



**Working
Families**

LAS helpline data deep dive

**A deep dive into our 2022-2023 Legal Advice
Service helpline data**

June 2023



Contents

A deep dive into our 2022-2023 Legal Advice Service helpline data | June 2023

01

Introduction and overview

Summary data, split of calls versus emails

02

WHO do we help?

Geography, protected characteristics, low income, multiple disadvantage

03

What ISSUES are they facing?

Most common issues we are contacted about, trends

04

The DIFFERENCE we make

Understanding rights and options, feeling confident to act on our advice, longer-term outcomes

01 Introduction and overview

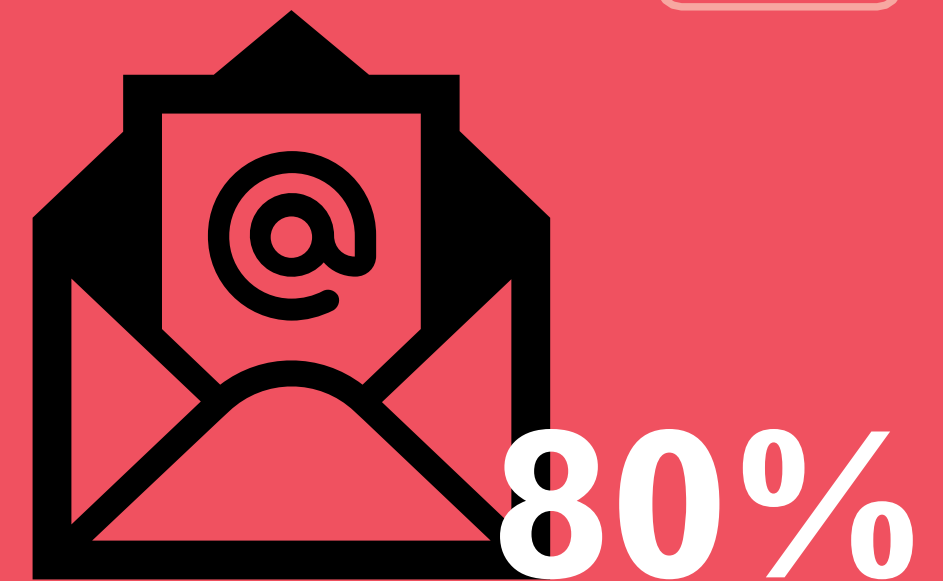
In 2022-2023, our helpline received ...

- **1,199** contact form queries via our **website**
- **53** queries via **social media**

We are still analysing our phone data for last year, but about a quarter of the queries we responded to were received by phone.

We advised ...

- **70%** of helpline clients by **email**
- **19%** over the **phone**
- **10%** via **phone and email**
- **2%** on **social media**



of helpline clients
received an
email response



**In 2022-2023, we
responded to 1,676
queries from 1,608
people.**

We took an average of **5** working
days to respond.

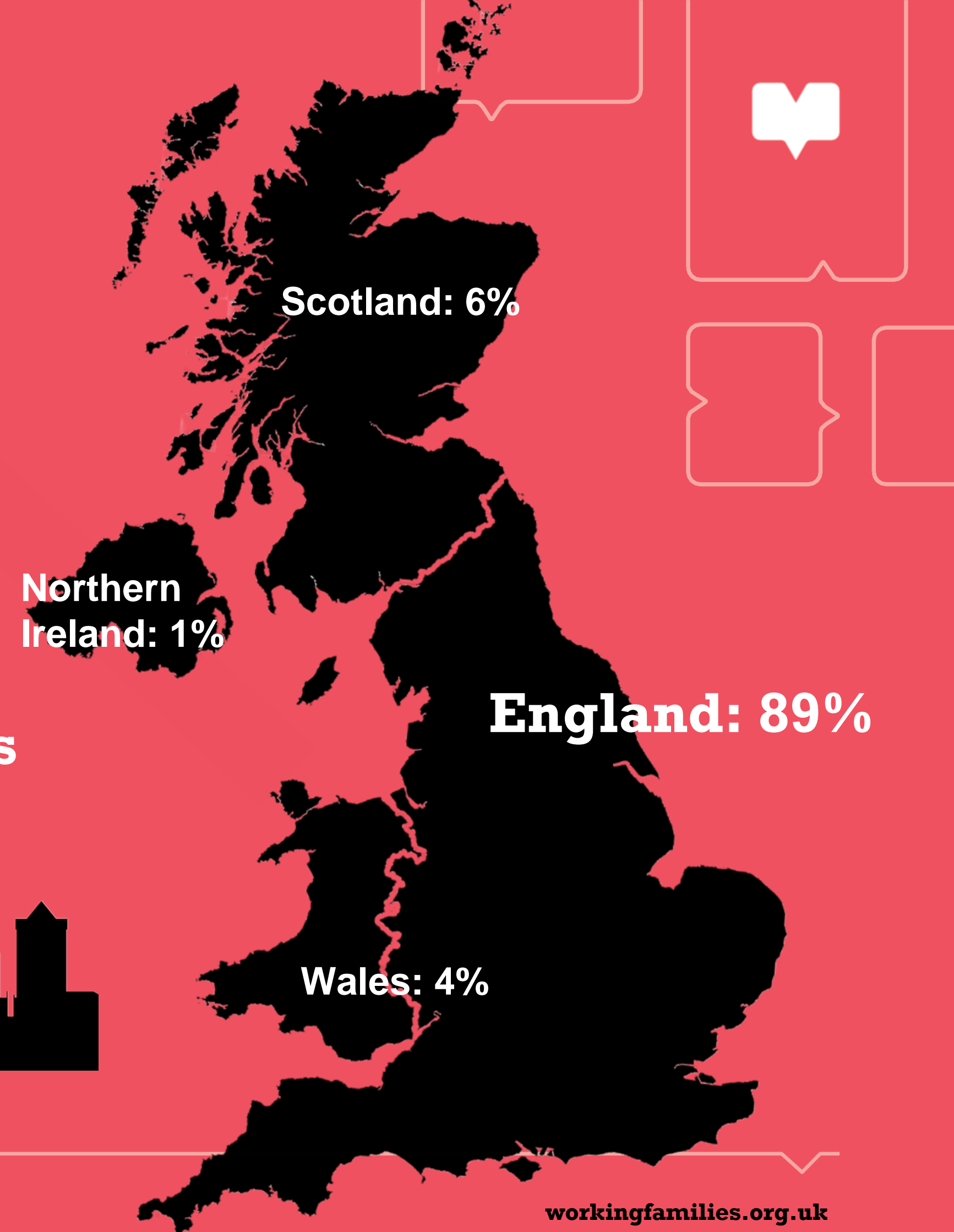
1,676

02 WHO do we help?

Where do people contact us from?

