

# Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework 2018/19 Annual Report



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# Executive Summary

The purpose of the Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework (CAPMRF) is to report and analyse the investment made by local authorities in advice services (covering both internal delivery and external commissioning) and to assess the outputs and impacts achieved for this investment. In doing so, the report aims to help ‘tell the story’ regarding the value of advice services, as well as provide a mechanism for councils to benchmark their performance and identify scope to further improve the impact and value for money of these services.

This report has been produced by the Improvement Service (IS) in conjunction with Scotland’s Local Authorities. The work has been made possible as the result of funding provided to the IS by the Scottish Government.

The framework is now in its fifth year of reporting. At stakeholder sessions held in November and December 2017, and subsequent discussions with several local authorities, there was broad agreement that the previous money advice performance management reporting Framework (MAPMRF) should be adapted to include welfare rights advice. This was to reflect the shift towards generic working in many areas as well as a reduction in funding allocated specifically for money advice services, which had meant that many local authorities found reporting separately on money advice increasingly challenging. This iteration of the framework is currently the second in which indicators for welfare rights advice have been included, making it possible to begin to identify changes over time at both local and national levels. Longer term trends can be examined for specific indicators that relate only to money advice.

This report analyses the returns submitted by all 32 local authorities covering the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019. It is noted that, the volume and quality of data reported by councils has strengthened since last year, though not every council was yet able to provide all data covered by the Framework, partly due to varying capabilities of the case management systems used. It is anticipated that a process of continuous improvement will further enhance the CAPMRF year-on-year, as it becomes further embedded. Any significant data gaps are noted within the report. It is noted that the effect of such data gaps is generally likely to contribute to underestimations of the workload and impact of the services.

There is compelling evidence that money and welfare rights advice services are used by those individuals experiencing the greatest social and economic inequality. This can be demonstrated by the demographic make-up of the clients they serve. In particular, a disproportionately greater percentage of clients have a disability, are members of minority ethnic groups, or live in a low-income household. Demand for money and welfare rights advice services continues to grow, with many local authorities indicating that welfare reforms have impacted on the volume and nature of this demand. Services appear to be dealing with more time-consuming cases, demonstrated by greater numbers of existing clients continuing support from the previous year, increasing numbers of debt clients awaiting outcomes, and increasing numbers of mandatory reconsiderations and appeals.

The analysis highlights that investment by local authorities in money and welfare rights advice represents good value for money and improves the financial position of many of the poorest and most vulnerable members of communities.

The general trend emerging from the data this year suggests that investment for internal services has slightly increased between 2017/18 and 2018/19 and slightly reduced for externally commissioned services. However, it is likely that the increase observed in internal services is reflective of increased cost of delivery. When accounting for the effects of inflation, the reported increase in funding is minimal. Furthermore, staffing costs have increased between 2017/18 and 2018/19 as a result of the local government pay award. This indicates that although funding is reported to have increased in cash terms, there is likely to have been a reduction in real terms. It has become more expensive to deliver the same service, yet the evidence suggests that services continue to deliver successful outcomes for some of the most vulnerable members of society. This is demonstrated both through increasing levels of client financial gain and in the reported impact that advice services have on the lives of those accessing support.

The majority of clients reported improved health and wellbeing, improved capacity and ability to cope and increased financial stability and resilience, highlighting that these services deliver more than just income maximisation. Local authorities themselves can also benefit from investment in money and welfare rights advice services through mitigating the loss of rental and council tax income. The number of clients seeking advice for rent arrears has increased between 2017/18 and 2018/19, therefore continued investment and support for clients with this debt stands to benefit councils' budgets.

The key findings for 2018/19 are as follows:

## Key Points

### Local Authority Investment

- Across Scotland, 29 internal and 71 external money and welfare rights advice services received funding from local authorities. The number of externally commissioned services receiving funding reduced from 77, whereas the number of services provided directly by councils remained at the same level as the previous year.
- Local authorities invested a total of £25.9m in money and welfare rights advice services in 2018/19. Since 2017/18 investment in internally delivered services increased 3% to approximately £14.8m and investment in externally delivered services decreased 10% to approximately £11.1m.
- Multiple factors may have contributed to the increase in internal funding, including; investments to mitigate the impact of welfare reform, increases in line with inflation, and increased cost of delivering the same service following the local government pay award.
- In 2018/19, there was a total of 908 paid FTE staff employed by money and welfare rights advice services, this has increased 6% since 2017/18. This is split on a roughly equally basis between those that are employed directly by councils and those that are funded by councils but employed by external partner organisations.

### Who Accesses Advice?

- A total of 244,637 clients were supported by money and welfare rights advice services in 2018/19.
- Three quarters of clients had a household income below £15,000, compared with a quarter of the Scottish population. The single largest group of advice service users had a household income of less than £6,000.

- A large and increasing proportion of clients were in some form of employment. This increased from 25% of clients in 2017/18 to 29% in 2018/19.
- 32% of clients were aged 60 and over.
- A disproportionate percentage of advice services' clients are from ethnic minority communities (relative to the ethnic minority population in Scotland), although the single largest ethnic minority group in Scotland continues to be under-represented.
- The proportion of clients with a disability or long-term health condition increased from 51% in 2017/18 to 54% in 2018/19.

### Demand for Services

- The total amount of debt owed reduced 9% in comparison with the past year to approximately £186.3m.
- The number of rent arrears clients increased 10% in comparison with the previous year, now making up the largest proportion of all debt clients (13%). This could have an impact for local authorities as it represents an increase in clients who owe money to the council.
- Since 2017/18 the total number of mandatory reconsiderations dealt with by welfare rights advice services has increased 17% and appeals have increased 19%.
- Welfare rights advice services supported clients with 4,098 claims for Universal Credit, increasing 97% since 2017/18. These claims made up 6% of all claims in 2018/19, compared with 3% in 2017/18.

### Financial Gain

- In relation to 'Health and Wellbeing' c.85% of service users reported improvement and c.90% indicated that they had 'Improved Capacity and Ability to Cope'.
- Approximately £323.9m verified financial gain was secured for clients, an increase of 7% (£22.1m) since the previous year.
- Every £1 invested in money and welfare rights advice provision by local authorities in Scotland provides financial gains of £13 to £14<sup>1</sup> for clients.

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1 This is presented as a range as there is a £13 return when only verified gain reported by councils is included, while there is a £14 return if both verified and unverified gain reported by councils is included.



# Background

In summary, the evidence indicates that Advice Services funded and/or delivered by Scotland's local authorities are effectively targeted on vulnerable and poor citizens. Almost 1/4 million clients were supported in the past year. The bulk of service users have a low / very low household income and an increasing number of these clients are in employment. The majority also have a disability or long-term health condition. This suggests that advice services are effectively targeted. Councils' work in this area brings a significant tangible benefit to these citizens, with £323m of verified financial gain recorded in 2018/19. This represents a return of £13 to communities for every £1 invested in Advice Services by councils.

In the period covered by this overview report, April 2018 to March 2019, there have been significant changes in national policies affecting the support and delivery of money and welfare advice services, with the establishment at UK level of a single Financial Guidance Body – the Money Advice and Pension Service<sup>2</sup>, devolution of levy funding for debt advice to the Scottish Government (with a value of c.£4m), and the establishment of Social Security Scotland<sup>3</sup> to manage those benefits that are devolved alongside new benefits that are unique to Scotland. It remains to be seen how these changes will impact on the delivery of money and welfare advice services at a local level.

Previous overview reports have highlighted the multiple benefits early access to advice services can offer for the health and wellbeing of people and the communities in which they live. Early access to advice services can reduce poverty and address income inequality and make a significant contribution to national strategies on health<sup>4</sup>, child poverty<sup>5</sup> and fairness<sup>6</sup>. Whilst there is a growing recognition of the impact that advice services can create, money and welfare advice services continue to be vulnerable to further cuts and their future remains uncertain.

Although there is a statutory duty on local authorities to provide aspects of advice services in certain circumstances arising from Parliamentary Acts<sup>7</sup>, funding for advice services in general is not 'protected' by legislative requirement, nor is it explicitly set out as a policy priority for Scottish Government or local government in Scotland. Due to the fact that certain other policy areas have benefited from relative protection in recent years, this has meant that relatively unprotected services, such as advice services, have been disproportionately vulnerable to cuts when funding decisions are taken<sup>8</sup>. This issue is likely to become more acute in future years. The Accounts Commission has highlighted that an increasing share of local authority funding is now committed to Scottish government priorities rising from 6.6% of revenue budgets in 2018-19 to 12.1% in 2019-20. This leaves local councillors with "*less flexibility in where to spend and where to save*".<sup>9</sup>

The Chair of the Accounts Commission stated: "*It's important to recognise that councils are working*

2 <https://moneyandpensionservice.org.uk/>

3 <https://www.socialsecurity.gov.scot/>

4 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-public-health-priorities/pages/1/>

5 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/>

6 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-action-plan/pages/7/>

7 Bankruptcy and Diligence (Scotland) Act 2007, Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017

8 [https://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/fairfundingforessentialservices2019-20v2\\_1.pdf](https://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/fairfundingforessentialservices2019-20v2_1.pdf)

9 [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr\\_190321\\_local\\_government\\_performance.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2019/nr_190321_local_government_performance.pdf)



*hard to maintain and, in some cases, improve services. Councils must now focus on changing how front-line services are designed and delivered.”<sup>10</sup>*

Across Scotland, local authorities are already adopting, or supporting, innovative approaches to delivering advice services. Examples include: the use of web chat to support advice services in Inverclyde; integrating holistic advice services in primary care settings in Aberdeenshire and working with the third sector to provide family and employability support alongside welfare and money advice in schools in Edinburgh. There are many other instances of the types of service transformation implemented by local authorities and their community planning partners. The focus is on improving service user outcomes in a cost effective and efficient way, but transformation and continued delivery is only possible if funding continues to be provided to support the services.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-47638448>

# Analysis of Data Returns

Ways of maximising potential investment in advice services might include increasing the contribution from health services, in recognition of the impact advice has both on service user health and wellbeing and cost savings to primary care services<sup>11</sup>, and adopting a more integrated approach to existing funding sources<sup>12</sup>. The IS is engaging with key stakeholders to explore the feasibility of widening adoption and roll-out of these approaches.

This section of the report outlines the Scotland-wide findings from the analysis of the data submitted by all 32 local authorities that funded money and welfare rights advice services in 2018/19. When submitting data, local authorities were asked to provide information in relation to five categories: 'Context', 'Input', 'Activity', 'Output' and 'Outcome'. All local authorities received a copy of the Indicator Guide<sup>13</sup> which explained, in detail, the indicators relating to each of the identified categories and the supporting data that should be collected. See Table 1 below for the list of indicators included in the CAPMRF.

Table 1: List of CAPMRF Indicators

Type of Indicator	Indicator
Context	C1 – Money and welfare rights advice services and case management system/s
	C2 – Number of clients per demographic measure
	C3 – Amount, number, and type of debts owed by client
Input	I1 – Number of FTE staff
	I2 - Funding
Activity	A1.1 – Volume
	A1.2 – Breakdown of contacts by channel
	A1.3 – Number of referrals
	A1.4 – Reason for initial contact
	A1.5 – Number of open and closed SNSIAP <sup>14</sup> cases
Output	OP1 – Breakdown of debt strategy agreed with client
	OP2 – Number of claims submitted and awards made/maintained for each type of welfare benefit
	OP3 – Number of welfare benefit claims that resulted in mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, and their outcome

11 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/welfare-advice-and-health-partnerships.html>

12 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/evaluation/debt-advice-funding-model-prelim-report.pdf>

13 <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/capmrf-indicator-guide-return-template.html>

14 Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

Type of Indicator	Indicator
Outcome	OC1 – Verified and unverified financial gain
	OC2 – Improved health and wellbeing
	OC3 – Improved capacity and ability to cope
	OC4 – Increased financial stability and resilience

The data received from each local authority in Scotland, upon which this analysis is based, is publicly available in the form of individual reports on the Improvement Service website. All 32 local authorities in Scotland provide either in-house money and welfare rights advice, fund an external provider to deliver these services or, indeed, do both. Data about these services, upon which this report is based, was submitted by all local authorities on a voluntary basis in relation to the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.

Several caveats apply to the data supplied. In 2017/18, data reporting was affected by updates to the case management system used by the majority of externally funded Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CABx), CASTLE, prior to the release of a new version in October 2017. The impact of this is that some figures were under-reported in 2017/18. This should be considered when comparing figures over time, as increases can in part be attributed to the increased reporting. As 2017/18 was the first year in which welfare rights advice was included in the framework, the reporting requirements were not all in place. When returning figures this year, several local authorities have identified inaccuracies in the figures provided for 2017/18. Where identified, these errors have been resolved, meaning the 2017/18 figures used in this report are the most-up-to date and accurate. However, this does mean that 2017/18 figures used in this report may not be consistent with those included in the published version of last year's report. Now that those errors have been reported by councils, a prominent errata note has been added to the 2017/18 publication.

This year there have been only minor changes to the framework meaning that the reporting requirements are, in many cases, already in place and completeness of reporting has improved. However, as with the previous year, there are still gaps in the data. Two local authorities were unable to provide any data in relation to their internal service and one could only provide limited data. Several local authorities also indicated that incomplete data had been provided by some of the external services they fund. Therefore, although there are greater numbers of local authorities reporting on most indicators, these figures are not always complete. These gaps often occur when some services cannot record the data in the format defined in the Indicator Guide. These gaps are identified where they exist in the analysis and must be considered when interpreting the findings. It should be noted that they are generally likely to contribute to underestimations of the workload and impact of the services.

The Improvement Service continues to work with local authorities in supporting the improvement and ease of recording. This year 6 local authorities trialled the use of an online reporting system. This was used to simplify the process of reporting as changes could be incorporated in real time and multiple Council colleagues or delivery partners (e.g. CABx sub contractors) that were given access by the individual local authorities could upload data. This system also included prompts



# Context Indicators

for users to review how the figures they uploaded compared with the previous year's figures. This was useful in quickly identifying errors and allowing local authorities to provide context to facilitate understanding of any significant changes. This system will be reviewed with local authorities with the aim of further improving the ease and efficiency of reporting for local authorities and it is anticipated that the option of online reporting of future years' data will be extended to all councils in the year ahead.

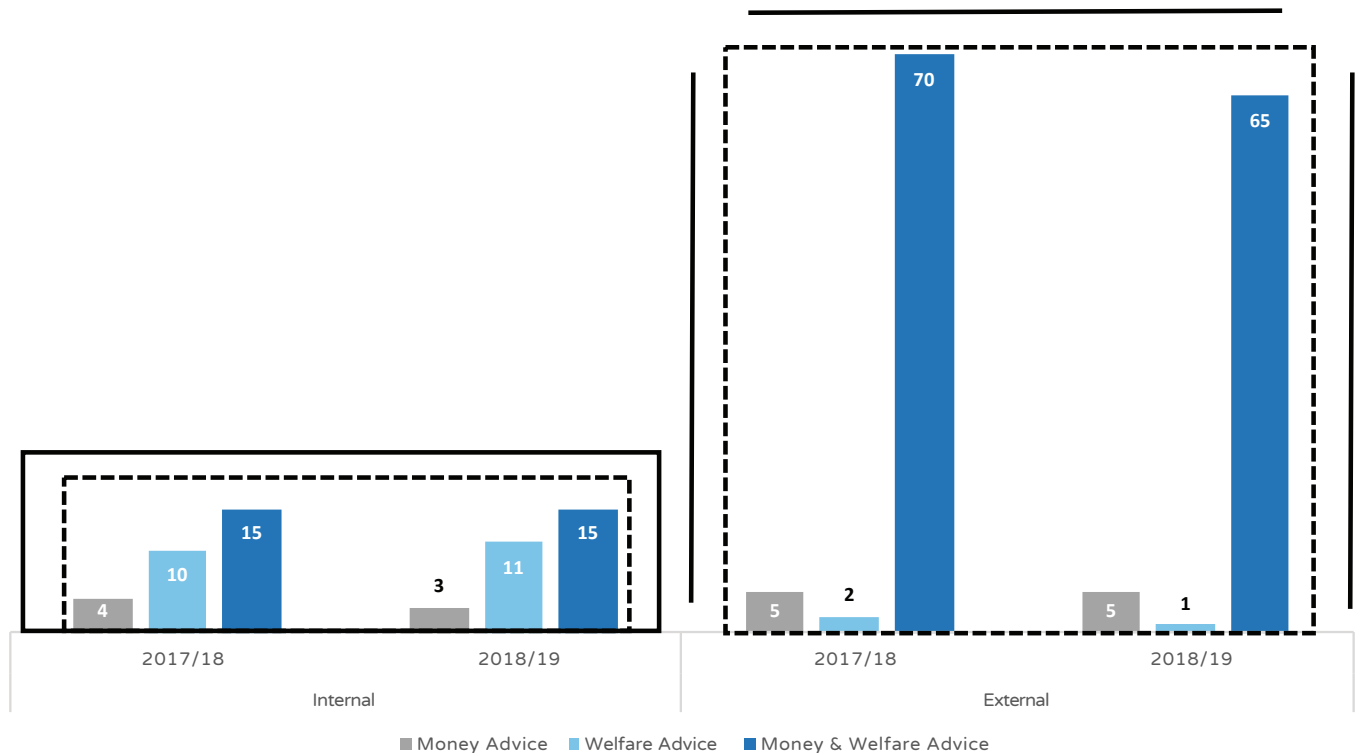
As has been the case in prior iterations of the CAPMRF, it is expected that the number of local authorities reporting on each indicator, as well as the accuracy of the data provided, will increase markedly year-on-year. This happens as a result of the commitment of local authorities, and their funded services, to adjust and strengthen their reporting systems in line with the Framework. As the development of the CAPMRF is an iterative process, the IS will continue to host annual reviews in partnership with local authorities. This process arises from a shared desire to evidence performance and achieve a clear, reliable, robust and consistent reporting methodology.

