

This is the latest monthly summary of data from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland and covers August 2023. It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.

Month in Focus

In August 2023, CABs helped over 23,000 people, giving over 96,000 pieces of advice. This is a 12% increase in client numbers compared to July 2023. Meanwhile, online advice pages received over 370,000 unique page views (UPVs) from over 230,000 people.

Views for advice on funding for energy efficiency in homes decreased by 80% from August 2022. This could be indicative of the impact the cost-of-living crisis has on the transition to net zero.

Across the network, demand for housing advice soared. Advice relating Local Authority rent arrears was at its highest level since 2020, having increased 21% from the same time last year.

Demand for advice related to Actual Homelessness is at its highest level since September 2022 having increased by 21% from July.

Moreover, advice relating to First Tier Tribunal (Housing and Property) peaked, having increased by 137% from July. This may suggest tenants turning to recourse at Tribunal, in the face of illegal evictions and rent increases during the rent cap and evictions ban.

Finally, demand for Crisis Grant advice continued to peak with an increase of 15% since July.



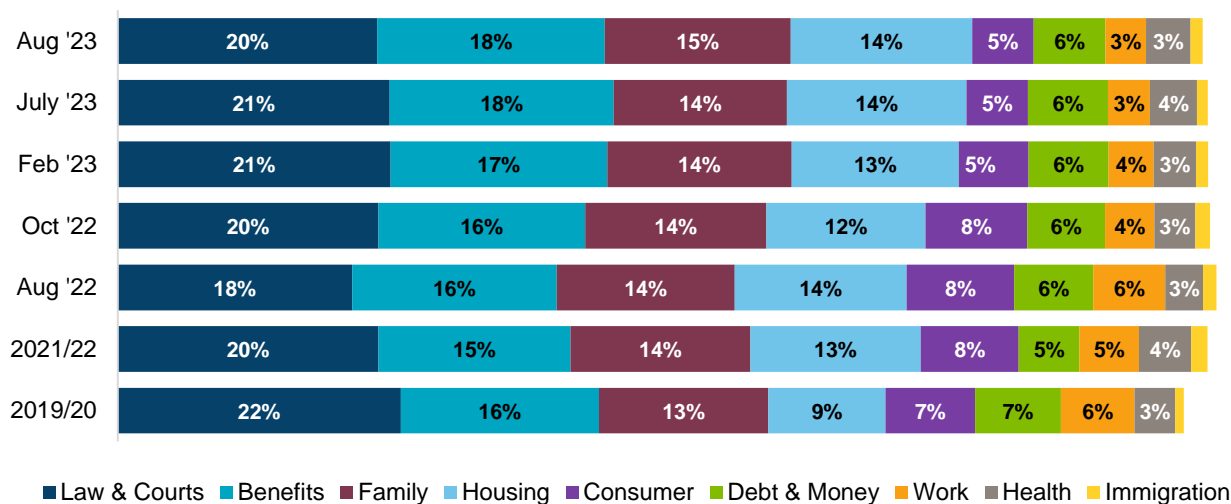
Webpages

372,574 unique page views

230,119 users (up 7% from July), 78% new

From July to August 2023, only views of pages providing advice in relation immigration (up 14%) and family issues (up 7%) showed any notable increase. Views of the health advice pages also increased again, up by 18% from August 2022, while unique page views of both the benefits and law/courts advice pages increased by 11% across this same time period. The largest decrease in advice page views from July to August 2023 were in relation to debt and money (down 11%).