20% of helpline users last year were **Londoners**

Londoners = 13% of the UK population



02 WHO do we help?

Demographics and protected characteristics

- **85%** of helpline users last year were **women**
- **19%** were from a **minority ethnic background** (UK generally: 16%)
- Of 481 people who told us whether they were **living with a disability or long-term health condition**, **17%** said yes (UK generally: 20%)
- **84%** of our helpline users were **aged 25-44**

25% of helpline users overall (a **third of London clients**) were **single parents**

(UK-wide: 22%)



02 WHO do we help?

Lower income

We use the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Minimum Income Standard to calculate thresholds for lower incomes.

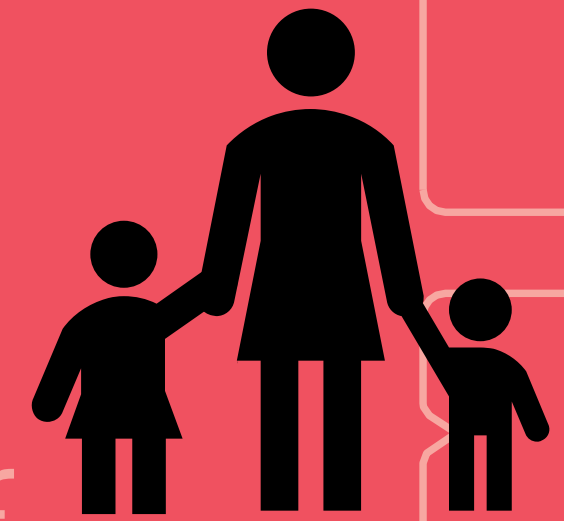
The Minimum Income Standard for different household make-ups and locations can be worked out using the MIS online calculator: www.minimumincome.org.uk.

The MIS is what research suggests is needed for a basic standard of living. It went up significantly in 2022, due to sharply rising living costs.

By 2024, almost **90% of single parents and 50% of workers with children are expected to earn below the MIS (NEF).**

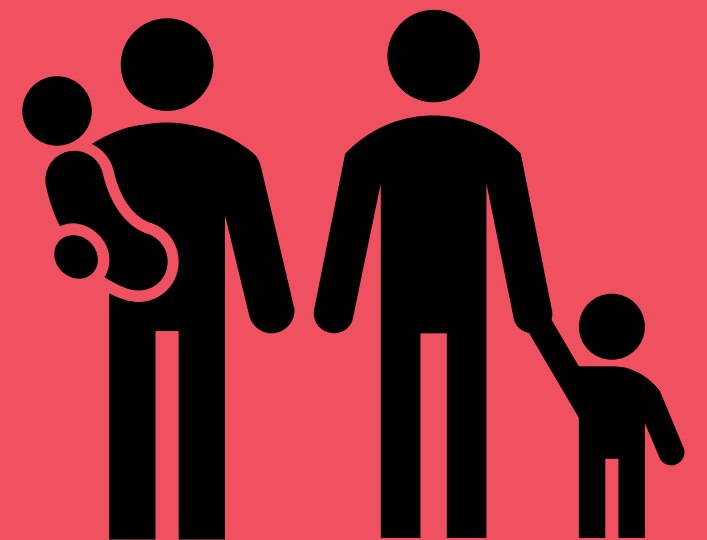
£35,664

- Single parent
- 1 pre-schooler
- 1 primary-aged child
- Greater London



£54,644

- Couple
- 1 baby
- 1 primary-aged child
- Outside London



02 WHO do we help?

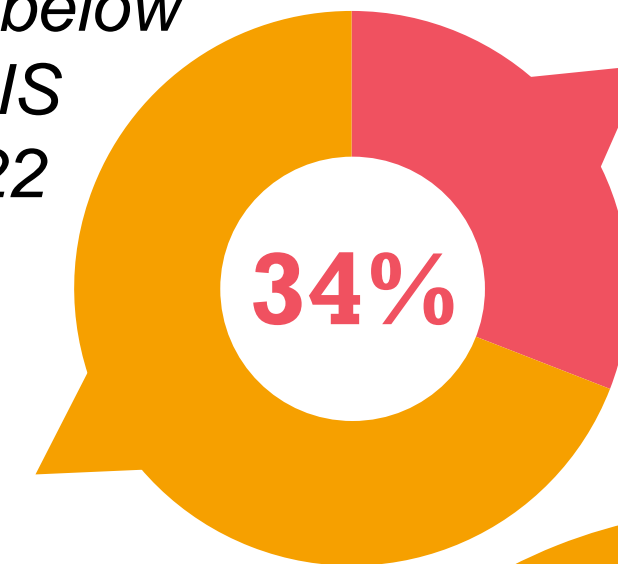
Lower income

Helpline users are considered as being on a lower income if they are **in receipt of low-income benefits**, and/or their **household income falls below the average Minimum Income Standard** for a two-child family of their household type:

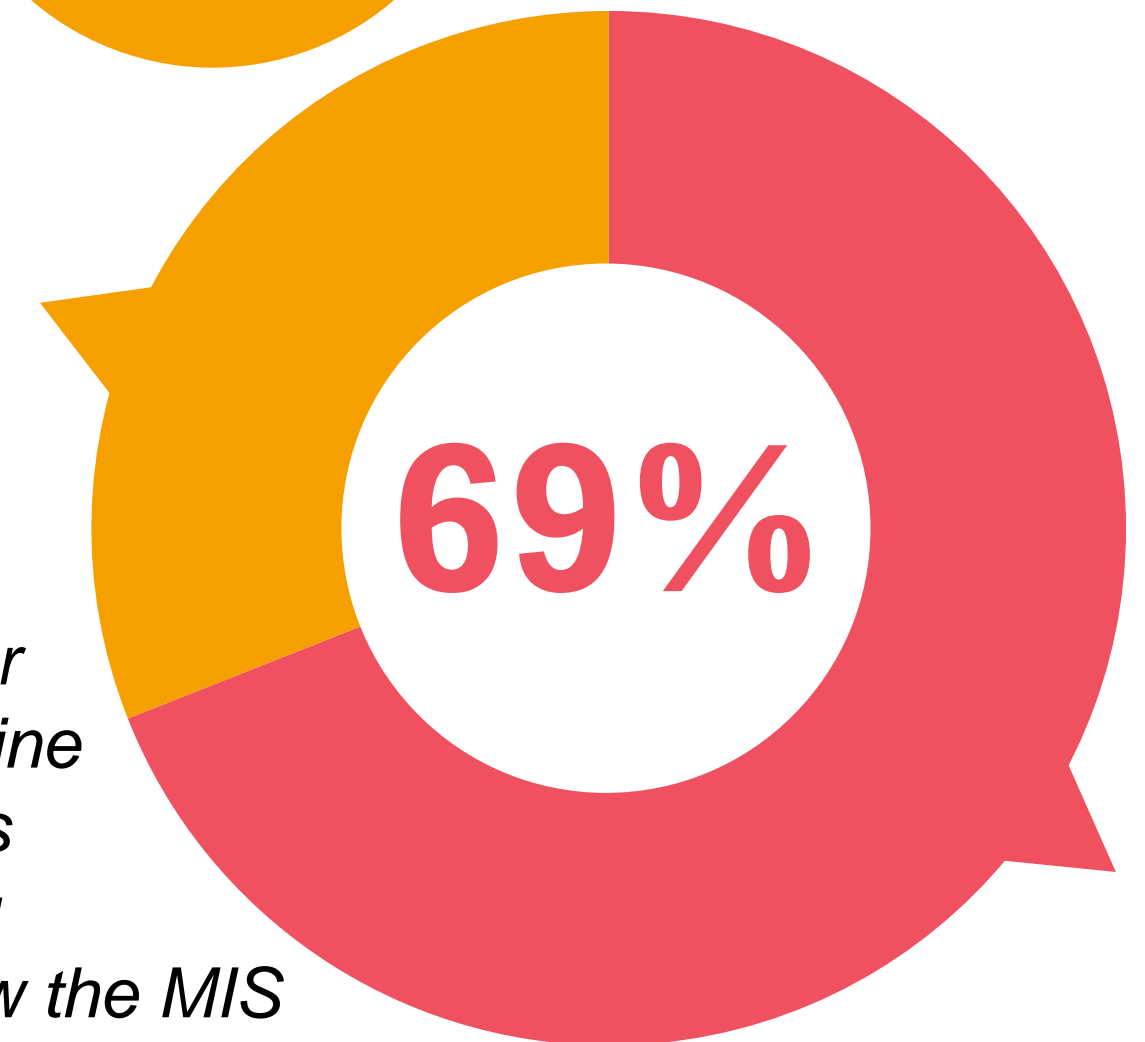
- in London – single-parent
- in London – couple
- outside London – single-parent
- outside London – couple

The New Economics Foundation estimated that by April 2022, 34.2% of the UK population was living below a socially acceptable standard of living (below the MIS). Last year, at 69% of helpline users, **lower-income families were massively over-represented among our helpline users.**

% of UK population living below the MIS in 2022



% of our helpline users living below the MIS



02 WHO do we help?

Multiple disadvantage

- Helpline clients from a **minority ethnic background** were more likely to be on a **lower income** (75-91%) compared to those from a white background (65%).
- Half of our **low-income London** clients were **also lone parents** compared to 33% outside London.
- 80% of **helpline clients living with a disability** were also on a **lower income**.



**95% of the
single parents
who contacted
our helpline
were on a
lower income**



“I’m a **lone parent** working full-time on a **low income**. My **childcare costs went up** in September. This means I now need to pay an extra £200-300 a month even with 30 hours’ [free] childcare. I am **unable to pay** for this increase on my wage.”

Challenges:

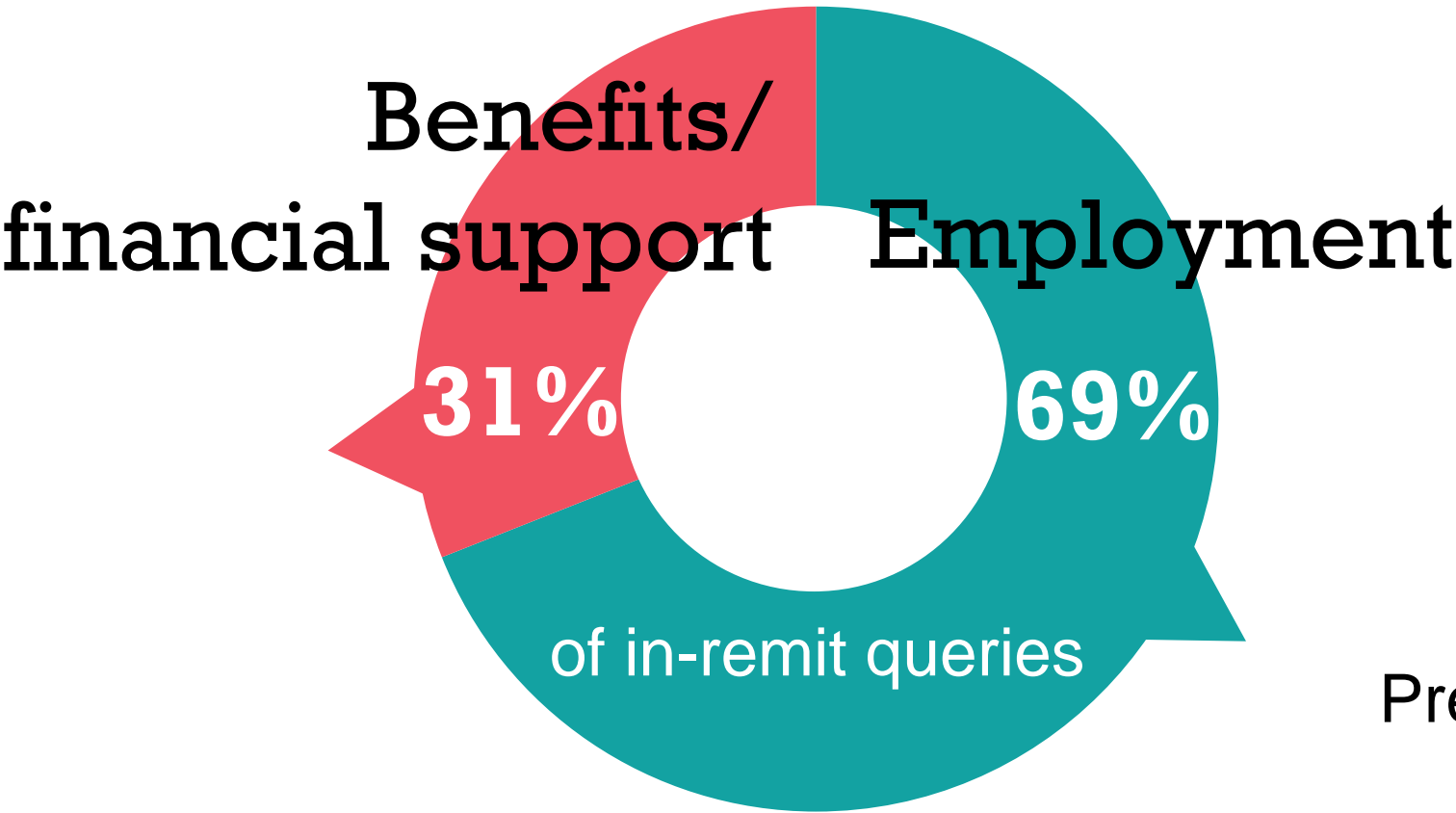
- Single parent
- Low income
- Unaffordable childcare costs
- Cost of living crisis

03 What ISSUES are they facing?

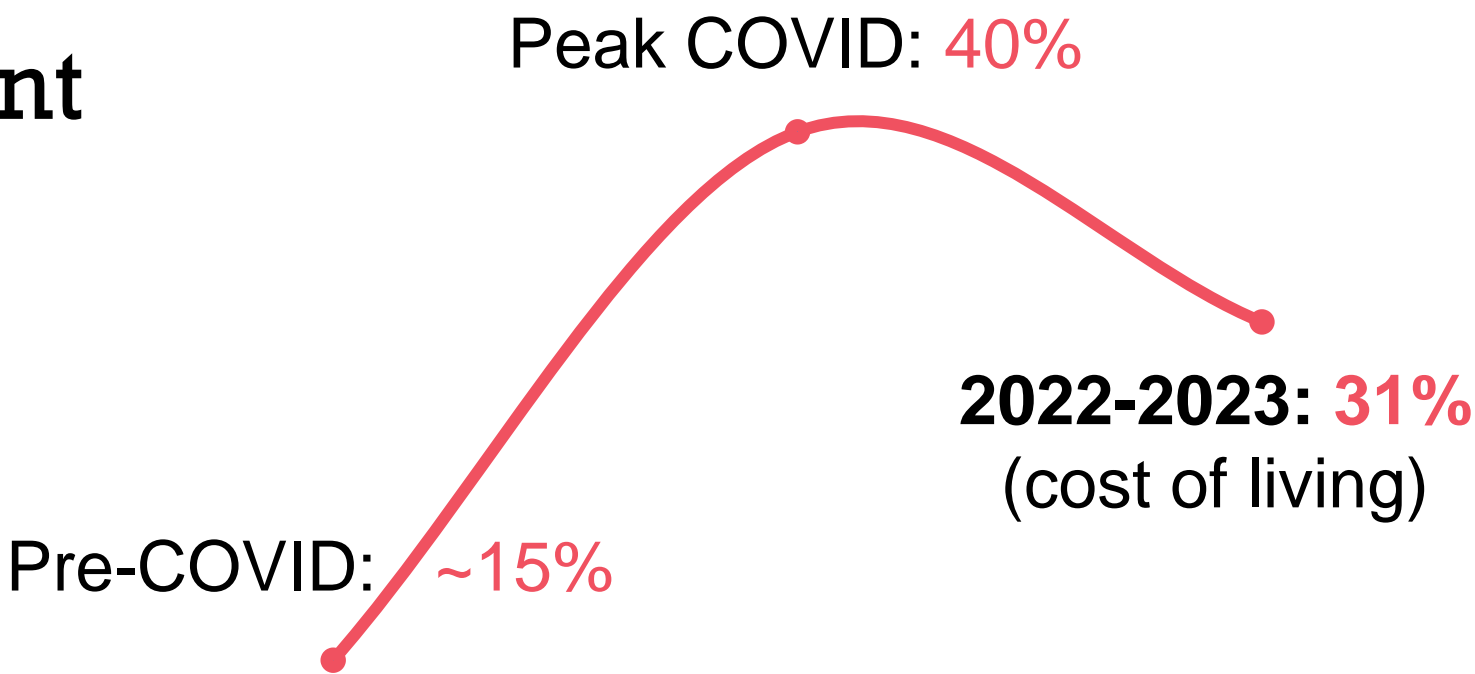
Employment versus benefits/financial support queries

Last year, 8% of helpline queries were outside remit. We signposted these clients.

Of in-remit queries, 69% were employment queries and 31% were benefits/financial support queries.



