

Legal Advice Service

**Working
Families**



**Helpline and website
data deep dive 2024-2025**

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A deep dive into our 2024-2025 Legal Advice Service helpline and website data

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02 WHO did we help?

Geography, protected characteristics, low income, multiple disadvantage, least access to justice



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03 What ISSUES were they facing?

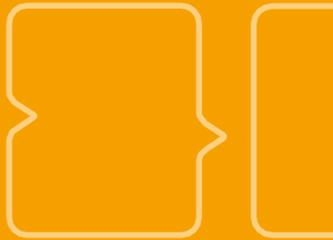
Most common issues we were contacted about (including in relation to income), trends



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LEARNING and IMPROVEMENT

04 The DIFFERENCE we made

Informed, empowered, resolved: understanding rights and options, feeling confident to act, and longer-term outcomes and impact



Spotlight on our WEBSITE

More than **1 in 10**
UK parents and carers visited our 200+
online information and guidance articles



570,000
(more than a third) were from London

The CORNERSTONE of our service

- Via our website, we can reach the vast majority of parents/carers in the UK
- Our website empowers parents/carers to help themselves, reserving our helpline for those with the thorniest problems/in greatest need
- In their advice emails, our advisers link extensively to our online resources: articles, factsheets, template letters and precedents

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01 Introduction and overview

In 2024-2025, our helpline received ...

- **972** contact form queries via our **website**
- **31** queries via **social media**
- **1,089 calls** to our helpline during opening hours, from **736 people** – **79%** of whom got through to an adviser

We advised ...

- **886** people by **email** only (59% of cases)
- **378** people over the **phone** only (25%)
- **215** people via **phone and email** (14%)
- **30** people on **social media** (2%)

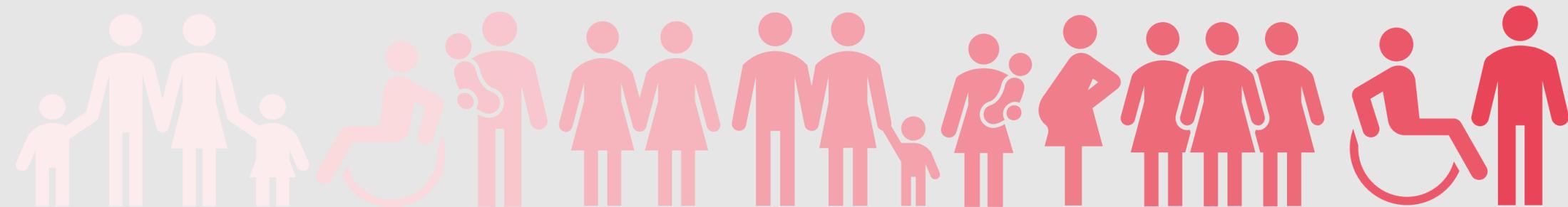
**We responded to every query,
and in under four days**



We responded to **1,509**
helpline queries from **1,455** people

1,652,305
unique website visitors

viewed our rights pages **1,910,552** times



Pro bono support: The law firms working with us to deliver our service

1. Baker McKenzie
2. BDBF LLP
3. Cooley LLP
4. Covington & Burling LLP
5. Dentons
6. Freshfields
7. Gowling WLG (UK) LLP
8. Herbert Smith Freehills
Kramer LLP

We couldn't have provided our in-depth specialist legal advice without over **70 volunteer lawyers** from **17 firms** helping draft **legal precedents** and around **450 query responses**, freeing up our expert in-house solicitors and advisers to help service users with the thorniest problems.

9. Lewis Silkin LLP
10. Linklaters LLP
11. Mishcon de Reya LLP
12. Norton Rose Fulbright
13. Pinsent Masons LLP
14. Reed Smith LLP
15. Simmons & Simmons LLP
16. White & Case LLP
17. Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

