

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

Month in focus:

December's data shows advice demand up across many issues however there are two fields which stand out as particularly stark and concerning.

Firstly, there has been a notable increase in those looking for support around work and employment. Advice given by bureaux relating to 'Pay and Entitlements' has continued to increase and is up 12% from November to December 2021 and now represents an overall increase of 37% from February 2020. These figures are also backed up by statistics from those seeking advice online. Visits to the webpage 'Challenging Your Work Dismissal' increased 233% from November to December, and currently sit at a staggering 141% above pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the webpage for 'your employer wants to dismiss you because of long term sickness' was new in November and was the most visited work-related webpage in December (2,675 UPVs).

The second area of concern was the continued growth in demand for support around debt and energy as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite. In bureaux advice given out in relation to Utilities and Communication rose 17% from November to December. Similarly, the number of people accessing webpages relating to 'grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills' increased 87% from November 2021 and is more than five times the pre-pandemic figure. These figures follow a record rise in the price cap in autumn 2021, and give a suggestion of the pressures households will face following another record rise in the spring.

Around debt more broadly the data also shows growing concern with traffic to the web page related to 'Dealing with Debts' increasing 44% from November and 194% from December 2020. This when viewed in conjunction with a 24% increase in bureaux advice from November around Finance and Charitable Support indicates that growing numbers are struggling with the cost-of-living

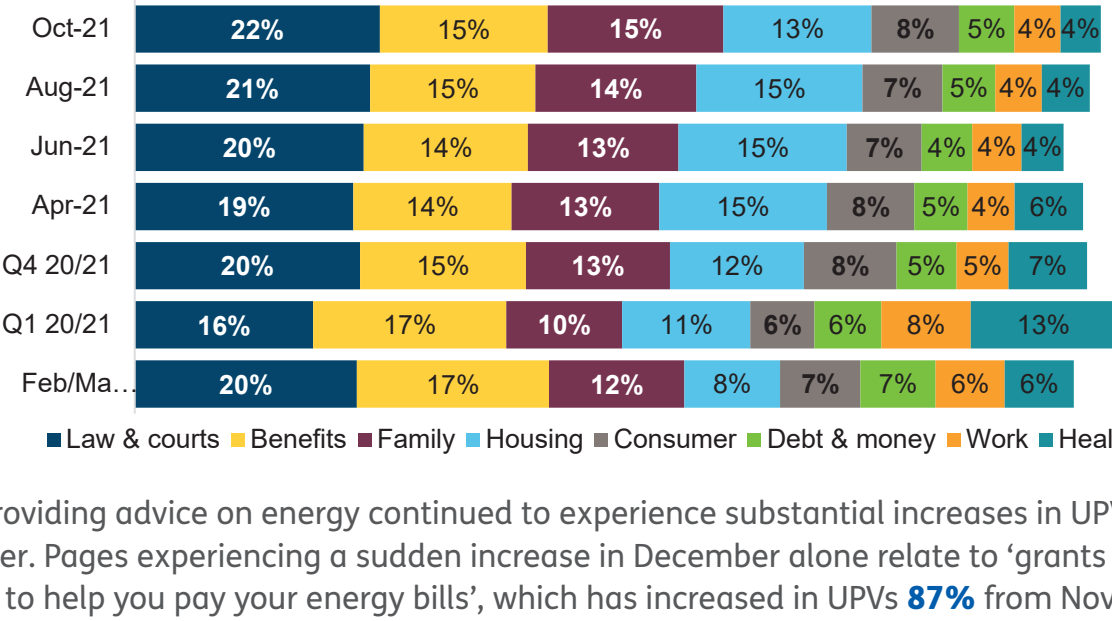
Key points

- > In December 2021 Citizens Advice Bureaux issued **66,204** pieces of advice.
- > In December 2021 pages on the website were viewed a total of **302,033** times.
- > There were **185,475** website users in December 2021
- > **83%** of these being new users.

