

**Domestic supplier liaison meeting  
16 February 2022**



# Agenda

Time	Agenda item	Lead
9.30 – 9.40	<b>Introduction</b> Actions from last meeting	Natasha Gilmour Suzi Cassie
9.40 – 10am	<b>Consumer Service</b> Operations update	Leanne Dullard
10 – 10.10	<b>Advice Direct Scotland</b> Operations update	Marjorie Gibson
10.10 – 10.45	<b>Extra Help Unit</b> Operations update Update on failed supplier work Self-disconnection & affordability	Natasha Gilmour Angus McMillan George Holmes
10.45 – 10.50	<b>BREAK</b>	



Time	Agenda item	Lead
10.50 – 11.05	<b>Supplier update - Observations on the energy crisis</b> Current and future challenges over the next 12 months facing consumers & industry	Open for attendees from suppliers
11.05 – 11.20	<b>Citizens Advice Energy Policy Team</b> Policy update & focus on work relating to energy bills and the current crisis	Abby Jitendra & Alexander Belsham-Harris
11.20 – 11.35	<b>Citizens Advice Scotland Energy Policy Team</b> Consumer Scotland transition & policy update	Michael O'Brien
11.35 – 11.50	<b>Ombudsman Services: Energy</b> Operations update	Jay Ross
11.50 – 12noon	<b>AOB &amp; Close</b>	Natasha Gilmour



# Supplier Liaison update

citizens  
advice

Leanne Dullard  
Operations

# Performance and Operations Q3

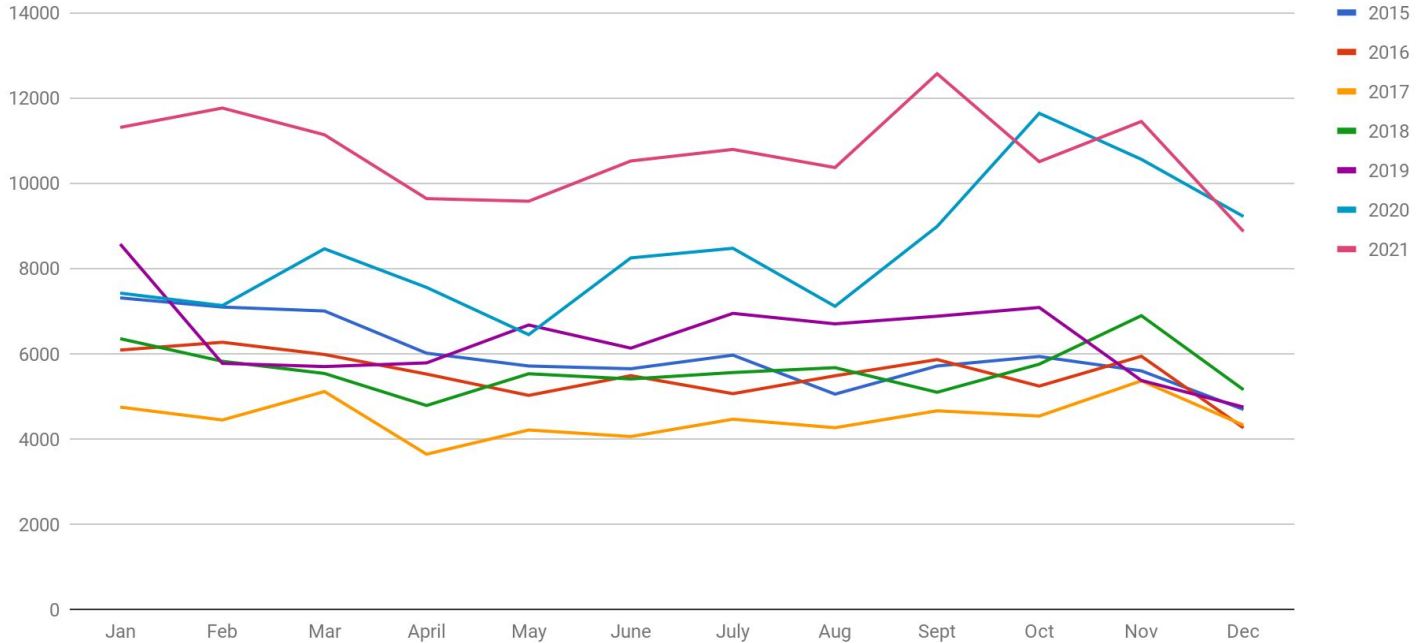
Key points from Q3 are:

- Contacts to the service in Q3 remained consistently higher than previous quarters as a result of the energy crisis, with calls to our priority line in particular seeing a month on month increase
- First full quarter of offering energy webchat advice has been completed and has been a success. Initially numbers were lower than anticipated however we have seen week on week increases in volume and we have done some promotional work to aid this further

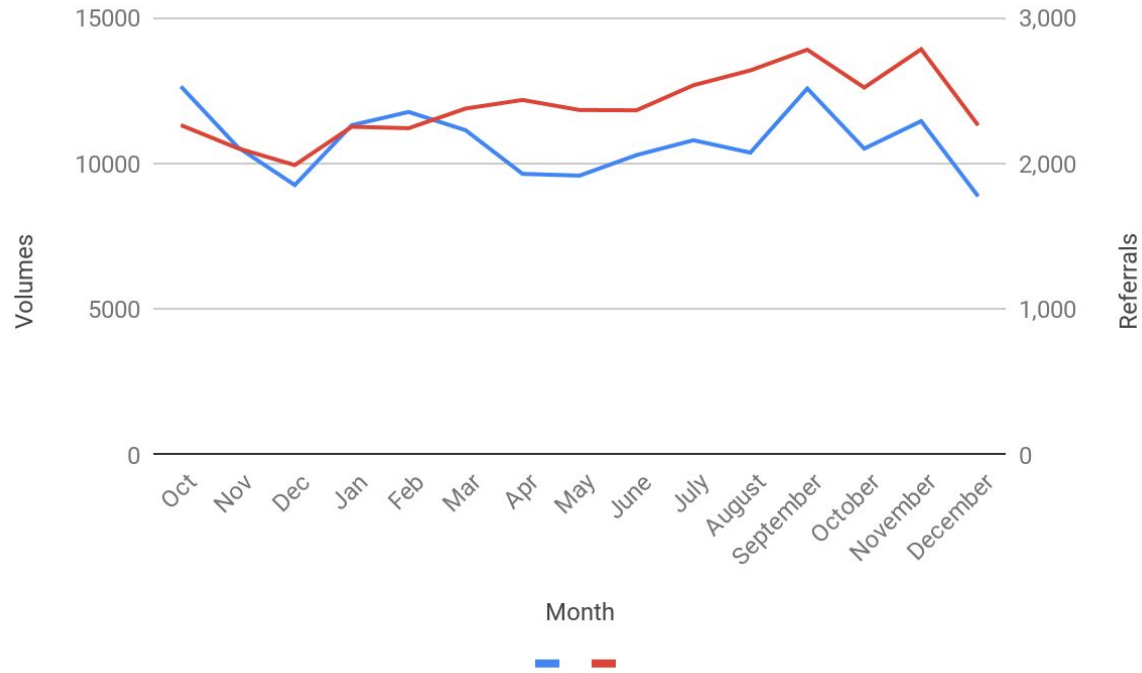
# Contact volumes comparison

Month	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
January	7304	6080	4745	6357	8566	7416	11304
February	7089	6263	4440	5817	5768	7124	11758
March	6997	5976	5107	5531	5693	8456	11138
April	6007	5517	3612	4779	5779	7430	9633
May	5706	5017	4205	5524	6668	6234	9572
June	5642	5480	4051	5402	6125	8102	10516
July	5961	5057	4458	5553	6941	8348	10787
August	5046	5477	4283	5667	6695	7009	10362
September	5706	5857	4655	5090	6874	8820	12564
October	5929	5235	5261	5749	7079	12536	10,500
November	5592	5935	5359	6887	5367	10546	11,443
December	4687	4255	4319	5150	4743	9249	8,863
<b>Total</b>	<b>71,666</b>	<b>66,149</b>	<b>54,492</b>	<b>67,506</b>	<b>76,298</b>	<b>101,914</b>	<b>128,768</b>

# Contact volumes comparison 2015 - 2021

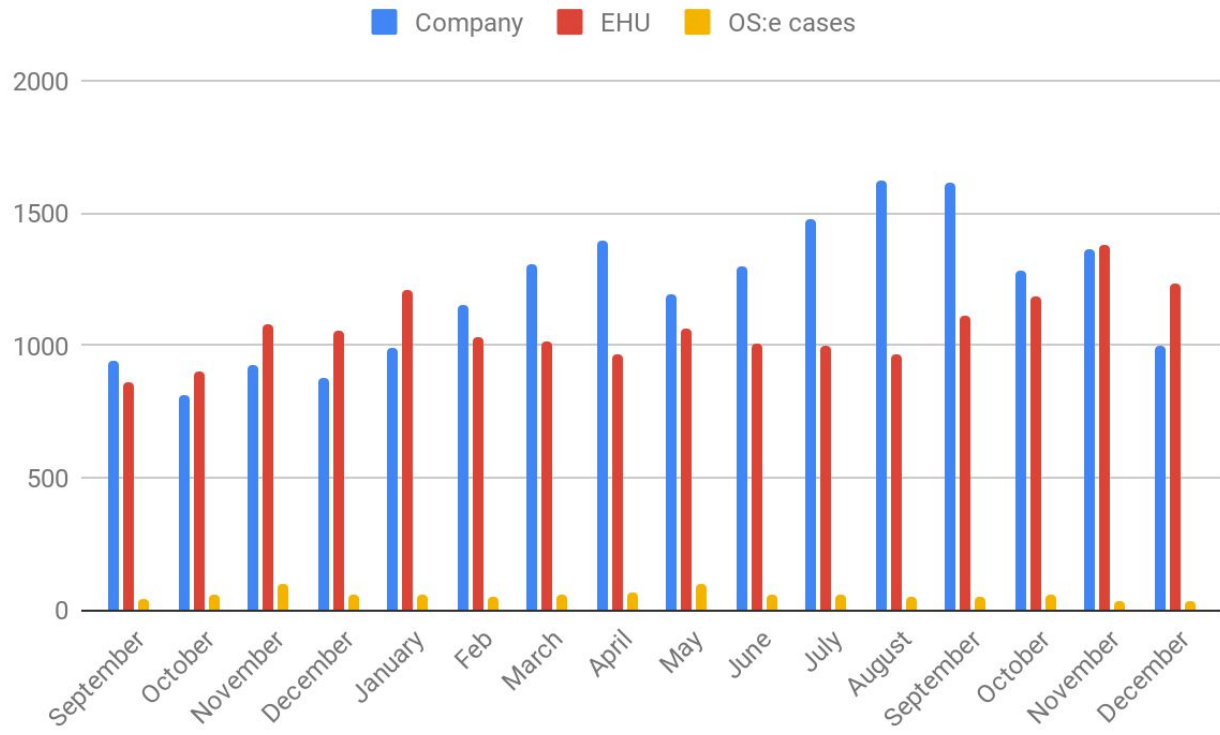


# Referrals against volumes Oct 20 - Dec 2021





# Referral proportions September 20 - Dec 2021



# Recorded information on the IVR

	Priority calls	Supplier switch & price increase	Coronavirus advice	Supplier of last resort
Apr	1013	1153	0	1178
May	939	1057	82	1084
June	977	1095	70	1019
July	962	1010		1007
Aug	921	1051		1457
Sept	1142	1479		5344
Oct	1112	1054		2987
Nov	986	977		1375
Dec	1447	667		1447

