

# Process Evaluation of Community Advice and Support Services + in Devon and Cornwall

Interim report

December 2020



# Background to the project, aims, methodology and limitations

## Background to the project

Crest Advisory have been commissioned by the Centre for Justice Innovation and CASS+ to conduct a process and outcomes evaluation. This is funded by the Lloyds Bank Foundation as part of a broader project run by the Centre for Justice Innovation to increase the provision of effective early intervention services in the justice system.

## This report

This interim report sets out findings from the initial process evaluation. The outcomes evaluation will conclude in late 2021, when a final report will be published.

## Aim of the process evaluation

The aim of the process evaluation was to:

1. Identify the key elements of the CASS+ operations which support offenders\* in terms of targeting, effectiveness, affordability and proportionality
2. To identify elements of the CASS+ model which are essential and desirable in order to replicate the service in other locations

## Methodology

The process evaluation has included : interviews with CASS+ staff; stakeholders and another community advice service; desk research; client profile analysis; demand flow mapping (drawing together data from across the system to build a picture of total demand/volume of cases relevant); and assessment of financial records.

## Limitations

- Interviewees from agencies outside of CASS+ were recruited for interview by CASS+ staff. This was to ensure that the evaluation was delivered in a timely manner in the context of Covid-19, however opportunities will be sought to address this in the next phase of the evaluation.
- The CASS+ database has only been in use for 1 year meaning data quality will continue to improve over the course of the next year. The statistics in this report sourced from the database should be seen as indicative only and may change when they are re-run at the end of 2021.

\*Whilst CASS+ supports offenders, families of offenders and victims, and this is discussed throughout the report, both components of this evaluation are focussed on evidencing impact on offender/defendant.

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# Executive Summary: based on research undertaken to date, it would appear that the current CASS+ model is both affordable and effective, though more evidence is required to be certain of the latter

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**Targeting:** There is no defined target cohort, however CASS+ effectively identifies and prioritises those it deems most at risk, whilst still supporting anyone that requires help. Staff work with court agencies to identify those at risk, and prioritise dynamically to manage demand. This has proven effective with the majority of clients meeting at least one of the characteristics staff described as benefiting the most from CASS+.

**Affordability:** The model is low-cost with minimal capital expenditure (being based in courts) and can be delivered at scale by deploying a small team of expert staff who recruit and train skilled volunteers.

**Proportionality:** Being client-led allows CASS+ to make effective prioritisation decisions according to clients' own assessments of their needs. Offering a scaled approach to interventions, flexed to client needs, means CASS+ can be as proportionate to the need as possible, whilst accounting for individual levels of engagement and motivation.

**Effectiveness:** Whilst the impact of the service will be evaluated fully in phase 2, interviewees agreed that CASS+ is effective in both the initial resolution of short-term issues as well as longer term behavioural changes.

## Key elements of the model for replication:

Expert staff and volunteers

Responsive

Localised

Generalist

Independent non-statutory status

Non-targeted



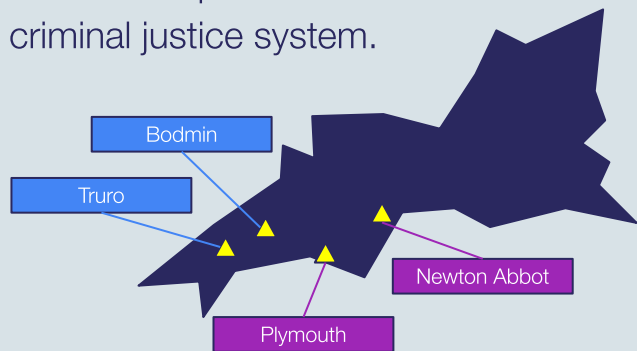


# **What is CASS+ and how does it work?**

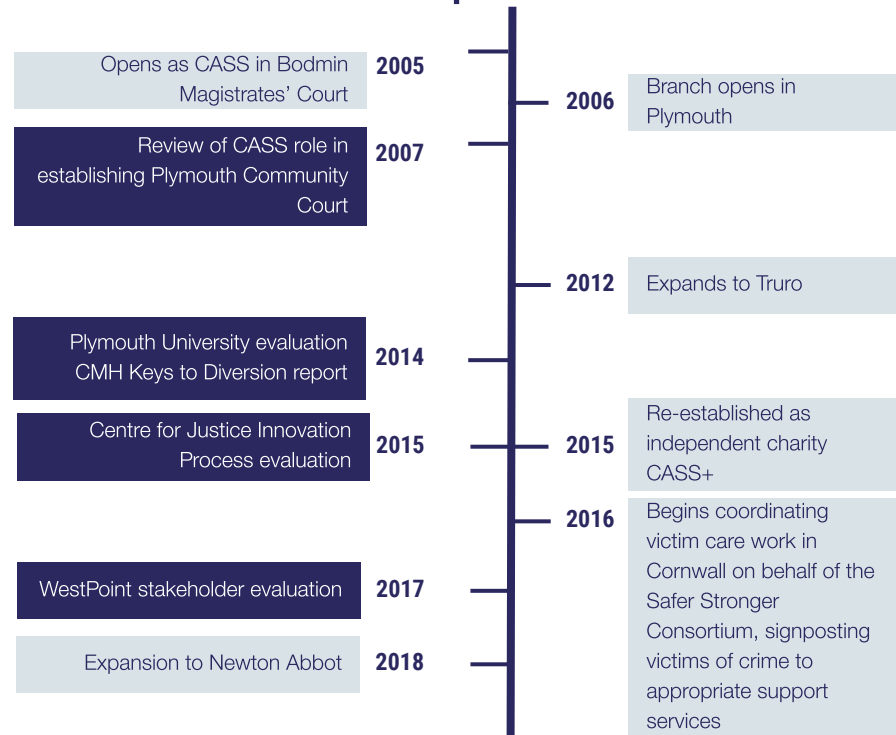
# CASS+ is a service which provides free advice and support in 4 magistrates' courts in Devon and Cornwall

## What is CASS+?

CASS+ (Community Advice and Support Services+) is a service which provides free advice and support from magistrates' court settings for people involved in the criminal justice system. Services users are provided with practical help with managing issues like fine repayments and benefits, referral to long-term support for chronic issues like addiction, and support with the often difficult experiences that come with involvement in the criminal justice system.



## CASS+ development timeline



Key:

Development of service

Previous evaluations

# The CASS+ model at its core is an in-person signposting and support service for those in court

Although there is variation between the courts, generally the model is as follows:

CASS+ are based in an office within the court, sometimes alongside other non-statutory organisations

CASS+ receive court listings the evening before each court day which they will review

On each court day, CASS+ staff and volunteers will do a number of key activities to try and engage individuals that may need help

Data suggests 56% of CJS clients are seen pre-sentence and 44% post-sentence

Following this initial support CASS+ may provide further follow up support

CASS+ will then provide support to the client either directly, in court, or by referring onto other agencies

Sit in hearings to action any referrals made in court

Proactively approach people in the waiting area

Attend cells to speak to people identified by solicitors/staff

Await referrals made by court staff

CASS+ support can be broadly grouped into:

Motivation

Intervention

Mentoring

Signposting

# **By focusing at the lower end of offending, CASS+ aims to fulfil the criteria for successful early intervention i.e. accessing individuals before offending behaviours are fully entrenched**

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Criminal Justice system resources are focussed on the most serious and prolific offenders, rather than channelled into early intervention to prevent the escalation of offending, or the offending starting in the first place.

CASS+ is aimed at the lower end of offending, providing support to holistically address the needs of those who may be at the start of an offending journey, but does not exclude those further along an offending journey.

The Centre for Justice Innovation defined four key components of a successful early intervention:

- Must be able to identify offenders with outstanding support needs
- Be successful in resolving problems and changing behaviour
- Be feasibly delivered to a large number of people
- Avoid intensifying engagement with the CJS beyond what is warranted

The following sections of the process evaluation assess the targeting of clients for the CASS+ service, the affordability in terms of delivering the intervention at scale, and proportionality of the service to client needs. The effectiveness of the service in addressing client needs and changing behaviours will be evaluated over the course of the second part of the evaluation, but some early findings from perceptions of stakeholders are included.



# **Rationale for intervention**

# CASS+'s aims and theory of change

## Why does CASS+ exist?

- CASS+'s governing purpose is to promote social inclusion, by preventing exclusion and supporting people who are socially excluded. This applies **in particular but not exclusively** to people involved in the criminal justice system and their families
- An important part of this is **reducing reoffending** as well as providing general support and advice to people in the courts

## What works to reduce (re)offending, and how is this reflected in CASS+'s work?

- Interventions to reduce reoffending take various forms, but research to date has identified some **key factors** that are effective at decreasing reoffending:<sup>1, 2</sup>
  - Addressing criminogenic needs
  - Supportive networks and relationships,
  - Perceptions of procedural justice and fairness,
  - Holistic support
- We have developed a **theory of change** to illustrate how CASS+ interventions aim to address each of these factors

*"The aims of CASS are to...reduce reoffending rates by enabling people that have got themselves caught up in the criminal justice system, from whichever side of the fence that happens to be, to access the support to unravel some of the issues going on in [their] lives and be able to change their track"*  
—CASS+ staff

# Falling through the cracks in the system: the need for support and advice in magistrates' courts...

- The vast majority of cases decided at magistrates' courts are for **low-level offences**, resulting in fines or conditional discharges
- Many people involved in these cases have **multiple and complex needs**, but often slip through the cracks in available services. Frequently, their individual problems fall **below the threshold** to access services, even when the combination means they struggle in their everyday lives
- Attending court, particularly for the first time, is often a **stressful and frightening experience**
- Offenders commonly need help with **housing, debt, substance misuse and mental health needs**. Many have also themselves been victims of crime and/or experienced childhood trauma
- These unmet **criminogenic needs** result in poor quality of life and increase the likelihood of offending
- Courts and criminal justice services such as probation **lack the time and resources** to address these issues, and the nature of the problems mean people often find it hard to get help on their own
- CASS+ provides **in-court advice, direct assistance and referrals** to meet these needs
- The service is **highly tailored** to individual clients' needs, ranging from reassurance in-court on the day to multiple referrals and/or regular contact over a prolonged period. It is also **accessible and non-targeted**, open to anyone in the court who needs assistance without any eligibility requirements or needs thresholds

*"We in the magistracy, we're not social workers. Even though we desperately try to be as supportive [as possible] where appropriate to help people, we don't have the resources. We don't have the time to administer justice" — Magistrate*

## ...and all of this is exacerbated by growing pressure on public services

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In recent years, the pressure on the criminal justice system has grown substantially due to budget cuts and increasing demand. Probation services are managing **larger caseloads**, so struggle to dedicate as much time to supporting people as they did previously. **Court closures** are driving a less local model, without such detailed knowledge of local service provision. Cuts to legal aid mean more people are coming through court **without representation**: this includes many criminal, family and tribunal cases.

At the same time, there have been **cuts to wider public services**, for instance in mental health and homelessness services. This makes it harder for them to support people and adequately address the vulnerabilities which drive criminality. **Thresholds for accessing support services** may be higher, or larger caseloads may translate to a reduced level of support, less emphasis on outreach and a lower tolerance for missed appointments or challenging behaviour. This can lead to the people most in need of help missing out, because they find it **hard to access support**.

*"If CASS+ wasn't there...The magistrates would probably just sit there and say, 'Oh, you need to refer yourself into We Are With You'. But whereas CASS+ will then sit down with them and maybe call in with them, [without CASS+, they would be] putting the onus on that person to then go and do it. Probably nine times out of ten they just wouldn't" — Drug and alcohol support service*



# There is a growing body of evidence on what works to reduce reoffending and to increase the likelihood of desistance from offending

<b>Addressing criminogenic needs</b>	We know that addressing criminogenic needs is a vital means of reducing (re)offending. Safe accommodation, stable employment and reduced substance misuse all lower the risk of reoffending. There is also evidence that desistance from offending is more likely when individuals have fulfilling employment. <sup>1, 2, 3</sup>
<b>Supportive networks and relationships</b>	Supportive social networks and good family and intimate relationships can both reduce criminogenic needs and act as protective factors in their own right; for example, we know that prisoners who receive family visits are less likely to reoffend and more likely to have employment or training and accommodation upon release. <sup>1</sup> Desistance theory also implies that individuals who have strong social ties, a sense of worth, hope and self-efficacy are more likely to desist from offending. <sup>1, 2, 3</sup>
<b>Perceptions of procedural justice and fairness</b>	Believing that policing and courts are fair can improve compliance with court orders and reduce reoffending, and the willingness of victims to engage with the police. <sup>4, 5</sup> Perceptions of fairness are increased when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• decisions appear neutral and unbiased</li><li>• people are treated with respect</li><li>• they can understand how decisions are made and what is expected of them</li><li>• they are able to make their voice heard</li></ul>
<b>Holistic support</b>	Multi-modal or holistic interventions which address a range of problems linked to offending are particularly effective, and sequencing is also important - e.g. stabilising chaotic substance misuse or securing accommodation before enrolling a client in a behavioural programme. Integrated case management and multi-agency partnerships have both proven effective in reducing reoffending. <sup>1, 2</sup>

*"There are services for [helping] people in different ways, but one place that does everything is really important" — Probation officer*

## CASS+ is designed to be able to deliver support which aligns with these principles

<b>Addressing criminogenic needs</b>	CASS+ provides direct assistance applying for benefits and other financial help, as well as referrals to food banks and to services tackling substance misuse, accommodation problems, mental health, and other criminogenic needs. They also help clients develop fine payment plans and liaise with court staff.
<b>Supportive networks and relationships</b>	By providing a supportive presence within the court and a listening ear to their clients, CASS+ helps them cope with the immediate stress of the court. CASS+ also gives ongoing encouragement to many of their clients to help them stay positive and motivate themselves, and generally offers a positive and supportive relationship and connection to the community.
<b>Perceptions of procedural justice and fairness</b>	Clients often struggle to understand court proceedings and what decision has been reached. CASS+ helps explain legal terminology and the practicalities of sentencing, as well as sometimes advocating on behalf of clients when they lack other representation and making magistrates and court staff aware of mitigating factors where relevant.
<b>Holistic support</b>	Many support services are 'mono-problem', and struggle to deal with interconnections between multiple needs or address them simultaneously. CASS+ provides holistic support and informal case management for clients with multiple needs, offering a single point of contact or crisis management service for complex cases. They are also responsive to clients' priorities in sequencing and seek to address contributing factors to their problems, e.g. working to resolve debt or housing problems before, or at the same time as, offering mental health treatment.