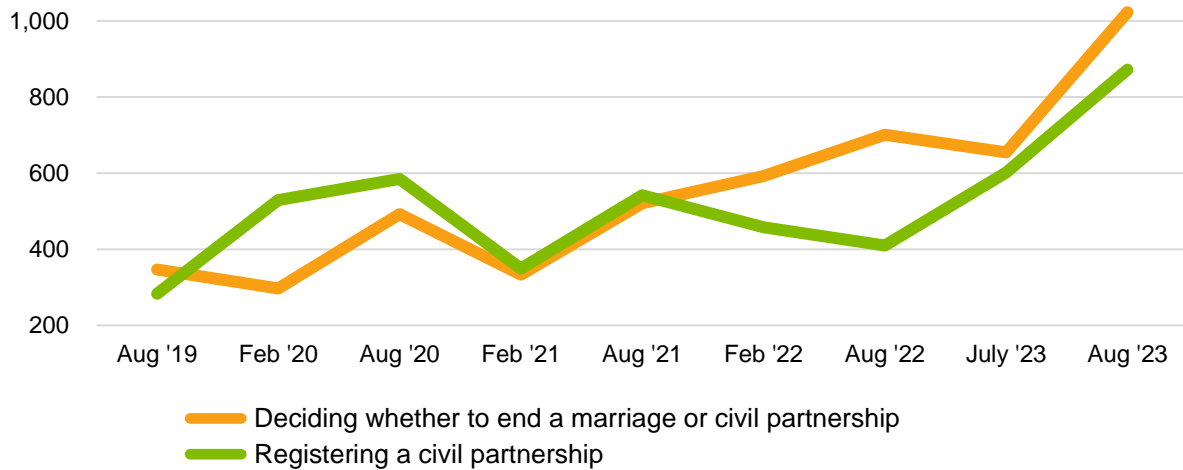
Advice sought on the 'Advice for Scotland' website, as a proportion of all advice



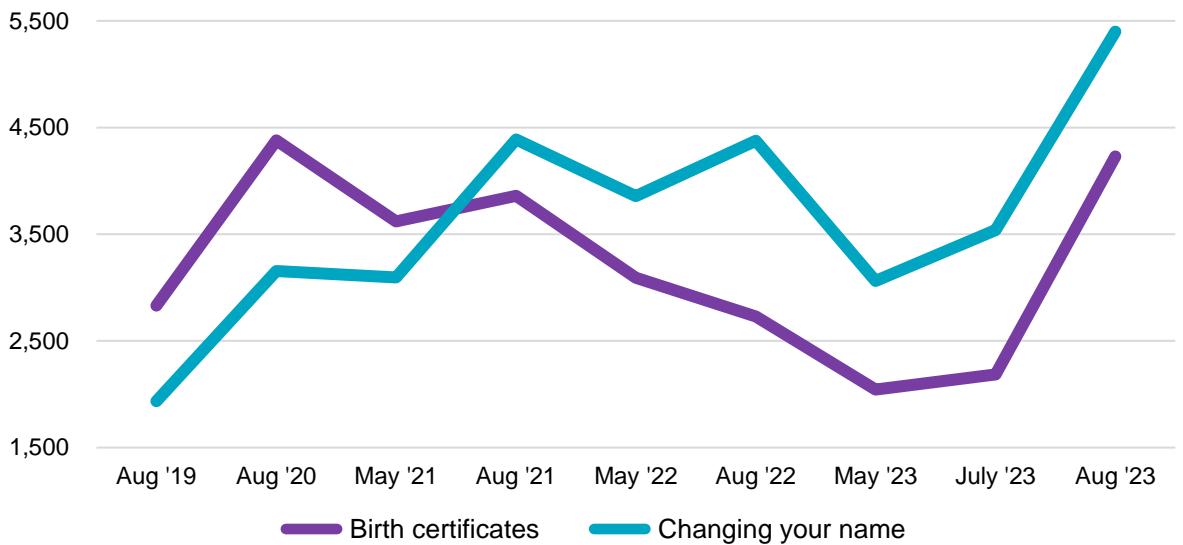
Views of pages where advice is given in relation to deciding whether or not to end a marriage or civil partnership are at their highest level, with an increase of 47% from July to August 2023 alone. The need for advice on registering a civil partnership has also increased, being at the highest level since June 2021 and with page views having increased by 126% from August 2022 to August 2023.



