

Resident Advice and Support

Situation Report Monthly report for September 23

HEADLINES



2363 residents presented for help; slightly lower than previous 3 months

the number of issues that required support and guidance was c. **4331**; highest since March

Most popular way residents have contacted for help in September was **telephone** then **online** web forms and **in person**

650 in person appointments with residents for support and guidance with **benefits, debt and other arrears such as energy**; highest since March



at least **£219K** income found for residents from 'one off' cash gains (DWP Benefit Appeal back payment, discretionary payments, benefit uptake campaigns); highest since March

at least **£157K** of resident debt was written off

at least **£99K** new monthly income found for residents (DWP monthly benefit increase) when annualised this is **£1.18M**; highest since March



Still seeing a high number of residents seeking support with **universal credit and other benefit applications at the Citizens Advice and Stockport Homes**

Once again fewer people presented with more issues:-

April May June **8K** residents and **10.4K** issues. July August September **7.2K** residents and **12.5K** issues



awarded **£11K** in crisis payments:-

224 discretionary crisis support fund applications awarded; **43** fewer than previous month

25% award rate for discretionary applications; **gas, electric and food** were the most applied for items

fewer applications for crisis rent applications (**47 to 31**) and the majority were from private rented accommodation



Demand remains high for help with **benefit support**; **September** saw fewer residents contacting CASORT for **benefits / universal credit** and **debt** with a small increase for **utility support**.

RAS saw a high number of residents seeking and/or requesting **appeals** for their current level of benefit claims; **Debt** cases – remains high

COL line saw an increase in **food poverty**



Brinnington and **Central** residents sought help the most for money advice and crisis support.

Davenport and **Cale Green, Manor & Edgeley** and **Cheadle Heath** recorded high demand; with **Offerton** nearly doubling

Redish North saw a reduction with residents seeking help

1. Notes about the Information in this report

This situation report (SITREP) contains data about the Resident Advice and Support model for Stockport residents. It is focussed on performance data from a number of teams and the data is sourced for different systems. The purpose is to have a collective Stockport view of how Resident and Advice Support services are performing for Stockport residents. The services covered in this SITREP are as follows:-

1.1. Resident Advice and Support (RAS) – Stockport Council

From April 23 services within the council who deliver benefits and debt advice were brought together into RAS – the areas within scope of this report are:-

- Benefit Appeals and Benefits Advice
- Debt Advice (includes SLA with Stockport homes for complex debt advice)
- Crisis Support Funds; COL crisis advice line
- Outreach support and home visitors
- Stopford House Advisors

1.2. Citizens Advice Stockport (CAS)

This is a commissioned service for a variety of advice and support to all Stockport residents; the areas of in scope for this report are:-

- Benefits & Tax Credits
- Universal Credit
- Debt
- Utilities and communications

1.3. Stockport Support Services Hub (SSH)

This is a commissioned prevention and early help service¹ to provide residents aged 18 and over a wide range of advice and support. Whilst some services are not in scope for this report, the following are included:-

- Advice provided around finances
- Foodbank vouchers
- Household Support Fund referrals
- Help with benefit claims/forms/queries
- Pension credit enquiries and Attendance Allowance

1.4. Stockport Homes Group (SHG)

This is service based within Stockport Homes² that supports their tenants with money and benefits advice. The following are in scope for this report:-

- Benefits & tax credits
- Benefit Appeals
- Discretionary payments to help with rent
- Budgeting advice

¹ [About us :: Stockport Support](#)
² <https://www.stockporthomes.org/advice-support/money-advice/money-advice-team/>

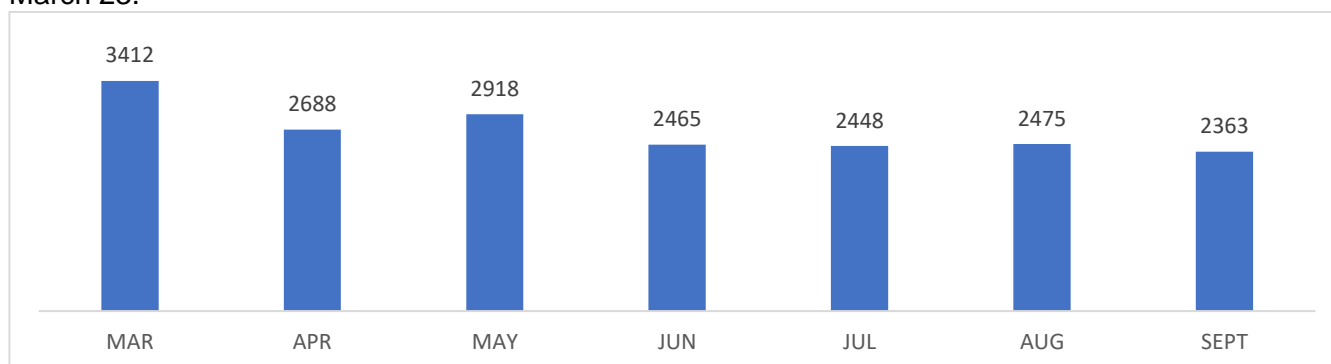
2. Summary Overview

Subsequent sections will look at these services in more detail. Please note, the data recorded within each of these services does vary and limits our ability to illustrate a complete picture; where these limitations exist they will be noted for the reader and where synergies exist they will be reported collectively. Furthermore, due to a time lag for some data, some information may be amended and/or updated from previous reports.

Note to the reader – from August 23:- data reporting in RAS has been updated and subsequently, adjusted some of the data and charts; additional information has been included for the RAS COL line; additional chart for overall cash gains; Stockport Homes financial outcomes have been split into one off and annualised benefit payments.

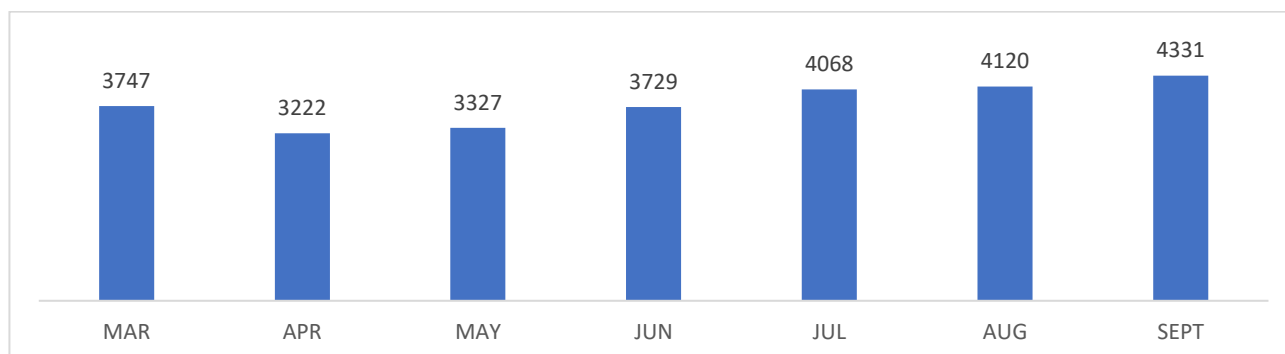
2.1. Total residents who presented across Stockport

These are unique residents who have presented to RAS or CAS. This might be direct contact, walk in or via referrals. Furthermore, the COL Advice line began in April and as such not included in the figures for March 23.



2.2. Total Issues raised

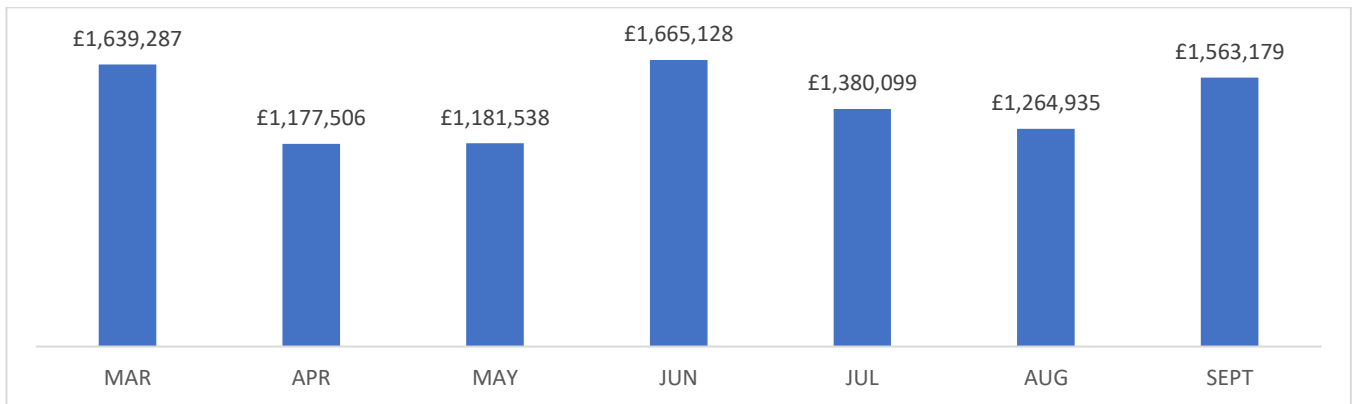
These are the total issues raised during the month (covers the entire range of issue complexity). It must be noted that some residents can present with a range of issues.



Please note April, May, and August had fewer working days due to bank holidays

2.1. Total new income gained by residents

This is the **combined value of new income derived from either benefits, discretionary payments, debt written off each month to our residents**. This represents new money coming into the Stockport economy. The benefits figures within this chart have been annualised and since March the combined running total is **£9.8M**. Note to reader - benefit awards in this figure are annualised from the month they were awarded.

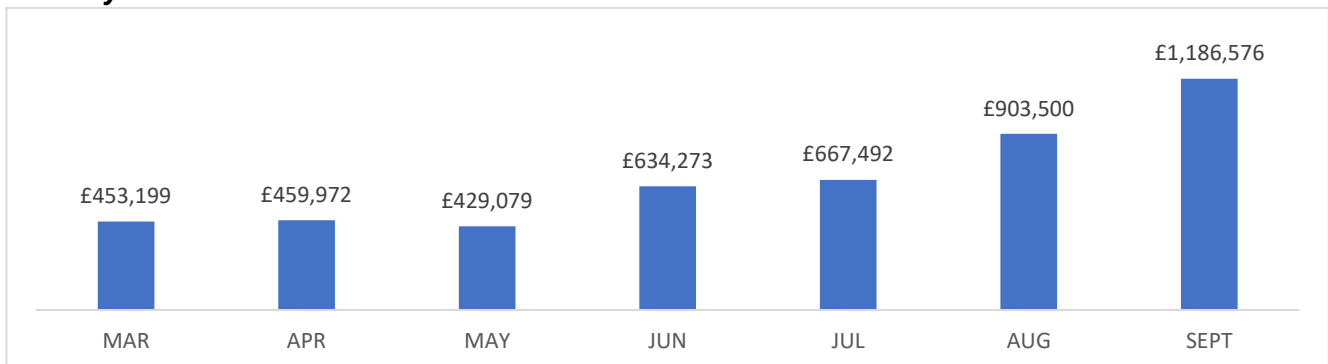


2.1.1. Total cash gains from benefits

This is the value of new income residents received from new benefits awards that were awarded each month to our residents. This represents new money coming into the Stockport economy.