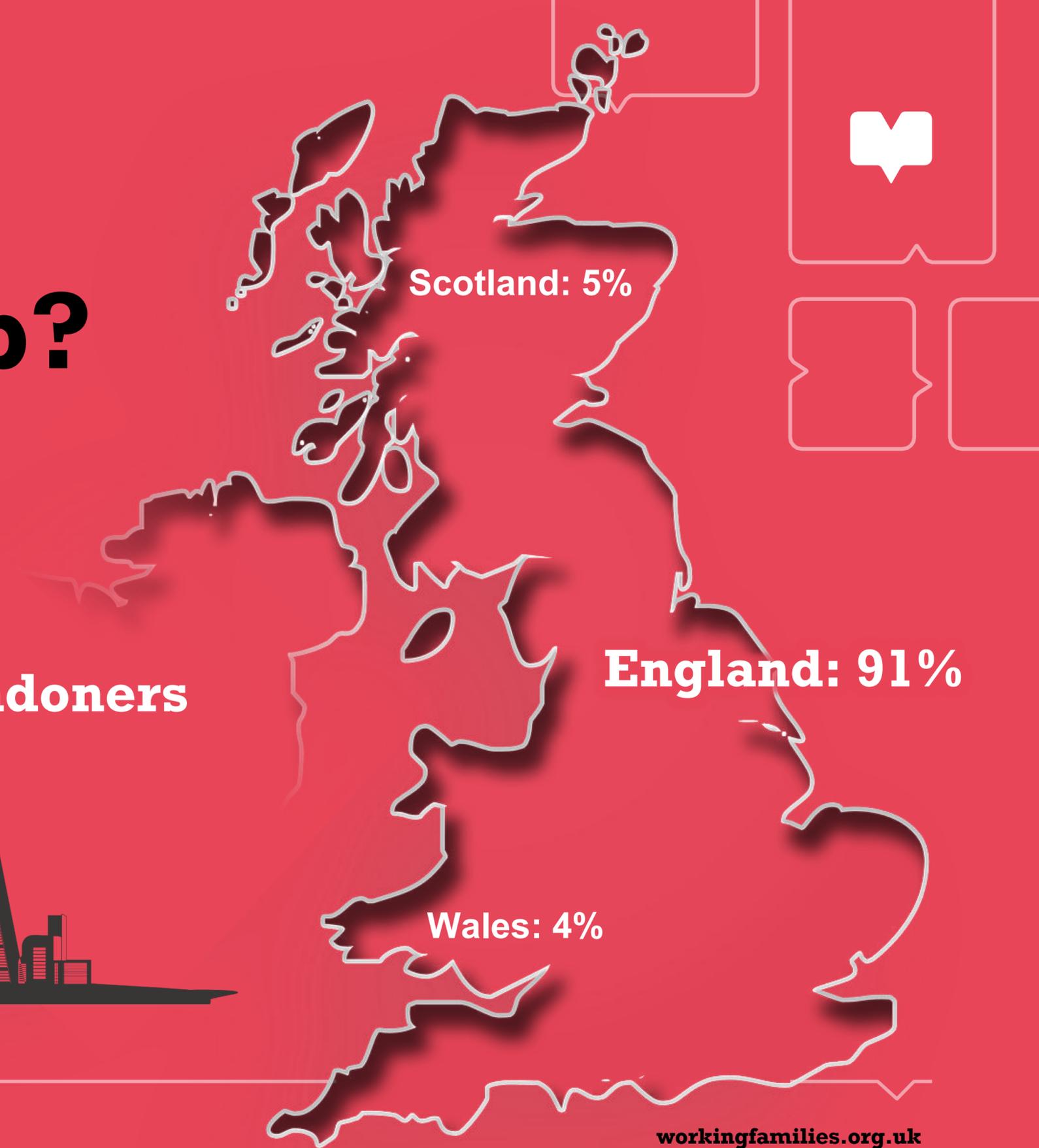


02 WHO do we help?

Where do people contact us from?

18% of helpline users last year were Londoners

Londoners = 14% of the population of England, Scotland and Wales (2022)



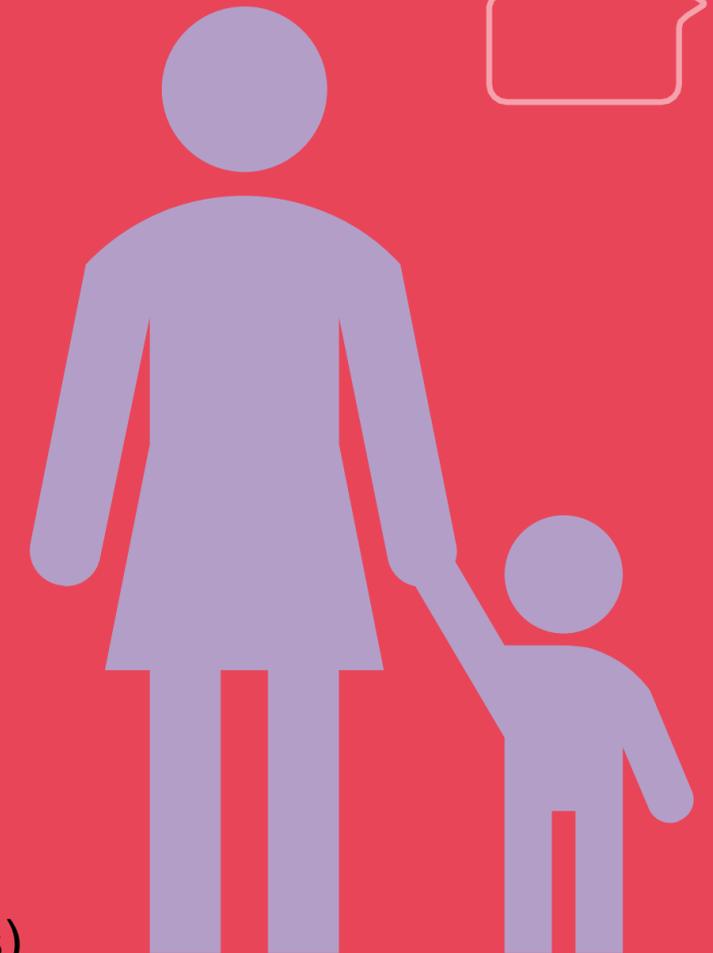
Protected characteristics and vulnerabilities

- **83%** of helpline users last year were **women** (previous two years: 84% and 85%)
- **86%** of our helpline users were **aged 25-44** – peak child-rearing years (previous two years: 83% and 84%)
- **18%** were from a **minority ethnic background** (previous two years: 19%; England, Scotland and Wales: 18%)
- **17%** were **living with a disability/long-term health condition** (previous two years: 14% and 17%)*

* Disabled people are underrepresented among our helpline users because they are less likely to be working, and most of our helpline users are in work. In the UK, 30% of people live with one or more long-term health conditions. 24% of the UK population had a disability in 2022-2023. There is overlap between the two.

19% of
helpline users
were **single
parents**

(previously 22%; UK-wide, 15% of families are lone-parent families)



Compared to 21% of UK households with children,

26%

of helpline users were living in
relative poverty*
despite working

* The threshold for living in relative poverty is earning $\leq 60\%$ of median income for the year in question. For 2024-2025, this figure was just over £30,000 for couple households with two children, and just under for single-parent households with two children. (Leeds Observatory)

** The MIS defines the income needed by different household types to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living. MIS benchmarking is updated each year by Loughborough University in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In 2024, the team redeveloped household budgets from scratch for the first time since the MIS's introduction in 2008: MIS thresholds increased significantly. We calculated our MIS thresholds using the [online MIS calculator](#), for four household types, all with two children: couples in and outside of London, and single parents in and outside of London. Our 65% figure is an estimate.