# However, it's not all about reducing reoffending – it's also about helping people in crisis

CASS+'s primary aim is to reduce (re)offending by addressing clients' needs (which are often multiple and complex). But CASS+ doesn't only work with offenders: it also supports victims, witnesses, families — anyone in the court who needs their help.

This may decrease offending: there is substantial overlap between victims and offenders, particularly for violent offences, and family members and victims may also have needs that may contribute to them offending themselves in future. Supporting victims can also decrease their chances of future victimisation, and so reduce offending in that way.

CASS+ doesn't limit its interventions to where it is likely to have an impact on future offending, however. It also acts to help people who come through the courts and seek support, whatever their situation. This is in service of CASS+'s broader aim, which is to **prevent social exclusion** and support those who are socially excluded.

Their place within the court building makes CASS+ well-positioned to capture people in crisis - not only those who have been through the criminal justice system, but also a broader group who might be involved in the family court, tribunals, or have heard about the CASS+ service through word of mouth.

*"[Without CASS+], you'd end up with more people, quite simply that didn't have familial support to repair those relationships, didn't have housing support and ended up homeless, didn't have financial support, and so ended up in further debt...People would be in a much messier situation, and their lives would quite simply not be improved on an upward trajectory, as they [are] when CASS+ become involved"*

—Drug and alcohol support service

# Developing a theory of change

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## **What is a theory of change?**

A theory of change is the output of a process to define explicitly what the aims of specific activities are, and how those activities are expected to result in certain outcomes and achieve an overall impact.

## **Why have one?**

Developing a theory of change can help with evaluating a service, by making clear exactly what outcomes the evaluation should be measuring and providing an opportunity to re-examine the relationships between activities, outputs and outcomes. It also helps practitioners understand what they are doing and why, and identifies the key elements of an intervention.

## **What did we do to establish one?**

To establish a theory of change for the CASS+ service, Crest firstly conducted 'situation analysis', trying to understand the problem the service aims to address, before reviewing the existing evidence base to find out what we already know works. Building then on existing documentation detailing inputs and activities of the service, and conducting interviews with staff about the intending outputs and outcomes, we produced together a one page summary of the Theory of Change. It is intended that the rest of the evaluation will use this Theory of Change as a basis.

CASS+’s client group includes everyone in contact with the court, not only defendants or offenders

## CASS+ Theory of Change: *promoting social inclusion*

The CASS+ Theory of Change is interwoven with available external support/services.

### Inputs

Staff

Volunteers

Office within court building

Relationships with local CJS and support services providers

Knowledge of local health and social care economy

### Action

Client drop-in/  
appointment

Volunteer visits people in custody or attends court session

Magistrate referral

Referral from other agency

Referral from court staff

CASS+ initial needs assessment

Referral third sector

Referral public agency

Direct assistance with need

Direct assistance with sentence

Comfort, reassurance and explanation of court processes

### External activity

Agency support

Magistrates make better-informed sentencing decisions

Follow up

### Short-term outcomes

Reduced criminogenic and other needs

Increased sense of procedural fairness

Better-informed sentencing

Clients better able to navigate court system

Increased number and uptake of referrals

More sustained engagement with other services

Greater emotional support for clients

### Long-term outcomes

Reduced (re)offending

Greater compliance with sentences and court orders

Improved client health and well-being

Clients have access to ongoing support in case of future crisis

Decreased burden on CJS by filling gaps in provision

# Other services have been developed on a similar basis, supporting the evidence base for this type of early intervention involving a holistic approach to the resolution of needs

## Case Study: Liaison and Diversion Service, Nationwide

Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services identify people who have mental health, learning disability, substance misuse or other vulnerabilities when they first come into contact with the criminal justice system.<sup>1</sup>

The service provides support and referrals to support services for those individuals with the aim to improve overall health outcomes and reduce reoffending. The information gathered about the service users can also be shared to inform criminal justice decisions as appropriate.

Both local and national evaluations of L&D services have promising (though not conclusive) findings in terms of reduced contact with criminal justice agencies after L&D engagement and some better informed sentencing decisions.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Case Study: Checkpoint, Durham

Checkpoint is a police-led scheme which aims to divert offenders early on in an offending pathway from further offending and improve the life chances of participants.

It offers offenders a four month contract as an alternative to prosecution for low level offences and is grounded in addressing the underlying needs of offenders. Offenders meet with a 'navigator' within 72 hours of agreeing to the contract, who tailors the four month period to offender needs.

The results of the implementation phase evaluation indicate that the cohort achieved a lower re-arrest and reoffending rate compared to offenders being given other out of court disposals.<sup>4</sup>

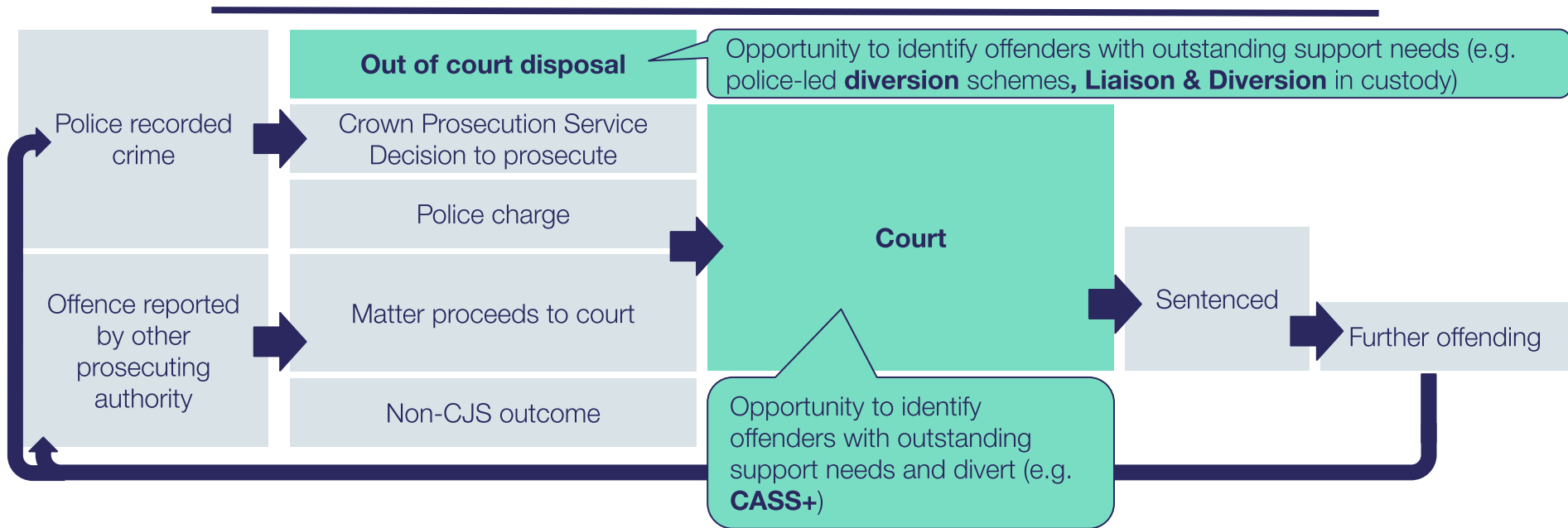
CASS+ has a different operating model to both L&D Services and Checkpoint, but the evidence base for these services supports the CASS+ theory of change, providing a holistic and tailored approach to addressing criminogenic needs



# Targeting:

how and to what extent CASS+ identifies and works with appropriate offenders

# To fulfil the criteria for effective early intervention, a service should be able to identify offenders with outstanding support needs at the early stages of the criminal justice process



For police-reported crime, there are opportunities to identify offenders with outstanding support needs at the point at which they are arrested or charged for the offence. However, not all defendants have contact with the police; other prosecuting authorities are able to send defendants straight to court. Therefore the magistrates' court is, in some cases, the first point of contact with the justice system.

*"They're central to a location that's crying out [with] people needing help" Solicitor*



# There is a natural limit to the ability of CASS+ to target individuals with the greatest needs (beyond being in Court), but we found evidence that CASS+ staff generally apply a form of prioritisation to help ensure certain cohorts are supported

As a non-statutory service (one of the success factors of the service), CASS+ can only receive limited information about potential clients without their permission. There are two ways that CASS+ manages to effectively target clients despite this limitation:

## 1. Relationships within the Court

CASS+ is a well-embedded and known service within the four courts it works in. CASS+ co-ordinators have developed strong relationships with all statutory and non-statutory organisations. A key benefit from this is that statutory agencies are able to identify target clients on CASS+'s behalf. For example magistrates, court and probation staff who identify outstanding offenders with support needs are able to refer directly to CASS+. Similarly CASS+ are provided with court listings the day before court so that they can identify potential clients.

*"If we have someone in Court with issues, the Court will refer them to CASS+"* Court Usher

*"Fines and conditional discharges...is absolutely the core group that we are targeting our work at. But we don't say no to...a community order"* CASS+ Staff

## 2. Prioritisation

Interviewees indicated that CASS+ is there to support anyone, but if demand exceeds the capacity of the service, staff will prioritise.

*"We work firstly with people currently in CJS and their families, secondly anyone at the point of crisis."* CASS+ Staff

Anyone physically present in the magistrates' court

Defendants and their families

Defendants

Defendants charged/prosecuted for low-level offences

Defendants charged/prosecuted for low-level offences open to engaging with support services **or** referred to CASS+ directly by court staff/agencies

# Interviewees identified specific characteristics and needs of individuals they thought were most likely to benefit from CASS+. Looking at service user data, this is broadly reflected in the profile of CASS+ clients, however these statistics are likely to change as data quality improves in the second year of data collection<sup>1</sup>

1. Those in contact with the **Criminal Justice System** (defendants, families, victims).

**At least 66% of clients in 2019/20 were defendants.** Excluding cases where no answer was recorded **81% of defendant clients had 5 convictions or fewer and 61% had 1 or none.**

2. Offenders committing **low-level offences** which are likely to result in sentences which don't require probation supervision.

Of all offences recorded in 2019/20, **20% were vehicle crime**, 14% violence against the person, 12% public order, and 7% theft offences

3. Offenders with **multiple and complex needs...**

The average number of **needs per client was 3.4** for all clients whether stated as defendants or otherwise.

4. ...specifically, problems with **debt, housing, mental health, and/or substance misuse...**

**29% had a debt issue**, 36% were on at least one benefit, **17% were homeless** or of no fixed abode and **61% had a mental health issue. 19% had a drugs need and 21% an alcohol need.**

5. ...but often with the **level of need falling just short of thresholds** for other statutory or third-sector services.

*At this stage of the evaluation we are unable to ascertain whether the service users have fallen below the threshold of other services. This will be tested in the second part of the evaluation.*

6. Those who would **struggle to engage** with services on their own.

At least **41% of CASS+ clients were not represented** by a solicitor in 2019/20 and **only 14% had a named probation officer.** *These are proxy indicators that a client may struggle to engage with other services - this will be tested in the second part of the evaluation.*

<sup>1</sup>Data from financial year 2019/20. CASS+ also currently provides what are known as 'brief interventions' to individuals which were not previously recorded. This involves providing quick verbal information for defendants or others about court processes or available services. These interventions have not been recorded until recently and may mean that the client profile would look different if these clients were included. We will re-run this analysis at the end of 2021.

