



Citizens Advice Scotland

EU Citizens Support Service



May 2020

Background Information

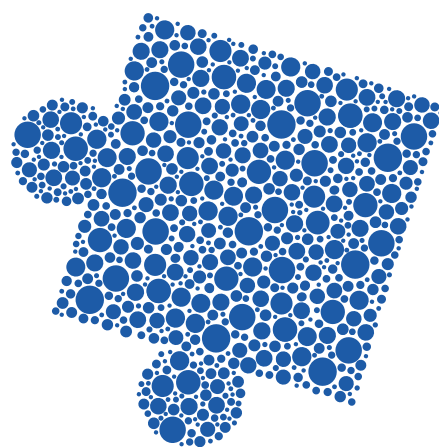
Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) has 59 member Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) across Scotland and is Scotland's largest independent advice network. All advice is free, confidential and impartial. In Scotland there are 59 CAB offices and advice is given at over 280 service points across the country.

In January 2019 Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) received funding from the Scottish Government to enable capacity to be developed within the CAB network to provide information and support, including immigration advice, to help individuals, particularly, but not restricted to, EEA nationals, to understand how they are affected by changes in the immigration rules as a result of leaving the EU. With the grant from the Scottish Government CAS was able to launch the EU Citizens Support Service (EUCSS) which comprised of a part-time national helpline from 18th March 2019 with three dedicated advisers and from 1st April 2019 all bureaux were able to provide support along with a solicitor-led service for complex cases. CAS was able to provide each CAB with an Android phone to assist people with the application as we identified that this was a major barrier to making an application to the EU Settlement Scheme.

In May 2019 CAS was also awarded funding by the Home Office and from this funding additional dedicated advisers were recruited and these advisers are located in bureaux across the country providing face-to-face support in communities and additional telephony cover. The Home Office funded advisers were fully operational by 1st August 2019 and the national helpline was able to start on a full-time basis from 5th August 2019.

The service provided by the dedicated advisers, 59 CAB and solicitor-led service covers all of Scotland.

Throughout this report there is reference to EU citizens and this term is used to cover all citizens of EEA countries and Switzerland.