02 **WHO** do we help?

Almost two thirds (65%)
of helpline users were
estimated to be from
households
**earning
below the
Minimum
Income
Standard
(MIS)****



In the UK, ~49% of children live in households with income below the Minimum Income Standard.

WHO is using our website?

- 62% of website visitors were **female** and 38% were **male***
- The majority were **aged 25-44***
- 27% were from a **minority ethnic background****
- 28% were living with a **disability and/or long-term health condition****

HOW are they finding us?

- More than double the number of users were looking at our site on a **smartphone/portable device** than on a desktop/laptop*
- Two thirds of visitors found us via an internet search, with most via **Google***
- 5 out of the top 10 Google searches by which users get to our website were about **working under protest letters***

43% were living in **relative poverty****

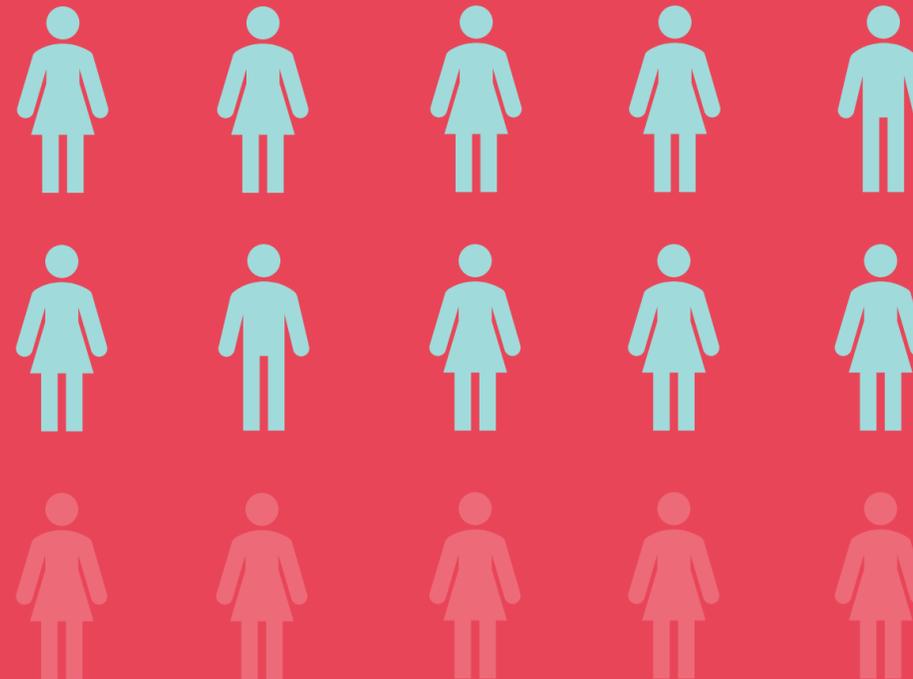
$\frac{3}{4}$ were earning **below the Minimum Income Standard****

* Data source: web analytics | ** Data source: 500+ website feedback survey respondents

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Multiple disadvantage

- 37% of helpline users from households earning below £50,000 were single parents
- 47% of helpline users living with a disability were living in relative poverty
- 42% of helpline users from a minority ethnic background were from households earning less than £30,000, compared to 22% of service users from a white background



2
—
3

Two thirds of the single parents who contacted us were living close to or in relative poverty

Least access to justice

Over three quarters of our helpline users between October and March* ...

- met our definition of having **least access to justice** (we give more time and extended support to these clients);
- presented with a **complex query** or **cluster problem** that couldn't be resolved via our website alone;
- were **in receipt of in-work benefits**; and/or
- had household **income below £50,000**

* We began recording 'complex queries' from 1 October 2024, hence this data not covering the whole 12 months

AMARA's story / Part

1

For four years, I've worked for the same employer with flexible arrangements that allowed me to care for my neurodivergent daughter. As a single mother, I relied on my guaranteed full-time weekday hours with fixed shifts to manage my caring responsibilities.

When my daughter settled into her new SEN school, I asked my employer if I could go full-time. I had the option to buy our rented home – something I'd been working towards to provide stability and financial security – and the increased income would help with securing and affording a mortgage. My employer seemed supportive.

Shortly afterwards, I was asked to sign a contract variation which I thought reflected my request. I work on the railways, and when asked to attend the office, I find the environment intimidating. I'm also neurodivergent, which my employer knew, so trusting them and feeling under pressure, I signed what I thought formalised our discussion.

A few days later, I realised I'd actually signed a zero-hours arrangement – no guaranteed hours, income or security. I felt extremely anxious. When I asked to revert to my previous contract, explaining this wasn't what I'd asked for, my employer refused. I then raised a grievance which was also refused.

