

# Citizens Advice Scotland

## Response to the Scottish Government's consultation on Scottish Court fees 2025-27

(January 2026)

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### Background

The Citizens Advice network in Scotland plays a crucial role in supporting people across the country to realise their rights. We inform people of their rights and responsibilities and provide holistic, person-centred advice – including advice on social security, debt, energy, housing, employment, family and relationships, complaints processes and legal proceedings. We empower people to secure access to justice by supporting them to navigate systems and procedures to resolve their issues, prevent detriment, and pursue recourse when things go wrong.

The network provides advice via multiple channels: in person in over 300 locations across the country, as well as by phone, email, and other channels, and via our freely accessible online advice pages.

Our holistic advice and support changes lives. In 2024/25, we supported nearly 200,000 people, leading to £169.4 million back into the pockets of people who need it most. Many of the people we support are from the most marginalised and intersectionally disadvantaged communities and backgrounds in Scotland. Last year

- almost two thirds of people we supported reported having a disability or long-term health condition,
- more than half were women,
- one third resided in the most deprived areas in Scotland,
- and more than 1 in 10 identified as belonging to a minoritised ethnic group.

More people have been coming through our doors for help each year since the pandemic – and the cost-of-living crisis shows no sign of relenting. Just as the volume of need is increasing, so is the complexity. Across the last five years, we have seen one in seven people accessing our advice across multiple years. We see crises that are predicated by chronic injustice, often years in the making, which can take hours to understand and untangle – and achieving justice often requires multiple contacts and building up of trust.

In this context, the **CAB network continues to provide vital, life-changing support on legal issues:**

- The Law and Courts pages on our public advice site were viewed more than 970,000 times in 2024/25 and remain some of the most viewed among all our advice pages.
- On legal proceedings, bureaux provided more than 41,000 pieces of advice in 2024/25, which is, on average, more than 3,400 pieces of advice every month.
- Advisers throughout the Citizens Advice network in Scotland routinely support people in accessing and navigating court and tribunal hearings, whether they be virtual, by teleconference, hybrid or in person. In 2024/25, the network supported more than 1,020 clients at courts and tribunals. This includes CAB advisers acting as authorised lay representatives such as in debt and housing cases or in social security and employment tribunals.

Based on the experiences of the people we support and our advice data, as well as expertise from across the Citizens Advice network in Scotland, our policy work on Human Rights and Access to Justice aims to ensure that people's human rights are protected and realised, that people in Scotland have equal access to the justice system, to legal services and to effective remedies; can navigate and engage appropriately in legal proceedings; and that processes are transparent and fair.

## Our Response

Citizens Advice Scotland remains opposed to any increase in court fees; we reiterate that **no-one should be excluded from accessing justice on grounds of cost**. Enabling everyone to protect and enforce their rights by seeking resolution before independent courts where necessary constitutes an essential component of the rule of law, which benefits society as whole. The constitutional right of access to the courts for all can therefore not simply be reduced to the potential benefit for the individual court user who should pay to use it.

**Therefore, any (uprating of) court fees should be assessed against the real risk that people could effectively be prevented from having access to justice.** Whether an increase across all court fees in Scotland is realistically affordable for all, must be considered in the context of significant inflationary pressures and the current cost of living crisis which continues to negatively affect the great majority of people in Scotland, even though unevenly.

Since 2021, Citizens Advice Scotland has commissioned YouGov to survey the Scottish adult population annually on questions of affordability and debt, housing, social security, energy, legal and consumer issues.

## CAS analysis of the 2025 survey<sup>1</sup> results show that for many people the cost-of-living crisis is far from over:

- Almost a quarter (23%) of people in Scotland are finding life difficult on their present household income, unchanged from the previous year<sup>2</sup> (24%).
- More than 1 in 5 people in Scotland (22%) said they regularly run out of money before 'pay day' (incl. benefits/pension payments, etc.) and need to use credit, an overdraft facility or borrow money to get by. While this affects men and women equally, surprisingly, the percentage is higher among people in full-time work, with 1 in 4 (25%) regularly running out of money before 'pay day'.
- Of those who went without money before payday, over the last year, 1 in 2 people experienced times when they had to go without appropriate clothing/footwear (49%); 1 in 3 people had to go without food for their household (34%) and basic toiletries (32%). 1 in 4 of them couldn't at times afford to use gas or electricity (24%).
- Around 1 in 5 of those who ran out of money before payday missed Council Tax payments (22%) and/or credit card payments (23%), and more than 1 in 8 (14%) missed rent or mortgage payments.
- Almost three quarters (72%) of those who missed payments because they ran out of money ended up with further debt as a result.
- Rising costs also continue to negatively impact people's right to participate in cultural life and other economic and social rights. For example, 1 in 3 people in Scotland said due to rising cost in the past 12 months they had to give up socialising (33%), while 1 in 5 people (19%) had to go without internet access at home or without a mobile phone in the past year – often resulting in impaired access to information, to work, education, cultural life, and to public services where these require access to the internet.

For further details on our opposition to an increase in Court Fees are outlined in our [response](#) to the Scottish Government's previous consultation on Court Fees.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2025 CAS Tracker Survey was run by YouGov from 27 - 31 March 2025. A sample representative of the Scottish population, with 1,008 respondents, was used. We include findings for specific demographic categories where the results showed noticeable differences between groups.

<sup>2</sup> The 2024 CAS Tracker Survey was run by YouGov from 9th - 11th April 2024. Total sample size was 1005 adults. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Scotland adults (aged 18+).