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Citizens Advice Bureaux

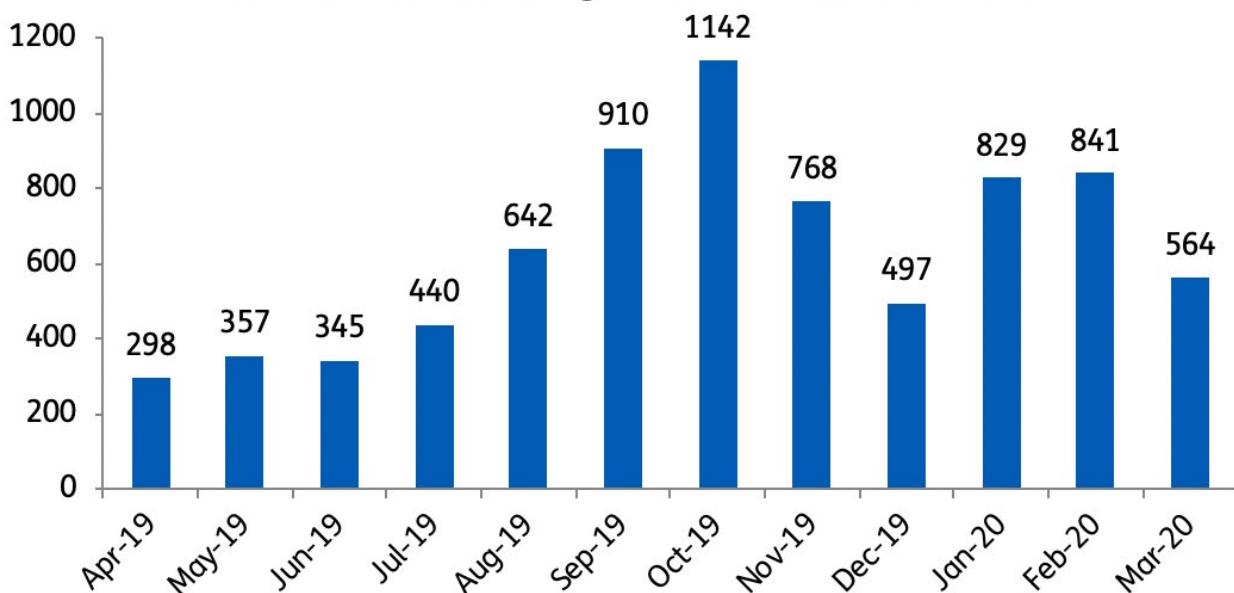
280

Service points across Scotland

Service Delivery

Data from the bureaux information systems shows that for the period between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 a total of 5,688 unique clients contacted the service for advice and support on 7,633 separate occasions.

No. of Clients Accessing EUCSS Service Each Month



On looking at the data it can be seen that the number of people accessing the service rose leading up to the planned October date for the UK leaving the EU. Once this passed the number of people seen reduced and this was compounded by public apathy, the festive period and the general election. The number of people receiving support in January and February 2020 increased to expected levels.

In March 2020 the number of people accessing the service reduced considerably due to Covid-19. Bureaux were able to keep providing a face-to-

face service up to 20th March and this has now ceased until will be safe to do so once again.

Even with Covid-19 the national helpline has continued on a full-time basis and all bureaux continue to provide advice and support using telephony, web-chat and email.

Rural Outreach

In February 2019/20 the Scottish Government provided additional funding to CAS to carry out additional work in some of the most rural areas of Scotland. CAS made six grants of 0.5FTE for a three month period to the following Bureaux:

- > Orkney CAB
- > Shetland CAB
- > Western Isles CAB
- > Skye and Lochalsh CAB
- > North West Sutherland CAB
- > Argyll and Bute CAB

The work by the bureau started in late February and was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic when businesses closed and bureaux were unable to continue to deliver face-to-face

interviews with clients. During the time that staff were able to provide a service we were able to ensure that everyone was able to complete all of the e-learning modules available to staff on the EU Settlement Scheme and gather information on local organisations and businesses which might either be in contact with or employ people who need to make an application to the EUSS. The impact of the additional advisers, on the number of applications made, was low. However, groundwork has been undertaken that will be vital once we resume work after the restrictions on social distancing are suitably relaxed.

For each locality data has been gathered of businesses that provide a comprehensive picture of local employers and this will be used to carry out engagement when circumstances permit.



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Citizens Advice Bureaux
supported in