The context indicators are used to provide information about the money advice services in each local authority area, as well as the clients who use them. These indicators are used to improve understanding of the complexities surrounding the delivery of money and welfare rights advice across local authorities in Scotland. Demographic information also enables identification of the groups accessing advice and allows for monitoring of trends and targeting of services.

## C1 – Number of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Services and Case Management Systems

### Number of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Services

Figure C1.1 Number and Type of Local Authority Funded Advice Services in 2017/18 and 2018/19



For the second year, local authorities were asked to report on both money and welfare rights advice services. A total of 100 services were funded by local authorities in 2018/19. 29 of these services were delivered internally by local authorities and 71 were delivered externally. Whilst the number of internally delivered services has remained stable since 2017/18, there has been a reduction of 6 external services. This change largely resulted from a review of advice services in one local authority, where the decision was made to move to a more sustainable single delivery contract. The majority of local authorities fund both internal and external services to deliver money and welfare rights advice. In 2018/19 there were 4 local authorities where funding was provided to internal services only, and 6 local authorities that funded external services only.

All local authorities provided funding for both money advice services and welfare rights advice services, aside from one local authority where funding was provided for welfare rights advice only. As can be seen in figure C1.1, many services are funded to provide both money and welfare rights advice. These services accounted for 52% of all internal services in 2018/19 and 89% of external services.

### Case Management Systems

There is a wide range of different case management systems used across local authority funded money and welfare rights services, as displayed in figure C1.2. Many local authorities use multiple systems across the different services which they fund, and at times, more than one system is used within the same service. There are several systems which are in common use across different local authorities, however there is also a large variety of systems which are bespoke or unique to individual local authorities.

There have been changes since the previous year in terms of the popularity of different case

management systems. The most commonly used case management system across services continues to be CASTLE. This system is used across the majority of Citizens Advice Bureaux, many

Figure C1.2: Most Common Case Management Systems Reported to be in Use in 2018/19

5	BrightOffice	2	2

of which receive local authority funding to provide money and welfare rights advice, therefore it is unsurprising that this system continues to be predominately used. AdvicePro and MACS/MACS8 also continue to be popular systems. In 2018/19, 14 individual services used AdvicePro across 12 local authority areas, and 6 individual services used MACS across 6 local authority areas. In previous years SWIFT and PG Debt were used in 6 and 4 services respectively. However, in 2018/19 SWIFT was used in just 2 services, and PG Debt was only used in 1. The move away from PG Debt is unsurprising as this system is no longer being maintained by the developer, therefore a shift to more sustainable systems was anticipated. The service using PG Debt is currently using it in conjunction with another case management system therefore it is likely that in future this system will no longer be used. A separate, more detailed briefing will be produced by the Improvement Service setting out the differences amongst different case management systems and how local authorities may be able to share learning in relation to these systems.

## C2 - Demographics

This section provides information on the demographics of clients accessing money and welfare rights advice services. It can be used to identify which groups are accessing these services and how this is changing over time. Where possible, comparisons have been made with the Scottish population using the most recent publication of the Scottish Household Survey<sup>15</sup>.

Demographic data was provided by 31 local authorities, however the accuracy in reporting varies across different demographic groups. Gender was the most widely reported, with 31 local authorities providing data, whereas income was reported by just 22 local authorities. Many of these differences in reporting are due to the capabilities of the various case management systems used. It has been highlighted by local authorities that figures do not always include every service which they fund. There has also been difficulty for some local authorities in providing figures for all clients, with 6 local authorities stating they could only provide figures for new clients, not for any existing clients whose support was ongoing from the previous financial year. Where data was missing for clients, these have been included in the figures as 'Not Recorded' so that the total

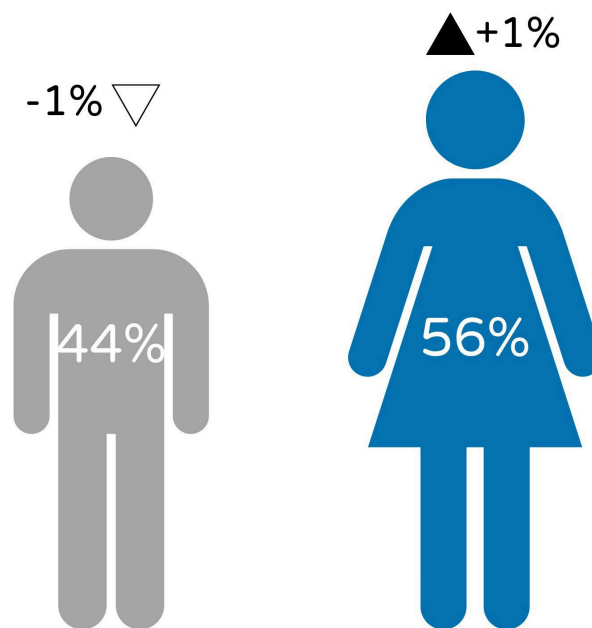
<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018

of each demographic group matches the total number of clients. However, 'Not Recorded' has been excluded from the proportions in the following analysis. Despite these caveats, there has been improved reporting in 2018/19. Compared with 2017/18, a greater number of local authorities provided data for each of the demographic groups, with more complete information across the services within these local authorities, with this improvement expected to continue in future iterations.

## Gender

As with the previous year, the data submitted by 31 local authorities suggest there was a larger proportion of female clients (56%) accessing money and welfare rights advice services than male clients (44%). As can be seen in figure C2.1 this proportion has risen marginally between 2017/18 and 2018/19<sup>16</sup>.

Figure C2.1 Proportion of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Gender in 2018/19 and Change from 2017/18



## Age

The data submitted by 30 local authorities indicate that clients accessing money and welfare rights advice services are most likely to be aged between 45 and 59. This age group made up 25%<sup>17</sup> of all clients in 2018/19, down 2 percentage points since the previous year. In 2018/19, the age categories for people aged 60 and above were subdivided to provide three different age groups<sup>18</sup>, allowing a more detailed understanding of the make-up of older clients. The largest group within these three categories was the oldest client group aged 71 and over, which accounted for 13% of all clients. However, it should be noted that not all services record the older age categories using these refined brackets and therefore the numbers within each of these categories are likely to be higher. These categories will be reviewed again to increase the accuracy of future reporting. Although these three new categories for recording those aged over 60 cannot be directly compared with

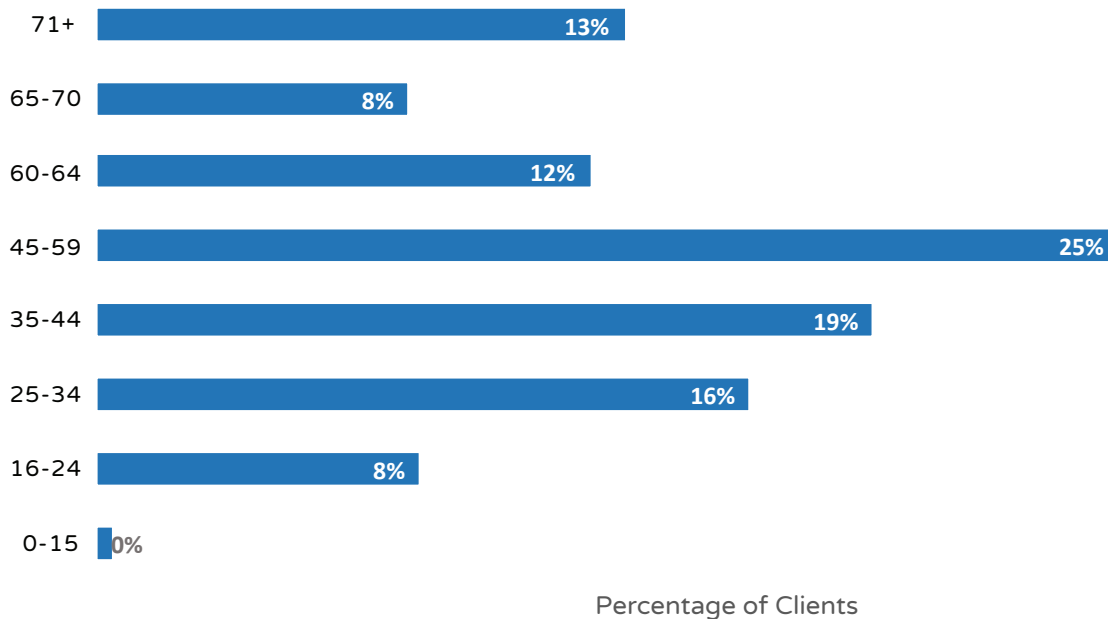
<sup>16</sup> Excludes 18% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 1% who 'Prefer not to answer'.

<sup>17</sup> Excludes 18% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 4% who 'Prefer not to answer'

<sup>18</sup> These categories changed from 60-74 and 75+ in 2017/18 to 60-64, 65-70 and 71+ in 2018/19



Figure C2.2 Proportion of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Age Bracket in 2018/19



the previous year, when combined the total of the three over 60 age groups accounts for a similar proportion as in the previous year. In 2018/19 32% of clients were aged 60 and over, compared with 33% in 2017/18. Client groups aged below 45 have also remained stable since the previous year.

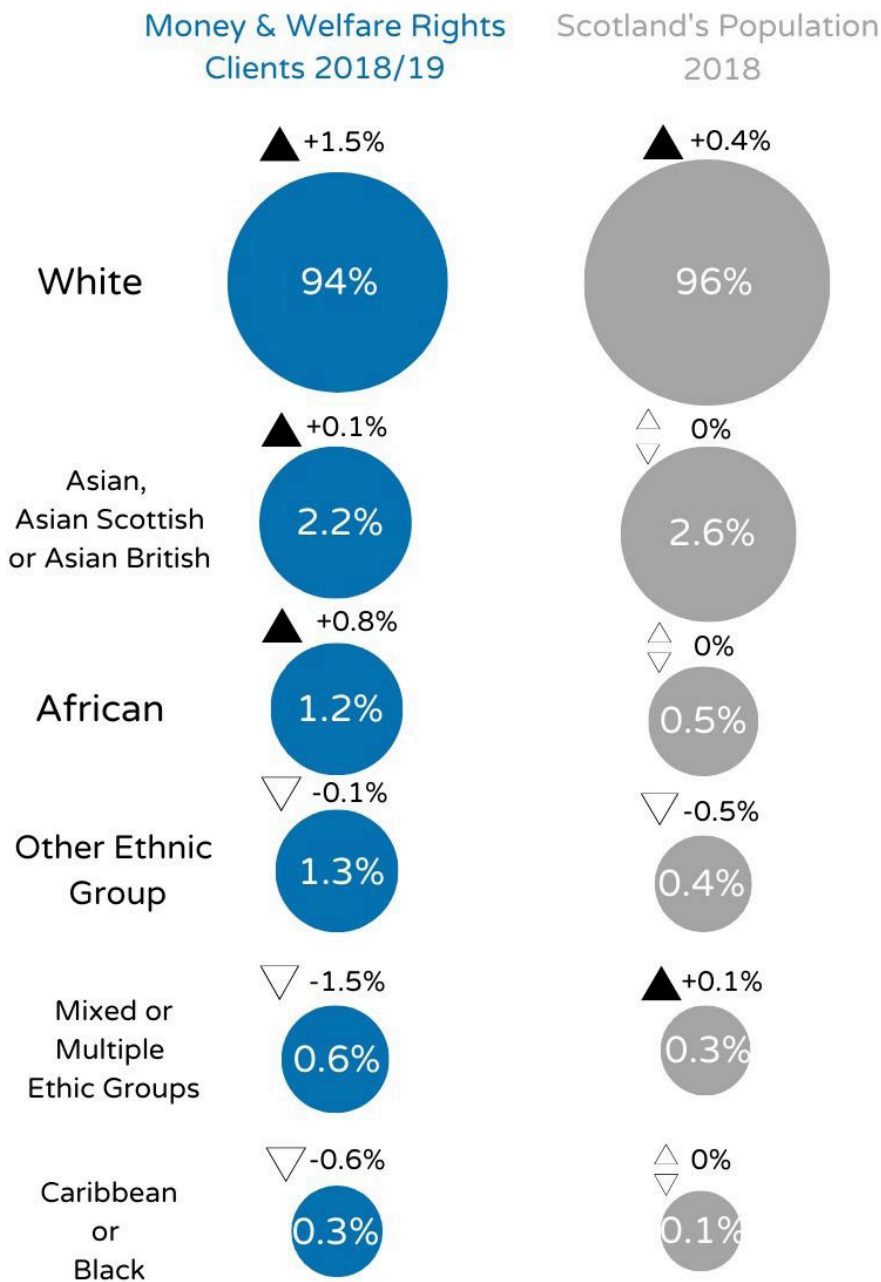
## Ethnicity

The ethnicity of money and welfare rights advice clients is recorded using the same definitions and major categories as the Scottish Household Survey<sup>19</sup>. This allows a comparison between money and welfare rights advice clients and the Scottish population, as can be seen in figure C2.3. The largest ethnic group accessing services, indicated by the data returns from 28 local authorities, continues to be 'White' (94%)<sup>20</sup> which is consistent with the Scottish population (96%). As with the previous year, ethnic minority groups are disproportionately over-represented in money and welfare rights advice services. In 2018/19, 5.7% of clients accessing services were from an ethnicity other than 'White', in comparison to 3.9% of the Scottish population. However, the proportion of clients from ethnic minority groups has reduced 1.5% since 2017/18. This reduction is a result of smaller proportions of clients recorded as 'Caribbean or Black', 'Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Group' and 'Other Ethnic Groups' accessing services in 2018/19. Nevertheless, these ethnicities are proportionally more common in advice services than in the general public and are also more likely to fluctuate due to their smaller size. There has been large growth in the proportion of clients recorded as 'African'. In 2017/18 this was the smallest ethnic group, with just 0.4% of clients recorded in this way. This has increased 0.8 percentage points to 1.2% of clients, which is now a larger proportion than in the Scottish population (0.5%) indicating that there may have been an increase in engagement with money and welfare rights advice services for clients from this ethnic group. It is also possible that ethnic minorities groups are disproportionately represented in these advice services due to increased demand/need. Figures from the Scottish Household Survey suggest that people from

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018

<sup>20</sup> Excludes 29% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 2% who 'Prefer not to answer'

Figure C2.3 Proportion of Money & Welfare Rights Advice Clients and the Scottish Population by Ethnicity in 2018/19 and Change From 2017/18



ethnic minority groups are less likely to report that they are managing well financially (White 56%, non-white 42%)<sup>21</sup>.

### Disability or Long-Term Condition

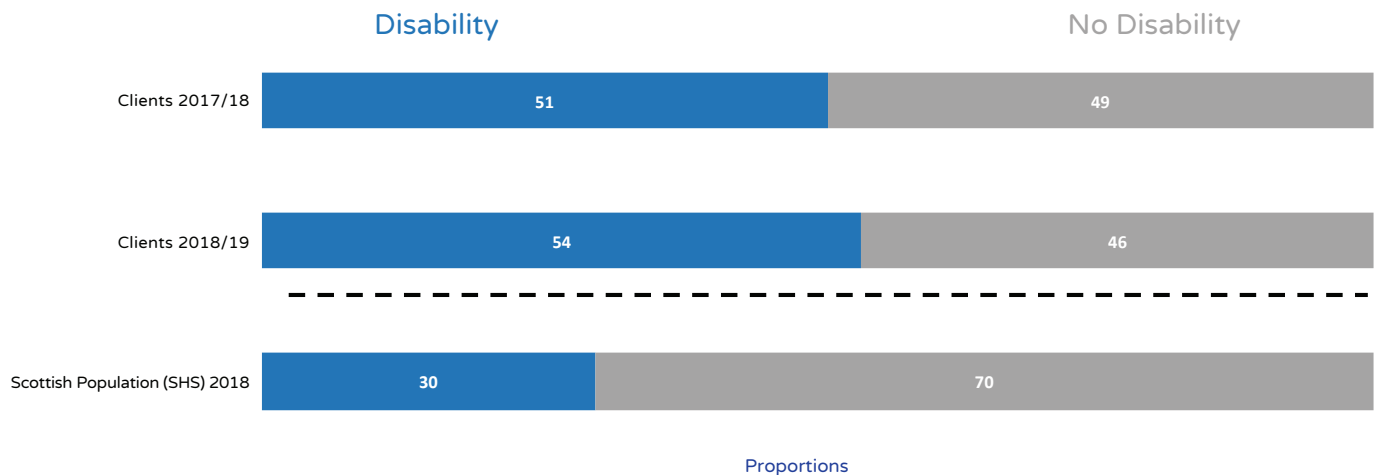
Data returns from 29 local authorities indicate that clients accessing money and welfare rights advice services are predominantly recorded as having a disability or long-term condition (54%)<sup>22</sup>. This is comparatively higher than the 30% of the Scottish population who report having a disability

21 Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018, as quoted in the Scottish Government Equality Evidence Finder

22 Excludes 36% of clients for whom this was 'Not Disclosed'

or long-term condition<sup>23</sup>. The proportion of clients recorded in this way has also increased 3 percentage points since 2017/18. These figures, as shown in figure C2.4, suggest that money and welfare rights advice services are continuing to successfully engage people with disabilities and long-term health conditions, and that there may be increasing demand from these clients.

