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CPAG in Scotland - Evaluation of second tier advice, information and training services



EQUALITY AND WELFARE



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List of Acronyms

AA – Attendance Allowance

BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

CAB – Citizens Advice Bureau

CPAG – Child Poverty Action Group

CTC – Child Tax Credit

DLA – Disability Living Allowance

DRH – Disability Rights Handbook

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

ESA – Employment and Support Allowance

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

HB – Housing Benefit

HMRC – Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

JSA – Jobseekers Allowance

PC – Pension Credit

PIP – Personal Independence Payment

UC – Universal Credit

WTC – Working Tax Credit

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

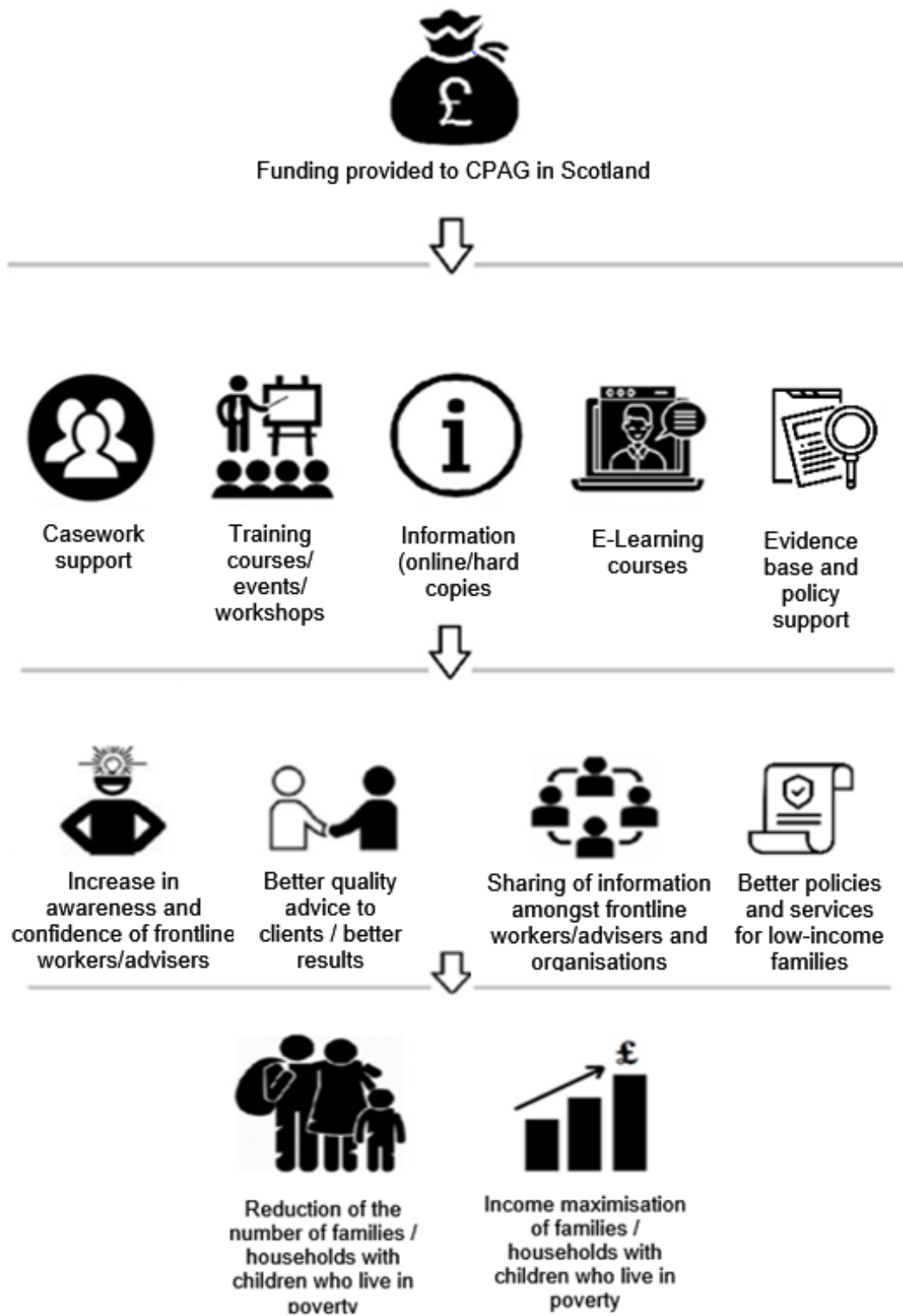
This report presents the findings from the Scottish Government's evaluation of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland's welfare rights second tier advice, information and training services. The report details the background and objectives of the evaluation plus the methodology used, presenting the key findings from primary and secondary data. The report then draws conclusions and provides recommendations regarding CPAG in Scotland's services.

1.2 Background

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) was established in 1965 and is the leading charity campaigning for the abolition of child poverty in the UK and for a better deal for low-income families and children. CPAG is based in Glasgow (established in 1999) and London and is a membership organisation, which is also funded by its publication and training activities in addition to receiving external funding. The organisation aims to raise awareness and understanding of the causes of poverty, its scope and scale and the impacts poverty has on children's lives; whilst enabling those in poverty to maximise their incomes and contributing to positive policy changes for households in poverty. Its publications, training and campaigning activities work to achieve these aims.

Since 2004, the Scottish Government has funded Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland to develop, organise and deliver welfare rights training, information and casework support to advisers and other frontline workers in order to increase their capacity and capability to give accurate and effective advice and information on benefits to households. In 2018/19 the Scottish Government provided CPAG in Scotland with £610,000 in funding for the second tier welfare rights advice service.

Figure 1. Simple logic model of CPAG in Scotland’s services to maximise income and reduce poverty



The key aims of CPAG in Scotland's services are:

- To support advisers and other frontline staff in the voluntary, public and private sectors to deliver accurate, high quality advice on benefit entitlements for low income households
- To provide an evidence base that will be used, through a separately funded Early Warning System, to support policy makers and service providers to develop policies and services that better fit the needs of low income families

As a result, CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice service is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- Advisers and frontline support staff working with low-income families increase benefit and tax credit knowledge and skills
- Frontline agencies provide accurate, high quality, effective advice and information on benefits both in and out of work
- Households maximise available income by: ensuring people claim the benefits they are entitled to; improving people's financial capability; and leaving fewer people struggling with debt
- Policy makers and service providers are better informed on the impacts of welfare reforms on devolved policies and services, and can develop policies and services better fit to the needs of low-income families

CPAG in Scotland provides a dedicated welfare rights second tier advice service as part of its overall work to develop and campaign for policy solutions to end child poverty. The service provides information, casework advice and training to frontline advisers and support staff working with families across Scotland. Beneficiaries of the service include welfare rights advisers, solicitors, student advisers, housing staff, health workers, family support staff, social workers and social security staff.

The service provided to these beneficiaries includes:

- Casework support via telephone and email
- A range of online and face-to-face training opportunities for front line advisers and support staff (e-learning resources can be found here: <http://elearning.cpag.org.uk/>)

- Advice handbooks and factsheets in both hard copy and electronic formats
- Online resources to support the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers
- Specific training, casework advice and information on benefits for students, benefits for minority ethnic communities, households affected by disability and children living with their parents and benefits for families

1.3 Objectives

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to assess the extent to which all aspects of CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice services ensure that households are able to maximise their available incomes and contribute to the overall outcomes of reducing the number of families and households with children who live in poverty. The evaluation was also designed with the aim to help inform future Scottish Government investment and make recommendations for future development of CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice services as well as for wider advice services in Scotland.

The specific objectives addressed in the course of this evaluation were to:

1. Assess the extent to which CPAG Scotland's second tier advice service contributes to the outcomes set out in the grant letter, notably:
 - Advisers and frontline support staff working with low-income families have increased benefit and tax credit knowledge and skills
 - Frontline agencies provide accurate, high quality, effective advice and information on benefits both in and out of work
 - Available household incomes are maximised by: ensuring people claim the benefits they are entitled to; improving people's financial capability; and leaving fewer people struggling with debt

2. Inform future Scottish Government investment, assess what aspects of the second tier advice service are working well in achieving its aims, identify any areas for improvement, and make recommendations on how to respond to these.

3. Make recommendations for future development of CPAG's Second Tier advice services / wider tier 2 services.

4. Make recommendations on ways to improve measurement of outcomes and impact.

2. Method

This section details the research method used to produce the key findings of this evaluation.

The evaluation involved two main components:

1. Secondary data: Analysis of monitoring and evaluation data collected by CPAG to provide insight into, for example: how widely used CPAG's services are, who the various services are reaching, advisers' and frontline workers' views on the services and the impact services have on their level of knowledge and ability to provide accurate advice, areas for improvement
2. Primary data collection, through a questionnaire and follow-up qualitative interviews, of the views of a wide range of service users (including service managers, advisers and frontline support staff) on awareness/accessibility of the services provided by CPAG in Scotland as well as topics covered and where additional support is needed, impact of services, support for accreditation to National Standards and future needs/services that could be provided.

3. Secondary data – analysis and findings

This section reports on the key findings from the evaluation of the secondary data provided by CPAG in Scotland up to 2018/19.

CPAG in Scotland provided a range of data and information on their second tier advice, information and training services for review in the evaluation. These included:

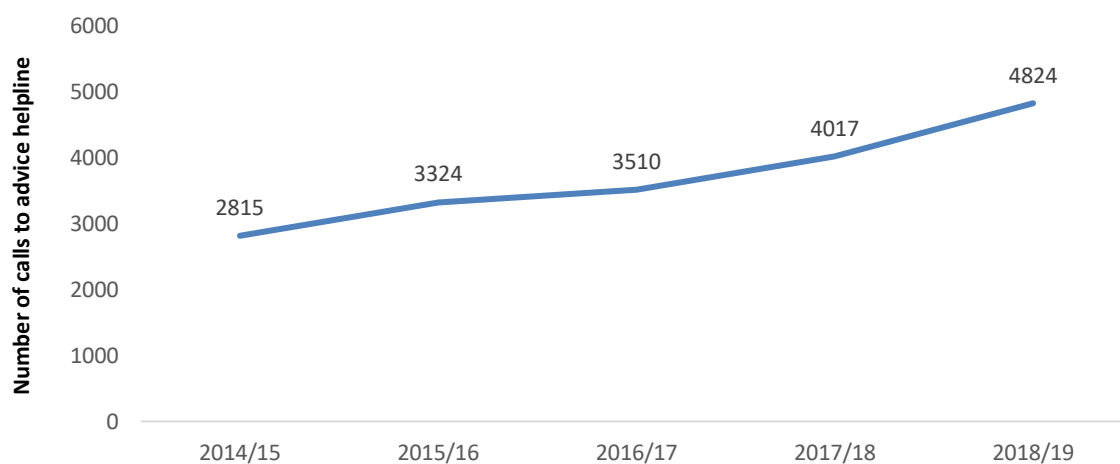
- **Quarterly grant funding progress reports** detailing the number of cases supported by the Advice Line, number of participants attending training courses and events per topic, number of handbooks/factsheets/e-bulletins produced and distributed per topic, availability of the Appeals Toolkit, number of times E-learning courses were accessed as well as the number of people enrolled and the number of participants attending the annual welfare rights conference
- **Annual conference evaluation data** containing findings from evaluation forms completed by attendees of the annual Welfare Rights Conferences from 2014-2018
- **Advice Line Database data** containing details for each inquiry made by frontline workers/organisations/individuals to the Advice Line including the date, level of inquiry, subject and organisation/type of organisation making the enquiry
- **Advice Line use survey data** containing findings from the surveys launched annually, assessing the Advice Line Service users' views and ratings of the Advice Line
- **Evaluation forms for E-learning courses** containing feedback for the courses from participants as well as suggestions for improvements

3.1 Advice Line data

In total, the data provided by CPAG covered 16,413 enquiries, from 2014/15 to 2018/19. This section will consider the available data on the Advice Line, before briefly reviewing available feedback on training and data about use of online resources.