# Client by nation Q3

Nation	% split	Volume
<b>Anon</b>	1.73%	326
<b>England</b>	91.26%	17,204
<b>Scotland</b>	0.29%	54
<b>Wales</b>	6.72%	1,267

# Trends

Quarter 1 Apr - June 21	Quarter 2 Jul - Sep 21	Quarter 3 Oct - Dec 21	Quarter 4 Jan - Mar 21
Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1405)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1848)	Credit refund issue (1664)	Disputed bill, customer not responsible (2177)
Final account reconciliation (1055)	Final account reconciliation (883)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (1292)	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill (874)
Disputed bill, customer not responsible (990)	Difficulty contacting supplier (805)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (1282)	Final account reconciliation (862)
Debt Recovery Practices (765)	Credit Refund Issue (757)	Price/tariff information (752)	Debt recovery practices (821)
Direct Debit Issues (695)	Debt recovery practices (736)	Direct debit issues (689)	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (761)
Catch up bill received (617))	Direct debit issues (715)	Disputed bill, customer not responsible (662)	Meter accuracy (746)
Meter Accuracy (617)	Price/tariff information (631)	Debt Recovery Practices (653)	Direct debit issues (712)
PPM Self disconnection (unable to credit meter) (488)	Catch up bill received (570)	New account issue (557)	Company contact details (non complaint purposes) (705)
Difficulty contacting supplier (423)	Meter accuracy (533)	Final account reconciliation (532)	Price/tariff information (699)
Price/tariff information (421)	Company contact details (non complaint purposes) (530)	Domestic supply disconnected (522)	Difficulty contacting supplier (612)

## Q3 Trends split by nation

England	Scotland	Wales
Credit Refund Issue	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill	Company contact details (non complaint purposes)
Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill	Credit Refund Issue	Credit Refund Issue
PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter)	Meter accuracy	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter)
Price/tariff information	New account issue	Price/tariff information
Disputed bill, customer not responsible	PPM self disconnection (unable to credit meter)	Debt recovery practices
Direct debit issues	Direct debit issues	Inaccurate bill or inaccurate estimated bill
Debt recovery practices	Debt recovery practices	Direct debit issues
New account issue	Quality/reliability of supply	Warm Home Discount
Final account reconciliation	Back billing code (potential breach)	Domestic supply disconnected
Domestic supply disconnected	Supply Point Administration Query (MPRN/MPR)	Balance query

# Looking ahead

- **Failed mid call transfer process**

- We have changed the way we process failed mid call transfers and report them to suppliers
- Going forward, if we have any failed mid call transfers to let you know about, then we will report these to you weekly on a Monday, in one email
- All the same details will still be included in the email

