

CAPTURING THE VOICE OF PEOPLE ON PROBATION FOR THE SOMERSET INSPECTION

JUNE 2023

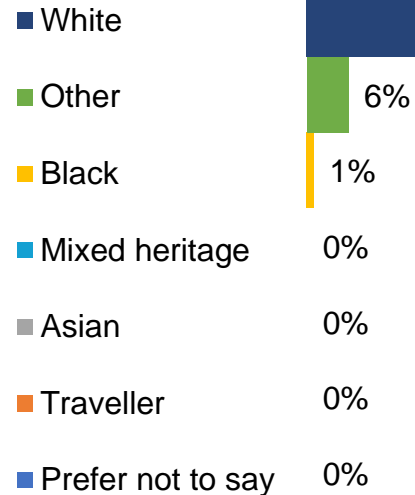
83 PEOPLE HAD THEIR SAY:

14 ONLINE SURVEYS

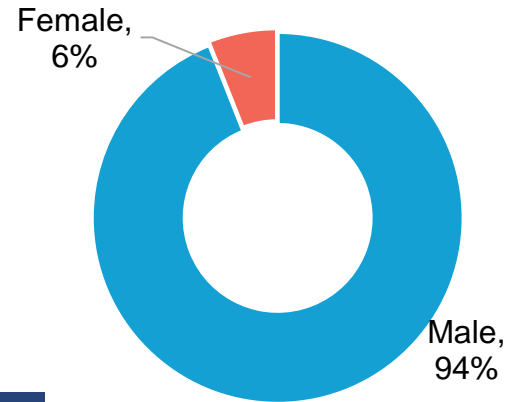
57 FACE TO FACE SURVEYS

12 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

