

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

06.08.20



Introduction

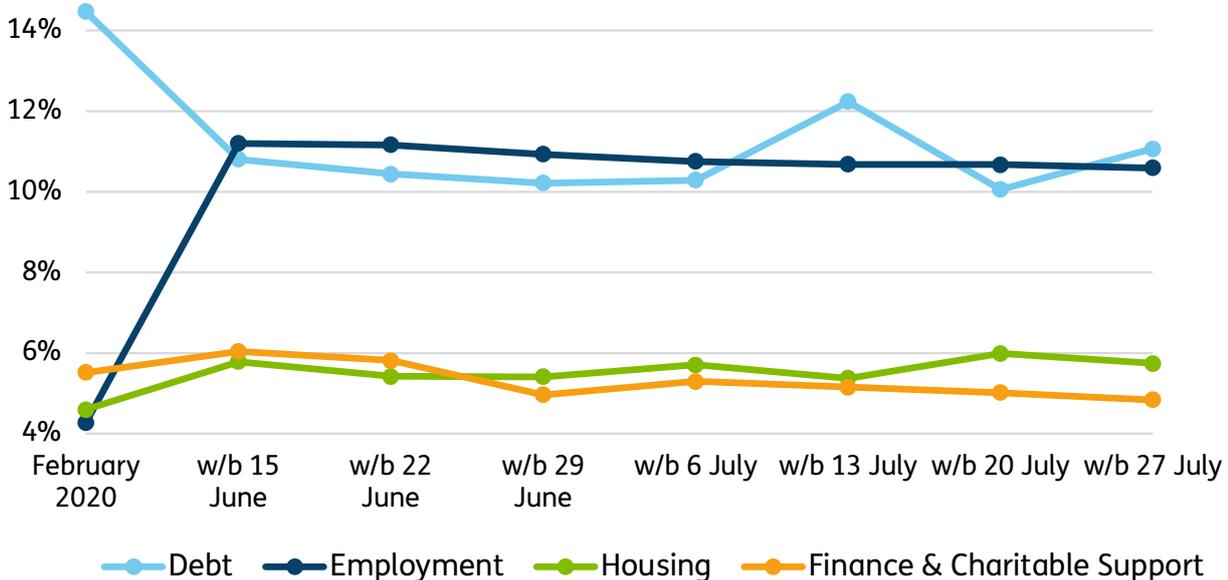
This is a weekly report that tracks changes in the type of advice people are seeking from the Citizens Advice network in Scotland up to and including Sunday 2 August. It includes data from the 59 Citizens Advice bureaux and from our public advice site.

Top five advice needs at Citizens Advice bureaux

Advice in relation to benefits remains the most common area of advice given by Citizens Advice bureaux in Scotland with a small decrease over recent weeks to 42% of all advice provided. The need for employment-related advice continues to exceed pre-lockdown levels, as does that for housing. In contrast, debt-related advice continues to be below pre-lockdown levels.

Before lockdown, debt advice was the second most common advice topic but employment-related advice began to overtake it in April 2020. This change may now be reversing with debt advice becoming slightly more common in recent weeks.