Presented by: **Leanne Dullard**  
Date: **16 February 2022**

citizens  
advice





# Energy Partnership Meeting (Oct - Dec 2021)

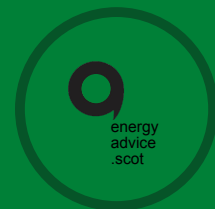




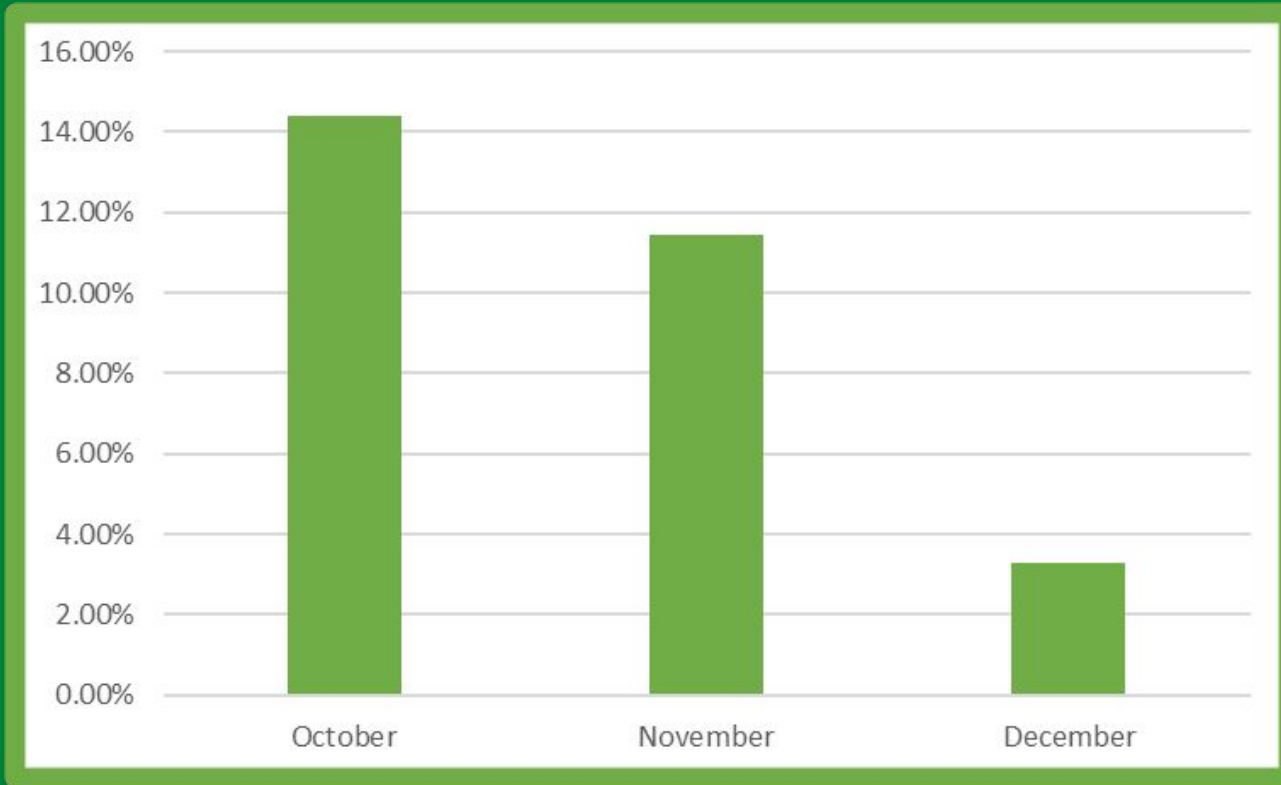
# Contacts In



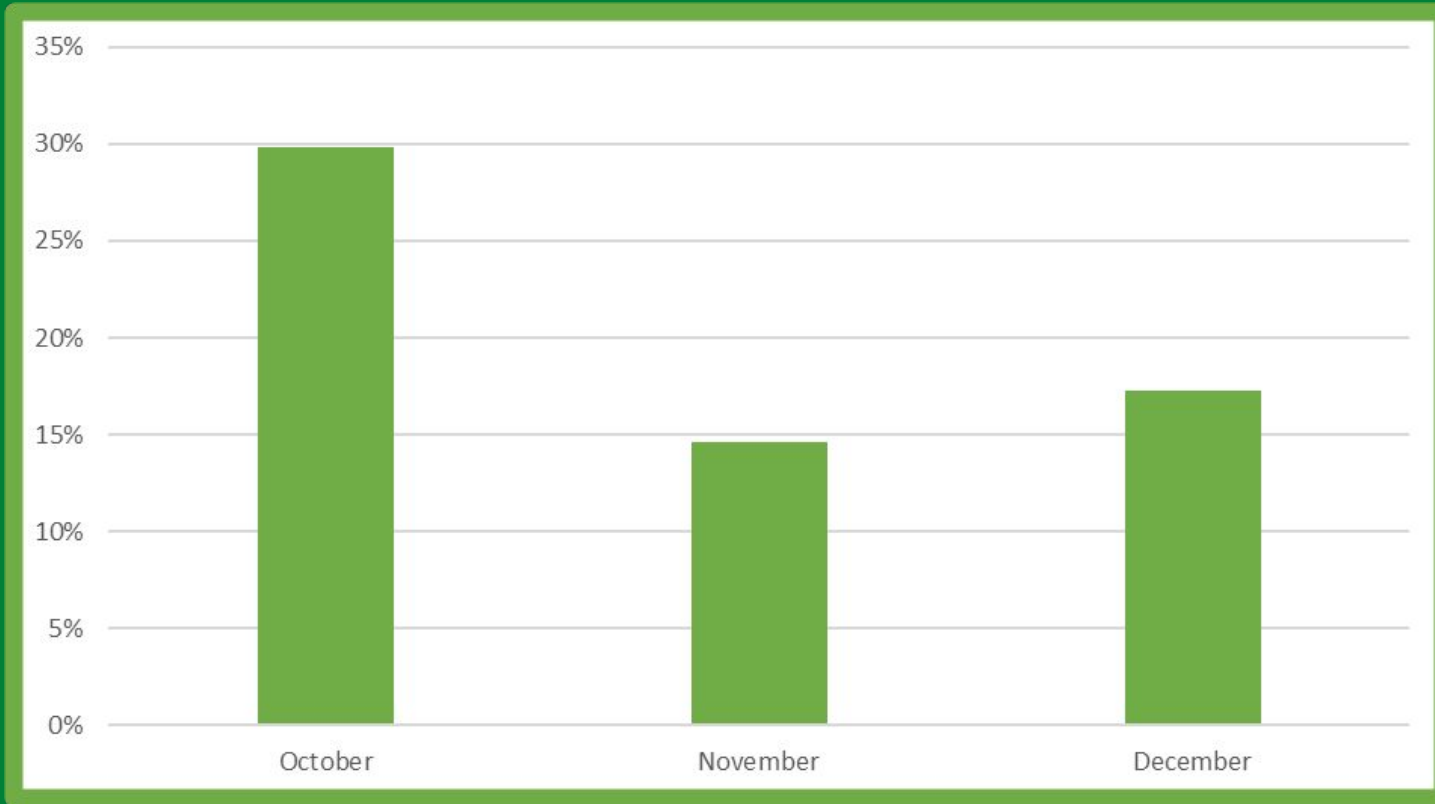
advice  
direct  
scotland



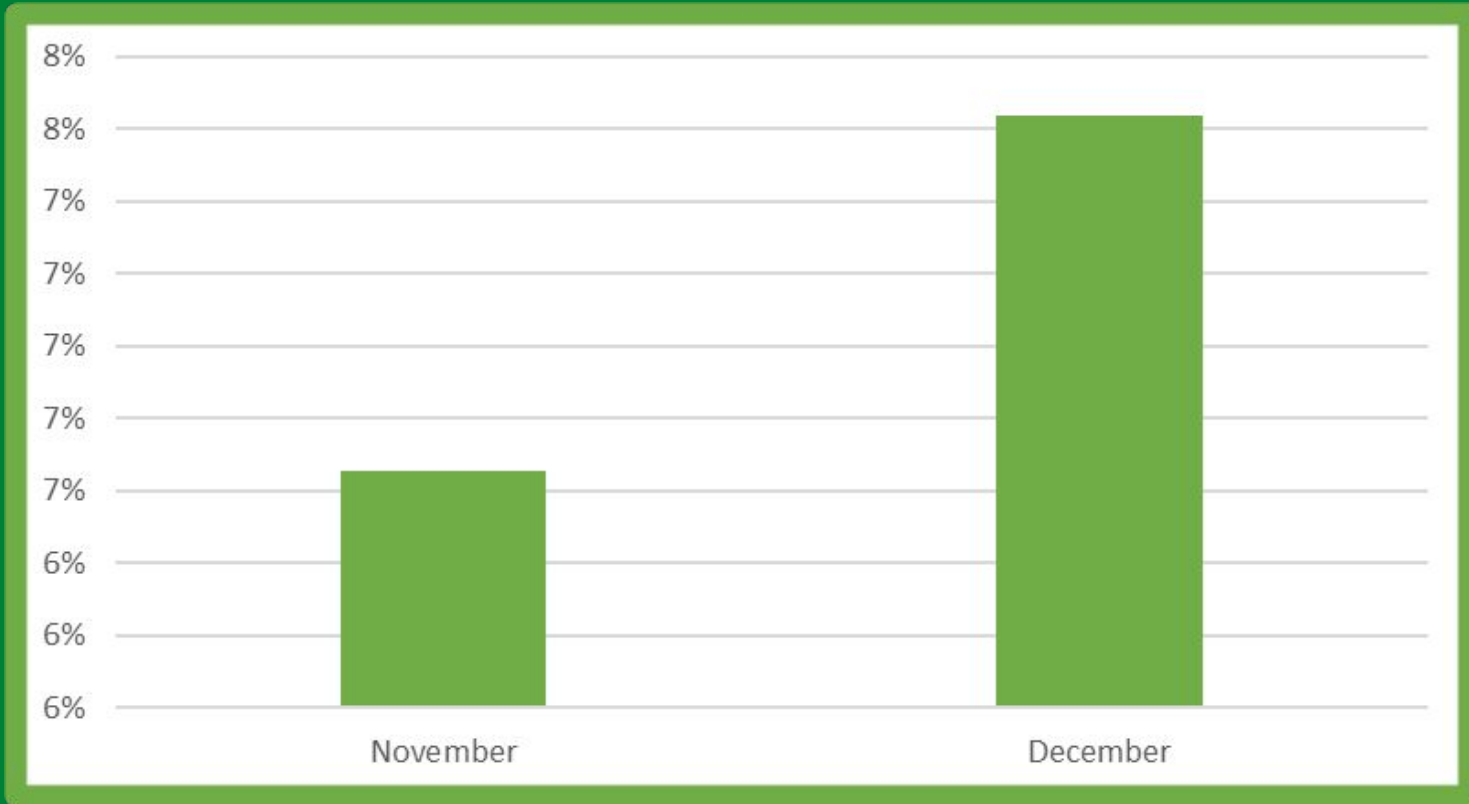
# Repeat Contacts (%)



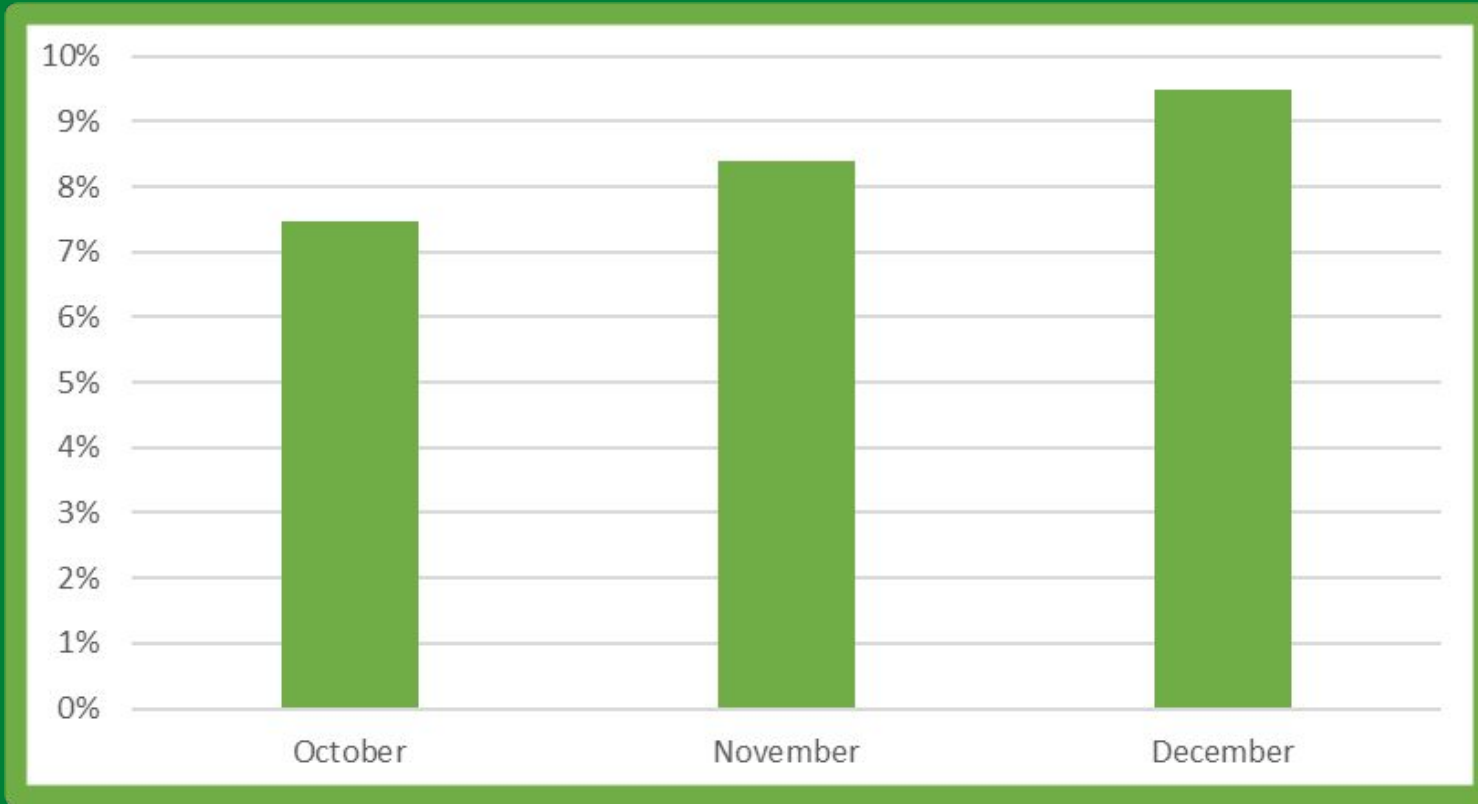
# Contacts Transferred to Supplier (%)



# Failed Transfers (%)

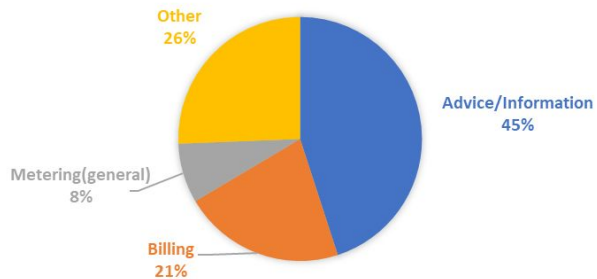


# Contact to EHU and Ombudsman (%)

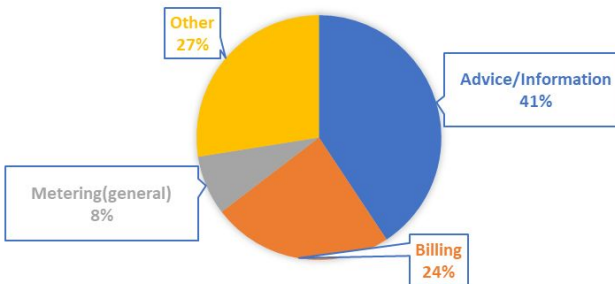


# Top 3 Contact Reasons

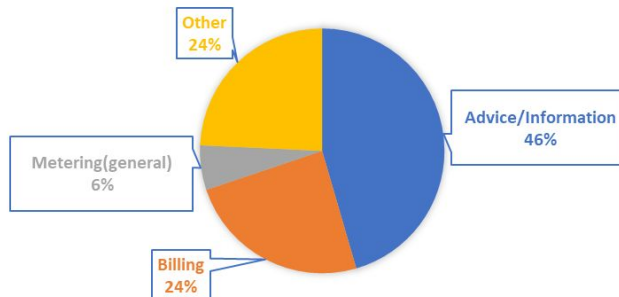
## TOP 3 OCT



## TOP 3 NOV



## TOP 3 DEC



# Recent News



- **Six new agents have joined the team and have now completed training.**
- All agents have completed vulnerability training.
- Telephone IVR has been updated to include information about the price cap.