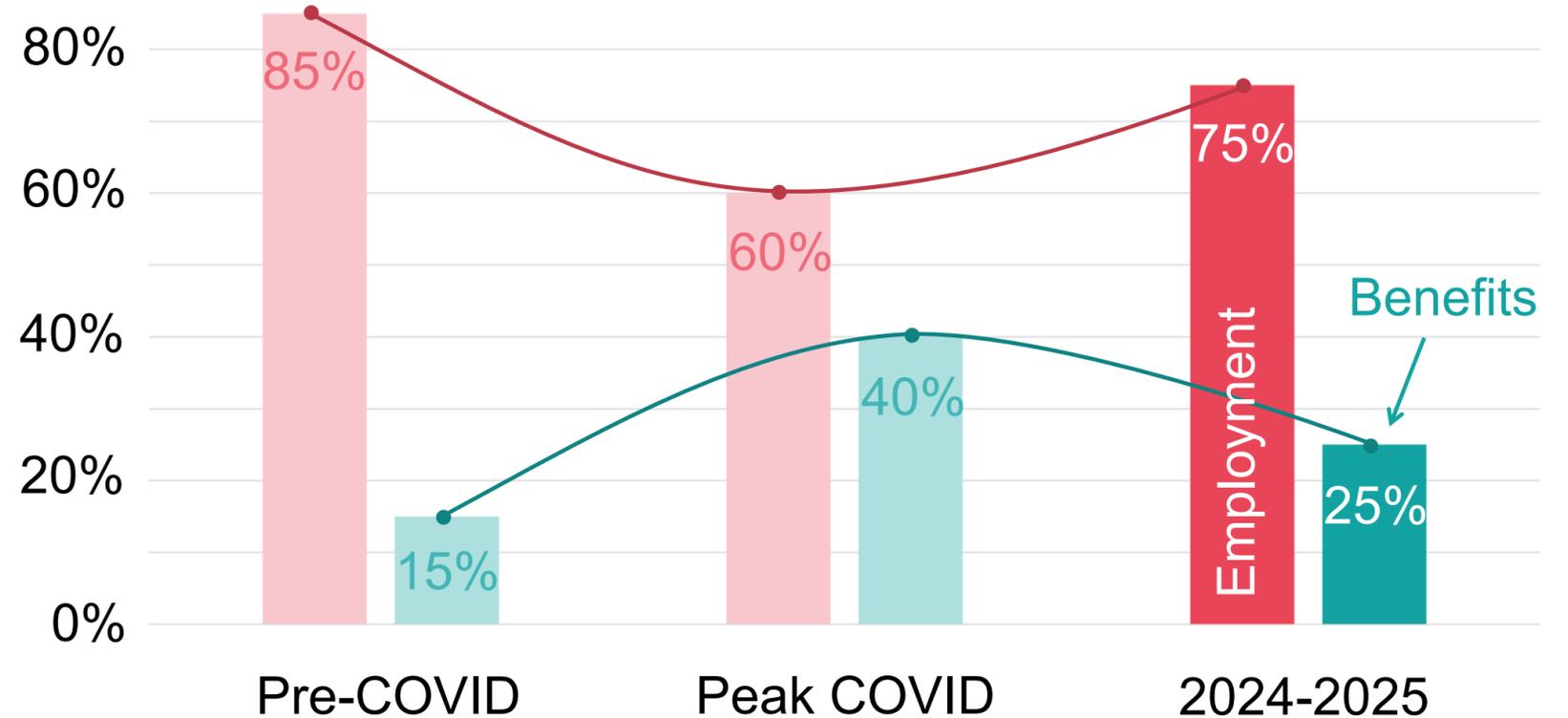
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03 What ISSUES were they facing?

Employment/benefits split

- Three quarters of queries concerned **employment issues**, and a quarter **in-work benefits/financial support/help with childcare costs**
- Nearly **40%** of the people we advised were also **signposted** to other agencies

A quarter received extended, in-depth support



The top 10 issues by income bracket



<£30k households
1. Discrimination (↑)
2. Pregnancy and maternity (↑)
3. Universal credit (↓)
4. Flexible working (↑)
5. Maternity benefits (↓)
6. Support for childcare (=)
7. General low-income benefits (↑)
8. Imposed changes (new)
9. Dismissal (new)
10. Pay and entitlements (new)

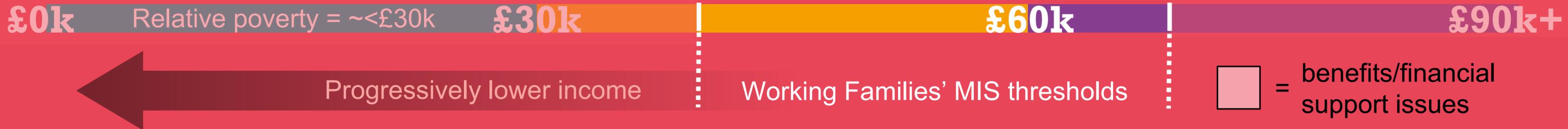
~ $\frac{1}{4}$
of clients

£30k-£60k households
1. Pregnancy and maternity (=)
2. Discrimination (=)
3. Flexible working (↑)
4. Universal credit (↑)
5. Support for childcare (↓)
6. Imposed changes (↑)
7. Redundancy (↑)
8. Pay and entitlements (↑)
9. Maternity benefits (↓)
10. Dismissal (new)

~ $\frac{1}{3}$
of clients

£60k+ households
1. Pregnancy and maternity (=)
2. Discrimination (↑)
3. Flexible working (↑)
4. Statutory family leave (new)
5. Pay and entitlements (↑)
6. Redundancy (↓)
7. Imposed changes (↑)
8. Support for childcare (↓)
9. Dismissal (new)
10. Dispute resolution (=)

