

Citizens Advice Scotland

Impact of COVID-19 on the advice sought from the Scottish Citizens Advice network. November 2021

This is the latest monthly summary of data from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland since the COVID-19 outbreak and covers November 2021.

It shows data from the 59 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland and our online advice site.

During November 2021 the CAB network helped 22,018 clients while online advice pages saw 213,592 users.

Month in focus:

November saw further demand for advice around income and the cost of living, and will likely have been driven by the impact of rising inflation, higher energy bills and reductions to Universal Credit.

Demand for online advice around compensation in the event of a power cut is also likely a consequence of storm Arwen in November, with further demand for energy related advice shows the consequences of the energy market crisis are still being felt by consumers.

As Scotland heads into the festive period, it is clear income and cost of living concerns continue to be a serious issue for people.

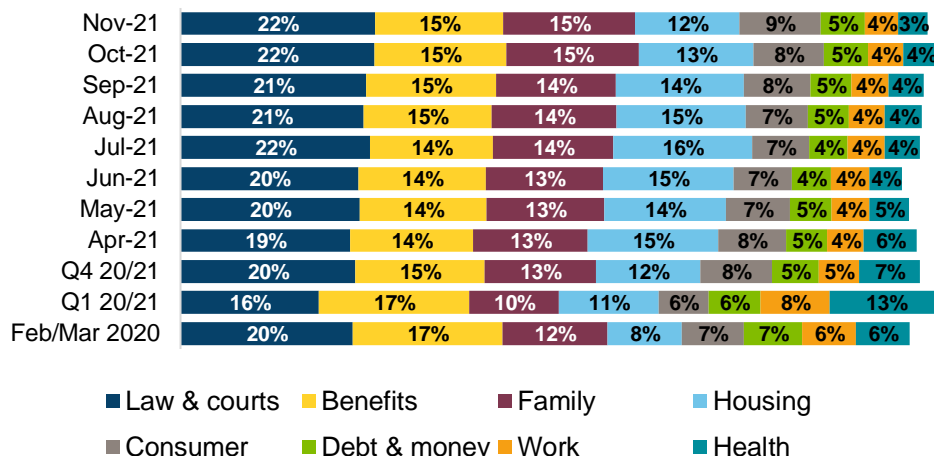
Online advice pages

- 358,314 unique page views (UPV)
- 213,592 users, 75% new

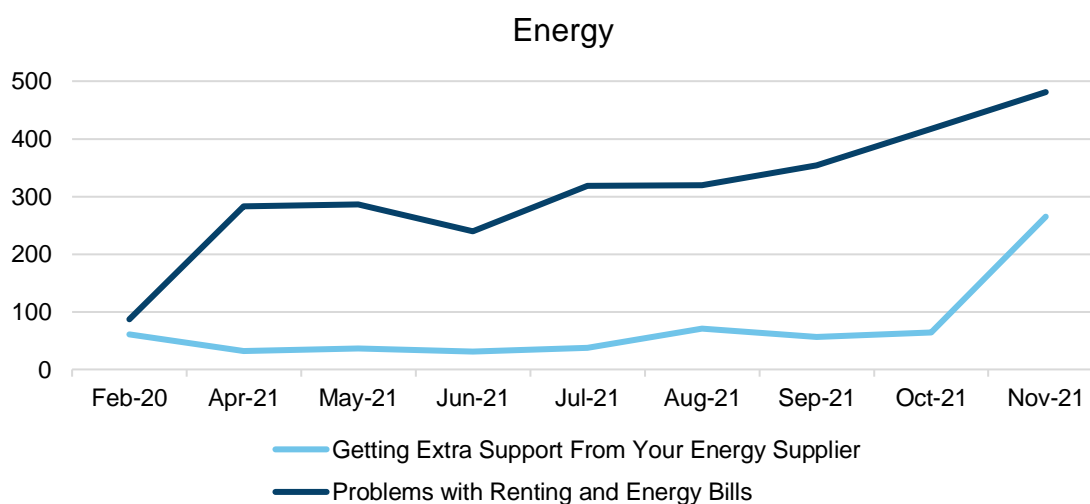
Trend data for visits to the Advice for Scotland website, as a proportion of all unique page views on the site, shows some variation between October and November 2021, with an increase in unique page views of webpages relating to consumer advice (up 15%), and decreases in the unique page views of pages relating to Health (down 17%), and Immigration (down 15%).