Overall there has been a 42% increase in the use of CPAG's advice helpline in the last five years (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Use of CPAG Advice Line, 2014/15-2018/2019



This increase in call volume in the last five years has been largely driven by the effect of increased enquiries about Universal Credit (UC), which has increased by a far greater extent than other types of enquiries (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Enquiries to CPAG Advice Line, by enquiry type, 2014/15-2018/2019

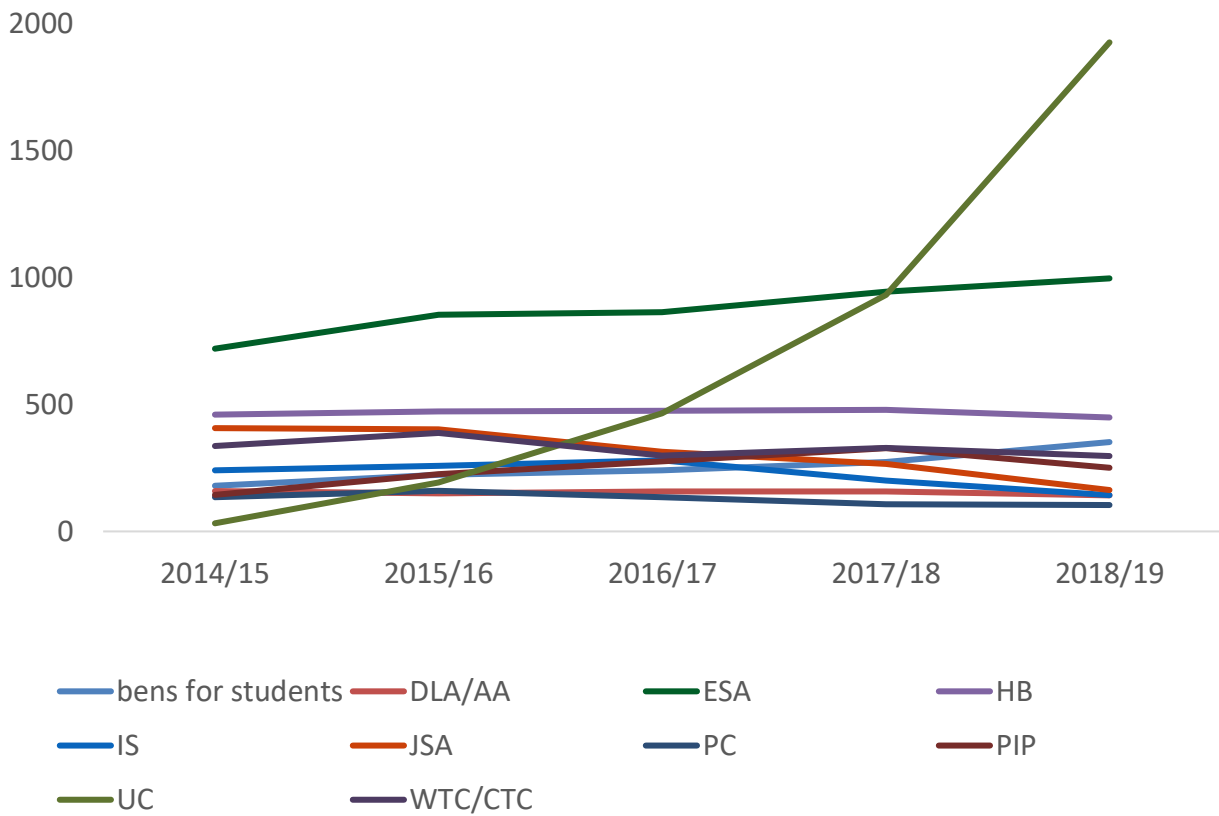


Figure 4. Percentage Increase/Decrease in enquiries to the Advice Line by enquiry type, 2014/15-2018/19

Enquiry Type	Percentage change
Benefits for Students	96%
DLA/AA	-11%
ESA	38%
HB	-2%
IS	-41%
JSA	-60%
PC	-23%
PIP	74%
UC	5922%
WTC/CTC	-12%
Total	71%

Universal Credit-related enquiries have increased from 32 in 2014/15 to 1,927 in 2018/19, a percentage increase of 5922%, far exceeding any other enquiry type and comprising 40% of all calls made to the advice line.

The most frequent users of the Advice Line between 2014/15 to 2018/19 were from Citizens Advice Bureaux (see Figures 5 and 6). Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs) made more than 30% of the total number of enquiries to the Advice Line every year. From 2017/18 to 2018/19 the Advice Line saw an increased usage by organisations defining themselves as “Other voluntary sector” while, at the same time, organisations defining themselves as “Support providers” appear to have decreased by a roughly similar amount. The reason for this is unknown, however, it is likely that this is a data anomaly and “Support providers” may have been included in “Other voluntary sector” in this time period. “Local Authorities”, “Housing Associations” and the remaining organisation types (Other/Not defined) appear to have made almost the same quantity of enquiries to the Advice Line over the period 2014/15 – 2018/19.

The number of enquiries made via the Advice Line did see an increase among all organisation types over the reference period, with the exception of those identified as 'Support providers' which, as mentioned above, could be an anomaly.

Figure 5. Enquiries to CPAG Advice Line, by Organisation Type, 2014/15-2018/2019

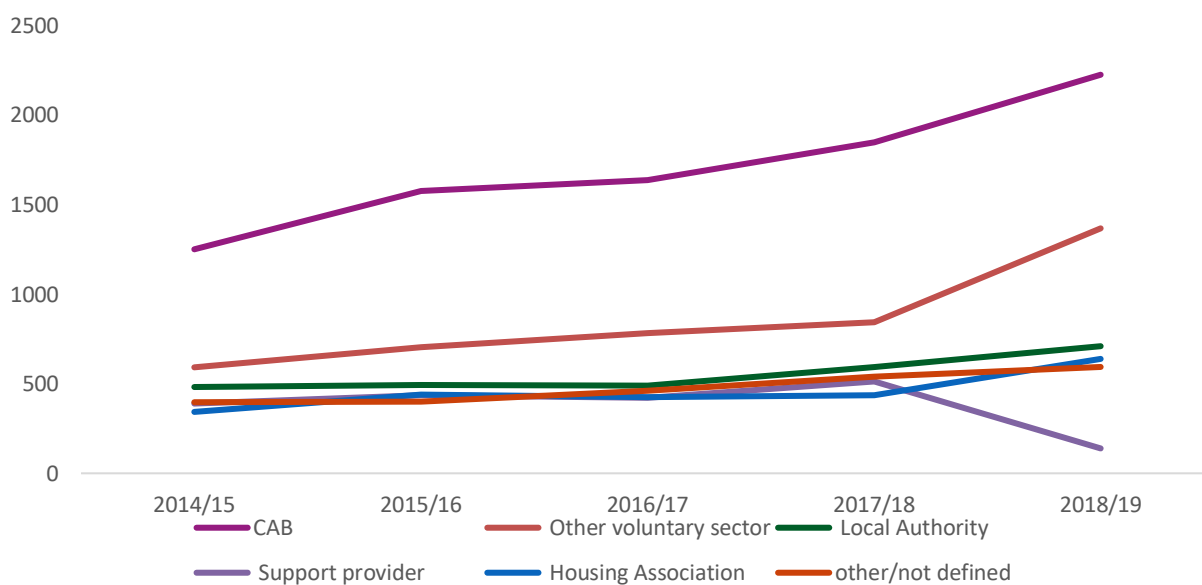


Figure 6. Percentage of enquiries made by Organisation Type

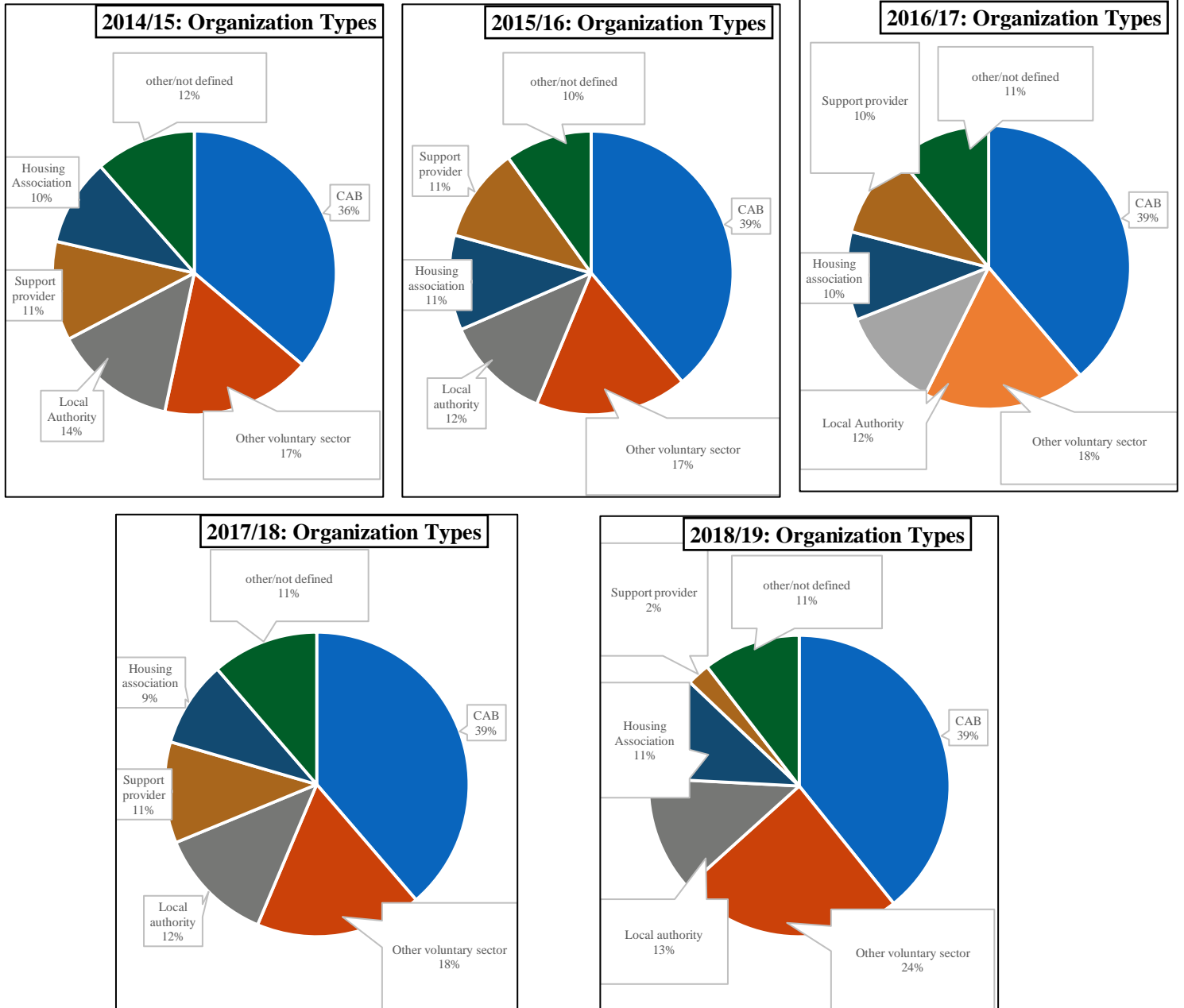
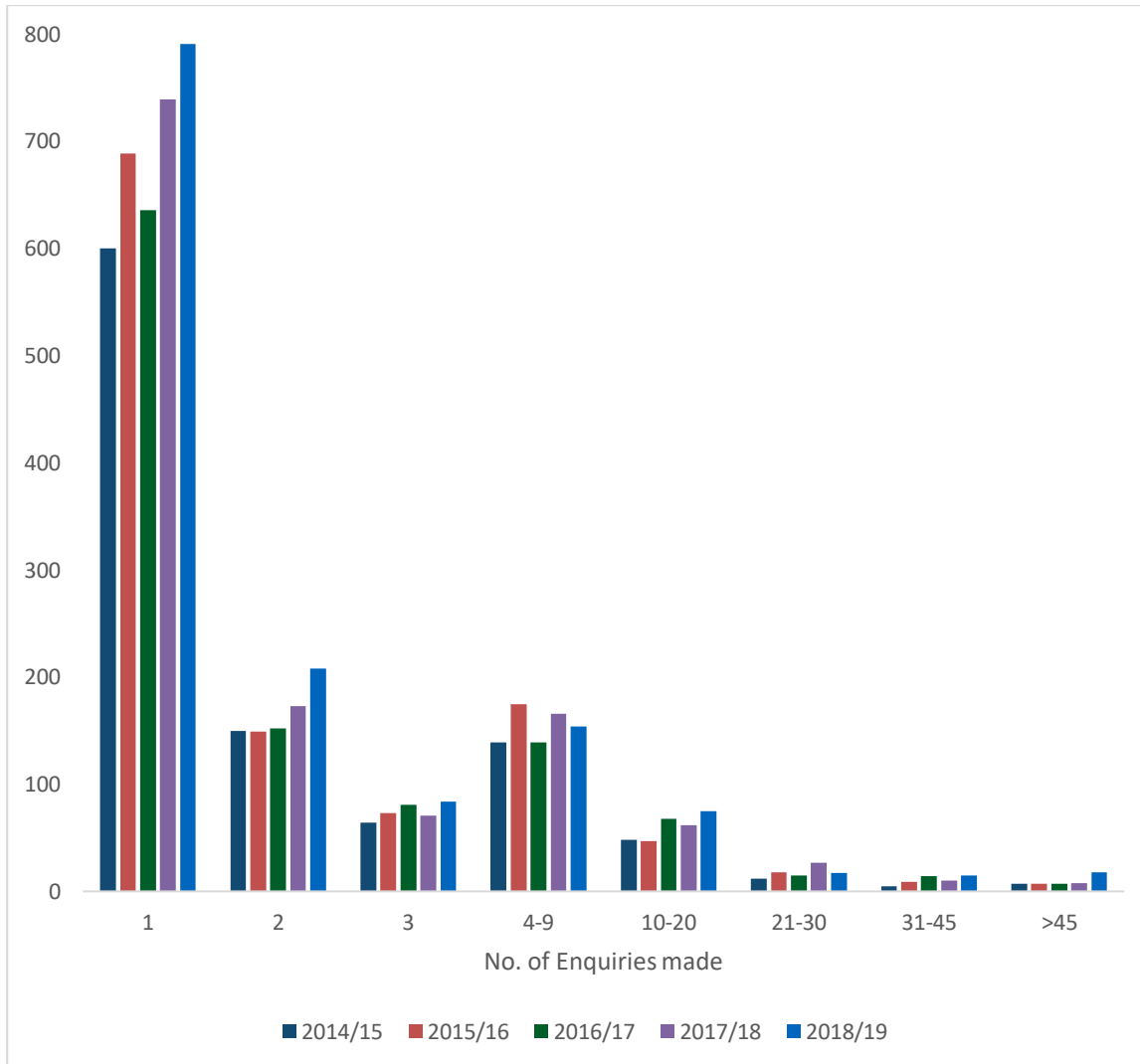