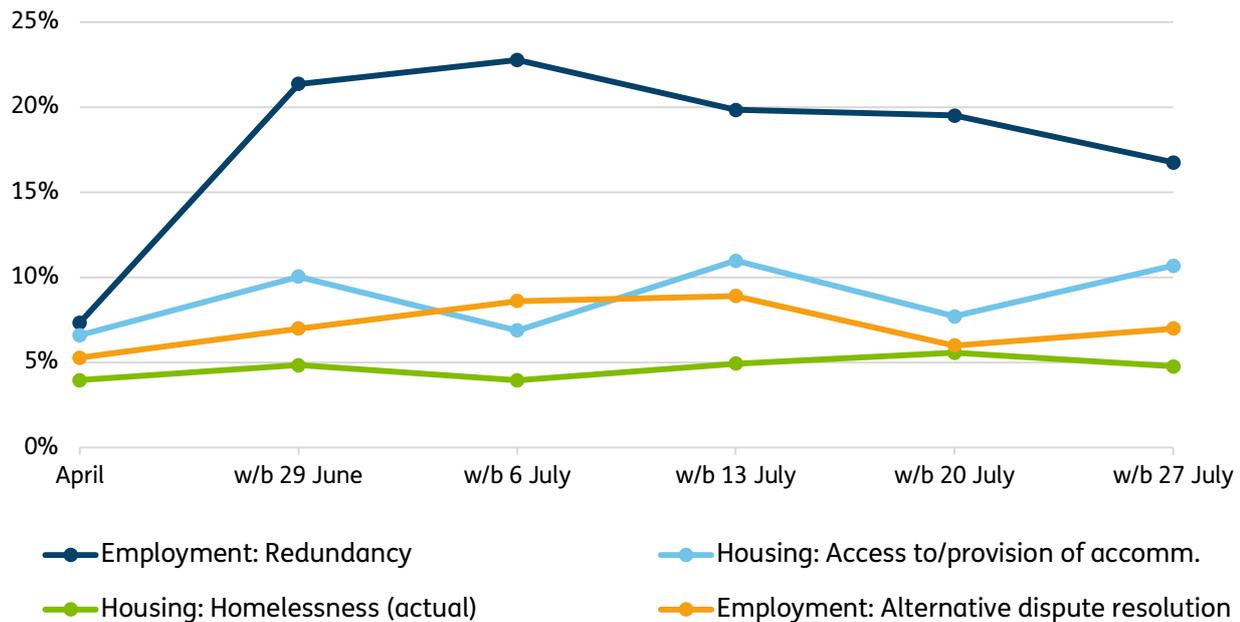
Chart 1: Top advice needs at bureaux (excluding benefits)



Notable increases in advice need

Although most advice areas are now returning to pre-lockdown levels, some remain higher than what would be considered ‘usual’ levels. Certain types of employment-related advice (especially redundancy) and housing-related advice are currently the most likely to continue to follow this trend.

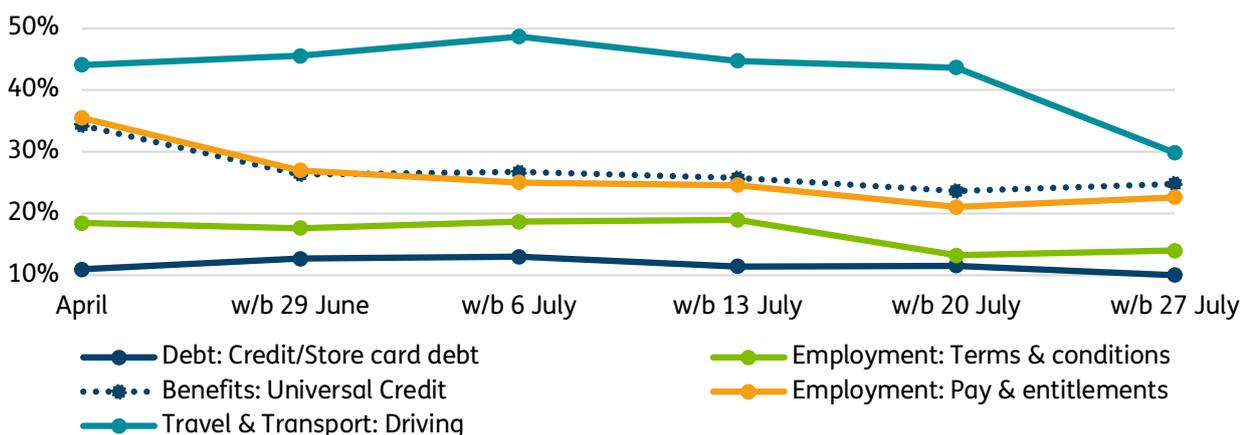
Chart 2: Notable increases in advice need at bureaux, April to July 2020



Notable decreases in advice need

Other advice areas show a decrease over recent weeks, with those related to driving and pay/entitlements being the most noticeable.