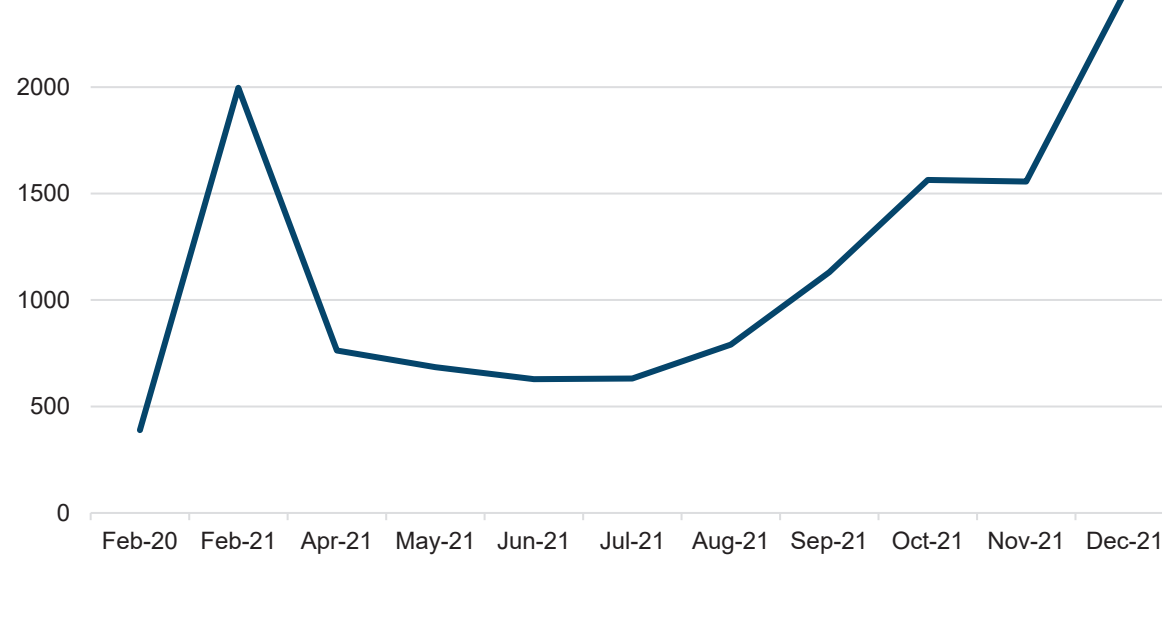
Web pages: December 2021

- > Number of unique page views (UPV) in December 2021: **302,033** (decrease of **16%** from November)
- > Number of website users in December 2021: **185,475** (increase of **11%** from November)
- > **83%** of these being new users.

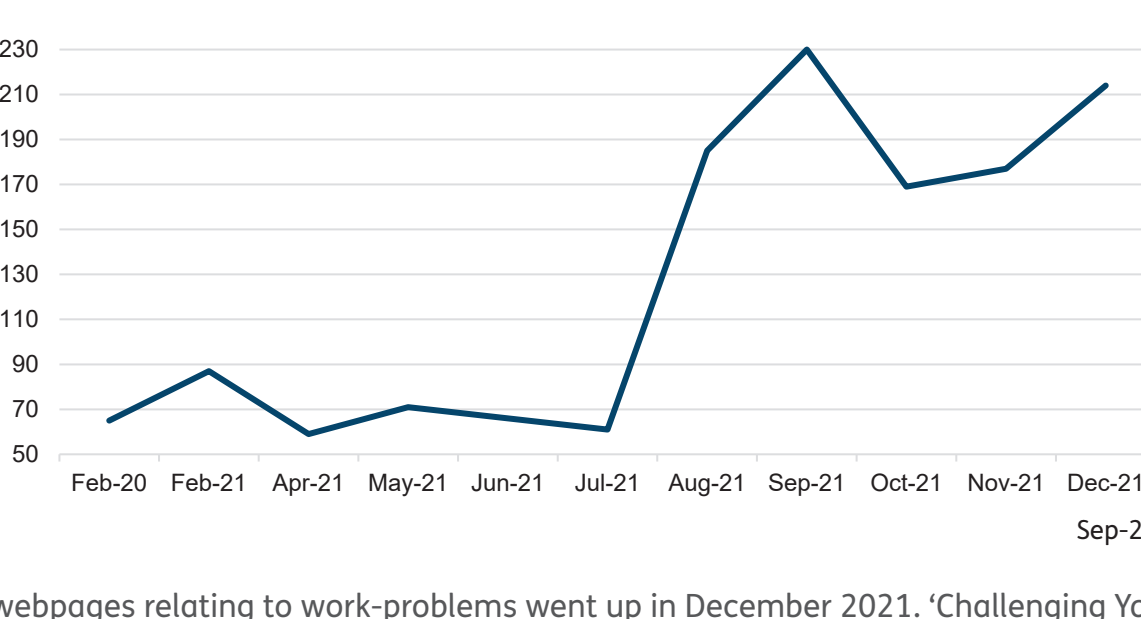
Trend data for visits to the Advice for Scotland website, as a proportion of all unique page views on the site, show notable variation between November and December 2021, with an increase in unique page views of webpages relating to work advice (up **30%**) and health (up **60%**), and no notable decreases amongst any advice area.



