

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

## Month in focus:

In February, the cost of living crisis continued to weigh on people's minds with online demand for debt and money advice increasing **25%** from the same time last year.

Despite the rent freeze in place until March 31st, online demand for advice on what to do if a landlord wants to increase rent was at its highest ever level, with views up **115%** since February 2022 alone.

Worries around rent payments could also be seen across the CAB network, with demand for advice relating to local authority rent arrears up by **93%** and **22%** for social housing rent arrears as a proportion of all debt advice.

The CAB network experienced the second highest level of demand for utilities and communications advice ever recorded. After overtaking Universal Credit in December 2022, energy advice has remained our most common advice type and is continuing to increase in demand with people needing help **12,386** times in February.

## Key points

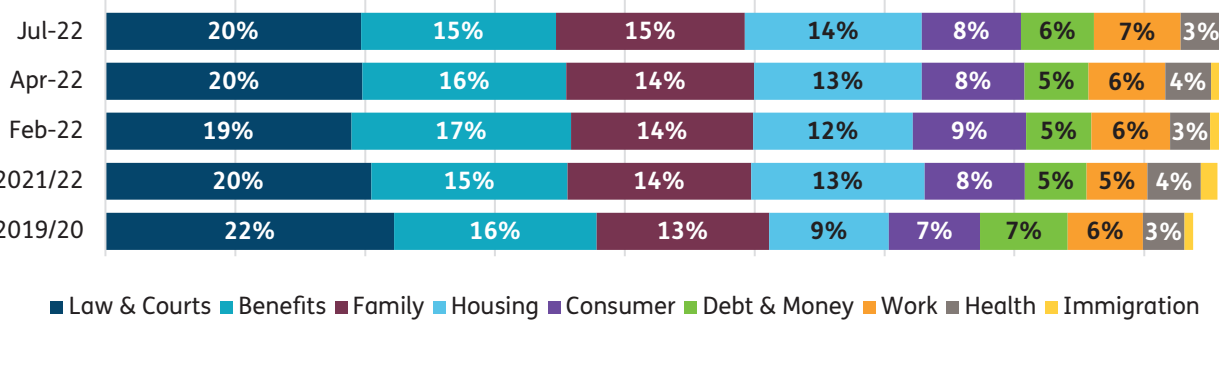
- > In February 2023 the CAB network gave **96,636** pieces of advice to **23,432** clients
- > Meanwhile there were over **368,066** views of the Advice for Scotland website from **224,606** users

## Online advice pages

- > **368,066** unique page views (UPVs)
- > **224,606** users, **77%** new

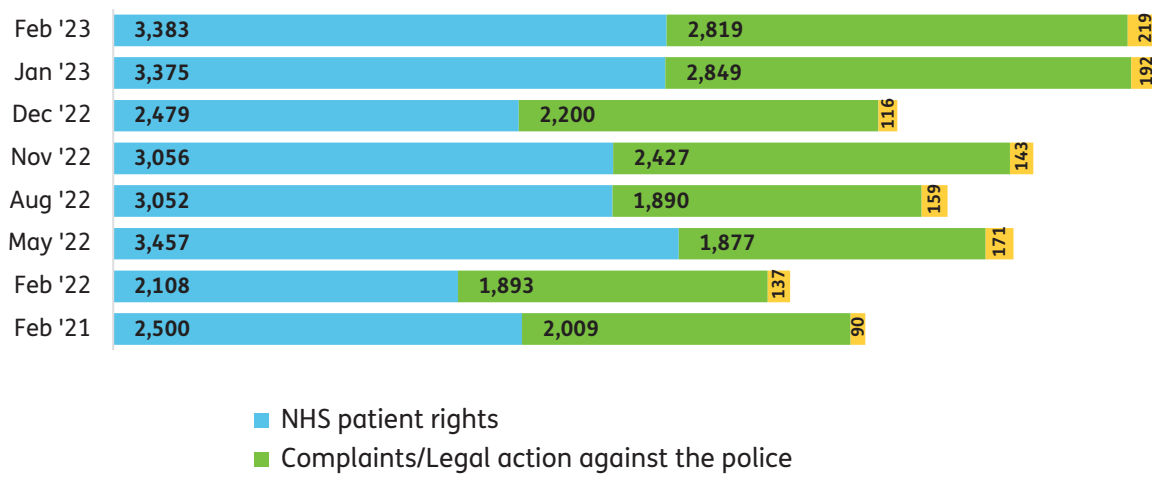
Small increases in UPVs for pages relating to Work (up **8%**), while UPVs for both Health and Housing advice pages increased by **7%** from January to February 2023. Over the longer term, however, UPVs relating to Debt and Money advice increased by **25%** between February 2022 and February 2023 while those for Consumer advice decreased by **37%** over the same period. In comparison to the pre-pandemic period, UPVs relating to Immigration advice (up **44%**) and housing advice (up **42%**) have both increased. In contrast UPVs for work-related advice have decreased by **39%** and Consumer advice UPVs by **22%**.