Compared to Feb 2020, advice areas with substantial increases are Immigration (up 39%); Law and Courts (up 13%), Family (up 25%), Housing (up 40%), and Consumer (up 30%).

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



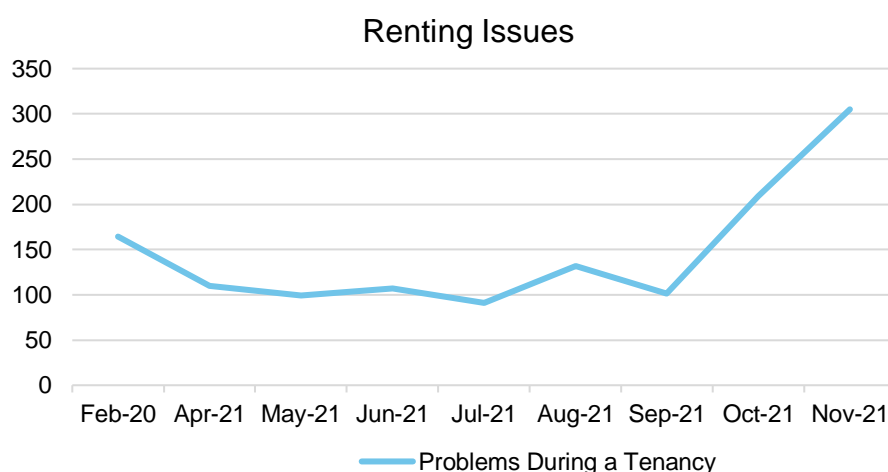
Online advice on energy across Consumer and Housing pages continued to experience substantial increases in UPVs in November. Pages seeing a sudden increase in November alone relate to 'get compensation if you have a power cut' (up 13,597% pre-pandemic), 'Getting extra support from your energy supplier' (up 259% pre-pandemic), and 'Problems with renting and energy bills' (up 357% pre-pandemic).



The webpage *'Something's gone wrong with a purchase: stolen goods'* has 669 UPVs in November, an increase of 24% from October, and an increase of 20% from the same period last year (November 2020).