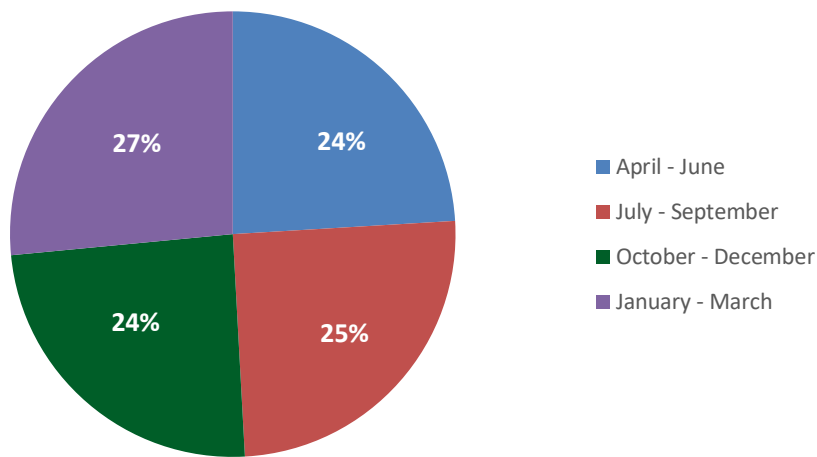
Figure 7. No. of Enquiries made per Organisation, 2014/15-2018/19



The majority of organisations make one enquiry to the Advice Line (58% averaged between 2014/15 and 2018/19), with a small number (8%) making 10 or more.

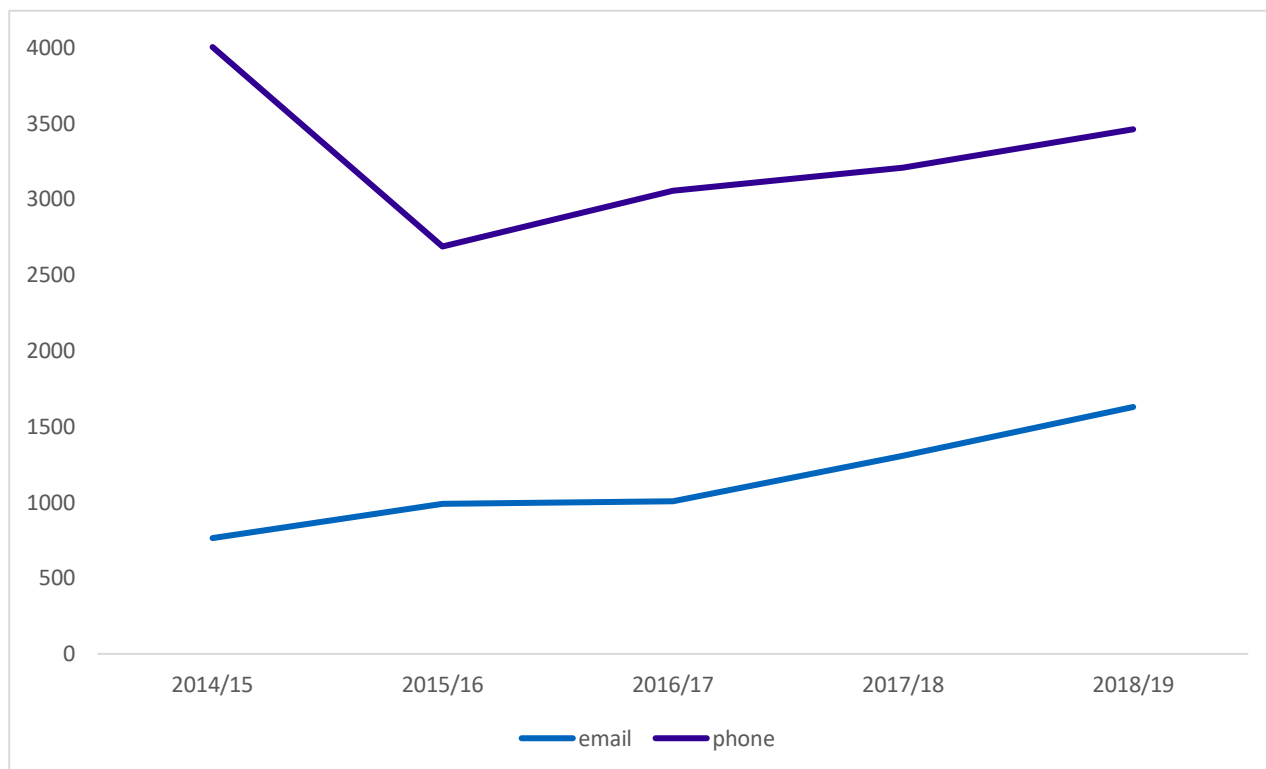
Call volume varies a little per quarter, but overall represents similar ranges across the year when averaged between 2014/15-2018/19 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Call volume per quarter, averaged across five years, 2014/15-2018/19



From 2014/15 – 2018/19 most of the enquiries were made via the phone, however, the number of enquiries made by email has been steadily increasing (see Figure 9). There was a sharp decrease in the number of enquiries made by phone between 2014/15 and 2015/16 and, since then, a gradual increase at an approximately similar rate as the increase seen in the number of email enquiries.

Figure 9. Email and phone enquiries per year, 2014/15-2018/2019



3.2 Advice Line survey user data

CPAG in Scotland runs an annual survey to see the overall opinion of people with regards to its Advice Line. Survey results were consistent across the years. The findings, averaged from the data collected between 2014/15 and 2018/19 is presented below:

3.2.1 Advice Line

- 100 % of respondents were satisfied with the Advice Line’s overall level of service
- An average of 20% (49 out of the 249 respondents between 2014/15 and 2018/19) reported that they had trouble contacting the Advice Line. Over the years the percentage has fluctuated but seen an overall increase from 10% of respondents in 2014 to 25% of respondents in 2019. Text responses

across all years reported similar results, that the advice line is sometimes busy, even if they call multiple times

- 100% of respondents reported that the staff explained the advice clearly
- 100% of respondents reported that staff were knowledgeable
- 100% of respondents reported that staff were approachable
- 100% of respondents reported that the Advice Line helps them feel more confident that their advice is up-to-date and accurate
- 100% of respondents reported that the Advice Line helps them resolve issues for clients more quickly
- 100% of respondents reported that the Advice Line helps them achieve better outcomes for clients
- 100% of respondents reported that they feel better equipped to deal with similar cases
- 97% of respondents reported that the Advice Line helps them prepare information materials for clients
- 100% of respondents reported that the CPAG Advice Line is the best place to get second-tier benefits advice
- 96% of respondents reported that they shared the information they got from the Advice Line with colleagues

3.2.2 Outcomes for clients after using the Advice Line

- 38% of respondents reported that their client received general advice and information about eligibility for benefits
- 12% of respondents reported that their client was helped to make an application for benefits
- 16% of respondents reported they achieved financial gain for the client
- 9% of respondents reported that they achieved reconsideration/the appeal was resolved in the client's favour
- 31% of respondents reported that they referred the client on to another agency for more specialist advice

The overall findings from the surveys conducted by CPAG in Scotland suggest that most users are overwhelmingly supportive with regards to the quality of service provided. The only reported negative was increased difficulty in accessing the advice line.

3.3 E-learning

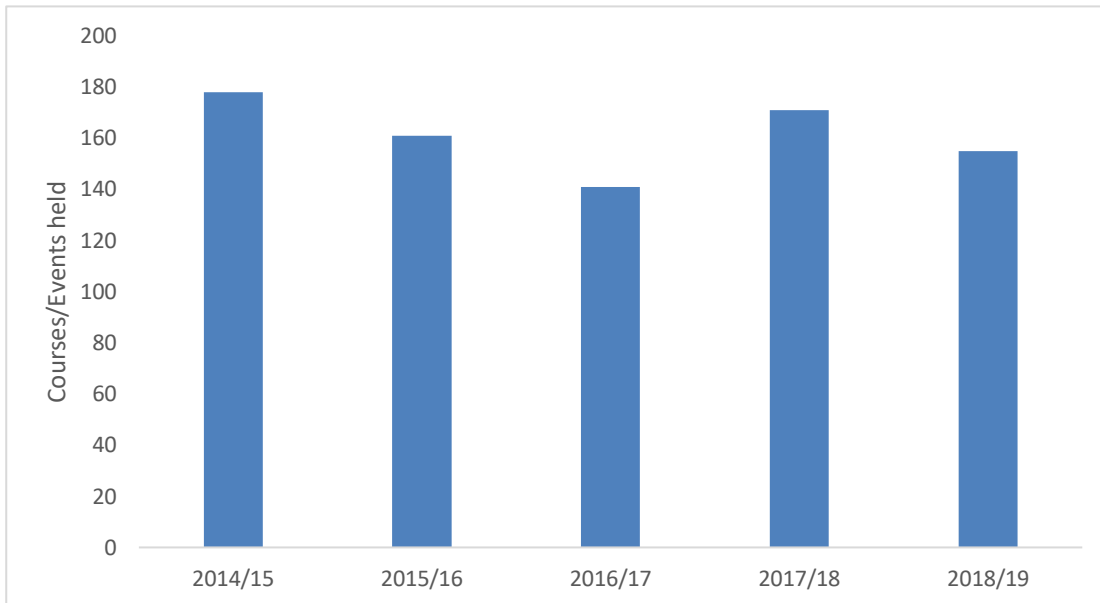
From 2014/15 to 2017/18 E-Learning courses were available on the following topics:

- Universal Credit
- Surviving the Appeals Process
- Scottish Welfare Fund
- Benefits Overview
- Making the most of the Handbook
- Planning and Paying for Funerals
- Supporting Hard-up Households

In this same time period E-Learning courses were accessed 72,419 times. 93% of respondents rated the E-Learning courses as either good or excellent.

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19 a total of 806 courses and events were held in-house by CPAG in Scotland. With the exception of 2016/17, where there was a small decrease, the number of training courses held per year has remained fairly consistent (see Figure 10., below).

Figure 10. Number of training courses/events held, 2014/15-2018/19



Demand for training courses has been varied, depending on the subject, and the changes in the courses available in a given year make it challenging to generalise about overall trends. However, since its introduction in 2017/18, the training course on 'Universal Credit' has been the most widely attended. This can be seen in Figure 11. below.

Figure 11. No. and proportion of participants attending courses by category, 2014/15-2018/2019

Year	Topics	No. of participants	No. of courses	No. of events	Total courses & events for the year
2014-2015	Families/early years	334	11	7	178
	Students	226	7	7	
	Children in care/disabled children	268	6	6	
	Minority ethnic	333	16	2	
	Welfare reform	1160	43	16	
	Other	1046	51	6	

2015-2016	Families/early years	432	13	9	161
	Students	345	15	5	
	Children in care/disabled children	181	7	4	
	Minority ethnic	310	7	9	
	Welfare reform	743	26	10	
	Appeals representation	78	4	0	

	Other	957	47	5	
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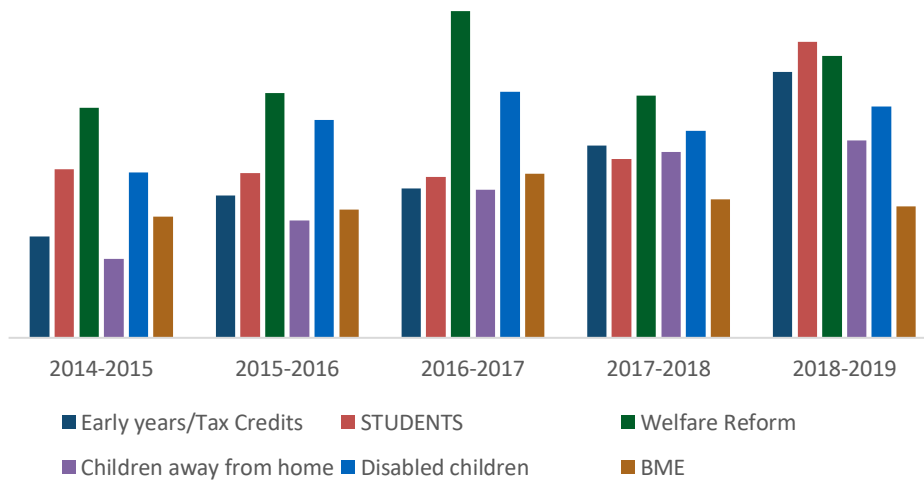
2016-2017	Families/early years	284	12	4	141
	Students	182	7	3	
	Children in care/disabled children	108	4	4	
	Minority ethnic	224	5	3	
	Welfare reform	1037	22	22	
	Appeals representation	50	4	0	
	Other	712	43	8	