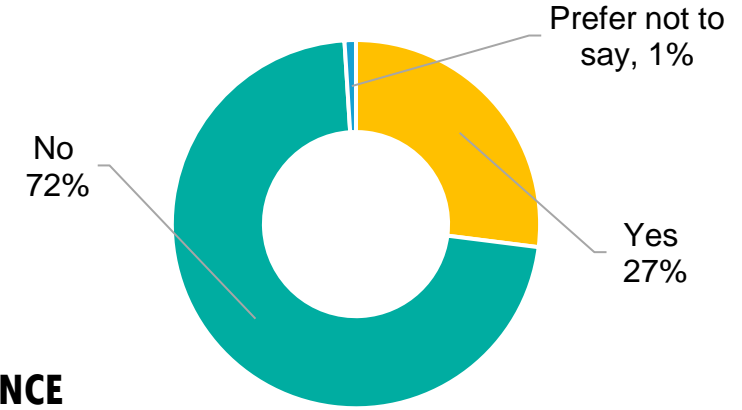
ETHNICITY



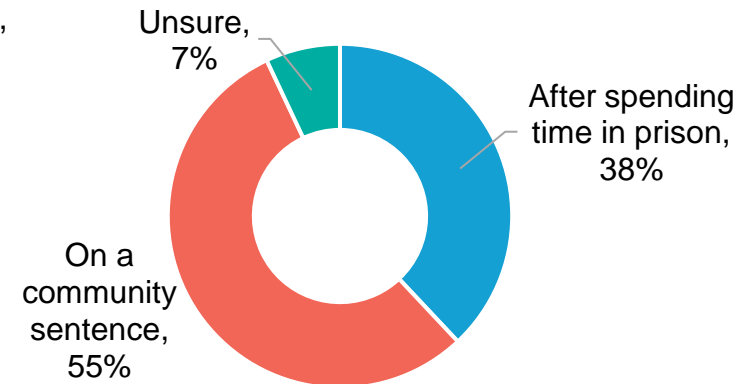
GENDER



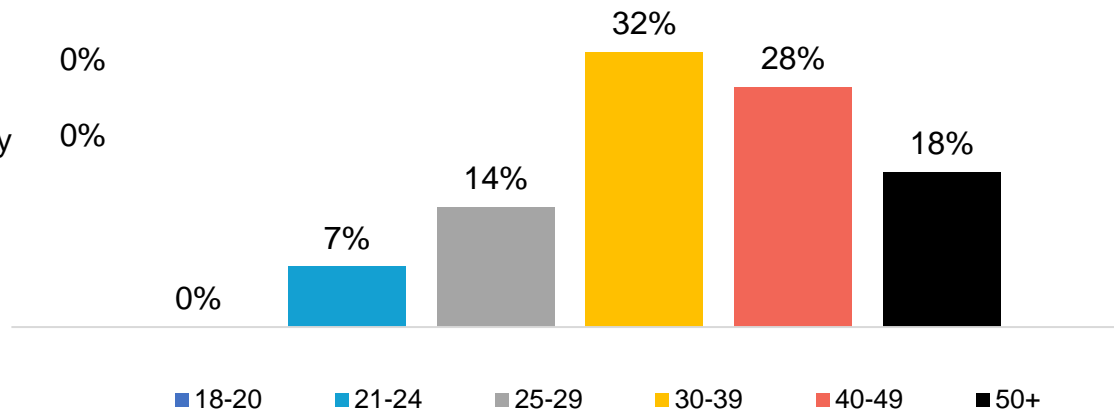
DISABILITY



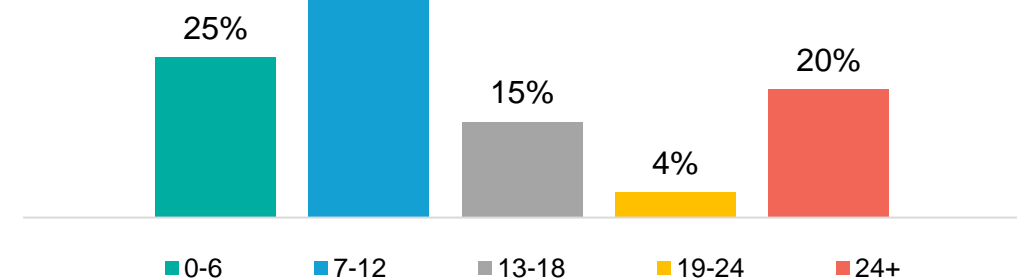
SENTENCE



AGE



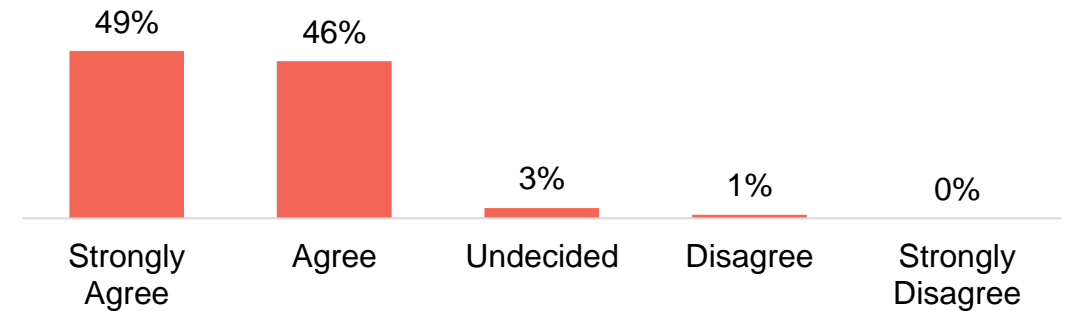
TIME ON PROBATION (MONTHS)