~ $\frac{4}{10}$
of clients

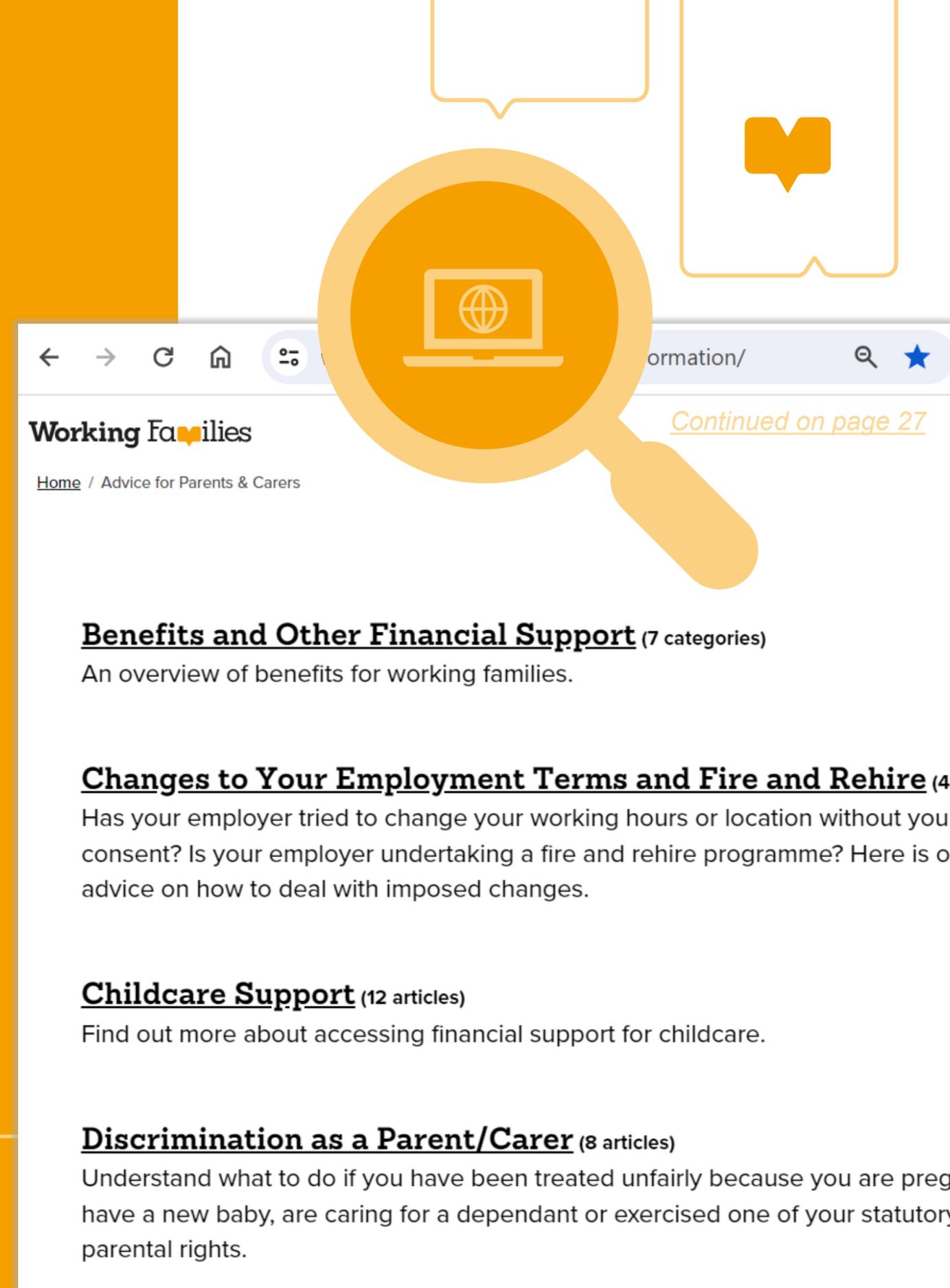


Most visited PAGES

	Views
<u>My employer wants to change my hours, location or other terms of my contract – what are my rights?</u>	109,153
<u>England – free childcare for children aged nine months to four years old</u>	93,388
<u>Flexible working and the right to request</u>	90,963
<u>Calculating maternity pay</u>	81,398
<u>What can I claim if I am too sick to work?</u>	68,591

Most popular DOWNLOADS

	Downloads
Template flexible working request letter	5,837
Letter of protest – varying existing terms	3,393
Appeal letter bundle for flexible working request	2,011
Letter of protest – fire and rehire	1,937
Pregnancy and maternity calendar 2024-2025	1,907



AMARA's story / Part 2

I felt so stressed, panicking about how I'd provide for my disabled daughter or buy our home with no guaranteed income.

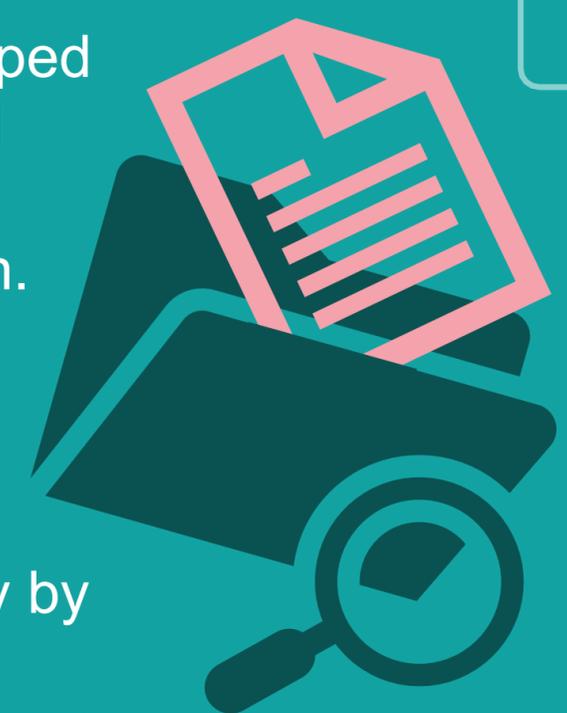
I looked for help, starting with my union, but my rep was unsupportive. I had a free half-hour with a solicitor, who told me to quit my job. Everywhere else, I was told I "didn't meet the criteria" for free legal support, or had to pay – which was financially impossible for me.

Through an online search, I found and contacted Working Families. An employment solicitor got back to me quickly, calling instead of emailing because I'd explained I'm neuro-divergent and this was my communication preference. She was kind, friendly and reassuring.