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



Although recent increases in the need for advice relating to certain individual rights is small, over the longer term the rises are more notable. For example, UPVs for the page for NHS patient rights are at their second highest level since May 2022 and have increased by **50%** from February 2022 to February 2023, and by **36%** from February 2021. Similarly, UPVs for the page providing advice on complaining about councillors/devolved public bodies are at their second highest level since May 2021; have increased by **61%** since February 2022 and **135%** since February 2021.

Individual rights



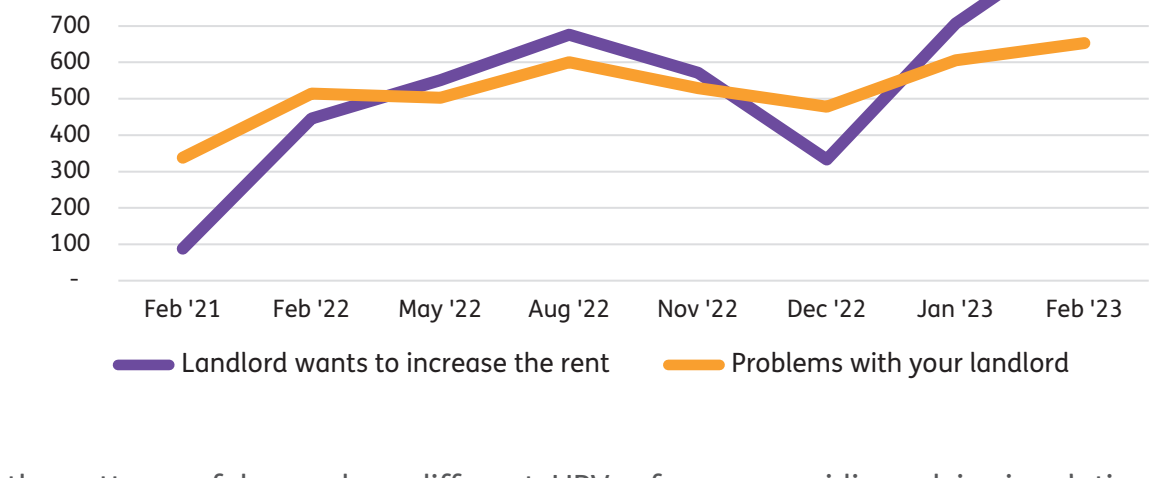
Unique pages views relating to discrimination at work increased by **77%** from January to February 2023, though are broadly similar to levels reported in February 2022 (up **7%**). The UPVs are, however, at their highest for some time and have increased by **92%** since February 2021.

Discrimination at work



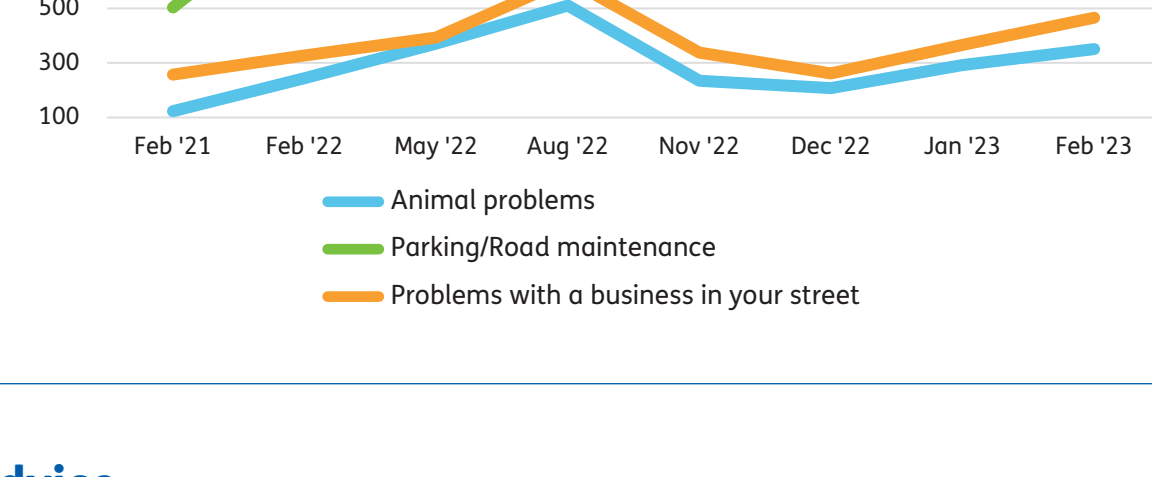
Worries around making rent payments still appear to be an issue with UPVs for the page providing advice on what to do if a landlord wants to increase the rent being at its highest ever level with views having doubled (up **115%**) since February 2022 alone. Advice relating to experiencing problems with a landlord also saw an increase in demand, with UPVs up by **28%** from February 2022 and **87%** from February 2021.