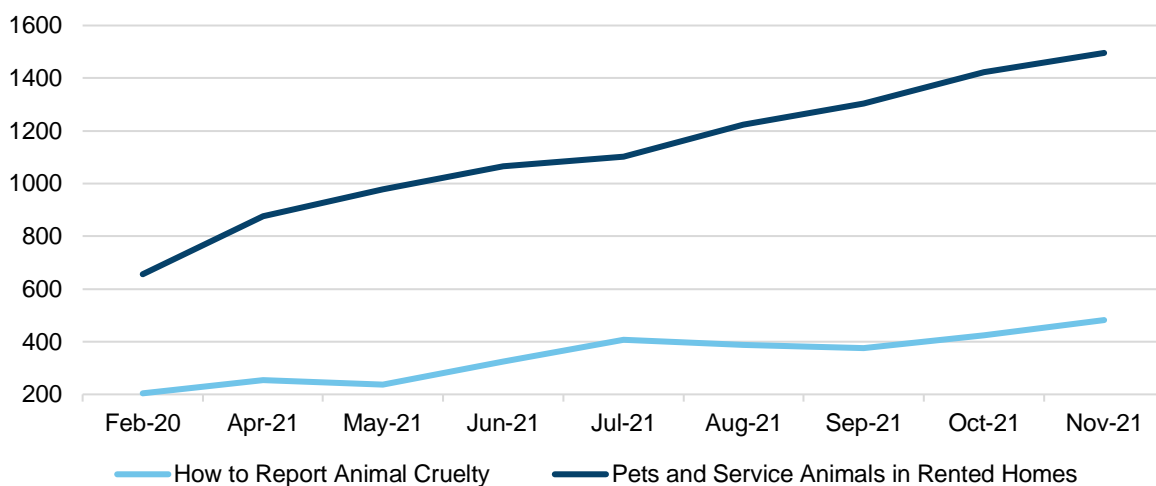


While several pages relating to problems during a tenancy decreased in November, such as *'Finding a home to rent'* (down 10%), *'Problems with your landlord'* (down 1%), *'Getting repairs while renting'* (0% change) and *'The landlord wants to increase rent'* (0% change), the general webpage for *'Problems during a tenancy'* increased 50% from October, and 54% from February 2020.



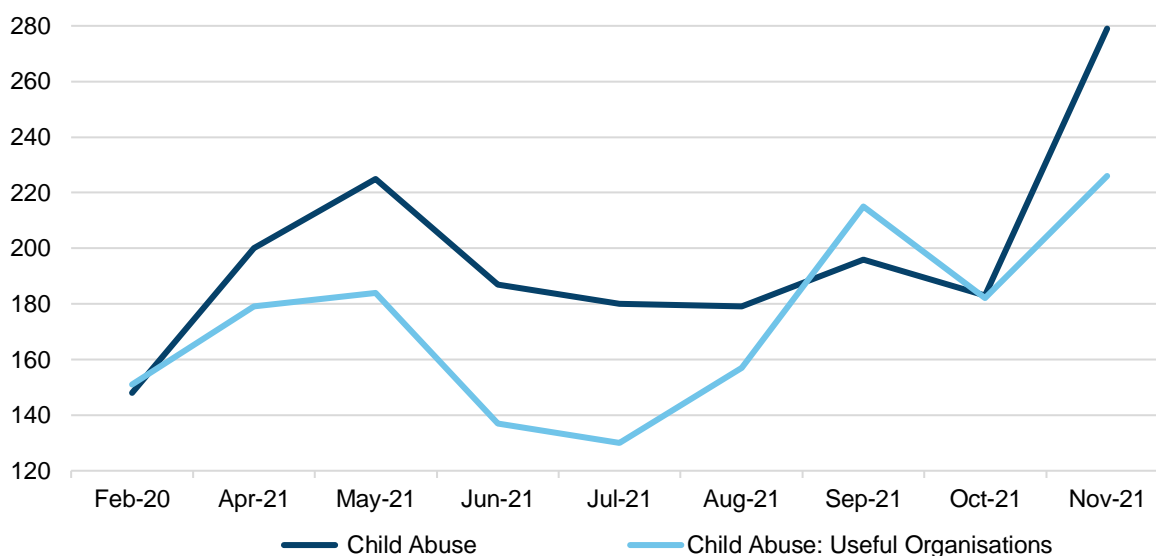
Webpages relating to animals have both increased steadily over 2021. Although the webpage for *'Pets and service animals in rented homes'* only increased 8% from October, it has been steadily increasing since April 2021, and is up 89% from February 2020 with 1,496 UPVs. Additionally, *'How to report animal cruelty'* is up 17% from October 2021, and 95% from February 2020.

Problems with Animals



The webpage for *'Child abuse'* experienced a sharp increase of 56% from October to November, which is also 56% up from the pre-pandemic period. The webpage for *'Child abuse: useful organisations'* is similarly up 27% from October as well.

