

The Listening Service

Research with Court Officials | Volunteers | Court Users to assist in the evaluation of the service

Report: August 2019 (v3)



Millworks, 28 Field Road, Glasgow, G76 8SE
07808 777417 jim.law@jlral.co.uk / www.jlral.co.uk

Background to project

- The Listening Service is a voluntary organisation which provides information, support and sign posting services within a court setting in Edinburgh.
- It is a 'multi-faith' / 'no-faith' operation aimed at assisting visitors to the court (especially those accused, their families and friends, jurors, witnesses etc), described in the survey as **Service / Court Users**, at what might be a stressful, confusing or emotionally challenging time, as they engage with the court system and processes.
- In addition to assisting individuals, it is hoped that the Listening Service is an aid to the court in helping the general smooth running of activity.
- It is acknowledged that very limited funds were available for this evaluation activity and this was taken into account when determining the structure of this project.

Background to research team

- The research team consisted of Jim Law (Project Director), supported by Marion Dodds (Associate Director) and Lisa MacDonald Ross (Research Executive).
- This team has extensive experience of conducting independent research across a range of sectors including Government, Local Government, Charities and Private sector organisations.
- Jim Law is a Fellow of the Market Research Society, and all work complies with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct, and with GDPR.
- More details of our experience can be found at www.jlral.co.uk .

Project objectives

The overarching aim of the research was to gather insight to assist with an evaluation of the services and support provided by the Listening Service.

This include investigating the following key questions:-

- *Is the Listening Service considered to be worthwhile?*
- *Is the quality of contact appropriate?*
- *What are considered to be the strengths / weaknesses of the service?*
- *How might the service be improved or developed?*
- The research was conducted with 3 groups of individuals:
 - a) **Service/Court Users** b) **Court staff/officials** and c) the Listening Service **Volunteers**
- The results from this research may be used in support of future funding applications and/or to refine and develop the services offered.

Methodology

- This was a challenging project to achieve for a number of reasons:-
 - *Encouraging users of the service to participate in the research was difficult. The Listening Service is a 'light touch' relationship within a much bigger experience (i.e. engaging with the Court), and therefore it was not appropriate for the volunteers to place a heavy emphasis on participation/providing feedback at what may be a difficult or stressful time.*
 - *No contact details are gathered from users so there is no opportunity for subsequent contact.*
 - *There was insufficient budget to be able to consider professional interviewers at the Court to gather feedback on a face to face basis.*
- The most appropriate research approach was to invite individuals to take part in online research by providing them with written details of how to access the survey.
- Over 70 Invitation 'slips' were handed out to Service/Court Users (*who had engaged with a Volunteer*) over a 3 month period from April – June 2019. Volunteers were sent an email invitation and link to the survey. Court officials were emailed the information and link by the Senior Administrator at the court.
- The online survey was accessible via Smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop pcs.
- By the end of June deadline 8 Service/Court Users (*who had engaged with a Volunteer*), 15 Court staff/officials and 23 Volunteers participated in the survey and provided information to assist this evaluation.
- While the numbers of Service/Court Users is lower than ideally desired, this is perhaps to be expected due to the circumstances and nature of contact. However, in combination, the feedback from the 3 groups is generally consistent and therefore valuable in this evaluation.

Overview of Key Findings

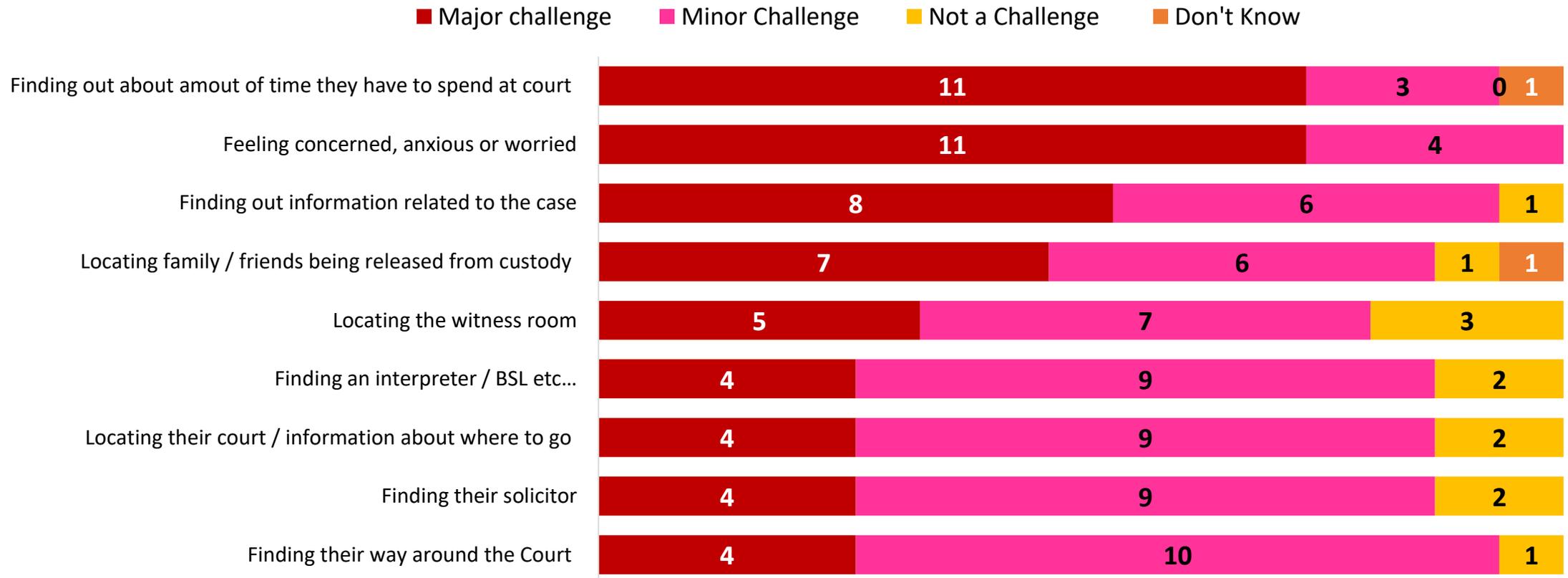
Overview of Key Findings

- ***Is the Listening Service considered to be worthwhile?***
 - *Yes: There is recognition amongst Court Users, Court Officials, and the Volunteers of the positive impact of the Listening Service*
- ***Is the quality of contact appropriate?***
 - *Yes: The majority of comments are positive of the supportive role of the Listening Service*
- ***What are considered to be the strengths / weaknesses of the service?***
 - *Strengths include: the positive and helpful attitude of the Volunteers; the ability to take time to listen to concerns or provide information and reassurance; ability to fill gaps, to be a calming influence and take pressure from Court staff*
 - *Weaknesses include: There is some lack of awareness and understanding of what the Listening Service provides (Court Officials); Some suggestions to improve training (Volunteers).*
- ***How might the service be improved or developed?***
 - *Suggestions included: Increased visibility/Increased understanding (Court Officials and Solicitor / Lawyer); ensure 'neutrality' is maintained at all times (Police Officer); Adjustment to training to reflect actual experiences in the Court environment; regular shared feedback sessions, revised 'uniform', funding for a 'Project Leader' (Volunteers);*

Detailed findings from Court Staff/Officials

Court Officials consider there are multiple challenges for Court users

In your opinion, to what extent are the following issues or challenges faced by individuals attending court?



Perception of services provided

Can you please tell us what you know of The Listening Service and the services it provides?

“They provide valuable support to any court user who is in need of same. They field a very diverse range of enquiries from users covering queries regarding navigating around the courthouse, court procedures to simply listening to those who wish to speak with them about any matter whether it be court related or not.” (Court Administrator)

“As a court official I am frequently in the main concourse and they are frequently engaging with members of the public, witnesses, civil litigants and accused and are clearly assisting them to feel more comfortable and at ease in what is usually a difficult time for them and in alien surroundings.” (Court Administrator)

“I am aware that they attend in the public areas outside court rooms and engage in an unobtrusive manner with members of the public.” (Police Officer)

“As far as I am aware these individuals are there to offer support and help.” (Court Officer)

“Helpful for those worried or seeking support.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

Perception of services provided (continued)

Can you please tell us what you know of The Listening Service and the services it provides?

“I just know that they walk around the court and offer support to any and all court users whether that be an accused person or a witness or a family member waiting on an accused.”

(Court Administrator)

“There to provide support where needed.”

“Provide a listening ear and information re the courts to those using the court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“Information, support, guidance.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

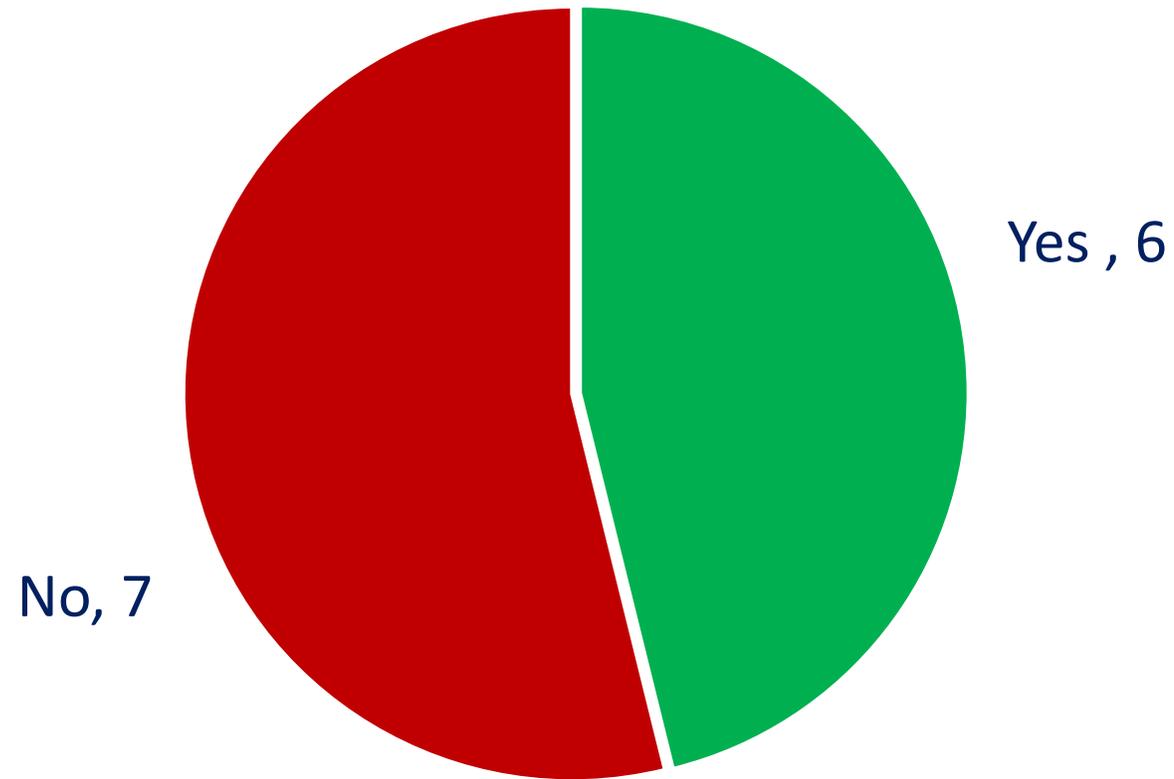
“Having just had CPD delivered by the Listening Service I'm fully appraised of the work they do.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“Providing pastoral assistance to those who need it around court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“They are present at court to talk to people who are anxious or unsure where to go.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

Around half of Court staff/Officials have referred people to The Listening Service

Have you ever referred an individual in the Court buildings to The Listening Service?



Reason for referral to The Listening Service

(If yes) Can you tell us your main reasons for referring individuals to The Listening Service?