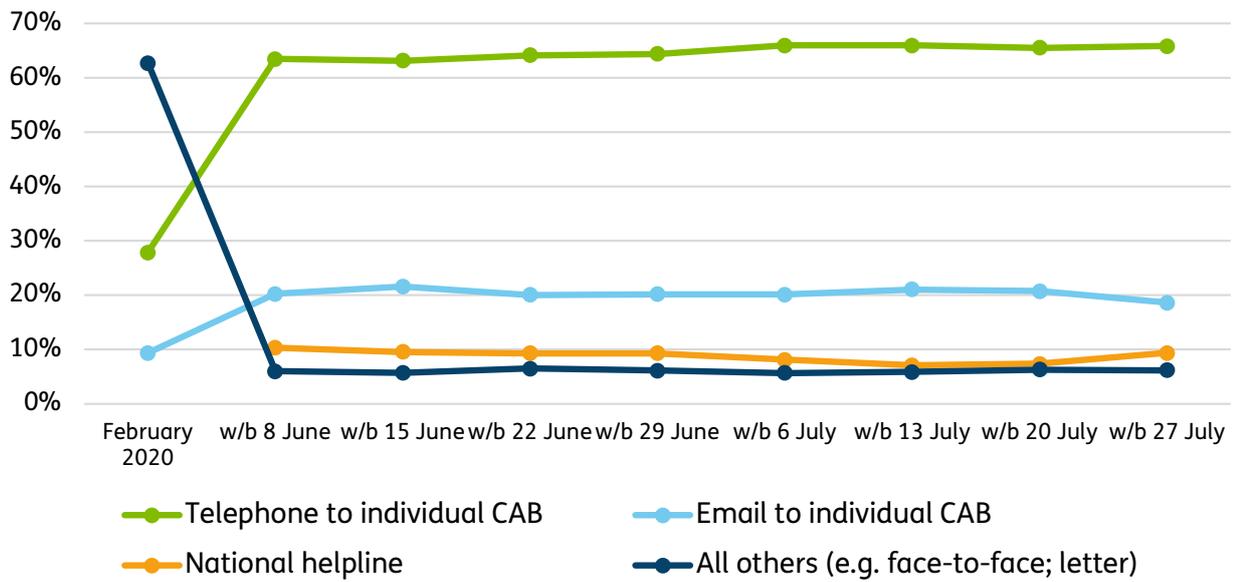
Chart 3: Notable decreases in advice need at bureaux, April to July 2020



Contact method

Direct contact with local bureaux via telephone remains the most common way to seek advice. A small increase in use of the National Helpline towards the end of July can also be seen.

Chart 4: Client contact method



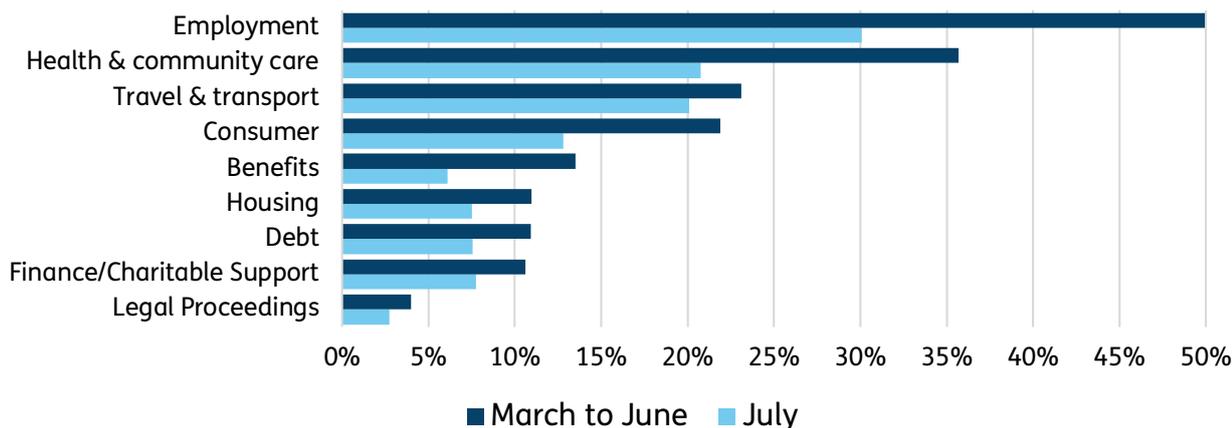
Clients with COVID-19 advice needs

In March 2020, an advice code was added in order to facilitate understanding of how COVID-19 was affecting advice need. This allows advisors to mark a query as being directly related to COVID-19.