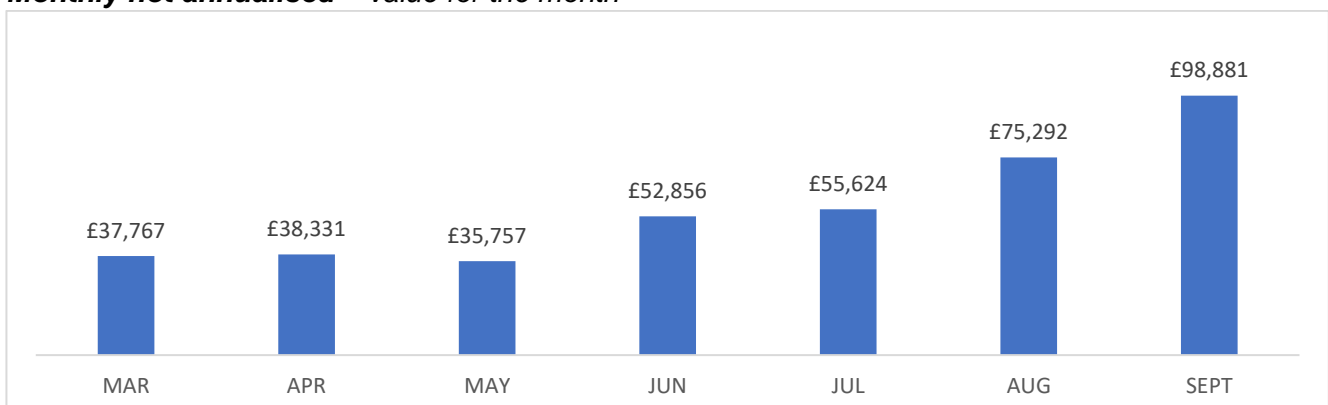
Note to reader, From August 23 we have included figures from Stockport Homes, this has increased the monthly figure from this date.

Monthly Annualised = value awarded x 12 months



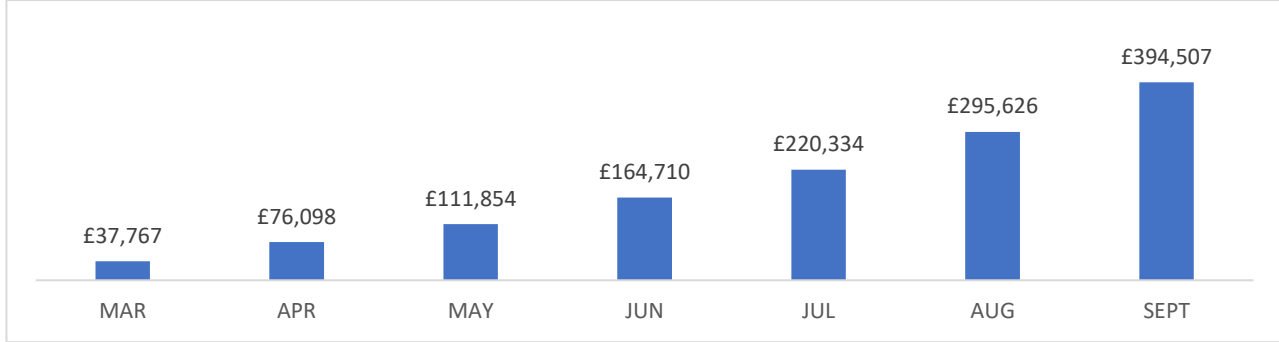
To provide a snapshot for only the benefit increases awarded – the chart shows the awards made during the month and is neither annualised or cumulative.

Monthly not annualised = value for the month



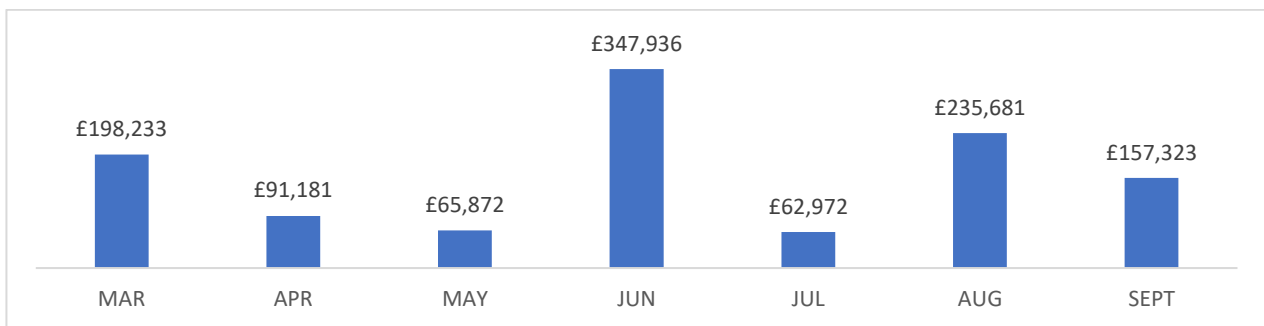
Benefit awards cumulatively by month. Only representative of the months shown in the charts.

Monthly Cumulative not annualised: value awarded by month across the duration of the report



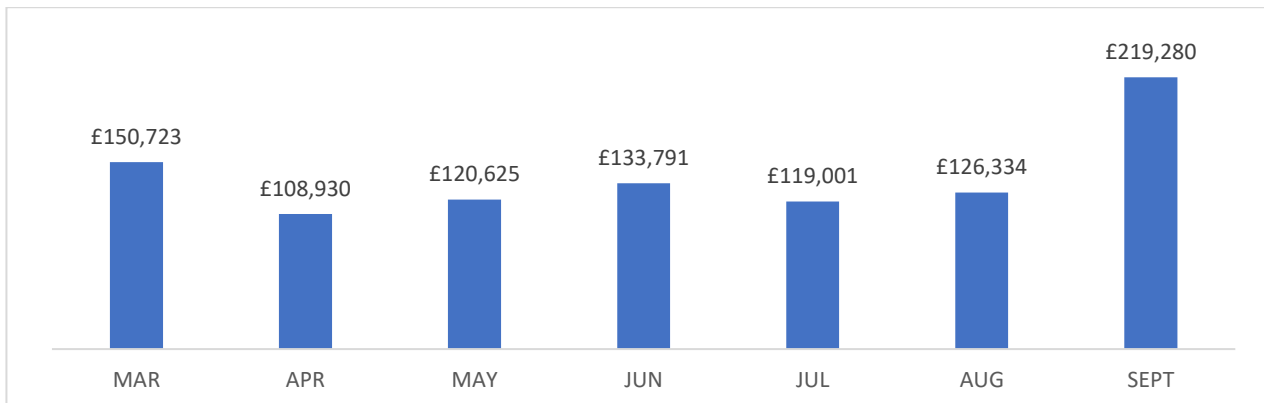
2.1.2. Total debt written off

Debt written off is recorded as a one off value and is totalled for each month. The values below represent debt that our residents no longer need to pay each month. Since March the running total for debt written off is **£1.16m** of which our residents do not need to pay.



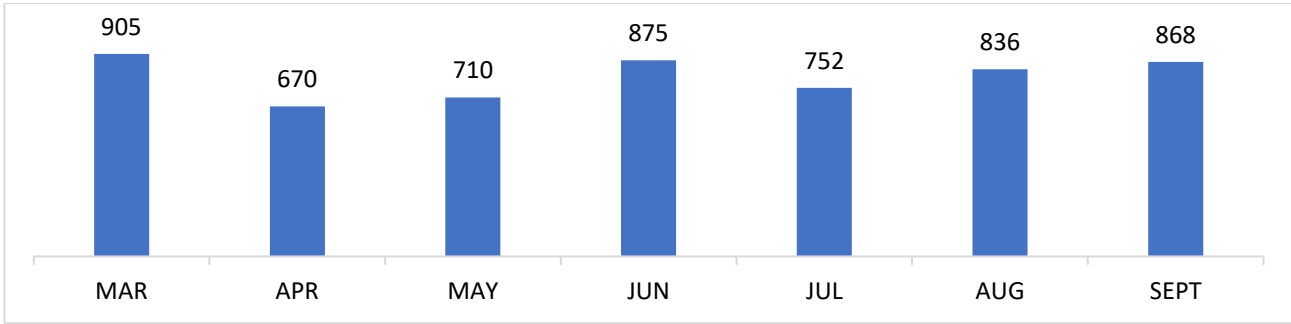
2.1.3. Total 'one off' cash gains

This is the total value of the one off payments that residents received each month. Typically this includes back payments from successful benefit appeals and one off payments from discretionary awards. Since March the running total for one off payments is **£978k** of which our residents and local economy will benefit from.



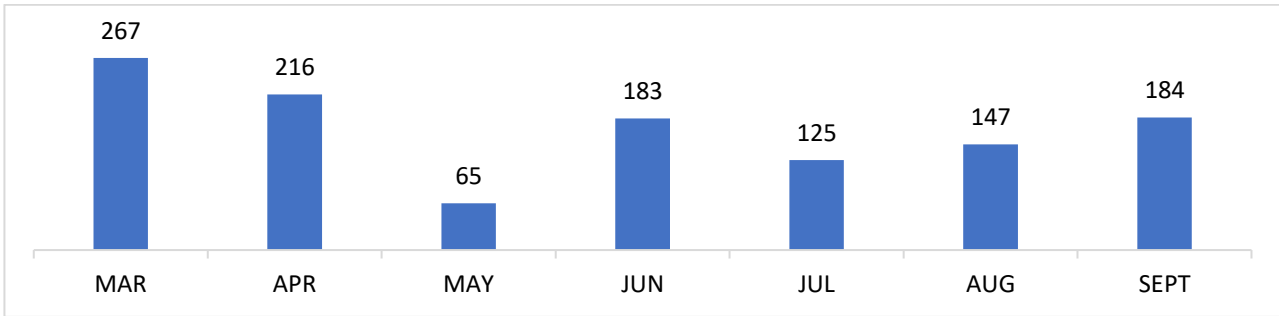
2.2. Total referrals monitoring

These are the number of residents that were referred into our ecosystem; the following chart looks at the inbound referrals made for each month for all the organisations in this report.



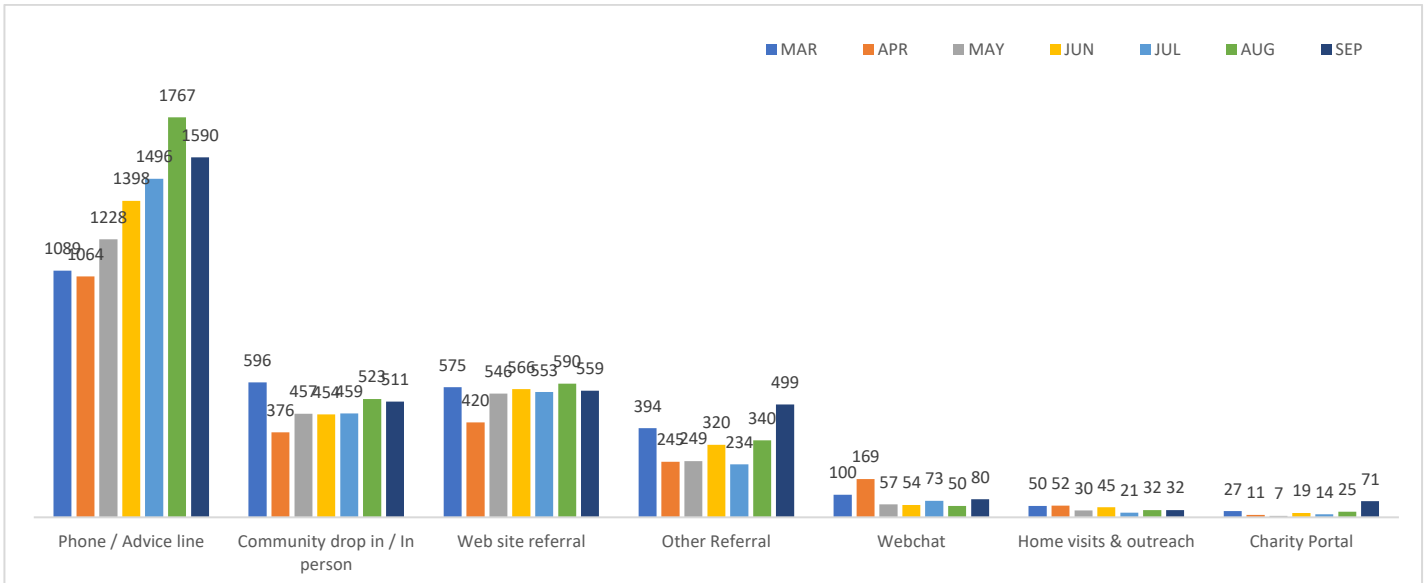
2.3. Warm handovers

Where we have this information recorded, the following chart looks at warm handovers to partners