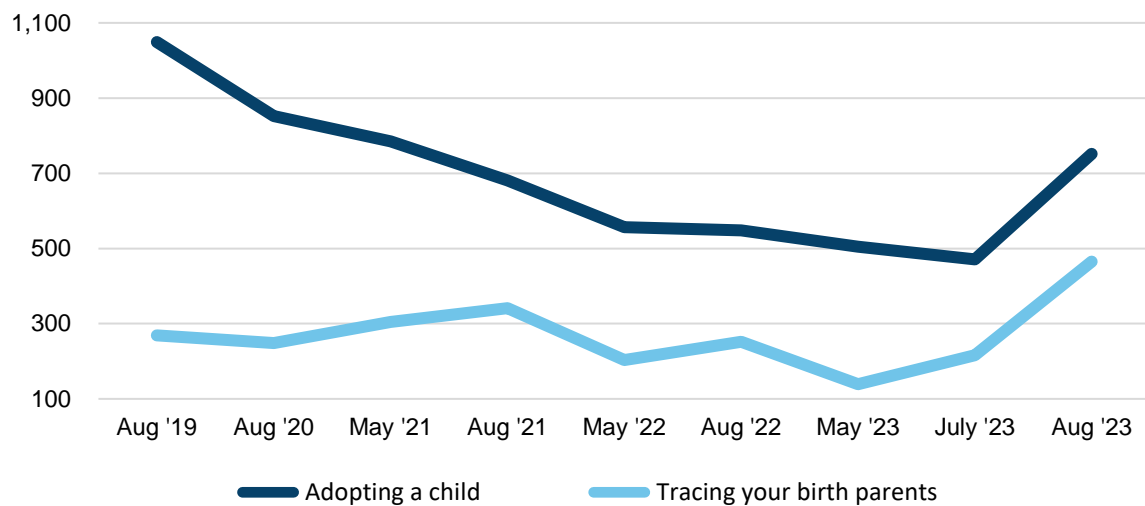
Marriage and civil partnerships



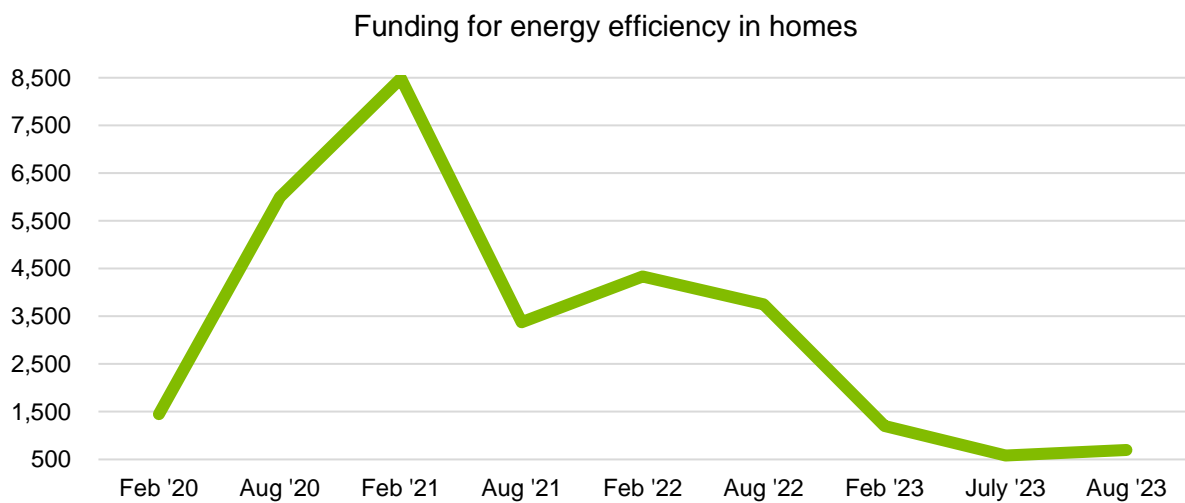
Also in the family and relationships sphere, views of pages providing advice on birth certificates, and making a name change, have also seen recent increases; from July to August 2023, the former rose by 82% and the later by 43%. Views of the birth certificates advice page are at their highest level since August 2020, while those relating to making a name change are at their highest level ever.



Still within the family and relationships arena, while still below pre-pandemic levels the page offering advice on adopting a child has seen a recent increase in views having risen by 50% from July to August 2023, and by 46% from August 2022 to August 2023. The views of this page are at their highest since May 2021. Page views in relation to advice on tracing birth parents are at their highest ever level, having increased by 31% from August 2022 to August 2023.