Figure C2.4 Proportion of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Clients Reporting a Disability or Long-Term Condition Compared to the Scottish Population, 2017/18 and 2018/19



## Household Income

As can be seen from Figure C2.5, clients accessing money and welfare rights advice services tend to have a comparatively lower household income than the Scottish population. From the 22 data returns, three quarters of clients had a household income below £15,000 (2017/18 76%, 2018/19 74%)<sup>24</sup>, compared with only a quarter of the Scottish population<sup>25</sup>. Although there have been slight increases in the proportion of clients in higher income brackets, the largest proportion of clients remain in the lowest income bracket, '£6,000 or less'. The proportion of clients in this income bracket has also increased since the previous year, indicating that money and welfare rights advice services are increasingly engaging with those in the lowest income households.

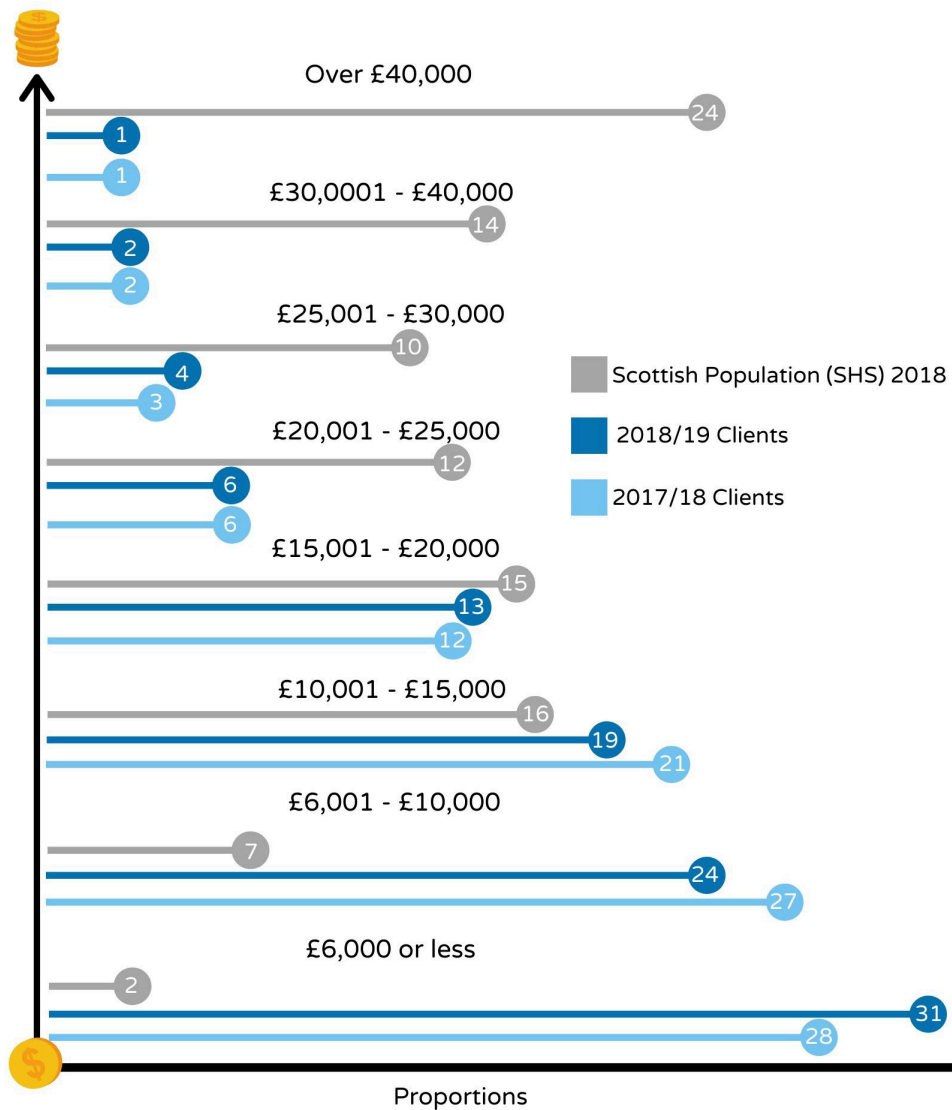
It should be noted that these figures do not include all clients due to recording differences. For many external agencies, household income is only recorded for clients with debt cases, as the information is not relevant to other cases.

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018

<sup>24</sup> 2017/18 Excludes 47% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 2018/19 excludes 59% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 3% who 'Prefer not to answer'

<sup>25</sup> Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018

Figure C2.5 Proportion of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Household Income Compared with the Scottish Population, 2017/18 and 2018/19



### Economic Status

Data submitted by 28 local authorities shows that 29% of money and welfare rights advice clients in 2018/19 were in some form of employment<sup>26</sup>. This has increased from 25% in 2017/18<sup>27</sup>. Although this proportion is still lower than the proportion of the Scottish population in employment (54%)<sup>28</sup>, it reflects that a large and increasing proportion of clients accessing support are in employment. There has however been an increase in the proportion of clients recorded as ‘Unemployed and seeking work’ which increased from 11% of clients in 2017/18 to 16% in 2018/19. A breakdown of clients by economic status can be seen in figure C2.6.

As in the previous year, a large proportion of clients in 2018/19 were permanently sick or disabled or suffering from a short-term illness or injury. However, this proportion has noticeably reduced from 38% of clients in 2017/18 to 30% of clients in 2018/19. Nevertheless this figure is likely to be higher than is presented as a number of agencies are not in a position to record figures for ‘Permanently

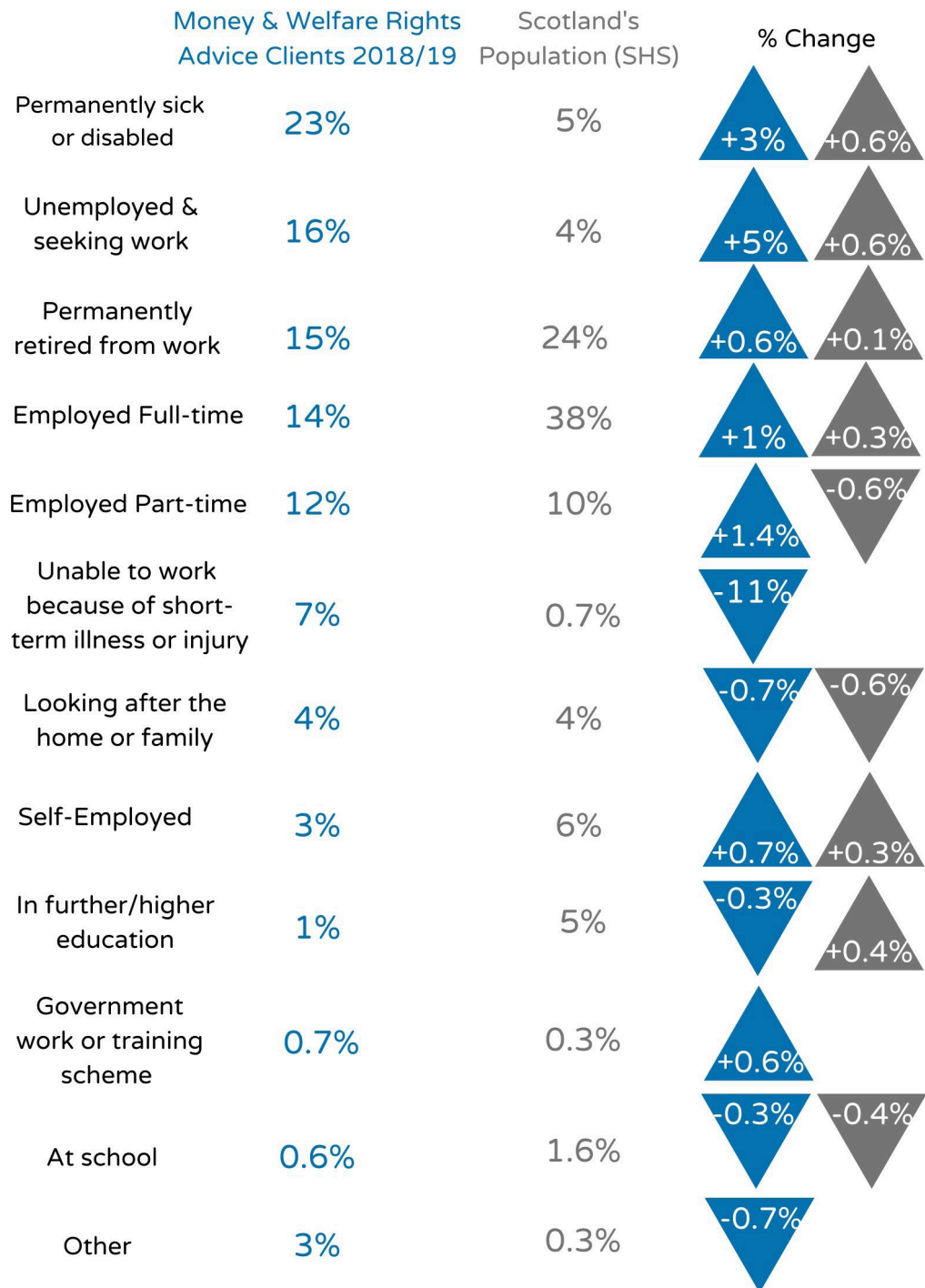
26 Excludes 40% of clients for whom this was ‘Not Recorded’ and 3% who ‘Prefer not to answer’

27 Excludes 40% of clients for whom this was ‘Not Recorded’

28 Scottish Government, ‘Scottish Household Survey’, 2018

sick or disabled' and 'Unable to work because of a short-term illness or injury' separately and, therefore, these figures could not be included or were recorded under either one of these categories. As with some other measures, these categories will be reviewed in future to improve consistency of recording.

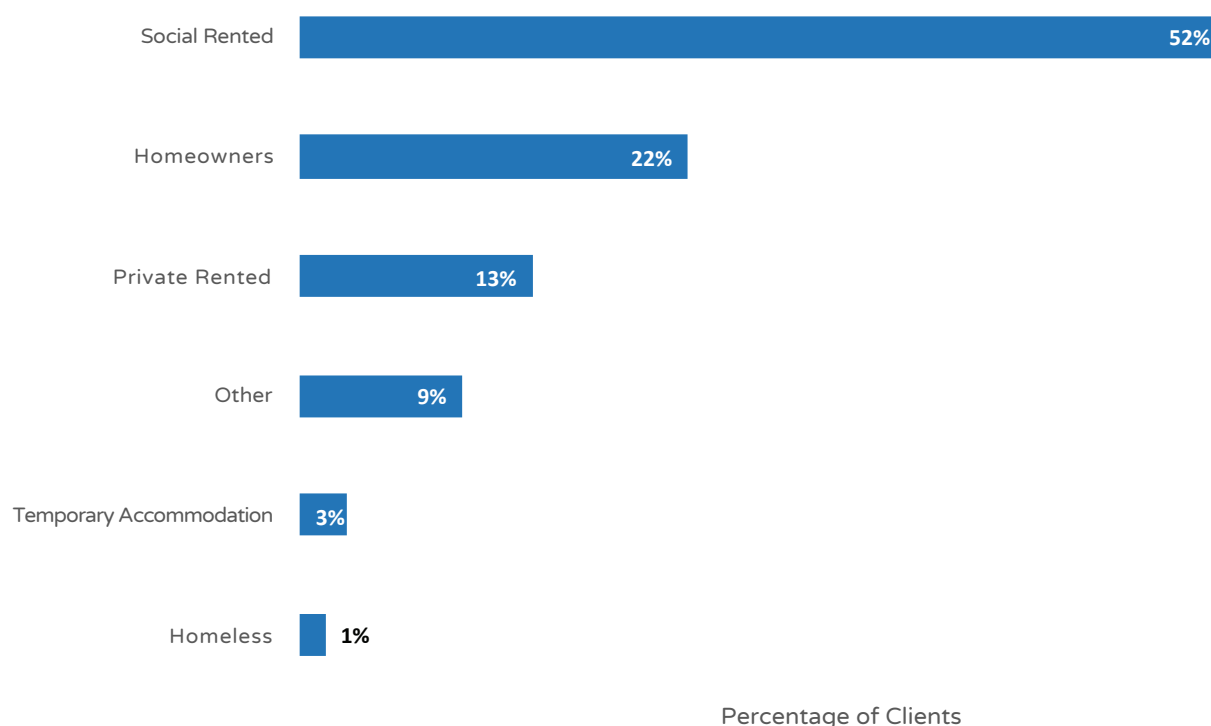
Figure C2.6 Breakdown of the Scottish Population and Money & Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Economic Status in 2018/19 and Change From 2017/18



## Housing Tenure

Data returned by 28 local authorities suggests that, as in the previous year, around half of money and welfare rights advice clients in 2018/19 lived in socially rented accommodation (52%)<sup>29</sup>. A breakdown of housing tenure by client is displayed in figure C2.7. This was the first year in which housing tenure also included clients living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness. Figures for these categories were reported by 26 local authorities. Combined, temporary accommodation and homelessness accounted for 4% of all clients.

Figure C2.7 Proportion of Money & Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Housing Tenure in 2018/19



## Household Composition

Data on household composition was completed by 26 local authorities. As can be seen in figure C2.8, single adult households were the most common household type in 2018/19 (40%)<sup>30</sup>. This was followed by adult family households which contain at least two adults with no children (19%). In 2018/19, additional refined categories were included for households with children. Three new categories were used to categorise single parent families, including small single parent families<sup>31</sup>, large single parent families<sup>32</sup> and young single parent families<sup>33</sup>. For families with more than one parent the category was replaced by two new categories, family household and large family household<sup>34</sup>. These categories were added to help support local authorities understand how advice services are meeting the needs of child poverty priority groups, as defined by the Scottish Government<sup>35</sup>. The Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan identifies large families,

<sup>29</sup> Excludes 47% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 6% who 'Prefer not to answer'

<sup>30</sup> Excludes 47% of clients for whom this was 'Not Recorded' and 5% who 'Prefer not to answer'

<sup>31</sup> Single parent family with 1 or 2 children

<sup>32</sup> Single parent family with 3 or more children

<sup>33</sup> Single parent under the age of 25 with 1 or more children

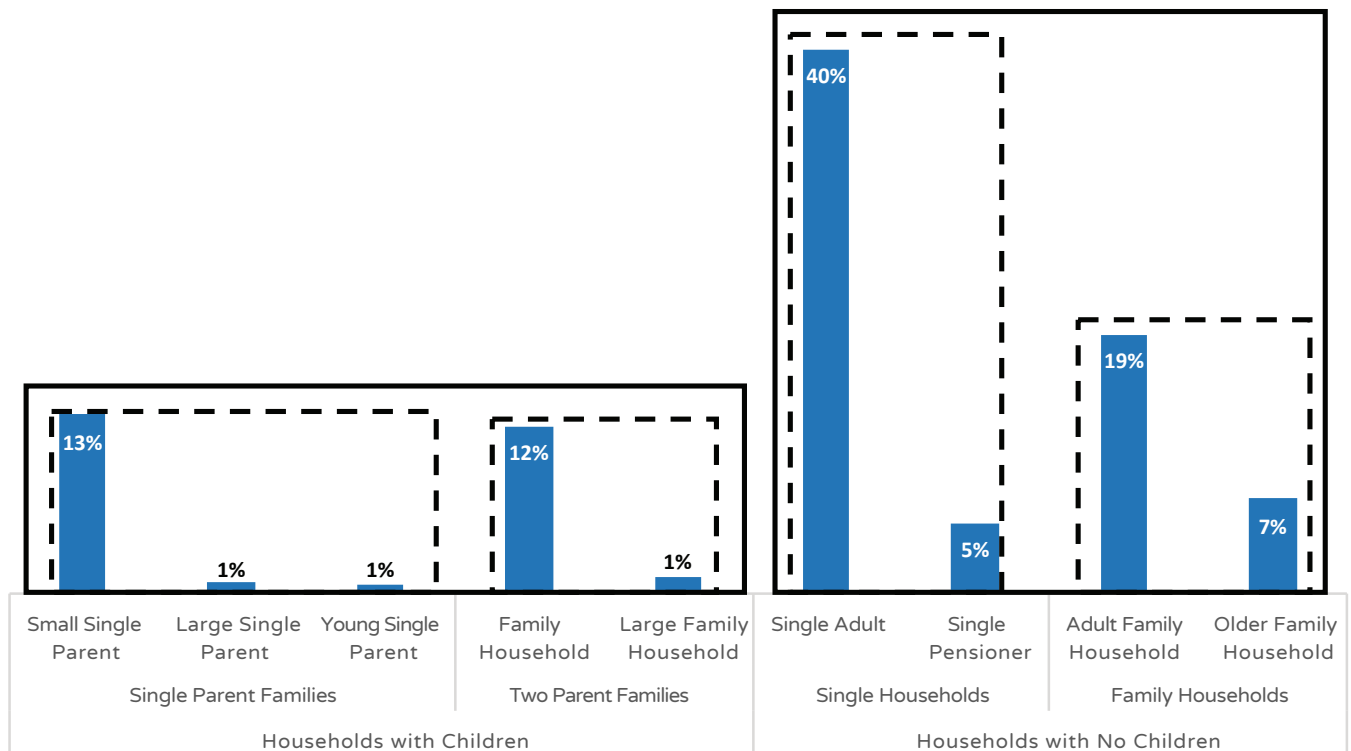
<sup>34</sup> Two parent family with 3 or more children

<sup>35</sup> Scottish Government, 'Every child, every chance: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022',

single parent families and mothers under the age of 25 as some of the households most at risk of child poverty, and therefore a priority for policy development in tackling child poverty. Single parent families made up 15% of all clients, the largest group of which were small single parent households (13%). Young single parents and large families only accounted for a small proportion of overall clients however, as this is the first year these categories have been included, these groups are likely under-reported.