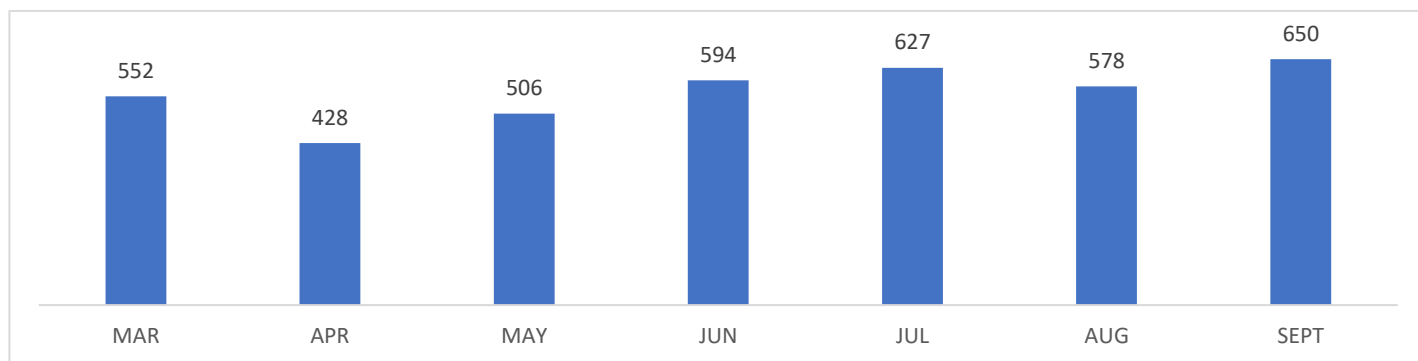


2.4. Total access channels used by residents

These are the preferred access channels used by residents to begin a conversation. This does not include ongoing communications. The increase in August can be attribute to COL line calls with regards to school uniform and school meal support enquires.



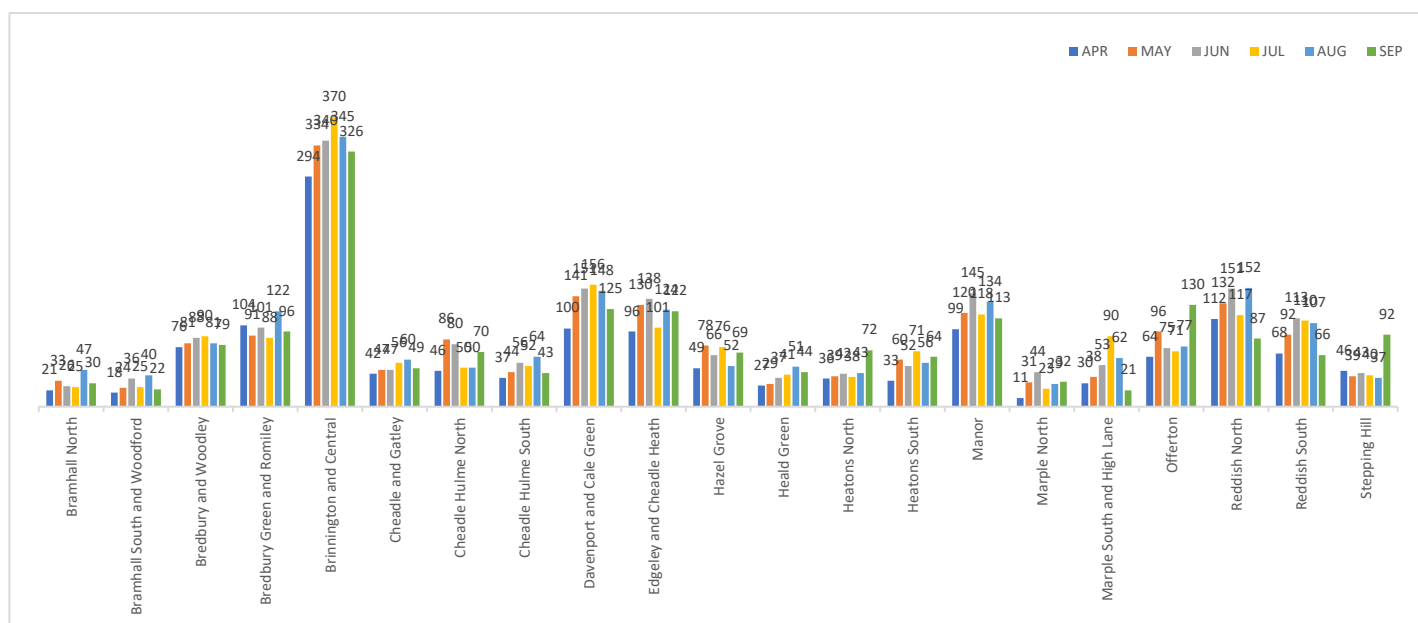
2.5. Total number of in-person appointments with residents



Does not include Stockport Support Hub for this report

2.6. Totals for where our residents reside; by ward

The chart and table does not include Stopford House reception, Stockport Homes and the Stockport Support Hub; these are presented differently within their respective section further on in this report.



The data set for the above chart is below.

	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT
Bramhall North	21	33	26	25	47	30
Bramhall South and Woodford	18	24	36	25	40	22
Bredbury and Woodley	76	81	88	90	81	79
Bredbury Green and Romiley	104	91	101	88	122	96
Brinnington and Central	294	334	340	370	345	326
Cheadle and Gatley	42	47	47	56	60	49
Cheadle Hulme North	46	86	80	50	50	70
Cheadle Hulme South	37	44	56	52	64	43
Davenport and Cale Green	100	141	151	156	148	125
Edgeley and Cheadle Heath	96	130	138	101	124	122
Hazel Grove	49	78	66	76	52	69
Heald Green	27	29	37	41	51	44
Heatons North	36	39	42	38	43	72
Heatons South	33	60	52	71	56	64
Manor	99	120	145	118	134	113
Marple North	11	31	44	23	29	32
Marple South and High Lane	30	38	53	90	62	21
Offerton	64	96	75	71	77	130
Reddish North	112	132	151	117	152	87
Reddish South	68	92	113	110	107	66
Stepping Hill	46	39	43	40	37	92
Total	1409	1765	1884	1808	1881	1752

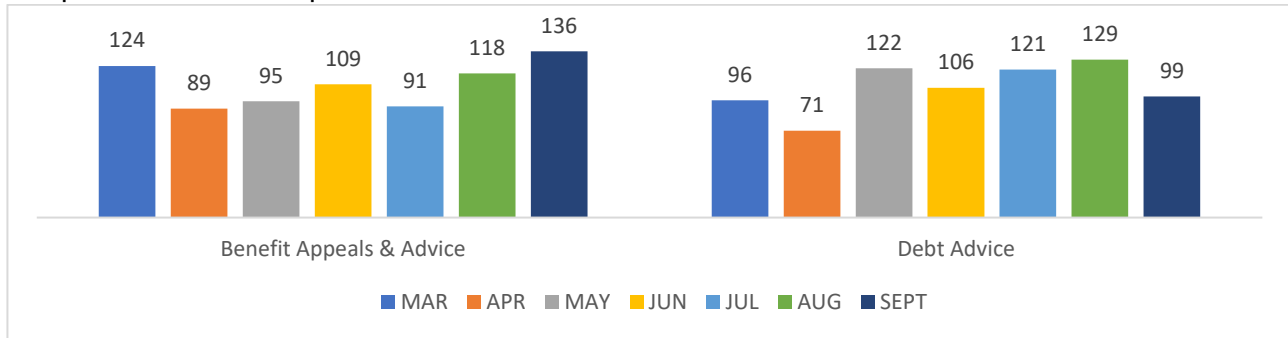
3. Resident Advice and Support – Stockport council

This section explores in more detail the range of teams within Resident and Advice service teams.

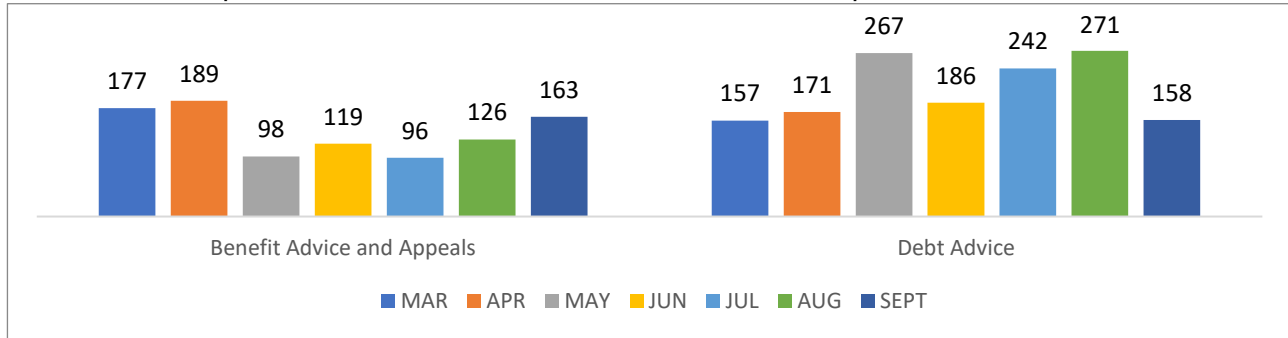
3.1. Benefit Appeals, Benefits Advice, Debt Advice

During August a review of system reporting was undertaken and improvements have been made to the reporting parameters and the overall quality of data.