Chart 5 shows how coronavirus has impacted on different advice areas. For example, 50% of all people seeking employment advice between March and June said this was as a result of COVID-19.

The highest proportions of clients with COVID-19-related advice needs have been seeking advice in relation to employment; health/community care; and travel/transport. Although the proportion of clients seeking specific coronavirus-related advice decreased in July 2020, these remain the top three coronavirus advice areas in terms of client numbers.

Chart 5: Clients with coronavirus-related advice need, as a proportion of advice area

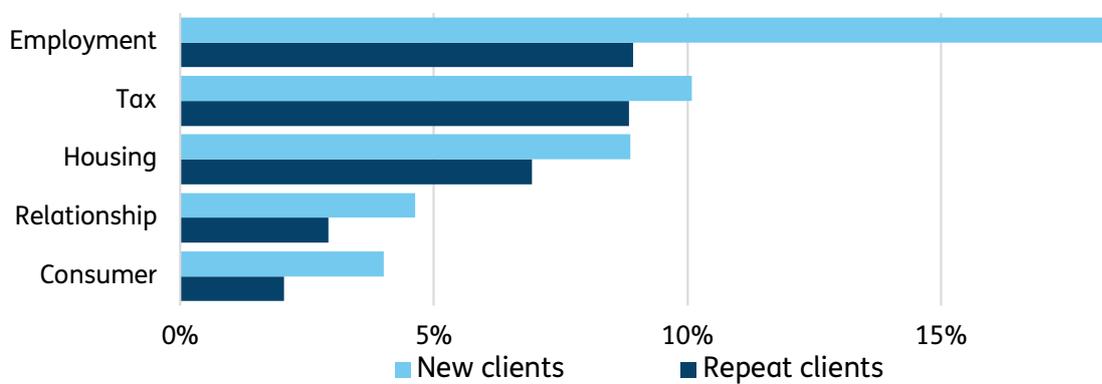


New and repeat clients

In terms of advice needs, there are differences between ‘new’ clients (i.e. those who came to bureaux for the first time between March and July 2020) and ‘repeat’ clients (i.e. those who had been to bureaux prior to March 2020). For ‘new’ clients, by far the most common type of advice sought was in relation to employment, followed by tax and housing.

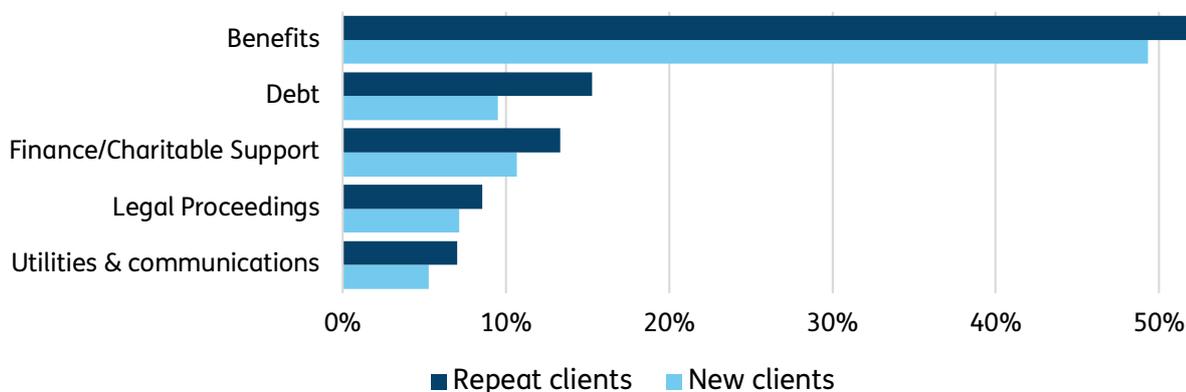
For example, between March and July, 18% of new clients sought employment advice compared to 9% of repeat clients.

Chart 6: Advice areas with higher proportion of ‘new’ clients, March to July 2020



In contrast, ‘repeat’ clients were more likely to seek advice in relation to benefits, debt, or finance/charitable support.