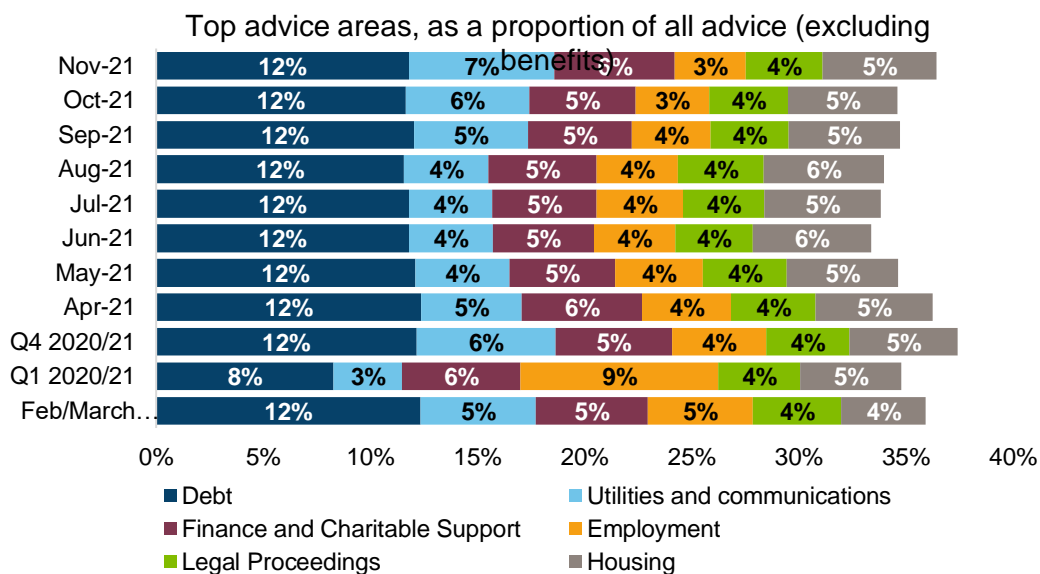
Abuse



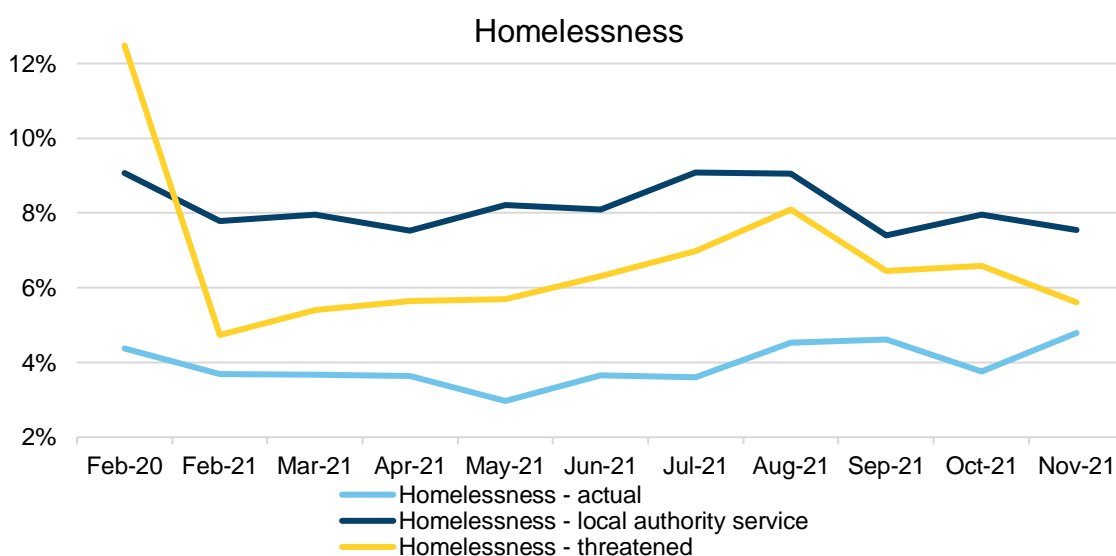
Citizens Advice Bureaux

- 22,018 clients
- 89,748 pieces of advice

Benefits remained the top advice area in November 2021 at 48% of all advice. Four notable changes in advice areas since October are Utilities and Communications (up 18%), Finance and Charitable Support (up 13%) as well as Immigration, Asylum, & Nationality (down 13%) and Tax (down 13%).