On an entirely different topic, while views of the page providing advice on funding for energy efficiency in homes increased by 13% from July to August 2023, they had nevertheless decreased by 80% from August 2022. It may be the case that a combination of the pandemic, and the following cost of living crisis, is having some impact on people’s willingness or ability to deal with this issue.





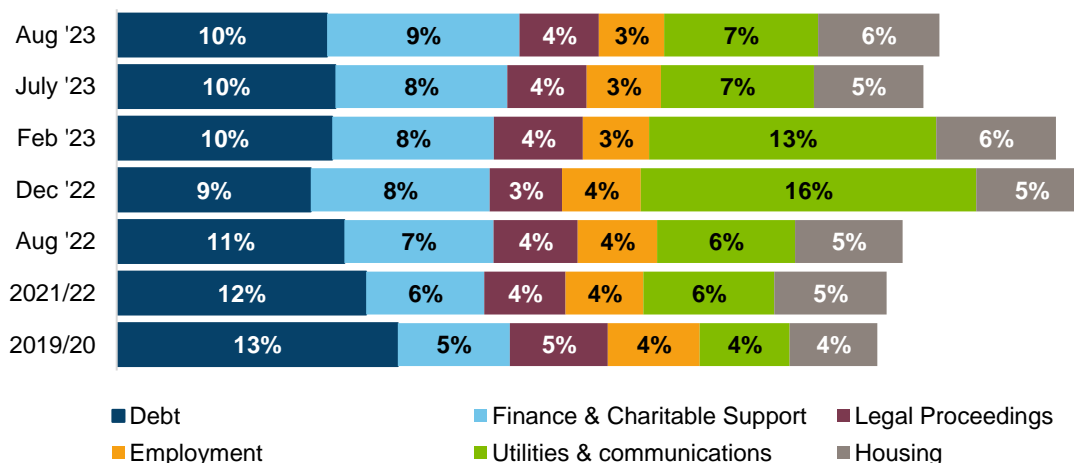
CAB network statistics

96,288 pieces of advice

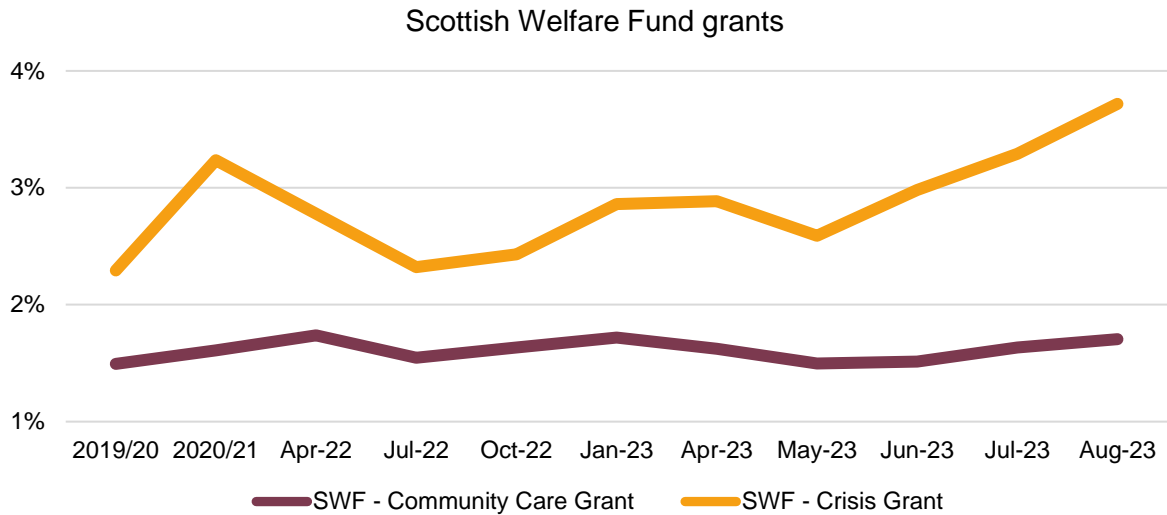
23,893 clients (up 12% since July)