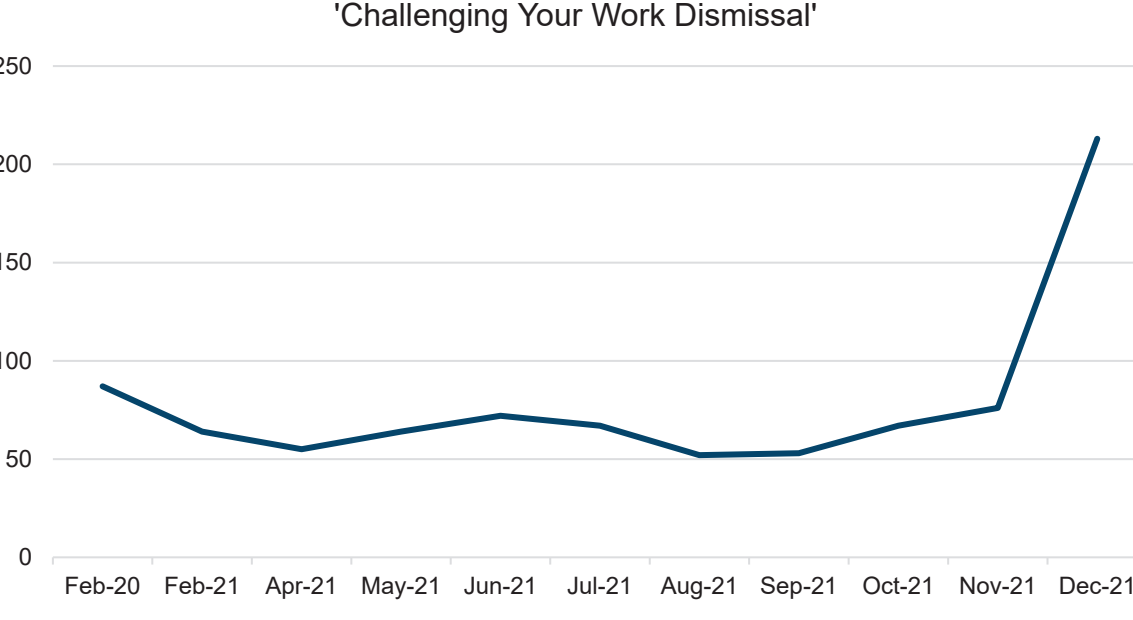
Pages providing advice on energy continued to experience substantial increases in UPVs in December. Pages experiencing a sudden increase in December alone relate to 'grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills', which has increased in UPVs **87%** from November 2021, more than quintuple the pre-pandemic figure. As a proportion of all UPVs, this webpage reached its highest overall proportion in December 2021, a **16%** increase from its previous peak in January 2021.