Overall, there was a larger proportion of clients from households without children than those with children (72% households without children, 28% households with children). However, this reflects a higher proportion of households with children compared with the Scottish population where 22% of households contained children<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, it is possible that there may have been under-reporting of clients in family households due to the introduction of the new family categories. Again, there is an expectation that future reporting will strengthen as local recording systems are embedded.

Figure C2.8 Proportion of Money and Welfare Rights Advice Clients by Household Composition in 2018/19



### C3 - Debt Owed

This is the fourth year in which local authorities were asked to provide data on the number of debt clients and the amount owed by these clients for 11 debt categories. Data submitted by 26 local authorities indicated that a total of 43,593 clients sought debt advice in 2018/19. A greater number of local authorities were able to provide data on the amount owed by debt clients than in previous years. From the 30 local authorities that provided data for this measure, the total debt owed by clients in 2018/19 totalled £186,250,137.

According to the data submitted, the total number of clients seeking debt advice has reduced

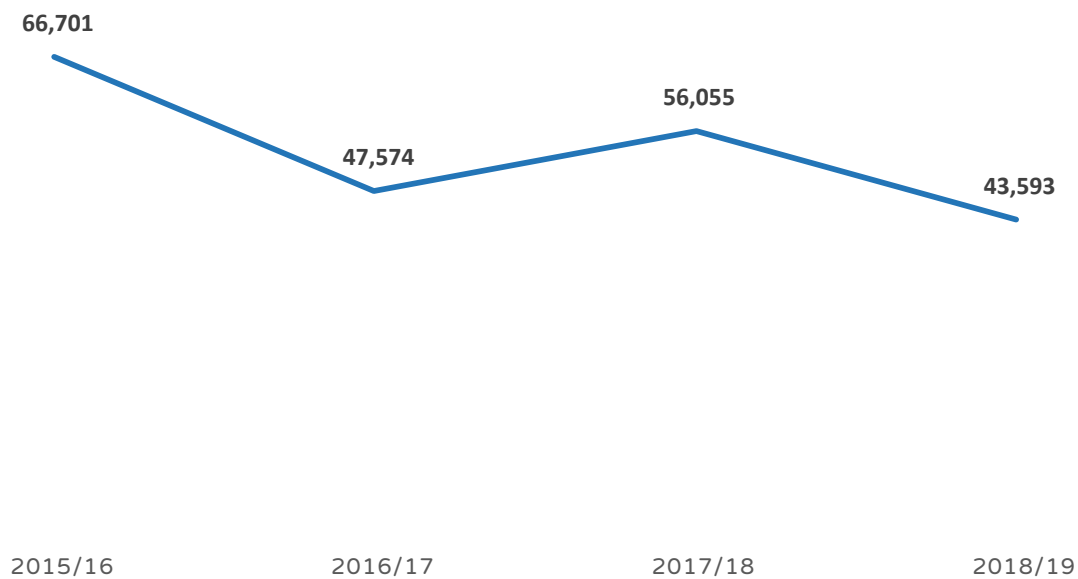
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/pages/3/>

36 Scottish Government, 'Scottish Household Survey', 2018

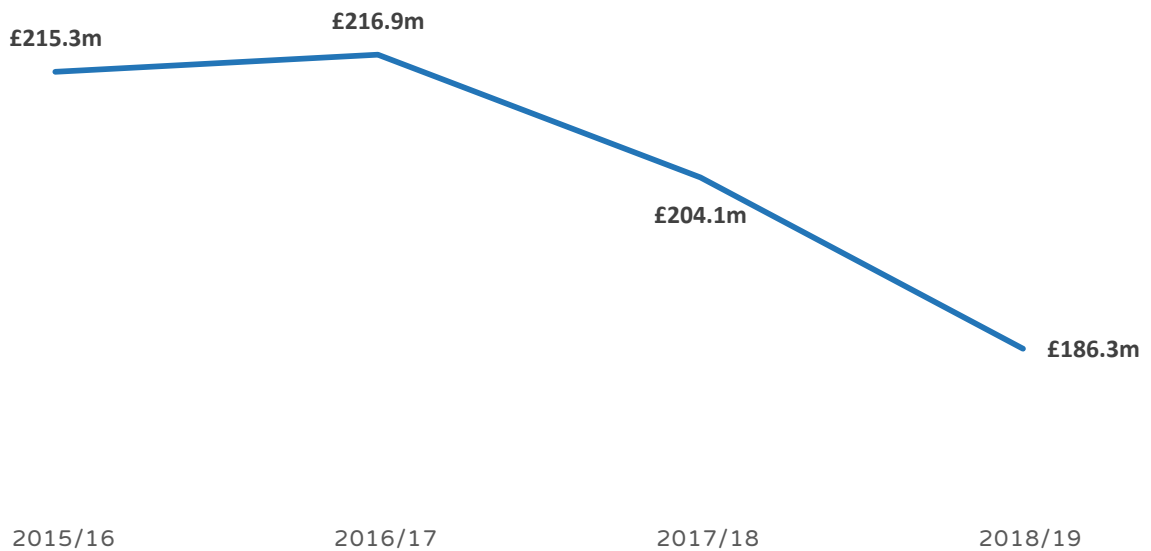
over time. Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 there was a 35% reduction in client numbers, with a 22% reduction in the past year. In 2017/18, 22 local authorities provided the total number of clients compared with 26 in 2018/19, therefore the reduction in client numbers comes despite a greater number of local authorities reporting on the measure this year. However, it should be noted that four local authorities highlighted that the data provided did not include all services funded by the local authority (due to local recording issues). Another local authority could only record the number of new debt clients (i.e. excluding pre-existing clients). For two local authorities, it only recently came to light that their reported figures in 2017/18 mistakenly included debt clients from projects not

Figure C3.1 Total Number of Debt Clients and Debt Owed 2015/16-2018/19

Total Number of Debt Clients



Total Amount of Debt Owed





funded by the local authority. This is likely to have had an impact on the total number of recorded debt clients supported by money advice services. Of the 19 local authorities that provided the total number of debt clients in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, 10 (53%) of these councils reported a reduction between these two years. It is unclear whether this change is partly a result of recording difficulties or whether other factors may have had an influence, such as a reduction in the availability of services. The drivers behind this change will be explored further.

Not all local authorities were able to provide a breakdown of the type of debt that clients sought advice on and could only provide the total number of clients. For those local authorities, the total number of clients have been included in the category 'other'. This category also included debts such as Telecoms, HMRC tax and National Insurance debts, Hire Purchase, Legal Fees and Child Maintenance. In 2018/19, 24 local authorities provided a breakdown of debt clients.

The most common types of debt clients sought advice for in 2018/19 were rent arrears (5,667, 13%), credit, store & charge card debts (5,452, 13%) and council tax arrears (5,174, 12%). Rent arrears was the only debt type where client numbers increased since the previous year. The number of clients seeking advice for this type of debt increased 75% between 2015/16 and 2018/19 from 3,234 clients to 5,667 and 10% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, from 5,136 to 5,667. There has however been improved reporting over time, with 24 local authorities providing a breakdown of clients in 2018/19 compared with 20 in 2017/18 and 18 in 2015/16. Nevertheless, clients seeking advice for this debt type now make up 13% of all clients, in comparison with just 9% in 2017/18. This suggests that the change is not only in the numbers reported but in how the number of clients for this debt type compares with other debt types. This increase may in part be attributed to the roll-out of Universal Credit. Evidence reported by Citizens Advice Scotland suggests that tenants receiving Universal Credit are more likely to have rent arrears<sup>37</sup>. Universal Credit is now rolled out across all 32 local authorities in Scotland<sup>38</sup>, and the data returns indicate that welfare rights advice services have experienced a 97% increase in the number of claims for Universal Credit. Therefore, it is possible that the increased number of clients seeking advice for rent arrears may be, in part, linked to the growth of Universal Credit.

As shown in figure C3.2, rent arrears now account for the largest proportion of debt clients. In 2015/16 this debt type was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in terms of client numbers but is now more common than both council tax arrears and credit, store & charge cards. Nevertheless, these two debts still make up a larger proportion of the overall amount of debt owed compared to rent arrears. Council tax arrears are now the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest debt type in terms of the amount owed. The amount owed has reduced since the previous year, however with a total debt of £20,075,954, this debt can have a significant impact on local authority income. In recognition of this issue, the IS, IRRV Scotland, Money and Pension Service and third sector organisations have produced a guide to 'Collaborative Council Tax Collection', which will be published shortly.

Although the number of clients seeking advice for rent arrears has increased, there has been a short-term reduction in the total amount of debt owed for rent arrears. Overall, the amount owed has increased 84% since 2015/16 (£4,457,367). However, there has been a reduction of 25% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, taking rent arrears from £10,945,737 to £8,197,951. This coincides with an overall reduction in debt since the previous year. Total debt owed has reduced 9% from £204,057,200 in 2017/18 to £186,250,137 in 2018/19. This decrease is despite an increase in reporting.

37 Citizens Advice Scotland, 'Rent Arrears: Causes and Consequences for CAB Clients', 2018, [https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/rent\\_arrears\\_oct\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/rent_arrears_oct_2018.pdf)

38 <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/Universal-Credit-Pilot>

In 2017/18, 20 local authorities reported debt breakdown figures, compared with 28 in 2018/19. However, as noted above, not all local authorities could provide figures for every service they fund so these figures may be higher than reported. From the 27 local authorities able to provide data in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, 17 (63%) reported a reduction in the total amount of debt owed. Aside from reporting difficulties, it is unclear what has driven this reduction in the amount of debt owed. One factor to consider may be whether people are seeking advice earlier than in the previous year, and therefore accessing services before a greater level of debt has built up. As it stands, however, the data gathered does not allow for this kind of analysis.

Figure C3.2 Number of Debt Clients and Amount of Debt Owed for Each Debt Type in 2018/19 and Change Since 2017/18



## Clients



## Amount Owed

Rank in 2018/19	Type of Debt	No. Clients in 2018/19	Change in No. Clients since 2017/18 (% Change)	Change in Debt Owed since 2017/18 (% Change)	Amount of Debt Owed in 2018/19	Type of Debt	Rank in 2018/19
1	Rent Arrears	5,667	+531 (10%)	-£4.1m (10%)	£34.9m	Credit, Store and Charge Card Debt	1
2	Credit, Store and Charge Card Debts	5,452	-2,794 (34%)	-£2.8m (11%)	£23.3m	Unsecured Personal Loan	2
3	Council Tax Arrears	5,174	-2,239 (30%)	-£1.7m (8%)	£20.1m	Council Tax Arrears	3
4	Utility Arrears	4,055	-526 (11%)	-£9.6m (35%)	£17.7m	Mortgage Arrears	4
5	Unsecured Personal Loan	3,528	-1,821 (34%)	-£2.7m (25%)	£8.2m	Rent Arrears	5
6	Bank and Building Society Overdrafts	2,689	-435 (14%)	-£3.1m (33%)	£6.3m	Benefit Overpayment	6
7	Catalogue Debts	2,183	-1,127 (34%)	-£0.1m (18%)	£4.6m	Bank and Building Society Overdrafts	7
8	Benefit Overpayment	1,845	-1,844 (50%)	-£0.5m (23%)	£3.9m	Catalogue Debt	8
9	Payday Loan/ High-cost Credit Arrears	1,694	-1,286 (43%)	-£4.6m (58%)	£3.3m	Payday Loan/ High-cost Credit Arrears	9
10	Mortgage Arrears	674	-720 (52%)	-£0.4m (10%)	£3.2m	Utility Arrears	10
11	Rent-to-Own Debt	455	-214 (32%)	-£2.6m (56%)	£2.0m	Rent-to-Own Debt	11
-	Other <sup>39</sup>	10,177	+13 (0%)	+£15.1m (35%)	£58.9m	Other	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43,593</b>	<b>-12,462 (22%)</b>	<b>-£17.8m (9%)</b>	<b>£186.3m</b>	<b>Total</b>	

39 Includes Telecoms, HMRC tax and National Insurance debt, Court fines, Hire Purchase, Child Maintenance and Student Debt



# Input Indicators

The input indicators are used to provide information on the levels of investment that local authorities make in money and welfare rights advice services. This is considered in terms of both financial resources and staffing levels.

## I1 – Staff and Volunteers

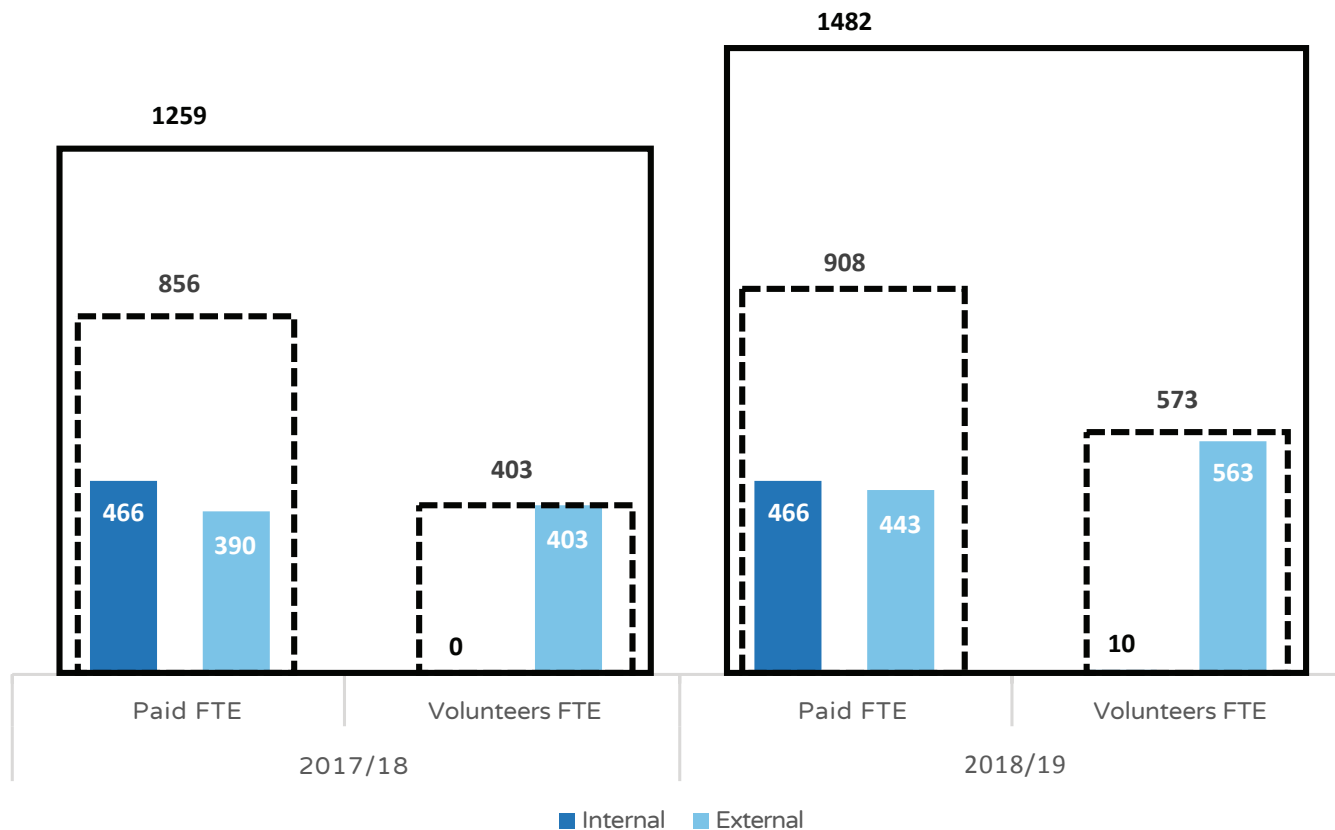
Local authorities are asked to provide figures on the number of staff employed through local authority investment in money and welfare rights advice services. This includes staff employed in services delivered both internally and externally. The number of staff is measured on a full-time equivalent basis (FTE) and includes all those involved in the delivery of money and welfare rights advice services, including administrative staff.