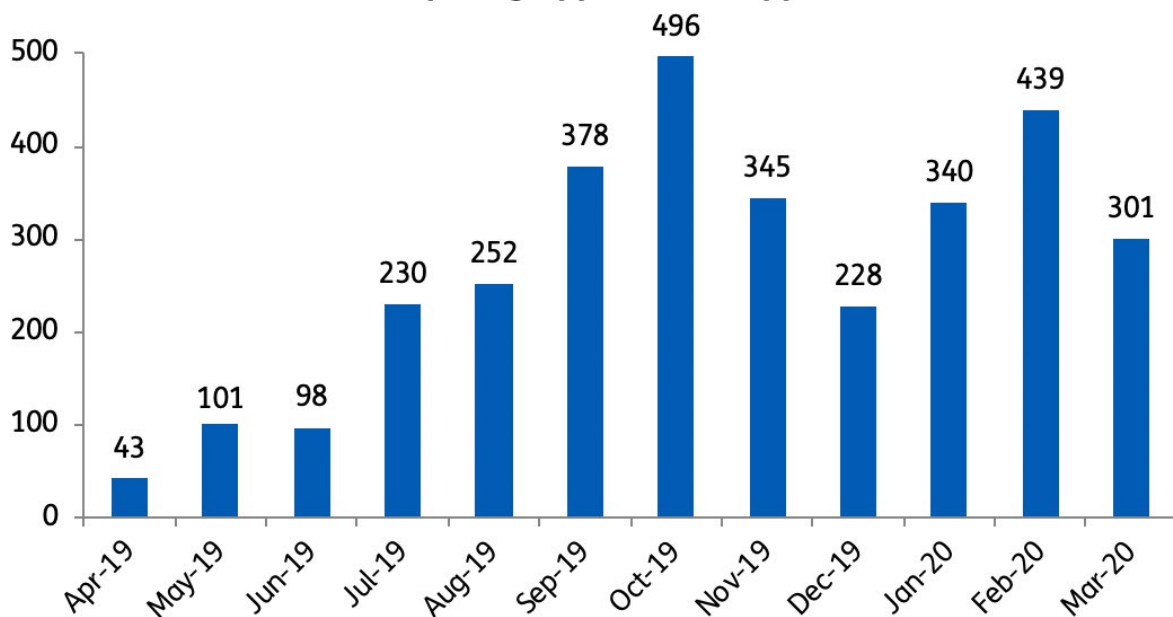
rural areas

Client Support

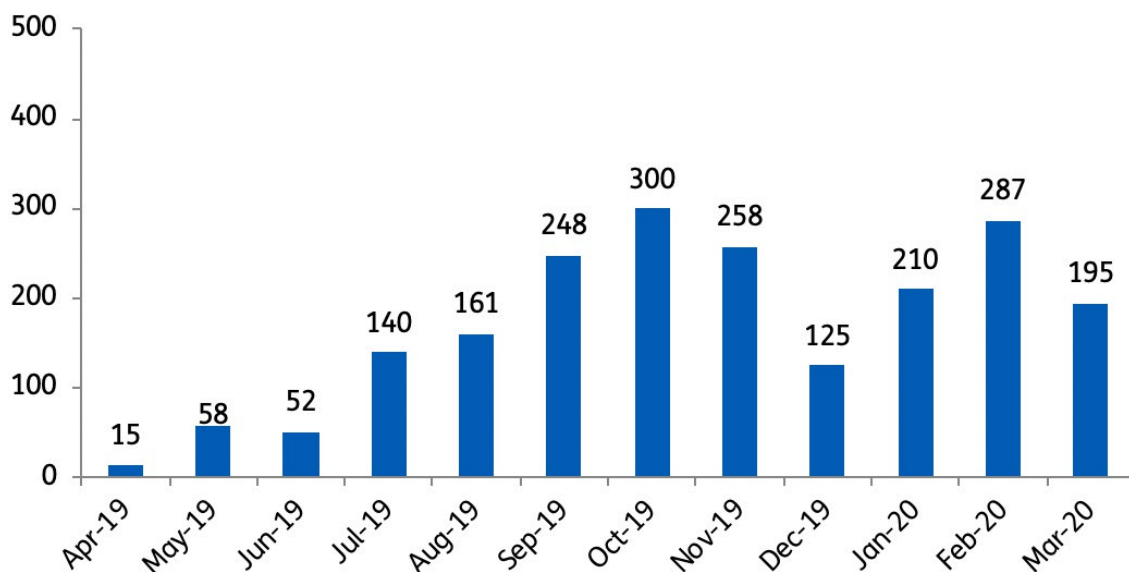
The number of people requiring support with their application and requiring access to a handset has also fluctuated in line with the reasons given for the number of people accessing the service.

The decision to provide each CAB with an Android phone is supported by the number of people that required this type of support. Advisers continue to find that many clients do not have access to a phone with the correct specification.