# Media Coverage

- **Cover on the energy price cap / cost of living crisis on television, radio, and print & digital media.**
- **Coverage of supplier failures, and what consumers can do when a supplier goes out of business.**
- **Proactive social media posts and engagement, website updates and communication with media outlets.**





# Media Coverage



## THE SCOTSMAN

We are right to feel jittery about the rising cost of living, but no one needs to face it alone - Andrew Bartlett

If anyone in Scotland hasn't already directly experienced the cost-of-living crisis, they don't have to look very hard to see it coming.

By Alison Campele  
Saturday, 20th November 2021, 4:55 am

Andrew Bartlett, chief executive of Advice Direct Scotland. PIC: Contributed.

## John O'Groat Journal and Caithness Courier

Lights grow dim for energy provider Bulb – advice for Caithness customers

## insider.co.uk

Bulb enters special administration, affecting 1.7 million customers

More than 20 energy suppliers have collapsed since the start of the year, amid rocketing gas prices

## Daily Record

Looming household energy price rises warning for Lanarkshire residents

Advice comes amid a further peak in gas costs and talks between the industry and UK Government.

## Daily Record

Energy firm Bulb goes into administration but will still supply all 1.7m customers across the UK

The company has been placed into special administration

## Daily Business

your agenda fresh and informed

Chigren talks over  
Bulb Energy collapses into special administration

## Daily Record

DWP launches new Universal Credit online guide to help people claim financial support

Universal Credit can help with daily living costs if you are on a low income or out of work.

## Scottish Housing News

CAS: 70% of people in Scotland are worried about unaffordable energy bills in 2022

## UK TODAY NEWS

Looming household energy price rises warning for Lanarkshire residents

## edinburghlive

Martin Lewis issues stark warning over energy bills that will affect every household

Consumer champion Martin Lewis has issued a stark warning over energy prices as household bills are set to rise dramatically. The energy crisis has already led to the collapse of 40 companies.

## The Northern Times

Highland residents warned that electricity prices are set to rise again; Advice Direct Scotland calls for those with concerns to get in touch for tips and advice

Published on 19/11/2021 10:00 AM

## Scottish Housing News

For the latest news, events and jobs in the housing sector

### Energy firm Bulb set to go into administration





advice  
direct  
scotland



energy  
advice  
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# Extra Help Unit

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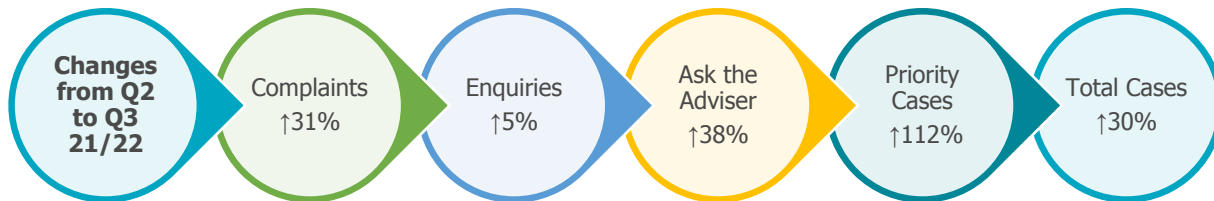
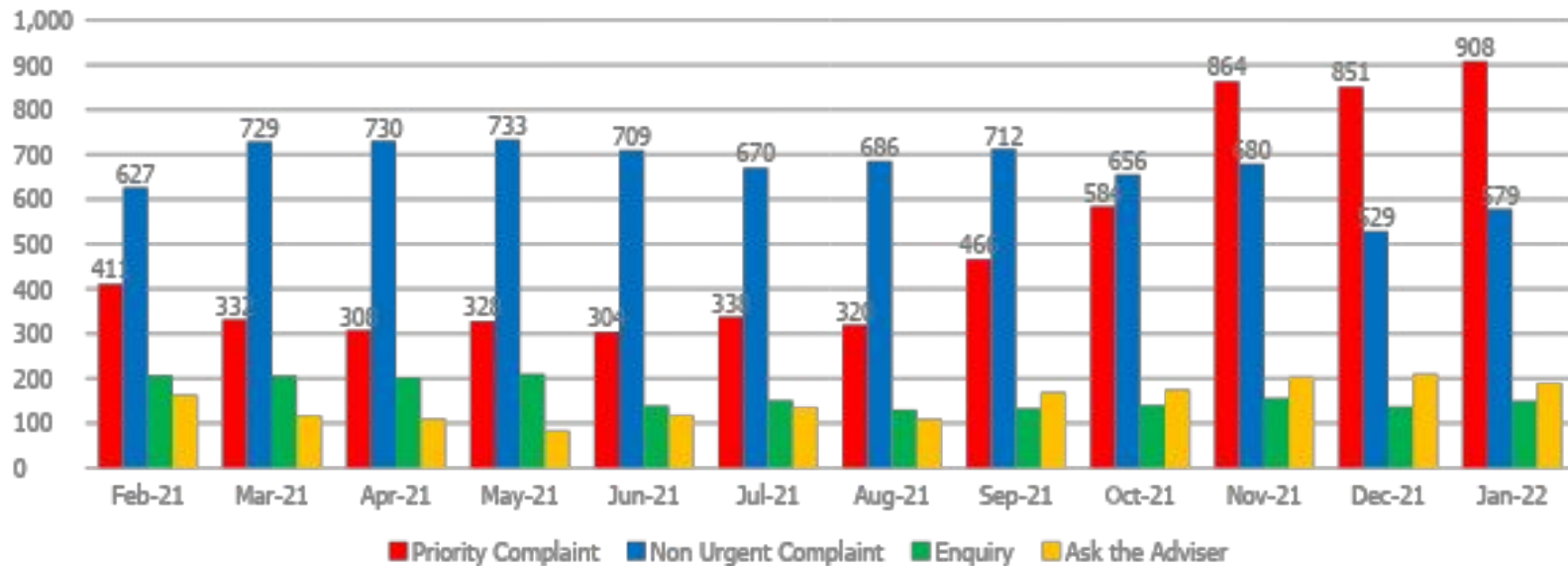
## Supplier Liaison update

Natasha Gilmour, Angus McMillan and George Holmes

16 February 2022

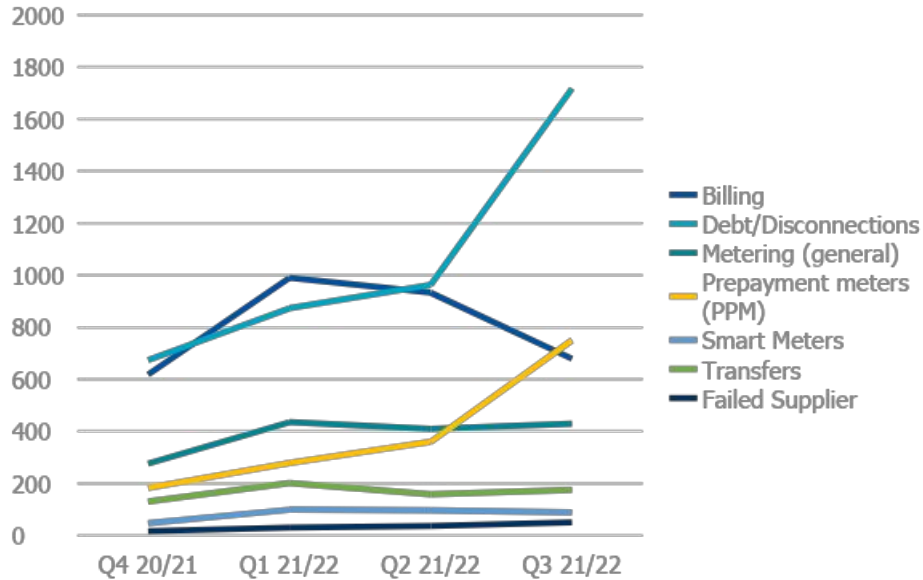


# Domestic Casework Volumes



# Casework Themes

## Main Complaint themes



## Top 5 Issues



**Self-disconnection** cases up by 139%, accounting for 30% of complaints.



**Unable to credit PPM** up by 105%



# Referral Partners

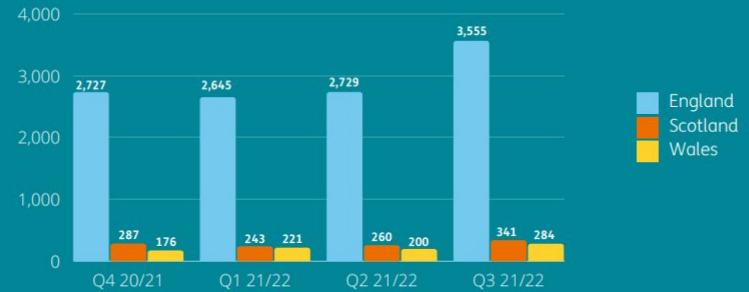
## Referral Partners across nations

Main referral partner across nations for Q3 21/22:

- > England – 93% of referrals from Citizens Advice Consumer Service
- > Wales – 92% of referrals from Citizens Advice Consumer Service
- > Scotland – 85% of referrals from Advice Direct Scotland

Whilst volumes have changed across the nations over the past 12 months, the overall proportion of complaints from each nation has remained relatively consistent.