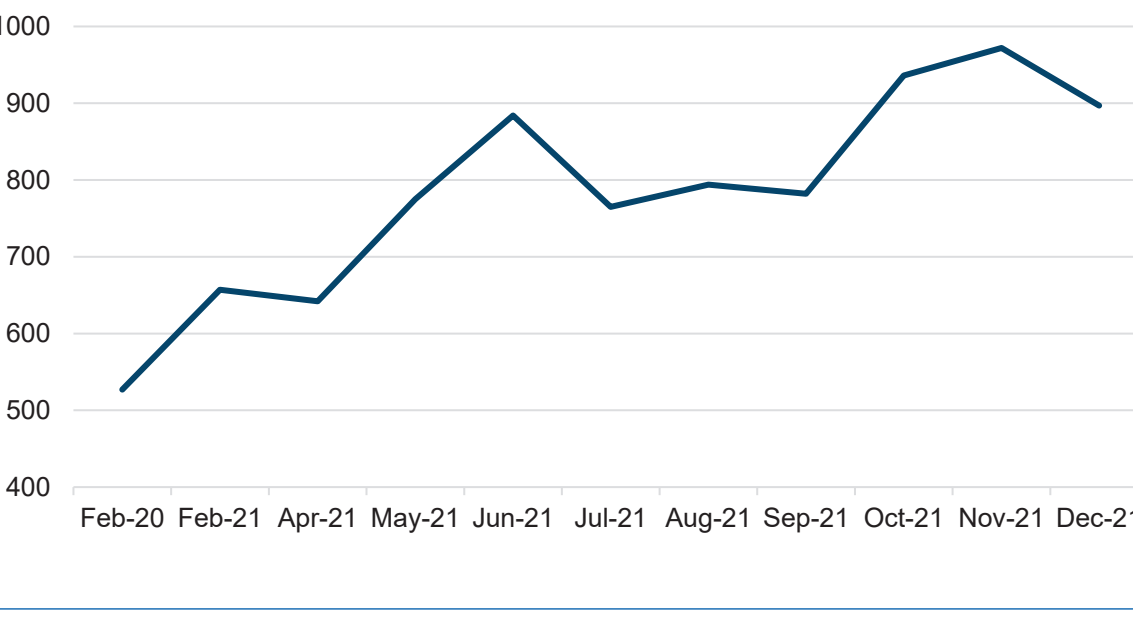
The webpage 'Dealing with Debts: Check If You Can Increase Your Income' had 214 UPVs in December, an increase of **44%** from November; by comparison, this webpage only experienced 73 UPVs in December 2020



Several webpages relating to work-problems went up in December 2021. 'Challenging Your Work Dismissal' increased **233%** from November to December, and has increased **141%** from pre-pandemic levels, with 213 UPVs in December. Although the webpage for 'your employer wants to dismiss you because of long term sickness' was new in November, it experienced a notable number of pageviews in December with 2,675 UPVs, making it the most visited work-related webpage in December.



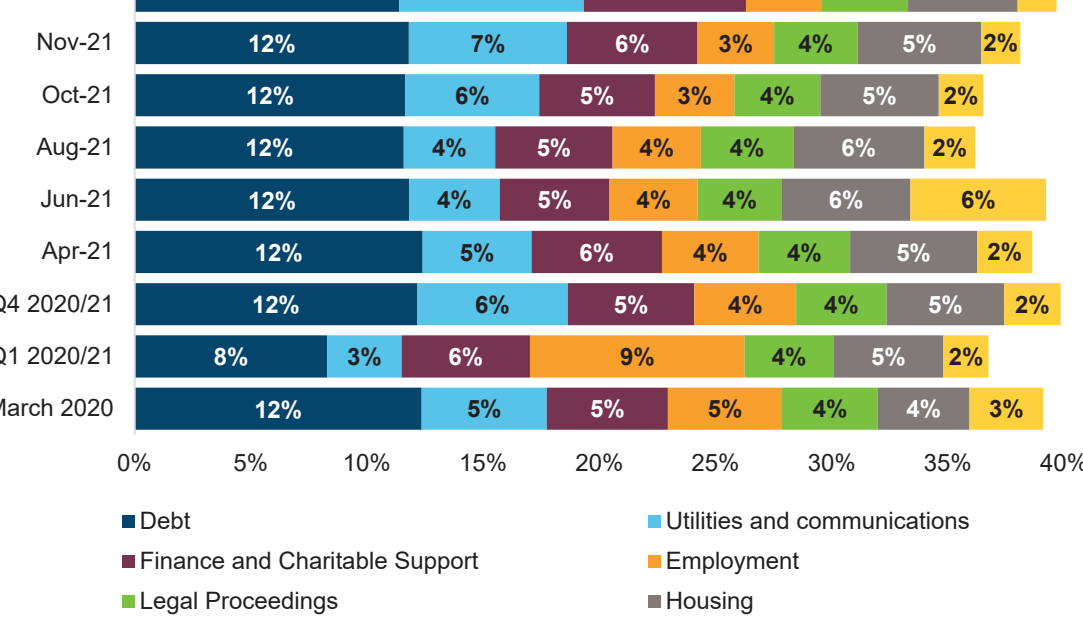
Although the webpage for 'law and courts: help for domestic abuse' peaked in UPVs in November 2021, in December 2021 this webpage reached its highest proportion of all UPVs, an increase of **10%** from November 2021.