Benefits queries





03 What ISSUES are they facing?

1. Pregnancy and maternity issues: **29%** of in-remit queries
2. Discrimination: **17%**
3. Flexible working: **16%**
4. Universal credit: **13%**
5. Maternity benefits: **11%**

03 What ISSUES are they facing?

Lower income clients

1. Universal credit (43% of benefits queries)
2. Pregnancy and maternity
3. Discrimination
4. Maternity benefits
5. Flexible working
6. Support for childcare
7. Benefits for carers
8. General low-income benefits
9. Dispute resolution
10. Working and child tax credits

=

=

=

1. Pregnancy and maternity
2. Pay and entitlements
3. Discrimination
4. Statutory family leave
5. Flexible working
6. Support for childcare
7. Maternity benefits
8. Redundancy
9. Imposed change
10. Universal credit

Clients with income above MIs



= benefits/
financial
support
issues



I'm currently on **maternity leave**. I have two children, age nine months and two. My employer **won't offer me part-time** work on my return, and I **can't afford full-time childcare** for two. My husband **earns below £25,000** and we are really **struggling financially** with bills going up. I haven't been able to find a part-time job with a family-friendly employer and I just **feel really stuck**. I don't get any money for my final three months of maternity leave and I'm really struggling.

Issues:

- Inadequate maternity pay
- Refused flex
- Lack of flexible jobs
- Childcare affordability
- Low income with little support available

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Our theory of change (extract – draft)

Working Families has a theory of change. This maps out the social change Working Families is trying to achieve and the steps along the way.

Our helpline sits within this roadmap, with its own target outcomes. Measuring the helpline’s outcomes helps us know if we’re effectively achieving our aims.

MEASUREMENT

- 1. Do LAS service users better understand their rights?
- 2. Do they go on to use their rights?
- 3. Does this help resolve their issues?



LAS OUTCOMES

Parents and carers are **informed** and **empowered** to make use of their employment rights and entitlements to enter and stay in work



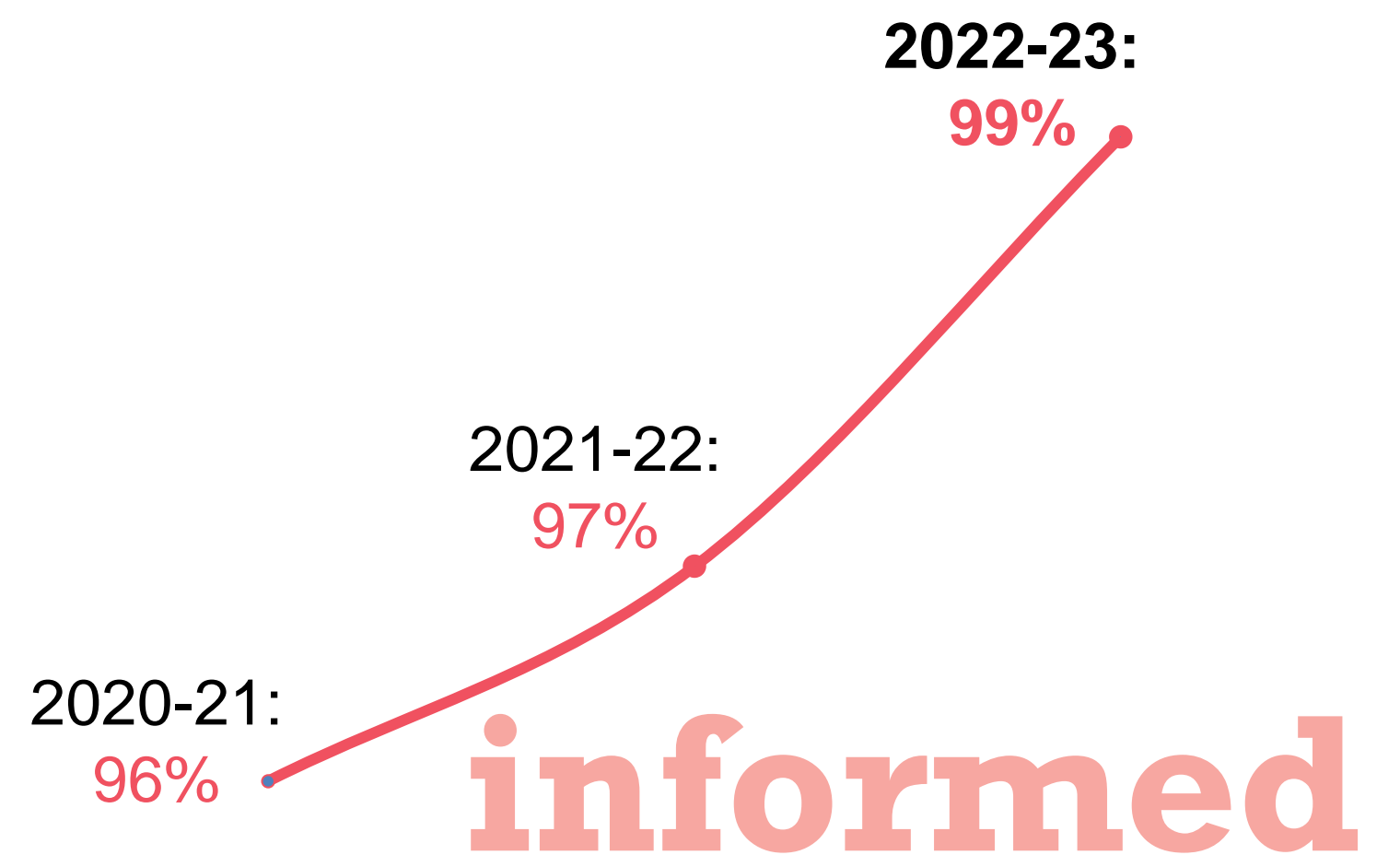
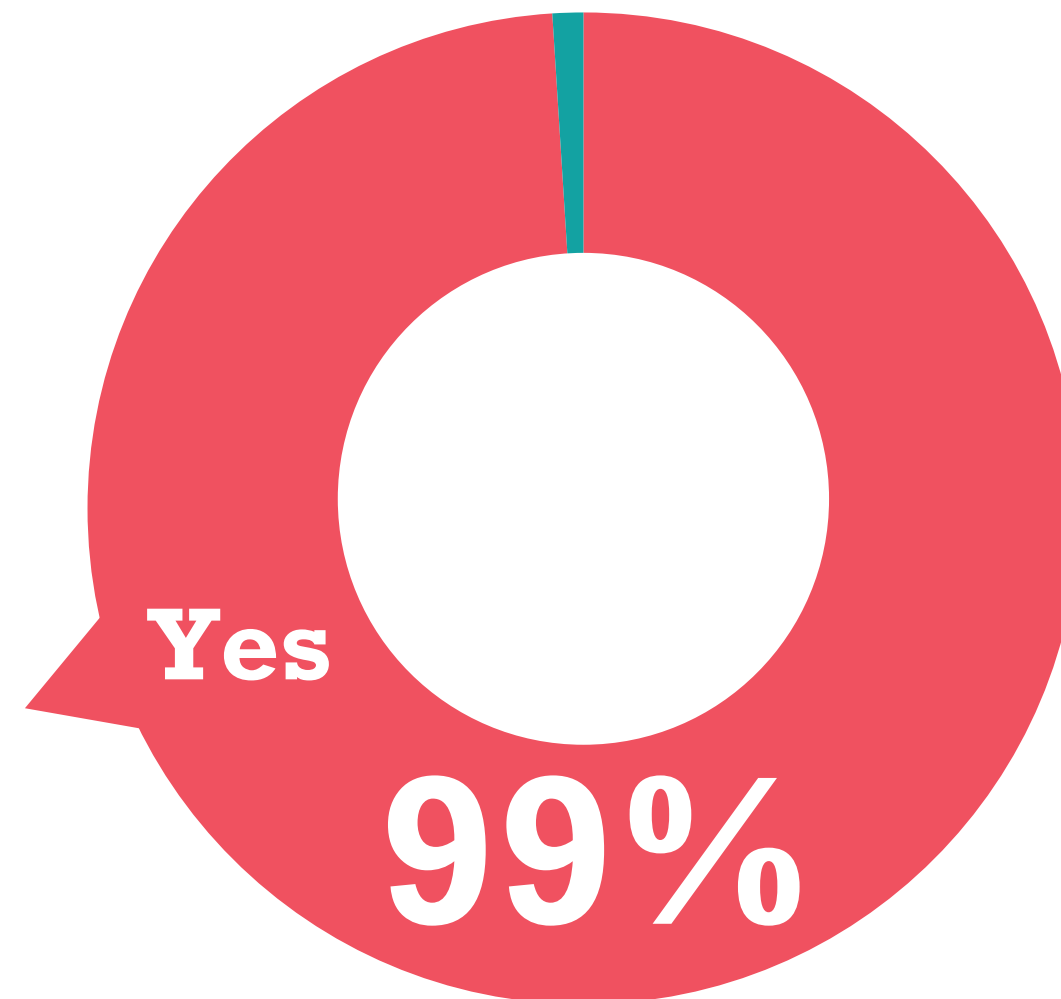
GOAL