In 2018/19, there was a total of 908 paid FTE staff employed by money and welfare rights advice services, this has increased 6% since 2017/18. This increase is driven by an increase in paid staff in externally delivered services. These services employed 443 FTE staff in 2018/19, an increase of 14% from 390 in 2017/18. In comparison paid staff in internally delivered services remained stable at 466. However, it should be noted that fewer local authorities reported figures for internal staff in 2018/19. Out of 26 local authorities with an internal service, 24 reported staffing figures for these services in 2018/19 compared with 25 in 2017/18. Therefore, internal staff are also likely to have increased.

The increase in external staff may be due, in part, to increased reporting, as 27 of the 28 local authorities with an external service reported figures this year in comparison to 26 last year. However, several local authorities mentioned that, for some external services, additional funding was received from external funders for specific projects, which led to an increase in staff within these services. Therefore, it is likely that staff funded through sources other than the local authority may have been included in the 2018/19 figures that were reported by external services, resulting in an increase in paid staff that is not directly supported by local authority investment. It should be noted that local authority investment in the core funding of external services can play an important role in these services securing additional funding, therefore the increase in staffing is likely a by-product of this investment. Nevertheless, this reported increase should be treated with caution in relation to determining the number of staff directly funded by the local authority.

External services also saw a large increase in the number of volunteers within the service. A total of 564 volunteers supported work within external services in 2018/19, compared with 403 in 2017/18. Previously there have been no volunteer staff recorded in internal services, however one local authority recorded 10 volunteers in 2018/19. These roles were created to support the expansion of projects within the local authority service. The introduction of volunteers within internal services is an area which will be explored further. A breakdown of internal and external staff is available in figure I1.1.

Figure I1.1 Internal and External FTE paid and volunteers in 2017/18 and 2018/19



## I2 – Funding

### Local Authority Funding

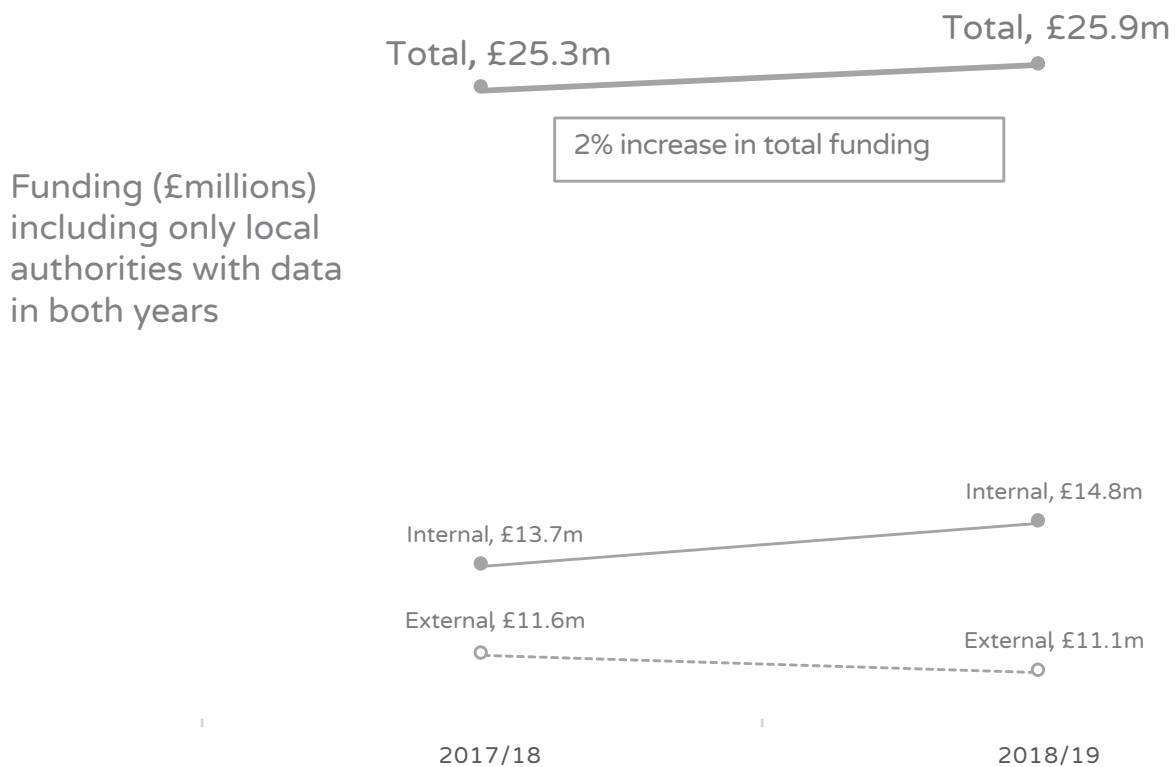
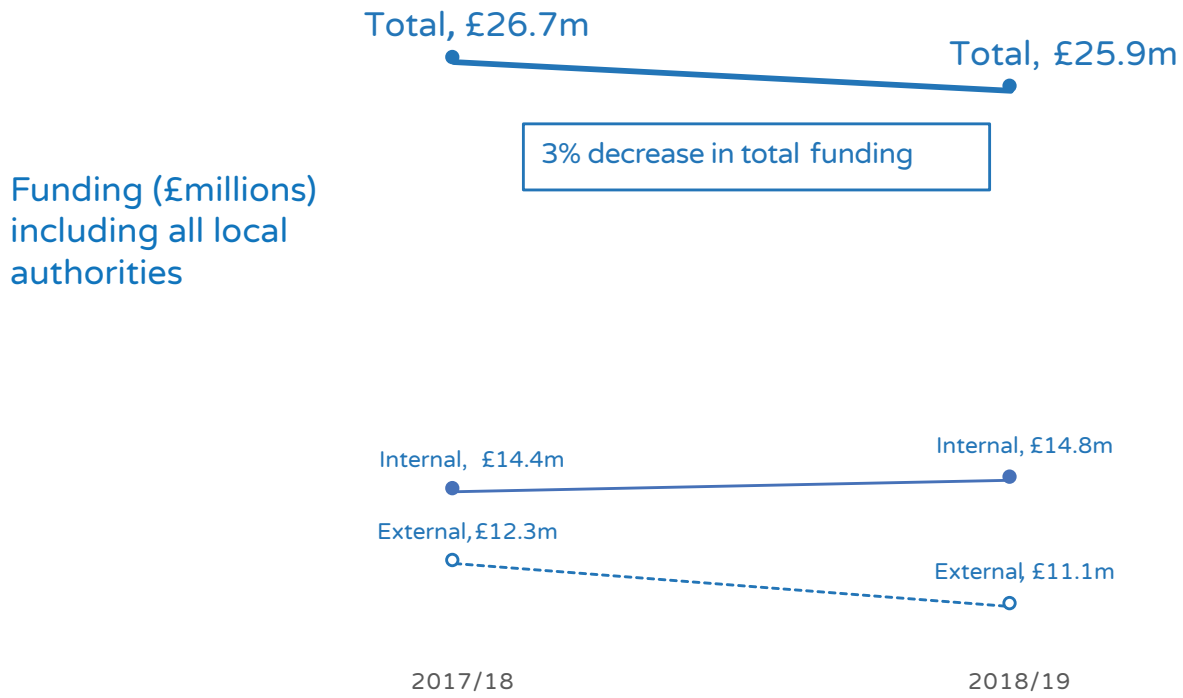
This is the second year in which local authorities have provided figures for the total amount of funding they provide for the delivery of money and welfare rights advice, including direct overheads. Previous iterations of the framework covered money advice only, therefore this is the first year in which investment in money and welfare rights advice services can be compared.

Total local authority funding for money & welfare rights advice services has reduced 3% from £26,721,642 in 2017/18 to £25,897,795 in 2018/19. This includes funding for both internal and external provision of services. Although local authority funding overall has decreased, this is driven by a reduction in funding for external provision, whereas funding for internal provision has increased since the previous year. Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, funding for internal provision has increased 3% from £14,382,414 to £14,753,814 and funding for external provision has reduced 10% from £12,339,228 to £11,143,981.

These trends, however, do not take account of the changes in reporting between the two years. In 2018/19, 4 of the 26 local authorities with an internal service could not provide funding figures for internal services, and 3 of the 28 local authorities with an external service could not provide funding figures for external services. When these local authorities, whose data was missing from the 2018/19 figures, are excluded from the 2017/18 figures, total funding for those councils providing data in both years saw an increase of 2% from £25,290,286 to £25,897,795. This increase is reflective of increased funding for internal services, amongst the local authorities with data in both years. Across these local authorities, funding for internal services increased 8% from £13,715,435 in 2017/18

to £14,753,814 in 2018/19, whilst for external services, local authority funding reduced 4% from £11,574,851 to £11,143,981. A breakdown of local authority funding, comparing these two scenarios is shown in figure I2.1.

Figure I2.1 Local authority funding by type of provision, 2017/18 to 2018/19



These figures indicate that the general trend across local authorities is of slightly increasing funding for internal provision alongside slightly reduced funding for external provision, however without complete data for all 32 local authorities, the full extent of this trend is unknown.

The increased funding for internal provision should be understood in the context of welfare reform. Across local authorities with a reported increase in funding for internal provision, several mentioned that these increases were in part to mitigate against the impact of welfare reforms such as the roll-out of Universal Credit. It appears that local authorities anticipated increased demand as a result of these reforms and therefore have increased investment to service this demand.

It is worth bearing in mind that this overall increase in funding for money and welfare rights advice services comes following years of cuts to local authority budgets. When adjusting funding figures for the effects of inflation, total funding, across local authorities with data in both years, has actually only increased 0.5% in real terms. An increase of funding would be needed each year just to deliver the same service accounting for the effects of inflation. It was also mentioned by some local authorities that increased funding does not necessarily reflect increased investment, but instead an increase in cost due to the local government pay award<sup>40</sup>. In March 2019 local government employees were awarded a backdated increase in pay of 3.5% for 2018/19, with an increase of 3% to follow in both 2019/20 and 2020/21. At least 2 local authorities have highlighted that they accounted for the 3.5% increase in their funding figures provided for 2018/19, however it is not clear if this was accounted for by all local authorities. Nevertheless, this context highlights that although funding may have increased, this is most likely because the same service now costs more to deliver, and this is likely to be the case for the year ahead, as the local government pay deal also included a further 3% pay increase for 2020/21.

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40 <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Scottish-councils-delighted-at-new-pay-deal-with-unions/46993>



## External Funding

Local authorities were also asked to provide figures for funding received from sources other than the local authority. In 2018/19, 28 local authorities provided data on investment from external sources, compared with 23 in 2017/18. A total of £4,043,728 was invested in money and welfare rights advice services by sources other than the local authority in 2018/19. This reflects a 2% decrease since the previous year. A breakdown of this funding is available in figure I2.2.

Figure I2.2 Scotland-wide funding received from other sources in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and change over time

	2017/18	2018/19	% Change 2017/18 to 2018/19	
Other	£1,189,736	£1,977,490	▲	+66%
Scottish Legal Aid Board <sup>41</sup>	£1,660,153	£771,398	▼	-54%
Scottish Government	£303,137	£545,522	▲	+80%
European Social Fund	£517,349	£459,223	▼	-11%
Big Lottery Fund	£447,591	£290,094	▼	-35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,117,966</b>	<b>£4,043,728</b>	▼	<b>-2%</b>

The Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) continues to be one of the largest mechanisms for routing funding for money advice services, with local authorities reporting a total of £771,398 invested in 2018/19. Figures from SLAB indicate that £520,490 was provided to local authority services for specific grant funded project work. The remaining £250,908 is funding that local authorities have indicated external services received from SLAB. There has been a reduction of 54% in SLAB funding since 2017/18. However, this year SLAB directly provided data on the amount invested in internal services. It appears that in the previous year several local authorities provided the amount received from SLAB for both internal and external services, whereas in the current year fewer have reported on SLAB funding for external services. Therefore, this figure does not include the total amount of SLAB funding received by external services in 2018/19.

A large increase in funding from Scottish Government was seen between 2017/18 and 2018/19. This increased 80% from £303,137 to £545,522. Indications from local authorities would suggest that this increased funding has been within external services as opposed to internal services.

Local authority investment is often important in enabling services to lever funding from these additional sources.

41 Scottish Legal Aid Board managed a grants programme on behalf of the Scottish Government and the Money Advice Service using debt levy funding. Responsibility for debt levy funding was devolved to Scottish Government in January 2019.

# Activity Indicators

## A1-Volume

The activity indicators provide an overview of the volume of clients and cases that money and welfare rights advice services have dealt with over the financial year.

### Contacts

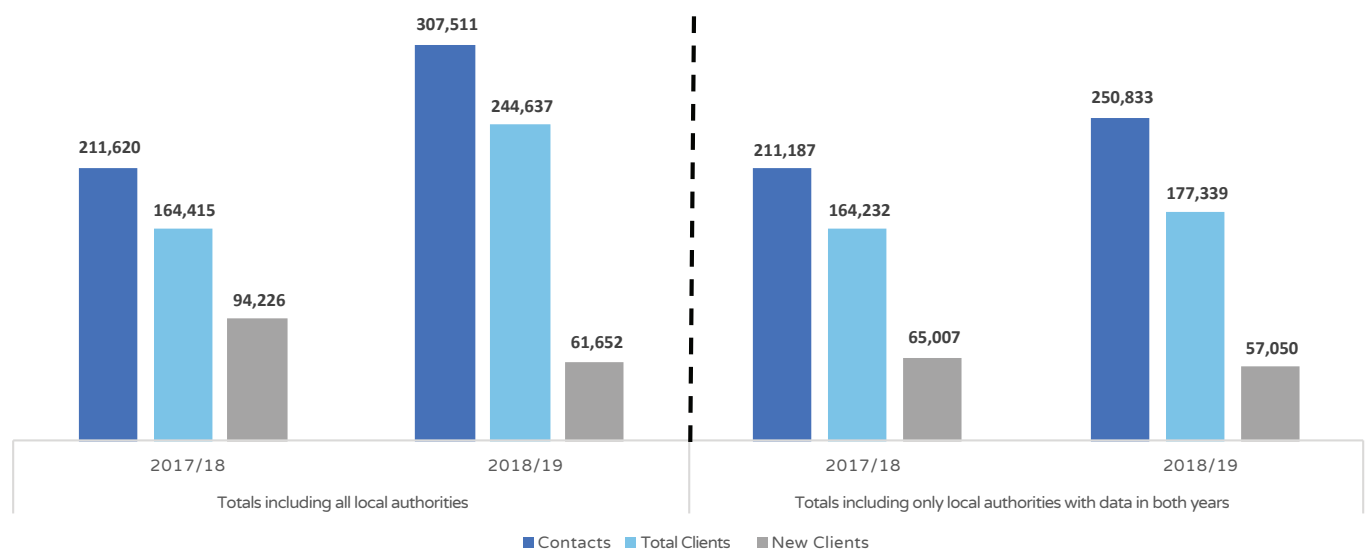
Contacts are defined as an enquiry from a person seeking information on a money or welfare rights advice matter. The contact turns into a new client if the service must take some form of action (e.g. signposting, referral, casework), to support the person and/or resolve the issue. The returns suggest that in 2018/19 there was a total of 307,511 contacts to money and welfare rights advice services. This reflects a 45% increase from 211,620 contacts in the previous year. This increase is, in part, a result of increased reporting, with 28 local authorities reporting the total number of contacts in 2018/19 compared with 23 in 2017/18. When examining only the 22 local authorities where data was provided for both 2017/18 and 2018/19, the total number of contacts increased 19% from 211,187 to 250,833.

It should be noted that these figures are likely to be higher than reported. In 2017/18 a number of external CAB services were unable to provide figures for contacts due to changes in the reporting system CASTLE throughout the year. Furthermore, in 2018/19, several local authorities indicated that figures for contacts did not include all services funded by the local authority.

### Total and New Clients

According to the 31 local authorities providing data, a total of 244,637 clients accessed money and welfare rights advice services in 2018/19. This includes both new clients accessing money and welfare rights advice services for the first time in 2018/19 and clients whose support is ongoing from the previous year. This figure reflects an increase of 49% since 2017/18, where 164,415 clients were supported. However, as with the number of contacts, this increase is partly reflective of an increase in reporting, with only 26 local authorities providing data in 2017/18. As shown in figure A1.1, when including only the 25 local authorities with data for this measure in both years, the total number of clients increased 8% from 164,332 in 2017/18 to 177,339 in 2018/19. Again, issues with the CASTLE system in 2017/18 resulted in underreporting of clients in this year. Furthermore, several local authorities were unable to provide the total number of clients for all their services in 2018/19. Therefore, there is likely to be a larger number of clients supported by money and welfare rights advice services than is reported.