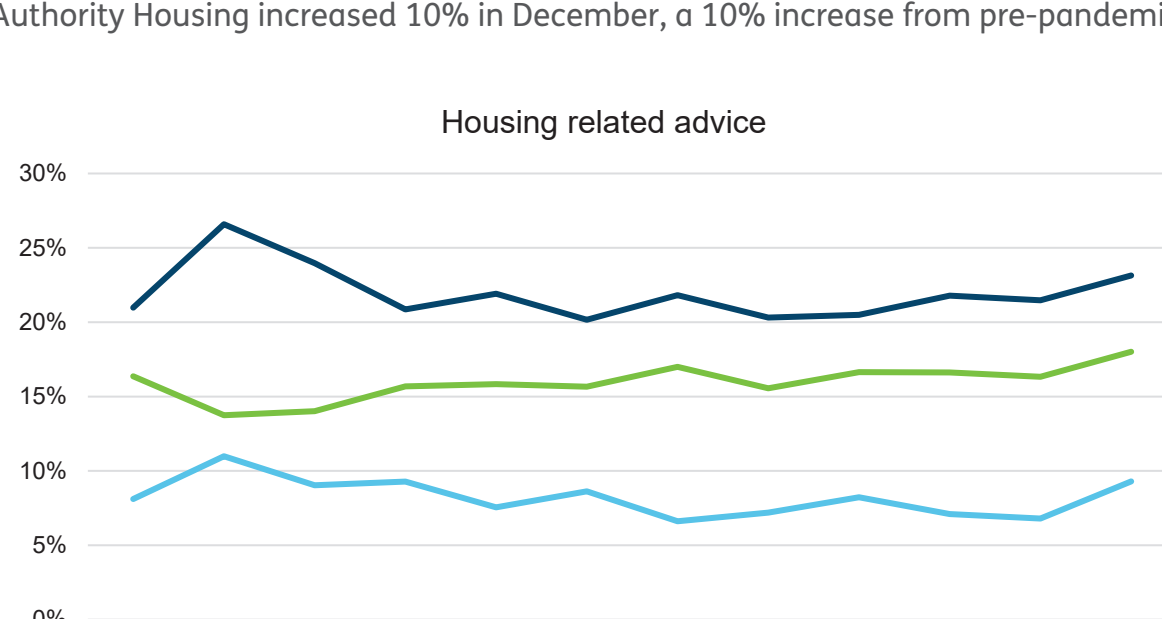
Citizens Advice Bureaux

- > **16,862** clients
- > **66,204** pieces of advice

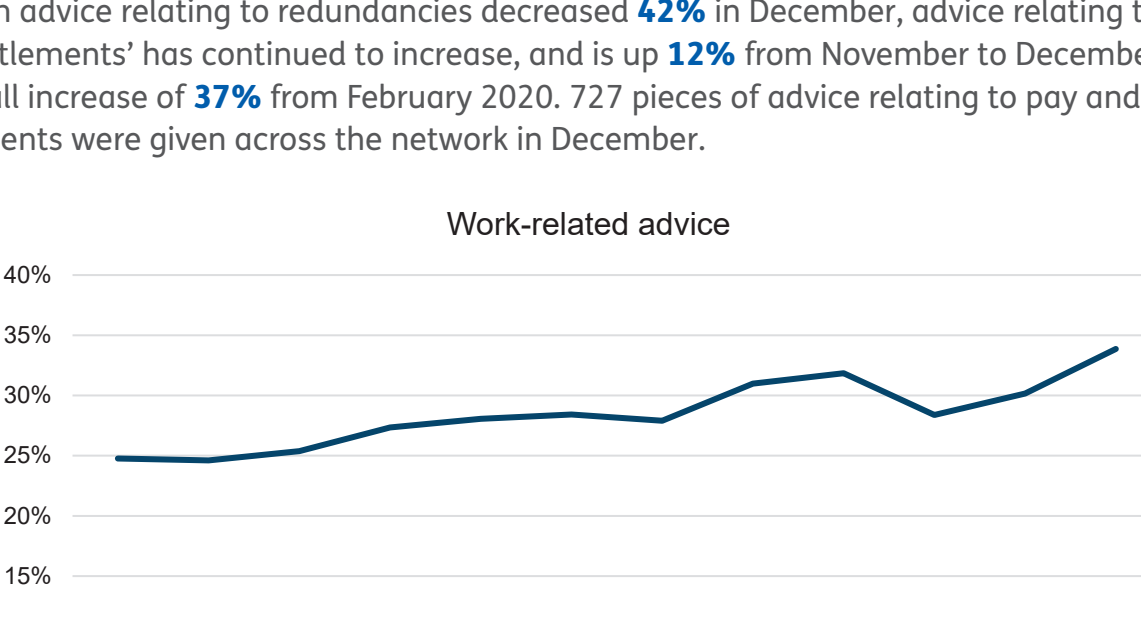
Benefits remained the top advice area in December 2021 at **47%** of all advice. Three notable increases in advice since November are Finance and Charitable Support (up **24%**), Utilities and Communications (up **17%**), and Health and Community Care (up **17%**); the only notable decrease in advice since November was in Housing (down **12%**).