Parents and carers access, progress and thrive in work, while meeting their caring responsibilities

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Immediate impact:
“**Do you better understand your rights and options after receiving our advice?**”

(Survey link included in our advisers’ response emails to helpline clients. Completed by 105 people.)



“Do you better understand your rights and options?”

Really clear and in-depth advice. Extremely helpful with having several scenarios to consider.

The advice I received was detailed and **easy to understand.**

Your advice has made me feel far more **clued up.**

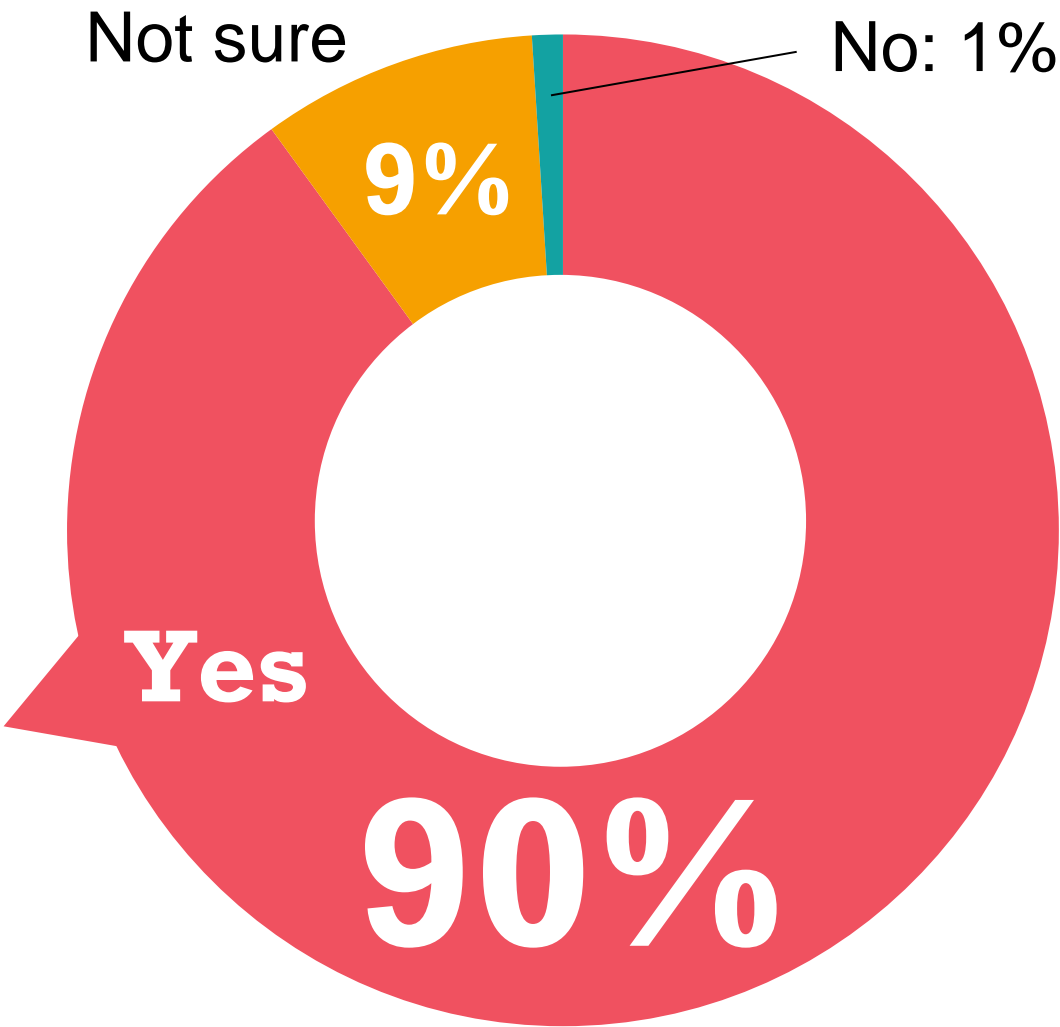
You’ve given me some ideas and options I hadn’t considered and presented them in a **really clear** way.