“It alleviates the burden on frontline court staff who have a multitude of other things to do whilst ensuring the individual receives a high quality service and attention.” (Court Administrator)

“It was a witness in a quasi-criminal matter calling in the JP Court. The witness was extremely agitated, anxious and had severe learning difficulties and indeed could neither read or write, and clearly needed assistance and support. The LS were there and provided that support in an exemplary manner.” (Court Administrator)

“Vulnerable and non vulnerable persons appearing at court & anxious friends/family of those appearing in custody - all of whom benefit from having someone take the time to chat to them and listen to their concerns.” (Police Officer)

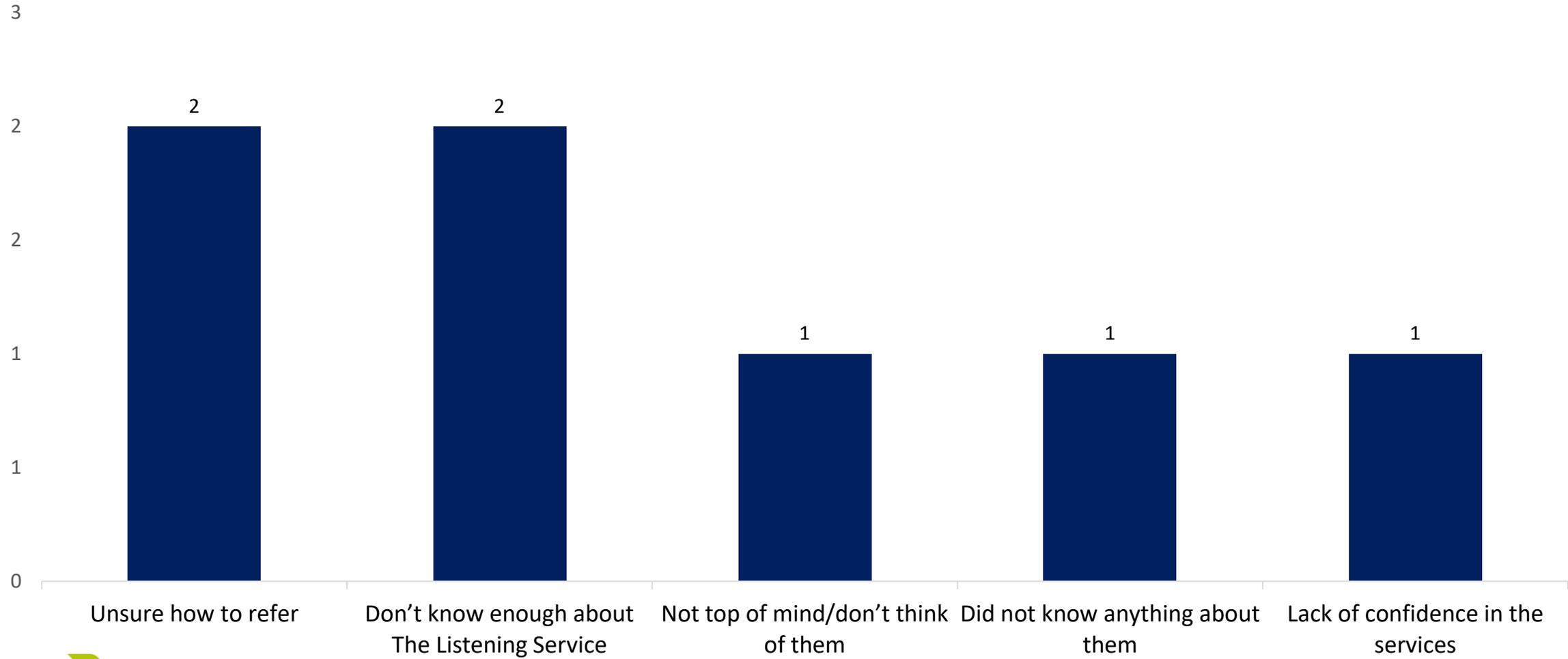
“Once was a juror who at the end of a trial found certain things brought up very difficult to deal with, a second time was a relative of a accuse who was distressed.” (Court Officer)

“Highly anxious, needing some more emotional support than a solicitor can’t provide.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

*“Anxious clients who are here without any support and are likely to be waiting around for some time.”
(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

Reason for non referral to The Listening Service

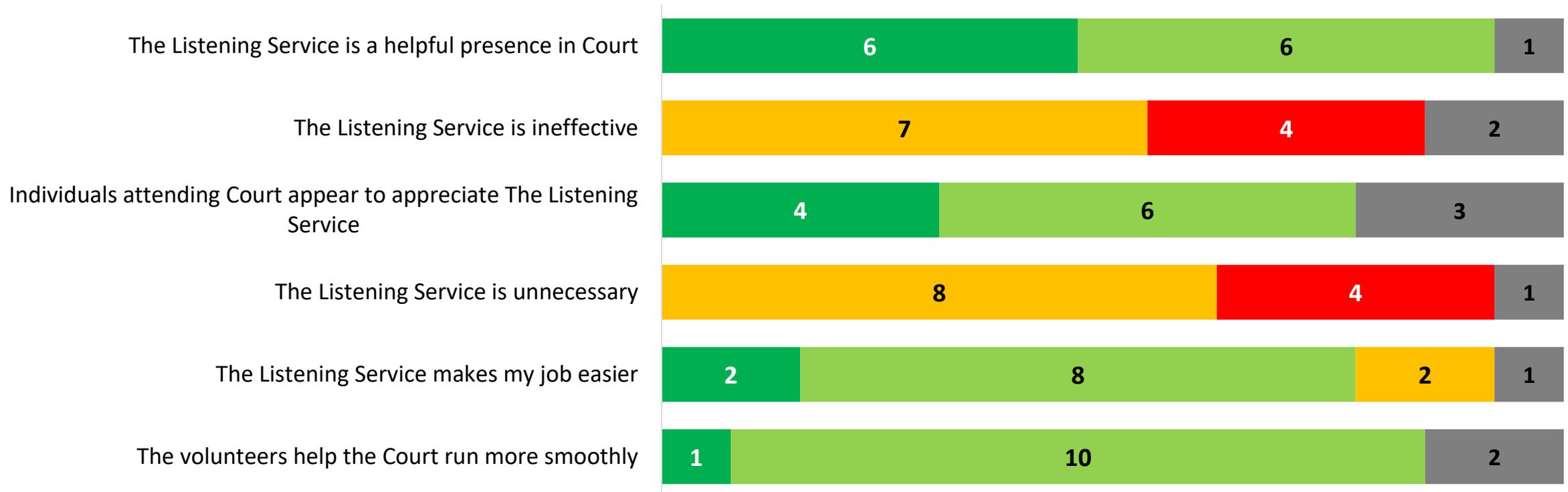
(If No) - What are your reasons for not directing individuals to The Listening Service?



Attitudes towards the Listening Service

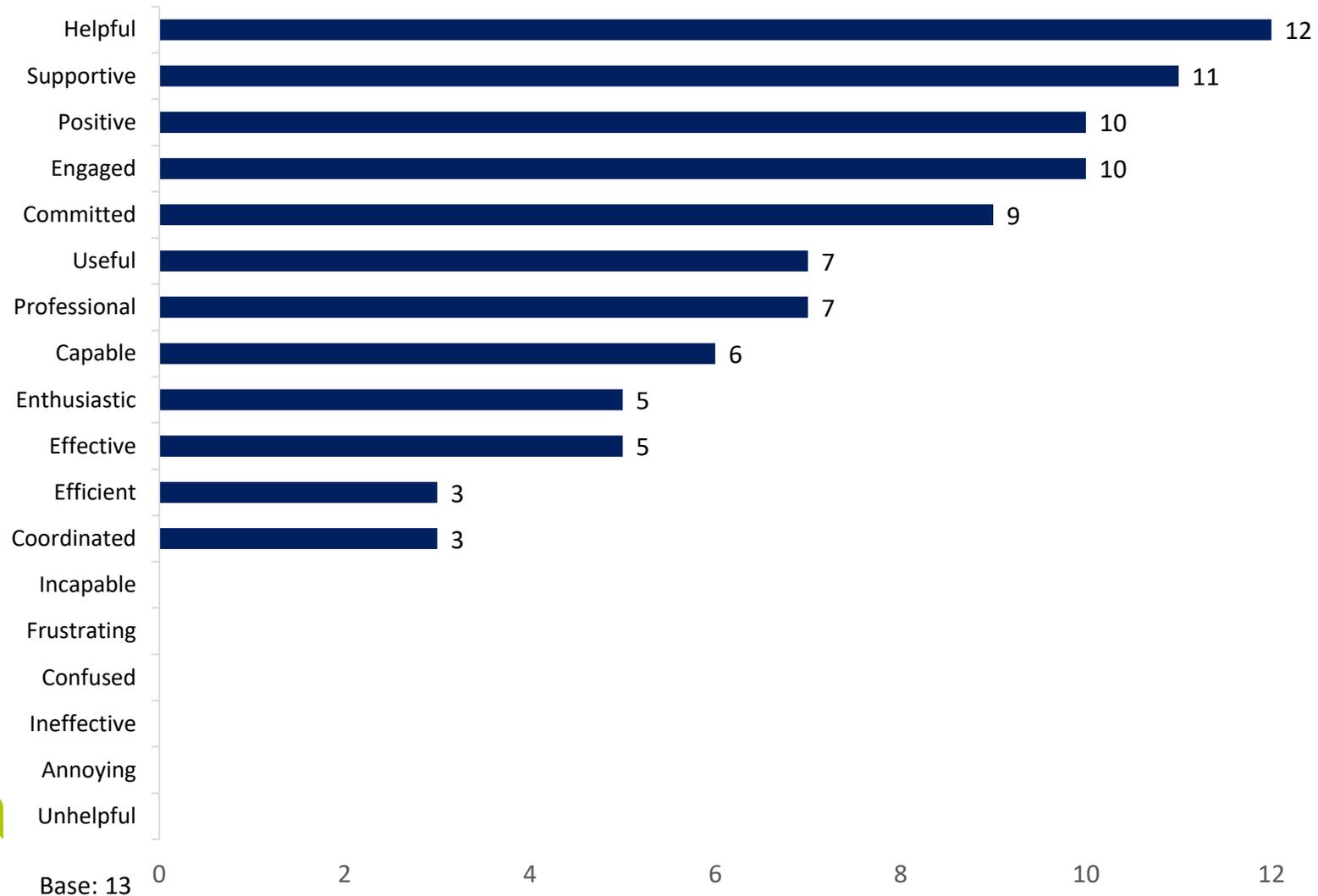
Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements...

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't Know



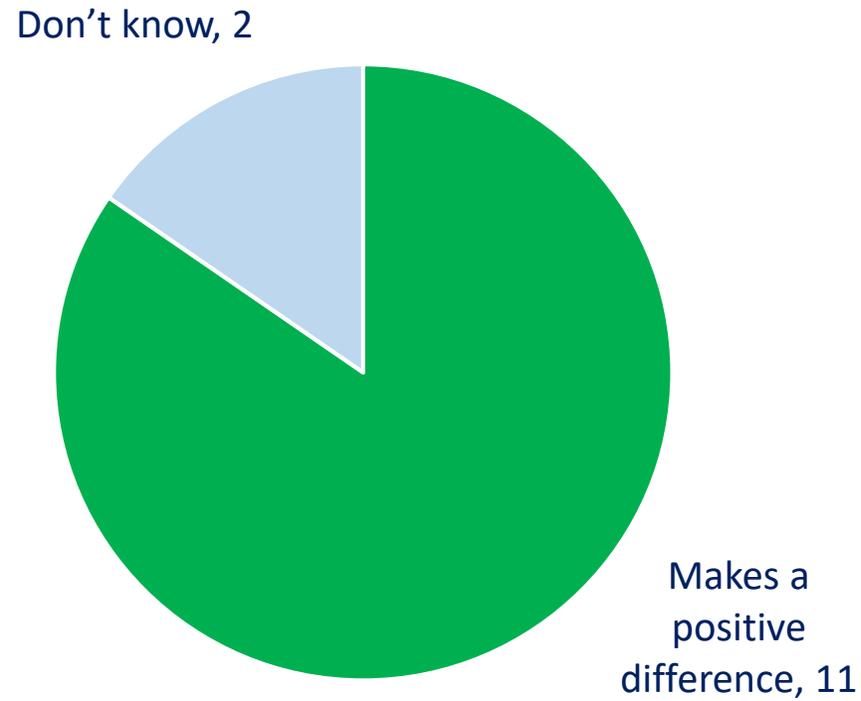
Descriptive words / phrases

What words or phrases would you use to describe The Listening Service?



Impact of The Listening Service

In your opinion, to what extent is The Listening Service making a difference?



Positive impact of The Listening Service...

You said The Listening Service makes a positive / negative difference – why do you say that?

“There are so many people who attend at court at a low ebb in their life, often emotionally unstable and in need of support for what might be a multitude of issues. The Listening Service can assist not only with their attendance at court but in signposting to support services outwith the court. To have such a sympathetic ear has been a very real positive for the court here at Edinburgh.” *(Court Administrator)*

“Putting people at ease, explaining, helping and supporting people at court, many of whom are there for the first time and are nervous and apprehensive.” *(Court Administrator)*

“It is an excellent service which offers an ear and support to people who otherwise would not receive it.”
(Police Officer)

“Their presents is very visible and so is not only openly accessible to the public but also to members of staff. Also as a court officer they are extremely helpful when we do have someone who needs assistance but we ourselves don't have the available time to sit down and help.” *(Court Officer)*

Positive impact of The Listening Services continued...

You said The Listening Service makes a positive difference – why do you say that?

“Very approachable and visible.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“Helps people who feel insecure, gives help to people when no one else does, as they’re too busy. Provides peace of mind to people by giving them information they need.”

“Provide a much needed ear to those struggling in court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

*“If the listening service is able to calm down a client before they speak with us then it is hugely helpful.”
(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

“Helps to calm anxious court users.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“Providing an independent and professional point of support for those who are suffering with stress and anxiety in attending court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“They are a source of reassurance to anxious court users.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

Service Improvement

In your opinion, what is the best thing about The Listening Service?

“They are non-judgemental and treat everyone in a positive, professional manner seeking only to assist wherever they can.” *(Court Administrator)*

“They are there every morning, in numbers and support when asked. They do not push themselves upon anyone.”
(Court Administrator)

“That they offer an avenue for people to talk to someone which is otherwise unavailable.” *(Police Officer)*

“They help across the board within the courts and not only help with listening support but also help to free up court staff who may not have the time to sit with people and help.” *(Court Officer)*

“Approachability.” *(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

Service Improvement

In your opinion, what is the best thing about The Listening Service?

“Their support and friendly ear.”

“Providing information and support.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“The tops.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“A calming presence in the court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

*“That the service is there to begin with. And that the volunteers are clearly visible in and around the building.”
(Court Administrator)*

“Consistency.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

“Speaking to people to reassure them when they are waiting at court.” (Solicitor / Lawyer)

Service Improvement

How could The Listening Service improve their services?