No. of Clients Requiring Application Support Each Month



No. of Clients Requiring Use of Handset Each Month

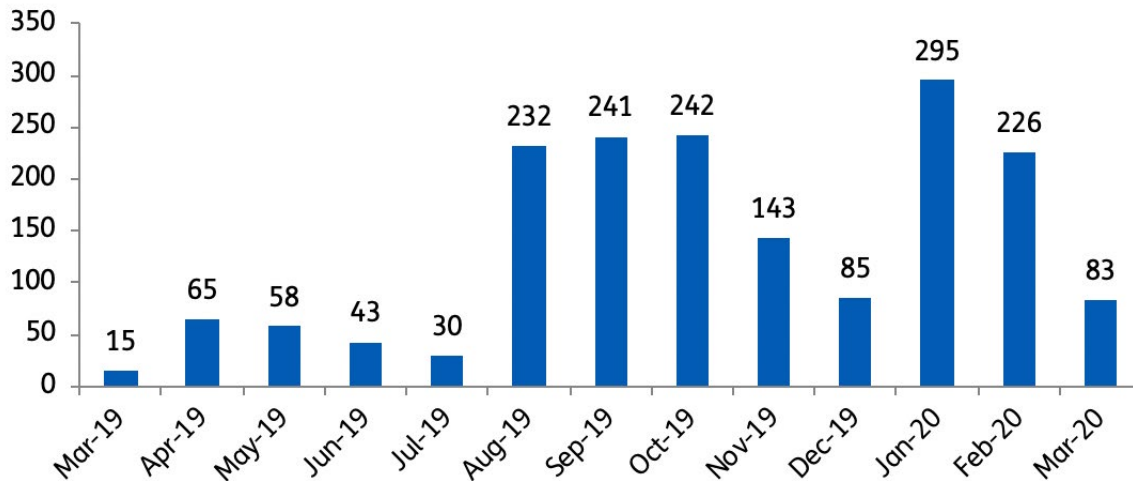


Telephone Helpline

The national helpline started on a part-time basis on 18th March 2019 and changed to a full-time basis on 5th August when we were satisfied that all of the Home Office funded advisers had sufficient knowledge and skills to provide the necessary level of support to clients.

The number of people calling the helpline peaked at 295 in January 2020 and this coincided with the actual date for the UK leaving the EU.

EUCSS National Helpline - Inbound Calls (Monthly)



The Monthly data shows that in January the number of people contacting the helpline increased considerably and this coincides with the UK leaving the EU on 29th January. In February the number of calls decreased and since the Covid-19 pandemic the number of calls

has reduced further. It is expected that this will remain low while restrictions exist on social distancing and non-essential employers being closed. The number of calls to our bureaux from the public asking for employment, benefits and debt advice has risen considerably.

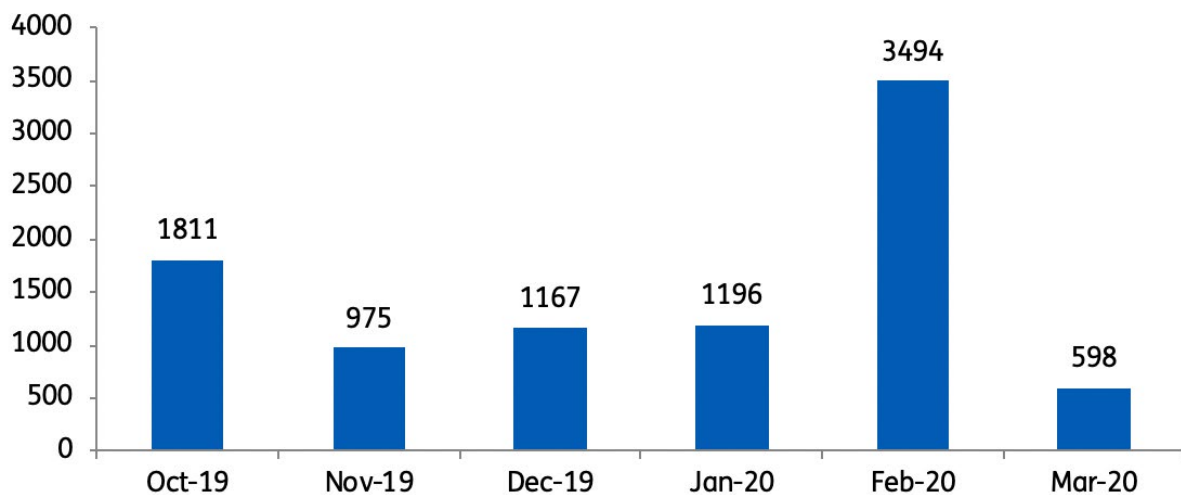
Our EU Citizen Support Service helpline continues to provide support during the Covid-19 pandemic



Service Information Events

In October 2019 we started gathering information on the number of people being provided with information about the service and between 1st October 2019 and 29th February 2020 a total of 9,241 were seen at information events.