Complaint volumes - geographical split



In Q3 81% of referrals were from consumers based in England, 9% from Scotland, 10% from Wales.



# KPI Performance



Q3 21/22

60% of complaints closed within 35WD	75% of complaints closed within 66wd	70% of Priority complaints closed within 20WD	70% of cases categorized as green, 90% categorized as green or amber	80% of complaints closed with a positive outcome	85% of consumers satisfied with service
59%	79%	80%	76% & 95%	82%	87%



Year to date Performance (April to January 2021)

60% of complaints closed within 35WD	75% of complaints closed within 66wd	70% of Priority complaints closed within 20WD	70% of cases categorized as green, 90% categorized as green or amber	80% of complaints closed with a positive outcome	85% of consumers satisfied with service
55%	78%	76%	76% & 95%	82%	89%





**87%** of consumers satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of service. Exceeded by 2%.

**77%** would recommend EHU Services

**88%** satisfied with referral handover to EHU

**97%** commented positively about manner of staff

**77%** felt EHU helped them find a way forward

**78%** felt the EHU made a positive difference

**74%** reported feeling less stressed

**83%** satisfied with length of time to resolve case

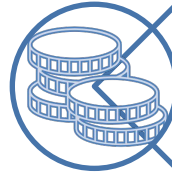
**72%** reported feeling less alone

**60%** reported their mental health and wellbeing had improved

### Customer satisfaction comments

“If it had not been for them I would have cracked up as I suffer from depression.”

“It's amazing and so awesome, brilliant, lovely and sympathetic. It's how it should be when you are speaking to someone on the phone. I don't know how the energy company can get it so wrong.”



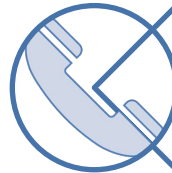
Empty text box for video or audio recording.



Empty text box for support or assistance comment.



Empty text box for group-related comment.

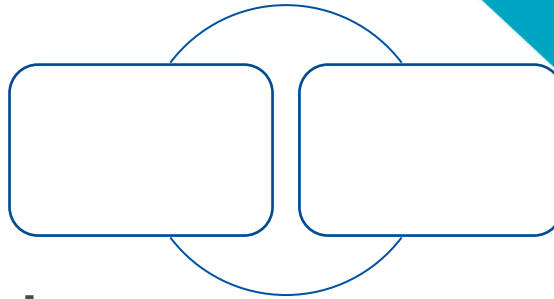


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# Operational update

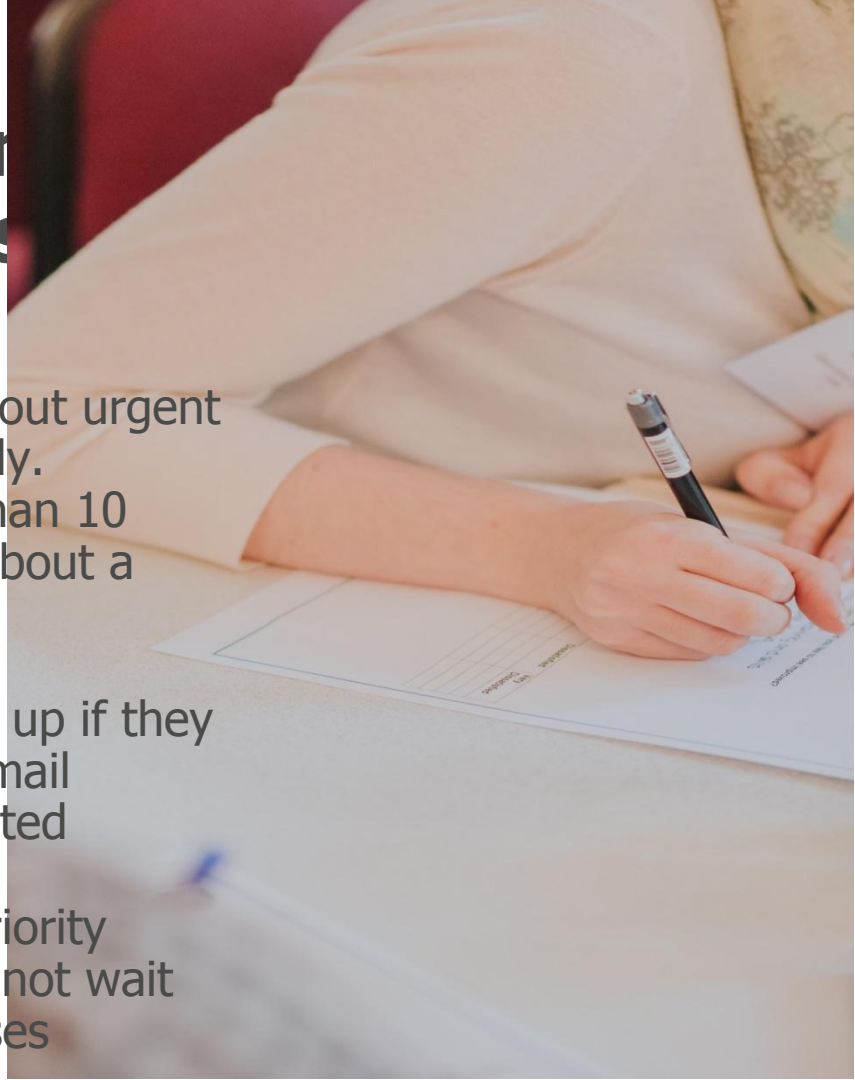
- 
- **Workload and backlog update**
  - **Servicemail replacement project**  
→ **Microsoft Dynamics 365**
  - **BS 18477: 2010. Inclusive service provision audit**



# Priority process – contacting suppliers and return of priority forms

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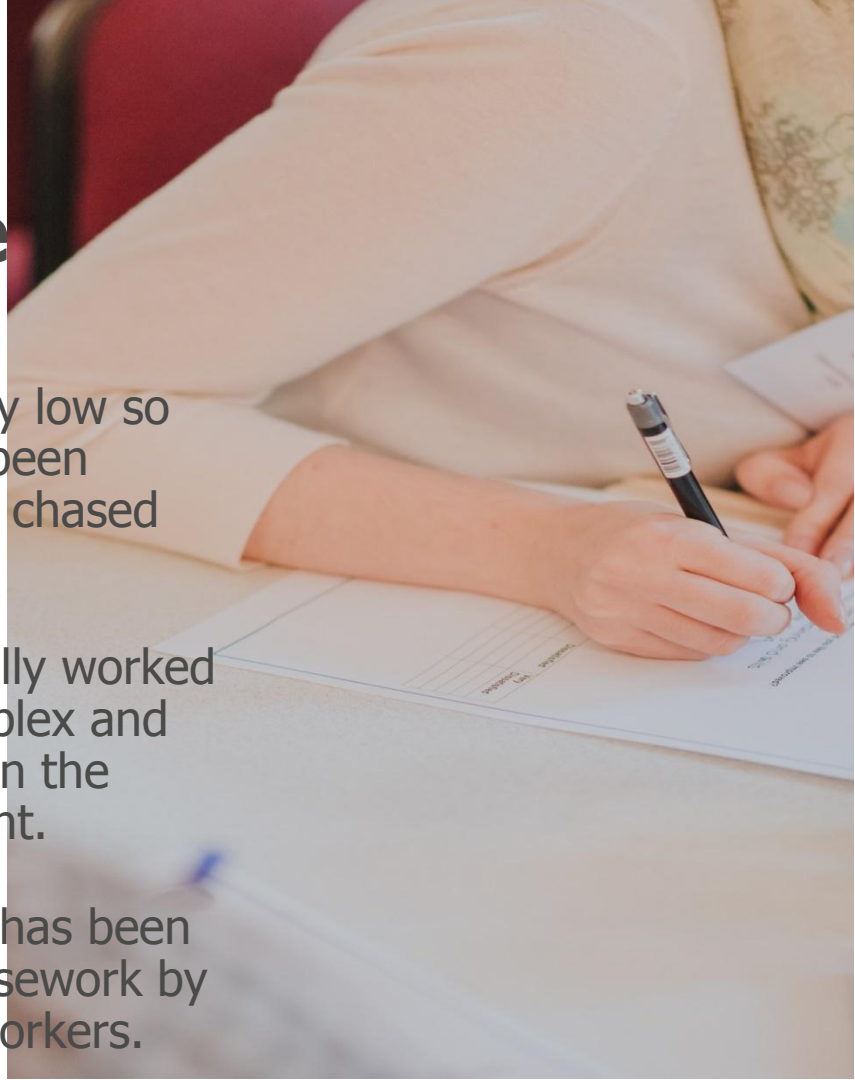
- Should be able to speak to someone about urgent cases immediately or almost immediately. However, we should never wait more than 10 minutes on hold to speak to someone about a priority case
- Caseworker will be encouraged to hang up if they have held the line for 10 minutes, an email referral will be sent and the case escalated
- Two working day time scale for most priority forms to be returned – vital that we do not wait significantly more than this on most cases