Problems during a tenancy



Although the patterns of demand are different, UPVs of pages providing advice in relation to 'problems where you live' have seen increases. While the UPVs for the page providing advice on parking and road maintenance have decreased by **13%** since February 2022, they are nevertheless up by **47%** since February 2021. In contrast, UPVs for the pages offering advice on animal-related problems (up **45%** since February 2022) and problems with a 'business on your street' (up **44%** since February 2022) are all higher than in February 2021.

Problems where you live

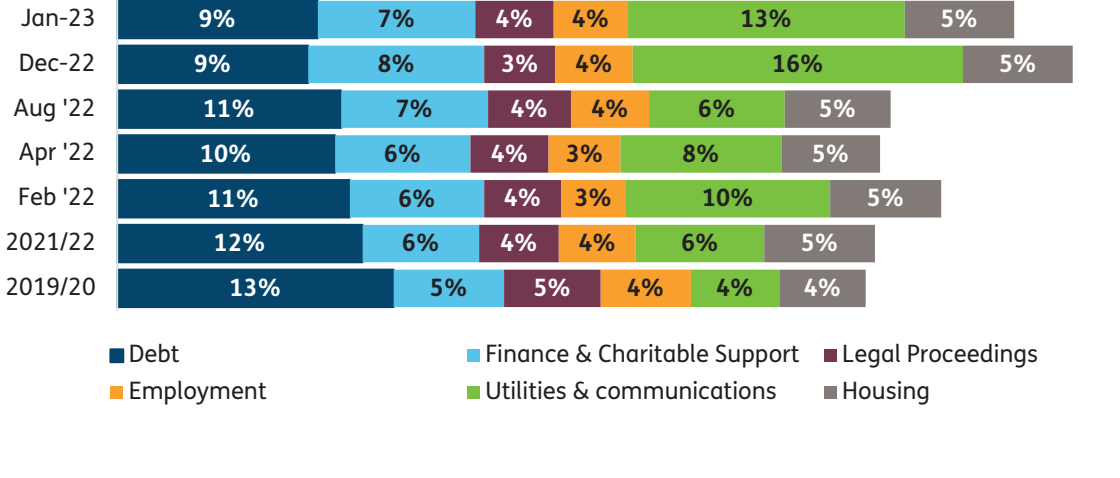


## CAB advice

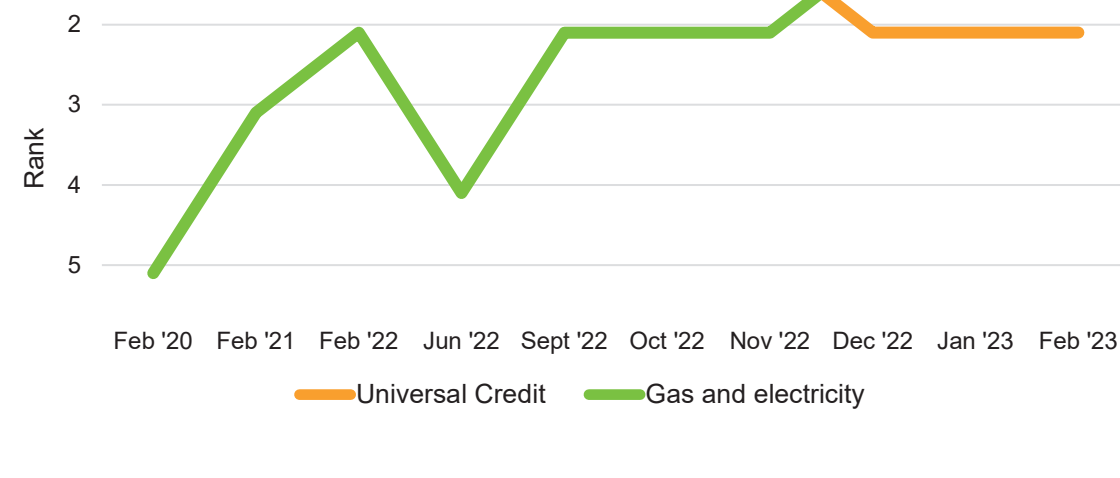
- > **96,636** pieces of advice (8% increase from February 2022)
- > **23,432** clients (6% increase from January 2022)