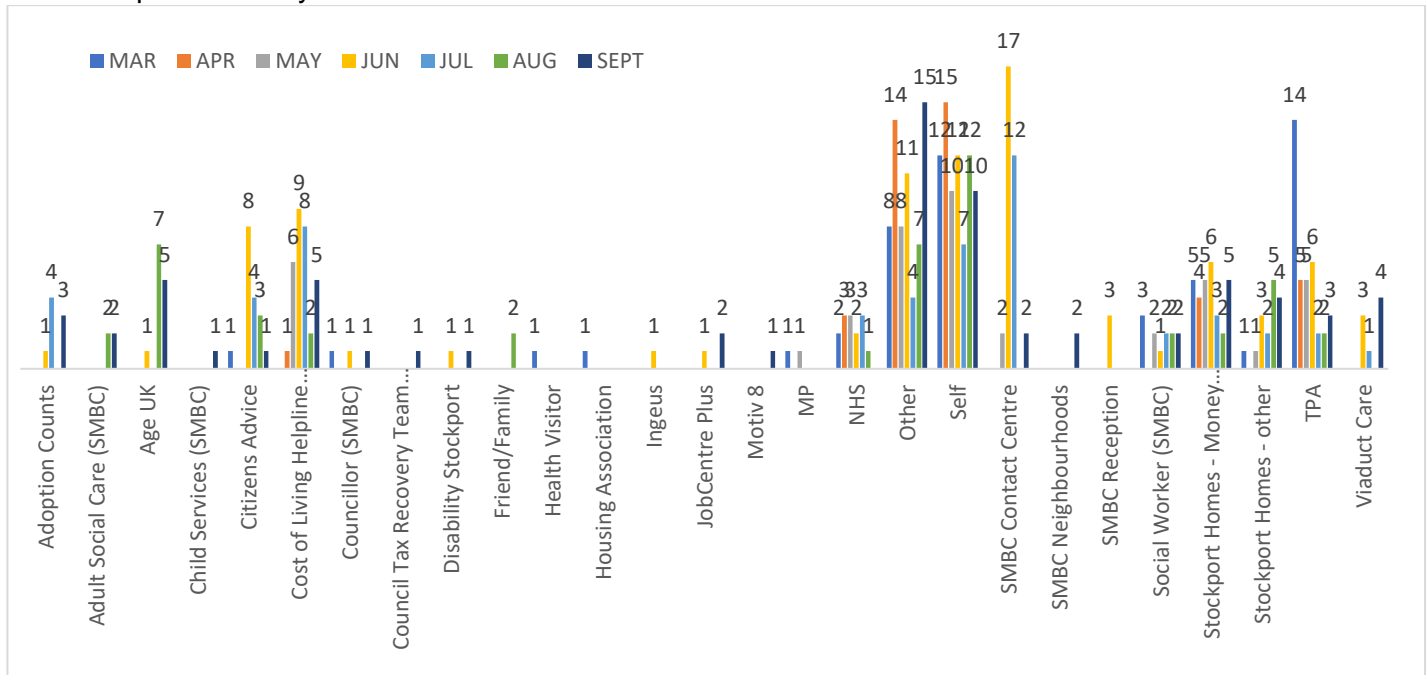
Unique Residents who presented to this team are below.



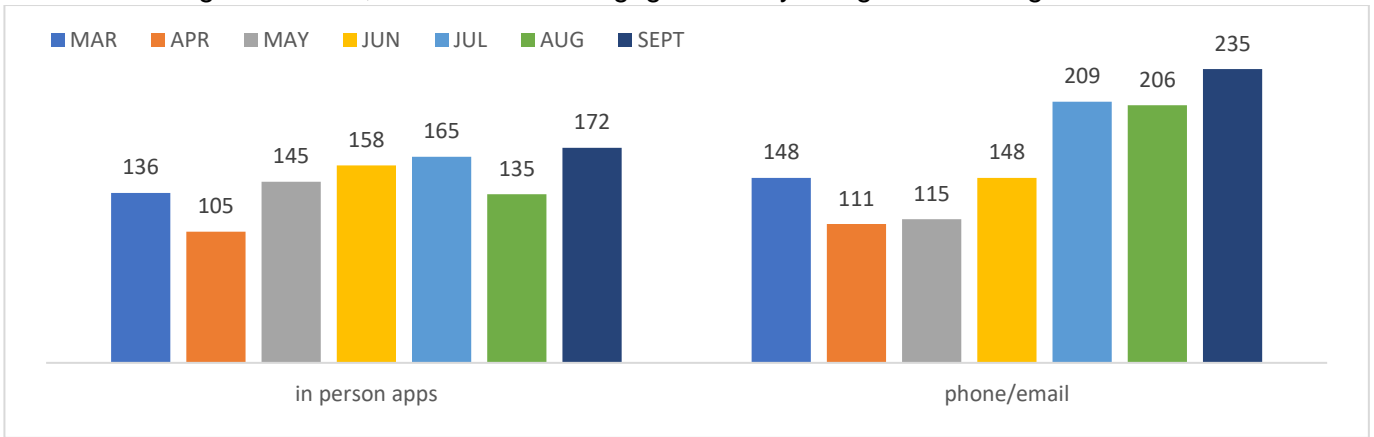
The core issues presented are as follows. A number of residents presented with more than one issue.



In the main, residents present to this team via an online referral form and where the source of the referral has been provided they are illustrated below.

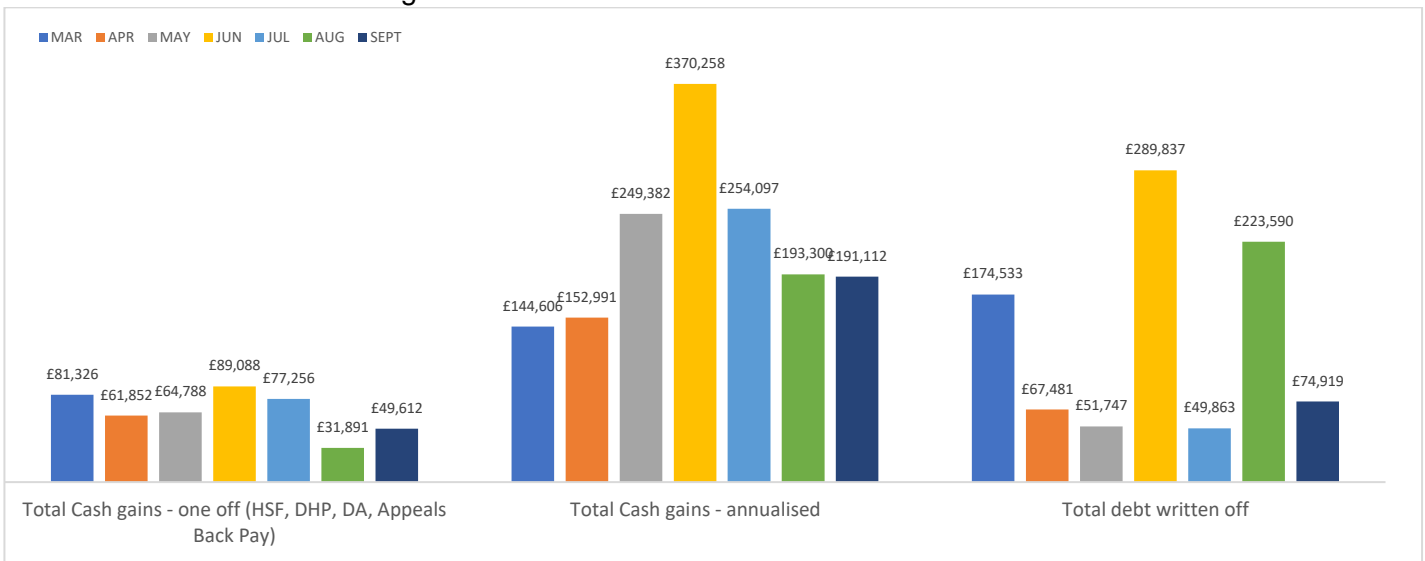


When delivering the service, residents were engaged with by using the following.

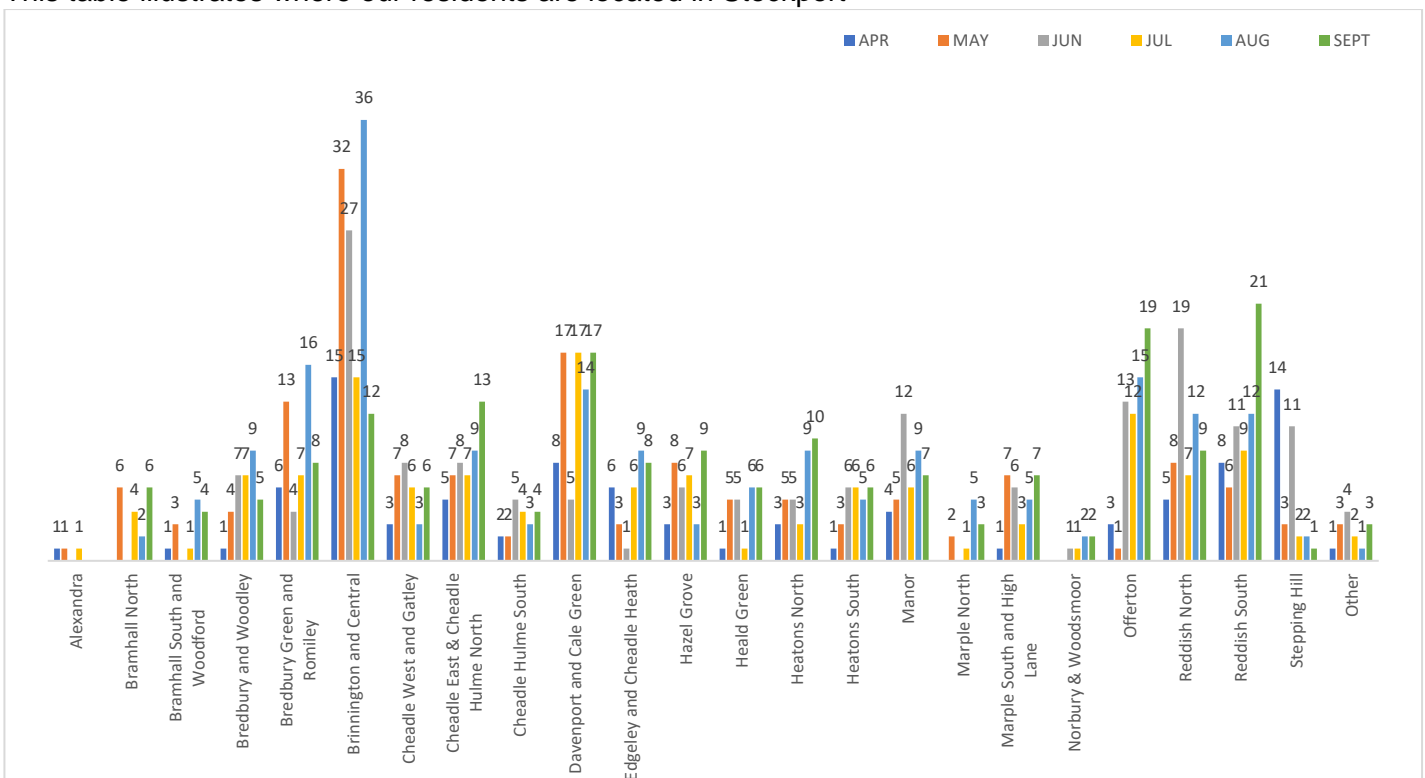


Between July and August there were **53 outreach appointments**; including home visits, Job centre, women’s centre, community Mental Health centres and appointments located at Stepping Hill Hospital.

This table looks at the income gained or debt written off for our residents.



This table illustrates where our residents are located in Stockport



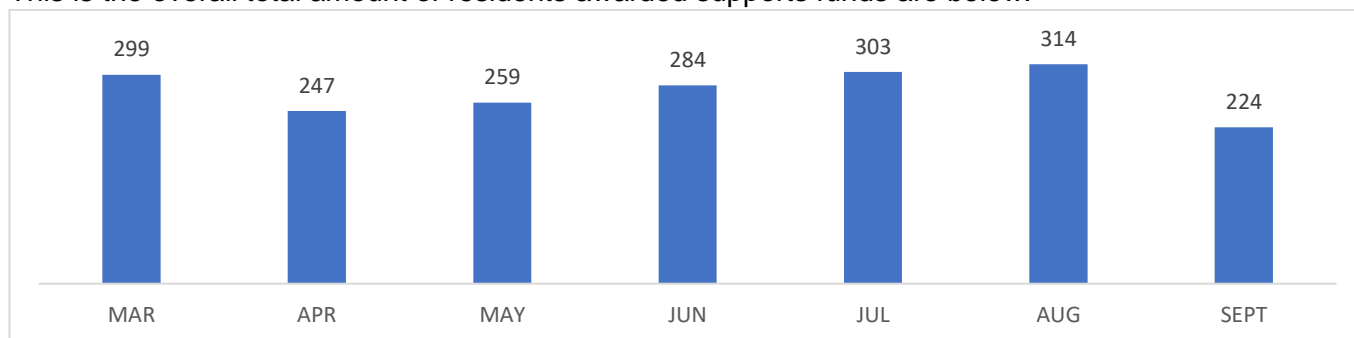
3.2. Crisis Support funds

This is a dedicated service to help residents in need of crisis support. All applications for support funds have to meet eligibility criteria which demonstrates financial hardship and the funds are awarded to help with energy, for daily essentials and rent. There are two types of discretionary payments and they focus on rent (Discretionary Housing Payments) or daily essentials (Discretionary Awards).