# The profile of clients has shifted slightly since the 2014 review. Clients are less likely to have previous convictions, suggesting a shift towards earlier intervention, but they also have higher levels of overall needs

A 2014 review of CASS+ data by Plymouth University developed a picture of a typical CASS+ client:

- Male, White British, Under 50 years
- Not employed / receiving 2+ benefits
- Rented accommodation/ living in middle to most deprived neighbourhood
- Single
- Using drugs habitually/Cannabis
- No general health issues
- Mental health issues (depression, anxiety)
- Has previous conviction
- Alcohol or drug related offence (possession)
- Offence 'trigger' – drunk/ excess alcohol
- Not represented by a solicitor

Data available on the new CASS+ database is not fully comparable, and some information has not yet been made available. However we know that in 2019/20:

## Most CASS+ clients are:

- Under 50
- Not employed/receiving 2+ benefits
- Rented accommodation
- Mental health issues
- Not represented by a solicitor

In 2014, **62%** of clients in Plymouth who were defendants had a previous conviction. In 2019/20, **51%** of clients who were defendants recorded a previous conviction

**51%**

of defendant clients recorded a previous conviction<sup>1</sup>

**54%**

had more than one need, compared to **30%** in Plymouth in 2014

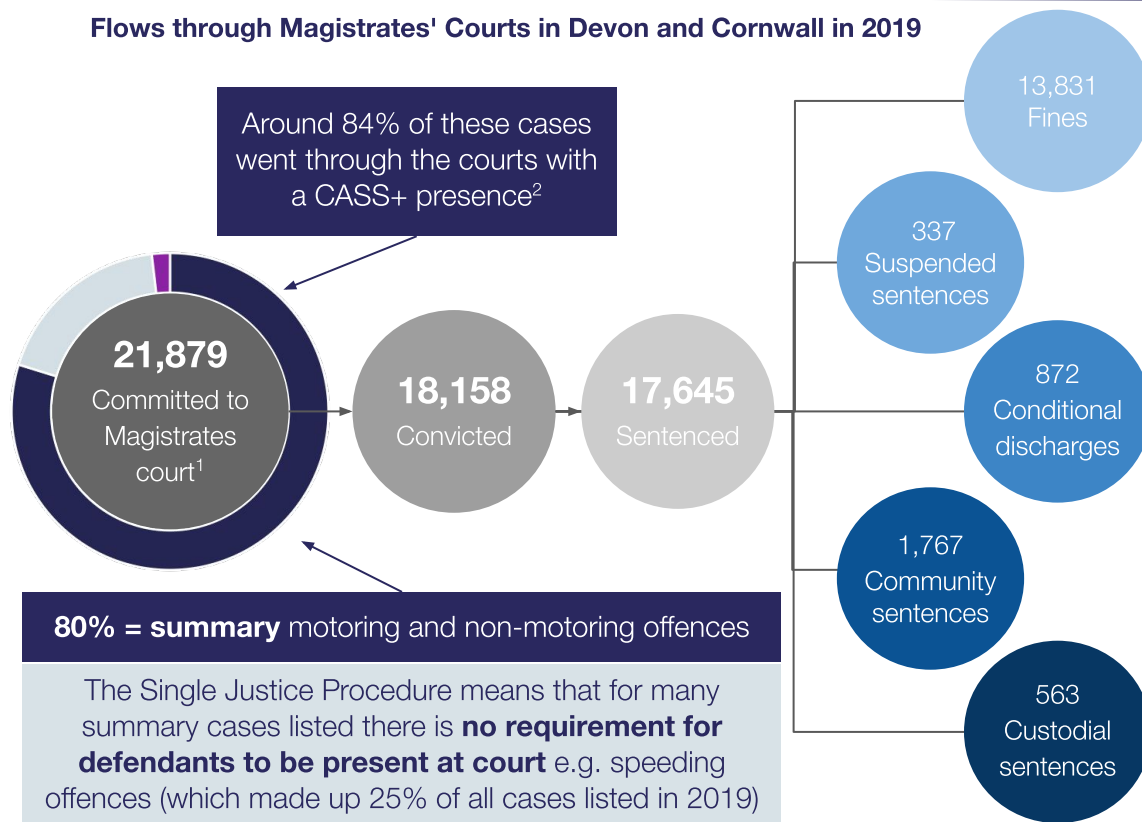
**18%**

of service users had a physical health need

We will revisit the missing components of the profile over the course of the rest of the evaluation.

# In 2019 almost 22,000 defendants were committed to Magistrates' Courts in Devon and Cornwall. Although 84% of these defendants were processed by courts with a CASS+ presence, many of these did not attend court and so could not be engaged by CASS+

## Flows through Magistrates' Courts in Devon and Cornwall in 2019



The CASS+ Service aims to cast its net wide, offering support to anyone in present in court, with the intention that this will therefore include those that might be seen as a 'priority' group (defendants with outstanding support needs) within it.

In 2019/20, CASS+ worked with 435 new defendants (66% of all new clients).

The number of defendants CASS+ can work with are limited by the non-statutory/voluntary nature of the service, and the available space in which to work with clients within the court.

We were told that the current operating model effectively meets demand the majority of the time. However, in the next phase of the research we will assess the proportion of the total pool of clients that CASS+ is aiming to engage, and what proportion it is successful in engaging.

# In summary, the CASS+ model is not designed to target individuals. However, the theory of change acknowledges that there are characteristics and circumstances that make some clients more likely to benefit from the service, and these are prioritised

## The operating model is justified in providing support to anyone in court

The CASS+ operating model is designed to support offenders as well as those at risk of becoming involved in the Criminal Justice System and their families. The rationale for this is two-fold: there is a strong evidence base for offending being concentrated within families and transmitted from one generation to the next, but families can also play a key role in supporting the rehabilitation of family members. Addressing the criminogenic and other needs of offenders' families as well as offenders themselves is therefore justified.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

## Staff can identify clients who are most likely to benefit from the service, but they have to be willing to engage

Staff do spend time observing court listings to identify offenders committing low level offences and will prioritise introducing themselves to these clients first. However, CASS+ is dependent on the willingness of the client to engage, so whilst staff may seek to help some clients as a priority over others, the resulting client profile is unlikely to be 100% as intended.

*"It's designed to serve anybody, from anywhere, with anything...that's what's so unique about CASS" CASS+ Staff*

## The lack of targeting is a key factor in the model, but prioritisation of clients may help manage demand effectively

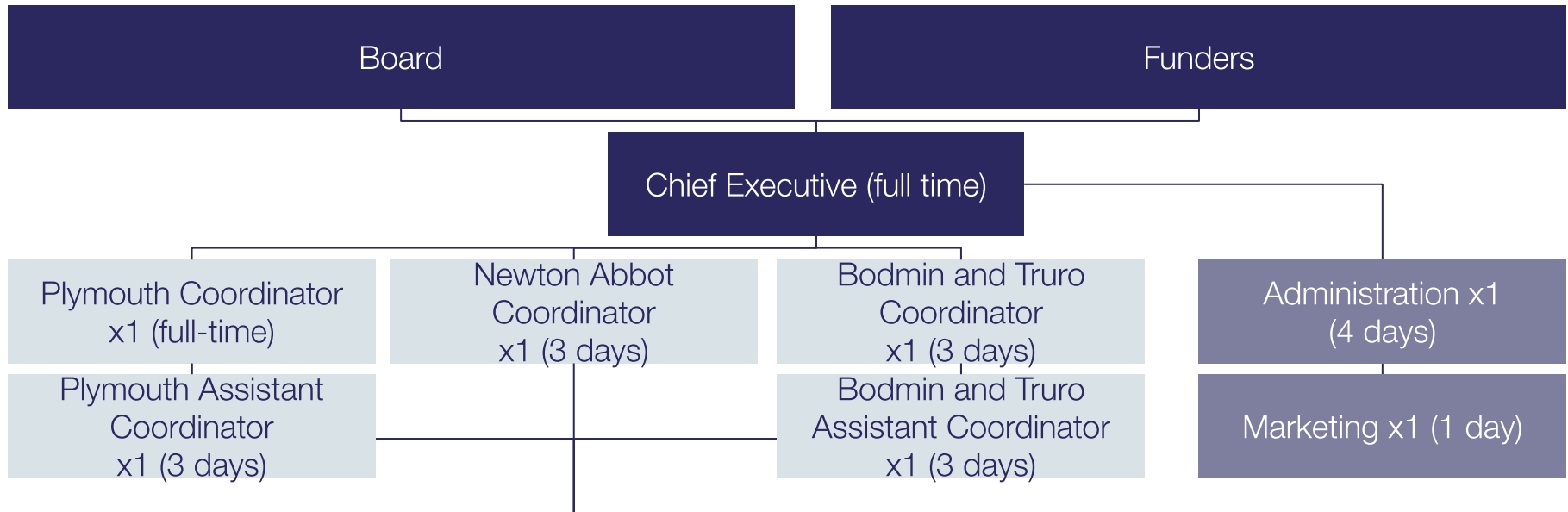
The fact that CASS+ is open to anyone has been identified by interviewees as a critical success factor supporting perceptions of the approachability of the service. Essentially, in order to attract the most at-risk clients, CASS+ must cast its net wide. CASS+ may consider formalising a client prioritisation process to help focus the intervention of delivery on priority clients, without adversely impacting the operating model.



# **Affordability:**

**the extent to which CASS+ delivers its operation  
efficiently and at scale**

# CASS+ currently has a staff of 8 and a team of volunteers (though an additional administrator and operations manager have recently been recruited). It has a physical presence in 4 magistrates courts in Devon and Cornwall



**Volunteers**  
(c. 12% with lived experience of the CJS)

In 2019 there were 42 volunteers across the year. 17 were new recruits. Over the course of the year 18 volunteers were lost to full time employment or relocation. This equates to a turnover rate of about 43 and a retention rate of about 28

*"We normally have 30-35 volunteers across the four courts" CASS+ Coordinator*

# The cost of the service in the financial year 2019/20 was £164,509. Staff and volunteers worked with at least 662 new individuals (not including brief interventions and existing clients) meaning the average cost per new client was around £249

In the financial year 2019/20 CASS+ worked with at least 662 individuals (generating 2,633 referrals to a range of 354 different services). The total cost of CASS+ work in 2019/20 was £164,509. **This means that the average cost of CASS+ per new client was £249 over the year** (excluding brief interventions and existing clients).

Looking at the Home Office cost of crime estimations from 2018, the lowest cost recorded for crimes most frequently linked to CASS+ clients is £870 for a theft from vehicle. The reoffending rate in Devon and Cornwall is currently 25.5%. At least 66% of the 662 individuals engaged with CASS+ were defendants. **We could therefore expect around 109 individuals to reoffend, which even using the lowest estimate of £870 per offence, would cost society almost £95,000.**

Using an average cost of £5,687 (average of all 'individual' offences) the cost of reoffending could be almost £620,000. At this cost CASS+ would need to have prevented 29 further offences to be cost-effective. *This is likely to an overestimation as CASS+ service users are unlikely to have committed the most serious violence with injury offences included in the Home Office calculations. A full cost benefit and reoffending analysis will be conducted in the second phase of the evaluation.*

<sup>1</sup>Home Office. The economic and social costs of crime. Second edition. (2018).

Home Office Unit Costs of Crime (£) (2018)<sup>1</sup>

	Individual	Commercial
Theft of vehicle	10,290	35,180
Theft from vehicle	870	1,870
Theft from person	1,380	N/A
Criminal damage - other	1,350	1,420
Burglary	5,930	15,460
Violence with Injury	14,050	N/A
Violence without Injury	5,940	N/A



# An effective early intervention needs to be delivered at scale to be able to impact the numbers processed at court for summary offences. The CASS+ volunteer model means the service can be feasibly delivered to a large number of people at a low cost

## Volunteer-led

CASS+ can operate at scale by employing highly skilled co-ordinators who can deliver interventions but also recruit, train and manage a team of volunteers.

*"Without volunteers going in and physically being in the courtroom and identifying the needs of people being heard, you would be putting yourself in danger of being in the office all the time and missing 80% of your potential client turnover, or the needs of those people that really do need us. So that's why we have to have volunteers" CASS+ Coordinator*

## Skills-tailored

Volunteers are deployed according to their skill sets. CASS+ has been particularly effective at recruiting unpaid staff on placements from relevant university courses. Stakeholders highlighted this meant the level of support provided has always been high quality, and also an added benefit of contributing to the professional development of individuals likely to go on to work in partner organisations.

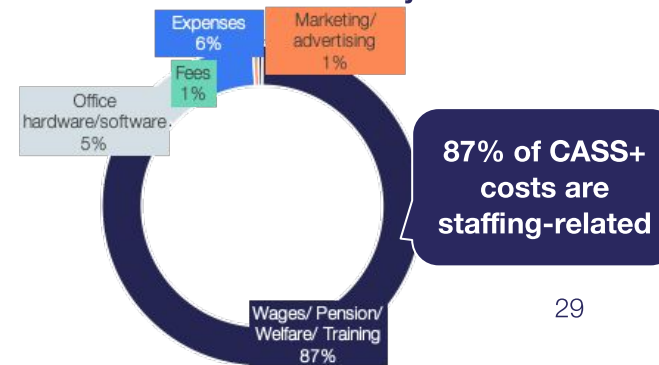
## Court-based

CASS+ staff and volunteers operate from Courts meaning there is no substantial capital investment required. Being physically present also means there is a quick and easy way to screen in potential clients. *That said there is limited available space within courts which can impact the number of clients who can be seen 1-1.*

## Scaled and client-led interventions

CASS+ operates a scaled approach to interventions, offering brief conversation and advice all the way up to sustained mentoring. Tailoring the level of intervention to need/demand from clients individually means time can be spent efficiently.