Figure A1.1 Total number of contacts, clients and new clients in 2017/18 and 2018/19



The overall increase in demand for these services, however, is not reflected in the number of new clients accessing services for the first time in 2018/19. Across 24 local authorities reporting data, there was a total of 61,652 new clients accessing money and welfare rights services in 2018/19. This has reduced 35% from 94,226 in 2017/18. Including only the 20 local authorities with data for this measure in both years shows a smaller, but still significant, reduction of 12%, from 65,007 in 2017/18 to 57,050 in 2018/19. Again, the reporting issues mentioned above also apply to new clients, which is likely to have had an impact on the overall figures. However, it is possible that these figures may display a reduced demand from new clients. In some areas, this could be reflective of the use of triage services, whereby people who contact the service with less complex cases are offered advice when they first contact the service and do not become a client with casework. The increased number of contacts would indicate that the demand for services may still have increased but with services supporting this demand more efficiently. Given there has been an increase in the total number of clients without a corresponding increase in new clients, this suggests that there is a greater number of clients in 2018/19 whose support is ongoing from the previous year. This could indicate that clients who are accessing services in 2018/19 have more complex or time-consuming cases than previously.

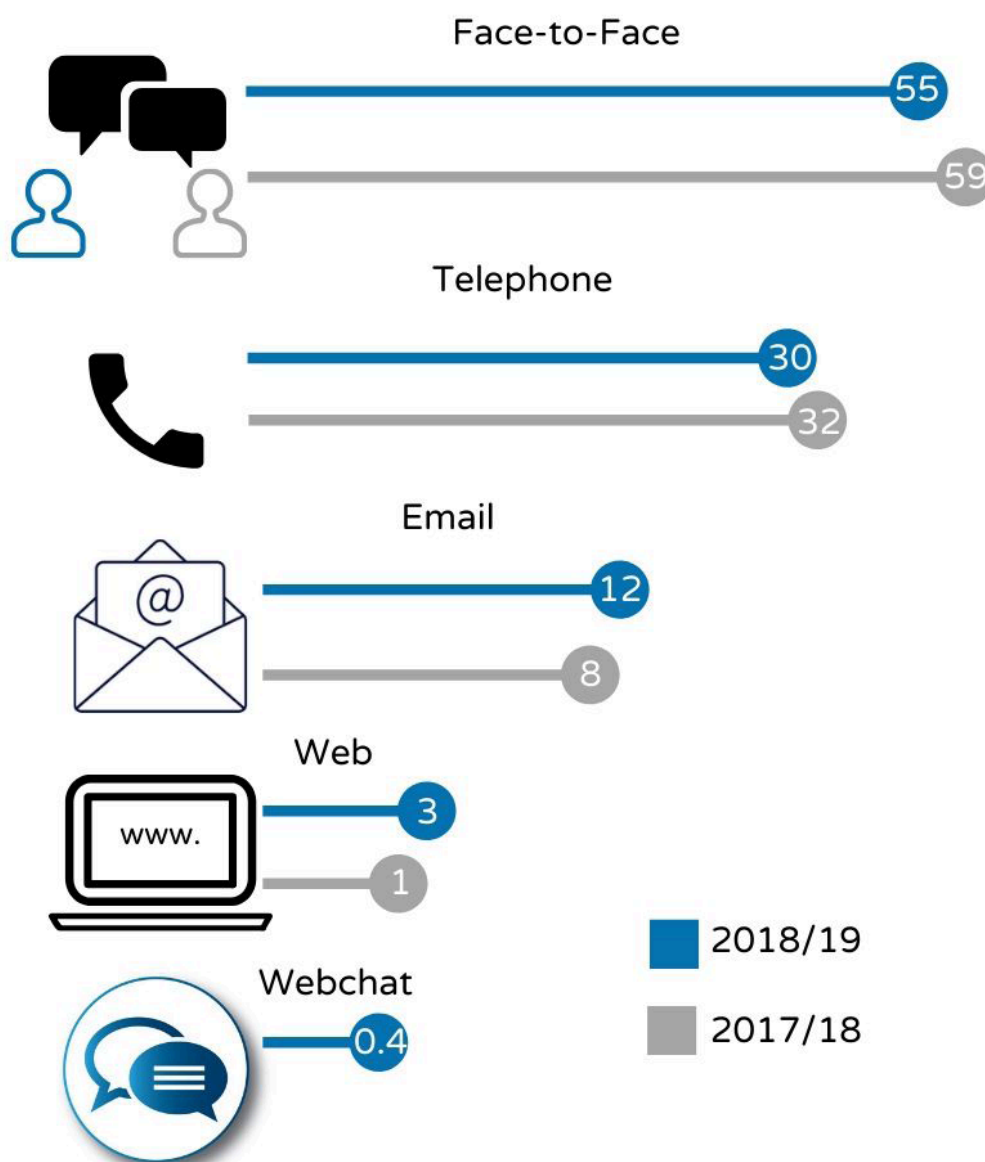
Given the issues with reporting in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, the exact figures for the demand experienced by money and welfare rights advice services is unclear. It seems likely that demand has risen, considering the increasing number of contacts and total number of clients, and that this demand may be from clients with more time-consuming needs. However, the extent of these changes cannot be fully captured from this data alone. Future iterations of the CAPMRF should be able to explore this trend further.

## Contacts by Channel

The data returns suggest initial contacts to money and welfare rights advice services are increasingly being made digitally. Contact made face-to-face and over the phone continues to be the most common methods in which people initially access services. However, as illustrated in figure A1.2, face-to-face and phone contacts made up 55% and 30% respectively of all contacts in 2018/19. In comparison to the previous year, this represents a fall from 59% and 32% respectively,

whereas the proportion of contacts by email, over the web and web chat have all increased. This seems to be indicative of a shift of channels to less labour-intensive methods of engaging with clients. It should be noted that several local authorities indicated that contacts by channel were not fully captured. Furthermore, for external CAB services using the CASTLE system, it is not possible to extract the first contact channel in which contacts were initially made. Figures were provided by several CABx for overall contacts by channel, however these figures include multiple contacts for the same individual and so have been excluded from totals where possible. This issue will be reviewed and the possibility of making comparisons between the channels used for initial contact and those used on subsequent contacts explored.

Figure A1.2 Proportion of Contacts by channel in 2017/18 and 2018/19



Proportion of Contacts

## Benefit Entitlement Checks

For the first time, this year local authorities were asked about the number of benefit entitlement checks carried out by their services. Data from 22 local authorities suggests a total of 44,416 benefit entitlement checks were carried out in 2018/19. Analysing only local authorities that provided figures for benefit entitlement checks and total clients, this total equates to 25% of all clients in 2018/19. As this is the first year in which these figures were requested, not all services within local authorities could report on this. It is expected that this should improve with future iterations of the framework and that this indicator can be further examined.

## Referrals to money and welfare rights advice services

A total of 130,068 referrals were made to money and welfare rights advice services in 2018/19, according to data from 25 local authorities. People continue to access money & welfare rights advice services primarily by making direct contact themselves. In 2018/19, 60% of referrals were self-referrals, an increase from 56% of referrals in 2017/18. The most common service through which clients were referred was Primary Health Care, which made up 9% of all referrals in both 2017/18 and 2018/19. These referrals may highlight the impact of integrating advice services within health care settings. The rationale for this model has been explored further in a briefing paper<sup>42</sup>. A breakdown of referrals is displayed in figure A1.3.

Figure A1.3 Number and Proportion of Referrals by Category in 2018/19 and change from 2017/18

Referral Type	Number of Referrals	Proportion of all Referrals
Self-Referral	77,897	60% ▲ +4%
Primary Health Care	12,202	9% △ 0%
Other	11,927	9% ▲ +1%
Social Services	8,357	6% ▲ +1%
LA Other	6,558	5% ▽ -7%
Third Sector	5,790	4% ▲ +1%
Housing	4,181	3% ▲ +1%
Employability	1,847	1.4% ▲ +1%
Revenues	1,264	1% ▽ -1%

42 Improvement Service, 'Briefing Paper: Specialist Link Workers (Welfare Rights Advice) in General Practice and Primary Care Improvement Plans', 2018

## First Reason for Contact

Since 2017/18, there has been a large increase in the proportion of people initially contacting Money & Welfare Rights Advice Services for benefit entitlement checks. Of the reasons for first contacting the service, benefit entitlement checks made up 37% in 2018/19, compared with 20% in 2017/18.

The most common reasons for contacting services, aside from benefit entitlement checks, tend also to be related to welfare rights. As seen in figure A1.4, assistance with making an initial application for benefits and help with appealing a welfare benefit decision made up 8% and 4%, respectively. Reasons categorised as 'Other' (33%) included hire purchase debt, telecoms debt and HMRC/ business debts, amongst others.

Figure A1.4 Proportion of first reason for contacting advice services in 2017/18 and 2018/19

	2017/18	2018/19	
Benefits entitlement check	20%	37%	▲
Assistance with making initial application for benefits	15%	8%	▼
Help with appealing a welfare benefit decision	9%	4%	▼
Rent arrears	5%	4%	▼
Council Tax arrears	3%	3%	◊
Credit, store, and charge card debts	3%	2%	▼
Seeking to access other funds (e.g. grants)	2%	2%	◊
Unsecured personal loan	1.4%	1.4%	◊
Benefit overpayment	1.7%	0.9%	▼
Bank and Building Society overdrafts	0.8%	0.9%	▲
Catalogue debts	0.7%	0.9%	▲
PPI	0.1%	0.6%	▲
Payday loan/high-cost credit	0.8%	0.5%	▼
Mortgage arrears	0.7%	0.4%	▼
Benefits Sanction	0.5%	0.3%	▼
Issue relating to right to reside	0.3%	0.3%	◊
Other	37%	33%	▼

Although these figures capture the initial reason that drives clients to contact advice services, it is often the case that the individual is then supported for additional reasons beyond this. For this reason, several services were unable to accurately record on this measure, with only 17 local authorities reporting on this measure in 2018/19. Nevertheless, this is comparatively higher than in 2017/18, when 12 local authorities reported on this measure, suggesting that reporting may improve

year-on-year.

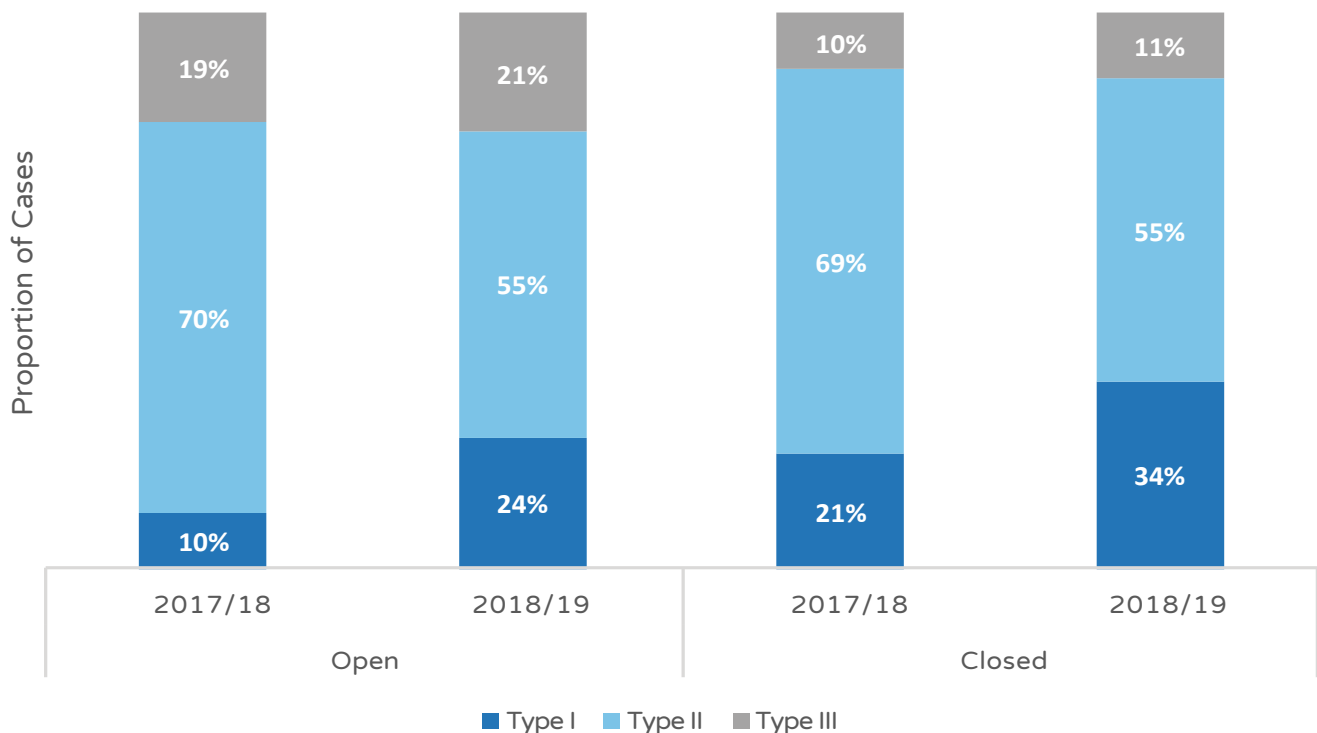
## SNSIAP Open and Closed Cases

Local authorities were asked to provide figures on the number of open and closed cases by the type of advice given. Open cases refer to cases when support is still ongoing at the end of the financial year, compared with closed cases when support for the problem or issue has been completed. The categories of advice are defined according to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers (SNSIAP)<sup>43</sup> as follows;

- Type I – Active Information, Sign-posting and Explanation
- Type II – Casework
- Type III – Advocacy, Representation and Mediation at Tribunal or Court Action Level

Figure A1.5 displays a breakdown of the open and closed cases by the SNSIAP type in both 2017/18 and 2018/19. The largest proportion of cases fell under Type II, which made up 55% of all recorded open and closed cases in 2018/19. The proportion of Type II cases have, however, reduced since the previous year, with a large increase in the proportion of Type I cases. Open Type I cases increased from 10% of all open cases in 2017/18 to 24% in 2018/19 and closed Type I cases increased from 21% of all closed cases in 2017/18 to 34% in 2018/19. The larger proportion of Type I closed cases, compared with Type I open cases could reflect the simpler nature of these type of cases and the effective use of triage systems by some services.

Figure A1.5 Breakdown of SNSIAP Type I, II and III Activity in 2017/18 and 2018/19



The change observed in case type could indicate that services are on average dealing with increased levels of general enquires. However, these changes may also be indicative of reporting issues. In 2018/19, the number of local authorities reporting on Type I cases increased whilst the number reporting on Type II reduced. Several local authorities mentioned that the number of Type II

43 <https://www.slab.org.uk/advice-agencies/scottish-national-standards-for-information-and-advice-partners/>

and Type III cases are not recorded separately and therefore these figures were not included, whilst Type I cases were. Therefore, the number of Type II and Type III are likely to be under-reported. Recording of case type is not consistent across the different services within local authorities meaning that comparisons should be treated with caution. This is an issue that will be discussed with councils for future recording / reporting purposes.



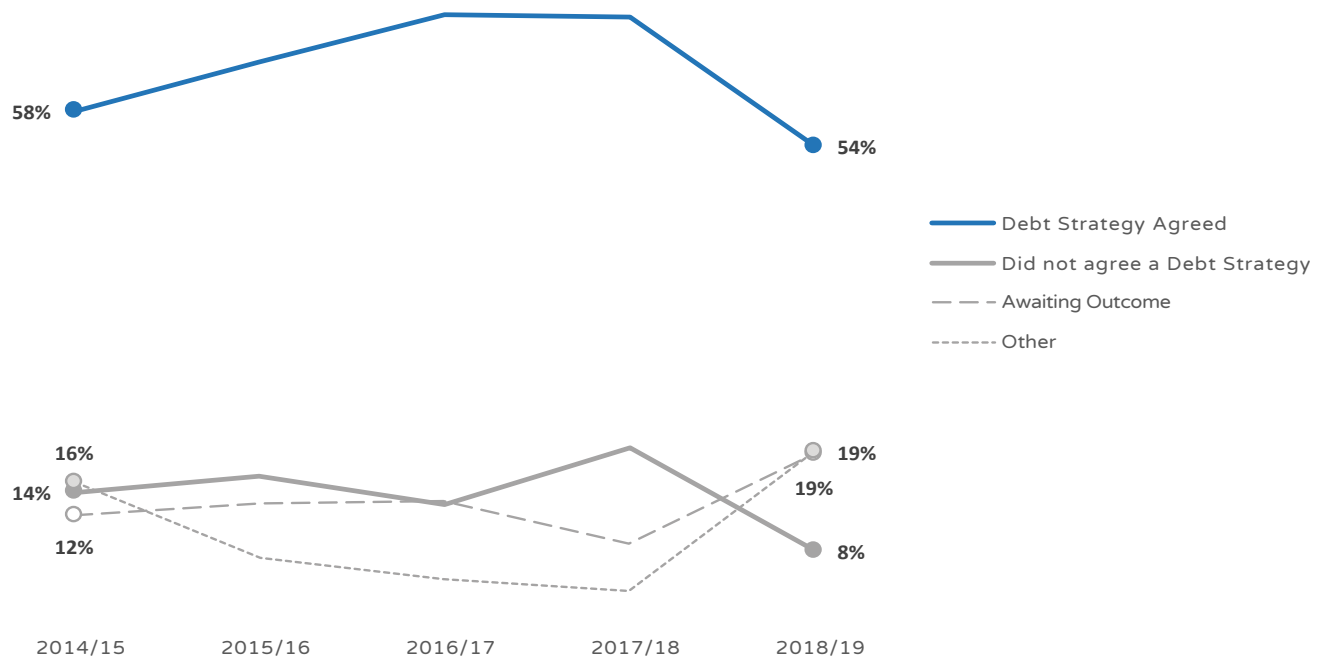
# Output Indicators

The output indicators show what action has occurred and measure the results of specific types of advice. In relation to money advice, 'debt strategy chosen' is used to measure output. For welfare advice, the number of claims and awards made for each welfare benefit, as well as the number of claims that result in mandatory reconsiderations and appeals are used. Submission of a mandatory reconsideration requires the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to review its initial decision on a client's welfare benefit claim. Then, if the client disagrees with the DWP's decision, an appeal can be submitted. This involves presenting the case to an independent tribunal. The outcome of both mandatory reconsiderations and appeals are measured in the CAPMRF.