# Failed Supplier Update

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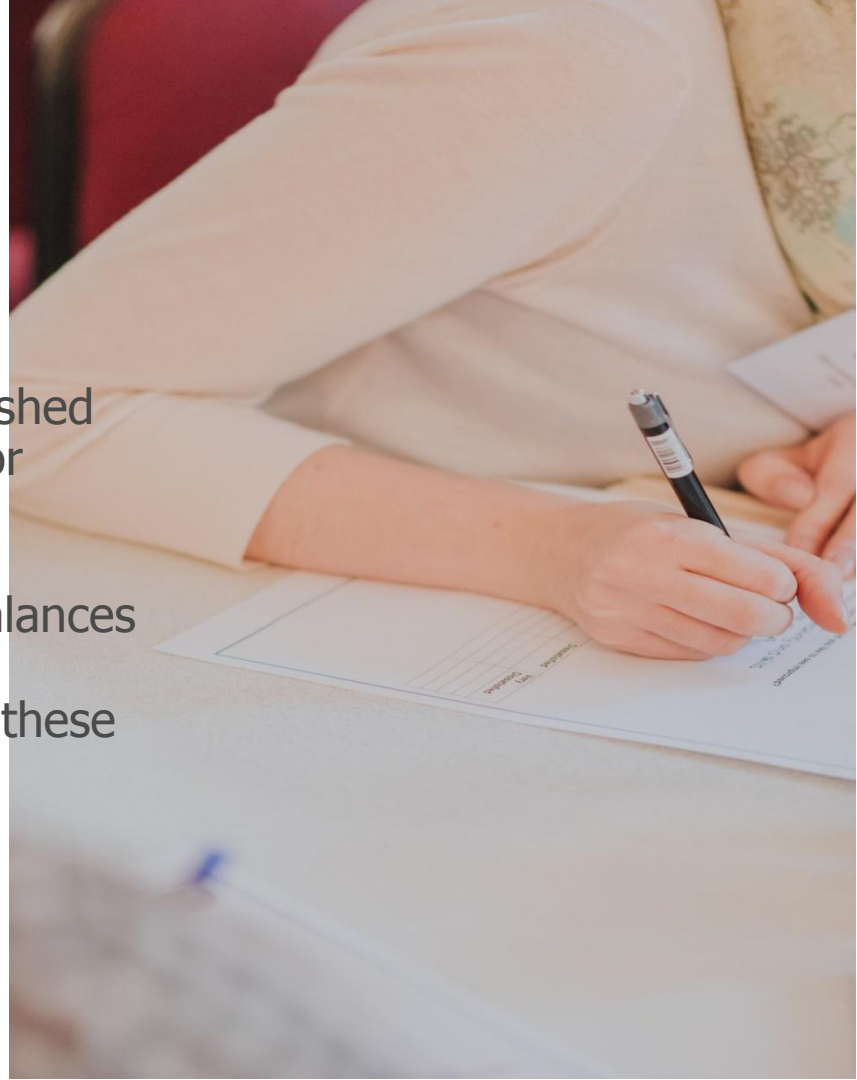
- Volume of new cases has been relatively low so far, although some new referrals have been received. Not all debts owed have been chased though.
- Work with appointed SOLRs has generally worked well, although some situations are complex and have led to confusion in relation to when the SOLR can or can't assist with a complaint.
- Progression of cases via administrators has been difficult, slow and time consuming – Casework by the SLOs and myself rather than Caseworkers.



# Financial benefit for People's Energy consumers

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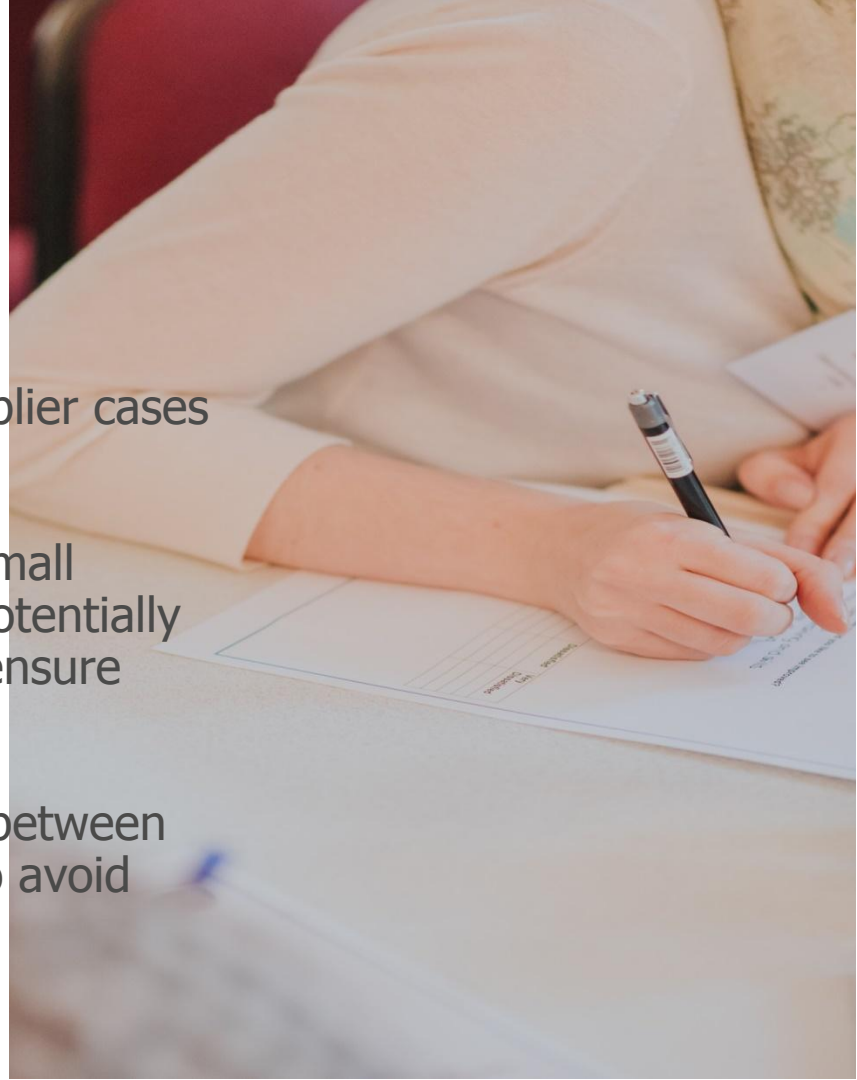
- EHU provided further information or pushed back on 8 cases where the administrator indicated there would be debt balances
- The debt positions changed to credit balances
- Total difference from debit to credit on these **8 cases** was **£19,345.70**



# What next on failed suppliers?

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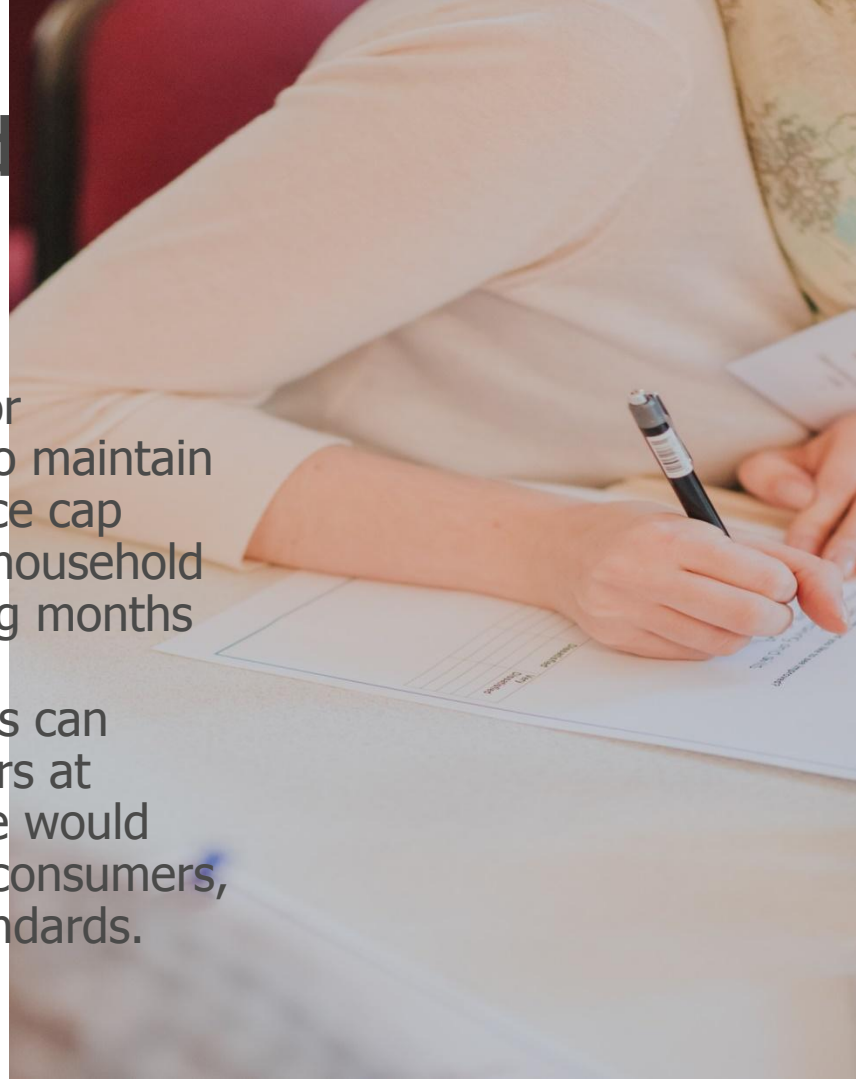
- Finalising work on remaining failed supplier cases
  - overall volume *currently* reducing
- Still some concerns over a number of small domestic and non-domestic suppliers potentially failing. Will be pushing all suppliers to ensure efficient resolution of existing cases
- Clear evidence that good relationships between SOLRs and administrators is required to avoid poor outcomes for consumers