Costs of CASS+ in the financial year 2019/20<sup>1</sup>



# In summary, CASS+ is a relatively low-cost model which can be delivered at scale, however managing demands from longer-term clients could be a challenging factor in the roll out of any new service

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CASS+ makes effective use of a volunteers to be able to deliver interventions to those willing to engage at court.

It is unclear at this stage of the evaluation what the split of time is between on-the-day clients and longer-term clients. However, co-ordinators (particularly in Plymouth's urban centre) referred to challenges in managing large caseloads of ongoing clients (who can drop in to court at any time) whilst delivering an immediate service in court. This has been particularly challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic when coordinators have been working mostly without their usual team of volunteers.

Another issue specific to Plymouth has been people attending court specifically seeking support from CASS+ having been referred through word of mouth. These additional demands affect the affordability, as well as the targeting and proportionality of the service. Similar issues were reported in the service based in Highbury Corner Court.

Demands have been managed in Plymouth (and in the Highbury Corner Advice Service) through an appointment booking system.

This can have some downsides, but if carefully managed allows staff to see longer-term clients in court as well as being available to new clients.

*"We have to be careful not to be taken over by appointments, when we've got Mr Smith out [in the waiting area] struggling but we're waiting for another guy to come"*

Highbury Corner Community Advice

**Crest will be conducting a full cost benefit analysis as part of the second phase of the evaluation. This will be included in the full report next year.**



# **Proportionality:**

**how CASS+ engages with clients and the extent to which this is proportionate to their needs**

# CASS+ client support journeys can be broadly grouped into four categories ranging from brief interventions to long-term support

CASS+ clients tend to follow one of four typical 'journeys'. Whilst the journey is generally reflective of the level and type of needs, other factors including willingness to engage will impact this. It may not be clear from an initial meeting whether the client is likely to end up having medium or long term support.

1. Brief intervention	2. On the day support	3. Medium-term support	4. Long-term support
Signposting	Signposting	Signposting	Signposting
	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention
		Mentoring	Mentoring
		Motivation	Motivation

The number of clients on each of these pathways also varies geographically. The courts in Cornwall are in more rural locations, so clients tend to be provided more often with brief interventions and on the day support, with some follow-up over the phone, whilst in Devon (and in particular Plymouth) medium- and long-term clients often return to the court for follow-up meetings.

*"Sometimes they (..) just want a little bit of help. Other times they run with you all day. Yeah, it really is individual."* CASS+ Coordinator

# By offering different levels of support, co-ordinators are tasked with carrying on-going caseloads as well as an 'on-the-day' service. This potentially limits the number of new clients CASS+ can see, though interviewees told us the service is always responsive

## Delivering long-term interventions may be impacting the number of 'on-the-day' interventions possible...

Currently the number of clients dealt with by CASS+ is only a small proportion of people going through the magistrates courts. It is not clear how many people (or what proportion of defendants) the service is aiming to support with the current staffing model, or the numbers of clients that could be supported through an uplift in resources (staff or volunteers)/expansion of the model (currently CASS+ does not work in all magistrates' courts in Devon and Cornwall).

Demand stemming from on-going long-term clients in Plymouth has been managed through the development of an appointments system to limit the number of visits/hours dedicated to ongoing clients and keeping time free for delivering 'on-the-day' work.

## ...but evidence shows that sustained support is often needed to address criminogenic needs...

Desistance from offending is not often a straight line. Offenders are likely to have relapses. Support is therefore often most effective if it is available over an extended period of time, as well as taking a holistic approach to multiple need pathways.<sup>1</sup>

## ...and interviewees reported that the CASS+ staff are always accessible and available to receive new clients

*"Previously [before lockdown] they always had 3-4 people in the office so if you had a number of enquiries you could always find someone to talk to" Court Usher*

*"In regards to their responsiveness...they're just fantastic...there's never a delay of more than 24 hours in response from them and it's often within the same hour" Drug and Alcohol Support Service*

<sup>1</sup>Wong, K. (HMIP) *If reoffending is not the only outcome, what are the alternatives?* (2019).

## **In summary, CASS+ support is client-led, prioritising those issues which are perceived by the client to be of highest importance. This means it is difficult to objectively assess the proportionality of intervention to need**

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In theory having a scaled approach to interventions means that CASS+ can deliver appropriate and proportionate interventions to client needs.

However, it is hard to evaluate objectively whether interventions are proportionate to need, because of the client-led nature of the service. CASS+ works to resolve the need identified by the client as their primary issue of concern, rather than a need identified by CASS+ themselves or any other agency.

This may mean disproportionate resources are sometimes focused on certain clients or needs, but equally it can improve efficiency and effectiveness by creating greater client buy-in and ensuring more appropriate sequencing of interventions. This might include, for instance, addressing immediate food and housing needs before long-term mental health needs.

Interviewees provided some examples of clients who had received longer-term support from CASS+. These individuals were generally described as having multiple needs, but each either below the threshold of a service or with limited options due to failing to attend appointments in the past and being rejected as a repeat client. For these clients, CASS+ is the last point of call, and there is no other support available.

Therefore the extent to which CASS+ is proportionate to client needs also depends on the availability of the agencies they are referring clients to and the thresholds of other services. For some there may be a waiting list, and therefore a need for CASS+ to provide a source of support and motivation to clients whilst they wait to be seen.

*"We have quite a group of people who just fall between all the services, like mental health because they're not mentally unwell enough or learning difficulties...just on the cusp"* Probation



# **Effectiveness:**

**how and to what extent CASS+ resolves individual offenders' presenting problems and supports behaviour change in the short term and the longer term**

# The effectiveness of CASS+ in terms of addressing client needs, improving wellbeing and reducing reoffending will be evaluated in the second phase of this work, but interviews with stakeholders have produced some early findings:

## CASS+ makes big impact on immediate needs

Interviewees referred clients to CASS+ for a number of reasons, but the immediate resolution of needs for clients in crisis was frequently cited. Stakeholders trust CASS+ as a central repository of information to be able to resolve issues for clients in the immediate term.

*"In particular with fines, [clients] say 'yes [CASS+] were fantastic. I've had a fines card sent out to me. I can pay this and it's a huge weight off my mind'"*  
Probation Officer

*"I always feel confident that CASS+ are able to signpost the client to what they need"*  
Solicitor

## But stakeholders have also seen longer-term impacts

Interviewees also saw the benefit of CASS+ as longer-term support for clients who have fallen through the cracks in the system, helping to navigate them between multiple services to get support for different needs from different places, and motivating clients to drive behaviour changes in themselves by participating in courses or other activities.

*"When CASS+ become involved, in the majority of cases, we see that someone's whole lifestyle, their whole environment improves significantly...Although the reoffending might not stop immediately things start to fall into place that bit quicker"*  
Drug and Alcohol Support Service

*"The [CASS+] service is invaluable. I don't know what would happen if they weren't there...the whole system would just fall through"*  
Magistrate



# The outcomes evaluation will assess the impact of CASS+ on service user needs, wellbeing and reoffending over the next year in line with the theory of change

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## Quantitative analysis of need and wellbeing over time

Crest have worked with CASS+ staff to develop existing outcomes assessment processes and documentation to allow a quantitative analysis the impact on service users at 6 and 18 weeks post initial intervention with CASS+.

## Client and stakeholder interviews

This will be supported by interviews with clients and other stakeholders to gain an understanding of any behaviour changes and outcomes driven by CASS+ as well as identifying the key factors of the service that supported those changes.

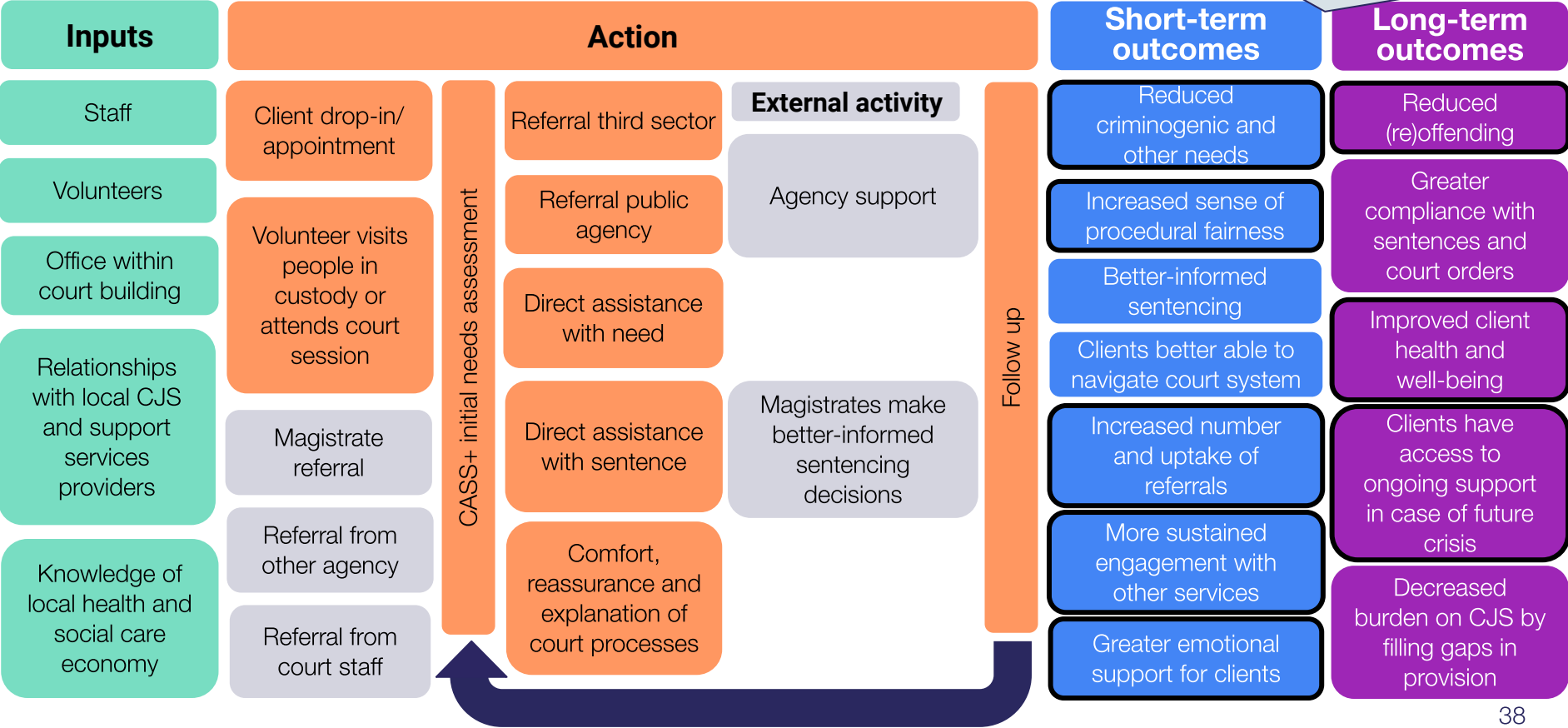
## Reoffending analysis

Crest are aiming to use the Ministry of Justice data lab to support a reoffending analysis for clients supported by CASS+.

Additional information may be sought from other CJS agencies.

# Theory of Change: promoting social inclusion

In our outcomes evaluation, we will be testing impact on clients' criminogenic needs, access to emotional support, engagement with other services, reoffending rates, perceptions of procedural fairness and well-being



# Interim Conclusions

# The CASS+ theory of change supports an evidence-based approach to the provision of court-based advice in Devon and Cornwall with an overall aim of promoting social inclusion. The service is working well in many respects:

## Targeting

- There is no defined target cohort, however CASS+ effectively identifies and prioritises those it deems most at risk, whilst still supporting anyone that requires help.
- Staff work with court agencies to identify those at risk, and prioritise dynamically to manage demand. In 2019/20 CASS+ engaged 435 often unrepresented defendants with multiple needs, without having to target.

## Proportionality

- Being client-led allows CASS+ to make prioritisation decisions according to clients' assessments of need
- Scaled interventions mean CASS+ can be proportionate to need, whilst accounting for individual levels of engagement and motivation
- Stakeholders from other organisations described CASS+ as a vital and necessary service.

## Affordability

- CASS+ is a relatively low-cost intervention that can be delivered at scale by making use of a volunteer-based model and the court setting.
- Increasing demands from longer-term clients have been managed through an appointments system in Plymouth.
- The average cost per client, per year, in 2019/20 was £249.

## Effectiveness

- Interviewees all demonstrated an overwhelmingly positive outlook on the impact of CASS+ on service users, and provided some concrete examples of CASS+ resolving client issues in the immediate term.
- A number of interviewees also perceived a longer term impact of CASS+ on client behaviours.
- This will be tested further in phase two of the evaluation.

## But there are also some challenges to delivery:

### Targeting

- Clients not involved in the criminal justice system sometimes seek help from CASS+; however, if these numbers grow this could cause problems delivering a service particularly aimed offenders or those at risk of offending.
- Covid-19 impacted CASS+'s ability to reach its audience, and is still now running without volunteers in some courts.