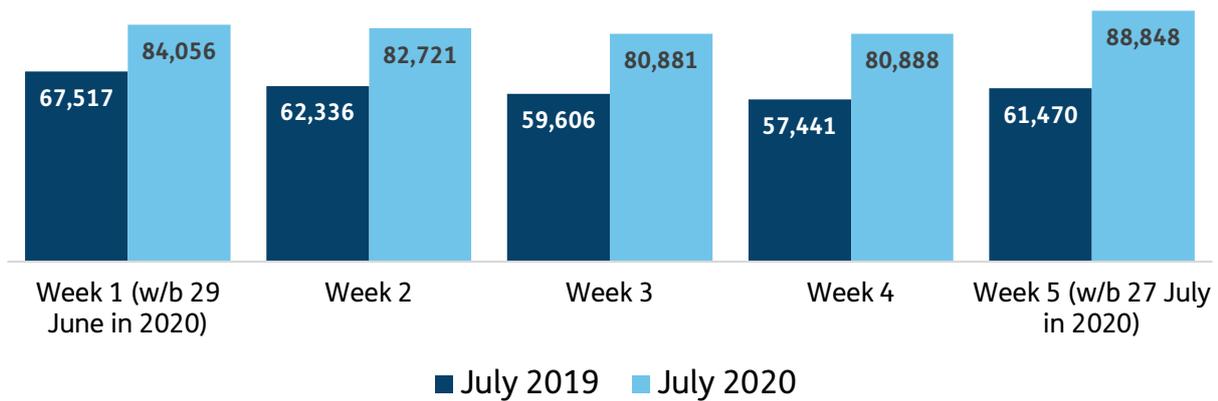
Chart 7: Advice areas with higher proportion of ‘repeat’ clients, March to July 2020



Online coronavirus advice

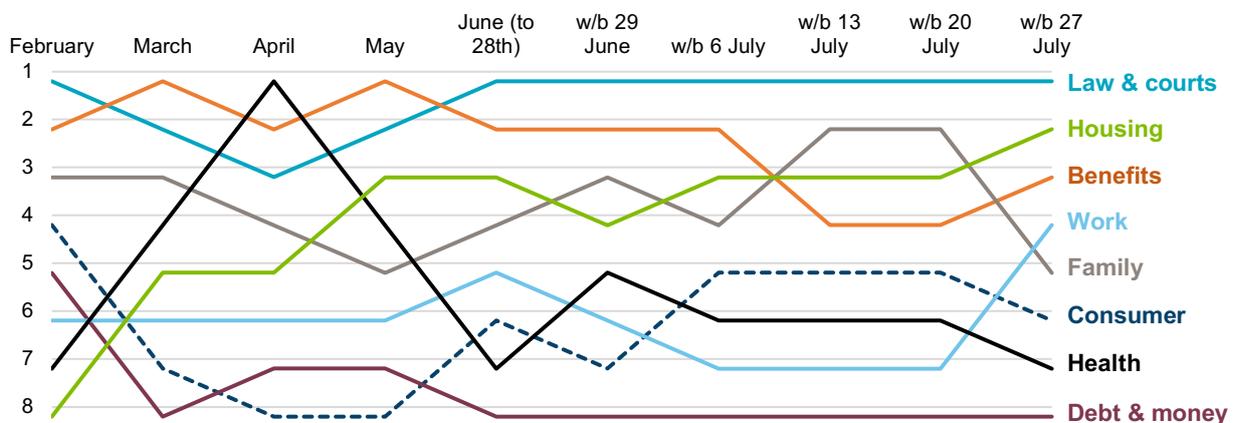
The public advice website had 88,848 unique page views during the week beginning 27 July 2020, an increase of 10% on the previous week and a 45% increase from the same period in 2019.

Chart 8: Unique page views on the public advice website



The top advice areas on the public advice site, when ranked, have shown some change in the week beginning 27 July, with increases evident in relation to work; housing; and benefits.

Chart 9: Top advice areas ranked by number of unique page views



This is also somewhat reflected in the coronavirus-specific webpages (see Chart 10), where a decline in health-related COVID-19 advice and an increase in furlough-related advice can be seen.

Chart 10: Coronavirus advice online: unique page views as a proportion of all