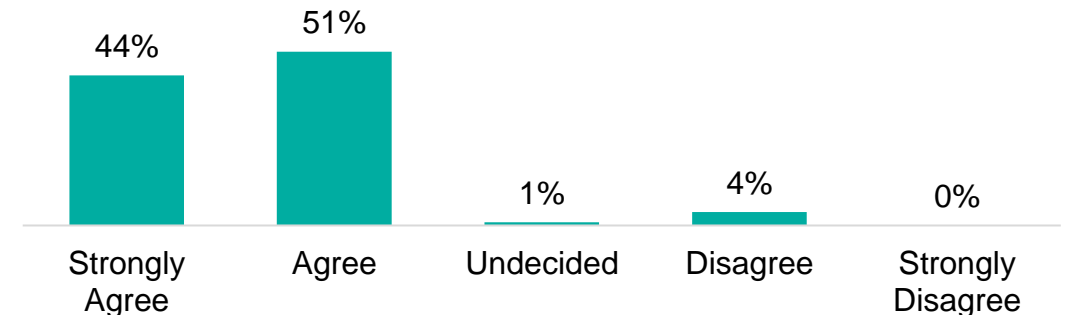
PEOPLE HAVE ISSUES WITH GETTING TO APPOINTMENTS IN SOMERSET

- **22%** (15/69) reported '**Appointments**' as the biggest challenge whilst on probation – When people on probation had a problem, '**Appointments**' was the most cited issue.
- The most popular reason for dissatisfaction with appointments was issues with getting to appointments. In fact, **10%** (7/69) reported that their biggest issue as '**Travel**' in Somerset.
- Other reasons for dissatisfaction with appointments in Somerset are the following: Not taking personal circumstances into consideration; Issues with communication; Issues with waiting long periods for appointments; Seems like a waste of time for some.
- **14%** (10/70) reported '**Appointments**' as what has been good regarding their probation experience. Such individuals stated that their appointments are flexible around their other commitments and that the staff make appointments a "positive experience."

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 SOMERSET

REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE ATTENDING APPOINTMENTS

"The service itself, staff are easy to talk to it's easy to make appointments, good experience."

"Travel distance it's half an hour in a car or an hour on the bus to get here."

"Getting to my appointments, it's not far but there's a terrible bus service."

"I could do with more of them, she works it around me, no problems. She helps in any way she can, good laugh, a bit of banter etc"

"Often theres something of use but sometimes its a waste of time."

"Sometimes I have to wait even though I'm here in time."

"I can't work as I would have to take a day off work [to make appointments] and that's not possible so I can't earn money to pay off debts."

"I don't get my bus fare back because I'm working and it's a 7 mile round trip which is unfair."

"I don't have to go into the office often and I get on well with my PO."

"They work around me, I get on OK with the PO."

NEARLY HALF CITED THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PROBATION OFFICERS AS WHAT'S POSITIVE

- **47%** (33/70) stated that '**PO/Service user relationships**' are what has been good about their probation experience – By far the most popular response to the question.

This was for the following reasons:
 - Supportive and helpful POs.
 - Flexibility around appointments.
 - Knowledgeable POs.
 - Positive experience with reception staff. **6%** (4/70) stated 'Reception' as the biggest positive.
- Those interviewed were split regarding the effectiveness of the relationship with their PO.
- **9%** (6/69) stated that the relationship with their probation officer as their biggest issue – mainly due to a frequent changing of probation officers.

"I had two probation officers, one was senior, knew what they were doing and tried to support me through the process, looking out for my best interests whilst also addressing my offending."

"Communication with my PO is very helpful and we can have a good chat."

"I struggled at first but my PO has been helpful and informative."

"My probation period has made a massive difference in my mental health, which was the reason behind my offending. It's helped immeasurably and has made me a better and stronger person."