## OP1 - Debt Strategy

For clients with debt, money advice services support the client to try to agree a method by which they will manage this debt. Local authorities provided a breakdown of these debt strategies including where a strategy could not be agreed and where the outcome of discussions was not yet known. Figure OP1 demonstrates how this breakdown has changed over time.

Figure OP1.1 Proportion of Debt Strategy Outputs 2014/15 to 2018/19



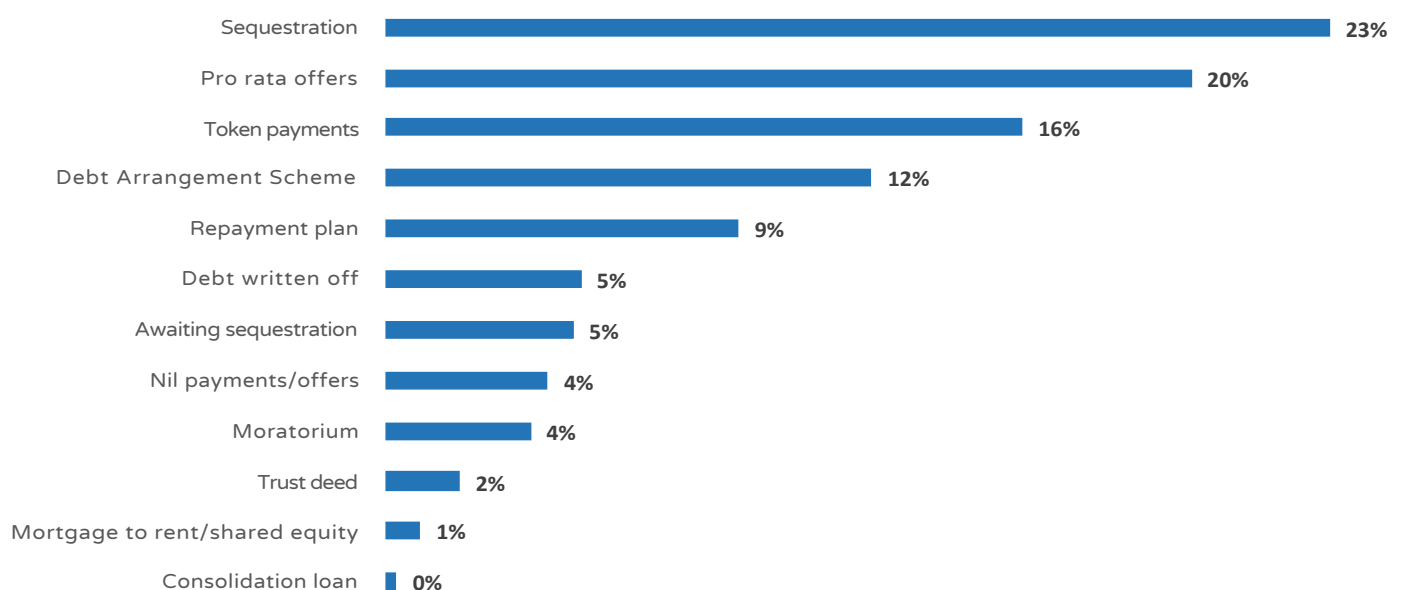
Since 2014/15, the most common outcome for clients was for a debt strategy to be agreed. A total of 7,350 debt strategies were agreed with clients in 2018/19, making up 54% of all debt strategy outputs in this year. There has, however, been a reduction in the proportion of debt strategies agreed. Agreed debt strategies accounted for 58% of debt strategy outputs in 2014/15 and peaked at 69% in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Although agreed debt strategies accounted for a smaller proportion

of outputs in 2018/19, this is a result of increases in the proportion designated ‘awaiting outcome’ and ‘other’. The proportion of outputs where a debt strategy was not agreed has, in fact, decreased from 14% in 2014/15 to 8% in 2018/19. The increase observed in the proportion classed as ‘awaiting outcome’ may indicate that debt cases have become increasingly complex and it could take longer for the service to agree an outcome with the client. There is also the possibility that there has been improved recording of this outcome over time.

Despite this large proportion of ‘awaiting outcome’, additional information from local authorities would suggest that there is also a large proportion of agreed debt strategies which are captured under the category ‘other’. This category is used to record anything which does not fall into the debt strategy categories defined in the framework. Local authorities stated that this category included full and final settlements, equity release and sale of assets, all of which are agreed debt strategies. This category increased from 3% of all debt strategy outputs in 2017/18 to 19% in 2018/19. Although not everything captured under ‘other’ relates to agreed debt strategies, it is likely that an increase in this category would suggest that the actual number of agreed debt strategies is higher than reported. This large increase, however, may indicate that strategies included under the category ‘other’ have become increasingly popular, over and above some of those listed in the framework. For example, equity release is argued to have increased in popularity due to the rise in older population with money tied up in assets<sup>44</sup>. The issue will be discussed with councils and potential changes made to the CAPMRF guidance for the next iteration of the Framework.

There are 12 different types of debt strategies recorded in the framework, a breakdown of which can be seen in figure OP1.2. These include ‘formal debt solutions’ such as the Debt Arrangement Scheme and sequestration, which are both controlled by the Accountant in Bankruptcy. The most commonly agreed debt strategy in 2018/19 was sequestration, which made up 23% of all debt strategies agreed. This debt strategy has become more popular over time, increasing from 21% in 2014/15 and 18% in 2017/18.

Figure OP1.2 Proportion of debt strategies agreed by strategy type in 2018/19



44 <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/news-and-insight/blogs/equity-release-observations-scottish-practice>

## OP2 and 3 – Welfare Benefit Claims, Awards, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals

This is the second year in which welfare rights indicators were included. These indicators cover a range of welfare benefits and record the number of claims and subsequent awards made or maintained for these benefits. Also recorded are the number of benefit claims that resulted in mandatory reconsiderations and the outcome of any appeal.

The data returns suggest that welfare benefit claims make up the majority of work in welfare rights advice, with 67,249 claims made by services in 2018/19. However, there has been a reduction in the number of claims made since the previous year, whilst mandatory reconsiderations and appeals have become more common. As seen in figure OP2-3.1 the total number of benefit claims made have decreased 16% since 2017/18 whilst mandatory reconsiderations and appeals have increased 17% and 19%, respectively. It is possible that individuals may be more likely to make claims themselves and only approach services if their claim is unsuccessful. As 2017/18 was the first year in which these measures were reported, there was significant under-reporting, which should be considered when comparing trends. Nevertheless, the decrease in claims is observed despite an increase in reporting.

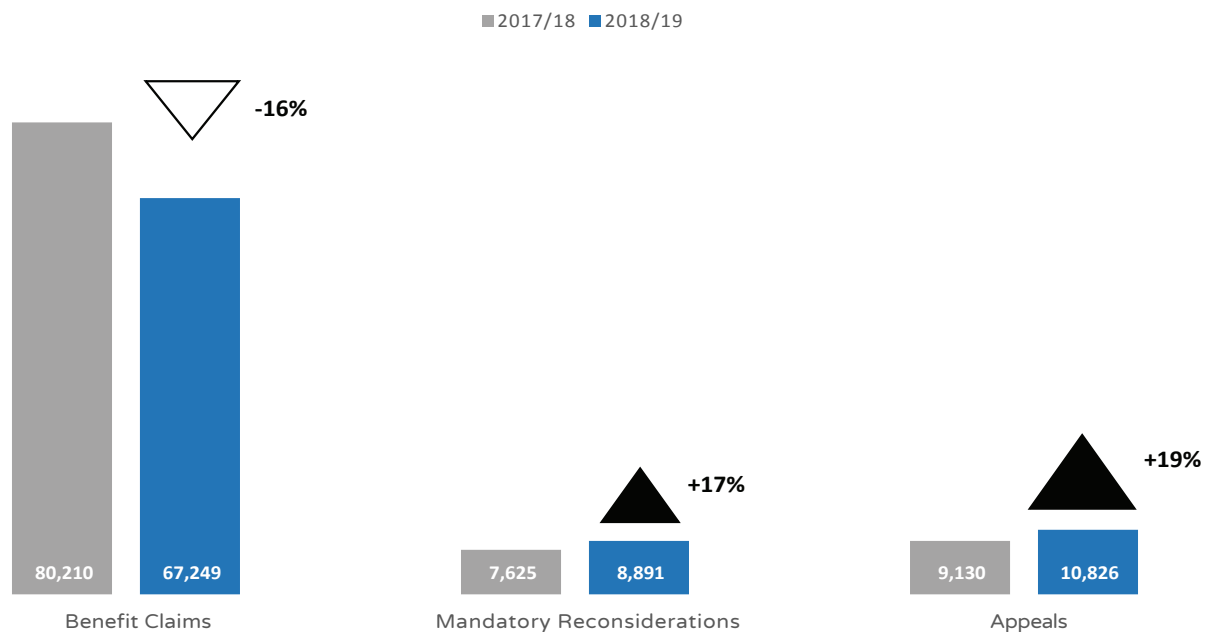
In 2018/19, 26 local authorities reported the total number of benefit claims compared with 20 in 2017/18. Amongst the 19 local authorities that provided data in both years, 9 (47%) reported a decrease in the number of benefit claims. With relation to Mandatory Reconsiderations, reporting increased from 20 local authorities in 2017/18 to 22 in 2018/19 with 13 (76%) of those reporting in both years indicating an increase. Appeals were recorded by 25 local authorities in 2018/19, compared with 23 in 2017/18. 11 (55%) of 20 local authorities that reported in both years recorded an increase.

Nonetheless, there is still under-reporting in 2018/19, not just in the number of local authorities providing figures, but also with the different services within these local authorities. The totals depicted above use aggregated figures from the breakdown local authorities provided by each benefit type. Local authorities have highlighted that not all benefit types are recorded equally. This is further complicated as not all services within local authorities can provide complete data. These issues are more common in relation to mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, as these are not always recorded separately. Therefore, the figures are likely to be higher than reported here, and longer-term trends are needed to identify real changes.

Despite the apparent decrease in claims, there has been an increase in the number of claims which result in an award being made or maintained. The total number of awards increased by 41%, from 39,432 in 2017/18 to 55,436 in 2018/19. Of the 20 local authorities recording awards in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, 12 (60%) reported an increase.

There has also been a high number of successful mandatory reconsiderations and appeals in 2018/19. This year, outputs for these cases were recorded separately, in comparison to the previous year, where outputs of mandatory reconsiderations and appeals were combined. Therefore, a direct comparison between years is not possible. It is also not possible to accurately determine the proportion of positive outputs, as the number of recorded outputs does not always match the recorded number of mandatory reconsiderations and appeals carried out. This is due to various recording issues, such as incomplete data within local authorities, missing data where the result is not known or the service is still awaiting the outcome, and instances where an outcome is recorded from work carried out in the previous reporting year. For this reason, the analysis focuses on the numbers with positive outputs, as opposed to proportions.

Figure OP2-3.1 Total number of benefit claims, mandatory reconsiderations and appeals in 2017/18 and 2018/19



As displayed in figure OP2-3.2, the total number of unsuccessful mandatory reconsiderations (2,626) was higher than the total number that were successful (2,063). It is possible that this partly relates to recording issues. However, of the 17 local authorities reporting both figures for successful and unsuccessful mandatory reconsiderations, 11 (65%) recorded a greater number of unsuccessful. This greater number of unsuccessful mandatory reconsiderations may, in part, have contributed to the overall increase in appeals between 2017/18 and 2018/19. Appeals have, however, been somewhat more successful. Overall there was a greater number of successful appeals (6,483) than unsuccessful (2,004) and all 23 local authorities that provided figures for the result of appeals, reported a greater number as being successful. These figures may indicate that benefit decisions are more likely to be overturned in the second stage of the process in which it is challenged.

As shown in figure OP2-3.2, Personal Independence Payment is the most common benefit type for which clients seek advice, with growing demand since 2017/18. This benefit made up 32% of all claims in 2018/19, an increase from 22% in 2017/18. Demand for support with Universal Credit appears to be growing with claims for this benefit increasing 97% from 2,078 in 2017/18 to 4,098 in 2018/19. This likely reflects the roll-out of Universal Credit.

Figure OP2-3.2 Number of Claims, Awards, Mandatory Reconsiderations (MRs), Appeals and Outputs by Welfare Benefit in 2018/19 and indication of change since 2017/18<sup>45</sup>

Increase since 2017/18
  Decrease since 2017/18

	No. Claims	No. Awards	No. MRs	No MRs Won	No MRs Lost	No Appeals	No. Appeals Won	No. Appeals Lost
Personal Independence Payment	21,856	13,324	3,796	688	1,299	5,177	2,979	1,064
Attendance Allowance	7,367	7,245	190	119	37	58	42	26
Universal Credit	4,098	3,604	456	94	72	347	203	51
Disability Living Allowance	2,473	3,591	329	90	119	493	291	110
Scottish Welfare Fund	2,111	1,068	68	14	7	8	11	7
Carers Allowance	1,766	1,393	22	9	1	1	1	5
Child Tax Credit	1,469	579	112	20	14	37	14	3
Pension Credit	1,334	2,156	30	9	5	10	3	4
Contributory Benefits	1,265	569	309	86	50	257	192	30
Child Benefit	842	554	18	4	1	8	7	3
Discretionary Housing Payments	834	1,327	20	10	1	-	-	-
Bereavement Benefits	190	129	4	-	-	5	-	-
State Pension	177	154	3	-	4		-	-
Funeral Expenses	84	39	9	1	-	1	-	-
Sure Start Maternity Grant (replaced by the Best Start Grant)	80	77	2	-	-	1	2	-
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	73	35	13	1	3	30	6	11
Maternity Allowance	45	31	-	-	-	4	2	1
Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments	40	15	3	1	-		-	-
Other	21,147	19,547	3,508	917	1,012	4,389	2,730	689
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,249</b>	<b>55,436</b>	<b>8,891</b>	<b>2,063</b>	<b>2,626</b>	<b>10,826</b>	<b>6,483</b>	<b>2,004</b>

<sup>45</sup> Sorted from highest to lowest based on the number of claims made

# Outcome Indicators

The outcome indicators describe the benefits experienced by clients who have received support from money and welfare rights advice services. In previous iterations of the CAPMRF, the financial gain secured for clients has been used to indicate the impact of these services. For many years, staff members working in money and welfare rights advice services have highlighted that the ‘softer’ outcomes delivered by the services they provide often make the greatest difference to their clients’ lives. Consequentially, from 2017/18 onwards, services have been attempting to measure their impact on clients’ health and wellbeing, capacity, and financial resilience. Services measure these ‘softer’ impacts by asking clients during their final advice session whether they agree or disagree with set statements, with the aim of identifying changes they have experienced as a direct result of receiving advice. While the number of local authorities reporting on these outcomes was low in relation to 2017/18, several have indicated that they intend to implement recording mechanisms prior to the next iteration of the CAPMRF. Therefore, as with other indicators, it is expected that the number of local authorities reporting will increase year-on-year.

## OC1 – Verified and Unverified Financial Gain

Local authorities were asked to provide the total financial gain generated for all clients which resulted from accessing support from money and welfare rights advice services. This includes any income to which clients were entitled but would not have received without the intervention of the service (including awards of benefits/tax credits, refunds, debts written off and grants accessed). In the case of benefits and tax credits, it is assumed that the award was made for a 12-month period.