# Self Disconnection and affordability

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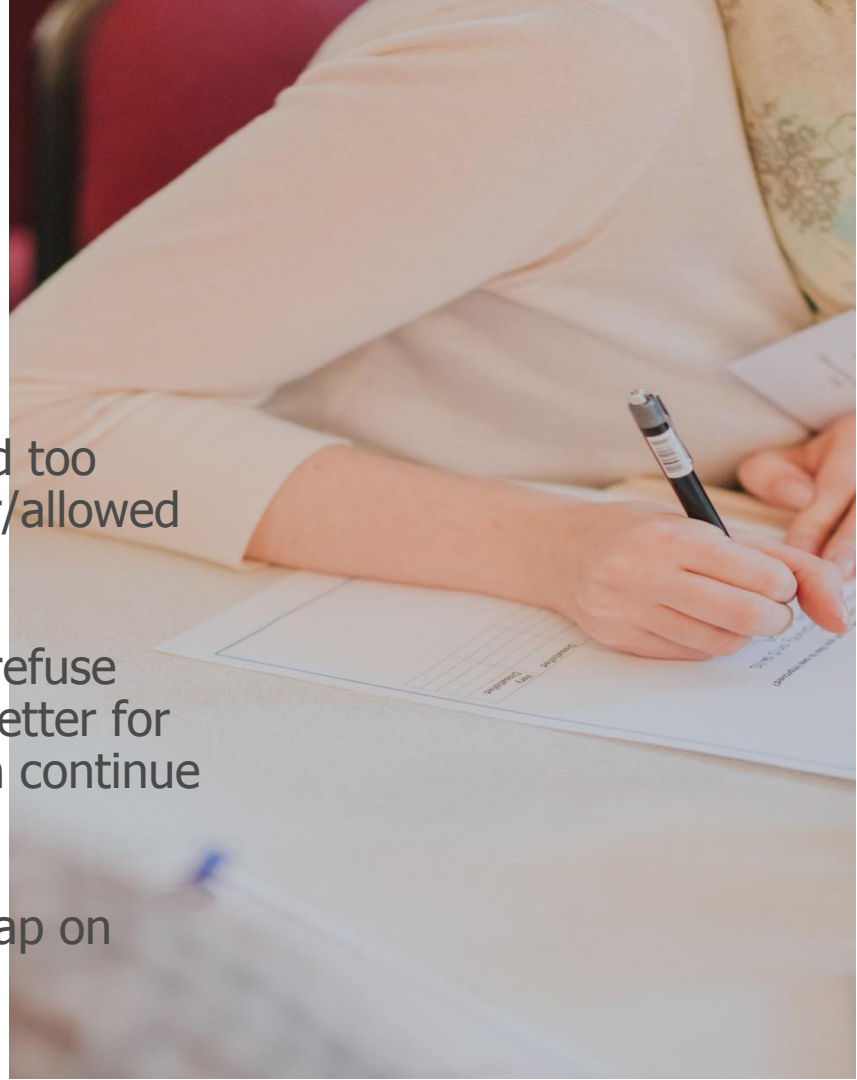
- Already experiencing record requests for assistance from consumers struggling to maintain their supply – however impact from price cap increase not here yet, and squeeze on household income expected to get worse in coming months
- We have questions about what suppliers can reasonably do to support their customers at present – as the consumer advocate we would always champion more being done for consumers, so it is not our role to set minimum standards.



# Questions on self disconnection

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- What are the parameters for consumers/households to be considered too vulnerable to have a prepayment meter/allowed to regularly self disconnect?
- When is it reasonable for a supplier to refuse further additional support credit? Is it better for the consumer to be left off supply, than continue to build debt?
- Is it legitimate for suppliers to have a cap on maximum available ASC e.g. £50





# Risks posed by price ca increases

- Significantly higher levels of self disconn seems unavoidable, with serious consequ the people in these households
- Self rationing to avoid debt collection ac could lead to “hidden” suffering for man households who are already struggling t their energy costs
- Increased instances of meter tampering consumers out of desperation
- Other resources such as Fuel Vouchers a exhausted by consumers





# How does the industry handle people who can't pay?

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There are going to be consumers who can't pay for a proportion of their energy consumption. How is the industry going to deal with this?

There will be no point in using hard debt collection activity in these scenarios.

This may require additional time and investment supporting vulnerable consumers who are struggling to pay, and offering additional debt forgiveness if prices reduce.



# Need for enhanced customer service

Billing complaints will have the potential to cause consumers in greater levels of detriment if not resolved quickly and effectively.

Vital that suppliers customer service teams

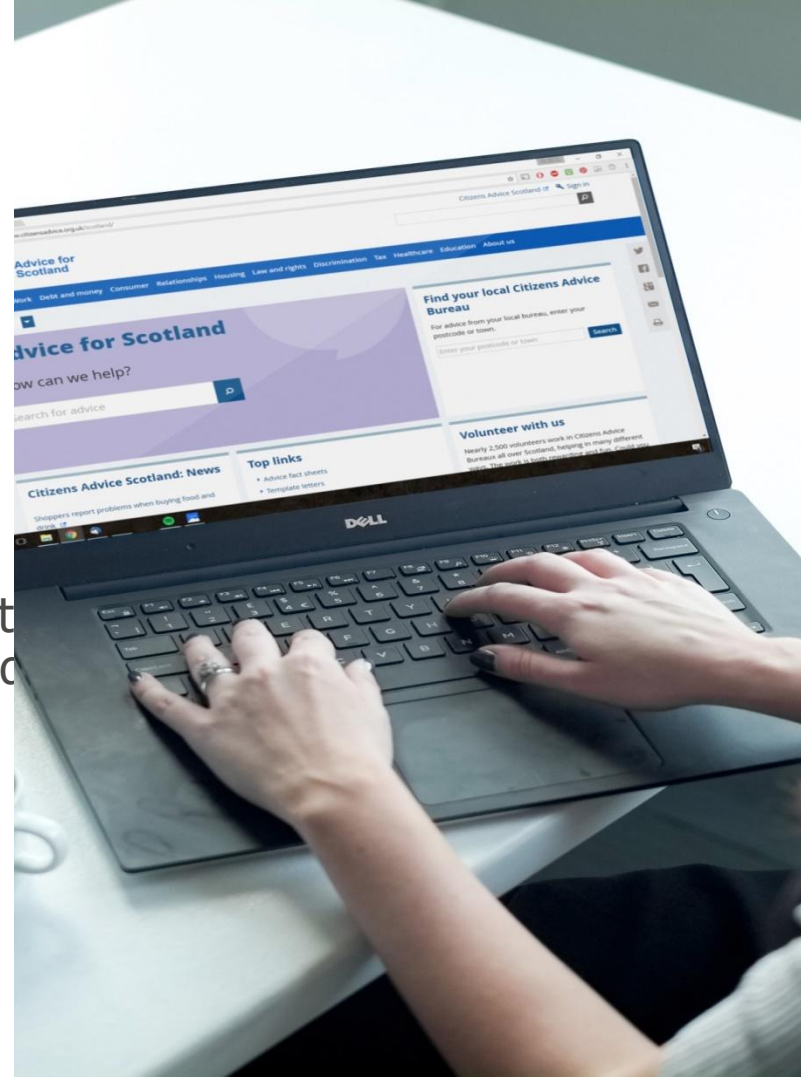
- Ensure all steps are taken to obtain and verify meter readings, and investigate concerns
- Effectively investigate concerns of billing and not assume price increases are to be expected
- Agree/encourage consumers to pay some bills while a billing complaint is investigated



# Other points

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- We will be monitoring cases related to forced switching to prepayment mode, including remote mode changes
- We will also be analysing cases about debt recovery practices to identify good and bad practice.



# Break

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10.45am – 10.50am



**Open slot for attendees from suppliers  
10.50am – 11.05am**

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Supplier observations on the energy crisis  
- Current & future challenges over the  
next 12 months facing consumers &  
industry



# Energy policy team update



Supplier Liaison Meeting  
16th February 2022

# Contents

1. Publications, blogs and consultation responses
2. Team updates
  - Energy Retail Markets
  - Future Energy Services
  - Energy Network and Systems
1. Cost of living crisis

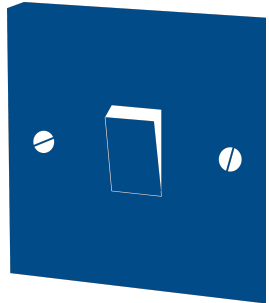
# Recent publications

We've released an analysis of our [service data](#), showing that demand is at the highest level since the start of the pandemic. We've also released 2 briefings on the cost of living crisis, focusing on [how best](#) to support energy consumers through [targeted support](#).

We released a report detailing how Ofgem's regulatory failures have led to [costs and poor outcomes for consumers](#).

We published a report on the experience of [benefit deductions](#) to pay for energy and other debts, and a report on how the consumer experience for [smart home technologies](#) could be improved.

All our publications are available [here](#).





# Upcoming policy/advocacy work

## Retail

- Ongoing work on affordability amidst higher energy bills
- Upcoming report on digital exclusion
- Focus on compliance and enforcement following 'Market Meltdown' report

## Net Zero Homes

- Finalising research on hydrogen, net zero diaries and support for consumers making changes to their homes.
- Ongoing engagement with BEIS on regulating heat networks, protections for smart products and services, protections for low-carbon tech in the home and next steps on a data dashboard.

## Energy Networks & Systems:

- Ongoing work on ensuring DNO business plans are value for money, including Open Hearings
- Looking at Net Zero Market Reform from a consumer perspective
- Research into different ways to regulate network companies

# Cost of living crisis



# People

16000  
14000  
12000  
10000  
8000  
6000  
4000  
2000  
0

04/2020

06/2020

08/2020

10/2020

12/2020

02/2021

04/2021

06/2021

08/2021

10/2021

12/2021

Average



**2021**

J F M A M J J A S O N D

# What has the government proposed?

- A £200 loan to be paid to all energy customers in GB in October. This will be paid back automatically over the next 5 years.
- A £150 council tax rebate to be paid to ~80% of households in April.

## Average proportion of unemployment benefit spent on energy bills over the last 20 years (single person excl. housing & other costs)



— Benefits as a proportion of energy bills (one person flat)

— Impact of Council Tax rebate and energy loan

# Next steps

- These interventions will make some difference, but not nearly enough for those who need it most.
- Energy prices will still be at a generational high as a proportion of unemployment benefit.
- We will continue to advocate for targeted measures to help people who need it the most through this crisis.





# CAS

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Scotland's Citizens Advice network empowers people in every corner of Scotland through our local bureaux and national services by providing free, confidential and independent advice.

We use people's real life experiences to influence policy and drive positive change. We are on the side of people who need help, and we change lives for the better

The Fair Markets policy team represents the interests of consumers in the energy and water industries in Scotland.



# Consumer Scotland

- > Statutory energy policy functions in Scotland transfer from CAS to Consumer Scotland on 1 April 2022. The 2022/23 workplan is currently out to consultation.
- > Statutory function of the EHU will be unaffected by these changes.
- > CAS engagement with suppliers will continue as part of policy work informed by the Citizens Advice Scotland supplier performance, etc.
- > Consumer Scotland will build relationships with the supply industry as its roles and responsibilities evolve.