No. of People Provided With Information About EUCSS



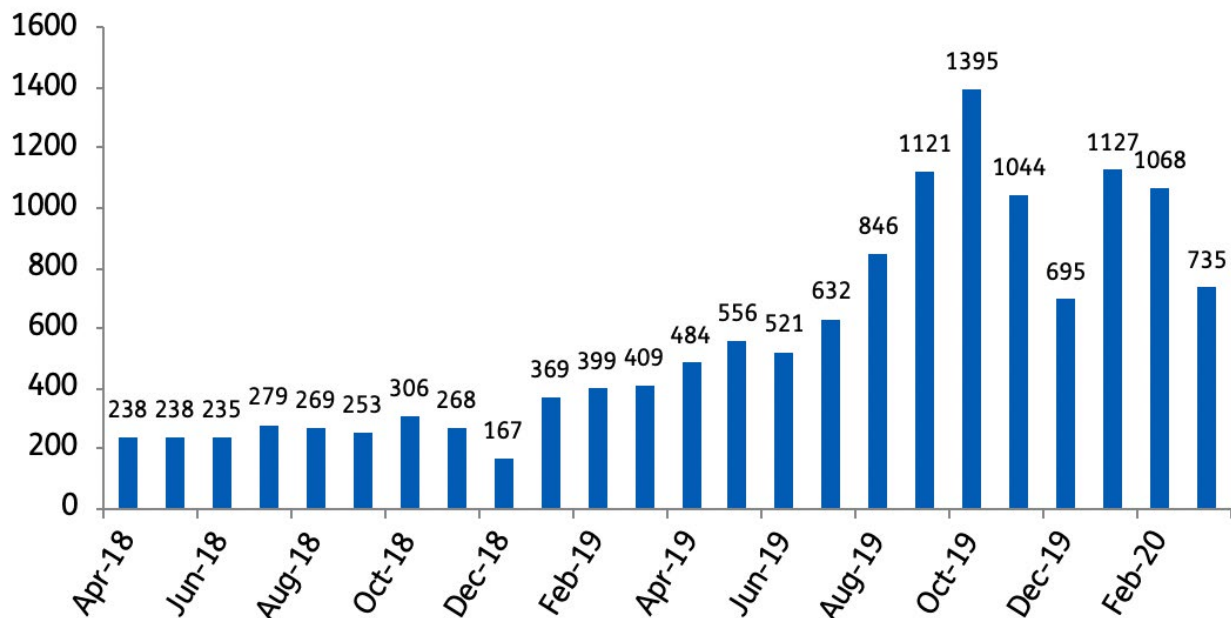
9,241

people seen at information events
between 1st Oct 2019 & 29th Feb 2020

Immigration Advice

There has also been a significant increase in the number of clients contacting bureaux regarding general immigration advice in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. In 2018/19 a total of 3,211 clients asked for immigration advice and in 2019/20 this rose to 8,928, an increase of 178%.