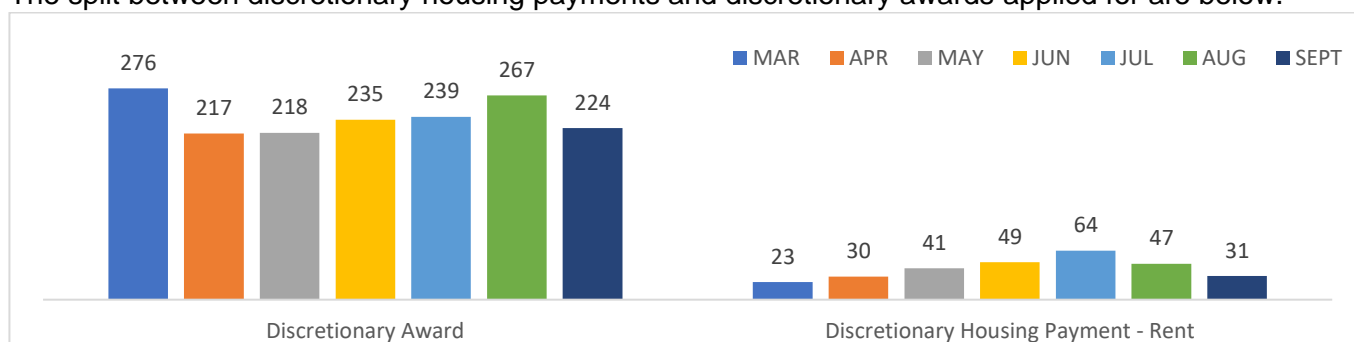
The average award rate for discretionary award items is **c.25%**.

During the financial year the team are provided with £67K cash budget to distribute via an application and assessment process and when a shortfall exists, the Household Support Fund is used to top up the cash budget.

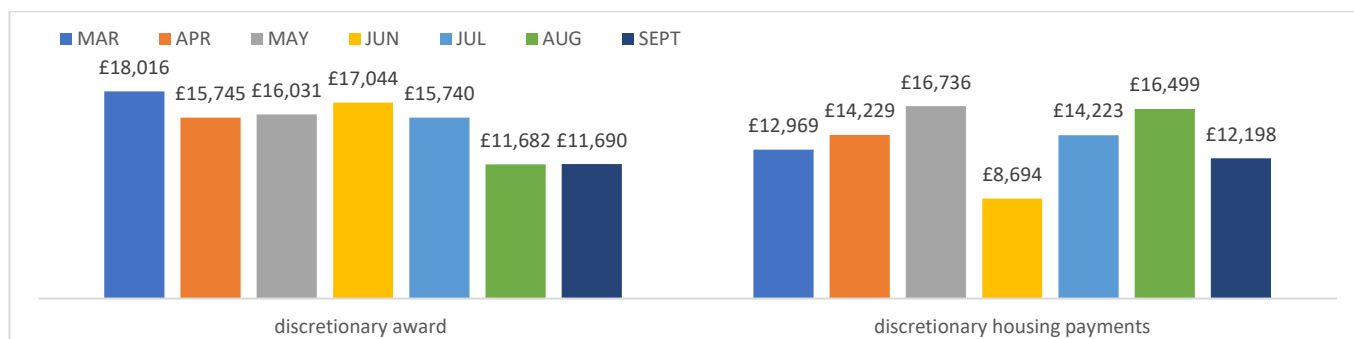
This is the overall total amount of residents awarded supports funds are below.



The split between discretionary housing payments and discretionary awards applied for are below.



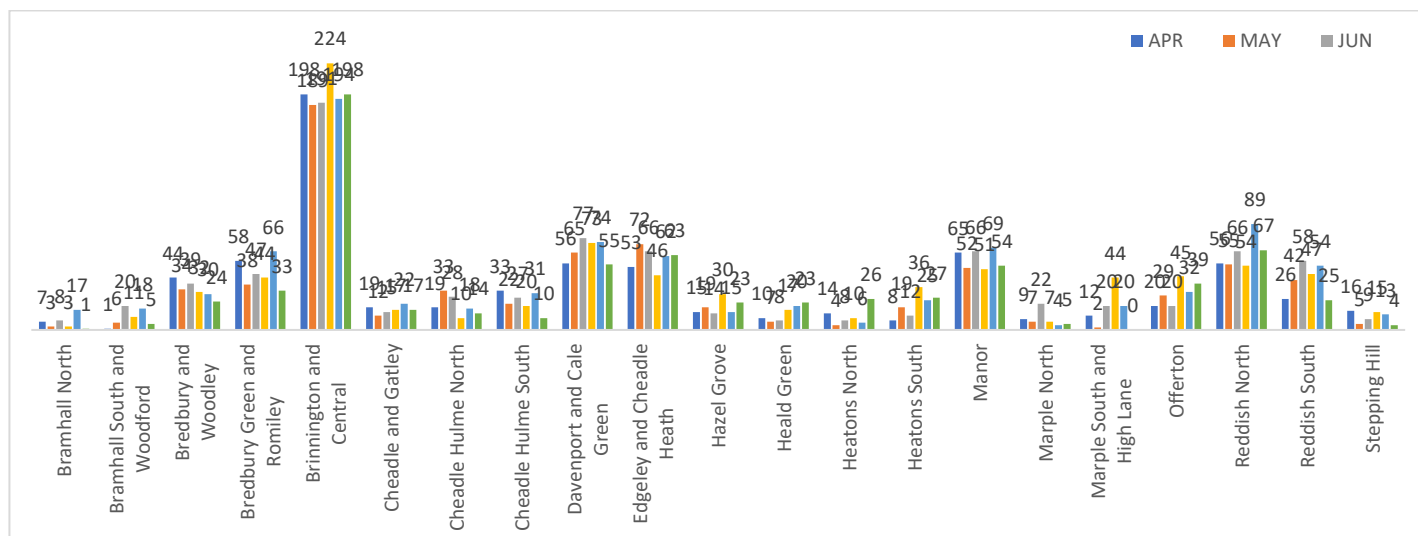
Whilst there were fewer discretionary housing payments received and processed, the awards for rental arrears is higher per resident at c.£330 per person when compared to discretionary awards which is c.£65 per item. The rationale is that a one off payment for rental arrears is generally higher than daily essentials.



Since April 23 support funds distributed are:-

- Discretionary awards - £88K
- Discretionary Housing payments – £82K

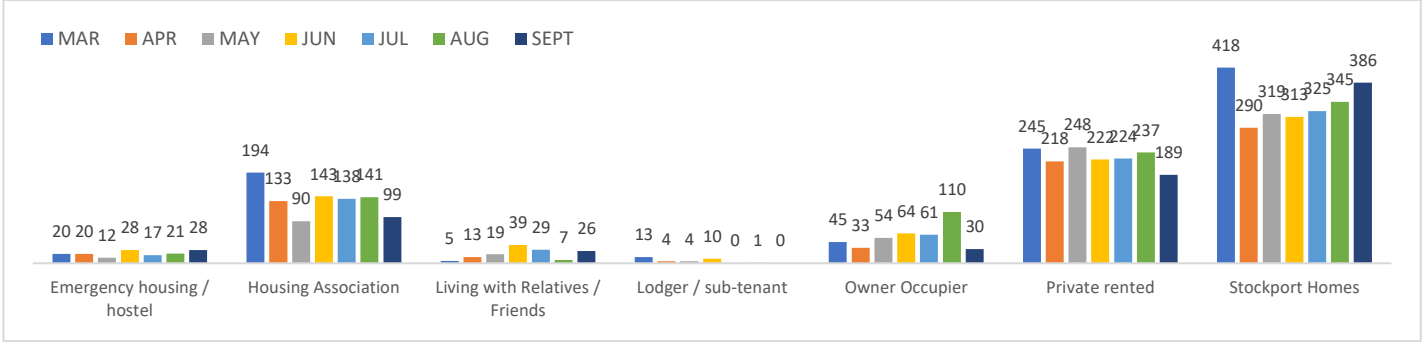
The geography of the items that were applied for crisis support funds applications are below.



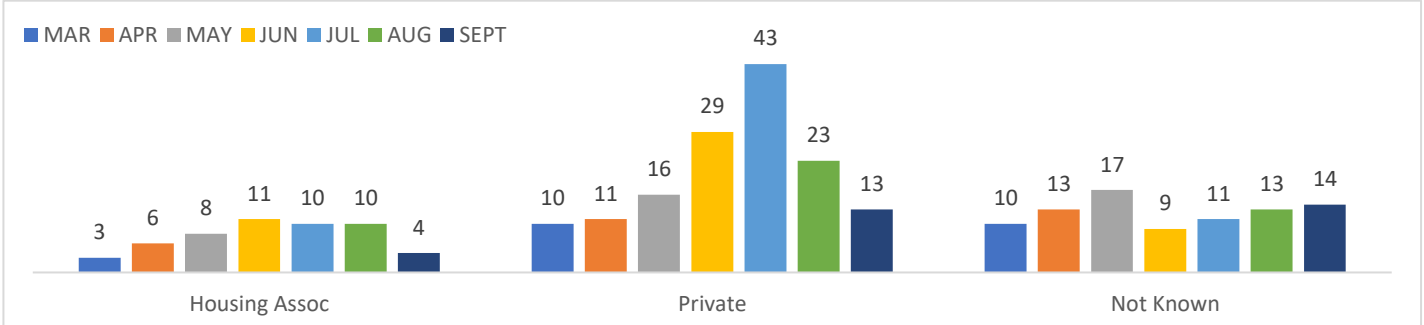
The table for the above chart is below:-

Wards	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
Bramhall North	7	3	8	3	17	1
Bramhall South and Woodford	1	6	20	11	18	5
Bredbury and Woodley	44	34	39	32	30	24
Bredbury Green and Romiley	58	38	47	44	66	33
Brinnington and Central	198	189	191	224	194	198
Cheadle and Gatley	19	12	15	17	22	17
Cheadle Hulme North	19	33	28	10	18	14
Cheadle Hulme South	33	22	27	20	31	10
Davenport and Cale Green	56	65	77	73	74	55
Edgeley and Cheadle Heath	53	72	66	46	62	63
Hazel Grove	15	19	14	30	15	23
Heald Green	10	7	8	17	20	23
Heatons North	14	4	8	10	6	26
Heatons South	8	19	12	36	25	27
Manor	65	52	66	51	69	54
Marple North	9	7	22	7	4	5
Marple South and High Lane	12	2	20	44	20	0
Offerton	20	29	20	45	32	39
Reddish North	56	55	66	54	89	67
Reddish South	26	42	58	47	54	25
Stepping Hill	16	5	9	15	13	4
	739	715	821	836	879	713