2017-2018	Families/early years	429	16	6	171
	Students	289	12	5	
	Children in care	88	3	1	
	Disability and carers	541	16	7	
	Minority ethnic	115	3	4	
	Universal credit	987	50	2	
	Appeals representation	122	7	0	
	Other	601	28	11	

Year	Topics	No. of participants	No. of courses	No. of events	Total courses & events for the year
2018-2019	Families/early years	359	14	9	155
	Students	262	12	4	
	Children in care	198	4	3	
	Disability and carers	261	8	5	
	Minority ethnic	228	4	4	
	Universal credit	1002	48	6	
	Appeals representation	68	5	0	
	Other	530	21	8	

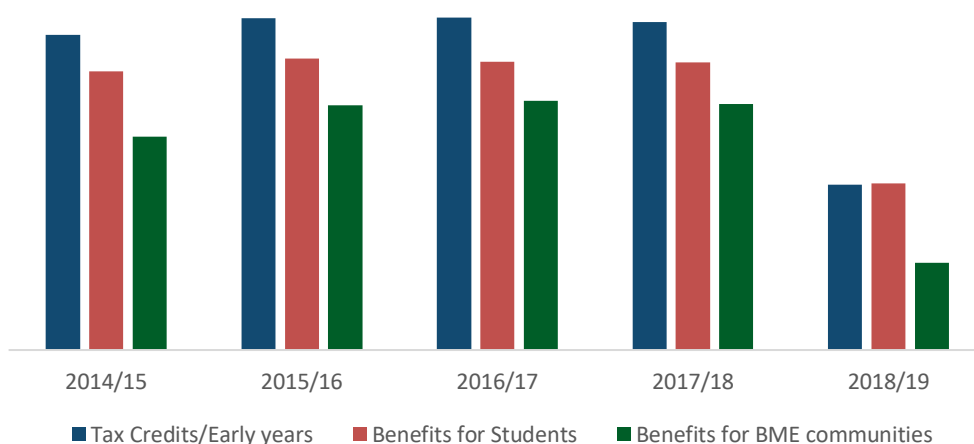
With regards to the factsheets downloaded there has been an overall increase over this period of time. It is unclear exactly why there has been an increase, it is possible that this is due to increased use of computers and other internet-enabled devices over this period. This can be seen in Figure 12. below.

Figure 12. Downloads per CPAG factsheet, 2014/15-2018/19



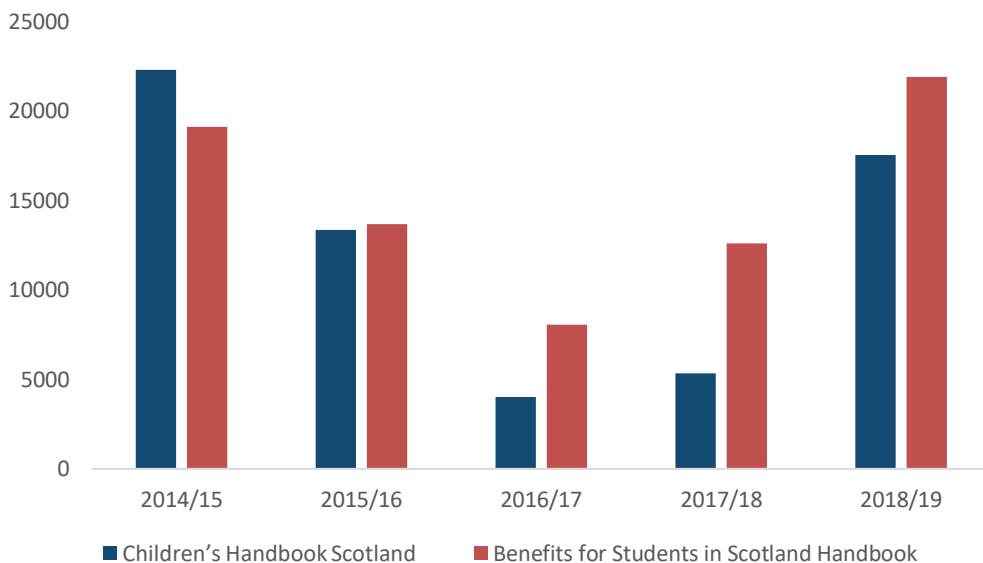
The use of e-bulletins was fairly consistent from 2014/15 to 2017/18 however there was a sharp decline in 2018/19 as a consequence of the introduction of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) which saw the mailing contact list reduced significantly. See Figure 13. below.

Figure 13. Use of e-bulletins, 2014/15-2018/19



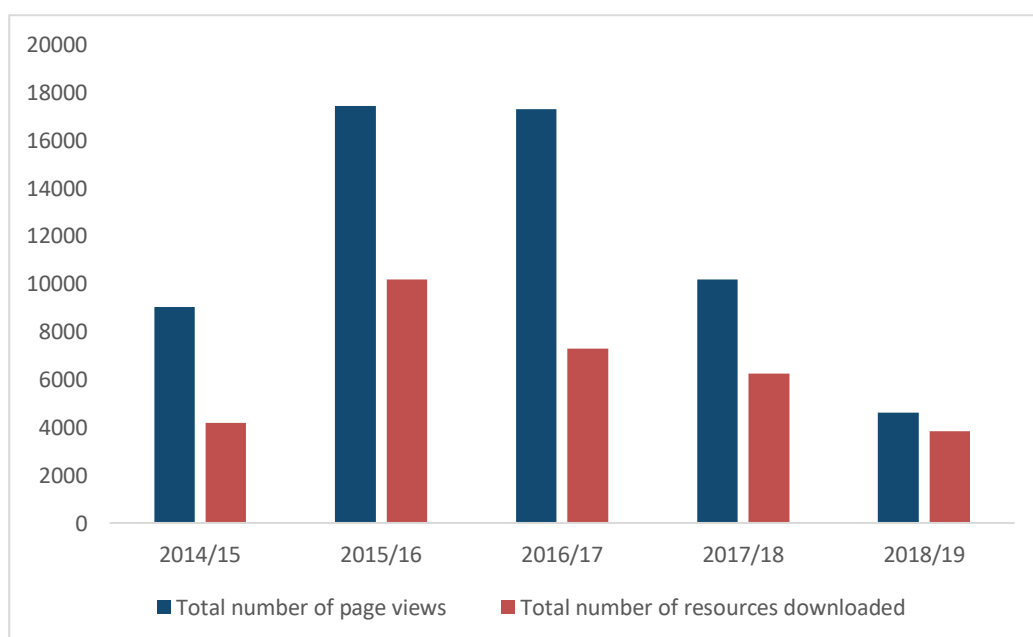
The number of handbook page views, over the five year period, initially declined and recently increased. It is unclear why this is the case. The data can be seen in Figure 14. below.

Figure 14. Handbook page views, 2014/15-2018/19



The number of appeal toolkit downloads increased in between 2015-2017, and have declined since. It is unclear why this is the case however it is possible that users are finding the appeal toolkit of less use or less necessary. This could be explored further by CPAG in Scotland. The data can be seen in Figure 15. below.

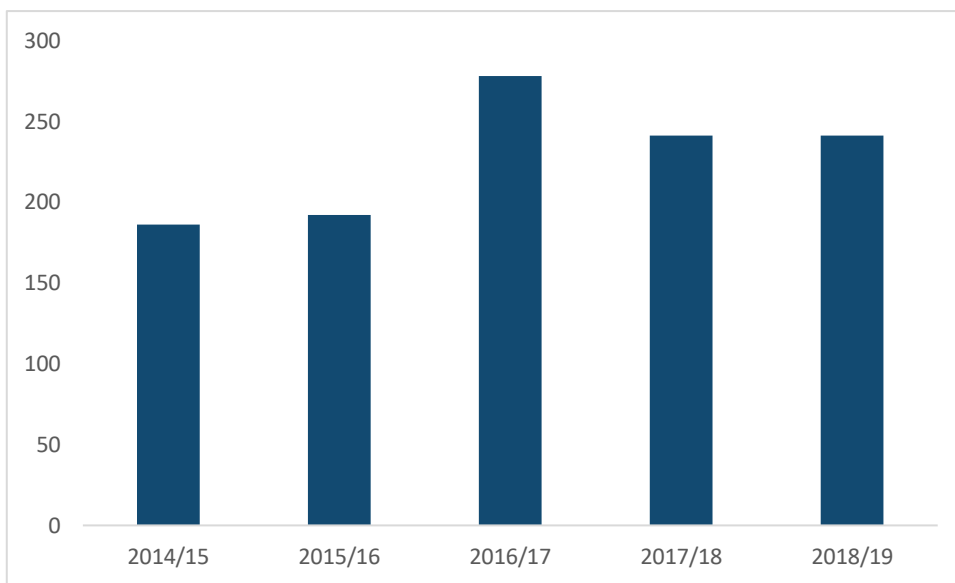
Figure 15. Appeals toolkit views and downloads, 2014/15-2018/19



3.4 Annual Welfare Rights Conference

From 2014 – 2018 there were 1138 attendees at CPAG in Scotland’s annual Welfare Rights Conferences. Figure 16. Below, shows the distribution for each year.

Figure 16. Attendees at annual Welfare Rights Conference, 2014/15-2018/19



The table below shows the percentages of respondents to the post-conference evaluation survey that felt that conference was poor/fair or good/excellent.

Figure 17. Rating of annual Welfare Rights Conference, 2014-18

How would you rate the conference overall		
Year	Poor/Fair	Good/Excellent
2014	8%	92%
2015	2%	98%
2016	2%	98%
2017	4%	96%
2018	2%	98%

Overall, between 2014 – 2018 the vast majority (96%) of respondents rated the annual Welfare Rights Conferences as either good or excellent.

3.5 Summary of Findings from Secondary Data Analysis

The principal findings from the analysis of the secondary data show that there has been an increase in the call volume to CPAG in Scotland’s advice helpline, largely driven by enquiries about Universal Credit. This coincided with an increase in the number of people attending training courses on Universal Credit which, although only introduced in 2017/18, has been the most widely attended training in the years since. The most frequent users of the advice helpline have been Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs). Most organisations accessing the advice line make just one enquiry. Call volume appears to stay steady across the year suggesting that demand remains consistent.

Users of the advice line are overwhelmingly supportive of it with the only reported negative being that there has been increasing difficulty, year by year, in accessing it. This could be due to demand increasing at a rate that outpaces resource allocation. Opinions of the E-learning courses on offer and the welfare rights conferences have also been particularly positive however there were concerns raised about the cost and limited geographical locations of the conferences.

There has been an increase in the overall number of factsheets downloaded, however, this may coincide with greater use of computers and electronic devices amongst frontline advisers since 2014/15. The use of e-bulletins remained fairly constant until the introduction of GDPR regulations, which resulted in a sharp decline. The number of Appeals Toolkit downloads increased between 2014/2015 and 2016/2017, but have declined since. It is unclear why this is the case, however, it is possible that users are finding the Appeals Toolkit less useful. The number of handbook page views saw a steady decrease from 2014/15 to 2016/17 and then an increase back to relatively similar numbers as 2014/15 without any clear cause.

4. Primary data – analysis and findings

This section reports the key findings from the two phases of primary data collection from external stakeholders:

- The online survey of CPAG in Scotland contacts; and
- The in-depth follow-up interviews

Questionnaire design

A survey questionnaire was developed and distributed to CPAG in Scotland contact lists and was promoted on social media. The questionnaire was designed, with input from CPAG in Scotland, to provide a thorough understanding of current satisfaction with CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice, information and training services, whether or not Scottish Government investment in CPAG in Scotland's services could be used more effectively, and to help inform recommendations for further development of CPAG in Scotland's second tier services as well as wider second tier services.

