

This is the latest monthly summary of data from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland since the COVID-19 outbreak and covers August 2021. It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.

Key points

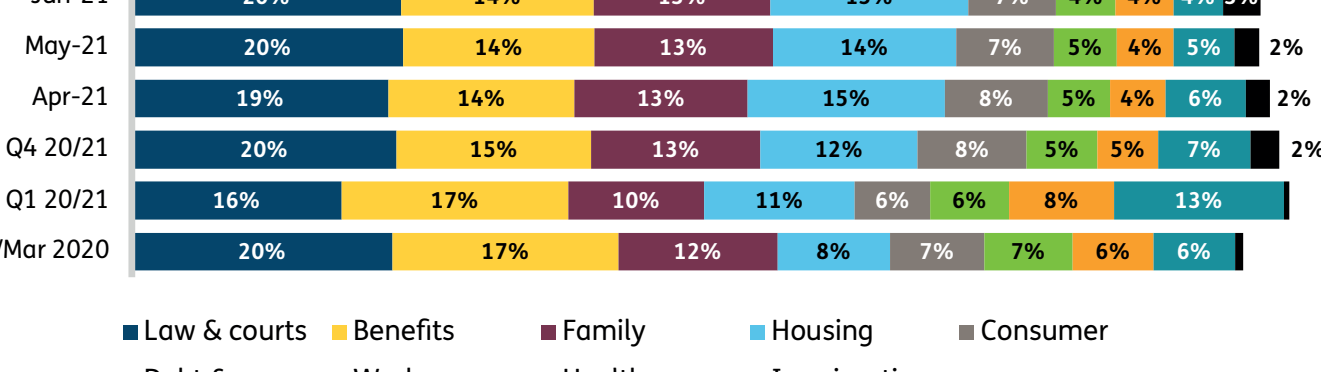
- > In August 2021 Citizens Advice Bureaux issued **84,623** pieces of advice.
- > In August 2021 pages on the website were viewed a total of **366,036** times.
- > There were **206,813** website users in August 2021
- > **76%** of these being new users.

Web pages: August 2021

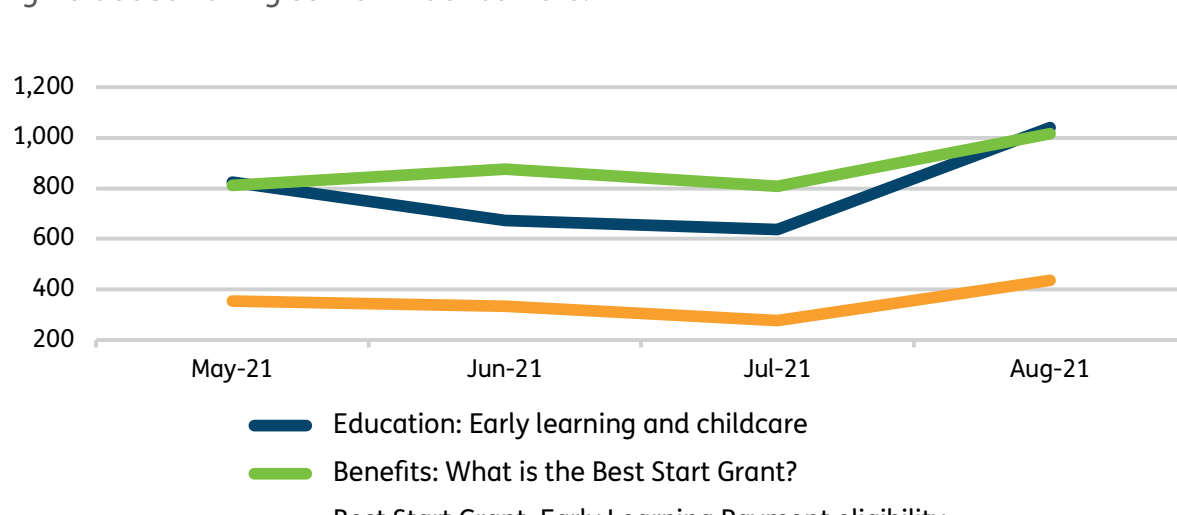
- > Number of unique page views (UPV) in August 2021: **366,036** (increase of **6%** from July)
- > Number of website users in August 2021: **206,813**
- > **76%** of these being new users.