The top advice area in August 2023 continued to be benefits, remaining stable at 47% of all advice provided. Of the other top advice areas: Finance and Charitable Support saw an increase from July to August 2023 (up 12%), an increase of 29% from August 2022 to August 2023. Advice in relation to Housing increased by 11% from July to August 2023, an increase of 13% between August 2022 and August 2023. Advice in relation to Employment decreased by 12% from July to August 2023 and decreased by 18% from August 2022 to August 2023. Advice in relation to Relationship decreased by 12% from July to August 2023 and decreased by 7% from August 2022 to August 2023. Lastly, advice in relation to Immigration, Asylum and Nationality decreased by 6% from July to August 2023 and decreased by 31% from August 2022 to August 2023. There were no other notable changes to report.

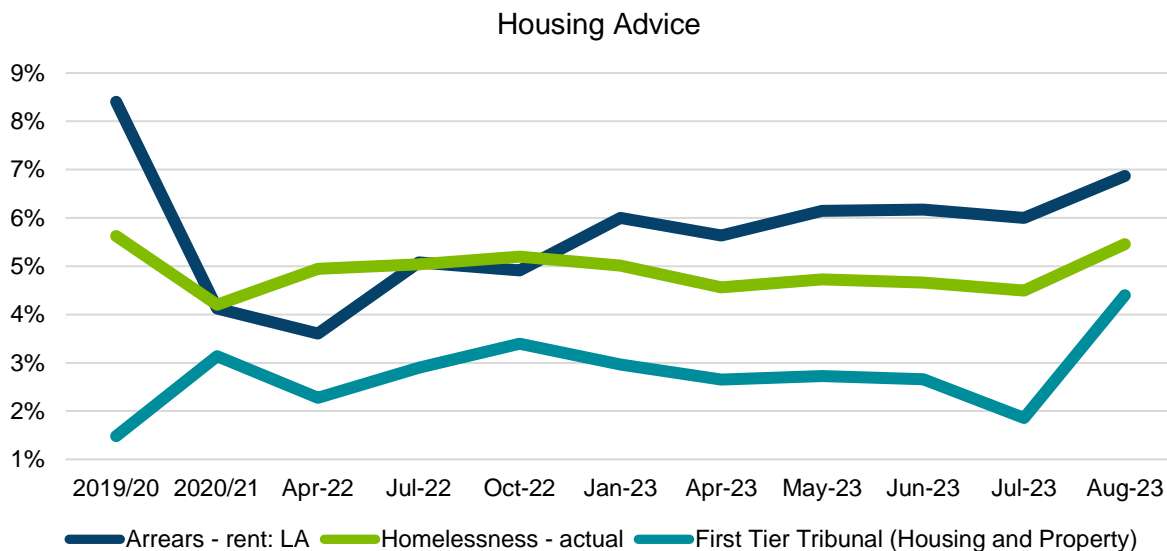
Top advice areas, as a proportion of all advice (excluding benefits)



Following on from last month, advice relating to both types of Scottish Welfare Fund grants increased from July to August 2023, with advice pertaining to the Community Care Grant increasing by 6%, and advice in relation to the Crisis Grant increasing by 15%. Advice relating to the Community Care Grant is thereby up 8% from August 2022 to August 2023, with advice pertaining to the Crisis Grant up 22% from August 2022 to August 2023. This is the overall peak level for the Crisis Grant, indicating people turning to this as the cost of living crisis continues.