Profile of survey respondents

There were a total of 382 responses to the questionnaire. Respondents were asked what best described them, in terms of their organisation. 28% (106) of responses were from individuals working in Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs), 15% (56) were

from Housing Associations, 14% (53) were from Local Authorities and 23% (85) reported being from “Other” organisations not listed in the available answers. These included:

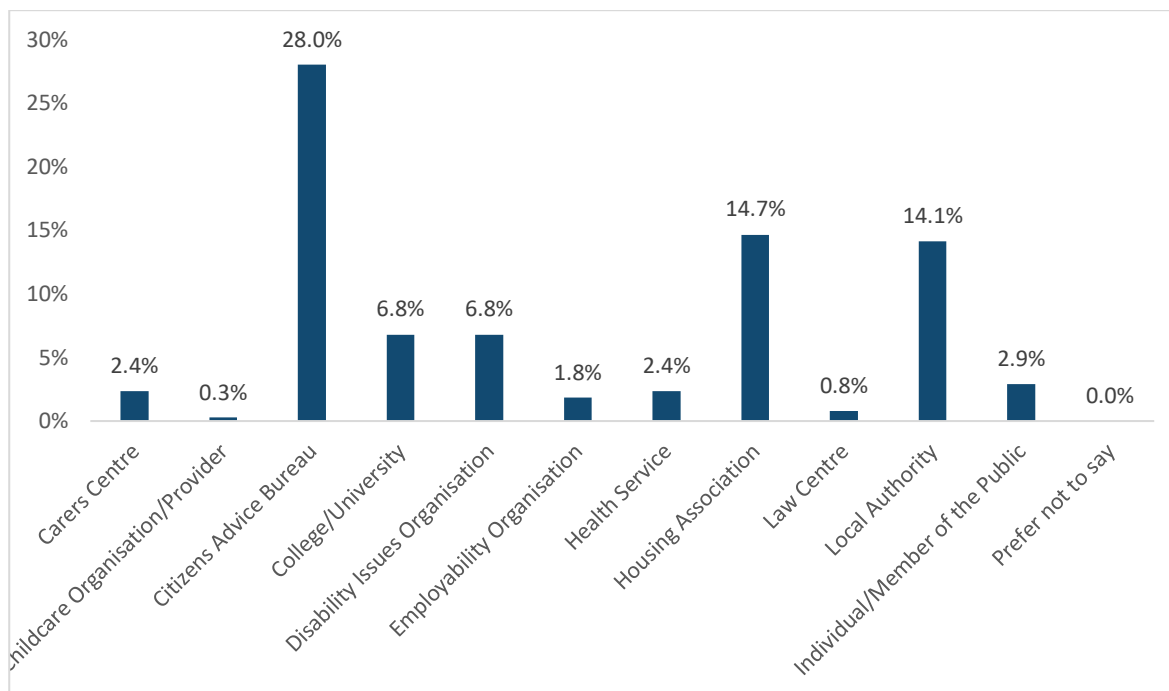
- Student Advice Centres
- Refugee Integration Services
- Community Centres and Miscellaneous Charities

The other 21% of responses were split amongst:

- College/University (7%)
- Disability Issues Organisation (7%)
- Individual/Member of the Public (3%)
- Carers Centre (2 %)
- Health Service (2%)
- Employability Organisation (2%)
- Law Centre (1%)
- Childcare Organisation/Provider (0.3%).

It is important to note that respondents were able to tick multiple organisation categories in the situation where their organisation doesn't fit specifically into one so the total equals more than 100% (104%). These breakdowns are detailed in Figure 18. below.

Figure 18. Profile of survey respondents, types of organisation



Respondents were asked where their organisation was based and, while more than a third responded working in either Glasgow (18%) or Edinburgh (20%), every local authority in Scotland was represented.

Respondents were also asked about their job role, however, this question was voluntary. Of the 374 responses, 41% reported that they were welfare rights specialist advisers, 25% reported that they were general advisers, 20% reported that they were other support workers, 0.8% chose not to say and 23% reported “other”. The “other” responses included policy researcher, family nurse, debt adviser, money adviser and student funding manager.

Stakeholder interview design

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide contact details if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. 84 respondents provided contact details and, of these, 23 indicated that they would still be willing to participate in an interview. Of these, 17 were able to fully complete the interview and their responses are included in this report. It is important to note that

this is a self-selected sample and can in no way be considered representative of the respondent population as a whole.

The purpose of the interview was to enrich and expand on the survey findings, providing more in-depth, personal perspectives on the topics in question. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured topic guide which was developed in conjunction with CPAG in Scotland, and included the following lines of enquiry around CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice, information and training services:

- Organisational background and focus
- Length of relationship with CPAG
- Awareness and use of CPAG services
- Strengths and weaknesses of services provided including barriers to access
- Whether impact on client's income maximisation is recorded
- Usage of services other than those provided by CPAG
- Gaps in services offered
- Impact of services on key goal of maximised household incomes
- Key challenges liked to be faced in the future
- Opinions of service changes suggested by CPAG and comments

Profile of stakeholder interview respondents

Of the 17 respondents who participated in both the questionnaire and follow-up telephone interview, approximately 30% (5) worked for a Housing Association/Charity and the rest were fairly evenly distributed amongst Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs), Local Authorities, Universities, and various other Charities for Mental Health, Children or Communities. The vast majority were frontline advisers (94%) and all were aware of, and had had a relationship with, CPAG in Scotland since they first came into post in a relevant role. This relationship with CPAG in Scotland varied from around 8 months to over 30 years.

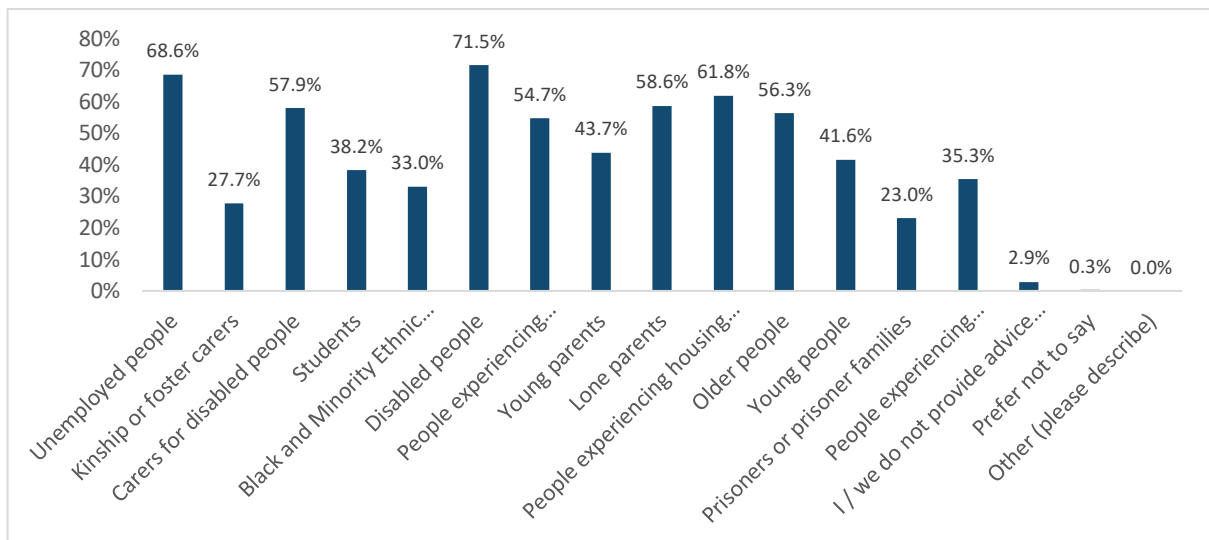
The organisations represented in the interviews were:

- Midlothian Council.
- Irvine Housing Association.
- Community One Stop Shop.
- Barnardos.
- Drumchapel Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Central Scotland Regional Equality Council.
- Support in Mind Scotland.
- Shelter Scotland.
- Ferguslie Park Housing Association.
- Strathclyde Students Union Hub.
- Perth Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Calvay Housing Association.
- Scottish Huntington's Association.
- Crisis UK.
- Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership.
- Glasgow Caledonian University.

Profile of survey respondent clients

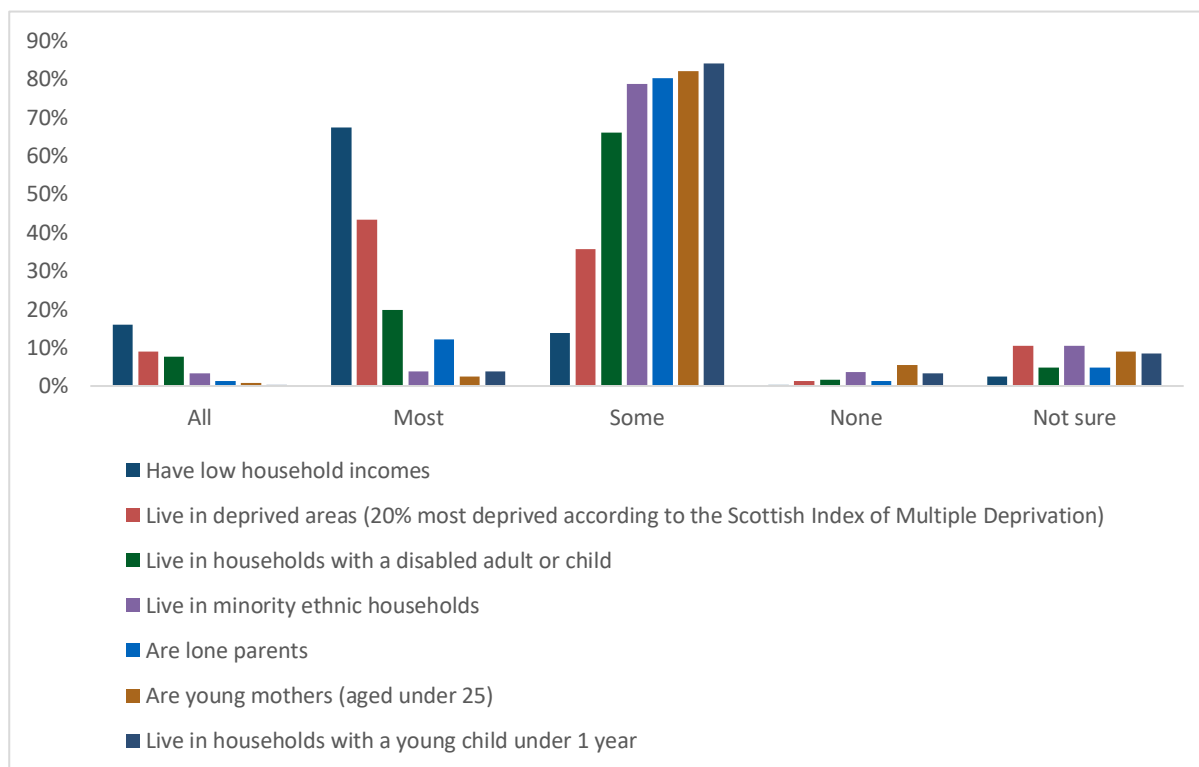
Survey respondents were asked about the main groups that receive advice or support from their respective organisations with the option to pick all that apply. The responses showed that frontline advisers work with a large variety of people with complex issues and needs. Over two thirds of respondents reported that they work with disabled (72%) and unemployed (69%) people. Over half reported working with those experiencing housing issues (62%), lone parents (59%), carers for the disabled (58%), older people (56%) and people experiencing drug/alcohol issues (55%). The full results can be seen in Figure 19. below.

Figure 19. Main groups that receive advice or support from respondents' organisation



Respondents were also asked about the proportion of people they/their organisation provide advice or support to that have low household incomes, live in deprived areas, live in households with a disabled child or adult, live in minority ethnic household, are lone parents, are young mothers and/or live in households with a young child under 1 year old. These questions were voluntary and therefore had varying numbers of responses (from 362 to 375). The vast majority of respondents reported that most or all of their clients live in households with low income (84%). Over half of respondents reported that most or all of their clients lived in deprived areas (52%). Almost all of the respondents reported that at least some of their clients fell into each of the other categories. The full results are shown in Figure 20. below.

Figure 20. Proportion of respondents' clients living situation

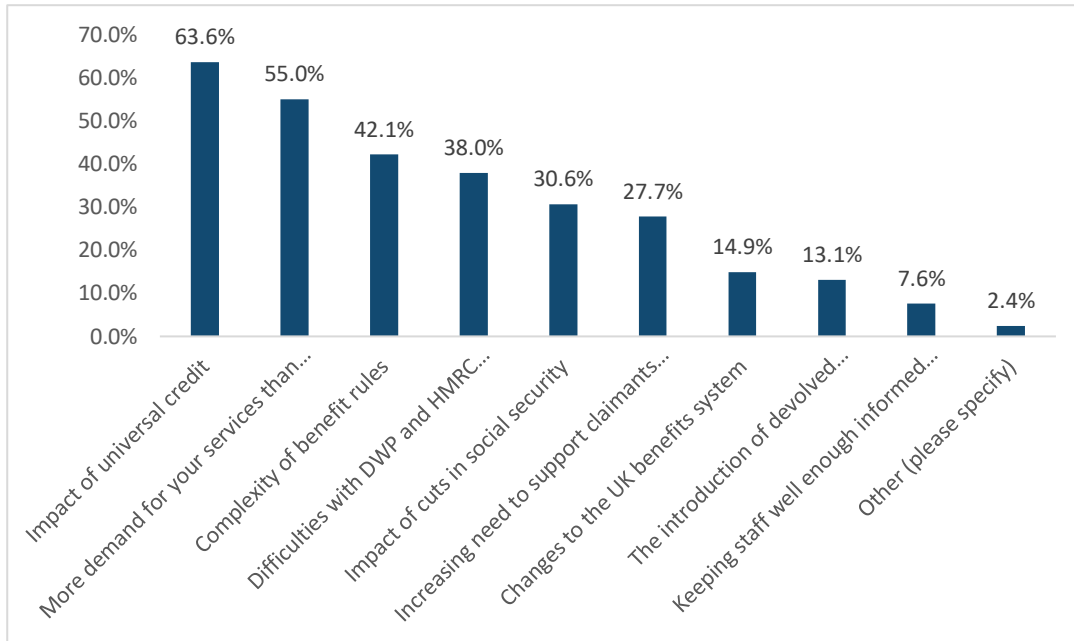


4.1 Future Needs

4.1.1 Main challenges

Respondents were then asked a series of questions related to their future needs. Initially they were asked about the main challenges they foresee themselves or their organisation facing in the next five years, with the option to pick up to three. Nearly two thirds of respondents (64%) reported that the impact of universal credit would be one of the main challenges. 55% reported that they foresaw more demand for their services being a challenge, while similar numbers of respondents reported the complexity of benefit rules (42%), and difficulties with DWP and HMRC administration (38%) being their main challenges over the next five years. 2% of respondents reported that there were “other” challenges they would face, not provided as answers to the question. When selecting “other”, respondents were asked to specify what these challenges were. The challenges reported included fuel costs, lack of funding, Scottish Social Security and the impacts of Brexit. The results are shown in Figure 21. below.