“Experience is probably the main area and by that I mean it is only through being in the court environment and talking with court users that volunteers will gain the experience of how best to deal with those who seek their assistance. They do a great job in general.” *(Court Administrator)*

“Available for JP court as well as Sheriff.” *(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

“To be honest I have a very limited knowledge of the Listening Service- I know roughly their purpose and I can see them in the court but I have never referred anyone to them or received any feedback about their service.”
(Court Administrator)

“It may be helpful for them to get to know solicitors and they can point clients in the right direction.”
(Solicitor / Lawyer)

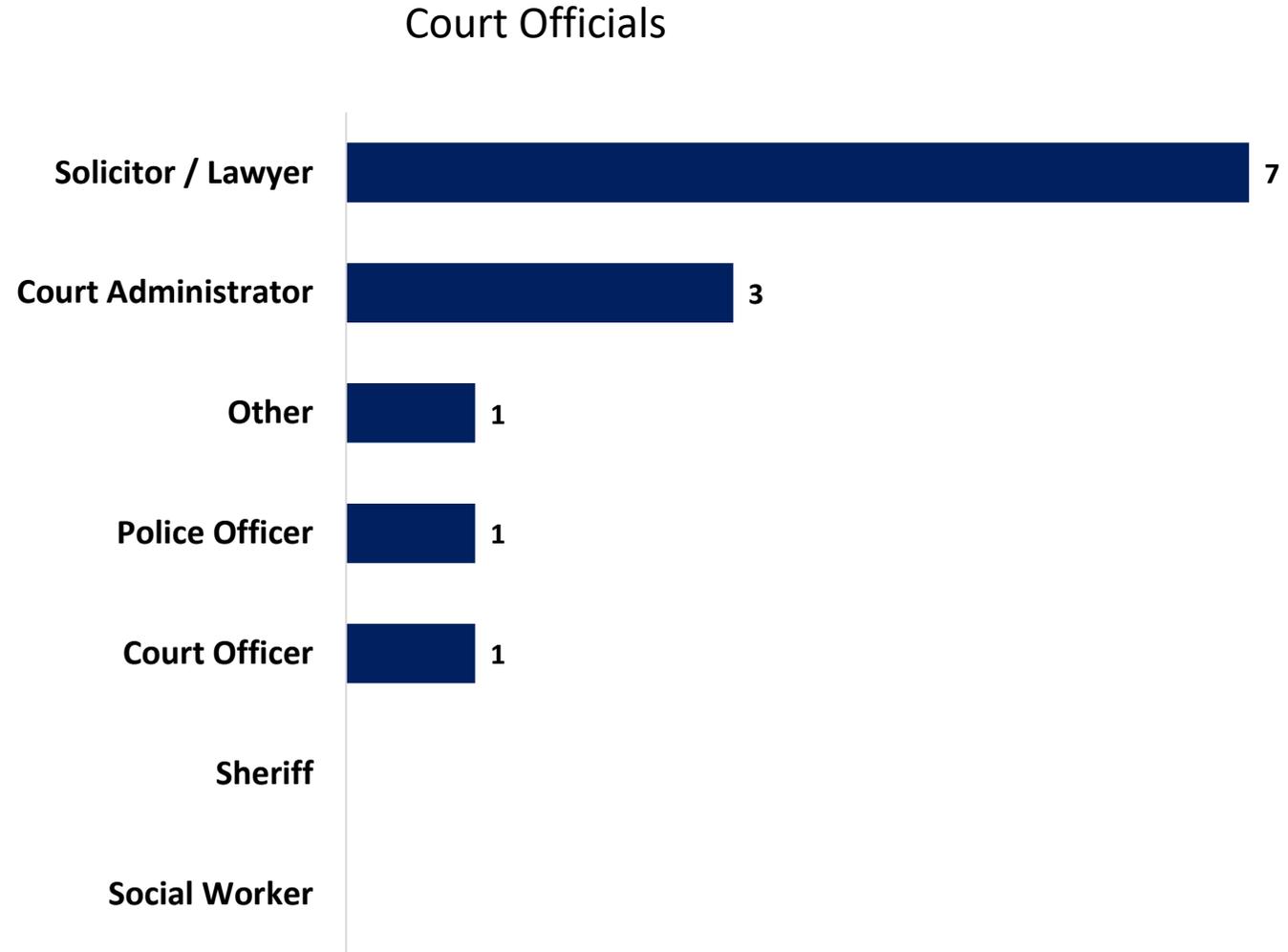
“More visibility.” *(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

“My only criticism would be when, having engaged with someone outside court, one was heard wishing the person "good luck" when their case was called. They should not offer such a gesture to any accused person due to appear in court.” *(Police Officer)*

“They could provide guidance to those released from custody.” *(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

“Keep up the good work.” *(Solicitor / Lawyer)*

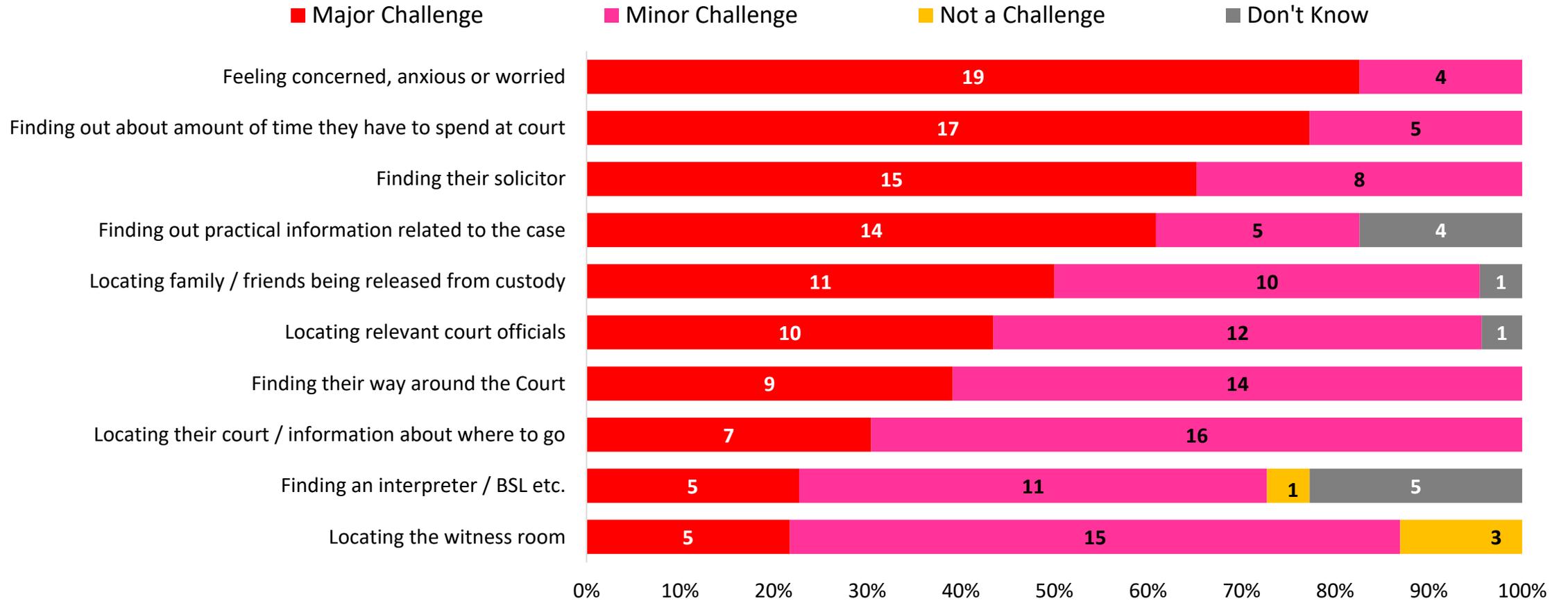
Roles/Profession



Detailed findings from Volunteers

Perception of challenges...

In your opinion, to what extent are the following issues challenges faced by individuals attending court?



Challenges

Are there any other challenges you feel are missing from the previous list?

“Dealing with a wide range of emotions including frustration, anger, distress, confusion.”

“If someone has been in custody and released on an “undertaking” they are not on any list, So that can be quite daunting ...the only way to find out is to ask the police on duty.”

“The fact that everyone is called for 09.30 / 10.00 and then seen in what looks like a random order can be challenging for some users.”

“Finding out which Sheriff is dealing with their case.”

“What is a challenge to one person is not to another. Differs from case to case. Hard to generalise.”

Challenges

Are there any other challenges you feel are missing from the previous list?

“Finding all the other places at the Sheriff Courts - social work office, fines dept, where to get expenses back and so on.”

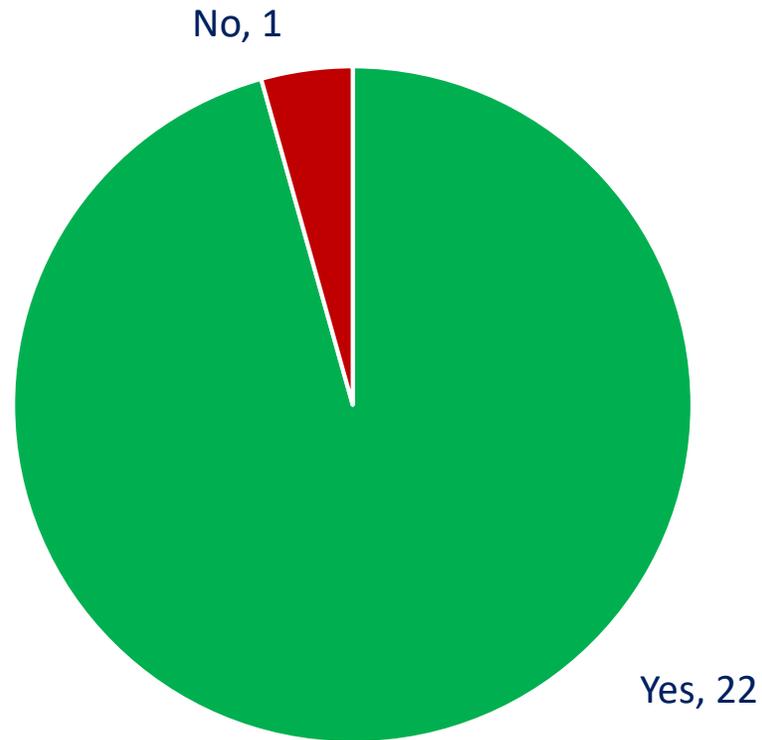
“Inaccurate information about when custody detainees will be called in court. Relatives/friends are told to be at court at 9.30ish when there is no likelihood of the case being heard before 11 am. This causes stress. Inability to identify which court custody cases will be heard in. There is no list that can be looked at.”

“It is a major challenge for family of those in custody knowing what is happening as they have no contact whatsoever. The most information they might get is from a police officer at the entrance of the specific Court as to what sort of time the case might be heard - usually ‘not before 11.30’ or ‘probably not till the afternoon.’”

“Inaccurate information from court staff as to where witnesses go to their waiting rooms/courts.”

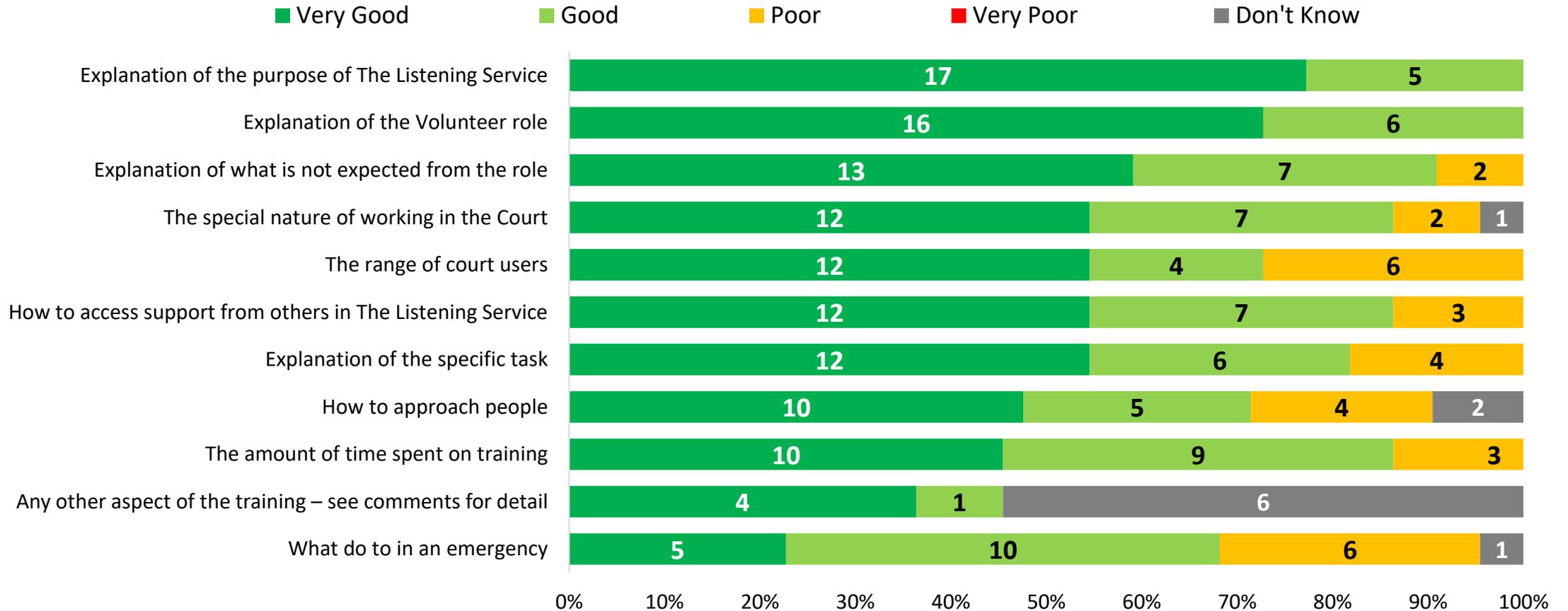
Training

Did you receive any form of training from The Listening Service?



Perceptions of the quality of training

If yes (you received training) – please rate the following aspect of your training...



Comments on rate of training

Any other aspect of the training – please give details

“Much of the training proved irrelevant to the actual needs of volunteers.”