### Affordability

- The volunteer model has not been possible to maintain throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, due to court closures and social distancing requirements. This may pose challenges for affordability if restrictions remain in place, dramatically reducing capacity for equivalent expenditure.

### Proportionality

- CASS+ sometimes manage long-term clients when they are rejected from other support services, unable to access the support required or not engaged in any formal way with another service
- CASS+ should assess whether the operating model/theory of change should explicitly address the need for case management

### Effectiveness

- The effectiveness of CASS+ is dependent on the availability of other local support services.
- This can be particularly problematic in rural areas where services are often spread out or located further away in urban areas (though court co-location has helped in Cornwall)

# Interviewees identified some key elements of the model. We have highlighted specific components of the model which are essential in bold text, as well as listing some desirable components

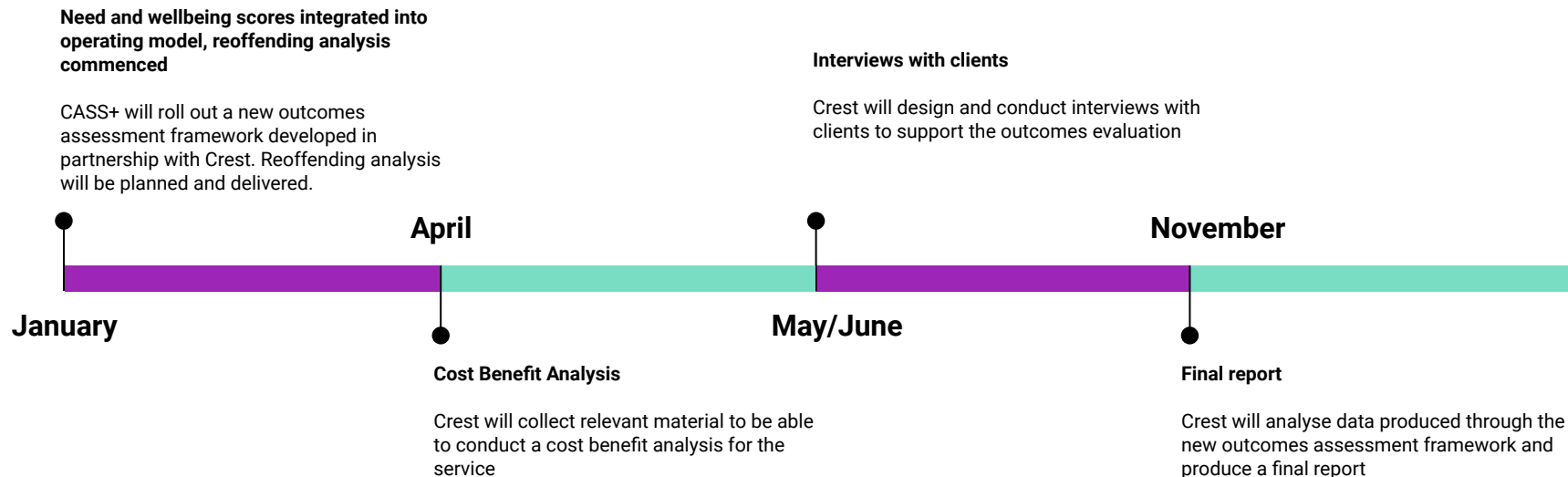
Expert staff and volunteers	Responsive	Localised
<b>Staff must be approachable, friendly, compassionate and motivated</b>	The service must be easily accessible by both service users and other stakeholders	<b>The service must have detailed local knowledge to be able to answer a broad range of questions</b>
Staff and volunteers must have experience working with clients with multiple and complex needs, or have an effective training process in place	The service must allow people to drop in	The service must form strong relationships with other local agencies through its staff
A volunteer model is required to have adequate reach across potential clients	<b>The service must be able to respond to questions and provide advice rapidly</b>	<b>The service must have a physical presence in court</b>
Generalist	Independent non-statutory status	Non-targeted
The service must be focussed on signposting at its core, with its main function being a central repository of local information	<b>The service must be independent from the criminal justice system</b>	<b>The service must be available to anyone in court without any thresholds required to be met to receive support</b>
<b>The service must be able to address multiple needs</b>	Engagement in the service must be voluntary	



# **Next steps: the outcomes evaluation**

# The second part of the evaluation will focus on outcomes (in terms of client need and wellbeing as well as reducing reoffending) and conducting a cost benefit analysis. We are due to report back at the end of 2021

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# Thank you

For more information please contact  
[eleanor.covell@crestadvisory.com](mailto:eleanor.covell@crestadvisory.com)  
[www.crestadvisory.com](http://www.crestadvisory.com)

Process Evaluation: CASS+ / EC - 07/12/2020 / Version 2/ Classification  
scheme: Publishable



# **Annex**

**Annex A: Client Profile Analysis**

**Annex B: Example Client Pathways**

**Annex C: Stakeholder Map**

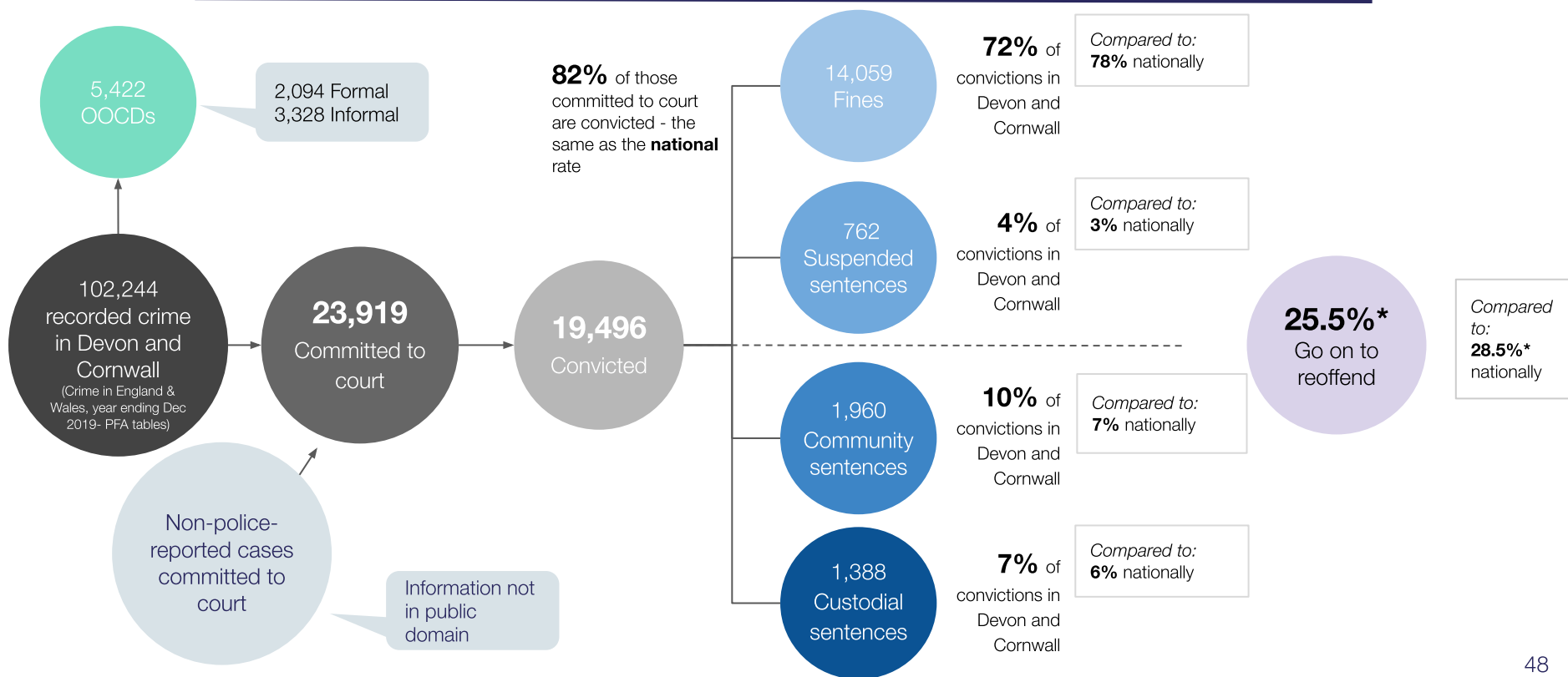
**Annex D: Previous Evaluation Findings**

**Annex E: References/Evidence Base**

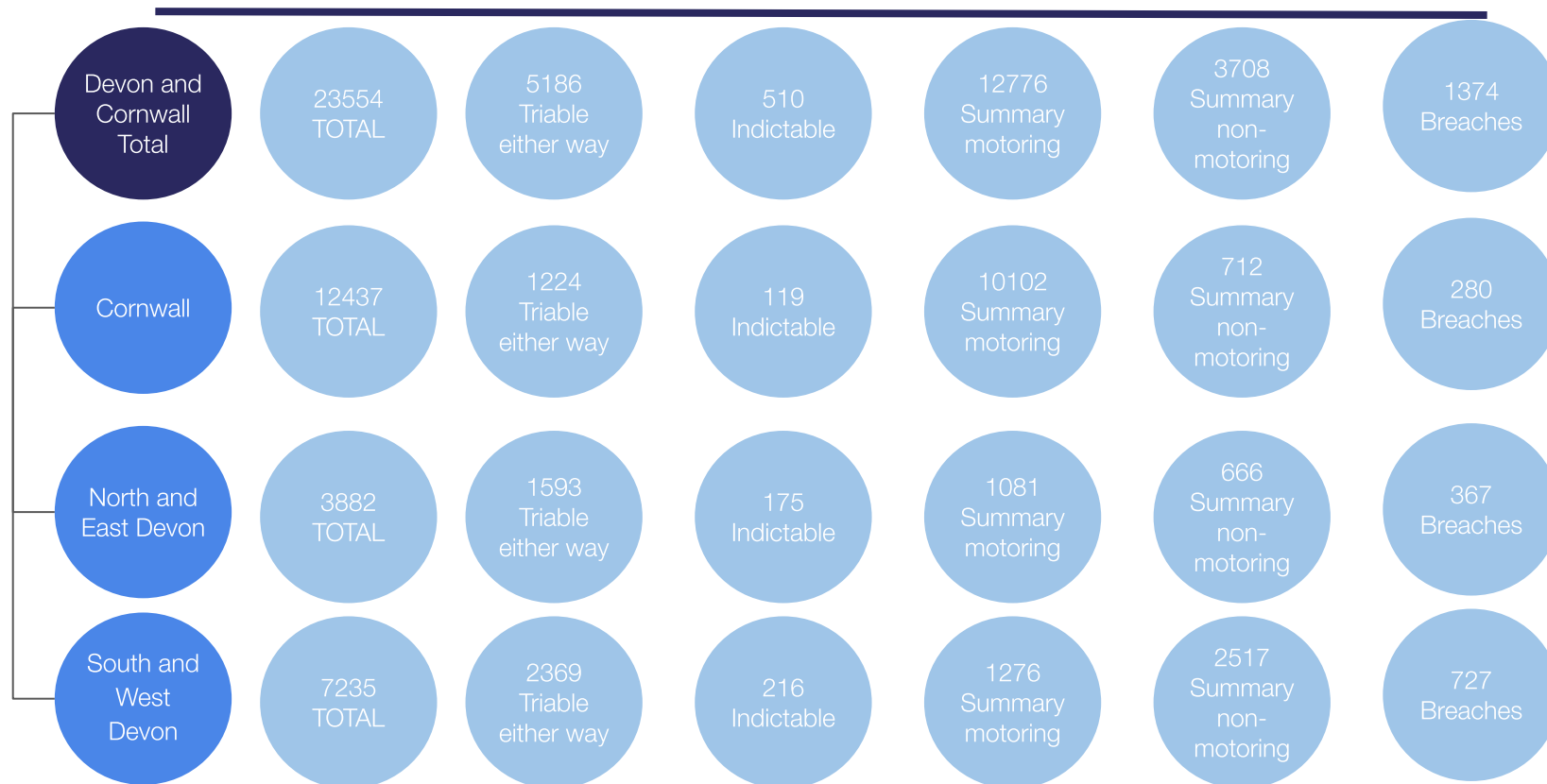


# **Annex A: Client Profile Analysis and demand context**

# In 2019 almost 24,000 defendants were committed to all criminal courts in Devon and Cornwall, as well as additional numbers reported by other prosecuting agencies. 14,059 fines were given alongside 1,960 community sentences