When we look at the tenure of residents who applied for Discretionary Awards

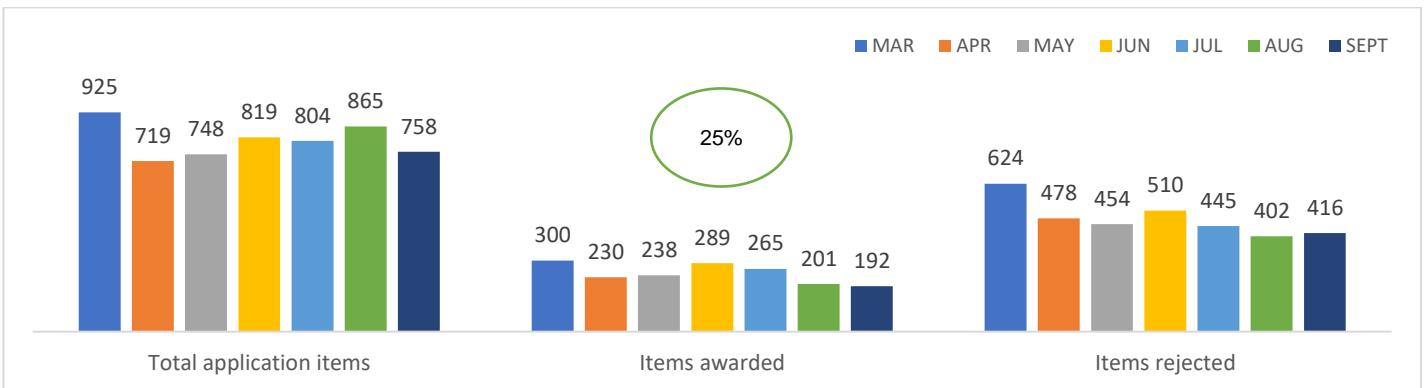


When we look at the tenure of residents who applied for Discretionary Housing payments

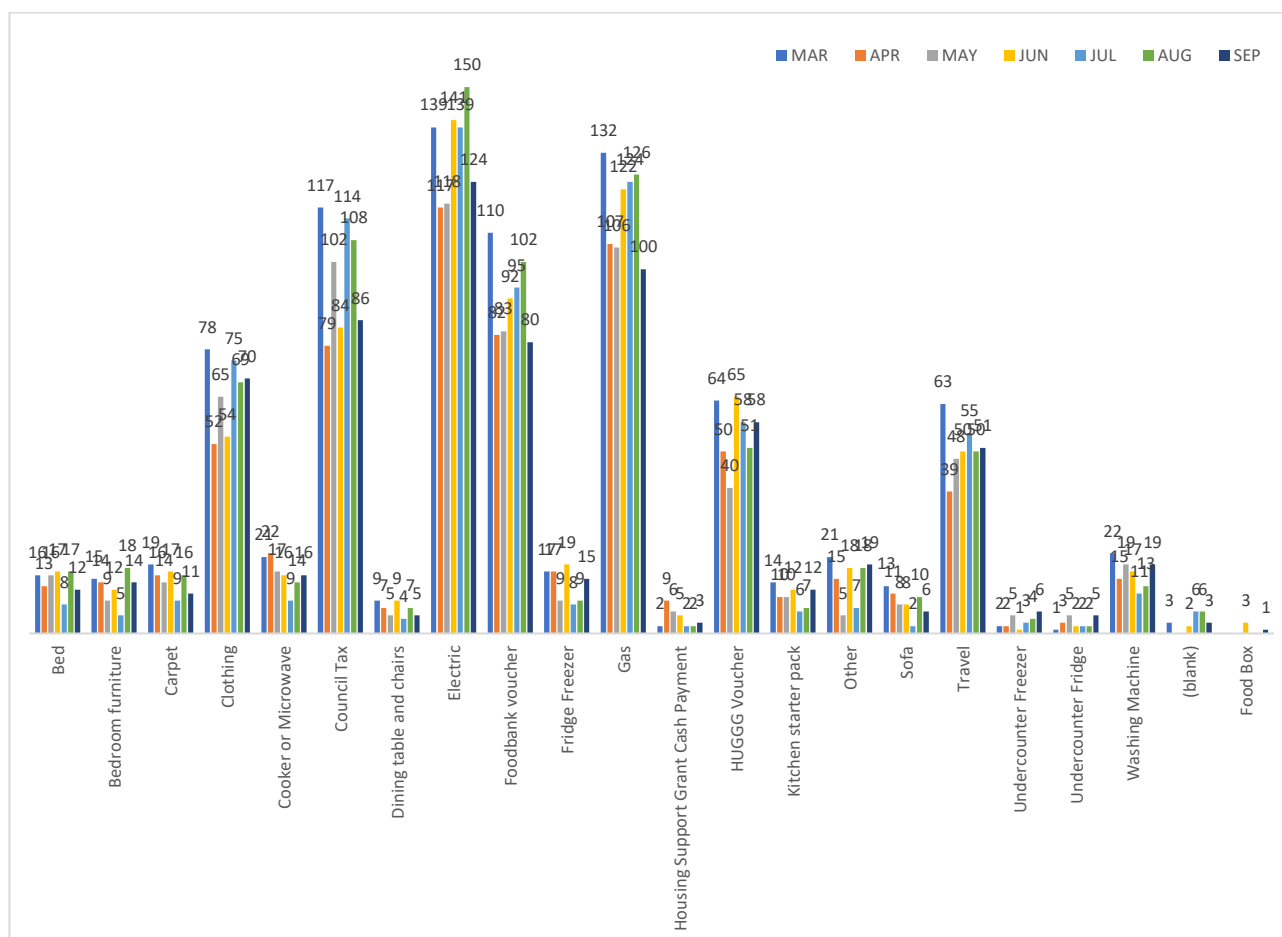


3.2.1. Deep dive into Discretionary Awards

Residents are able to apply for a number of items in an application and each are assessed. A summary of the applications and outcomes for each item are below.



The range of items residents applied for are illustrated in the next chart

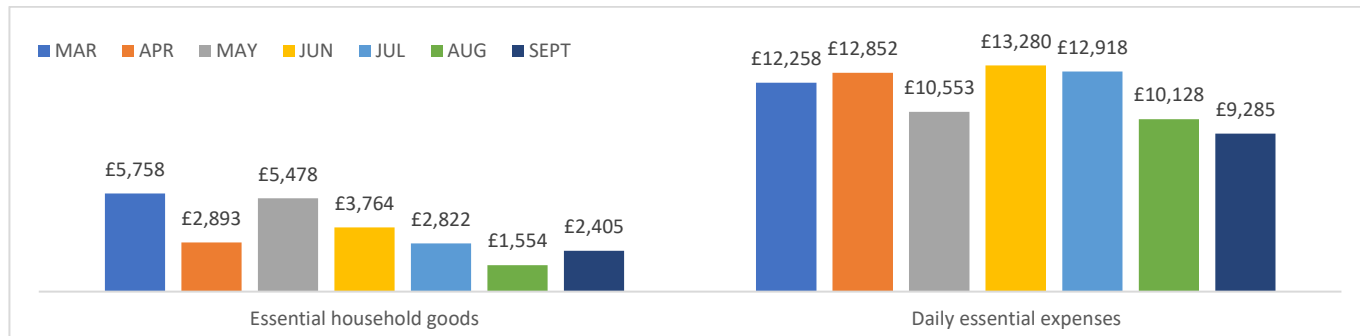


The table for the above chart is below:-

item	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	RANK
Electric	139	117	118	141	139	150	124	1
Gas	132	107	106	122	124	126	100	2
Council Tax	117	79	102	84	114	108	86	3
Foodbank voucher	110	82	83	92	95	102	80	4
Clothing	78	52	65	54	75	69	70	5
HUGGG Voucher	64	50	40	65	58	51	58	6
Travel	63	39	48	50	55	50	51	7
Other	21	15	5	18	7	18	19	8
Washing Machine	22	15	19	17	11	13	19	8
Cooker or Microwave	21	22	17	16	9	14	16	9
Fridge Freezer	17	17	9	19	8	9	15	10
Bedroom furniture	15	14	9	12	5	18	14	11
Bed	16	13	16	17	8	17	12	12
Kitchen starter pack	14	10	10	12	6	7	12	12
Carpet	19	16	14	17	9	16	11	13
Sofa	13	11	8	8	2	10	6	14
Undercounter Freezer	2	2	5	1	3	4	6	14
Dining table and chairs	9	7	5	9	4	7	5	15
Undercounter Fridge	1	3	5	2	2	2	5	15
Housing Support Grant Cash Payment	2	9	6	5	2	2	3	16
(blank)	3	0	0	2	6	6	3	17
Food Box	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	18
Grand Total	878	680	690	766	742	799	716	

Of these, the range of household items that residents apply for are illustrated below. Furniture is seen as a priority for care leavers who are setting up their new home. Electricity and gas bills are the most requested items and this is line with the energy price increases across the UK. Furthermore, when residents request support with council tax bills, they are redirected and processed as council tax discretionary payments and no payments from support funds budget are made. When we look at the applications in more detail, the following table illustrates the ‘what and where’ in Stockport. This information helps us focus on our outreach, prevention and intervention plans.

The overall amount awarded to residents is below.



The table below looks at the typical items requested by ward

	Bramhall North	Bramhall South and Woodford	Bredbury and Woodley	Bredbury Green and Romiley	Brinnington and Central	Cheadle and Gatley	Cheadle Hulme North	Cheadle Hulme South	Davenport and Cale Green	Edgeley and Cheadle Heath	Hazel Grove	Heald Green	Heatons North	Heatons South	Manor	Marple North	Offerton	Reddish North	Reddish South	Stepping Hill	Unavailable	
Bed					1	1				1	1	1	1	1	2			1				2
Bedroom furniture			1		3				1	2	1	1			1			1				3
Carpet					2				1	2	1				3			1				1
Clothing			3	4	20	2		1	5	4	3	2	1	7	1		3	7	3			4
Cooker or Microwave				2	1		1		1	2		1			3			2	1			2
Council Tax	1	2	2	3	16	3	3	1	3	5	4	2	6	2	6	2	7	9	2	1		6
Dining table and chairs					1				1	1												2
Electric		1	5	5	35	3	3	3	9	10	3	3	3	3	6	1	8	11	3			9
Foodbank voucher		1	2	2	29	1		1	5	8	1	2	3	2	3	1	3	6	2	2		6
Fridge Freezer			1	2	1								2		5							4
Gas		1	4	5	25	3	3	3	8	6	2	3	2	3	6		6	9	3			8
Housing Support Grant Payment				1					1													1
HUGGG Voucher			2	3	14	1	1		6	5	1	1	1	4	4		2	5	1	1		6
Kitchen starter					1				1	2		1	1		3				1			2
Other				1	4	1	1		2	2	2				2			2	1			1
Sofa					2					1									1			2
Stockport Pantry			1		14			1	4	2	1	1		2	2		3	4	2			5
Travel			1	1	20	1	1		2	3	1	3		2	2		3	5	2			4
Undercounter Freezer					1				1	2					1							1
Undercounter Fridge										1		1	2									1
Washing Machine				1	4	1			2		1		1	1	3			1	1			3
(blank)			1						1													1
Food Box									1													

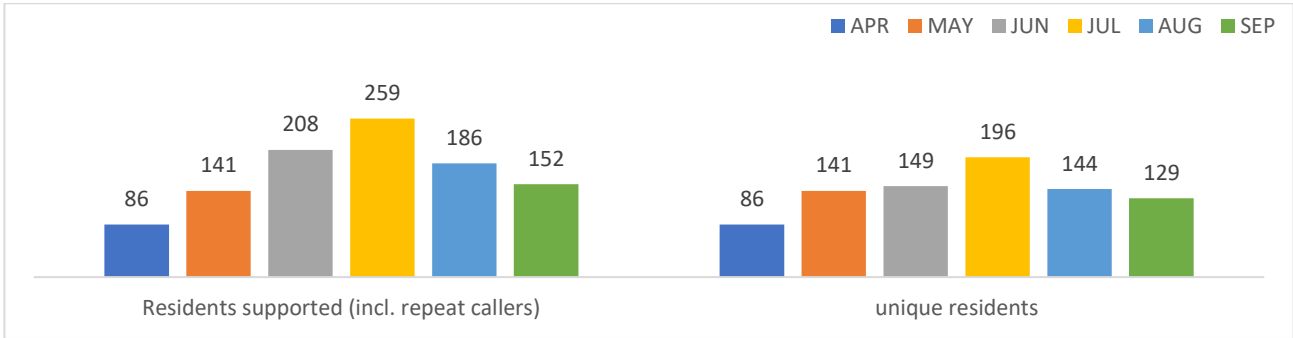
3.3. Cost of living (COL) Advice Line

This is a complimentary service for Stockport residents who require assistance with navigating through all the channels of support available. The line was opened in early April 2023.