“The day at sheriff court on geography of building and the information given by David Young”

“We perhaps missed something about what we should expect from a "typical" shift.”

“Had little understanding of the functions of each court - and in particular the custody arrangements.”

“I found the training useful and informative especially the time spent at the court with Dave.”

“The training was absolutely excellent - clear and relevant with no extraneous material or detail.”

“time spent on legal language.”

Training

Please tell us any other thoughts or comments you have about the training from The Listening Service.

“I was involved in the initial training before anyone had any experience of volunteering for the Listening Service As we have gained experience and understanding the training has evolved and improved.”

“The training focused on signposting to other organisations, teamworking and faith groups in Edinburgh. We found that the needs of users required us to be comfortable approaching and communicating individuals who are exhibiting strong emotions and, often, confusing about the Court and procedures..”

“The training was thorough but it is only when you have started the work that you have more questions...and is ongoing learning curve,.”

“There was not enough training on how the courts worked and the roles of those who worked in the court.”

Training...continued

Please tell us any other thoughts or comments you have about the training from The Listening Service.

“Engaging , insightful and easy discussion. Felt very well informed before induction day at sheriff court and also well prepared.”

“excellent training, very reassuring and encouraging. very informative.”

“The only thing that really took me surprise is that volunteers can be busy when the court is relatively quiet and vice versa.”

“If not already done I'd emphasise the active nature of the role. As well as the more passive job of signposting and dealing with queries we should take the initiative in approaching people to see if they need our help or would like to talk about their situation. The experience of attending the Sheriff Court is not usually one the public look forward to and talking about it can often help to relieve anxiety.”

“It has been adapted over the three years of the Service and is more finely-tuned now to the Service Requirements”

Training...continued

Please tell us any other thoughts or comments you have about the training from The Listening Service.

“I felt the two day training I received was thorough, interesting and appropriate. It was quite intense doing it over two days with a lot of information to assimilate. It might be helpful to have some follow up training or feedback session after some volunteers sessions have been completed to allow sharing of problems, interesting solutions, etc. I felt the folk running the training had spent a lot of time trying to get it right and that was very much appreciated..”

“I took part in the first training group and a lot of the training was a bit irrelevant, but I can't be too critical as it was not clear at that stage how the LS would be in the real court environment or how it would evolve.”

“Friendly and helpful.”

“The training was very good, covered a good range of issues covered by the service and relating to contact with court users. It was followed up by a useful first session with a current volunteer.”

Training...continued

Please tell us any other thoughts or comments you have about the training from The Listening Service.

“Although it was good, there was so much information imparted during the day about the workings of the Court that afterwards it was difficult to process everything. I would like a refresher training session once a year to enable us to ask questions and get answers that would be far more meaningful after being in the Court environment.”

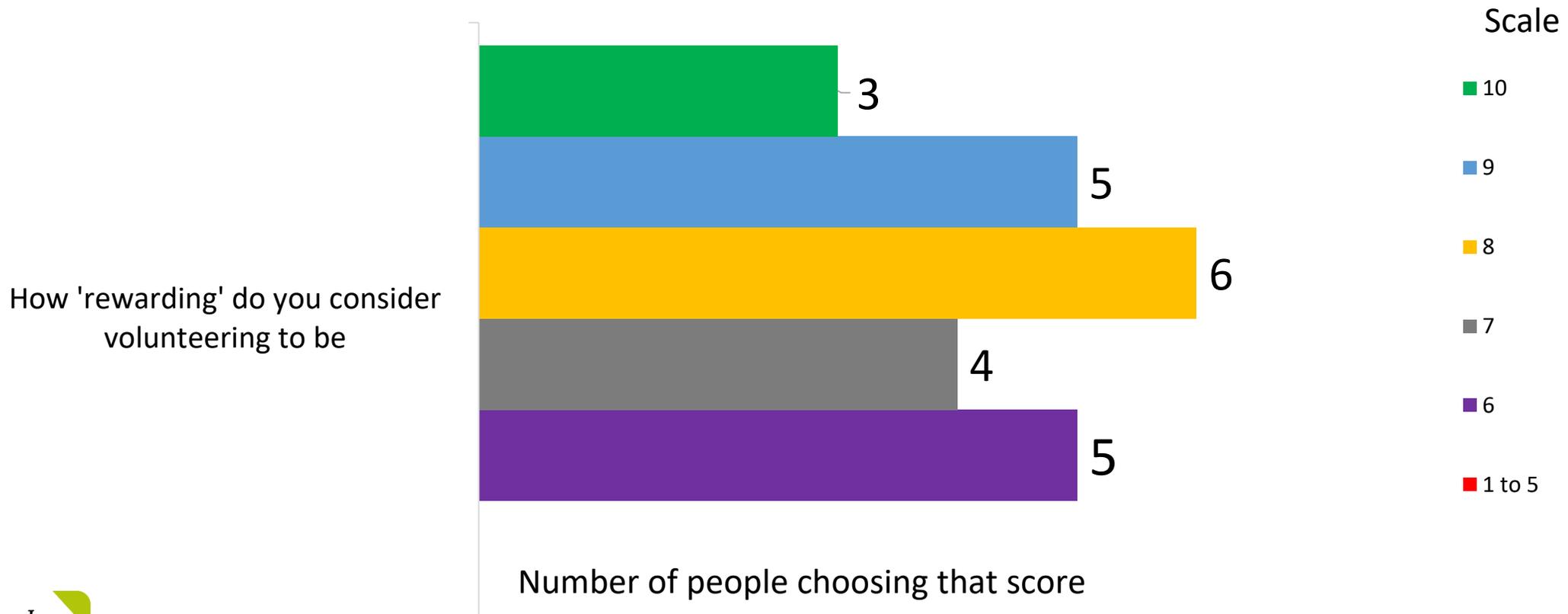
“Very good trainers and their know how came over very clearly.”

“I feel we need some more help in how to approach people. I do not think the training helped us to do the task rather it explained about the courts and their structure - not really about how to approach people and do the actual job.”

“The current training is much more relevant to the role than the earlier training programme.”

Level of 'reward'

How 'rewarding' do you consider volunteering with The Listening Service to be ...on a scale of 1 - 10?



Level of 'reward'

Why do you say that?

“Having experienced the trauma of supporting someone in the Sheriff Court, I can appreciate the value of someone just being there and available for support. The positive responses received when speaking with someone show the value of the scheme.”

“It is very variable. Some sessions can feel really useful with good conversations and interactions, and others can seem not so productive.”

“There is a real need for practical and emotional support for 'accused' and their 'supporters'.”

“It is a strange job! It can be -occasionally- tricky to approach someone, especially if they are sitting next to other people unknown to them, It is very random...and not solution based, you have to settle for “ the moment” i.e. you probably will not know what happens to the person with whom you might have been temporarily very involved. Sometimes you are hanging around waiting with nothing much happening or no need for your input! Physically, it can be a bit tiring with stairs, cold temperatures, and a tense atmosphere, however the odd times you feel you have made a difference makes it worthwhile!”

“I have only spent 2 mornings in the court and only one on my own so am pretty inexperienced at the moment re whether these 2 sessions were representative.”

“Was on duty today and felt needed and useful.”

Level of 'reward'

Why do you say that?

"I enjoy helping people and there are lots of opportunities to make court users time less stressful. I enjoy meeting people from different walks of life and helping them in any way I can."

"In my short experience with the service there appears to be a clear role in supporting many people during the daily hubbub of the court building. Many people are anxious on arrival to the building and want to be in the right place for the right time or to locate the correct court officials and solicitors. There are many complex reasons for family members to also be in attendance and they often need an impartial listening ear and time spent with them amidst the busy comings and goings. Conversations may be lengthy and very varied but usually very purposeful and everyone I have spoken with at length appreciates the time and engagement. Some have actively seemed me out to let me know that the outcome of the court proceedings has been in."

"I enjoy talking to people and everyone I have spoken to so far has appeared appreciative."

"I guess that is an average of the days where you fell you've really made a difference to someone's experience of the court and those where you've been little more than a human signpost!"

"It's not something I look forward to but sometimes the experience of doing it does give a sense of the service being appreciated by those we speak to."

"Enjoy supporting those attending courts."

Level of 'reward' continued

Why do you say that?

“It makes a difference to Court experience so worthwhile. To be alongside when users are in difficulties is very satisfying. Working with other volunteers and getting to know them.”

“There are times when I feel,(and have had evidence) that I have really helped someone in great difficulties. I also find it a huge exercise in practical humility.”

“I find it very rewarding when I have good conversations with folk and can offer what seems to be some useful support, but sometimes there seem to be quite a bit of time when it is quiet and there are few folk who need help - this can be a little frustrating.”

“As the service has going for over 2 years it becomes easier to see what role the volunteers have within the court setting and I have had many encounters and long conversations with court users where I have been thanked for being there, for listening, for helping and for just being there with them.”

“Very unpredictable and sometimes frustrating. Never knowing how helpful you have been.”

Level of 'reward' continued

Why do you say that?

“On most days one comes away feeling that one has made a difference to people, sometimes a very significant difference. The downside is that there are many times when the court is quiet and there is little to do.”

“I feel the service the volunteers are carrying out is important and appears to be appreciated. Therefore it is rewarding. However, volunteers spend a considerable amount of time simply standing around with little to do following the initial signposting, and in-between speaking to anxious users.”

“It is extremely rewarding on the days when you have given meaningful support to people who are anxious. Other days one has to be satisfied with merely doing signposting as often people don't wish to communicate when approached - but if this is the case then people are usually grateful when approached that you have taken an interest and often say "thank you for asking.”

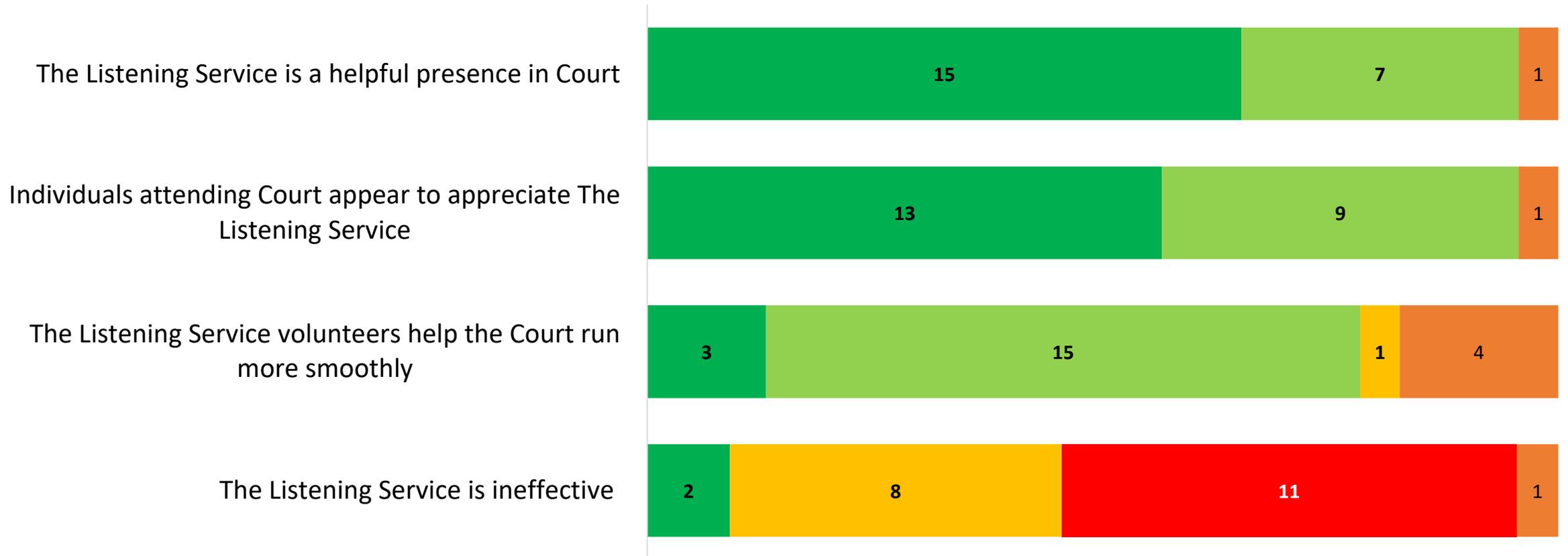
“Not always that busy - quieter times.”

“I feel I have a lot to learn still but I'm enjoying being part of the Listening Service.”

“Court users are unaware of the organisation.”

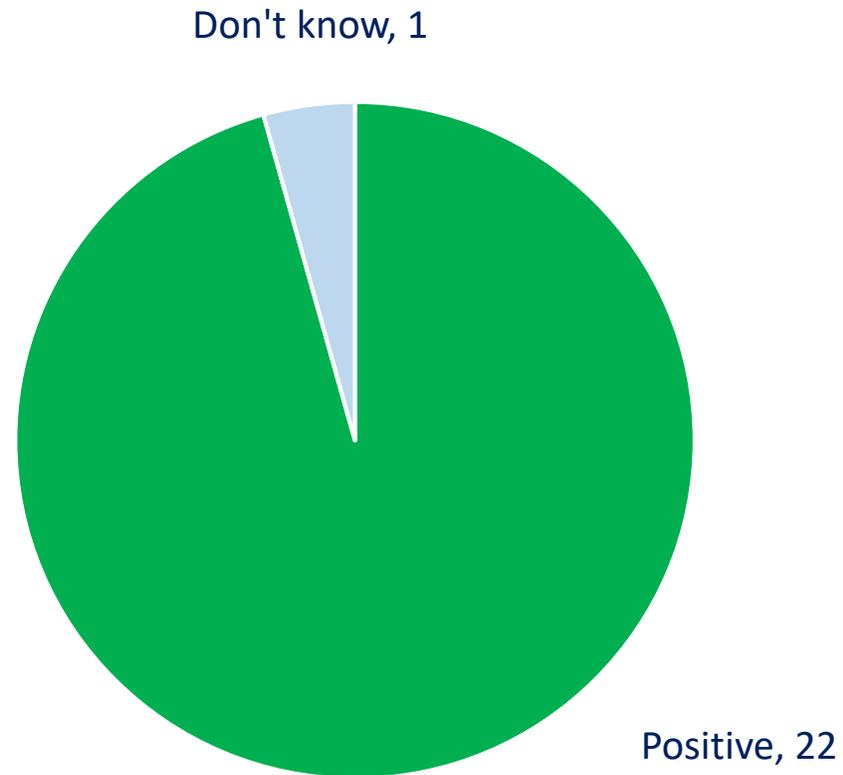
Volunteer perceptions...

Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements...



Impact

In your opinion, to what extent is The Listening Service making a difference?



Positive impact of The Listening Services

You said The Listening Service makes a positive difference – why do you say that?

“The fact that court officials request we speak with court users and comments from court officials indicate the LS is making a difference.”

It fills a gap by engaging with people who are unfamiliar with the court, or very anxious, or worried for themselves or others. After more than two years of regular involvement court users and officials seem to accept, appreciate and may refer cases to Listening Service volunteers.”

“Have found that 'users' appreciate the time and support given. We have been asked by Police and Solicitors to spend time with individuals. I have been there, with Court first aiders and other volunteers, for 2 people who had panic attack and required support for some time. Users of the service have expressed gratitude.”

“See previous comment...and the most surprising people , and others, say thank you from time to time. We have the time to stay and listen which is quite a luxury, occasionally, we have helped with panic attacks, supported people within the court, Although the work is palliative, it can calm people down before they go into court in a better state to deal with what happens.”

“Court staff have said it helps. Individual attenders indicate to the service that have felt supported.”

Positive impact of The Listening Services

You said The Listening Service makes a positive difference – why do you say that?

“The listening service is a friendly face in a sometimes frightening and confusing environment. Often we can point people to where they can obtain the information they need. Often court users are very agitated and just having some anonymous person to chat to can be of help.”

“All my encounters , whether signage / direction or lengthier one to one conversations have been in response to a clear need or situation that needed support. The receptive nature of the service is it’s great strength in such a busy building where officials display the appearance of being very busy and on the move constantly.”

“People attending court for whatever reason can seem or feel bewildered, overwhelmed or nervous. A smiling face and someone who is there simply to listen or talk can help reassure and support them.”

“It makes the experience less overwhelming for some people, can re-assure those who are concerned and help make sure people are in the right place at the right time
I think I've already explained that in answer to previous questions.”

“Several individuals have said they appreciated my input.”

Positive impact of The Listening Services continued...

You said The Listening Service makes a positive / negative difference – why do you say that?

“Provides individual support for Court users when needed. Often results are seen by individuals or families, supporters are calmer and more ready to face what’s ahead. This is sometimes expressed but often observed. Various Court officials, police and some solicitors, and certainly one Sheriff have expressed thanks or called in our Service , describing it in positive terms.”

“There have been times when I have stopped people emotionally and (once) physically collapsing. I am Polish and I think I have made a positive impact upon some of the Poles going through the system by being able to speak in Polish.”

“The feedback I have received from people I have spoken to (court users) have almost invariably expressed their gratitude and appreciation for help at a confusing, anxiety provoking and difficult time. People frequently look relieved and less anxious after speaking to someone from the Listening Service.”

“From personal experience and watching and listening to colleagues, we have been able to point people in the right direction, take them to the correct office/court, room. People I have spoken to have said my presence has made a difference to them -feeling less nervous or alone, passing the time with them, being spoken to and listened to when other court staff don't have the time, speaking to really disadvantaged people who may have many problems and negative attitudes to the criminal justice system.”

Positive impact of The Listening Services continued...

You said The Listening Service makes a positive difference – why do you say that?

“Some people helped in their experience of the court process.”

“I have a clear perception that the volunteers help court users to navigate the court system and to feel more relaxed, and sometimes one can really help by empathising with a person in distress.”

“You can see that for a few, especially those who have never been to Court before that this, or a similar service, is required. Those that we speak to often say that it has been helpful to speak to someone informally, but in confidence, who is not a Court Official, Social Worker or Solicitor.”

“Because some of the Court officials and police officers sometimes say so, and also the gratitude shown by those one has helped is immense - so must be helping.”

“Offers reassurance and support to court users who often find themselves in an alien environment without any one else to support them from the court services.”

“The comments made by court users , and the words of appreciation make me say that.”

Service Improvement

In your opinion, what is the best thing about The Listening Service?

“The variety of people we meet and the responses we receive, often from unexpected people. The relationship we have built up with court officials.”

“Trained volunteers being available to engage with people whether they are regulars, or unfamiliar with the Court in what is often a worrying and intimidating situation
Impartial and non-judgmental support - emotional blotting paper.”

“We are non-judgmental and there!”

“Feeling that those in need receive support.”

“The best thing is knowing that you have been of help to someone when they really needed it.”

“Being a safety net of calmness, engagement and support.”

“Providing reassurance and support to those who are often in unfamiliar surroundings and a stressful situation. Meeting and talking to a huge range of people.”

“It offers a means of relieving tension. The official services, lawyers, police, sheriffs, court officials are essentially about administering procedure, the Listening Service is or should be about offering a degree of comfort in a stressful situation.”

“It is there for people who might otherwise have no one to speak to as they are at the court on their own or are themselves supporting someone who is in custody and unsure what is happening.”

“Open to all.”

Service Improvement continued...

In your opinion, what is the best thing about The Listening Service?

“It exists!”

“I find it rewarding for the positive feedback I sometimes get from those I talk too. I like and enjoy meeting and chatting with the volunteers. Also its a fret exercise in humility - you have to be prepared to be humiliated when people you try to talk to reject it.”

“Helping folk to have a better experience when attending court.”
“Being around and available to court users, time to listen to people.”

“Being there as a visible presence to assist court users.”

“Acting kindly towards vulnerable people.”
“Assisting those in stress about their own situation, or anxious about others. Even a small piece of information or short discussion can be helpful to a Court user.”

“The support to help people who are in a stressful situation - even just the signposting to those who are not particularly stressed but are overawed by the surroundings. Friendly faces of volunteers means a lot. Often people who ask what the Listening Service is there for say how wonderful it is that we volunteer to do it.”

“Being an informed and confidential service to anyone who is wanting guidance/ support/ reassurance.”
“It is a non judgemental presence and just being there and available.”

“Being recognised with their noticeable tops.”

Service Improvement

How could The Listening Service improve its services?

“Getting funding to employ someone as Project Leader to help with recruitment and supporting volunteers.”

“It already has by reacting to and improving the training to be more relevant, and attracting more volunteers to spread the load.”

“Regular meetings with Court professionals and Police to discuss ways we can help/extend our services. Better engagement with Solicitors to be more aware of their ways of working and how we might better support their 'clients'.”

“Ongoing updated training, checking on volunteers , colourful (warm) sweatshirts without the word “ chaplaincy” - which can be off - putting to some people.”

“I would like to be retrained in the workings of the court.”

“From my current experience this is difficult for me to evaluate.”

“As a fairly new volunteer, I can't identify any improvements at this point. It seems to work very effectively and I'm sure the team will act upon and implement any improvements suggested by this survey.”

“Monday afternoons should help. Is some kind of handout for court users (e.g. custody supporters) worth thinking about?”

“By making itself more widely known to those attending court. If it isn't already it should be included as part of the official documentation sent to those attending court whether as the accused, their relatives or friends, witnesses, jury members or translators.”

“I feel it is too early for me to say, given my limited work in court so far.”

Service Improvement continued...

How could The Listening Service improve its services?

“Consider a regular opportunity for meeting to discuss interesting cases from which everyone can learn.”

“It's maybe a trivial point but the logo on the T-shirt is misleading to people; it should not have the word "faith" on it.”

“I think some users are wary of approaching a volunteer with a shirt indicating that the service is a multi faith chaplaincy listening service. It might be helpful to review the branding of the polo shirts worn by volunteers. One user thanked me for approaching her as she didn't think the service was for her. It might be useful to set up an information desk a little bit away from the entrance.”

“Have refresher training for volunteers.”

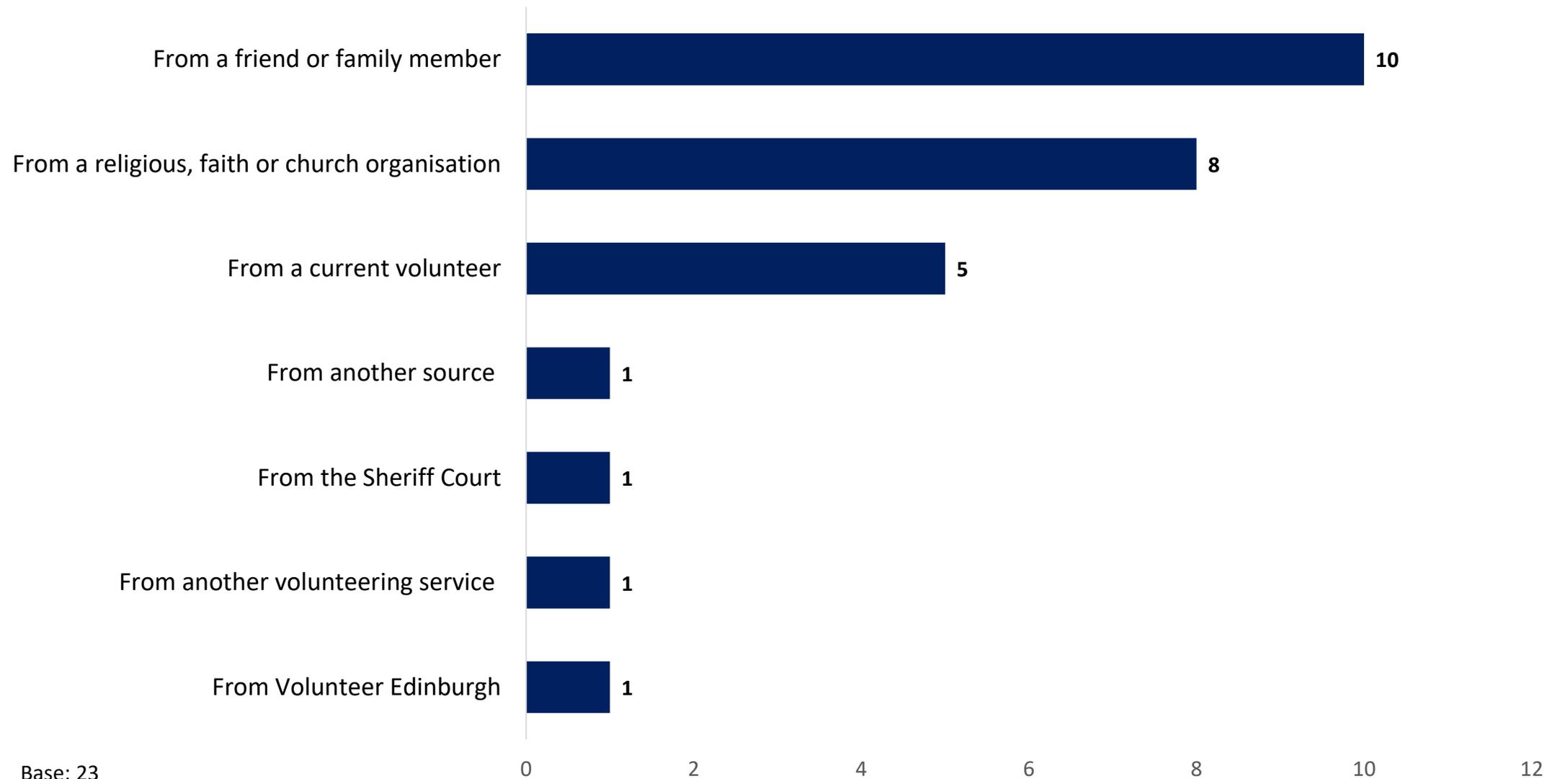
“Maybe by having access to the Custody area to provide support there.”

“A better, higher profile and perhaps flyers being distributed.”

“Ensure it is resourced to maintain but also develop. Currently almost all organisation is provided on a shoestring with volunteers providing training and support. These people have excellent skills and experience in their field, but should they not be able to continue, it would be difficult to maintain the Service. Development in feedback and discussion with the Courts, sharing our valuable experience to identify structural problems, would be a helpful area to impact on our work as volunteers.”