She reviewed my work correspondence and explained how a work contract isn't always confined to what's written on paper. She helped me understand that the way I'd been treated potentially amounted to indirect sex discrimination and/or disability discrimination. I wanted to keep my job, so we planned to appeal the grievance decision.

My adviser went above and beyond, putting together an appeal pack – I was blown away by the detail, yet it was written in a way I could understand. She'd drafted my appeal document and given detailed advice on handling the process. I immediately felt more informed and confident, knowing I had a clear path to follow.

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04 The DIFFERENCE we make

Our theory of change

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 what we set out to.

MEASUREMENT

1. Do Legal Advice Service users better understand their rights?
2. Do they plan/go on to use their rights?
3. Does this help resolve their issues?

OUTCOMES

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

GOAL

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



Outcomes summary

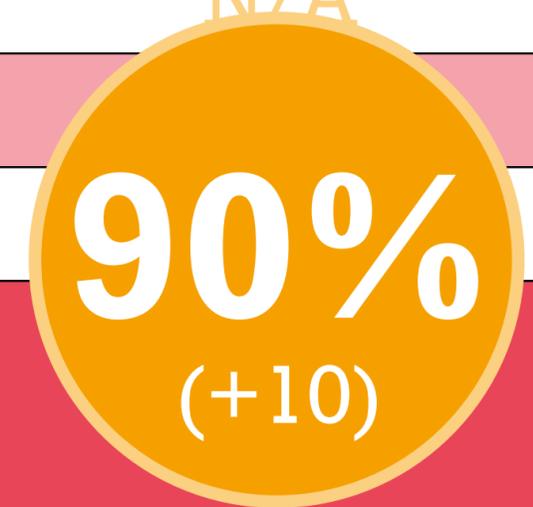
INFORMED	EMPOWERED	RESOLVED
Better understood rights, options and entitlements after accessing our advice	Intended to act on, or did act on, our advice	Resolved their work issue/increased their household income

Short-term outcomes – survey emailed with our advice/embedded in our webpages

Helpline	102 responses	98% (=)	95% (-1)	N/A
Website	732 responses	93% (+3)	80% (+1)	N/A

Long-term outcomes – survey emailed two to three months later

Helpline	182 responses	98% (+3)	92% (+4)	90% (+10)
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Note: The '+', '-' and '=' figures in brackets indicate change compared to 2023-2024's equivalent data.

INFORMED

You gave me **clarity on my rights** and reassured me that my employer was in the wrong and I was not asking for something unreasonable.



I **know where I stand** when it comes to being treated less favourably/discriminated against whilst on maternity leave.

You gave me a **very clear understanding of my rights** around flexible working requests.

Your advice helped me **understand my rights** and make a more informed decision about my future.

I was **more informed** to negotiate with management.

You have **equipped me with the information** I need to proceed through this claim against my workplace who have treated me unfairly throughout my pregnancy and maternity leave.

I **know what I am entitled to** and I **understand the next step.**

EMPOWERED



Your advice meant I could **challenge my employer's decisions.**

Referring to points from acts meant I sounded more professional and **gave me a leg to stand on.**

I felt **more secure in decisions I was making** for my family.

I came away feeling **empowered and confident** to continue to raise my concerns and challenge my employer until I'd exhausted all internal processes.

Your advice gave me **so much confidence.**

I feel **more confident** in how to present my case.

I felt **more confident** because I **knew my rights.**

Your advice **gave me the confidence to speak to my manager** about how my diagnosis impacted my plans to return to work and to discuss my options.

I feel **more confident** navigating the benefits system.

I feel **empowered to have conversations with my employer** knowing I have the information I need.

RESOLVED

I've kept my role and avoided a tribunal.

My **flexible working arrangement has been approved**, and I feel **more secure in my job**. This has also meant my child can attend nursery four days per week instead of five, which has given us **more financial security**.

I feel **less stressed** as I was able to discuss my options with my employer as per your advice, which meant I was able to **keep my role in the business**.

I have **successfully navigated a grievance at work** and was able to **keep my flexible working request**. Working a four-day week offers **stability for my family**.

Your advice made my partner and I feel **less stressed**. We found out what our rights were in terms of claiming adoption pay and shared parental pay. My partner and I have **both been able to take paid time off work while adopting our daughter**. This has **made a huge difference to us all during the settling-in time**. Your advice and resources were invaluable – clear and understandable.

Your thorough advice provided a **clear route of options**. **My husband's flexible working request was accepted, which meant I could return to work full-time**. (His employer had assumed that I wouldn't/shouldn't be returning to work full-time so had declined his informal request.) This has **helped hugely with our income** and the **time we get to spend with our son**.

RESOLVED

Childcare is more affordable and I am **able to go back to work after my maternity leave**. Before I contacted Working Families, I wouldn't have been able to go back to work.

I was able to **obtain a larger settlement** that meant I can now **focus my time on my baby**.

I **kept my job** during maternity leave.

My **income is secure** and is not going to be taken away.

I was **allowed enough parental leave** to meet the needs of my **disabled child**.

Your advice helped me to gain **flexible working to support my son's transition to primary school**. Without your advice, **I would have had to give up my job**.

I've been able to **progress my career and balance my family life better**.

My work wanted me to start at 08:00, which I couldn't do because of childcare opening times. Thanks to your advice, I **negotiated an 08:30 start**.

Applying for flexible working as a man was challenging and looked upon negatively by my employer. I **successfully appealed against my employer's refusal of my flexible working request**, and can now **spend more time with my young children** and do nursery drop-offs/pick-ups. I'm less stressed.

RESOLVED: BENEFITS

- **100%** of service users receiving benefits advice said they **better understood** their entitlements
- **85% acted** on our advice
- Nearly **two thirds increased their household income**
- **43%** told us they **increased their household income** by a specific amount: an average of **£4,592/year**
- Our advisers calculated **benefits gains** of over **£90,000**

I understand the system much better now.