Trend data for visits to the Advice for Scotland website, as a proportion of all unique page views on the site, shows little variation between July and August 2021 other than small increases in the unique page views of pages relating to benefits advice (up **5%**) and debt/money advice (up **7%**). In addition, unique page views in relation to immigration advice decreased by more than one-third (38%).

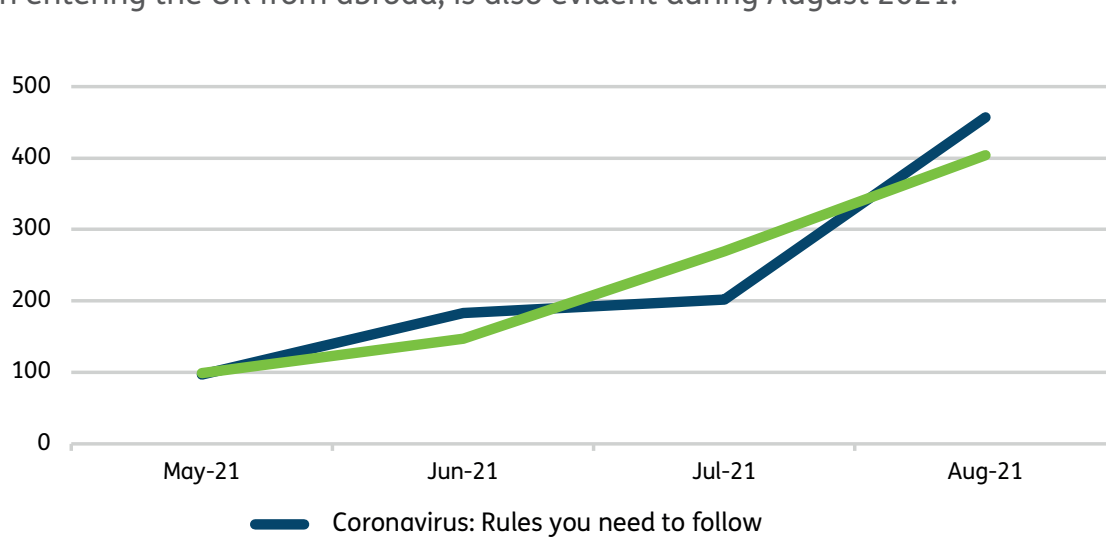
Advice sought on the 'Advice for Scotland' website, as a proportion of all advice



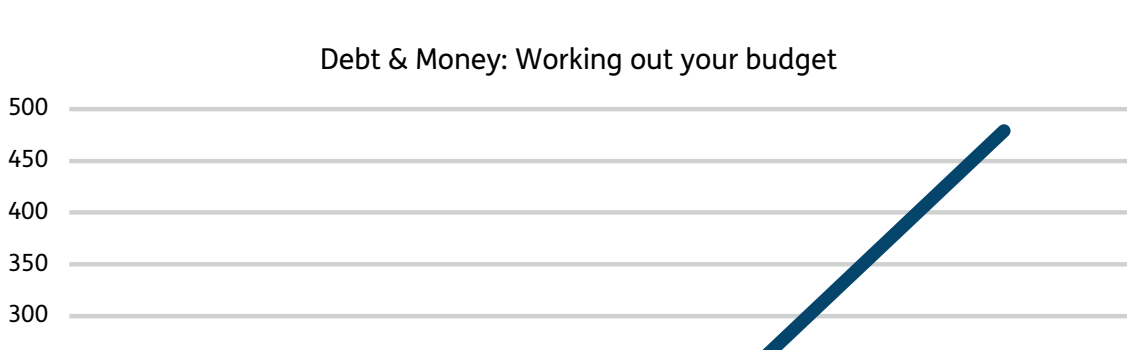
The pages providing advice on early learning/childcare and the Best Start Grant saw increases in the number of unique views during August 2021, with the return to 'business as usual' schooling no doubt having some influence here.