Source of awareness

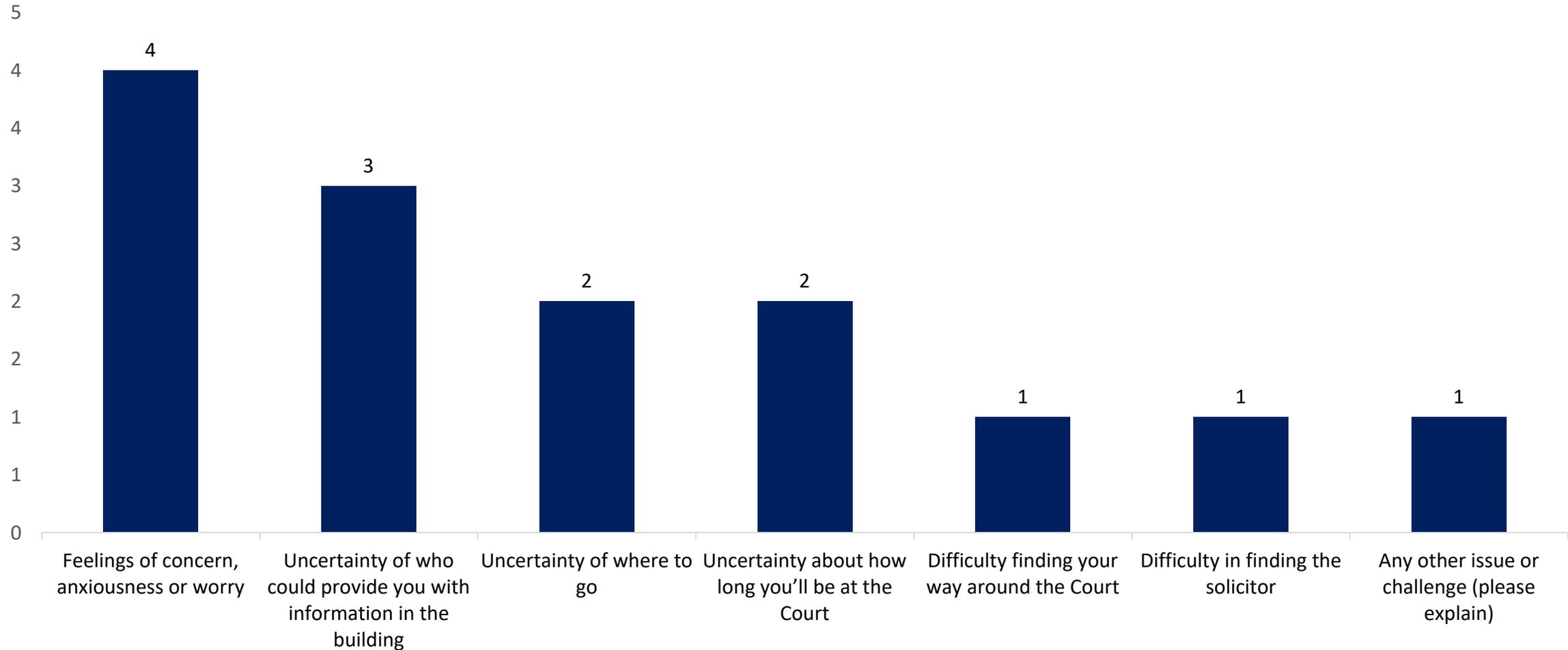
How did you first hear about The Listening Service?



Detailed findings from Court Users

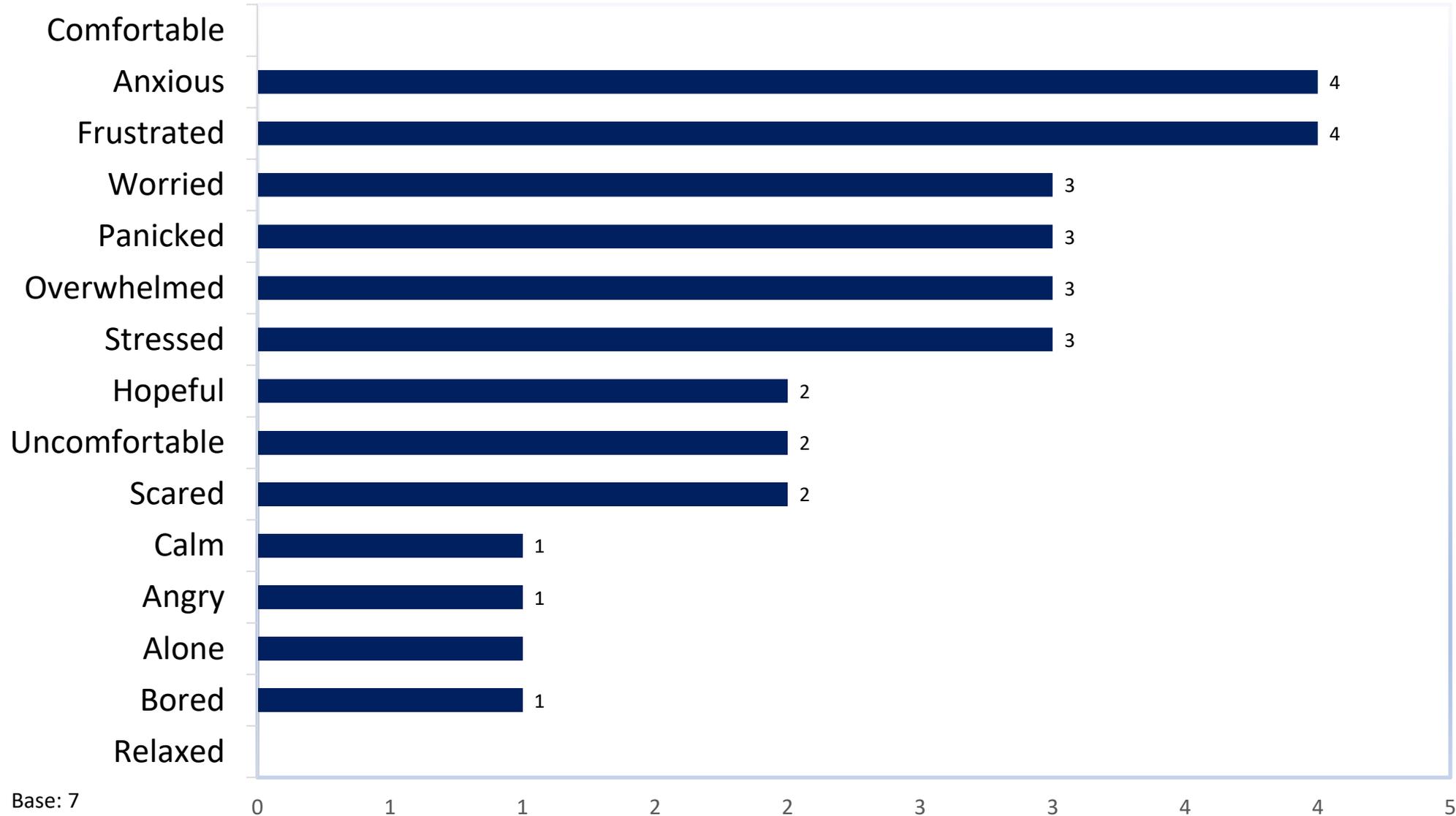
Experience of issues / challenges

Did you experience any of the following issues or challenges when attending the Court?



Court users indicate a range of negative emotions before speaking with TLS

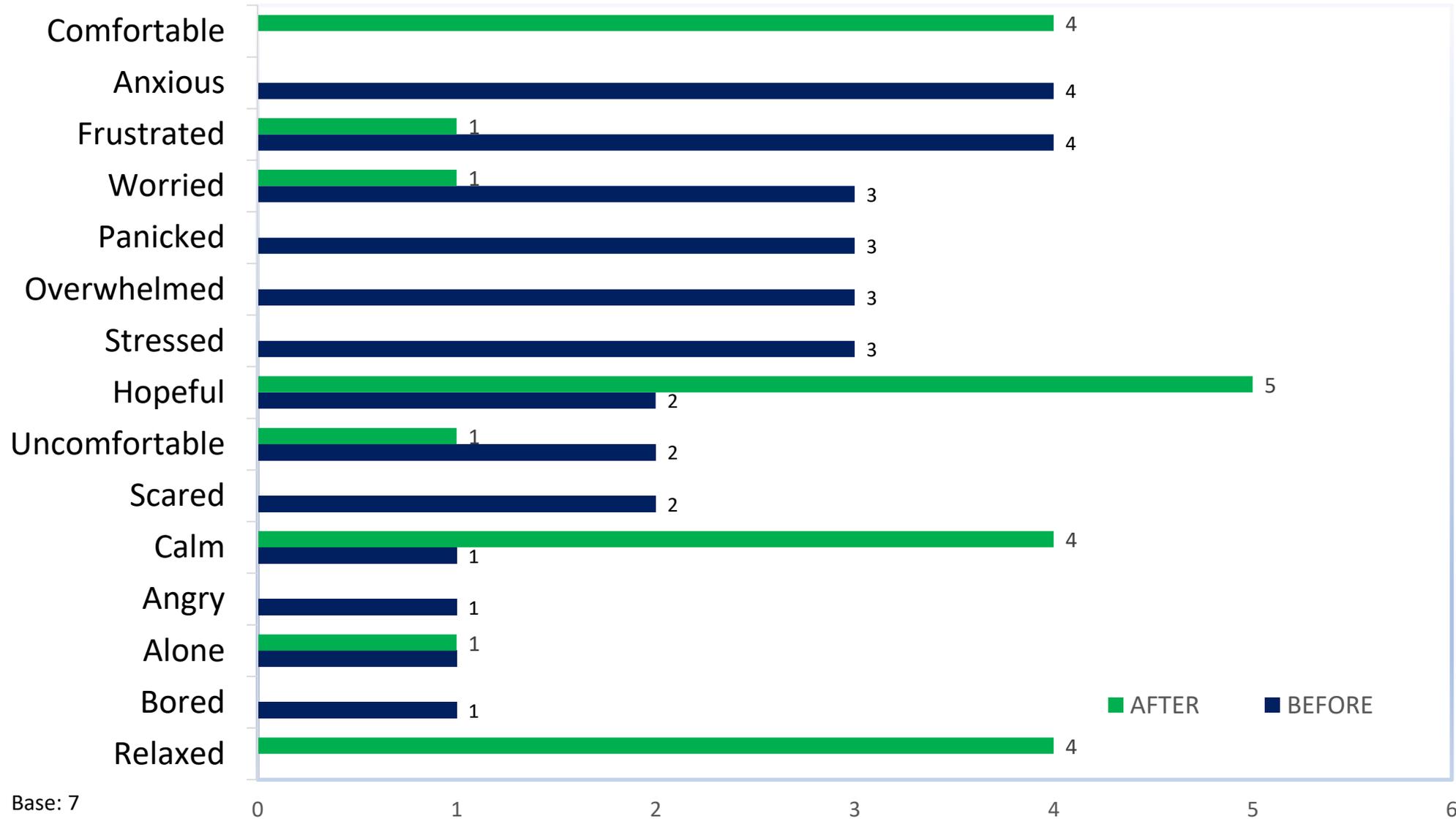
Which of the following words / phrases would you use to describe how you felt BEFORE speaking to The Listening Service?



Base: 7

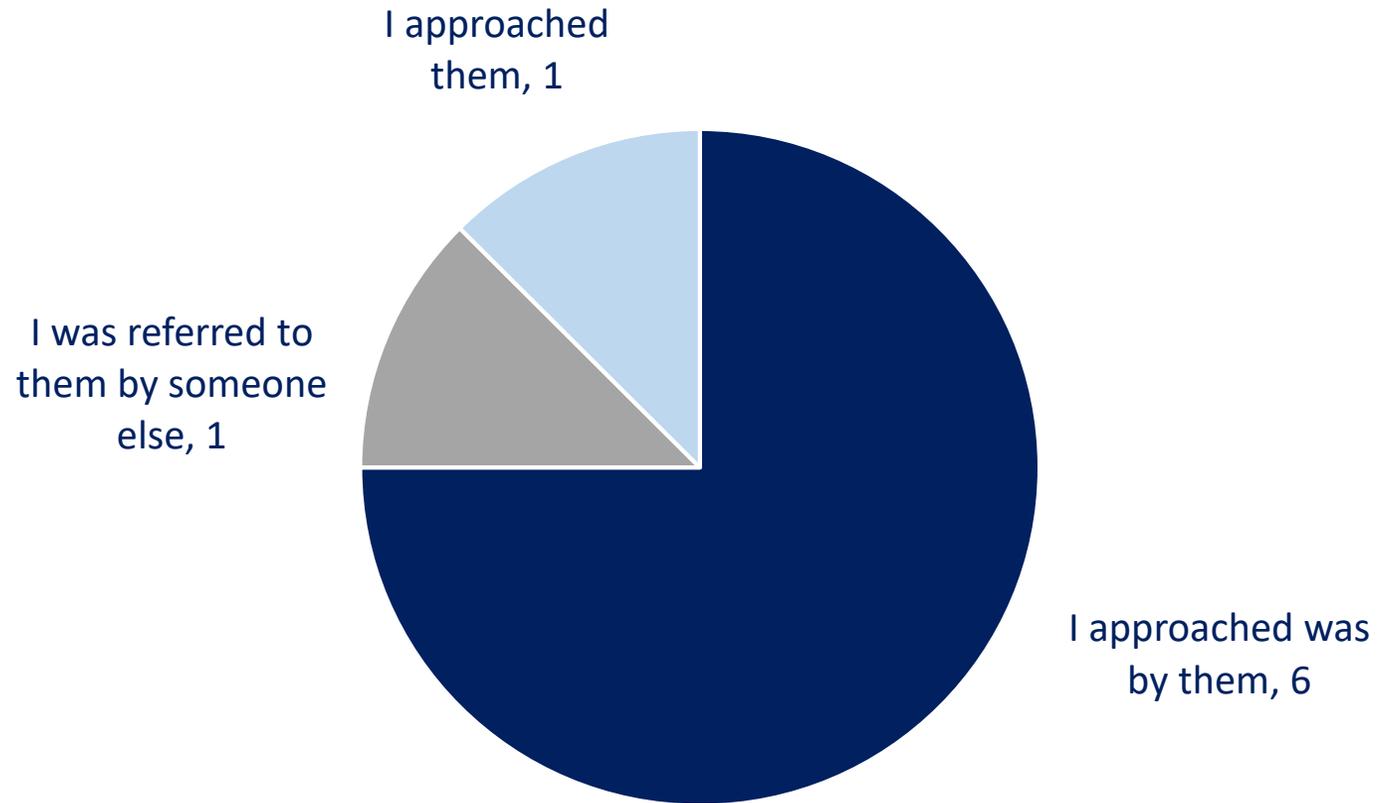
Court users were more positive after speaking with TLS

Which of the following words / phrases would you use to describe how you felt AFTER speaking to The Listening Service?