Benefits remained the top advice area in February 2023 at **43%** of all advice. Some small changes and an 8% increase in Housing were evident, at **12%** increase in Legal Proceedings advice, and an **8%** increase in Housing advice. At **13.4%** of all advice Utilities and Communications, February 2023 superseded January 2023 (**13.1%**) to become the second highest level ever recorded. Utilities and Communications advice was also up by **38%** from February 2022, and Legal Proceedings advice by **18%**. Although numbers are small, advice relating to Discrimination (up **43%**) and Education (up **30%**) also increased from February 2022 to February 2023.

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



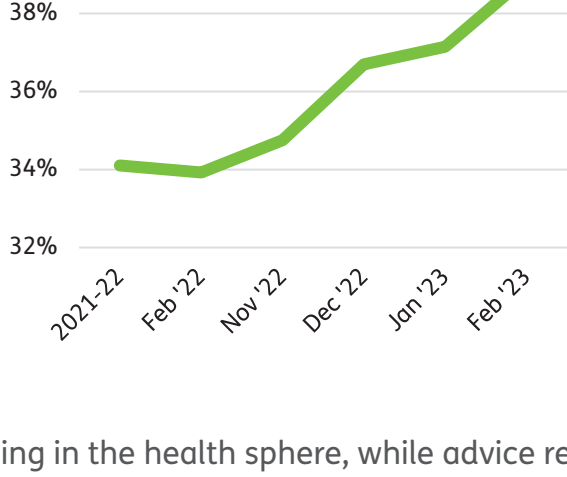
Most common advice type: Ranked (1=highest)



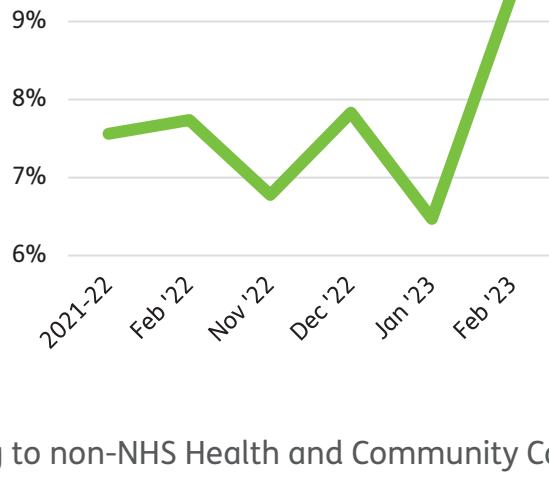
Energy advice continues to be our single biggest code after overtaking Universal Credit in December 2022 and continues to increase in demand. There was an increase of **611** pieces of advice given on energy compared to January 2023, with **12,386** pieces of advice given overall.

While issues currently faced by the NHS continue to make headlines, it can be seen that advice relating to all aspects of clinical treatment has been constantly increasing since 2021/22 (when an 'advice code' for that particular issue was first introduced) and is at its highest ever level of **39%** of all NHS-related advice. From February 2022 alone, this has increased by **15%**. Similarly, a sharp increase of **45%** in advice relating to the handling of NHS staff complaints was seen between January and February 2023, and a **15%** rise since February 2022. Other than advice related to mental health (although the numbers related to this are low), handling of NHS staff complaints is the only NHS advice area that is essentially at pre-pandemic levels.