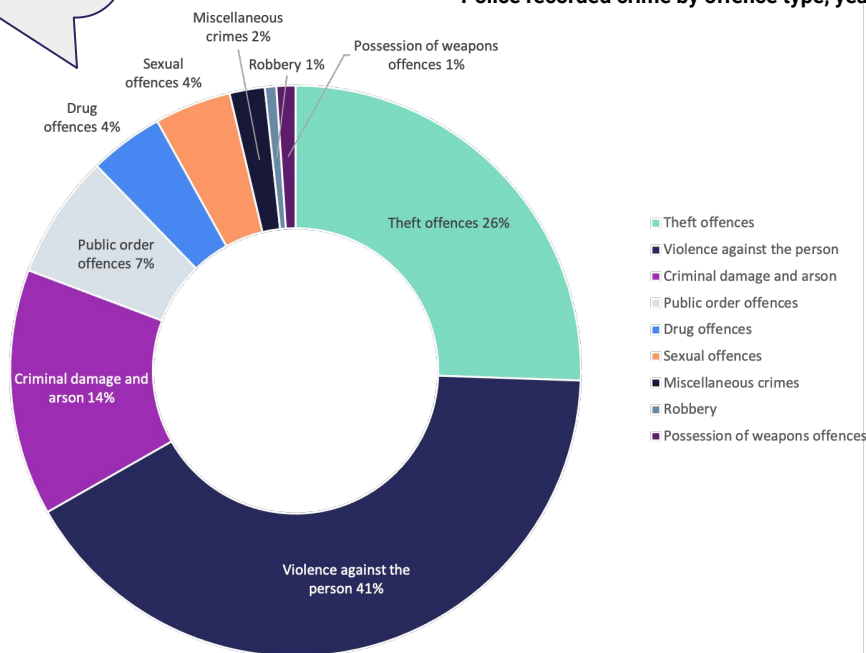
# There were a total of 23,554 cases sent to Magistrates Courts in Devon and Cornwall in 2019



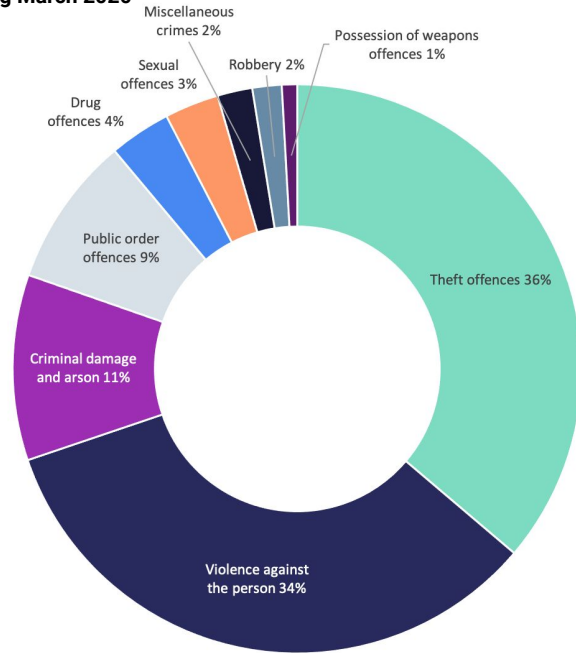
# A greater proportion of offending in Devon and Cornwall is made up of violent offences than the England and Wales average

The offence breakdown in Devon & Cornwall is generally consistent across all community safety partnerships, with only slight variations

## Devon and Cornwall



## England and Wales



# **We have used the CASS+ database to draw out some statistics describing the CASS+ client profile in 2019/20**

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The CASS+ database has only been in use since late 2018 and implementation has been graduated. This means that, although data quality has improved dramatically over time, these statistics may change as data quality continues to improve.

These figures should be treated as an indicative client profile, however we should expect exact numbers to change when we re-run the analysis at the end of 2021.

The following pages outline the client profile, according to the database, in terms of:

- Defendant status and previous convictions
- Offence type
- Needs
- Age
- Benefits
- Housing
- Employment

# CASS+ clients were (as expected) a mix of defendants/offenders and others who were in court

At least 66% of clients in the data set received were involved in the CJS as an defendant/offender



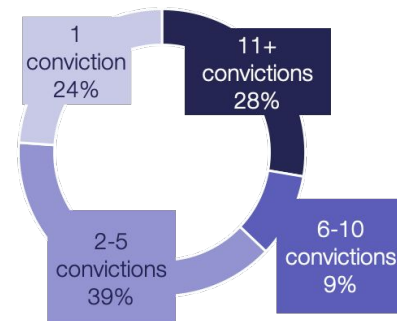
37% of clients involved in the CJS had previous convictions



Of those, 24% had just 1



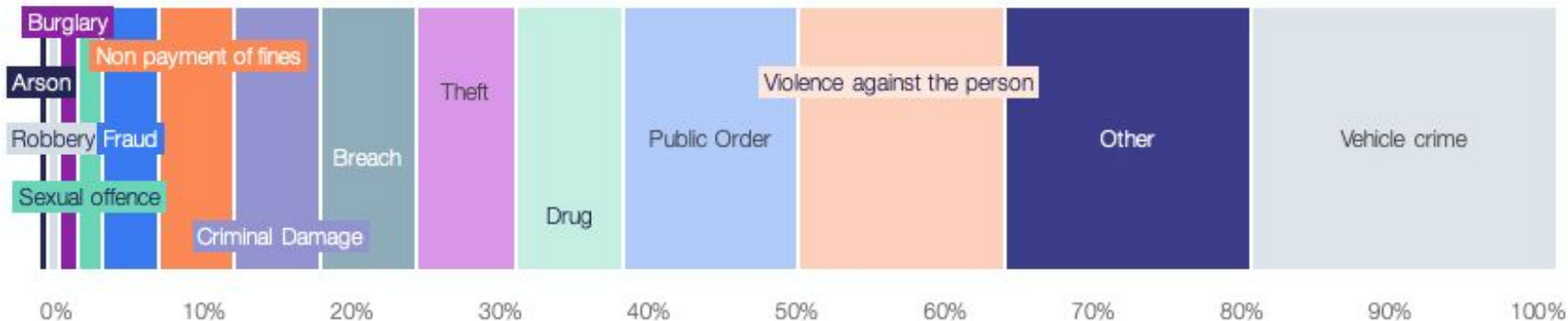
At least 41% of these were not represented by a solicitor





# Looking specifically at the defendant clients, the offending profile was in line with the descriptions of interviewees: predominantly low level offending, though violence against the person contains a range of degrees of offence

Proportionate breakdown of the total number of offences charged in the defendant client group, 2019/20 (note a number of defendants/offenders had been charged with multiple offences)

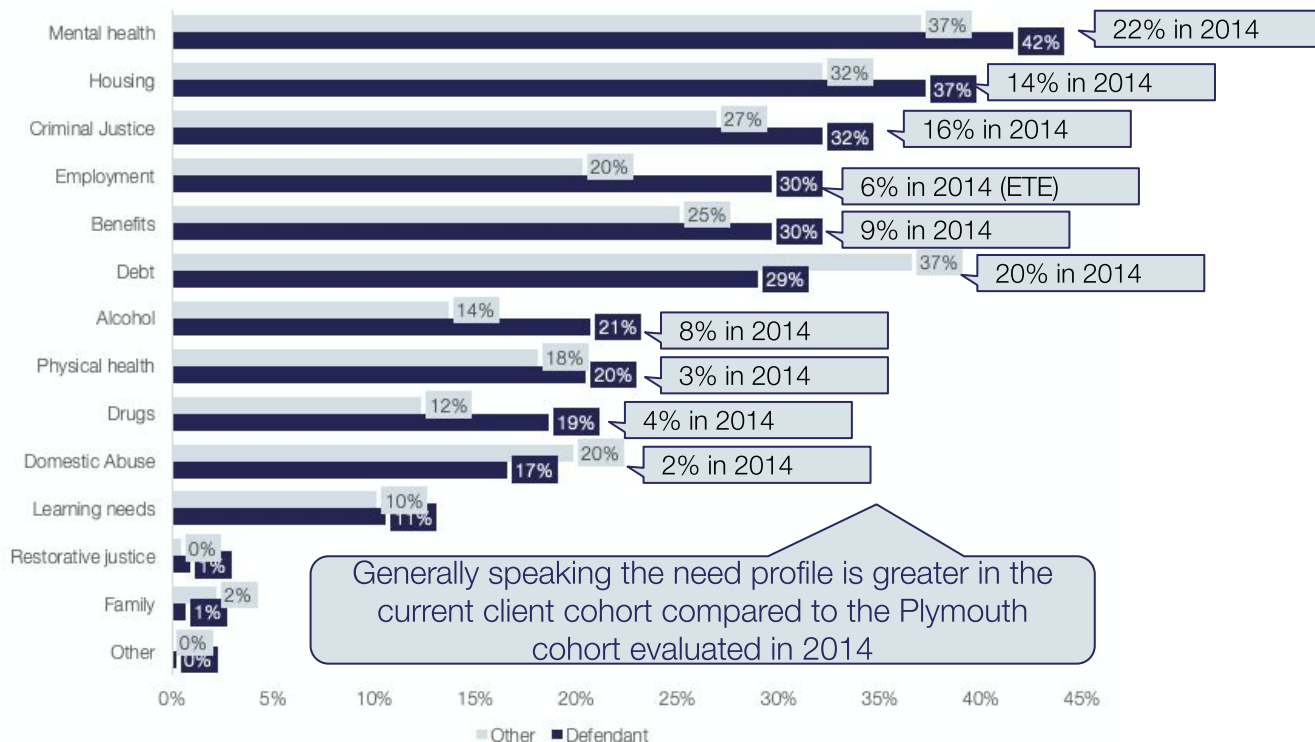


Of all offences recorded in 2019/20, **20% were vehicle crime**, 14% violence against the person, 12% public order, and 7% theft offences

For the second part of the evaluation it would be interesting to look at the sentencing outcomes for these offence types to test if that is also in line with the purported client profile

# According to the needs assessment part of the form 42% of clients who were defendants had a mental health need along with 37% of the rest of clients

Proportion of clients with specific needs identified by type of need split by split by defendant and other client groups, 2019/20



Generally speaking the need profile is greater in the current client cohort compared to the Plymouth cohort evaluated in 2014

'Defendants' are those attending court for a hearing

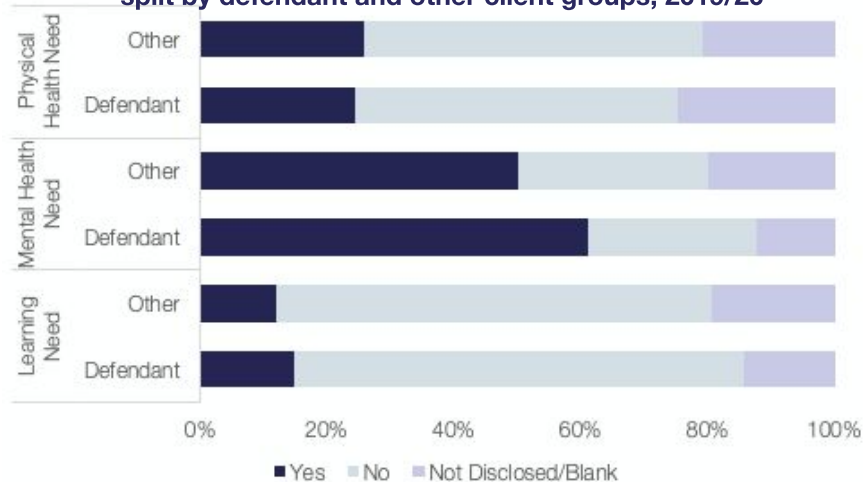
'Other' includes families of defendants and any other individuals supported by CASS+ who are not defendants

# Mental health was a particularly prevalent need across both cohorts. 59% of the defendant cohort had a mental health need, and 40% of the remaining cohort

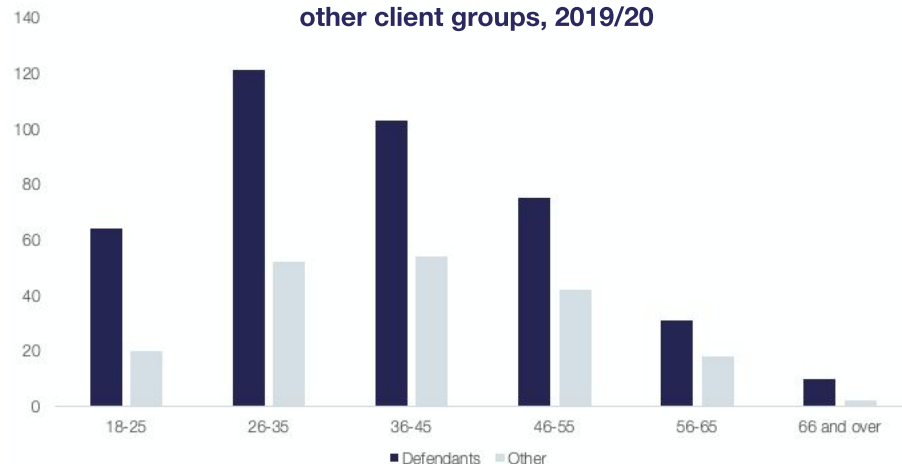
Interviewees frequently referred to mental health service thresholds and the support that CASS+ provides to fill the gap for those that fall between the cracks

Proportionately more in the defendant category were under 35 (this also aligns with the overall distribution of offending in Devon & Cornwall)

**Proportion of clients with physical and mental health and learning needs split by defendant and other client groups, 2019/20**