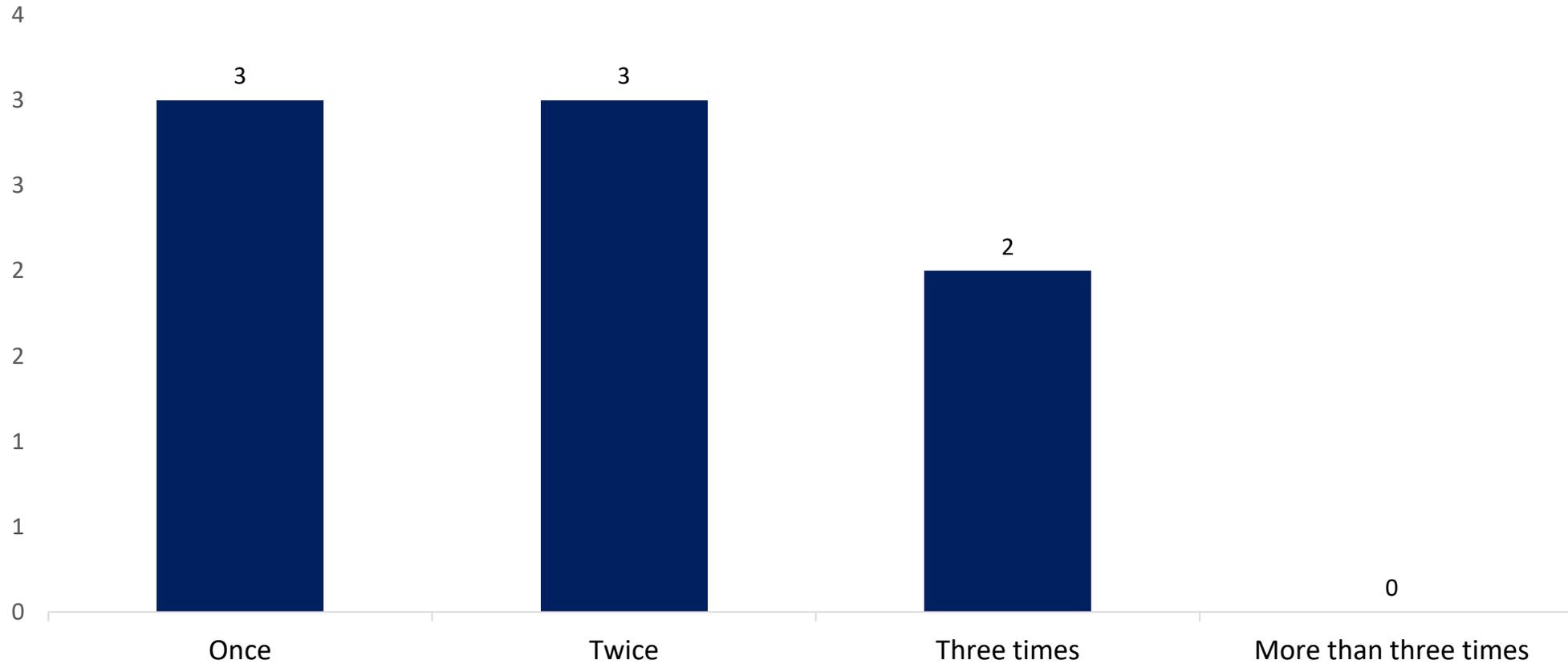
Initial interaction

How did you come to speak with someone from The Listening Service?



Amount of interaction

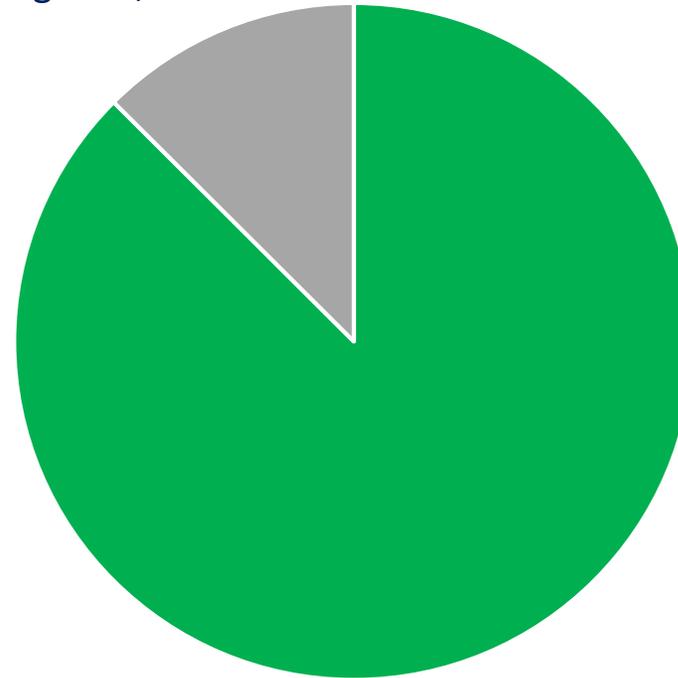
How many times did you speak to someone from The Listening Service?



Experience

Overall, was your experience with the person from The Listening Service positive or negative?

Neither Positive
nor Negative, 1



Positive, 7

Positive /negative impact of The Listening Services

You said The Listening Service makes a positive / neither positive or negative experience – why do you say that?

“I found the woman very helpful and pleasant to deal with.” (Female, 45-54 years)

“I had a positive experience as they were very friendly and welcoming and help keep distracted from the nerves and pressure I was feeling.” (Male, 16-24 years)

“We were feeling worried and the lovely lady sat and spoke to us and explained how things worked in a court so we felt more at ease.” (Female, 35-44 years / Employed Full Time)

“Very helpful.” (Female, 16-24 years / Not Employed)

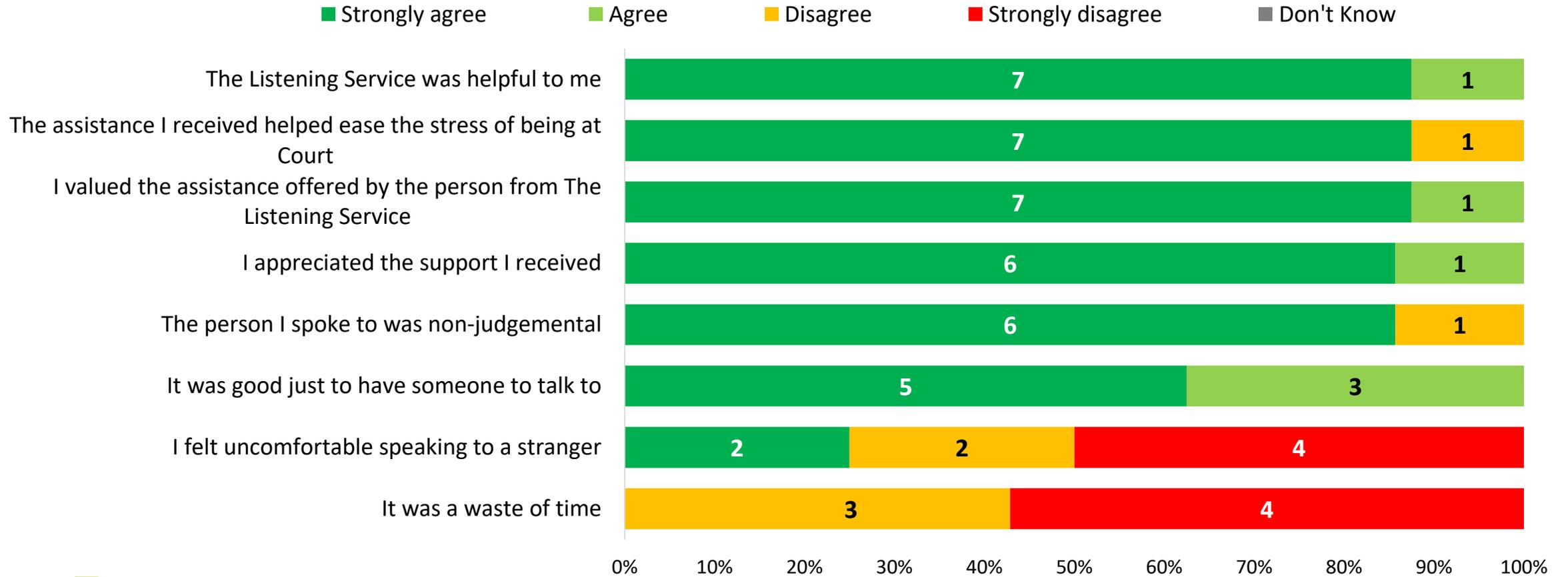
“She was very polite and helpful.” (Female, 35-44 years / Employed Part Time)

“The lady was able to help me get the information I needed. She was very helpful and I’m not sure how we would have coped without.” (Female, 45-54 years/ Employed Part Time)

“The whole process was too rushed in order to fully remember the positives or negatives about the situation.” (Female, 16-24 years / Not Employed)

Agree / disagree

Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements...



Service Improvement

In your opinion, what is the best thing about The Listening Service?

“That they comfort you and speak to you slowly and they are more approachable.” *(Female, 16-24 years)*

“I find them a very helpful and trustworthy service.” *(Female, 45-54 years)*

“The best thing about the listening service was the tone of voice was so calm and measure and they kept reassuring and hoping for the best result which helped calm me down and relax some of the nerves I had before.” *(Male, 16-24 years)*

“I think that it is wonderful for people who need this to have the availability.” *(Female 35-44 years)*

“Help out.” *(Female, 16-24 years)*

“There to help you when needed.” *(Female, 35-44 years)*

“To have someone who understands the courts and didn’t judge us in any way. It was invaluable.” *(Female, 45-54 years)*

“The blonde lady.” *(Female, 45-54 years)*

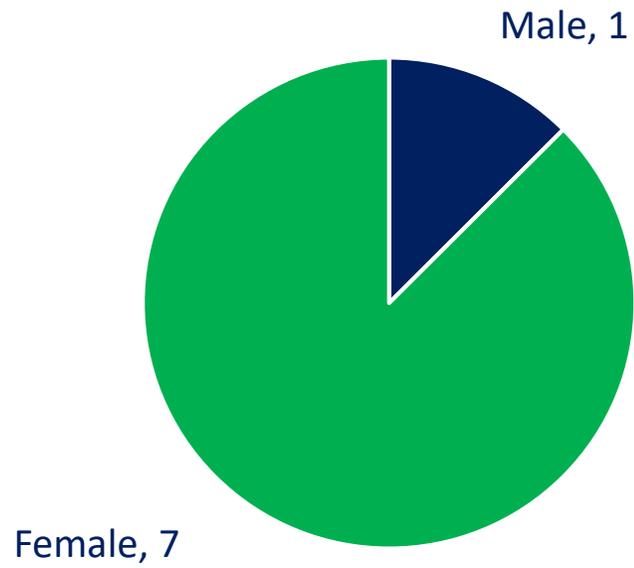
Service Improvement

How could The Listening Service improve what they do?

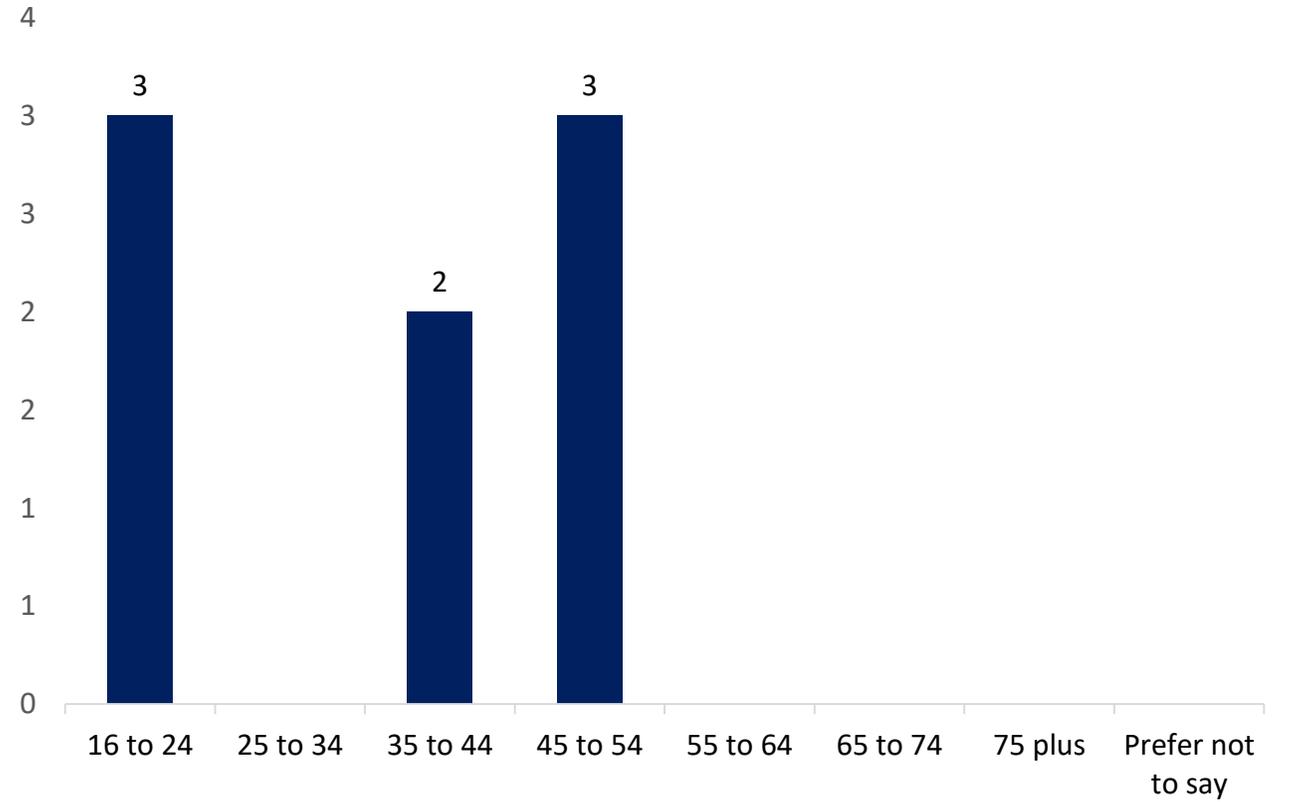
“Provide younger listening service assistants (mainly for teenagers and children).”
(Female, 16-24 years)