informed

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Immediate impact:
“Do you intend to
act on our
advice?”

empowered



I now **feel confident** that I will be able to provide a business case for my flexible working request.

“**Do you intend to act on our advice?**”

I feel like I can make a **more informed decision** about my situation with the information you’ve provided.

I really appreciate the clear advice and **will be acting upon it.**

I now feel **much more confident** applying for SPL.

Your advice has made me feel **empowered** to progress conversations with my employers.

empowered



I was **close to tears** reading the response from your benefits adviser, which was simply amazing. The time and effort spent on my reply was heart-warming; I really felt like she **understood what I was asking**, and the information she sent me was **clearly set out and easy to read** in a **non-judgmental** way. Thank you – you have given me a **clearer mindset moving forward**.

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Longer-term outcomes

Capturing long-term outcomes data for our helpline has been a longstanding challenge. We empower people to help themselves – they don't have to come back and let us know how they got on. And we recognise that working families are busy with more pressing priorities than feeding back to us.

In late 2022, we started sending out more follow-up emails with a link to a short outcomes survey. This was reworked in early 2023 to tie in with our theory of change and work we were doing to better understand least access to justice. Funders are also increasingly requiring more comprehensive outcomes data.

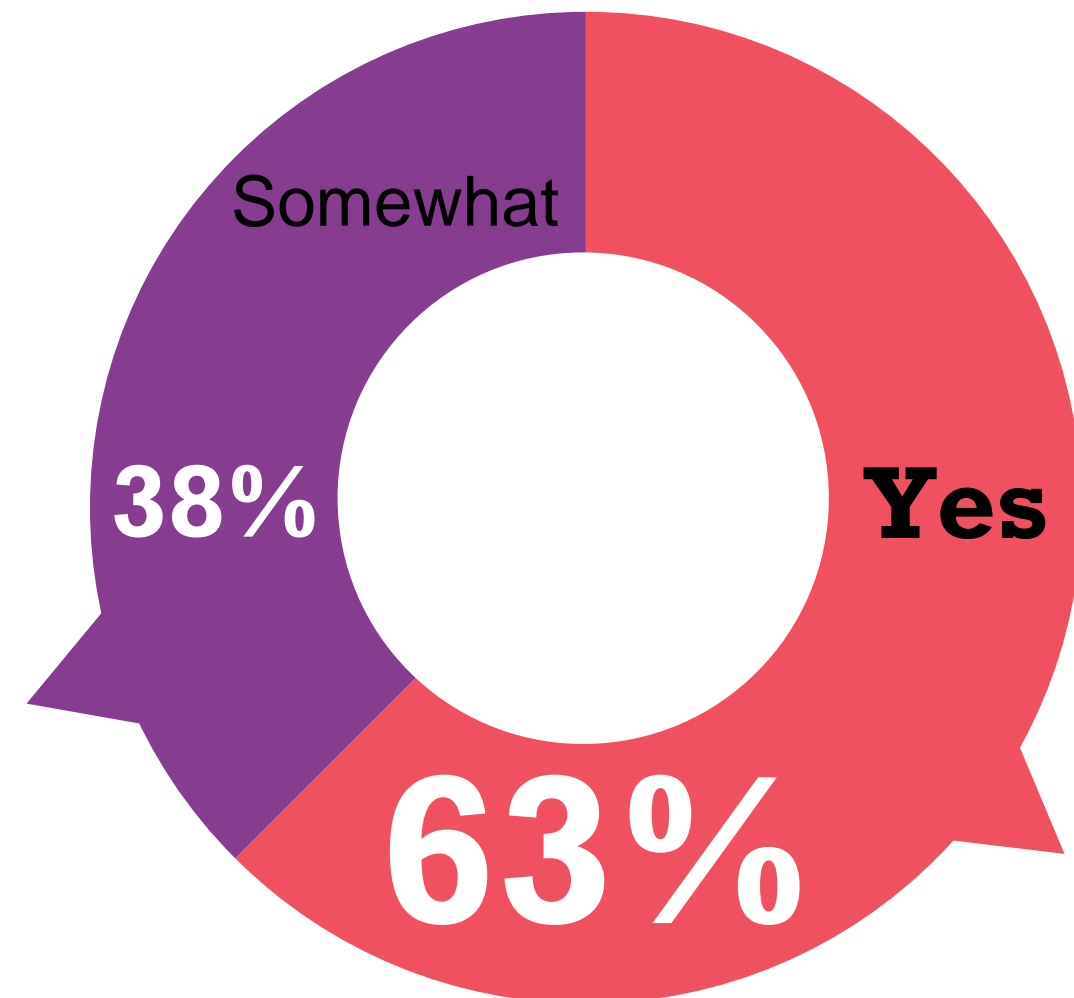
Since late 2022, we have received 27 longer-term outcomes survey responses.