This is the second year in which financial gain generated by welfare rights advice has been recorded. Table OC1.1 provides a breakdown of the financial gain secured for welfare rights clients for each of the past two years. This shows financial gain secured by both awards made and following successful mandatory reconsiderations and appeals, broken down for each welfare benefit. The data indicates that a total of £267,087,439 in financial gain was secured from welfare rights advice in 2018/19, reflecting an increase of 21% since 2017/18. There have been increases in the total financial gain across all welfare benefits, aside from three types of benefit. Financial gain related to Personal Independence Payment made up the largest proportion of the total gains secured, with large increases in particular from financial gain from mandatory reconsiderations and appeals. Large increases were also observed in financial gains related to Universal Credit. In 2017/18, financial gain secured from Universal Credit claims awarded accounted for 1% of the total financial gain from awards, this has risen to 8% in 2018/19. Financial gain secured from Universal Credit mandatory reconsiderations and appeals now makes up 3% of this financial gain type, compared with 1% in 2017/18. This may reflect the rolling-out of Universal Credit.

As with other welfare rights measures, these increases may also, in part, be attributable to better reporting this year, as the measure was new in 2017/18. A total of 28 local authorities provided data on financial gain from awards in 2018/19, compared with 23 in 2017/18. Reporting of financial gain from mandatory reconsiderations and appeals has also improved, however this is not as well reported as financial gain from benefit claims. In 2018/19, 26 local authorities reported this measure, compared with 22 in 2017/18. Under-reporting of financial gain from MR’s and appeals has been attributed, by some services, to a difficulty in following up on outcomes, as often the clients will not

return if successful. Some services could only provide the total financial gain, but not a breakdown by each welfare benefit. Where this was the case, the total was included under 'other'. Local authorities also indicated that the data was not always complete as not all funded services could be included. For these reasons, the changes observed are not wholly reliable and will need to be examined further with longer term trends.

Figure OC1.1 Financial Gain from Welfare Benefit Awards and MRs/Appeals in 2017/18 and 2018/19

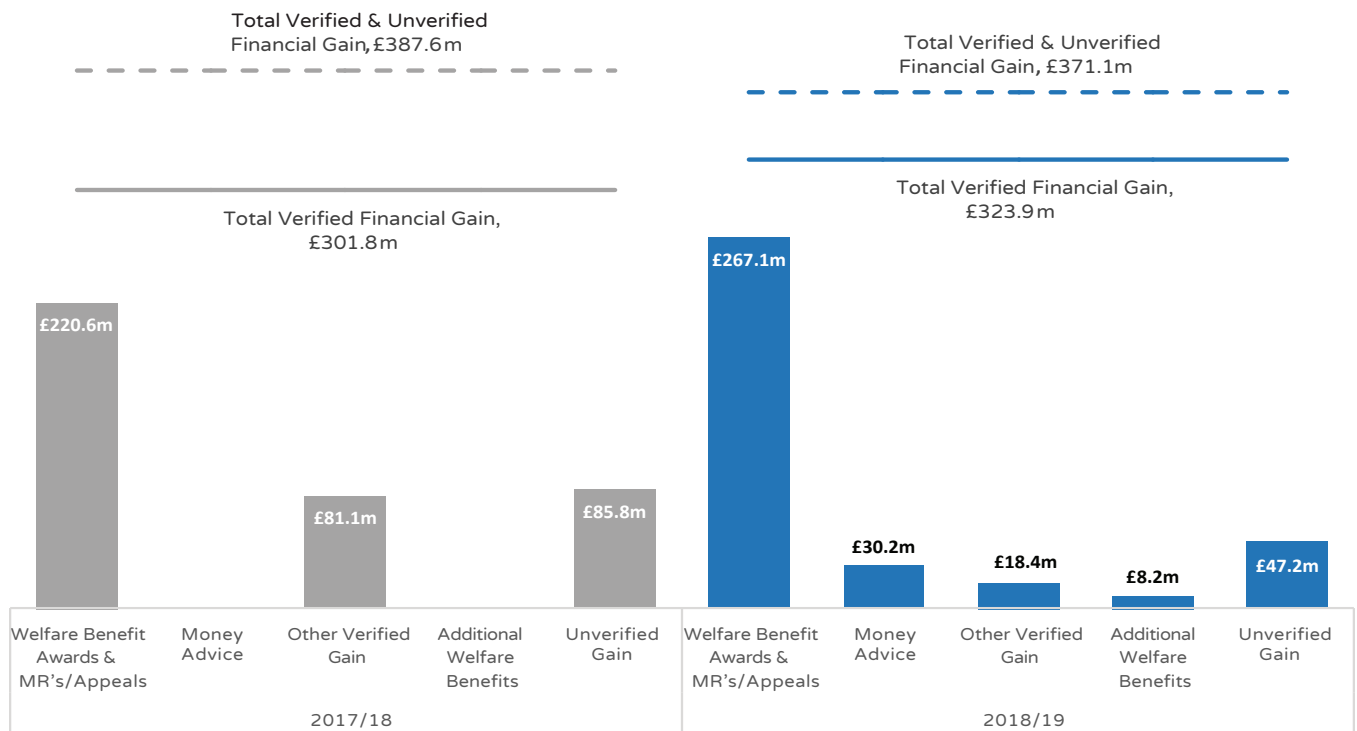
		Financial Gain From Awards	Financial Gain from MRs and Appeals	Total	
Personal Independence Payment	2017/18	£62,945,121	£13,498,251	<b>£76,443,372</b>	▲
	2018/19	£66,356,434	£19,563,811	<b>£85,920,245</b>	
Attendance Allowance	2017/18	£18,299,723	£530,399	<b>£18,830,122</b>	▲
	2018/19	£29,556,233	£1,959,706	<b>£31,515,939</b>	
Universal Credit	2017/18	£2,498,804	£335,235	<b>£2,834,039</b>	▲
	2018/19	£16,699,608	£1,115,463	<b>£17,815,071</b>	
Disability Living Allowance	2017/18	£5,547,566	£1,119,252	<b>£6,666,818</b>	▲
	2018/19	£6,146,411	£2,730,061	<b>£8,876,472</b>	
Pension Credit	2017/18	£5,667,393	£171,246	<b>£5,838,639</b>	▲
	2018/19	£6,997,890	£87,623	<b>£7,085,513</b>	
Carers Allowance	2017/18	£2,898,317	£64,032	<b>£2,962,348</b>	▲
	2018/19	£4,194,118	£63,942	<b>£4,258,060</b>	
Contributory Benefits	2017/18	£1,250,708	£293,650	<b>£1,544,359</b>	▲
	2018/19	£2,632,769	£1,354,155	<b>£3,986,924</b>	
Child Tax Credit	2017/18	£2,823,787	£393,762	<b>£3,217,549</b>	▲
	2018/19	£3,185,276	£196,224	<b>£3,381,500</b>	
State Pension	2017/18	£898,329	£77,577	<b>£975,906</b>	▲
	2018/19	£1,400,568	£0	<b>£1,400,568</b>	
Discretionary Housing Payments	2017/18	£799,400	£89,542	<b>£888,942</b>	▲
	2018/19	£1,308,618	£11,654	<b>£1,320,273</b>	
Child Benefit	2017/18	£177,296	£43,239	<b>£220,535</b>	▲
	2018/19	£880,829	£61,321	<b>£942,150</b>	
Scottish Welfare Fund	2017/18	£1,145,623	£10,268	<b>£1,155,891</b>	▽
	2018/19	£859,970	£21,285	<b>£881,255</b>	
Bereavement Benefits	2017/18	£460,292	£36,229	<b>£496,522</b>	▲
	2018/19	£561,487	£0	<b>£561,487</b>	
Maternity Allowance	2017/18	£162,140	£0	<b>£162,140</b>	▲
	2018/19	£157,684	£87,865	<b>£245,549</b>	

		Financial Gain From Awards	Financial Gain from MRs and Appeals	Total	
Industrial Injured Disablement Benefit	2017/18	£19,031	£13,851	<b>£32,882</b>	▲
	2018/19	£122,385	£20,126	<b>£142,511</b>	
Sure Start Maternity Grant (replaced by the best Start Grant)	2017/18	£40,148	£485,834	<b>£525,982</b>	▽
	2018/19	£73,311	£1,000	<b>£74,311</b>	
Funeral Expenses	2017/18	£47,949	£585	<b>£48,533</b>	▲
	2018/19	£52,282	£4,178	<b>£56,461</b>	
Cold Weather Payments and Winter Fuel Payments	2017/18	£11,670	£200	<b>£11,870</b>	▽
	2018/19	£2,592	£300	<b>£2,892</b>	
Other	2017/18	£82,546,162	£15,246,010	<b>£97,792,171</b>	▲
	2018/19	£81,345,429	£17,274,829	<b>£98,620,257</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>£188,239,458</b>	<b>£32,409,159</b>	<b>£220,648,617</b>	▲
	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>£222,533,895</b>	<b>£44,553,543</b>	<b>£267,087,439</b>	

Local authorities were also asked about additional financial gain secured in relation to welfare rights advice not already recorded under the categories above. A total of £8,179,848 was recorded by 9 local authorities. In addition, local authorities were asked to provide figures for financial gain secured in relation to money advice. This data was submitted by 24 local authorities and totalled £30,217,870. As shown in figure OC1.2, this additional financial gain, alongside the welfare rights financial gain detailed above, and additional 'other' verified gain which could not be disaggregated between money and welfare rights, combines to a total of £323,876,347 verified financial gain secured for clients in 2018/19. This represents an increase of 7% since the previous year. Of the 27 local authorities that reported verified financial gain in both 2017/18 and 2018/19, 20 (74%) reported an increase. Nevertheless, it has been highlighted by local authorities that data for this measure was incomplete in both years, with not all funded services able to provide figures, and under-reporting in some cases for those that could. There has been a large reduction in the amount of unverified financial gain recorded in 2018/19. Therefore, when this is included, the total financial gain shows a reduction between 2017/18 and 2018/19.



Figure OC1.2 Total Verified and Unverified Financial Gain Breakdown for 2017/18 and 2018/19





Based on these figures, it is estimated that for every £1 of local authority funding invested in money and welfare rights services, £13 (verified) - £14 (verified & unverified)<sup>46</sup> is secured in financial gain for clients. The figures reported here reflect an excellent return on investment and, given the issues with reporting of financial gain, the actual true value is likely to be much higher than reported.

<sup>46</sup> Calculated by dividing total financial gain by total local authority investment. This is presented as a range as there is a £13 return when only verified gain is included, while there is a £14 return if both verified and unverified gain is included.

## OC2 – Improved Health and Wellbeing

Local authorities were asked to provide figures on the number of clients reporting improved health and wellbeing as a direct result of getting advice. Figure OC2 provides a breakdown of responses across the five statement areas. There has been a marginal improvement in reporting between 2017/18 and 2018/19 with an increase in sample size across 3 of the statement areas. Clients' responses were predominately positive across the 5 areas, with moderate improvement over time. Across the 5 statement areas, the proportion of the clients sampled who responded in agreement with the statement has increased between 2017/18 and 2018/19. There were very few negative responses across the statements, however it should be noted that responses were not received from all clients sampled. The statement 'I've been feeling more relaxed' had the largest sample size and had high levels of agreement, with 1,554 clients agreeing with statement, equating to 84% of the clients sampled.



Figure OC2 Number of Clients Self-Reporting Improved Health and Wellbeing in 2017/18 and 2018/19

Statement	Year	Proportion of Sample that Agreed	No. Local Authorities that Reported	Total Sample Size	 Agreed	 Disagreed
I've been feeling more relaxed	2017/18	71%	3	1,617	1,154	-
	2018/19	84%	4	1,848	1,554	183
I've been feeling better about myself	2017/18	86%	3	1,617	1,390	20
	2018/19	96%	3	342	329	7
I've been feeling more optimistic about the future	2017/18	85%	2	337	285	15
	2018/19	95%	3	342	324	12
I've been feeling physically better	2017/18	41%	3	437	177	89
	2018/19	89%	3	342	304	5
I've been getting on better with others	2017/18	55%	2	337	185	10
	2018/19	85%	3	342	292	2

## OC3 – Improved Capacity and Ability to Cope

Local authorities were also asked to submit data on the number of clients who report on whether accessing advice directly improved their capacity and ability to cope. The majority of clients sampled, agreed that improvements had been made across the five statement areas, as highlighted in figure OC3. These statements were surveyed across a larger number of local authorities in 2018/19, however the sample sizes between each year vary only slightly. The statement 'I am more able to make decisions' had the largest sample size and the largest number of positive responses. Of the 1,871 clients sampled, 1,644 (88%) agreed that accessing advice improved their ability to make decisions. A substantial number of clients (356, 98%) also agreed that they now knew when to seek support and where to get it. This demonstrates the wider impact advices services can have and could suggest that accessing advice may encourage people to access support in the future before problems become unmanageable and reduce the need for any subsequent support.



Figure OC3 Number of Clients Self-Reporting Improved Capacity and Ability to Cope in 2017/18 and 2018/19

Statement	Year	Proportion of Sample that Agreed	No. Local Authorities that Reported	Total Sample Size	 Agreed	 Disagreed
I am more able to make decisions	2017/18	<b>79%</b>	3	1,617	<b>1,277</b>	14
	2018/19	<b>88%</b>	5	1,871	<b>1,644</b>	76
I know when to seek support and where to get it	2017/18	<b>99%</b>	3	437	<b>433</b>	-
	2018/19	<b>98%</b>	4	365	<b>356</b>	4
I feel more in control of my life	2017/18	<b>89%</b>	2	337	<b>300</b>	-
	2018/19	<b>96%</b>	4	365	<b>351</b>	5
I am thinking more clearly	2017/18	<b>88%</b>	2	337	<b>295</b>	5
	2018/19	<b>95%</b>	4	365	<b>347</b>	14
I am more able to cope with day to day issues/problems	2017/18	<b>83%</b>	2	337	<b>281</b>	19
	2018/19	<b>95%</b>	4	365	<b>346</b>	12

## OC4 – Increased Financial Stability and Resilience

Data was also submitted by local authorities on clients' self-reporting of improved financial stability and resilience as a direct result of receiving advice. As with other self-reported outcomes, a substantial number of clients agreed with the five statements, as displayed in figure OC4. The statement, 'I can better manage my money', had the largest sample size and had a large number of positive responses (1,393, 74%). However, there were also a significant number of clients who disagreed with this statement (156). This could indicate that clients do not feel they have enough money to manage their needs. It may also potentially indicate that some services focus primarily on resolving immediate crises, without necessarily focusing on future prevention, such as helping equip clients to address underlying causes or develop the capacity to avoid / manage future situations. Further investigation of these figures is needed.

Figure OC4 Number of Clients Self-Reporting Improved Financial Stability and Resilience in 2017/18 and 2018/19

Statement	Year	Proportion of Sample that Agreed	No. Local Authorities that Reported	Total Sample Size	 Agreed	 Disagreed
I can better manage my money	2017/18	<b>76%</b>	4	1,717	<b>1,303</b>	6
	2018/19	<b>74%</b>	5	1,871	<b>1,393</b>	156
I am confident that I am getting all the benefits/ help to which I am legally entitled	2017/18	<b>87%</b>	2	337	<b>294</b>	16
	2018/19	<b>99%</b>	4	365	<b>360</b>	2
I know how much money I have to spend	2017/18	<b>86%</b>	2	337	<b>290</b>	10
	2018/19	<b>98%</b>	4	365	<b>359</b>	2
I recognise when I need help to sort out my money	2017/18	<b>89%</b>	2	337	<b>300</b>	-
	2018/19	<b>98%</b>	4	365	<b>356</b>	2
I would be better able to cope if I had an unexpected expense	2017/18	<b>89%</b>	1	165	<b>147</b>	17
	2018/19	<b>93%</b>	4	365	<b>339</b>	12

# Conclusion

This report has summarised the significant contribution made by local authority funded and delivered money and welfare rights advice. It highlights that local authority investment of £25.9m p.a., not only delivers multiple benefits, but is also crucial in leveraging in additional resources from a range of external providers.

The data returns submitted by councils demonstrate that advice services are effectively targeting many of the poorest and most vulnerable groups and individuals within Scotland. For the second year running, the report seeks to identify not just the significant financial gain that advice services deliver to service users but also the wider impact they create within communities. Whilst recognising the challenges of identifying and reporting on some of the 'softer' outcomes experienced by service users, the returns have provided evidence of these benefits. In relation to 'Health and Wellbeing' c.85% of service users reported improvement and c.90% indicated that they had 'Improved Capacity and Ability to Cope'.

Increasingly, the debts for which service users are seeking advice relate to monies owed to local authorities. Rent arrears accounted for the largest proportion of debt clients and Council tax arrears were the third largest debt type in terms of the amount owed. Potentially this could have a significant impact on local authority budgets and investment in advice services is likely to result in improvements in income.

The report findings highlight areas that merit further exploration such as: the reason for the increase in volunteer numbers; identification of links between Universal Credit roll-out and increases in rent arrears and an assessment of the contribution, if any, digital information has made to the reduced number of contacts becoming clients.

Consistent reporting remains an issue that requires ongoing improvement and strengthening and discussions will continue with local authorities to enable this to be addressed.

The analysis indicates that every £1 invested in advice services by Scotland's local authorities delivers benefits of between c£13- £14. This represents an exceptionally good use of public funding. However, despite demonstrating the contribution made by advice services, the evidence also highlights that these services remain vulnerable when considering increasing demand amidst growing costs and cuts.

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