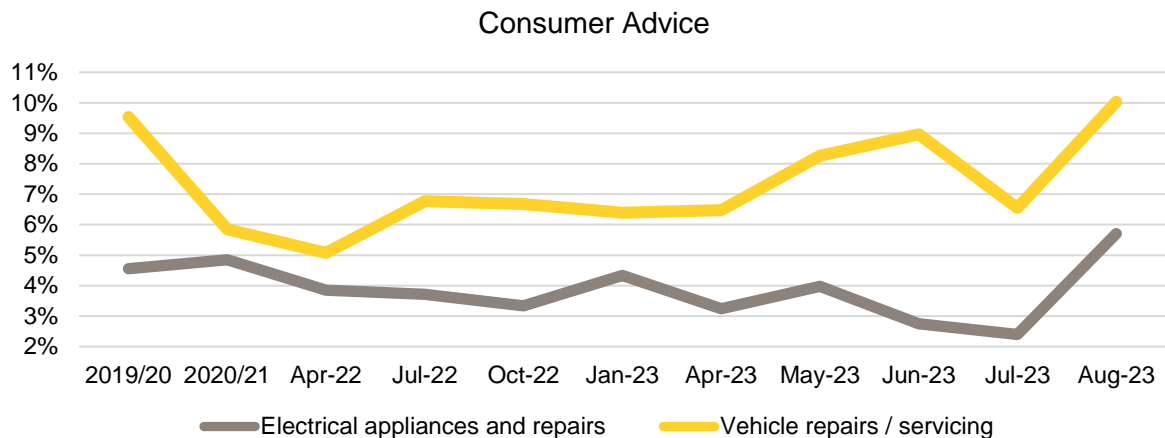


Advice relating to rent arrears in Local Authority housing increased by 15% from July to August 2023 and by 21% from August 2022 to August 2023 – the highest level since 2020. Advice given in relation to Homelessness – actual has increased by 21% from July to August 2023, and by 30% from August 2022 to August 2023. This is its highest level since September 2022. Furthermore, advice relating to First Tier Tribunal (Housing and Property) has increased by 137% from July to August 2023 and by 164% from August 2022 to August 2023. The provision of advice in this area is at its highest ever level and perhaps indicative of tenants turning to recourse at Tribunal, in the face of illegal evictions/rent increases during the rent cap and evictions ban. Whilst we cannot say these three pieces of advice are necessarily connected, it is interesting to note that the provision of advice in these areas are currently at high levels.

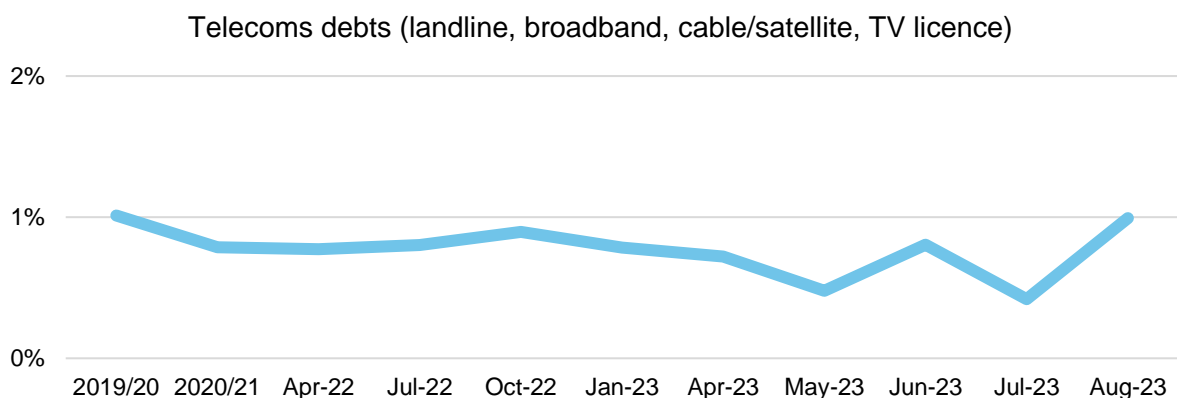




Provision of advice in relation to Electrical Appliances and Repairs increased by 138% from July to August 2023, whilst increasing 166% from August 2022 to August 2023. Similarly, advice pertaining to Vehicle Repairs and Servicing is up by 53% from July to August 2023, whilst increasing by 83% from August 2022 to August 2023. Overall, advice relating to both these areas are at their highest ever levels.



Finally, advice relating to Telecoms debts (landline, broadband, cable/satellite, TV licence) has increased by 110% from July to August 2023, and by 163% from August 2022 to August 2023. This is the highest level since 2020, although it should be noted that the figures for this advice code are very low. Nevertheless, this is something to look out for in the future, as it points towards people struggling with these debts more and more as the cost of living crisis wears on.



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