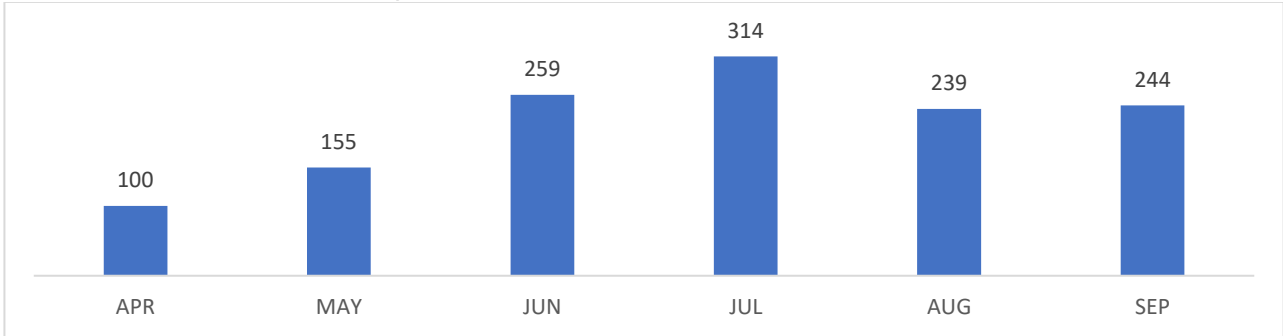
From August, improvements made to this section with wider information reported; some charts have been updated from previous months.

For context the COL line has 3 FTE and during peak times this is bolstered to 4 FTE.

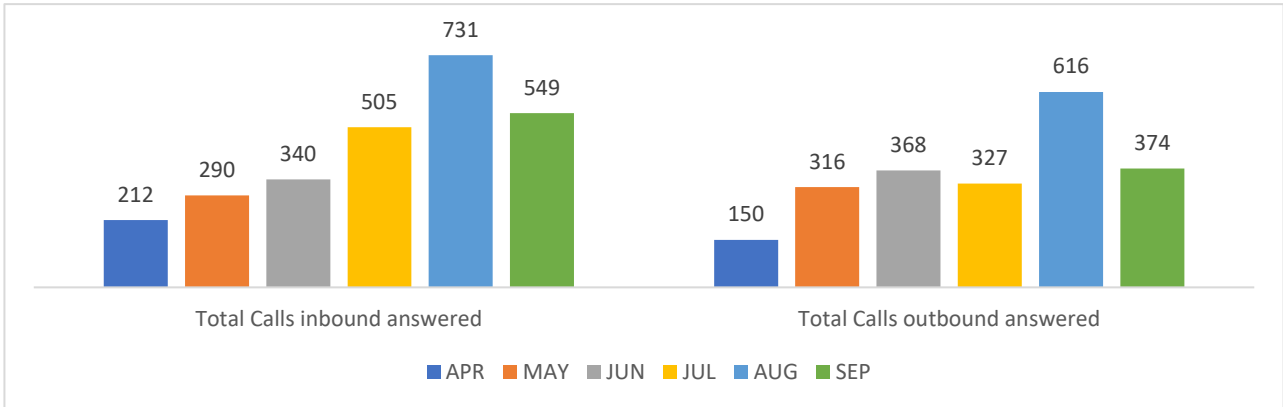
This chart looks at the number of residents who contacted the COL line; in a few circumstances, residents called the COL line more than once and for different issues. The peak recorded in July can be attributed to the school uniform grant and free school meal support enquiries and applications.



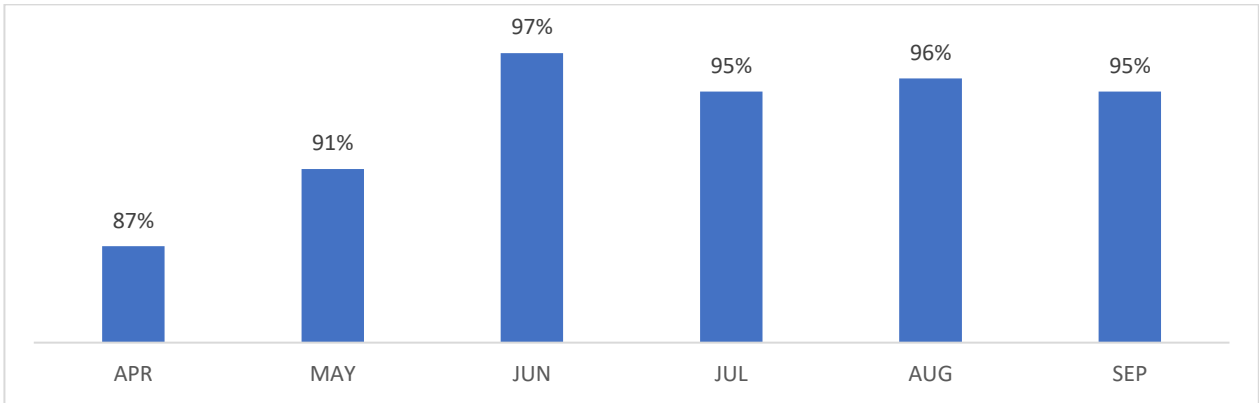
The number of issues and enquiries resolved for residents are below.



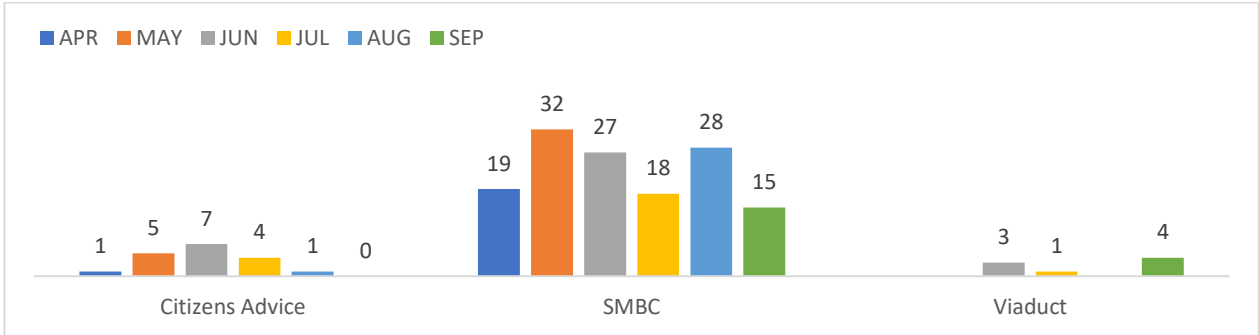
Whilst supporting residents the call volume for inbound and outbound calls are below. Please note that the COL team also make outbound calls to residents when providing tailored solutions, help to complete forms and to follow up and check in with the resident. This includes calling residents back to avoid call charges.



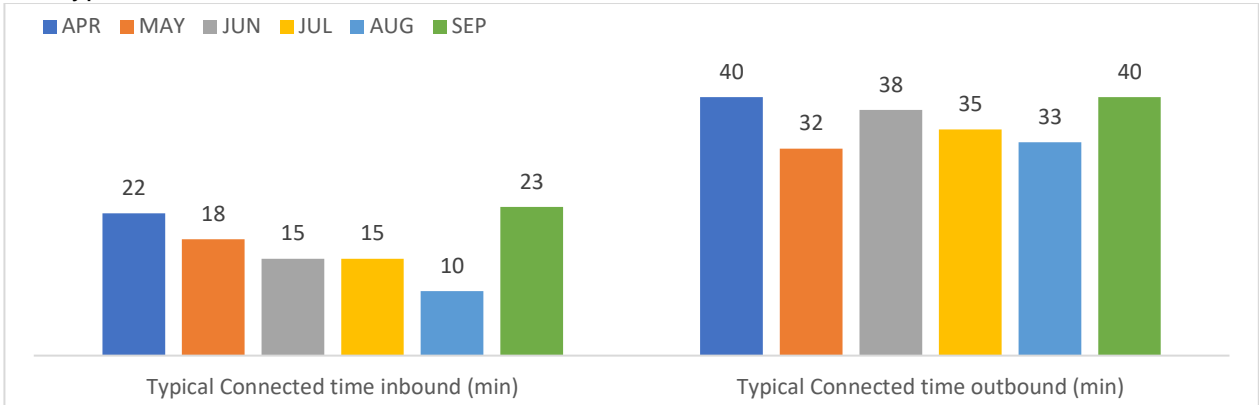
The answer rate for inbound calls to the COL line is as follows:



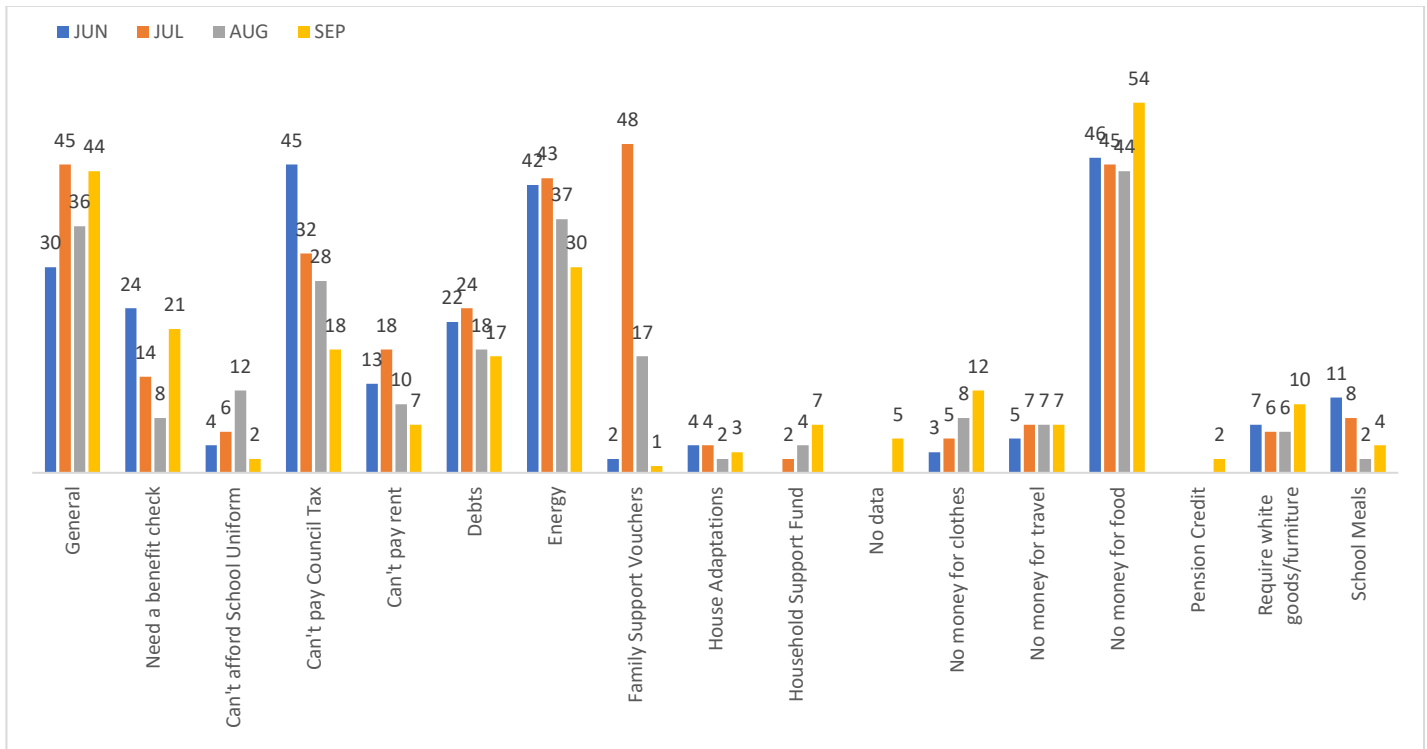
Warm referrals 'in' to the COL team are as follows