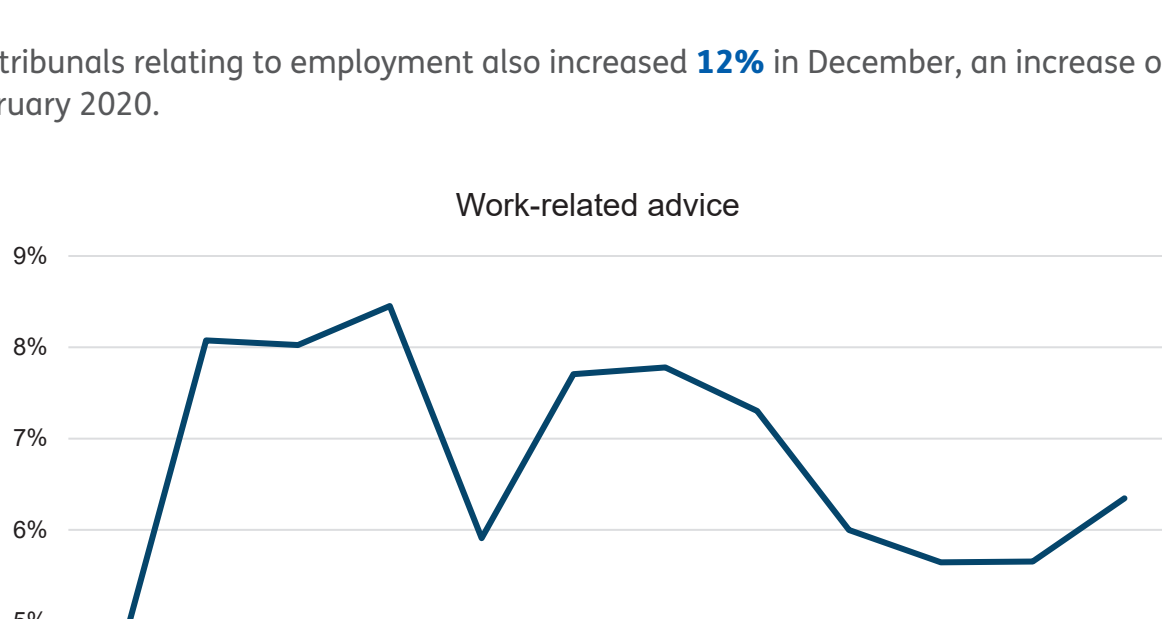
Three Housing advice areas increased past pre-pandemic levels in December 2021. While Advice related to Private sector rented properties only increased **8%** from November, it has increased **10%** from February 2020. Advice relating to 'registered social landlord property' has experienced a **37%** increase from November to December 2021, a **15%** increase from February 2020. Advice relating to Local Authority Housing increased 10% in December, a 10% increase from pre-pandemic levels.



Work-related advice increased in December in both Employment, and Legal Proceedings areas. Although advice relating to redundancies decreased **42%** in December, advice relating to 'Pay and Entitlements' has continued to increase, and is up **12%** from November to December 2021, an overall increase of **37%** from February 2020. 727 pieces of advice relating to pay and entitlements were given across the network in December.



First-tier tribunals relating to employment also increased **12%** in December, an increase of **45%** from February 2020.



During December 2021:

The proportion of face-to-face contacts decreased by **14%** between November and December 2021, most likely as a result of increased Covid-19 concerns, with those seeking advice in relation to Immigration (**20%**), Travel/Transport (**14%**) and Benefits (**13%**) most likely to use this method of contact.

Advice most commonly sought via **SCAH**:

Housing

Benefits

Employment

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

Immigration

Travel

Benefits

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

Benefits

Debt

Finance/Charitable Support

“the number of people accessing webpages relating to ‘grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills’ increased 87% from November 2021 and is more than quintuple the pre-pandemic figure”