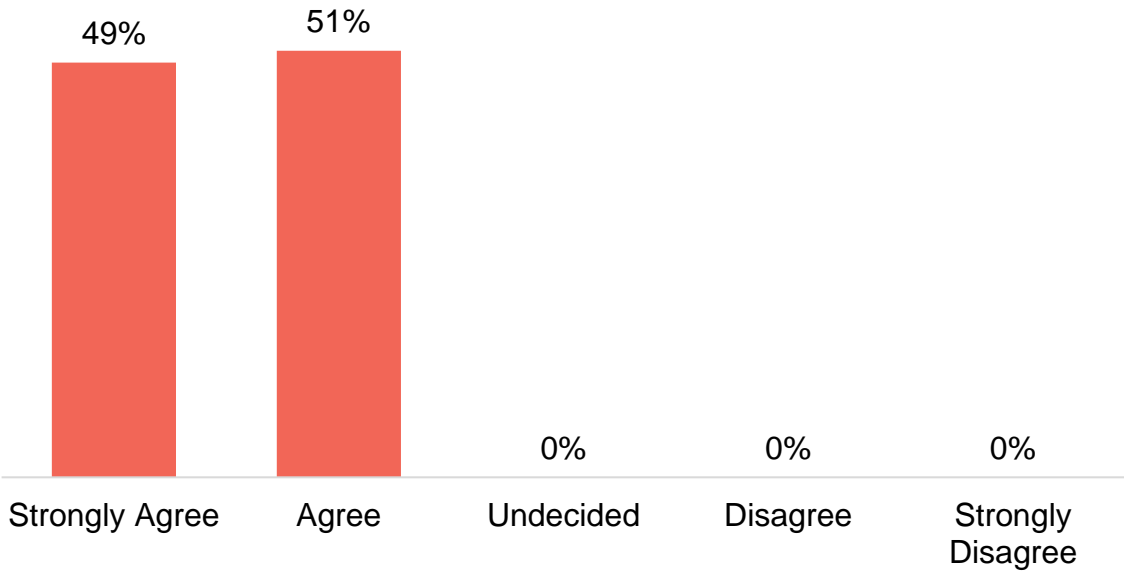
"They are very flexible and give me lots of leeway with my childcare and working around my working hours."

"Very friendly reception, most helpful. The staff in general are OK too."

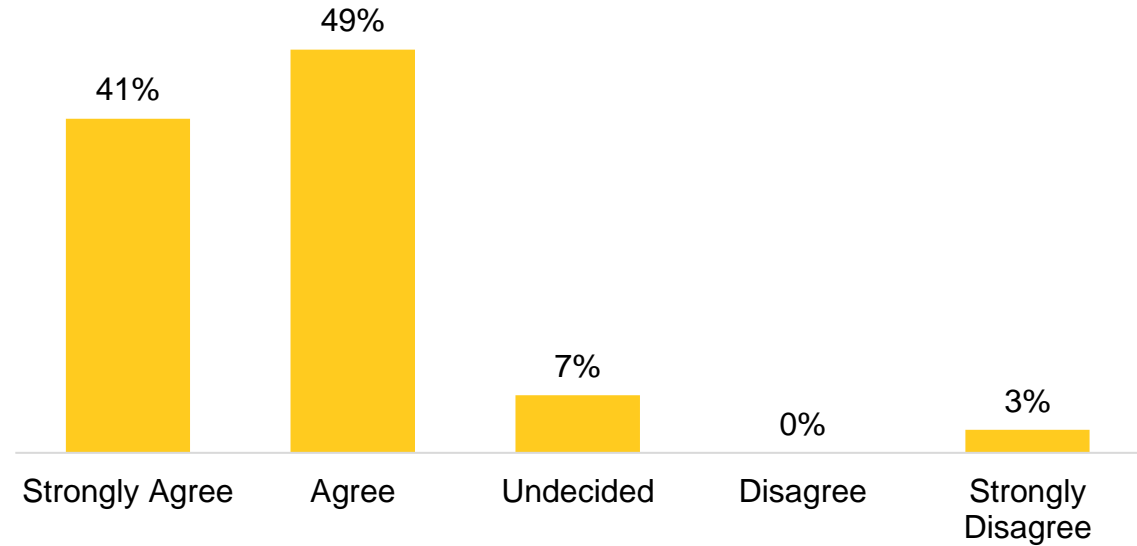
"Constant changes of officers. I'm on no 6 in 4 years."