Figure 21. Main challenges facing respondents over the next five years



Stakeholders in the in-depth interviews were generally of the view that demand for their services would increase and that this and uncertainties surrounding universal credit were likely to impact most on them in the near future. Some also voiced concerns about Scottish Social Security and “Scottish benefits”.

“It’s a struggle to keep up with the way it changes (Universal Credit)”

“How universal credit develops will be a continual issues because it already causes problems all the time... because it’s really quite complicated and it changes without much notice”

“(issues around) Scottish benefits will become more and more key”

“Working with the new Scottish Social Security will be difficult along with the rollout of Universal Credit”

4.1.2 Demand for frontline benefits-related advice

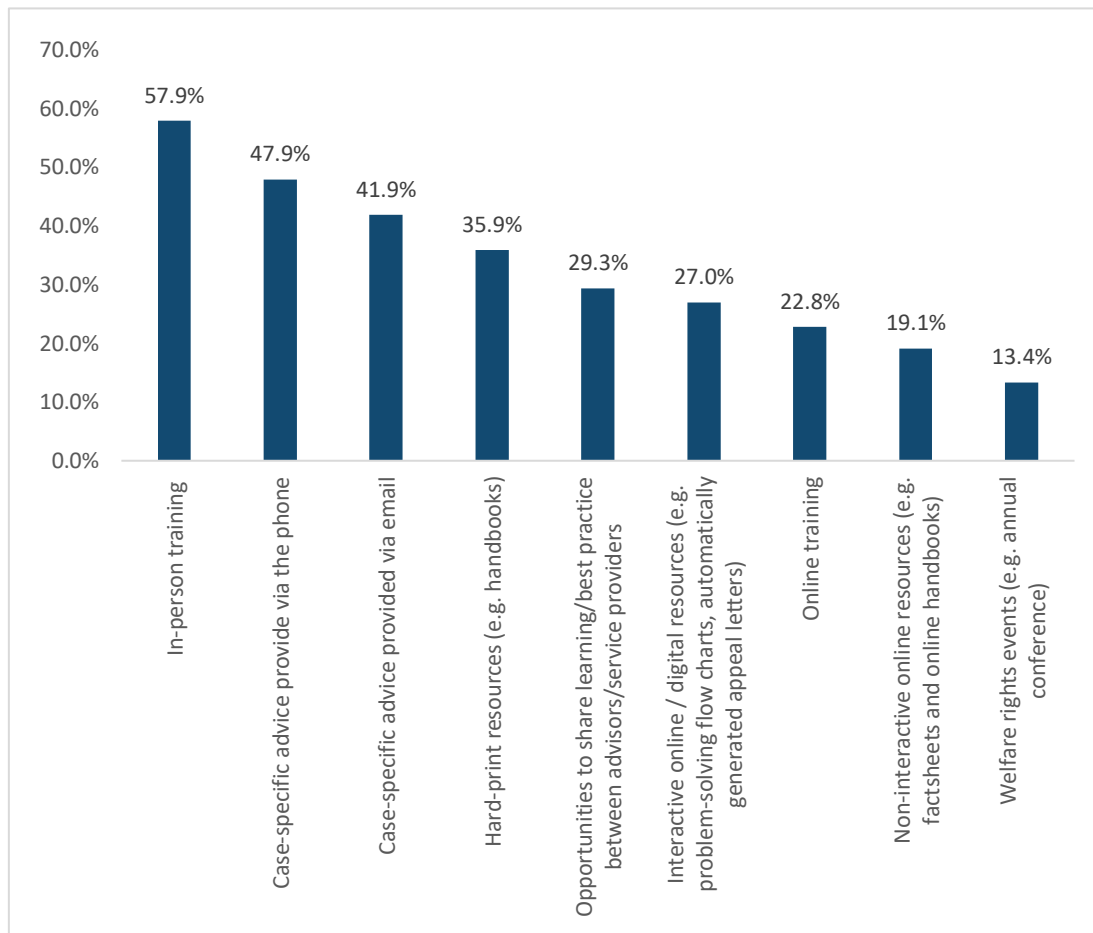
Respondents were also asked about the demand for frontline benefits-related advice will face or support services they anticipate they/their organisations will need in the next five years. Nearly all (90%) reported that they anticipate having more demand than they currently have, 10% reported that they anticipate about the same amount of demand and only 1% reported that they anticipate less demand.

Respondents were asked to provide free text responses for the benefit-related issues they anticipate they will need support with over the next five years. The majority of responses related to the unknown challenges surrounding Universal Credit and the uncertainty following Brexit.

4.1.3 Top three most useful resources to help with income maximisation

Respondents were asked what three resources they felt would be most useful to them/their organisation to help their clients to maximise their income. Over half of respondents (58%) reported that in-person training would be most useful while case-specific advice given over the phone (48%) or via email (42%) were the next two top choices. The results are shown in Figure 22. below.

Figure 22. Resources respondents felt would be most useful to help maximisation of income for clients over the next five years



4.1.4 Accredited benefits-related training demand

Respondents were asked the extent to which it is a priority for them/others in their organisation to attend accredited benefits-related training. Over two thirds of respondents (68%) reported that it would be a high priority for them/others in their organisation. Only 7% felt it would be low priority while nearly a fifth (20%) were unsure how much of a priority it would be.

4.2 Use of existing services provided by CPAG in Scotland

4.2.1 CPAG services usage

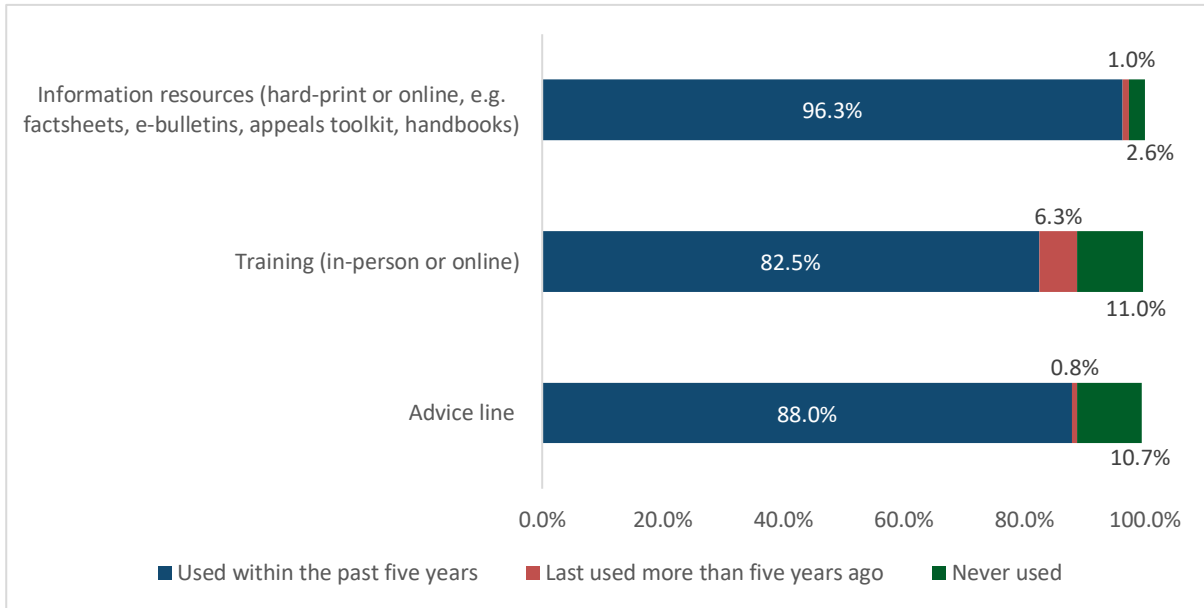
Respondents were then asked a series of questions relating to the use of existing services offered by CPAG in Scotland. Initially, they were asked which services they have used and whether or not they have used them within the last five years, before that or not at all. The majority of respondents had used all of the services within the last five years (ranging from 83% to 96%).

A small percentage of respondents had previously reported that they had never used the Advice Line (11%). When asked why, the most common answer was that they were not aware of the Advice Line service (42%). After this the most common responses were that respondent's obtained advice from materials or colleagues within their own organisation instead (29%), through other services provided by CPAG in Scotland (27%) or from other organisations (15%).

A similarly small percentage of respondents had previously reported that they had never attended any of the training provided by CPAG in Scotland (11%). When asked why, more than half of the respondents reported that it was because the cost was too high (54%). After this the next most common answers were that they got information from colleagues in their organisation who had attended the training rather than going themselves (29%), and that the locations of the in-person training were not convenient (21%).

A very small percentage of respondents reported that they had never used the information resources provided by CPAG in Scotland (3%). When asked why, roughly two thirds of these respondents reported that they were not aware of the information resources provided by CPAG in Scotland (67%). Otherwise the next most common answers were that they prefer to access information from the Advice Line (11%) or that they use information resources from within their own organisation (11%). The results are shown in Figure 23. below.

Figure 23. CPAG services usage



Stakeholders in the in-depth interviews were asked about usage of the Advice Line, each of the information resources and each of the types of training individually. All but one reported that they had used the Advice Line (94%), most had used the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook (82%), nearly two thirds had used the fact sheets (65%) and Scottish handbooks (65%) while only a quarter had used the What You Need To Know guides (24%). With regards to training, more of the stakeholders had attended the in-person training (76%) than had used the free online training (53%). When asked why they had never used these services the answers ranged from not being aware that they existed (particularly the free online training), to not finding the services particularly relevant or useful for what they do (particularly the What You Need To Know guides). Many reported that they found the in-person training to be financially or geographically difficult to attend.

4.2.2 Advice from other organisations

When asked whether or not they used any other benefits-related advice services from any other organisations aside from CPAG in Scotland, nearly two thirds of survey respondents (63%), and all but one (94%) of the stakeholders in the in-depth interviews, reported that they did. Respondents were also asked to provide the names of the organisations whose benefits-related advice services they used. These included:

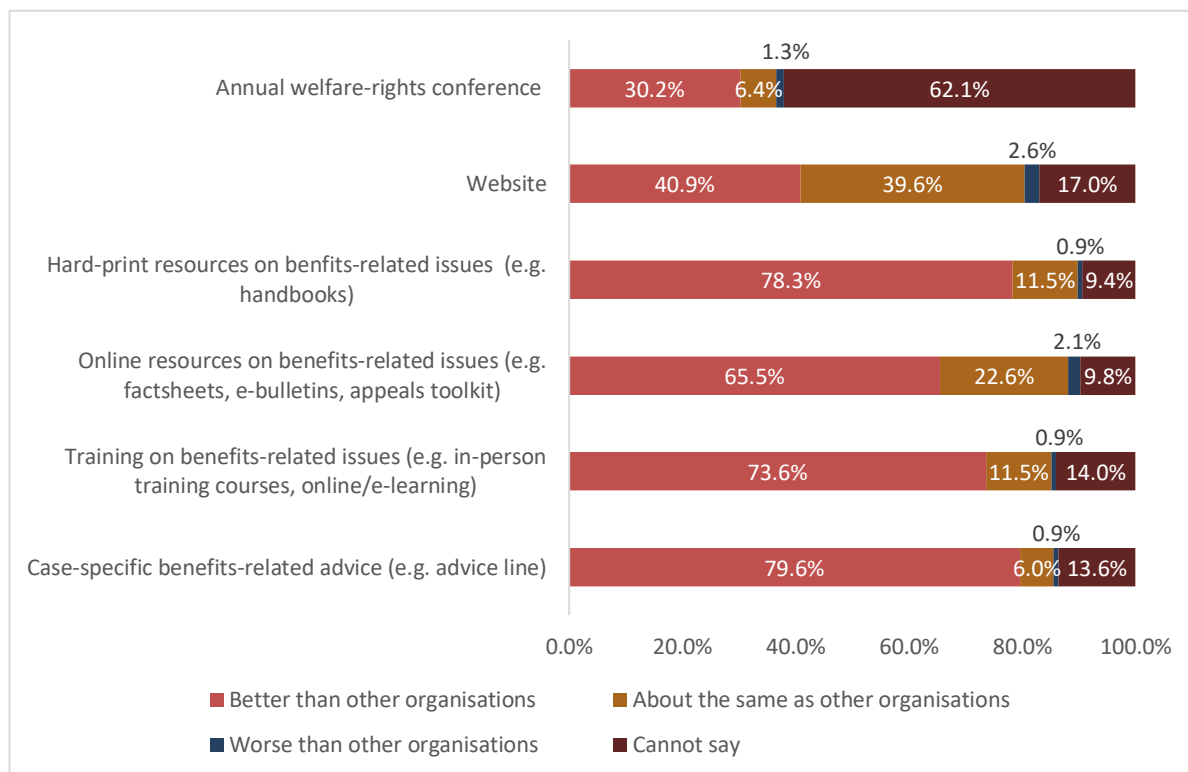
- Rights Advice Scotland
- Rightsnet
- Disability Rights UK
- Shelter
- Benefits and Work
- Turn2us
- Citizens Advice Scotland
- Age UK
- DWP
- Wiseradviser
- Disability Alliance
- Citizens Advice and Rights Fife
- Various Scottish council resources

These respondents were also asked to compare the quality of the advice services on offer from CPAG in Scotland with those provided by other organisations. Overall, the feeling was that many of the services on offer from CPAG in Scotland were superior, with approximately two thirds of survey respondents reporting that the services, hard print resources, online resources, training and case-specific benefits-related advice on offer from CPAG were better than the services and resources provided by other organisations.