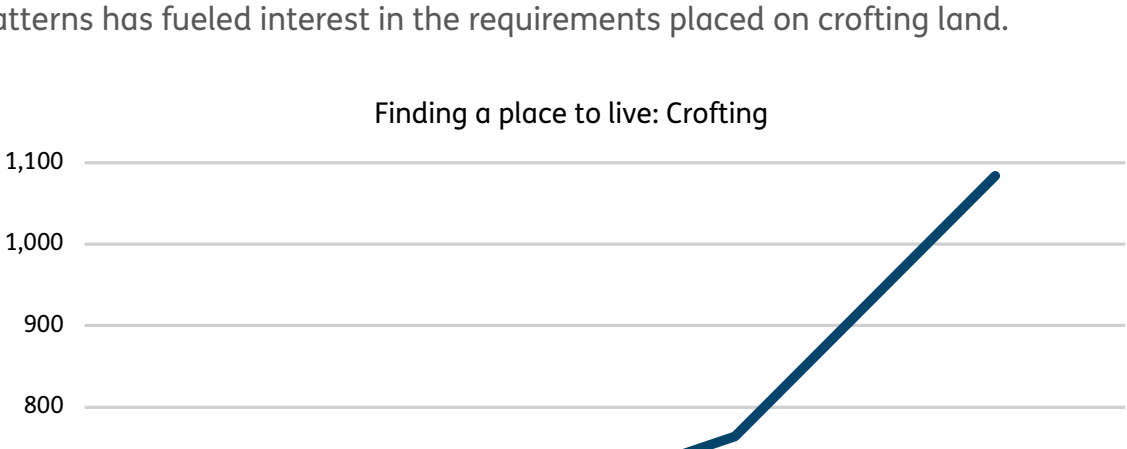
A sharp increase in traffic to pages covering advice on coronavirus rules, both in general and when entering the UK from abroad, is also evident during August 2021.



Unique views of the page providing advice on working out a budget saw a significant increase during August 2021, having more than doubled in comparison to views during July 2021. These **479** unique page views are higher than those recorded for August 2019 (**408**) and August 2020 (**291**).



An advice area that has seen a significant increase in unique page views is that related to crofting, this having risen by **50%** between May and August 2021. In addition, the unique page views seen for this page in August 2021 are almost double those of August 2020 and more than triple those of August 2019. Although we can provide no current explanation for the increase, it may be the case that the pandemic has resulted in more people considering a different way of life or that evolving tourism patterns has fueled interest in the requirements placed on crofting land.