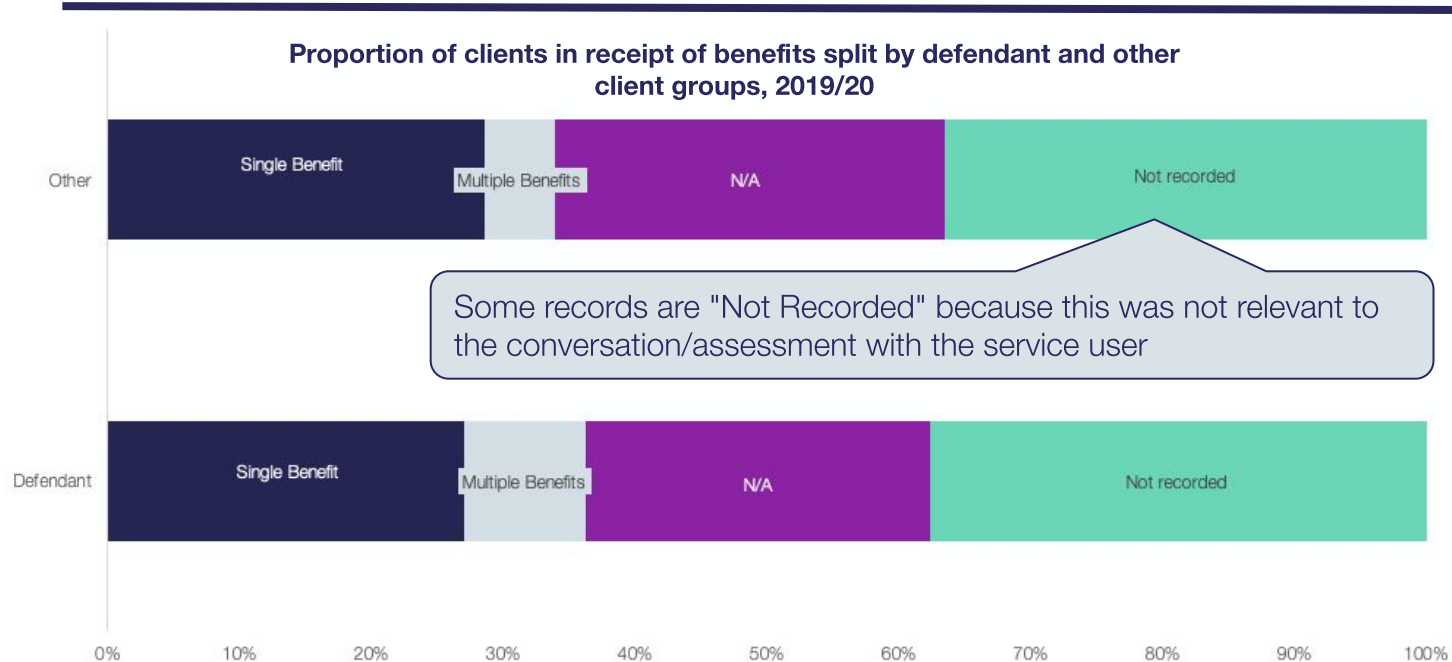


**Age of client at first meeting with CASS+ split by defendant and other client groups, 2019/20**

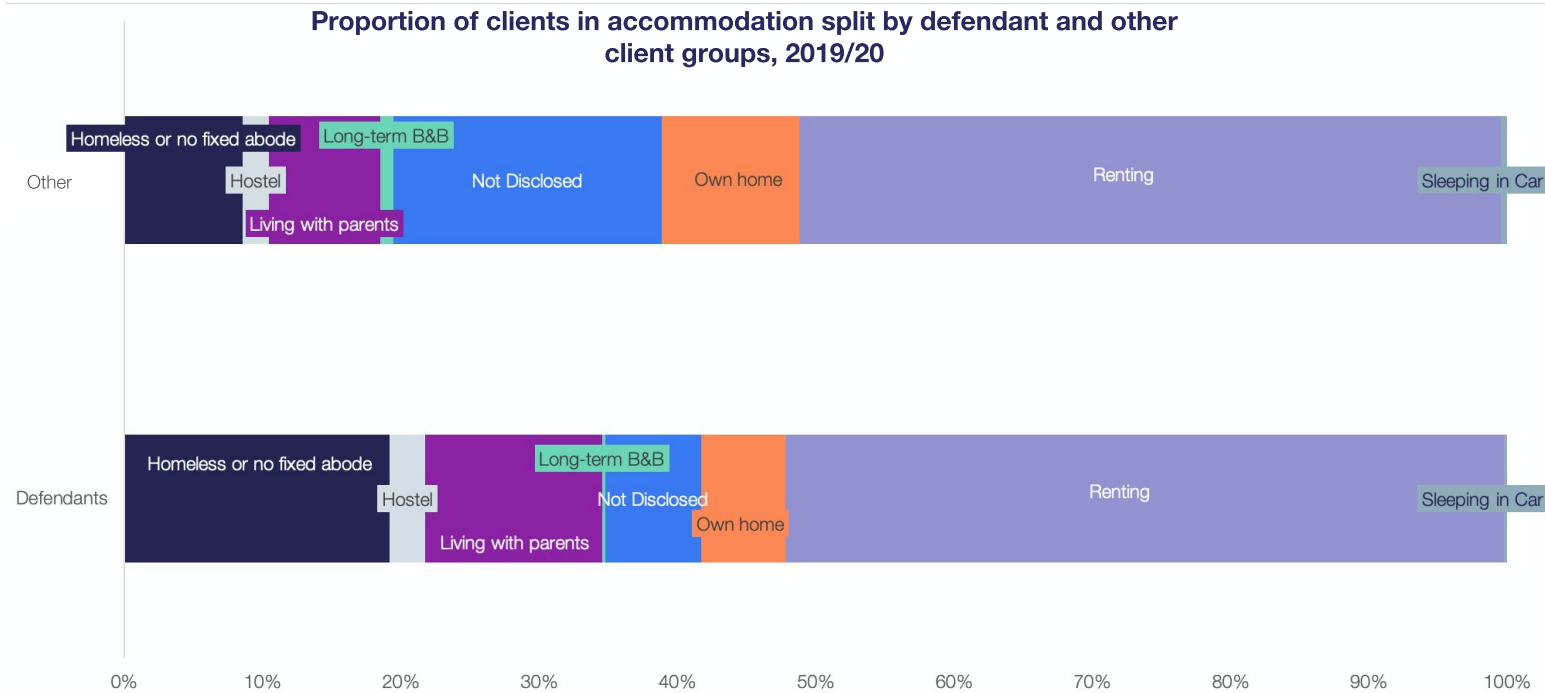


Some records are "Not Disclosed/Blank" because this was not relevant to the conversation/assessment with the service user

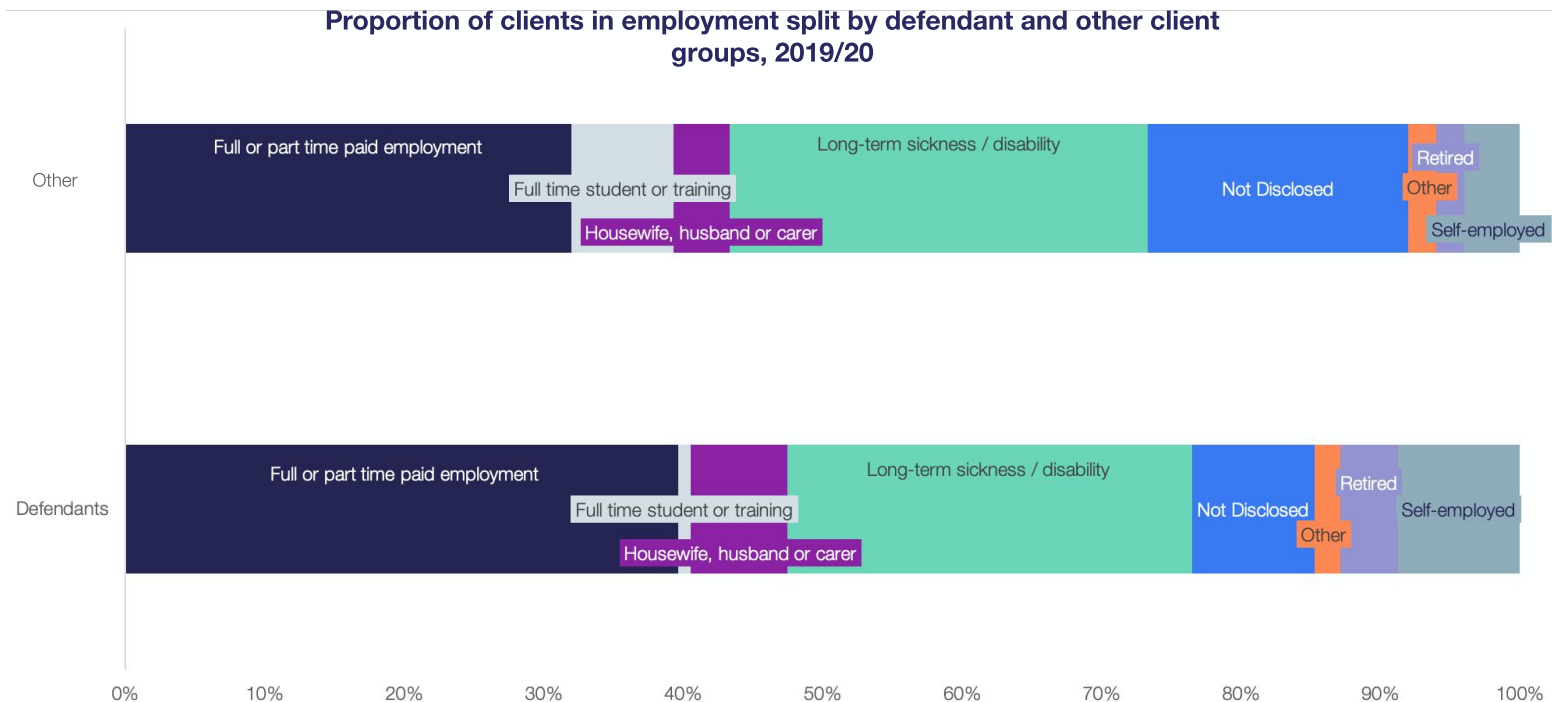
# Defendants were more likely to be on multiple benefits than the wider cohort




# Defendants were more likely to be homeless or of no fixed abode than the broader cohort, but the majority of clients were renting in both groups



# Defendants were more likely to be employed than the wider cohort. A significant proportion in each were long term sick or with a disability