No. of Clients Requiring Immigration Advice Each Month



178%

increase in **immigration advice**
in 2019/20

Solicitor-Led Service

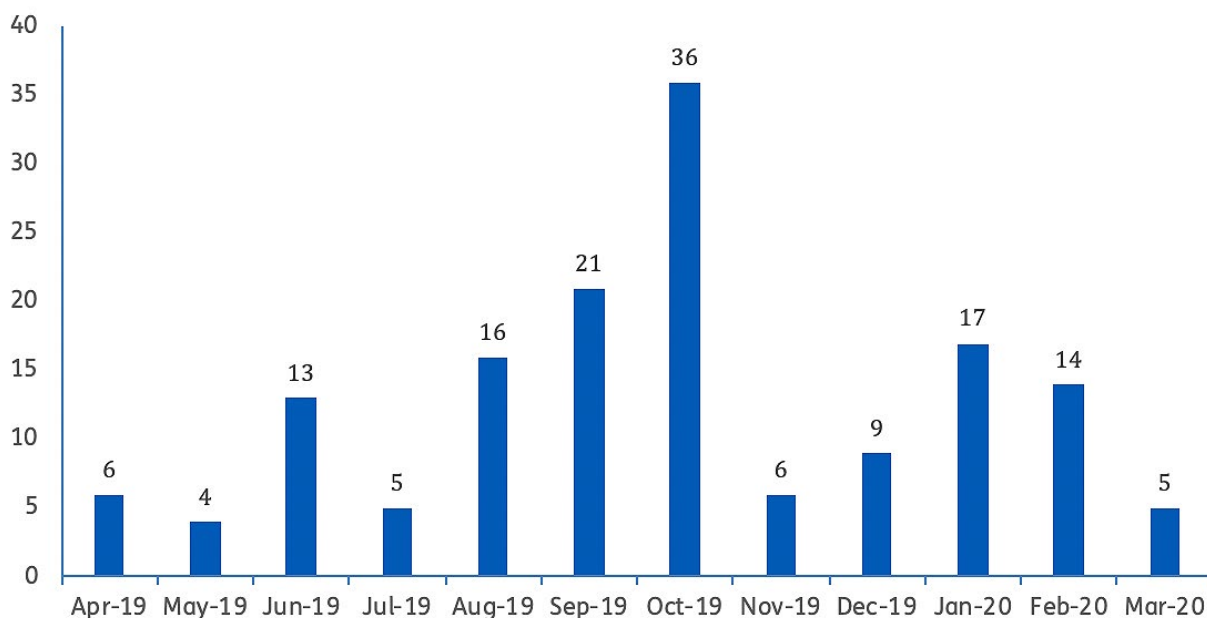
Immigration advice is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) and all advisers in bureaux are able to provide advice at OISC Level 1 and any complex cases must be passed to someone that is authorised to give advice at OISC Level 2 or 3.

Citizens Advice Scotland has an agreement with the Lanarkshire Community Law Centre, which is associated to Airdrie CAB that any cases that cannot be dealt with by bureaux advisers under OISC Level 1 will be passed to them for further support. The solicitor-led service provided second tier advice and support for 152 clients in 2019/20 taking 16 clients on as referrals. In the early part of the year the solicitor undertook extensive training with EUCSS advisers and bureaux.

Throughout the year the solicitor accepted 31 referrals for advice on the need to declare criminal convictions, 13 on Derivative Rights of Residence and 6 on Surinder Singh applications.

As we head towards the application deadline it is expected that the number of cases requiring support for the solicitor-led service will increase as more complex cases surface due to people who have been in the country for many years being identified and also people with offending histories coming forward.