“Continue what they are doing.” *(Female, 45-54 years)*

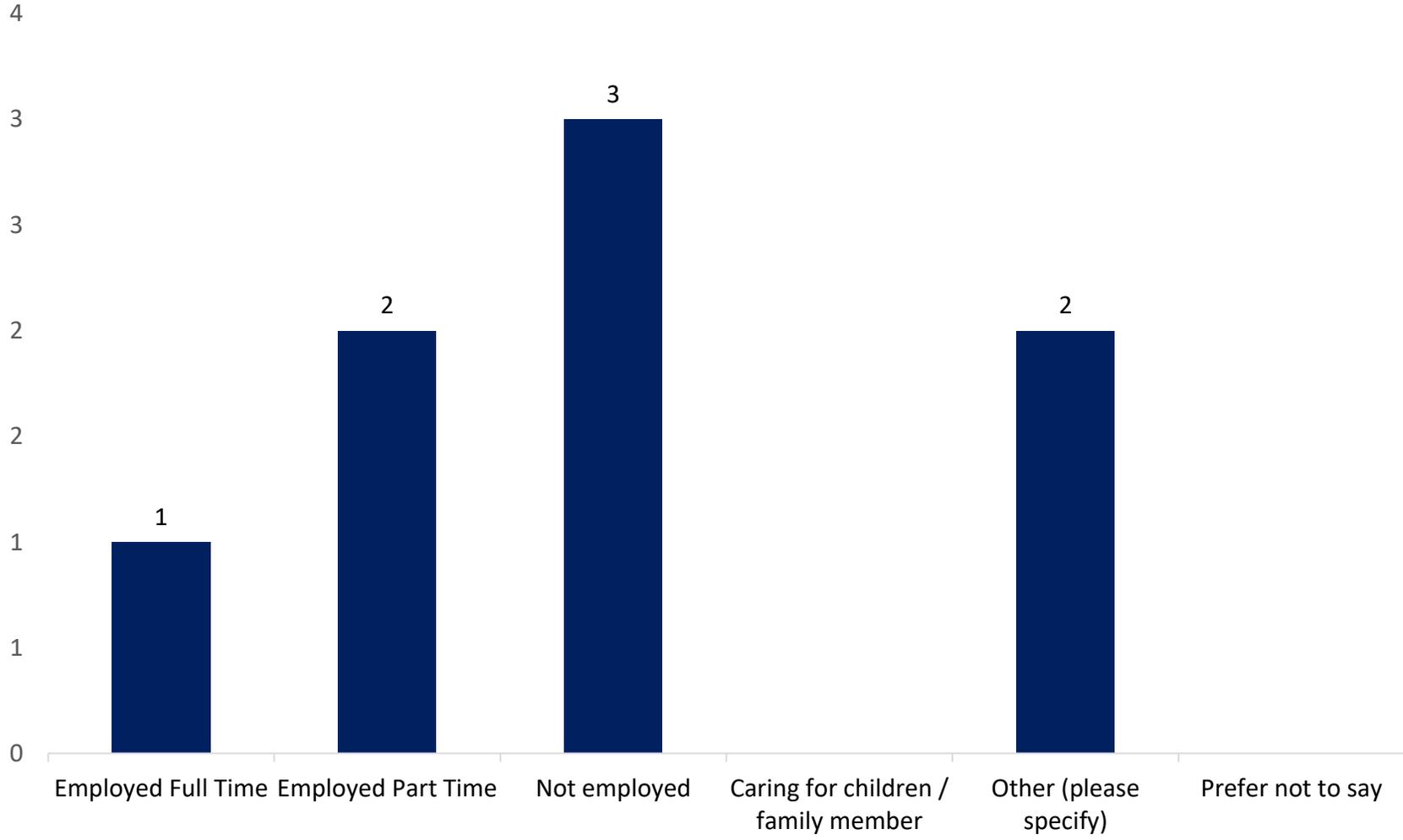
Court User : Gender



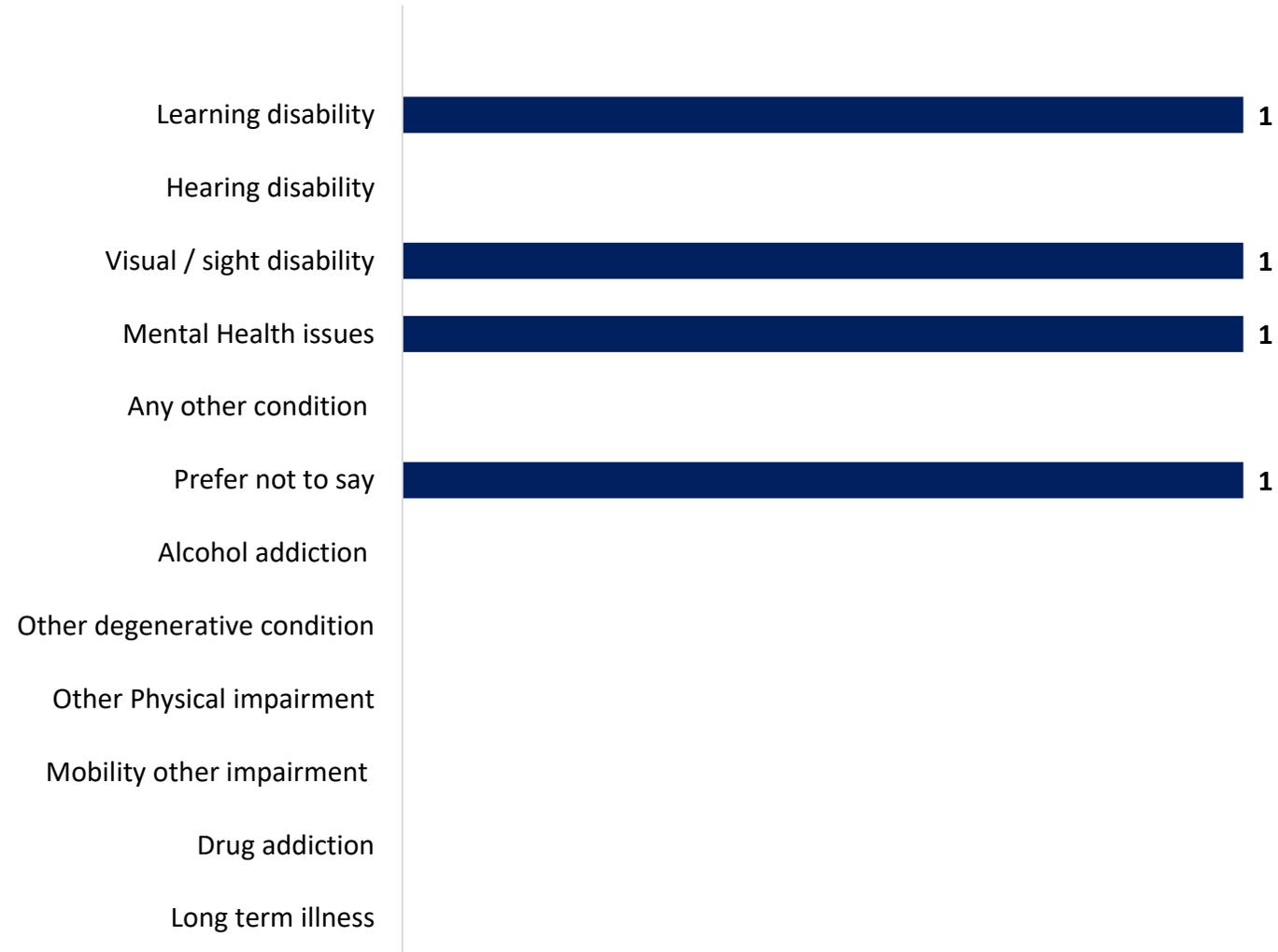
Age



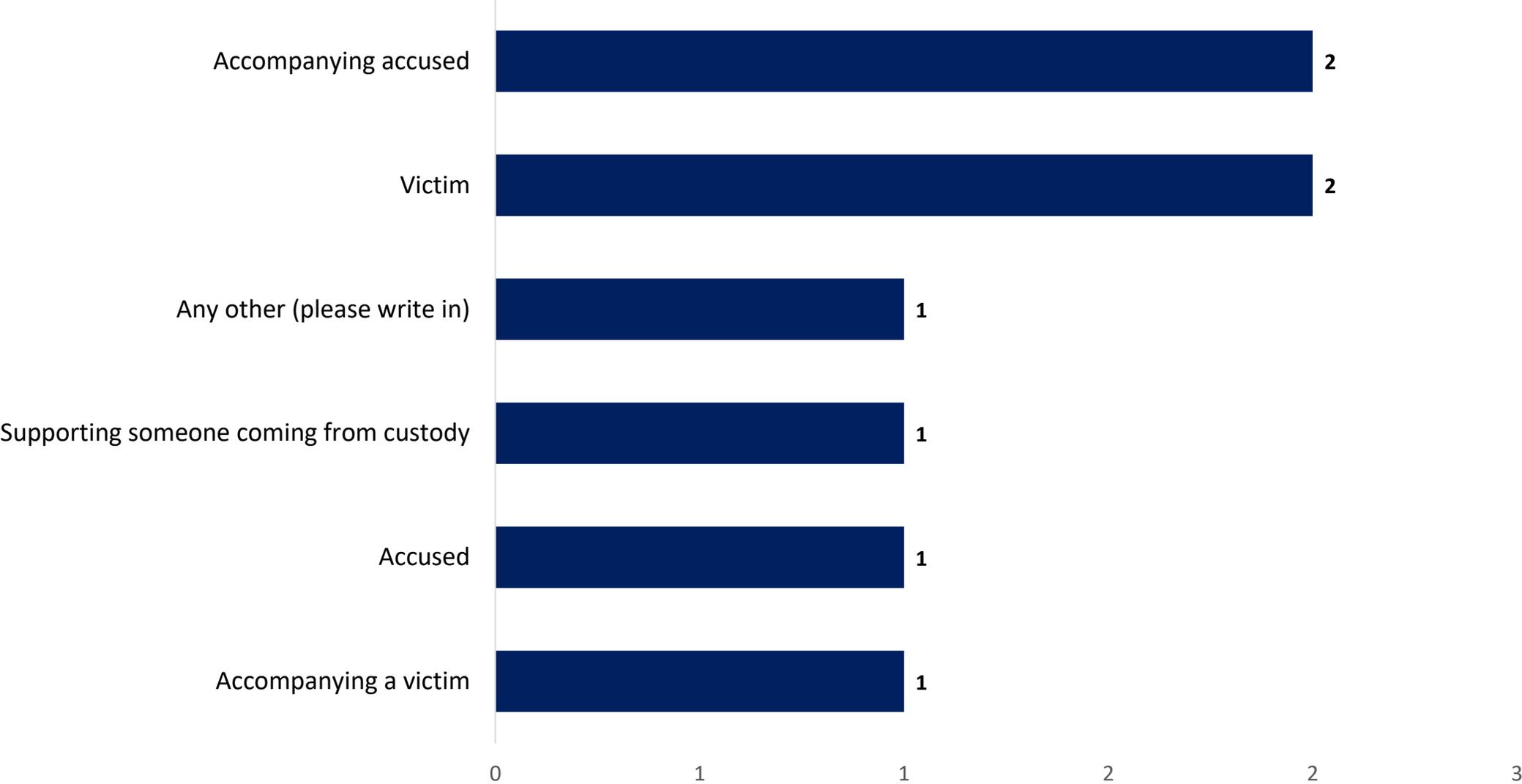
Employment status



Disability



Reason for Court Attendance



Overview of Key Findings

Overview of Key Findings

- ***Is the Listening Service considered to be worthwhile?***
 - *Yes: There is recognition amongst Court Users, Court Officials, and the Volunteers of the positive impact of the Listening Service*
- ***Is the quality of contact appropriate?***
 - *Yes: The majority of comments are positive of the supportive role of the Listening Service*
- ***What are considered to be the strengths / weaknesses of the service?***
 - *Strengths include: the positive and helpful attitude of the Volunteers; the ability to take time to listen to concerns or provide information and reassurance; ability to fill gaps, to be a calming influence and take pressure from Court staff*
 - *Weaknesses include: There is some lack of awareness and understanding of what the Listening Service provides (Court Officials); Some suggestions to improve training (Volunteers).*
- ***How might the service be improved or developed?***
 - *Suggestions included: Increased visibility/Increased understanding (Court Officials and Solicitor / Lawyer); ensure 'neutrality' is maintained at all times (Police Officer); Adjustment to training to reflect actual experiences in the Court environment; regular shared feedback sessions, revised 'uniform', funding for a 'Project Leader' (Volunteers);*

The Listening Service Research with Court Officials | Volunteers | Court Users

Report: August 2019



Millworks, 28 Field Road, Glasgow, G76 8SE
07808 777417 jim.law@jlral.co.uk / www.jlral.co.uk