It felt like a weight off getting this benefits buffer whilst on maternity leave as a single mum.

* Data source: 46 benefits advice clients who responded to our long-term outcomes survey

1 of our helpline users who completed our long-term outcomes survey
4 specifically mentioned **improved wellbeing***

This outcome really **helps with my mental and physical health.**

You really **helped me when I faced the most difficult time.** Working Families was a **godsend.**

I feel **less stressed.**

My mental health has never been better.

You've been a **lifeline** for me at a terribly difficult time in my life.

WELLBEING

When we first spoke I was panicking, feeling stressed and anxious. You

put **things in perspective**, made me **feel calm** and my situation **manageable.**

Without Working Families, **I would have been completely lost.**

The whole process is a lot **less stressful.**

79% of helpline users said it's **easier to balance work and family and/or their family financial situation has improved** as a result of Working Families*

THE MOST HELPFUL ADVICE

Working Families helped explain I was 'in the right' **better than any other support organisation**, enabling me to communicate my position very clearly to my employer.

Yours was **by far the best support I received** when it came to understanding my rights.

Your excellent service was **so helpful** when I **couldn't get clear information from other sources.**

No one else, including our employers, knew what we were entitled to, and **everything else I read online was very confusing.**

You helped me at a time of real need and worry after being **wrongly advised by another reputable organisation.**

Working Families' advice was far better than [other well-known advice organisations].



WEBSITE FEEDBACK



Your online resources were **amazing** – they explained things **really clearly**. We **used the letters when contacting our employers** about leave.

This is the **clearest information I have read on the subject of flexible working requests for parents/carers**. It **avoids jargon** or having to follow links to gov.uk about employment law (which can be difficult to understand for the layperson). It also gives **helpful suggestions** for how to go about parts of the process in an **amicable** way with your employer, which I **haven't found on other sites**. Thank you for the article – I feel **more confident** in what I can do now.

The information on the website was **extremely helpful and informative**, resulting in a **positive and satisfactory outcome**.

I was struggling to find the correct info on the government website and **this has really reassured me**. It's **very clear, succinct and easy to understand**.

Your website is great and provides lots of **helpful information for confused parents**.

Spotlight on our **WEBSITE**

Your really thorough email included links to **additional resources I could quote to my employer**.

Excellent online resources.

This description of shared parental leave is the **best I've read so far**.

I'm very grateful for the information shared here as I was worried about returning to work when my twins are still under one year old, but **this article has really given me perspectives I didn't know were possible by law**.



LEARNING and IMPROVEMENT

We're always striving to make our Legal Advice Service even better, and strengthening how we record, analyse and act on our data is key to this. In 2024-2025, we ...

- **analysed our helpline phone data** to work out when demand was highest. We knew **we weren't answering as many calls as we wanted to**, but wanted to **increase capacity in a targeted, efficient way**. We increased adviser capacity on the phone by only three hours per week, at the busiest times and ...

We **grew the percentage of unique callers getting through to an adviser** from a low of just ~40% a few years ago, to **89%** by the end of 2024-2025.

- **enhanced monitoring of least access to justice** among service users by including known low income/receipt of benefits alongside our formal **definition**
- **clearly defined complex queries** as those our website can't resolve and began consistent monitoring of these
- **adapted our website feedback form** to capture nuanced reasons for our web pages not helping, including 'the law doesn't help me' and 'the benefits system is too complex'

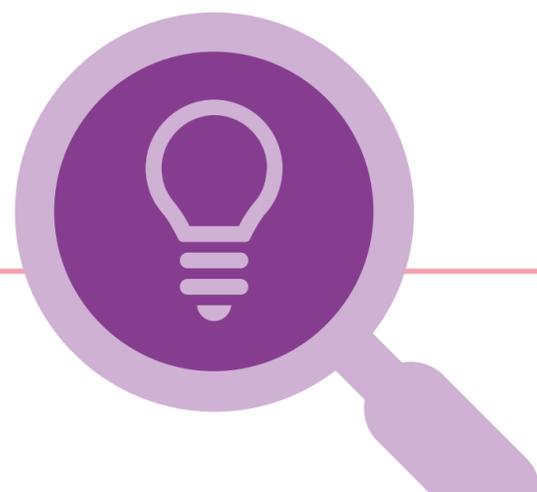


We are **continually adapting**. All **feedback received is reviewed quickly and acted on** (where appropriate) by our head of legal advice, ensuring that **our helpline is shaped by the people who use it**.

We're working on further improvements to our monitoring and evaluation. Putting together this deep dive – our richest yet – has helped us identify gaps and where we can tighten our data capture.