EUCSS - OISC 2nd Tier Support



In 2019/20 **2nd Tier Support** provided in

152 cases



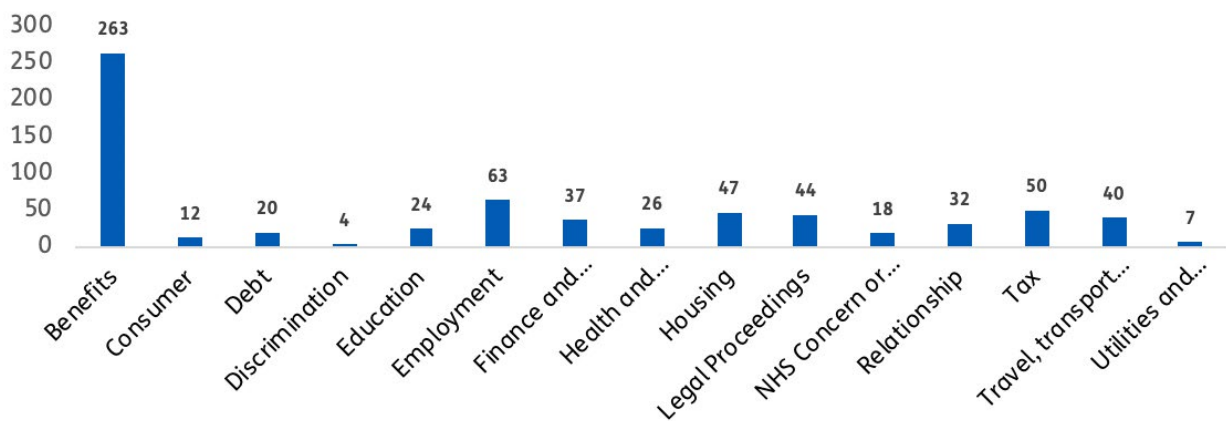
Additional Services

All CAB provide a holistic service and are able to provide advice on a variety of subjects. Through the skill and experience of advisers we are in a position where we are able to identify underlying and related problems to the presenting issue.

For the period between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020 there were 263 clients asking

for support with the EU Settlement Scheme application who also had issues with their Benefits. The vast majority of these clients had been refused Universal Credit as they had failed the Department of Work and Pensions' (DWP) Habitual Residency Test (HRT).

Additional Service Provided to Clients Accessing EUCSS Apr 2019 to Mar 2020



263



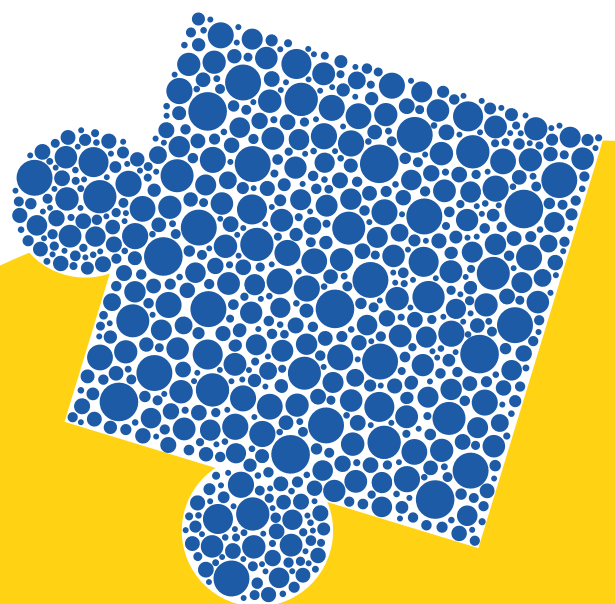
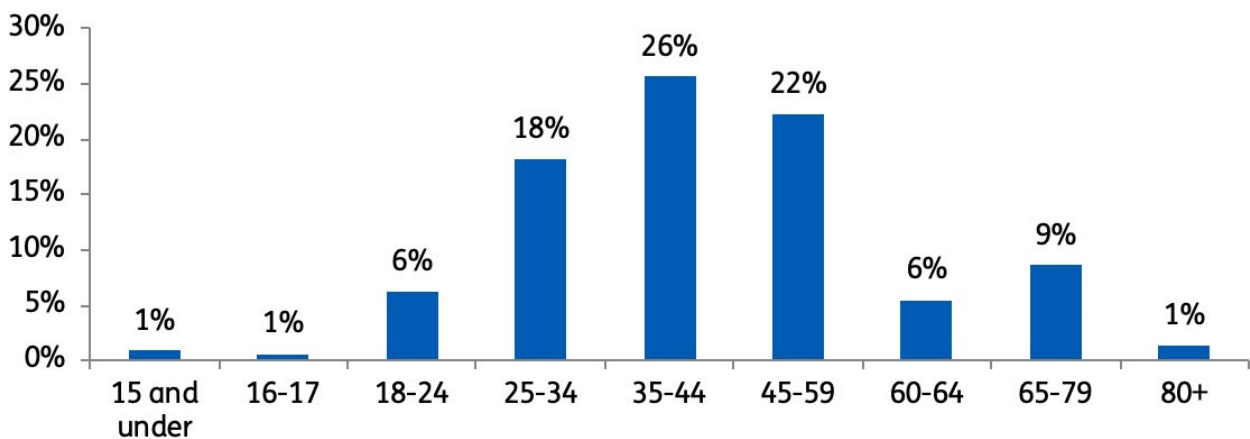
clients asking for support with the EU Settlement Scheme also had issues with benefits

