring a more diverse range of staff so service users can feel they can relate to staff more easily.

“Just that probation need to employ older people because it's hard for people of my age to be expected to bare our souls to 23-year-olds, and actually, it's probably as hard for the 23-year-old to know how to help us anyway.”



THE ISSUE:

Participants spoke about a lack of consistency with probation staff.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Better communication between probation practitioners so the level of support remains consistent when there is a change in staff.

“If you have to have a stand in probation worker, they should listen to you in the same way your normal one does.”

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