ALL PEOPLE ON PROBATION IN SOMERSET FEEL ABLE TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS IN PRIVATE WITH THEIR PROBATION OFFICER

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



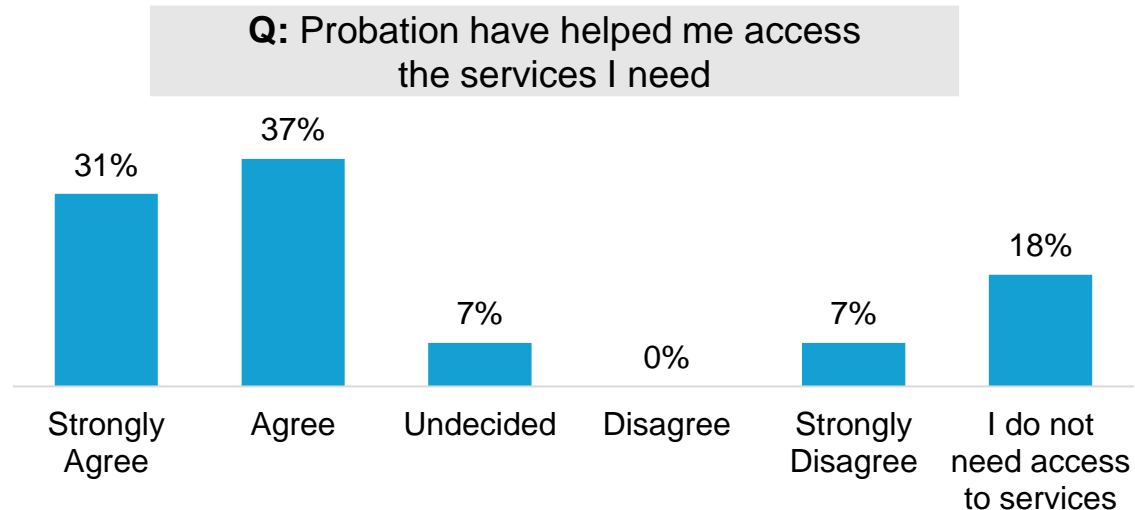
Q: I feel safe accessing the probation office



THERE'S GOOD ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES IN SOMERSET

- **4 in 5** (48/58) who need support accessing services feel that probation have helped them in Somerset.

- **General Signposting** - Positive: **6%** / Issue: **0%**
- **Mental Health** - Positive: **10%** / Issue: **7%**
- **Housing** - Positive: **6%** / Issue: **3%**
- **Substance misuse** - Positive: **3%** / Issue: **3%**
- **ETE** - Positive: **4%** / Issue: **3%**
- **Programmes** - Positive: **10%** / Issue: **0%**



"Mental Health, she changed my doctors for me and she sorts it all out for me."

"Attending Horizon group. Useful, insightful as we as addressing various issues."


"They helped me get a place to live."

"Helpful, the Turning Point referral was good."

"General help, anger management and probation in general is OK."

"Issues with access to employment, Catch 22 provided very poor CV help."

NEARLY ALL WHO NEED ASSISTANCE FEEL SUPPORTED IN REGARD TO ACCESSING SERVICES RELEVANT TO THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS

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**97% HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES
RELEVANT TO
THEIR
PERSONAL
NEEDS**

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**85% HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES IN A
REASONABLE
TIME**

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**85% HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO
ACCESS
SERVICES IN
THEIR LOCAL
AREA**

PEOPLE HAVE MIXED EXPERIENCES WITH INDUCTIONS IN SOMERSET

"OK I suppose, there was a booklet she went through and ticked stuff off as we went etc."

"Fine, they covered sentence plan and I got a leaflet on the complaints procedure."

"She sorted out what I wanted to do and helped me loads, she goes above and beyond."

"Its a bit wishy washy, they don't cover things of use really its just a set of rules."