Age Profile

The age profile of clients shows that younger and older adults have not been asking for support and this could be for a variety of reasons. Work requires to be carried out to focus on these groups to increase the support that is made available to them.

Children under the age of 16 would be recorded on their parents' record on our information systems.

Age Range of EUCSS Clients



Challenges

- > We identified that a large number of EU citizens who were making claims for benefits from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) were being refused benefit on the grounds that as they did not have Settled Status they did not have recourse to public funds.
Through discussions with senior management in DWP we agreed that any clients that made a claim for benefit that either had Pre-settled Status or had not applied to the EU Settlement Scheme would be signposted to us.
Advisers have made contact with their local DWP offices and given briefings to the staff to raise awareness of the service that we are able to provide and how we can work in partnership.
- > The number and nationality of EU citizens living in the UK is not known and this has proved to be a significant challenge as the lack of data has made it difficult to identify if there are specific groups of EU citizens living in specific areas. The lack of data at a local level prevents organisations taking a targeted approach with marketing. To try and overcome this we have linked with local organisations and groups to build up a picture at a local level.
- > The changes to the date that the UK was going to leave the EU along with political uncertainty and changes within the UK Government caused weariness in the general public and especially amongst EU citizens. Now that we have left the EU this should have created some stability to enable services to provide support to people to make their application. However, because of Covid-19 all organisations are faced with providing a reduced level of service. Until social-interaction rules are relaxed the timescale for people that are resident in the UK to make their application may result in many missing the deadline as there will be a potential bottleneck of late applications as the deadline approaches. Experience tells us that the most 'hard to reach' groups such as the elderly, people in the criminal justice system, agriculture workers and hospitality workers have not made applications in the numbers that we would hope and it will be a challenge to ensure that all people make an application that need to.
- > The guidance provided to EU citizens isn't comprehensive as many people do not appreciate that dependents who are non-EEA or Swiss citizens must also make an application. This also applies to Irish citizens who are not required to apply. CAS will be undertaking a marketing campaign, when social interaction rules are lifted, to highlight who needs to make an application.
- > There is a lack of understanding by EU citizens that if they are given Pre-Settled Status that this will last for up to five years and that they must reapply to the EUSS to be able to remain in the UK. There is no reminder system and could result in large numbers of people facing issues in later years.

Planned Activities in 2020/21

While we are currently unable to carry out any work that involves face-to-face contact with the public it is difficult to provide the public with information about the service as in many cases people will have more important issues to deal with such as the health of both themselves and their families, unemployment and debt.

Once we are able to deliver a more comprehensive service we will be

- > Launching a refreshed marketing campaign to target those that know that they have to make an application but haven't done so yet.
- > Undertaking three six week marketing campaigns with Bauer Media and this will target their listeners through social media, email, website and radio adverts on six radio stations. The reach will include over 307,000 listeners and 1.2 million website users.
- > Launching a marketing campaign using twelve regional newspapers and one national newspaper to include social media, website and hard copy advertisements.
- > Continuing discussions with sporting organisations to support their employees with their applications for the EUSS and use this as a way to access their fan base through their social media.
- > Continuing early discussions have been held with representatives of organisations that work in the justice sector and the proposal is to provide support to people in the criminal justice system that need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.
- > Working with Care providers across Scotland to identify both residents in care homes and people living in the community that receive care who may be EU citizens and need to make an application. This work will also cover employees that are EU citizens.
- > Working closely with all embassies and consulates to increase awareness of the service that CAS is able to provide.



Hamish Fraser

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Citizens Advice Scotland

20th April 2020



www.cas.org.uk



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