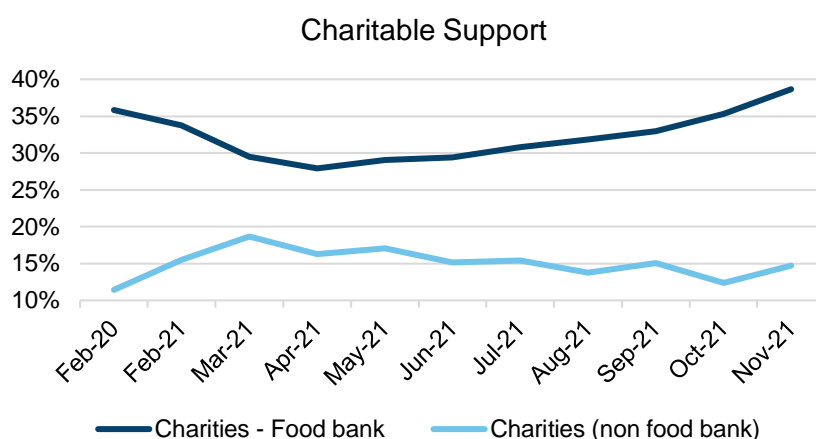


Although threatened homelessness and local authority services have both decreased from October to November (in addition to staying below pre-pandemic levels), actual homelessness in November has increased 27% since October 2021, surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 10%.

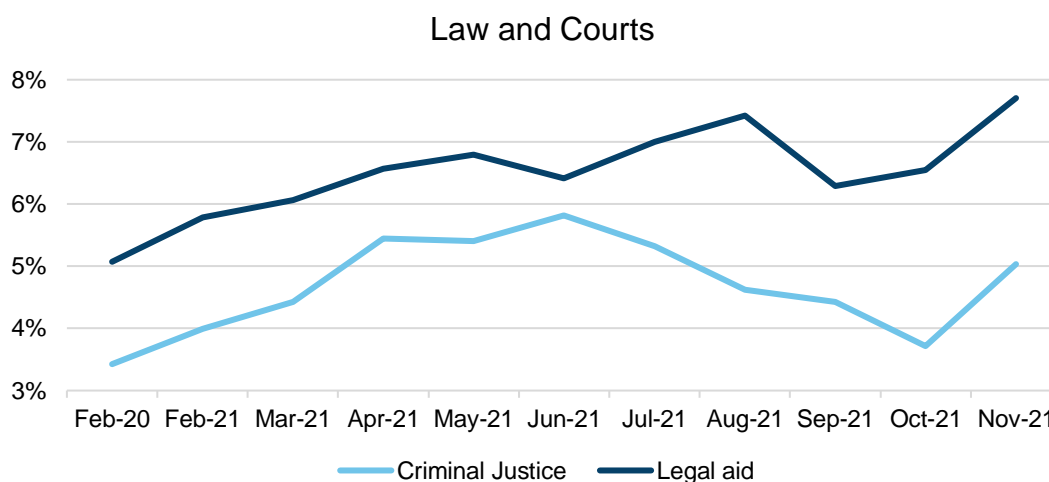


As noted in October, charitable support has been approaching pre-pandemic levels, and surpassed them in November.

Advice relating to charitable support from foodbanks has continued to increase in November, with a 9% increase from October, and an 8% increase from February 2020. Advice for charitable support from non-food banks increased 19% from October to November, and 29% from February 2020.