However, less than half of respondents felt that CPAG in Scotland's website was either better (41%) or the same (40%), as that of other organisations.

For each service, the percentage of respondents that felt that what CPAG in Scotland provided was worse than what was provided by other organisations was very low (ranging from 3% to 1%). The results can be seen in Figure 24. below.

Figure 24 Quality of CPAG services compared to those of other organisations



4.2.3 CPAG services contribution to income maximisation

Respondents were also asked the extent to which they feel the services offered by CPAG in Scotland contribute to income maximisation for the clients that they/their organisation support. The results were broadly similar to the previous questions about the quality of the advice services. With regards to the hard print resources, the majority of respondents (93%) felt that they contributed. A similarly high percentage felt the online resources and Advice Line contributed (91% and 91% respectively). Slightly fewer reported that they felt that the training and website contributed (88% and 83% respectively), while less than half felt that the annual welfare-rights conference contributed. The results can be seen in Figure 25. below.

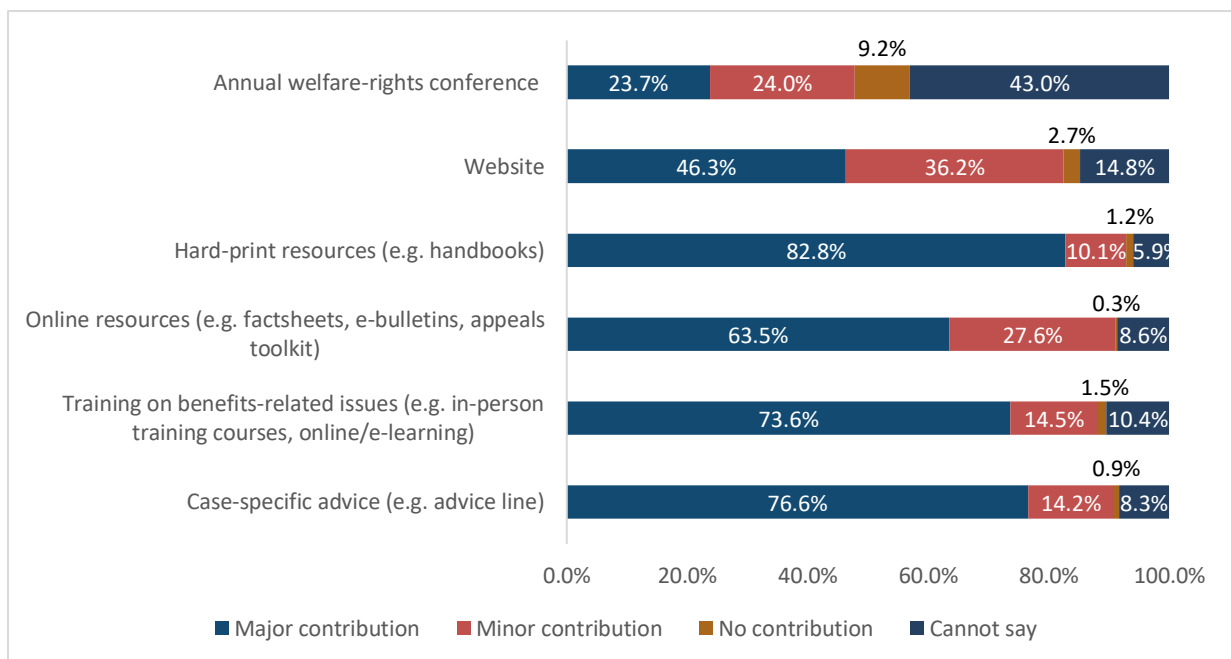
While some stakeholders from the in-depth interviews reported that income maximisation was not relevant to the work that they did, all of those for whom it was relevant reported that they felt that the services on offer from CPAG in Scotland contributed to income maximisation for their clients. Many were particularly enthusiastic about the extent to which this was the case.

“Yes, CPAG in Scotland has definitely helped me to maximise household incomes. The services are ideal for that”

“Yes definitely. They (CPAG advisers) encourage you to stick with it and gives you ideas and tactics to use to help people get benefits”

“The level of information and resources they provide is extremely useful to help with that (income maximisation)”

Figure 25. Extent to which CPAG services contribute to income maximisation for clients



4.2.4 First action when advice is needed

Respondents were asked about the first action taken when advice or assistance was needed with regards to a benefits-related topic. Roughly half reported that they searched for the answer in hard print resources provided by CPAG (51%). The next most common actions were to search for the answer in online resources provided

by CPAG (14%), to search for the answer in online resources provided by a different organisation (11%) or to call the CPAG Advice Line (11%).

4.3 Quality of CPAG services

Respondents were also asked a series of questions relating to their opinions of each of the categories of services provided by CPAG in Scotland.

4.3.1 Advice Line

When asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements about the Advice Line, almost unanimously, respondents reported that they agreed that the Advice Line addressed the issue at hand (97%), they were satisfied with the advice they received (97%), the information provided improved their benefits-related knowledge and skills (94%), and they received a response within a reasonable timeframe (93%).

All of the stakeholders from the in-depth interviews reported that they found the Advice Line to be particularly useful:

“It’s really helpful to be able to ring someone up to clarify issues”

“When you speak to them on the phone (CPAG advisers) they are really knowledgeable and helpful”

“The advisers are so friendly and so helpful. They are always able to help me with any issues I am having quickly and efficiently”

“The advice they provide is great and I mainly work alone so it is really nice to be able to talk to someone about a case and bounce ideas back and forth”

“The advisers are extremely knowledgeable. They’ve helped a lot when situations are complicated”

“They are very authoritative. They provide high quality advice and when you go with a particularly complex issue you know that they will be able to answer it, even if they can’t then and there they will go away and come back to you with an answer”

This was even the case for the one respondent who reported that they hadn’t used the Advice Line in the last five years:

“Oh yes the Advice Line was great when I used it in the past but I prefer to use email and I’ve found that they can be just as speedy and I don’t have to worry about forgetting to write down important information as it’s all in the email”

Survey respondents were allowed to provide free text responses with regards to suggestions for how the Advice Line could be improved or adapted for the future. Many of the responses were about how the Advice Line was of very high quality and particularly helpful already. Otherwise the majority of suggestions related to:

- providing longer availability hours
- increasing capacity (providing more advisers so that the Advice Line is completely engaged less often)
- providing a queuing system or option for a call back when an adviser is free

When probed about whether the Advice Line could be improved many of the interview stakeholders reported that they were unable or would struggle to come up with any suggestions. Those that did, reported that the main issues were waiting times and lack of capacity.

“(The Advice Line) is sometimes too busy or it takes a while to get a response”

“The Advice Line opening hours could be expanded. It would be helpful if it was available 9-5 Monday to Friday”.

“There are occasionally problems with the line and I get cut off and sometimes it’s busy but I know that they have a lot on their plate so it’s not that big of a problem for me”.

“I would struggle to find any... Sometimes the Advice Line is busy but given their workload it’s understandable. It’s also not an issue that is unique to CPAG”

“In a perfect world they would have more people on the lines so that we could always get through”

“The Advice Line is great but it’s not always a quick response and sometimes you need one. It can take a while to get through and I can’t always rely on being able to speak to an adviser when I have a client in the office and I need an answer at that moment”

4.3.2 Training

When asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements about the training provided by CPAG in Scotland, most respondents reported that they agreed that the information provided on the training improved their benefits-related knowledge and skills (96%), they felt more confident in their job role after completing the training, (94%) and the training materials were produced to a high standard (91%). A smaller percentage of respondents felt that the training represented good value for money (71%).

Responses from the stakeholder interviews were mixed with regards to the training. Most of those that reported going to in-person training within the last five years felt

that the quality was particularly high, but due to geographical or financial constraints they were unable to attend as regularly as they would have liked and would be unlikely to be able to attend again in the near future.

“Training being in Edinburgh and Glasgow makes it restrictive sometimes. More training in north of Scotland would be appreciated”

“The trainings are good but I would attend more if they were more financially accessible. They struggle to compete with citizen’s advice trainings”

“It would be helpful if they could provide more training outside of Glasgow and Edinburgh”

“My organisation used to pay for us to go to CPAG training every year but not finances are tight and they are just too expensive to be able to justify”

With regards to online training, many of the stakeholders were not aware that they were available. Those that had used them said that they were good, but very basic and as experienced advisers not something that they would likely use regularly.

Survey respondents were allowed to provide free text responses with regards to suggestions for how the training could be improved. Many of the responses were extremely positive, mentioning how the training was of a very high quality and/or that they could not think of improvements. Otherwise, the majority of suggestions were about the cost being lowered to make it more affordable and about providing the training in other areas (particularly in Lothian and the Highlands).

4.3.3 Information resources

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements about the information resources provided by CPAG in Scotland. The majority of

respondents agreed that the resources provided improved their knowledge (95%) and they were of high quality (92%). A slightly smaller percentage of respondents reported that they agreed that they represented good value for money (81%).

Stakeholders in the in-depth interviews were asked about each of the information resources (Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook, Scottish handbooks, What You Need To Know guides, fact sheets) separately. As mentioned previously, usage rates were mixed with most reporting having used the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook and, similarly, most reporting having not used the What You Need To Know guides. When this was probed it was found that, in every case, non-usage of a resource had to do with either it not being relevant to the work that the adviser was doing, or that they were unaware that it existed. None of the respondents reported that any of the information resources they had used were of poor quality or readily offered criticism.

When probed about if and how information resources could be improved the majority of responses were that they were good as they were, with some suggesting that it would be helpful if the paper resources (such as the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook) could be made available in online format. Interestingly, others reported a fear that resources might be moving to online format and pleaded that they at least stay in paper format as well. Some found the handbooks to be too costly and a few mentioned that it can be a bit dense and hard to easily comprehend.

“I don’t use the What You Need To Know guides no, to be honest I didn’t know they existed. It might be helpful if we could be told about them. If someone from CPAG could visit our offices and tell us about everything that’s available. But otherwise everything that I use is great. Really high quality”

“It would be great to have it (the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook) and any of the other books online. I am based in an office that

is 30 miles from my home so 9/10 times I'll go straight from my home to an appointment so anything I can access on my work iPad would be very helpful"

"I would say don't get rid of the paper based copy (the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook) but having it offered online would be beneficial"

"I am not very computer literate and I see more and more things going online. I hope that they keep making paper versions of the handbook (welfare benefits and tax credit)"

"I think for me it would be very useful to have the handbook (welfare benefits and tax credits) available online but I also like to have the paper version to hand so that I can leave little bookmarks for easy access. So I don't need to keep searching for relevant information when I've found it before. So yes, bring it online but keep the paper version too"

Two stakeholders volunteered that, while they do use the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook they would always check the disability rights handbook (published by Disability Rights UK) first.

"I always check the disability handbook first. It is explained more easily. The CPAG handbook can be more complicated and the Disability Rights Handbook (DRH) is easier to understand. I probably use them both 50/50 but I always check DRH first. The CPAG handbook is 1800 pages and the DRH is around 300"

Survey respondents were allowed to provide free text responses with regards to suggestions for how the information resources could be improved. Similar to the other services provided by CPAG, many of the responses were very positive and mentioned how the resources are of a very high quality and are very useful.

Otherwise, the majority of suggestions were about reducing the cost of the handbooks as some organisations/individuals are not willing/able to purchase new books every year. A few respondents reported that they felt that it would be helpful if the information in the handbooks could be provided online as well.

4.3.4 Responsivity to changes in the welfare benefits/tax credit system

Stakeholders in the in-depth interviews were asked whether or not they felt CPAG in Scotland's services were responsive to changes in the welfare benefits and tax credit system. All of the responses were positive.