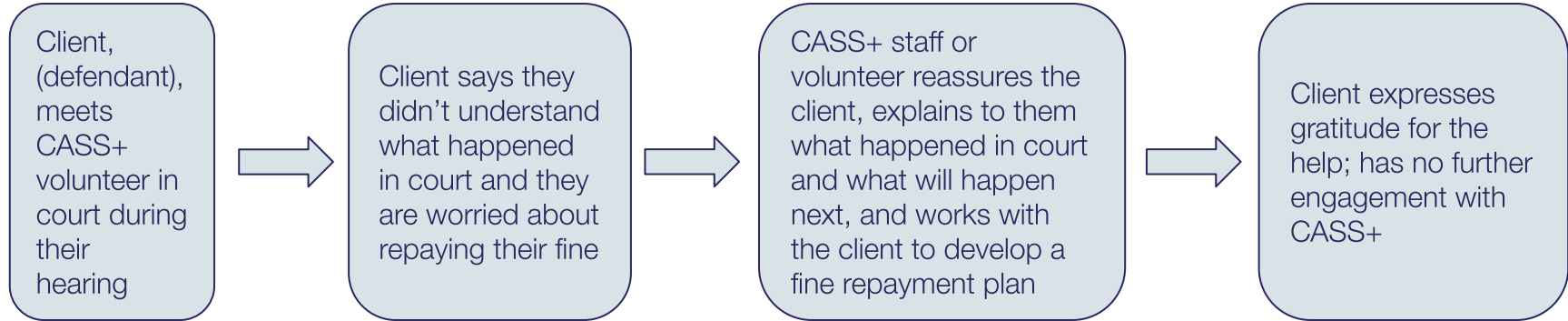




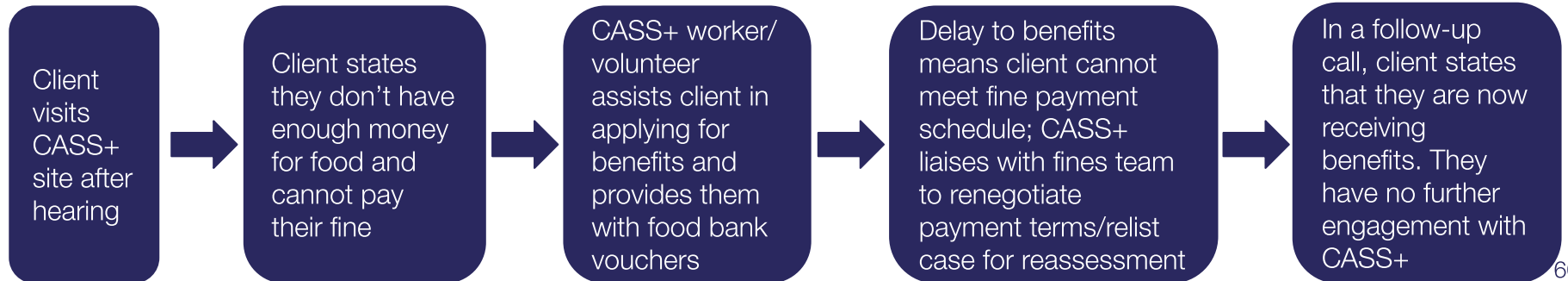
# **Annex B: Example Client Pathways**

# 1. Short-term client provided with direct assistance

## Example Client A



## Example Client B

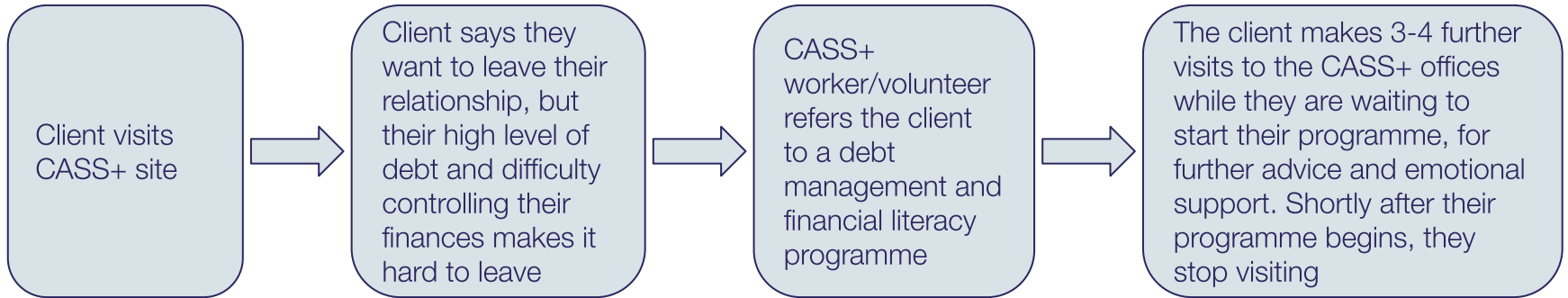




## 2. Medium-term client successfully referred to another programme

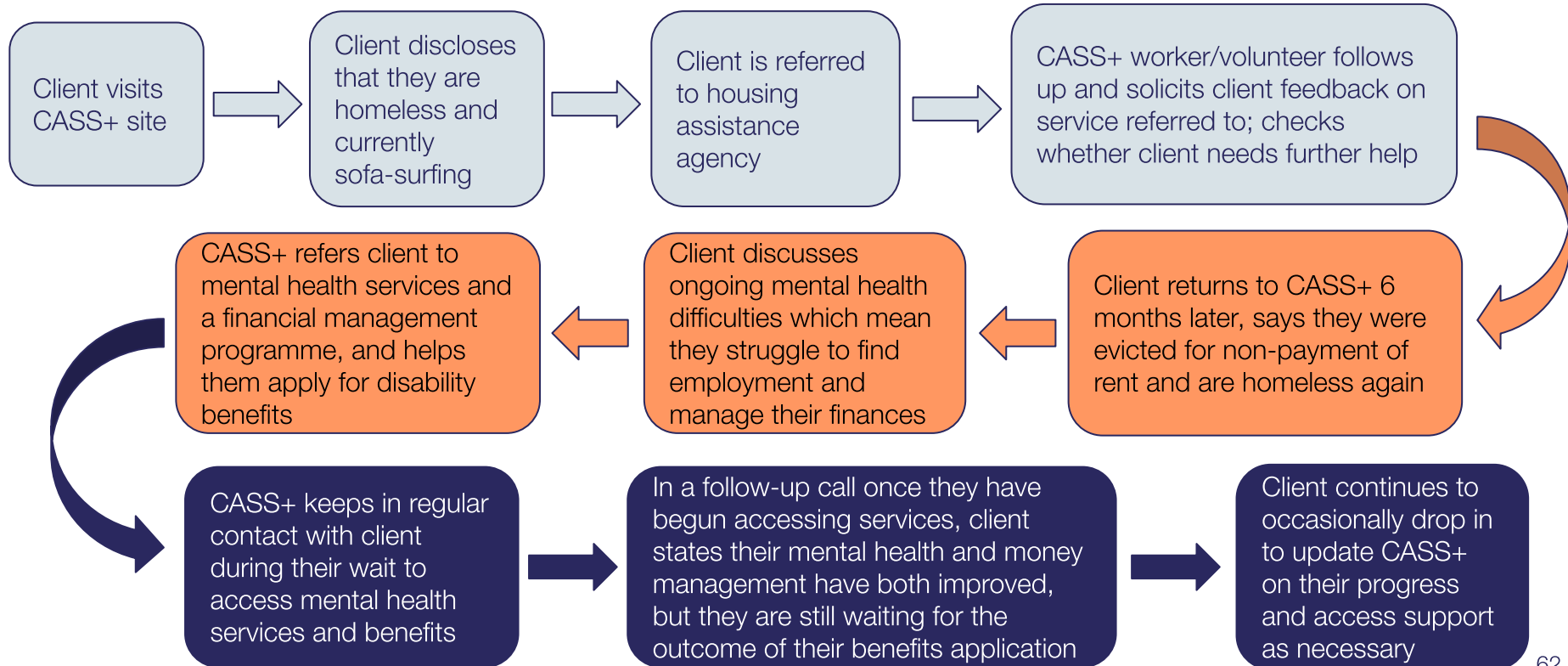
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### Example Client



### 3. Long-term client with multiple needs

#### Example Client

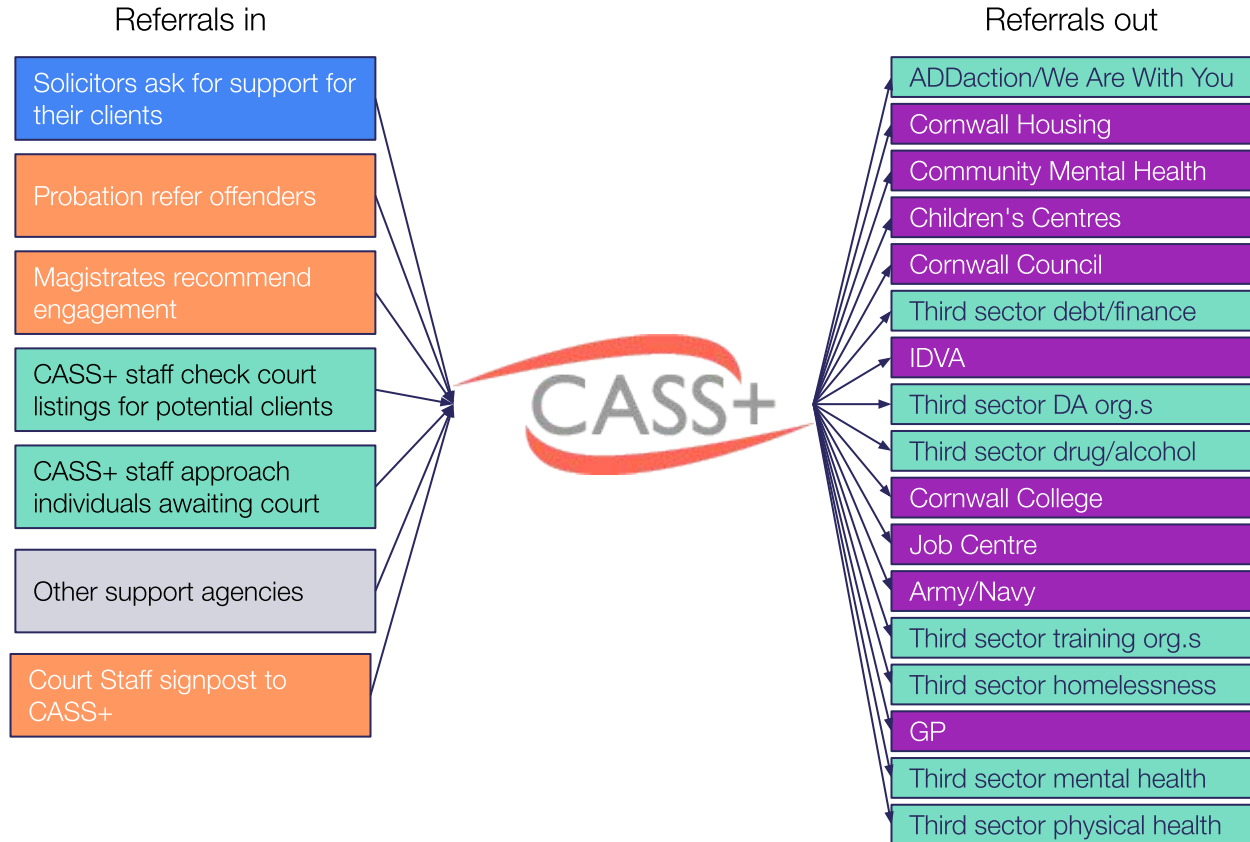




# **Annex C: Stakeholder Map**

# Stakeholder map

**Key:** CJS, Solicitor, Third Sector, Other Public Service





# **Annex D: Previous evaluation findings**

# Findings of evaluations to date

## Elements of success

- Thorough, in-depth knowledge of local services
- Tailored, targeted nature of intervention
- No eligibility requirements or need threshold makes service highly approachable and accessible
- Responsive to clients' priorities rather than having a particular area of focus
- Strong relationships with key services, proactively pursued
- Building relationships with clients and acting as ongoing crisis service for complex cases
- Case management for clients with multiple needs
- Advocacy on clients' behalf, e.g. at referral stage
- Integrated with court system
- Support clients to engage with services/referrals

## Challenges

- Need for somewhere to divert to — reliant on availability and quality of other services
- Lack of formal infrastructure for coordinated commissioning
- Insufficient resources for outreach or assertive service
- No formal mechanisms for tracking clients
- Demand outweighs supply — number of clients could be increased with greater operational capacity
- Difficult to secure long-term, sustainable funding



# **Annex E:**

## **References/Evidence Base**

# References/Evidence Base

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- Page 10:** <sup>1</sup>MoJ. *Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending* (2013). <sup>2</sup>Scottish Government. *What works to reduce reoffending: a summary of the evidence* (2015).
- Page 13:** <sup>1</sup>MoJ. *Transforming Rehabilitation: a summary of evidence on reducing reoffending* (2013). <sup>2</sup>Scottish Government. *What works to reduce reoffending: a summary of the evidence* (2015). <sup>3</sup>HMIP. *Reconciling Desistance and What Works* (2019), <sup>4</sup>HMPPS. *Guidance: Procedural justice* (2019). <sup>5</sup>Criminal Justice Alliance, *To be fair: procedural fairness in courts* (2014).
- Page 18:** <sup>1</sup>NHS England. *About Diversion*. Accessed 07/12/2020. <sup>2</sup>Forbes, E et al. *Evaluating liaison and diversion schemes: an analysis of health, criminal and economic data*. (2017). <sup>3</sup>Disley, E et al. *Evaluation of the offender Liaison and Diversion Trial Schemes* (2016) <sup>4</sup>Weir, K et al. *Checkpoint: An Innovative Programme to Navigate People Away from the Cycle of Reoffending: Implementation Phase Evaluation* (2019).
- Page 24:** <sup>1</sup>Ministry of Justice, *Criminal justice system statistics quarterly: December 2019. Individuals only - corporate excluded*, <sup>2</sup>Based on Magistrates Court Receipt data by Local Justice Area (Cornwall and South and West Devon)
- Page 25:** <sup>1</sup>Farrington, D et al. *The concentration of offending in families*. (1996). <sup>2</sup>Besemer, S, Farrington, DP. *Intergenerational transmission of criminal behaviour. Conviction trajectories of fathers and their children*. (2012) <sup>3</sup>Lord Farmer. *The importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*.
- Page 28:** <sup>1</sup>Home Office. *The economic and social costs of crime*. Second edition. (2018).
- Page 29:** <sup>1</sup>CASS+ *Financial Year 2019/20 Accounts Summary*.
- Page 33:** <sup>1</sup>Wong, K. (HMIP) *If reoffending is not the only outcome, what are the alternatives?* (2019).
- Page 48:** <sup>1</sup>Home Office *Police Recorded Crime*; <sup>2</sup>Home Office *crime outcomes*; <sup>3</sup>MoJ *court outcomes*; <sup>4</sup>Reoffending rate calculated using MoJ reoffending data tool. <sup>5</sup>Population estimates from ONS *Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, mid-2018*.
- Page 49:** <sup>1</sup>MoJ *Magistrates Court Receipts Tool, Criminal Justice Statistics Quarterly, April-June 2020 release*
- Page 50:** <sup>1</sup>Home Office, *Police Recorded Crime in England & Wales, year ending Dec 2019, PFA tables*.
- Page 51-57:** <sup>1</sup>CASS+ *Client Profile Data from Lamplight Database, financial year 2019/20*.
- Page 65:** <sup>1</sup>Edwards Associates, *'The Community Advice and Support Service (CASS) at the Bodmin and 'Plymouth District Magistrates' Courts'* (2007). <sup>2</sup>Centre for Mental Health, *'Keys to Diversion: Best practice for offenders with multiple needs'* (2014). <sup>3</sup>Centre for Justice Innovation, *'Better Courts Case-study: Plymouth Community Advice and Support Service'* (2015). <sup>5</sup>WestPoint, *'Stakeholder Evaluation of CASSPLUS Support Service Delivery'* (2017).