NHS clinical treatment (all aspects)

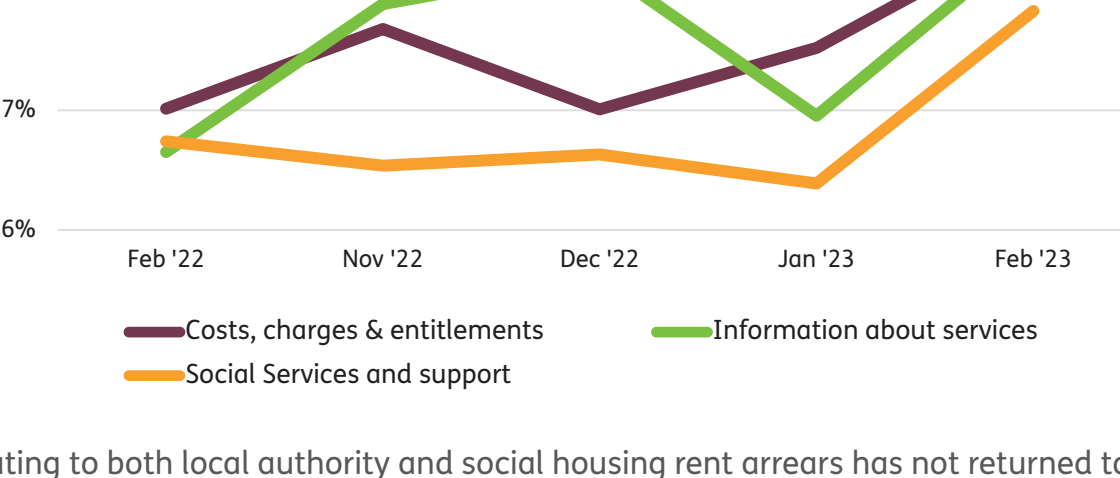


NHS staff: complaint handling



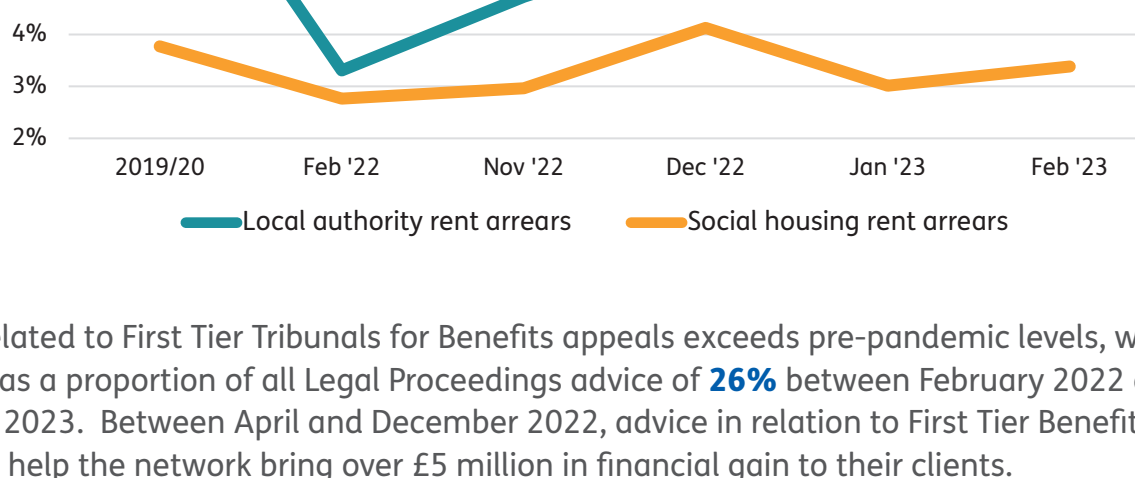
Continuing in the health sphere, while advice relating to non-NHS Health and Community Care remains far below pre-pandemic levels both recent and longer-term increases are evident. For example, advice relating to costs, charges and entitlements increased by **13%** between January and February 2023, and by **21%** from February 2022.

Health and Community Care



Advice relating to both local authority and social housing rent arrears has not returned to pre-pandemic, no doubt at least in part due to the forbearance measures put in place that time. Nevertheless, increases are evidence between February 2022 and February 2023, with advice relating to local authority rent arrears up by **93%** as a proportion of all debt advice. For social housing rent arrears, the increase over this same period is more modest at **22%**.

Rent arrears



Advice related to First Tier Tribunals for Benefits appeals exceeds pre-pandemic levels, with an increase as a proportion of all Legal Proceedings advice of **26%** between February 2022 and February 2023. Between January and December 2022, advice in relation to First Tier Tribunals help the network bring over £5 million in financial gain to their clients.

First Tier Tribunal: Benefits