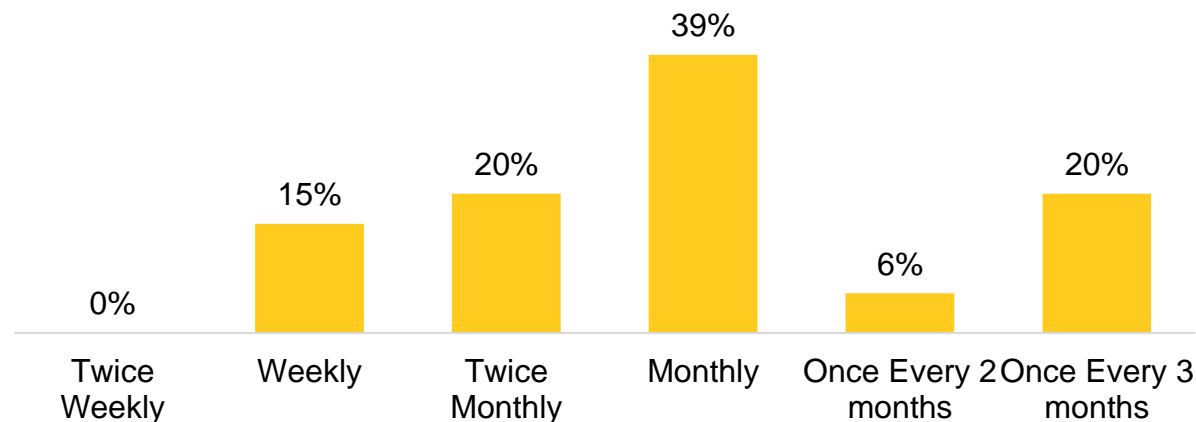
"Rubbish I had 18 months and they didn't even bother to get in touch for 12 months and I didn't even see a probation officer at all until I got in touch."

"I dont know I didnt really have one. Ive been in jail a few times, I think they just didn't bother as I knew the score."

4 IN 10 WANT MONTHLY APPOINTMENTS IN SOMERSET

- **39%** (28/71) of people in Somerset prefer monthly appointments – This was the most popular response to the question: How often do you think you should see your probation officer?
- More people mentioned wanting remote, telephone appointments than face to face appointments in Somerset.
- People on probation need a form of contact that is relevant to their personal needs.

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



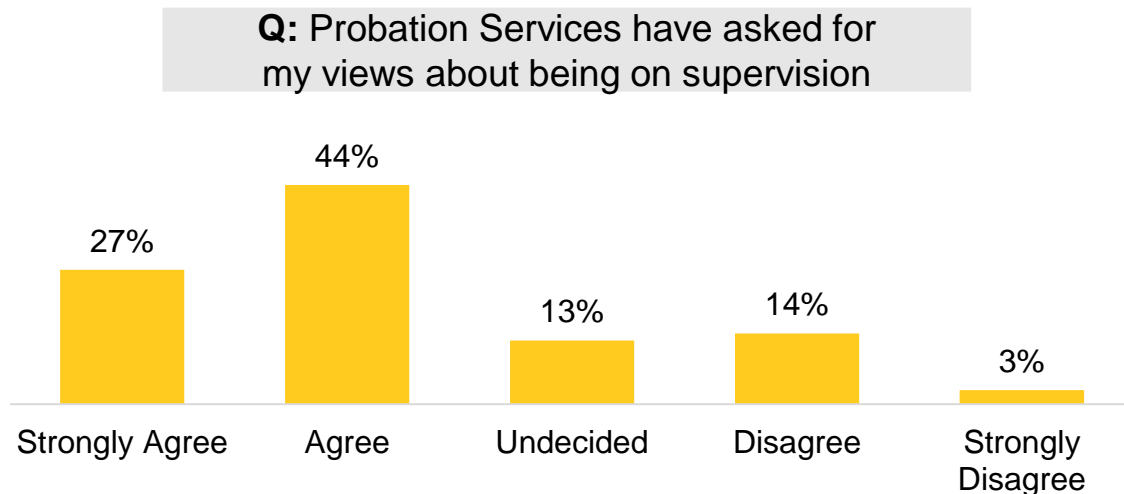
"I like office visits and it's mood dependant but at least monthly."

"Every month, a call would be easier."

"Personally, I think face to face meetings are more beneficial. Telephone calls are ok for brief conversations from the offender's side, but I feel that some offenders will not be paying as much attention as they should when probation contact them via telephone."