"Yes, they always seem up to date, even when something has just changed"

"They are leading the way in the benefits advice sector"

"Yes, very much so. It's very helpful to read the information they put out about what is coming up and what we need to know that's changed"

"Yes, very much so. It's very helpful to read the information they put out about what is coming up and what we need to know that's changed"

"They always know about the most recent cases and they are able to inform us about them"

"They are truly second to none. The things that CPAG was looking at six months ago are only being looked at now by other organisations"

"Yes, massively. They definitely keep on top of it and they have good early warning systems"

“Yes, I think it’s an ever changing system and it must be very hard to keep completely up to date and yet as far as I can tell they do! And it’s very useful for us to have it as a resource with things changing as fast as they are at the moment”

4.3.5 Gaps in services offered

When asked about whether there were any gaps in the services offered by CPAG in Scotland the general consensus amongst the interview stakeholders was that there weren’t and that the services on offer covered everything they needed for them to do their jobs effectively.

“Not from my point of view. They cover anything that we need”

“No gaps that I can think of. I would just say keep up the good work”

A few did report that there were certain topics that they went to other organisations for advice on (such as housing, homelessness and benefits for older people) and they would appreciate it if CPAG in Scotland could also advise on them, however they felt that it might not be appropriate or possible for them to do so.

“It would be useful to have resources to help parents get free trainings and workshops to give them experience so they can get jobs and into the workforce but I don’t think that’s something that CPAG would necessarily need to help with”

“Anything around housing, homelessness law or immigration advice would be great but I know that’s not really what CPAG does”

“It would be great to get housing advice. I use (another service), but it is nowhere near as good quality. It just does not compare to advice provided by CPAG”

“Maybe something on benefits for older people. I don’t know if it’s possible for them to do that. And I wouldn’t want it take resources away from what they are already doing”

4.4 Reaction to proposed changes to services

Interview stakeholders were also asked to provide their opinion on a number of potential changes suggested by CPAG in Scotland that could be made to the services offered.

4.4.1 Online versions of CPAG’s handbooks and more online information resources

Some of the stakeholders had reported previously that they felt that interactive versions of online handbooks and other information resources would be helpful, as long as paper versions were still available. When those that hadn’t offered that information previously were probed about whether online versions would be useful, most responded that they would, often with the same caveat about paper versions continuing to be available. A few responded that they would not use online versions, but could see how they might be useful for others. One respondent suggested that, if they were to go online in an upgraded format, it would be helpful if they were designed for easy browsing with quick links to different sections and topics instead of just in one large PDF (or something similar).

“Improved online versions of the book (Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook) and any of the other handbooks would be fine but I would hate to lose the book (paper version)”

4.4.2 Tools to speed up casework (such as template letters and digitally generated letters)

All of the stakeholders felt that template or digitally generated letters would be particularly useful. Some mentioned that they had already created their own template letters or used some created by other organisations, but would be very keen for CPAG in Scotland to produce them. A key point made was that it would be particularly useful if they could be tailored by the frontline adviser.

“Yes, definitely. CAB already provides some but they could be much better. It would be good if CPAG could provide them too”

“I think that would be quite useful but I tend to like to do more personal letters because I feel like I have more impact doing so. But if it was a template letter that I could take away and tailor my way then yes”

“It would be very helpful to have digitally generated letters provided you could adapt it to your own case easily”

“That would be very useful (template letters and digitally generated letters), especially for case submissions and appeals”

4.4.3 New ‘What You Need to Know’ Guides

Many of the stakeholders didn’t have strong opinions about whether or not CPAG in Scotland should produce new ‘What You Need to Know’ Guides on different topics. Generally, they were positive about the idea of having more topics covered with useful information from CPAG, but only a few were able to come up with suggestions for what the guides could cover. Of those who made topic suggestions, these included:

- Tribunals
- Students
- Housing
- Single parents
- Carers

4.4.4 More e-learning and online training

All of the stakeholders felt that more e-learning and online training would be useful. Many caveated, however, that it would need to be easily accessible and navigable and would need to cover topics that were relevant to both new advisers and advisers that had been in post for a long time (refreshing knowledge on certain topics or training for novel issues).

“Yes, I think e-learning would be good provided it is accessible, particularly for those with disabilities or who are less computer literate”

“I think e-learning is really helpful. It would be especially good for new staff to bring them up to speed quickly”

“Yes, I think that would be useful (e-learning). Even if there’s something that I think I know quite well, doing a piece of work online that would help reinforce my knowledge or teach me how I could be doing something better or differently would be great”

4.5 Unsolicited remarks

Below are a few unsolicited remarks made by some of the stakeholders. They have been included as the stakeholders wanted to make it clear how strongly they felt about the services.

“I have nothing bad to say about CPAG. Other organisations could learn a lot from them. I wish CPAG had a client facing service, I would work for it”

“Please let them know, if they keep on doing what they’re doing, that would be fantastic. It’s such a great resource”

“CPAG are the first people we would go to either to produce information or to speak to someone. I don’t think I could do my job without them”

4.6 Summary of Findings from Primary Data Analysis

Results from the Scottish Government’s survey and stakeholder interviews suggest that there are a wide range of organisations using CPAG in Scotland’s services, and these organisations support clients with a wide range of issues. The vast majority of respondents reported that most or all of their clients live with low income and more than half reported that most or all of their clients live in deprived areas. Many respondents work with disabled people, unemployed people, those experiencing housing issues and lone parents.

The main future challenges foreseen by the respondents were the impact of Universal Credit, increased demand for frontline adviser services, the complexity of benefit rules, and difficulties dealing with DWP and HMRC administration.

The majority of respondents reported that they had used all of the services on offer by CPAG in Scotland within the last five years. The Advice Line is held in very high esteem, while the information resources produced by CPAG in Scotland are considered to be of very high quality. The most common reason given by respondents for not using one or more of the services on offer by CPAG in Scotland was that they were unaware that these services existed.

The majority of respondents found that the training on offer by CPAG in Scotland was very useful and better than what was offered by other organisations. Many did report, however, that the in-person training was financially or geographically difficult to attend.

Many stakeholders felt that online versions of the handbooks, tools to speed up casework (such as template letters) and more E-learning would be useful. Some respondents were keen to point out, however, that they think it would still be useful for print versions of the handbooks to be available for those that want them.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Similar to the previous evaluation in 2011, CPAG in Scotland's second tier advice, information and training services have evaluated positively. This is clearly seen in both the secondary data provided to us by CPAG in Scotland, and in the primary data we collected through the survey questionnaire and stakeholder interviews.

CPAG in Scotland's services and staff were held in high regard

This was a common theme throughout the study and can be particularly clearly seen in the following:

- 100% of respondents to CPAG in Scotland's annual surveys between 2014 and 2019 reported that they were satisfied with the Advice Lines overall level of service and that it is the best place to get second-tier benefits advice. They also all reported that they felt that the staff had explained the advice clearly and were knowledgeable and approachable
- There has been a 42% increase in the use of the Advice Line in the last five years and this has been a steady increase, year by year

- The majority of the respondents to the Scottish Government survey felt that the Advice Line addressed the issues they had at hand and were satisfied with the advice they received (97%). A similarly high percentage reported that they felt the information provided in the CPAG in Scotland training improved their benefits-related knowledge and skills (96%) and that they felt more confident in their job role after completing the training (94%)
- All of the stakeholders from the in-depth interviews reported that they found the Advice Line to be particularly useful. The majority felt that the information resources on offer that they had used and were aware of were of high quality and they had no criticisms. With regards to training most of the stakeholders felt the quality was high and any criticism was in relation to geographical or financial barriers rather than structure or content
- The closing remarks of many of the stakeholders in the interviews were extremely positive of CPAG and the services they provide

The perceived continued need for CPAG in Scotland services in light of structural and societal changes (Universal Credit, Scottish Social Security and Brexit)

The survey and stakeholders from the interviews all made it very clear that the highest perceived challenges facing frontline advisers over the next five years will be around Universal Credit and Scottish social security, as well as the unknown economic and social effects of Brexit. Respondents commonly reported that they felt that demand for their services would continue to increase (90% of survey respondents and most of the interview stakeholders) and that they are starting to see it happening already. Stakeholders in the interviews made it particularly apparent that they felt the need for CPAG in Scotland's services would also steadily increase.

Assessing the extent to which CPAG in Scotland has delivered on the agreed outcomes set out in the Scottish Government grant letter

The evidence collected from primary and secondary sources indicates that CPAG in Scotland's services available to advisers and frontline support staff have led to an increase in benefit and tax credit knowledge and skills. As a result, these advisers and frontline support staff are able to provide accurate, high quality, effective advice and information to their clients.

Both the quantitative and qualitative research indicates that the services provided are considered essential by many of the frontline advisers

- 100% of respondents to CPAG's annual surveys between 2014 and 2019 that they felt that the Advice Line helps them achieve better outcomes for their clients and that they are better equipped to deal with similar cases after using it. Of these respondents the majority work with low income families as at least one of their client groups
- 94% of the Scottish Government survey respondents reported that the information provided through the advice line improved their benefits-related knowledge and skills, 96% that CPAG training improved their knowledge and skills, and 95% that CPAG information resources did as well
- Stakeholders from the interviews reported, fairly consistently, that the services provided by CPAG are of very high quality, help them significantly when they have issues, and are otherwise essential for them to be able to perform their duties in their respective positions

The review of the primary and secondary data has shown that, on the whole, CPAG services have contributed to advisers' ability to successfully achieve income maximisation for their clients.

- All of the CPAG Advice Line survey respondents between 2014 and 2019 reported that the Advice Line helped them achieve better outcomes for their clients

- The majority of respondents to the Scottish Government survey reported that they felt that the information resources (such as the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook) (93%), the online resources (such as fact sheets and e-bulletins) (91%) and the Advice Line (91%) have contributed to income maximisation for their clients. Slightly fewer reported that the training and website contributed (88% and 83% respectively) and, while these percentages are still high, these are areas which could perhaps be explored for some improvement

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for consideration. Some of the recommendations made in the previous 2011 evaluation have not been actioned. These have been reflected upon and included when relevant.

1. The qualitative research found, similar to the 2011 evaluation, that many stakeholders do record the impact on their clients regarding income maximisation. This is generally done electronically and in a number of different systems. It was previously suggested that there may be scope to work with stakeholders to assess the impact on individual clients' income maximisation and/or the degree to which the organisation contributes to the impact of frontline agencies in this regard. However, probing further in this line of questioning in our research we found a number of barriers. Many stakeholders reported that it would either be impossible or incredibly difficult to draw this type of data from their systems while others felt that the information might not be recorded as often or as accurately as to be valuable. It might still be helpful for CPAG in Scotland to establish an advisory group to discuss further options with regards to developing a simple form or software of some kind that could be shared with stakeholders for easily recordable and accessible income maximisation data.

2. The e-learning platform has been expanded and updated since the recommendation for it to be in the 2011 evaluation, however there is certainly scope for it to be expanded further. There was clear interest amongst stakeholders in the interviews and some helpful suggestions for what to cover. In-person training is still inaccessible (due to geographical and financial barriers) for many advisers across Scotland, and development of key trainings that strike the balance between educating new staff and increasing the impact and efficiency of those that have been in post for a number of years would prove to be immensely useful.

3. Whilst the majority of feedback about the Advice Line was positive there is certainly a perceived need and strong desire for increased capacity. Responses to both the quantitative and qualitative work around this suggested that the most common complaint with regards to the Advice Line was not being able to get through and having to wait. With a marked increase in Advice Line usage over the last five years and a perceived increase of need for advice services in the near future surrounding the rollout of Universal Credit and Scottish social security, and the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, it would be helpful to increase the number of advisers and extend the opening hours throughout the week. This could be done by CPAG in Scotland with an increased budget from Scottish Government or effective reallocation of resources currently available.

4. Online versions of the major handbooks, particularly the Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits handbook, appear to be of particular interest to some of the stakeholders. Those that work remotely or travel a lot may find it helpful to be able to access the information on a work iPad or laptop rather than needing to carry the handbook(s) with them. It was made clear by numerous stakeholders in the interviews, however, that if the handbooks were to be upgraded into a more interactive online format, it would still be preferential to keep the paper versions in print as well. It is therefore recommended that, should CPAG in Scotland focus on providing resources primarily in digital

format, paper versions of the major handbooks should still be available for purchase by those that want or need them.

5. It was clear from the stakeholder interviews that there is significant interest in CPAG in Scotland providing template letters and/or digitally generated case letters. All of the stakeholders felt it would be useful and many were quite vocal about just how useful they felt it would be. A key point was made multiple times, however, that it would be best if they could be made so that they could be edited and tailored to each individual case by the frontline advisers.
6. During the qualitative interviews it became apparent that some advisers were not aware of the full range of services available from CPAG in Scotland. These same respondents reported that they would be keen to use these services had they known that they existed. It is therefore recommended that CPAG in Scotland examines how it may more effectively publicise the range of services on offer to frontline advice organisations and individuals.
7. With stakeholders reporting that CPAG in Scotland's welfare rights services are essential and remote working now the norm for the time being due to the Coronavirus pandemic, a focus on providing resources digitally, training online and ensuring Advice Line capacity is sufficient is a clear priority.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact hugh.kirkland@gov.scot for further information.



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