# Projects 2021/22

## Grant-funded:

- > Prepayment meters

## Levy-funded (Energy Consumers Commis

- > Decarbonisation
- > Fuel debt
- > Consumer vulnerability
- > Restricted meters and post-RTS signal pla
- > Consumer tracker survey



# Ongoing workstreams

- > Price cap and energy affordability crisis.
- > Big Energy Saving Winter campaign.
- > Future of Warm Home Discount in Scotland and the impact on Industry Initiatives funding.
- > Scottish Government consultations: plans for a Scottish National Energy Agency; launch of the Low Income Winter Heating Assistance.
- > Supporting consumers on heat networks, inc. complex debt issues.
- > Energy networks inc. Storm Arwen.



# Thank you

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Contact:

[michael.obrien@cas.org.uk](mailto:michael.obrien@cas.org.uk)

Produced by Citizens Advice Scotland [11/02/2022]  
Scottish charity SCO 16637 and company limited by guarantee 89892

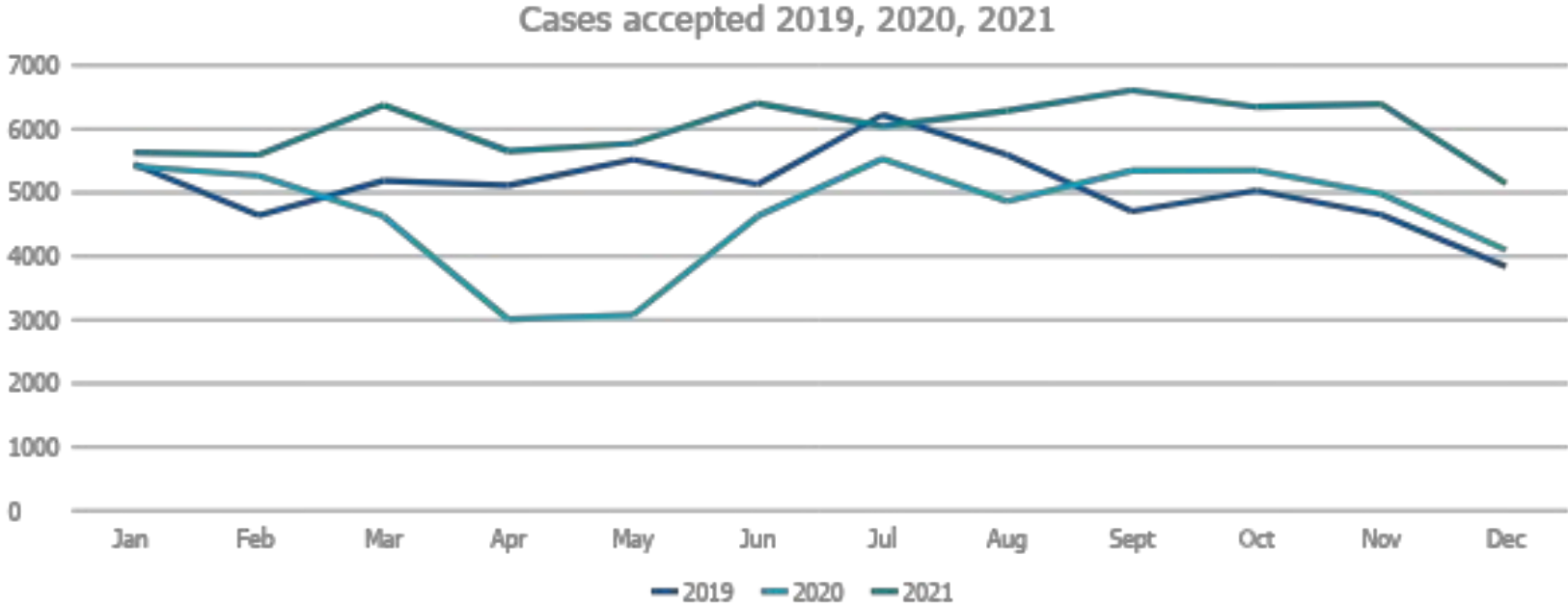


# OS Slides

## Domestic Supplier Liaison Meeting

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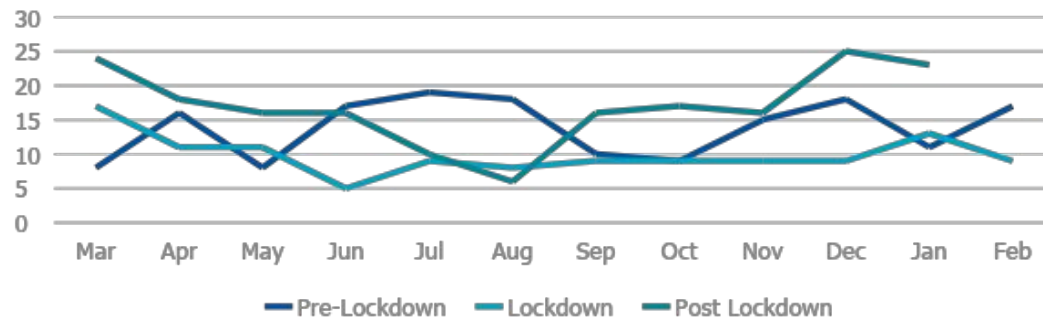
# Increase in complaint numbers



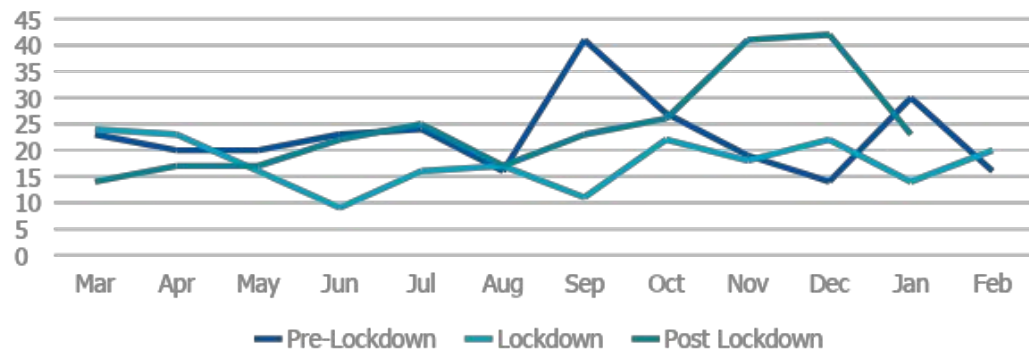
## Areas of concern

Pre-Lockdown:  
Mar 19 – Feb 20  
Lockdown:  
Mar 20 – Feb 21  
Post-Lockdown:  
Mar 21 – Jan 22

### Unsuitable Payment Plan



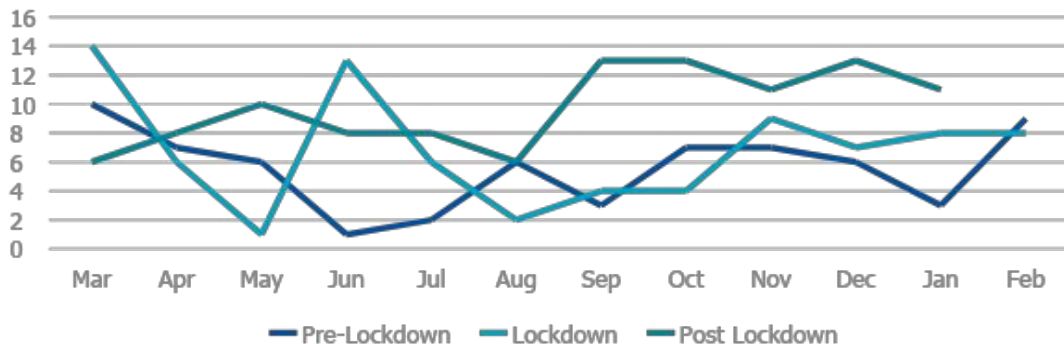
### Unaffordable increase in Direct Debit



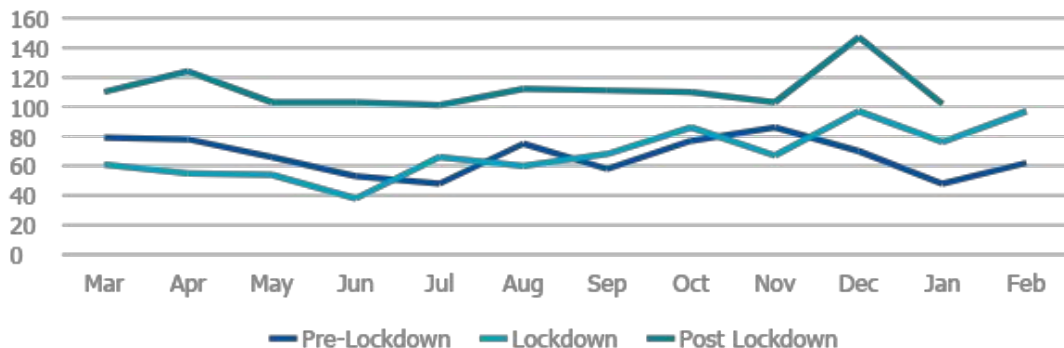


## Areas of concern

### Disconnection



### Debt Recovery Practises



Pre-Lockdown:  
Mar 19 – Feb 20  
Lockdown:  
Mar 20 – Feb 21  
Post-Lockdown:  
Mar 21 – Jan 22

## Collaboration to better support vulnerability

- OS is starting to see an increasing number of vulnerable customers making contact
- OS decided to organise a round table with suppliers as well as organisations supporting consumers such as Citizen Advice, Extra Help Unit and Advice Direct Scotland to open the conversation and understand what happens in other organisations as well as think about what solutions we can find to ensure colleagues and consumers are supported
- We started by discussing the situation in each organisation followed by exploring solutions we could implement to support all stakeholders
- Three areas has come to light:
  - Consumer Support
  - Employees Safeguarding
  - Regulation.

# Collaboration to better support vulnerability

## Consumer Support

- Is supporting customers is making them worse off in some circumstances?
- Regulation versus Doing the Right Thing
- What can be done?

## Employees Safeguarding

- Recruiting the right people (whether internally or externally)
- Support employees working with vulnerable people

## Regulation

- Industry parties should work collaboratively to highlight areas where regulation drives unintended consequence, or poor customer outcomes.
- To collaboratively push for the right support (beyond industry) for consumers to help them through this, and any, difficult periods.

**AOB**

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**Thank you**