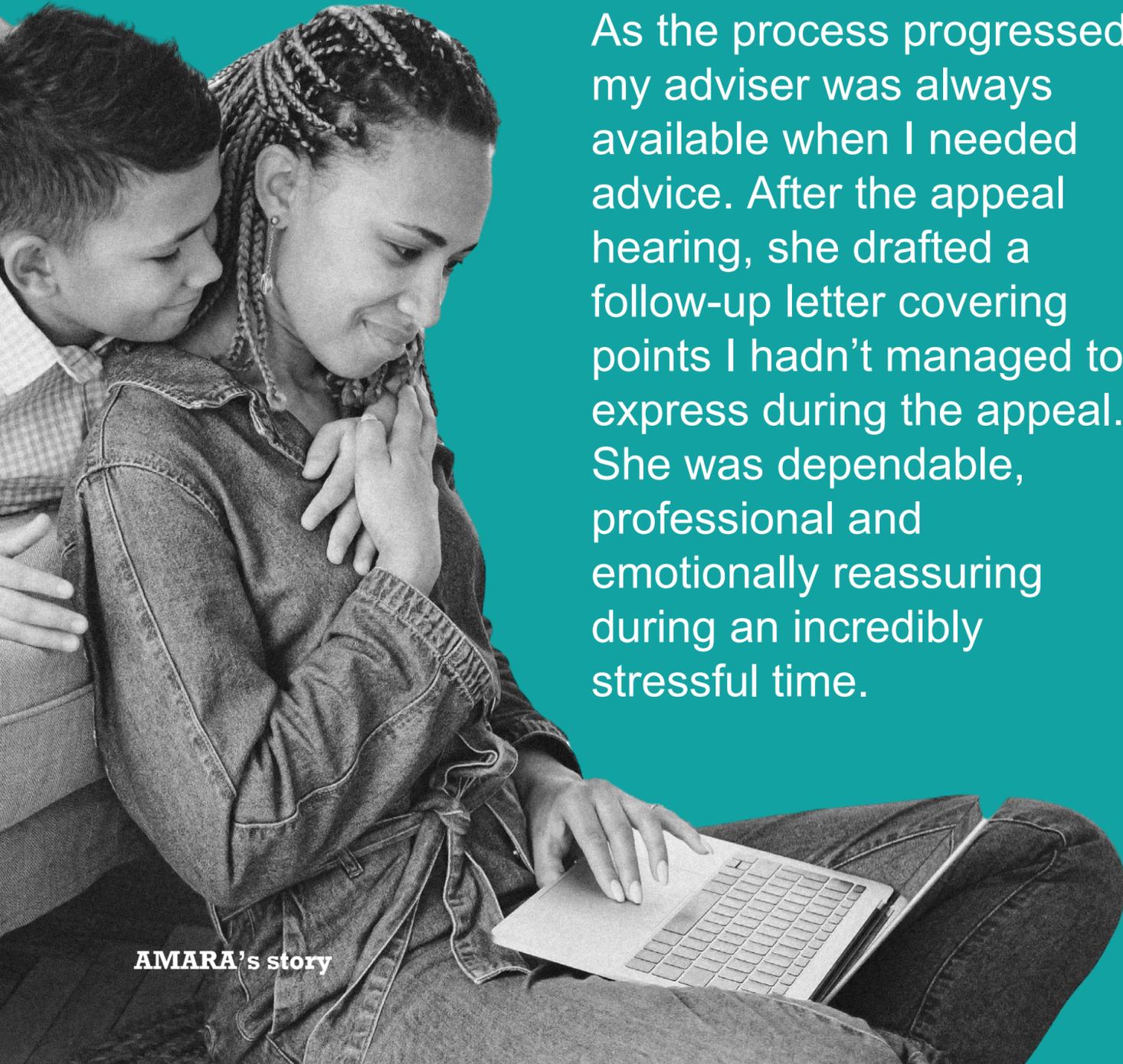
- Our **helpline contact form wasn't accurately capturing caring responsibilities for a disabled child/adult family member**. Parents typically selected only 'parent', missing additional caring roles. We've **adapted our contact form to more precisely capture carer status**.

- We've been **under-recording financial outcomes** by only capturing calculated unclaimed benefits or confirmed settlements. Supporting someone to keep their job or increase working days through flexible working requests are also financial outcomes. We're **developing ways to quantify and capture these broader financial outcomes**.
- Having established successful long-term outcomes data collection from helpline users, we're in the early stages of **applying a similar approach to track website visitors' eventual outcomes**.



AMARA's story / Part

3



As the process progressed, my adviser was always available when I needed advice. After the appeal hearing, she drafted a follow-up letter covering points I hadn't managed to express during the appeal. She was dependable, professional and emotionally reassuring during an incredibly stressful time.

Thanks to Working Families' support, I secured exactly what I'd originally requested: a **full-time contract with fixed, guaranteed weekday hours**. I feel so **relieved**. I'm **financially secure** and have a much better work-life balance that allows me to properly care for and enjoy quality time with my disabled daughter. I can finally move forward with buying our home.

From the beginning, I felt well supported. The lines of communication were always open and I never felt alone. My adviser was patient and compassionate, showing genuine empathy throughout. I honestly don't know what I would have done without Working Families' support; it's been life-changing.

Our **FUNDERS**

We couldn't make the difference we do without the generous support of our Legal Advice Service's funders.

Thank you.

- A B Charitable Trust
- Access to Justice Foundation 'Improving Outcomes Through Legal Support' (IOTLS) programme, funded by the Ministry of Justice
- Access to Justice Foundation 'Improving Outcomes Through Advice' (ILTA) programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, with our thanks to National Lottery players
- Aviva Foundation
- Drapers' Charitable Fund
- Dulverton Charitable Trust
- Farrer & Co Charitable Trust
- Garden Court Chambers
- Gowling WLG (UK) Charitable Trust
- London Legal Support Trust (Centre of Excellence funding)
- National Lottery Community Fund 'Awards for All England' programme, with our thanks to National Lottery Players
- Trust for London

Working Families' free Legal Advice Service was established in 1999. Our team of specialist employment solicitors and experienced advisers empower working parents and carers with a clear understanding of their employment rights and the strategies and confidence to resolve unreasonable and/or unjust treatment at work. We prioritise a de-escalatory approach, helping people with caring responsibilities to remain

in work wherever possible and appropriate.

We also have a dedicated benefits adviser, who advises on in-work benefits, financial support, and help with childcare costs.

Our Legal Advice Service has been continuously Advice Quality Standard accredited for over 20 years and is a London Legal Support Trust Centre of Excellence.



Working Families



Contact our helpline:

- [Online contact form](#)
- **0300 012 0312**