3/4 HAVE BEEN ASKED THEIR VIEWS BUT **NOBODY** INTERVIEWED FELT LIKE THEY HAVE A SAY IN HOW PROBATION IS RUN

- **71%** (50/71) of those surveyed felt like probation services have asked for their views about being on supervision.
- However, nobody interviewed felt like they have a say in how probation is run.
- People on probation know how to complain in Somerset. However, people reported that when they do complain, sometimes nothing comes of it and they're threatened with recall.



"I don't think you get a say in how its run."

"No, certainly not."

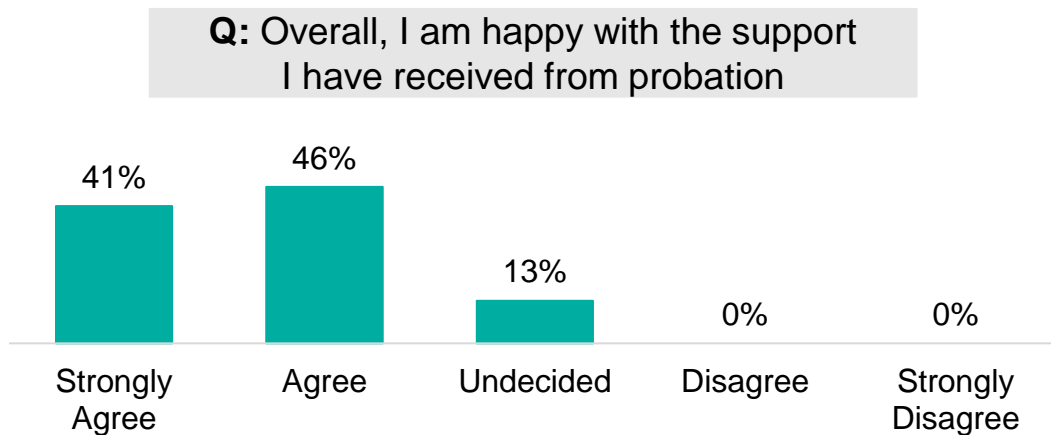
"I don't have a say in how its run but how my programme is."

"I complained in the past but your threatened with recall so I don't bother now."

"I complain often and have asked for forms etc but you get blagged off and it all fizzles out."

87% ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR OVERALL SUPPORT FROM PROBATION

- **41%** (28/69) answered '**Nothing can be improved**' when asked about any issues they have whilst on probation.
- **10%** (7/70) stated that there were '**No positives**' regarding their probation experience. This is low compared to the **28%** nationally.



“Yeovil probation is an excellent service! It is a shame you have had to commit a crime to get such support.

“It’s like a one stop shop which provided support not only dealing with your offending but also helping with housing social issues food and another multitude of issues my official order stops in July! I have asked if I can be kept on and it has been agreed that everything thing can stay the same the only difference is it will not be court ordered! This speaks volumes of a caring, well-run service.

“It’s style could be replicated into the mainstream support services as a whole. It would be a totally different ball game. It’s basically a place where they do a bit of everything and have a really good knowledge base to be able to support.

“The attitude of staff is just out of this world they are friendly sympathetic engaging and doers.”

PEOPLE ON PROBATION'S SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES THEY FACE

- People on probation in Somerset want adequate housing upon release from prison.
- People on probation want access to blended supervision.
- People want flexibility with their appointments to work around their paid work.
- Some mentioned that they want a more personalized approach to their orders.
- Continuity with their probation officers is imperative. Those experiencing revolving doors of probation officers struggle to get the help they need.

"I can't work as I would have to take a day off work and that's not possible so I can't earn money to pay off debts."

"Less meeting targets and more actual help. Making me go in to ask how I am when last time I asked for help having being homeless is demoralizing."

"A more personal approach its just following a table and its the same for everyone so its a bit false."

"When people come out of prison, they should get a house. I've been released 4 times and had to live in a tent. Its not on, and they come and see you 2 weeks before release and haven't time to sort fuck all."

"Less pointless visits to the office really, only coming in if theres a reason it ruins the day otherwise."

"If you don't need to come in then why make you. Zoom etc was used during COVID whats wrong with that."

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