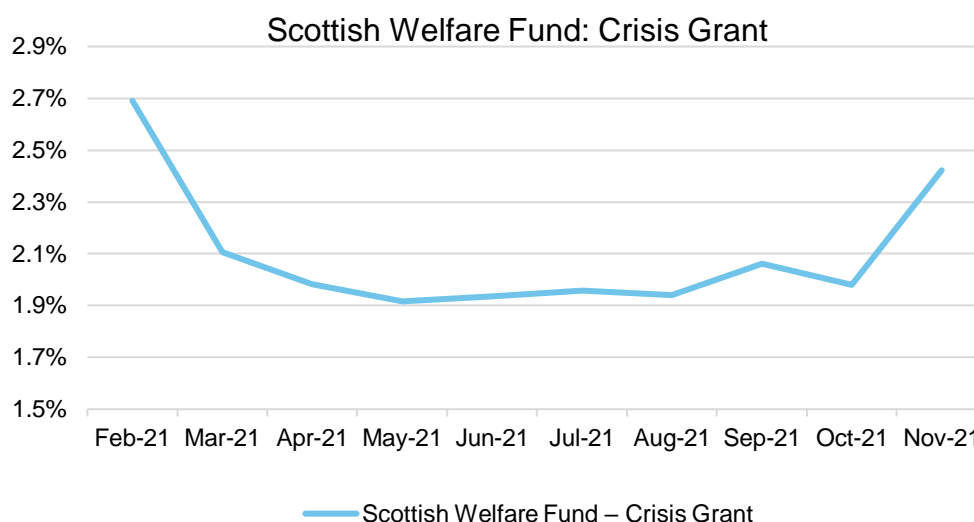


Advice relating to Law and Courts: Criminal Justice increased 35% from October to November, an increase of 47% since February 2020. Similarly, Legal Aid increased 18% from October to November, an increase of 52% from February 2020. Legal Aid is now experiencing its highest proportion level over the past 22 months.

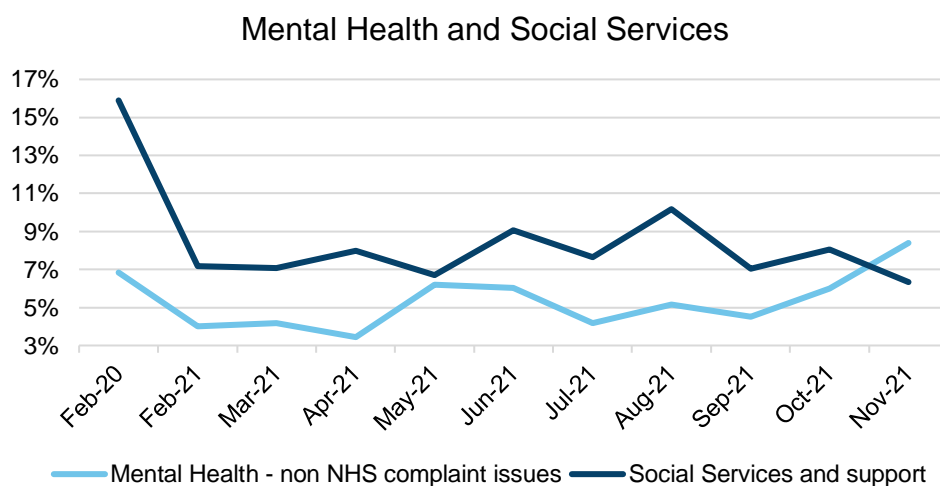


Advice around crisis grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund increased from October to November 22%, the sharpest increase in this financial year, and an overall increase of 33% from February 2020.

In November, 1,050 pieces of advice were given on crisis grants, compared to 749 in February 2020 and 1,039 in February 2021. Additionally, advice for Employers Support Allowance – Contributory is up 8% from October.



Lastly, advice relating to Mental Health – non NHS complaints has increased 40% from October, and exceeded the pre-pandemic period by 23% in November. This is the highest proportion of this advice category since February 2020. At the same time, advice relating to social services and support are down 21% from October 2021, and down 60% from February 2020.



The proportion of face-to-face contacts increased by 6% between October and November 2021, with those seeking advice in relation to Immigration (21%) or Travel/Transport (16%) most likely to use this method of contact.

During November 2021:

- Those seeking advice in relation to Benefits, Debt, and Finance + Charitable Support were most likely to do so through direct contact with bureaux (either telephone or email).
- Those seeking advice in relation to Consumer; Discrimination; and Immigration were most likely to use the Scottish Citizens Advice Helpline.