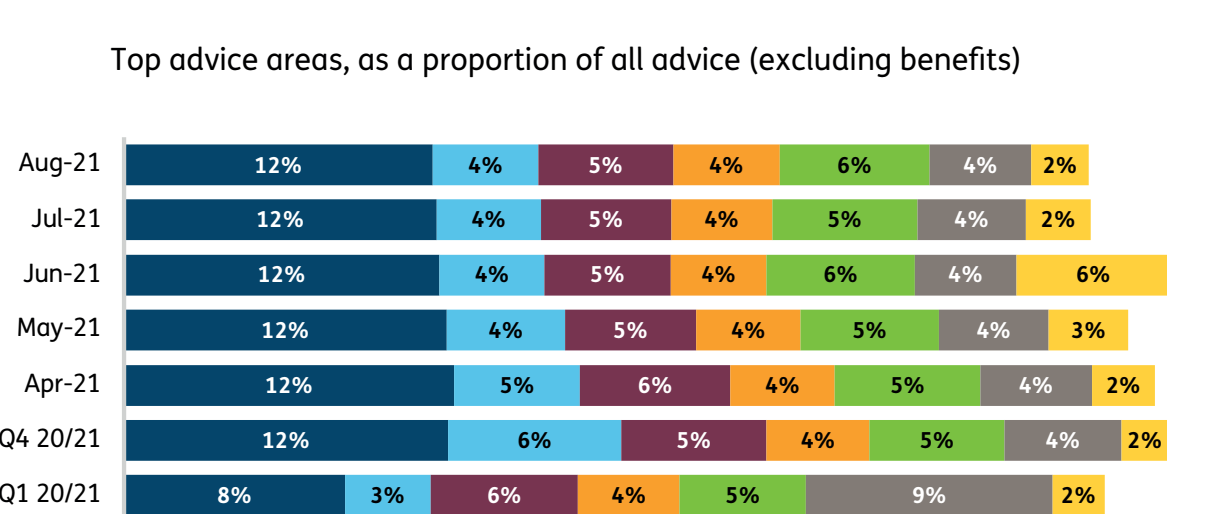
Citizens Advice Bureaux

- > **20,616** clients
- > **84,623** pieces of advice

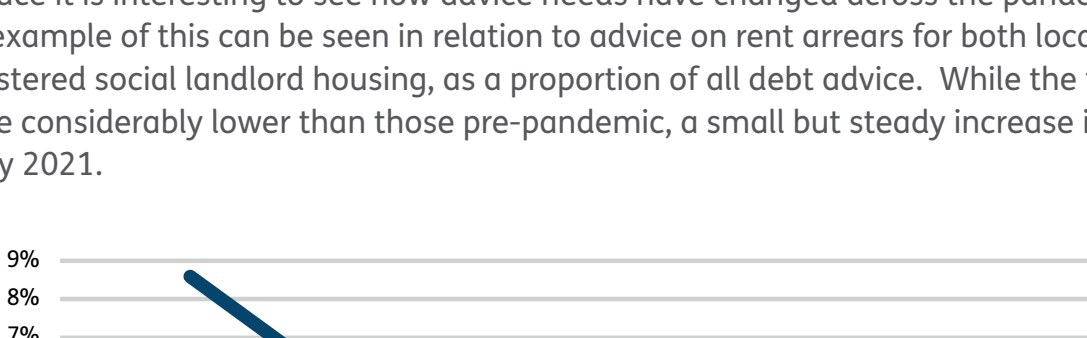
Benefits remained the top advice area in August 2021 at **49%** of all advice. Trend data continues to show a return to 'business as usual' for bureaux in terms of advice need, particularly with immigration-related advice returning to what can be considered 'normal' levels.

Two small increases can be seen in relation to finance/charitable support (up **4%**) and housing (up **3%**).

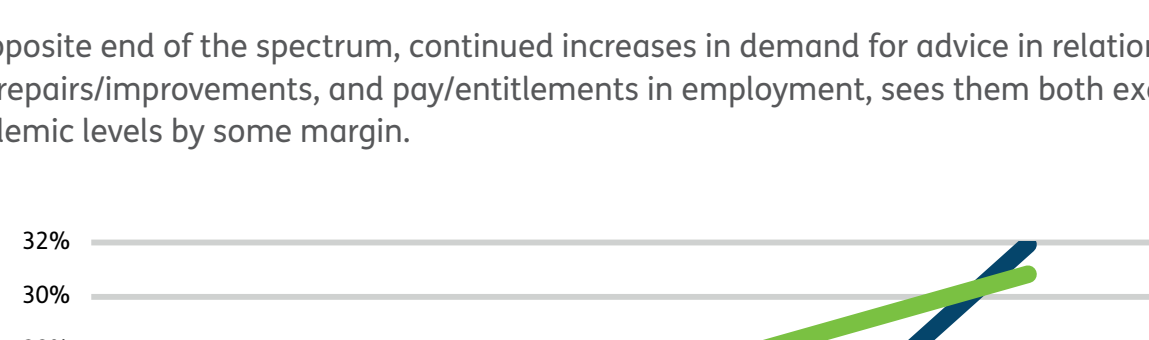
Top advice areas, as a proportion of all advice (excluding benefits)



In considering the advice sub-categories, in areas where Covid forbearance measures were put in place it is interesting to see how advice needs have changed across the pandemic period. A good example of this can be seen in relation to advice on rent arrears for both local authority and registered social landlord housing, as a proportion of all debt advice. While the figures for these are considerably lower than those pre-pandemic, a small but steady increase is evident from May 2021.



At the opposite end of the spectrum, continued increases in demand for advice in relation to building repairs/improvements, and pay/entitlements in employment, sees them both exceeding pre-pandemic levels by some margin.



During August 2021:

The proportion of face-to-face contacts increased by **25%** between July and August 2021, with those seeking advice in relation to immigration (**18%**) or travel/transport (**14%**) most likely to use this method of contact.

Advice most commonly sought via **SCAH**:

- Consumer Issues
- Employment
- Immigration

Advice most commonly sought **face-to-face**:

- Immigration
- Travel

Advice most commonly sought through **direct contact with bureaux (telephone or email)**:

- Debt

Advice sought on money advice was up 7%.

Benefits advice was up 5%.

Significant increase in demand for advice on working out budgets.

Month in focus:

CAS has warned that citizens face a "perfect storm" this autumn as the furlough scheme ends, Universal Credit is cut and energy bills rise.

It is worrying to note a gradual increase in demand for advice in a number of related areas as the end of these measures approaches with the number of people seeking online debt and money advice up 7%, benefits advice up 5%, and also a significant increase in demand for advice on working out budgets.

This when viewed in combination with advice provided by bureaux on pay/entitlements now exceeding pre-pandemic levels by some margin is a cause for concern and something we will continue to monitor closely.

In the meantime, CAS has launched "Our Advice Adds Up" a campaign targeted at people facing financial pressures this autumn.