We are working to improve response rates to our new outcomes survey.

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Long-term outcomes:
“**Did our employment advice help you [resolve your issue]?**”

(Sample size: 16)



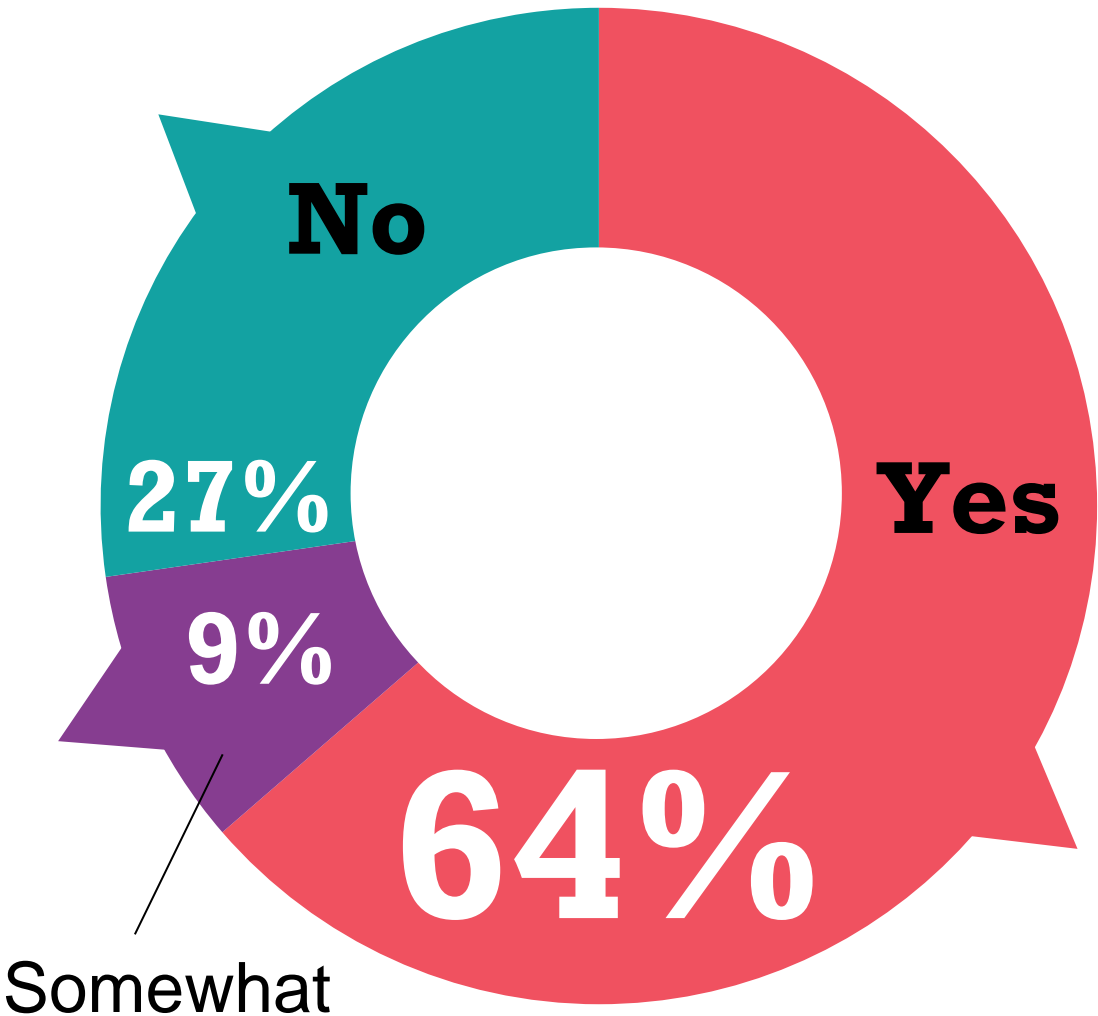
Employment outcomes:

- I understood my rights and felt empowered knowing how to act on them
- I kept my job
- I understood what I needed to do if I couldn't resolve the issue
- I was able to take time off to care for my family
- I resolved a dispute with my employer
- Less stress/anxiety
- I was able to have an honest and open conversation with my boss

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Long-term outcomes:
“Did acting on our advice help you increase your household income?”

(Sample size: 11)



Reported benefits/
financial support outcomes:

- More income per month (£34-150)
- Family’s financial situation more manageable

(Of the three people who said no, one said this was down to a persistently unreasonable employer refusing to pay maternity pay, and another’s income increased rendering them ineligible for benefits.)



Total value of unclaimed in-work benefits/financial support calculated for our helpline clients in 2022-2023

- 20 cases
- Highest value: £24,581/year
- Lowest value: £500/year
- Average value/year: £4,902
- Median value/year: ~£3,775

£98,032

Sample outcomes

I almost didn't think I had any maternity leave rights but you advised me accurately on the policies and **I was able to get paid maternity leave.**

Your advice helped me **earn extra money** while on maternity leave from my main employment.

You gave us the confidence to keep negotiating and **get the hours we needed from our child's nursery.**

I felt I was **no longer on my own** with my grievance case and had the **confidence** to take it to appeal. I lost my case but I know, with your advice, that I **gave it my best shot.**

04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Case study

OUTLINE: A mother requested reduced and compressed hours after maternity leave. Her employer offered a trial, which it cut short, and during which she was required to attend meetings on non-working days. Her request was refused yet her male colleagues worked flexibly in the way she'd requested to.

OUR ADVICE: We identified five potential claims/legal breaches, including indirect and direct sex discrimination, and under statutory flexible working legislation, the Employment Rights Act 1996, and the Part-time Workers Regulations 2000. We advised on how to request flexible working, challenge a refusal, resolve informally, raise a grievance, and bring a claim in the Employment Tribunal.

“I appealed using your advice, which proved instrumental to winning my case ... It was gruelling ... but Working Families was like a **fairy godmother** helping me out.”