The typical connection time in minutes with residents follows:

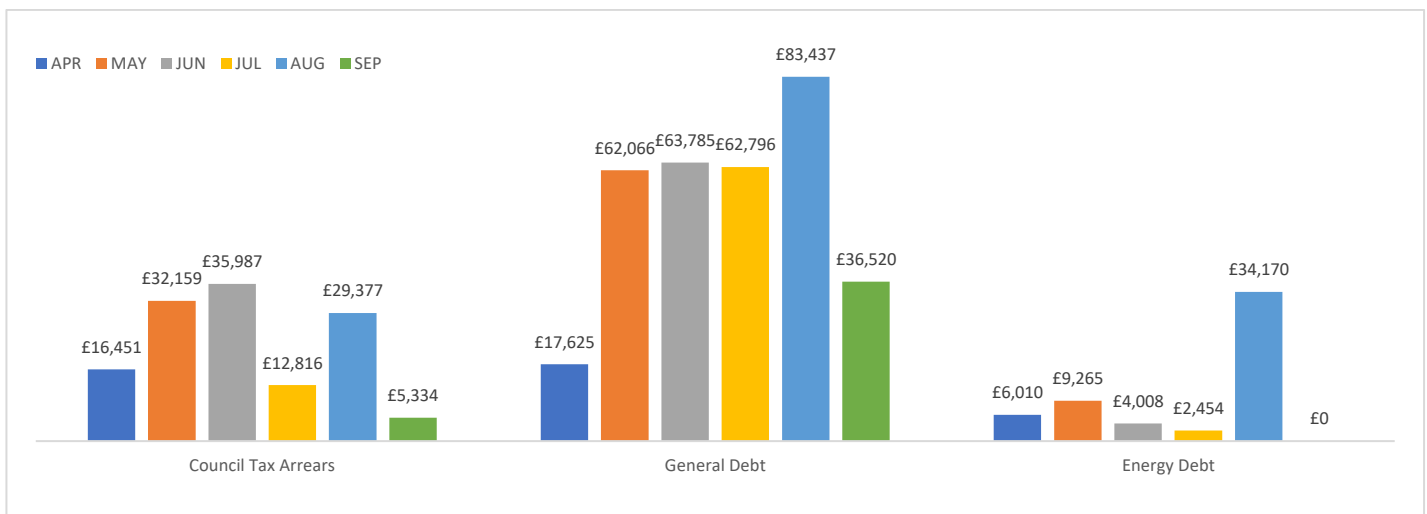


The list of the issues presented are as follows. The most frequent reasons why residents called the COL line related to food poverty, energy bills and council tax bills.



'General' refers to conversations or information rather than specific issues

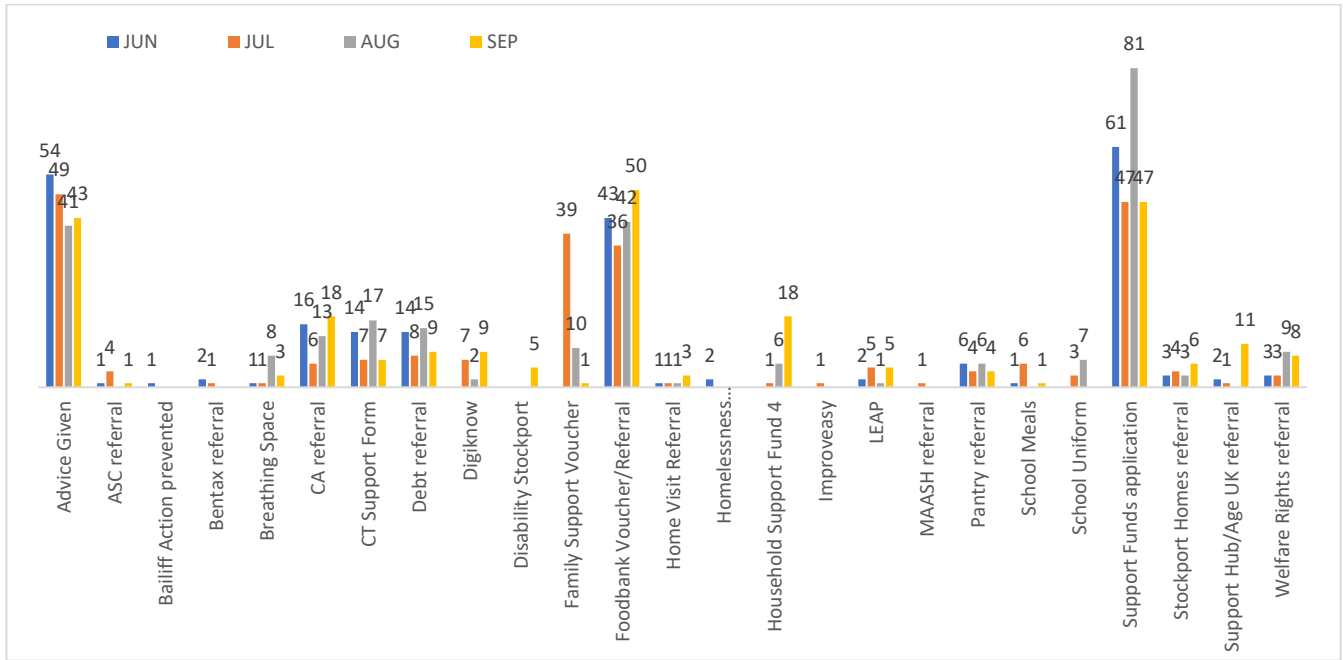
When residents were asked about their debt, the total value of debt recorded so far is c.£478K and can be categorised as follows:



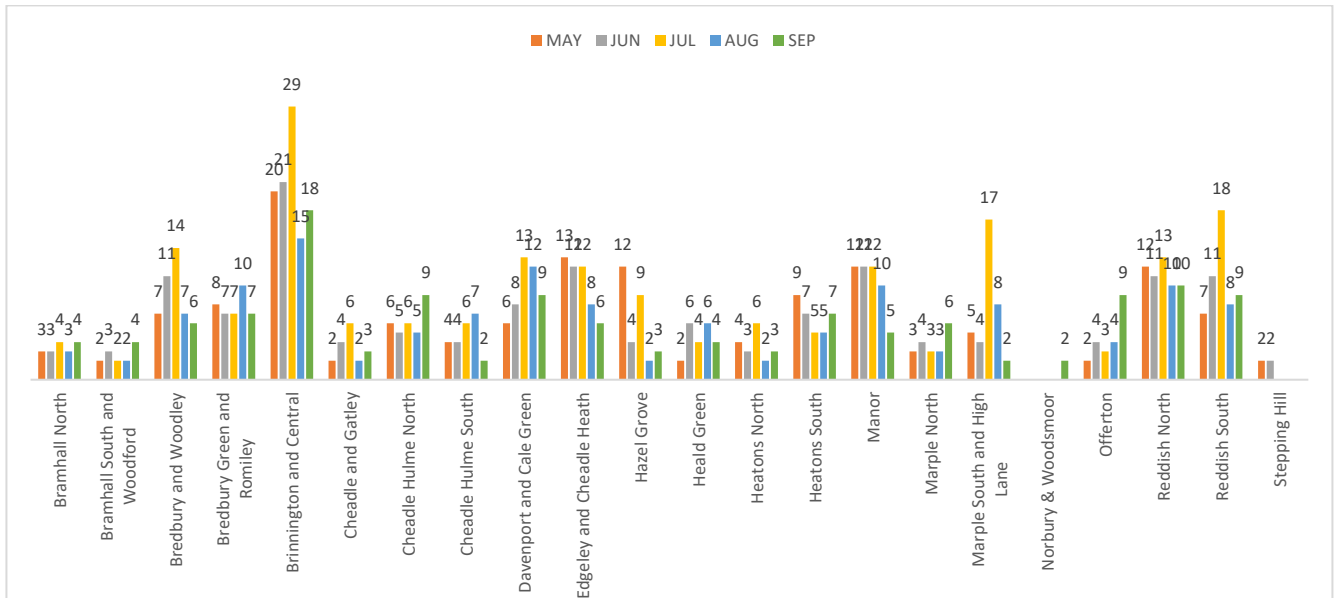
With regards to **outcomes** from the calls to the COL line; these are summarised below. Where a referral is recorded, this is a 'warm handover' to those organisations, charities or partners.

The most requested service was Household support funds applications and in most cases, the COL team work together with the resident to complete the applications – sometimes requiring a call back to ensure all information is available.

The outcome of the calls are illustrated below.



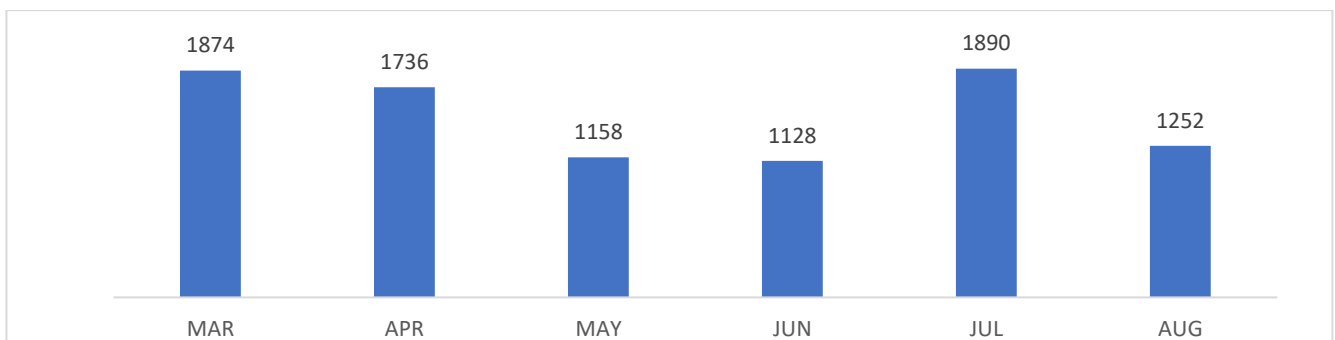
Where information is available, the wards recorded for residents calling the COL line are as follows.



3.4. Cost of Living Web site visits

This section looks at the visitors to the COL support web site across the months.

[Cost of living support - Stockport Council](#)

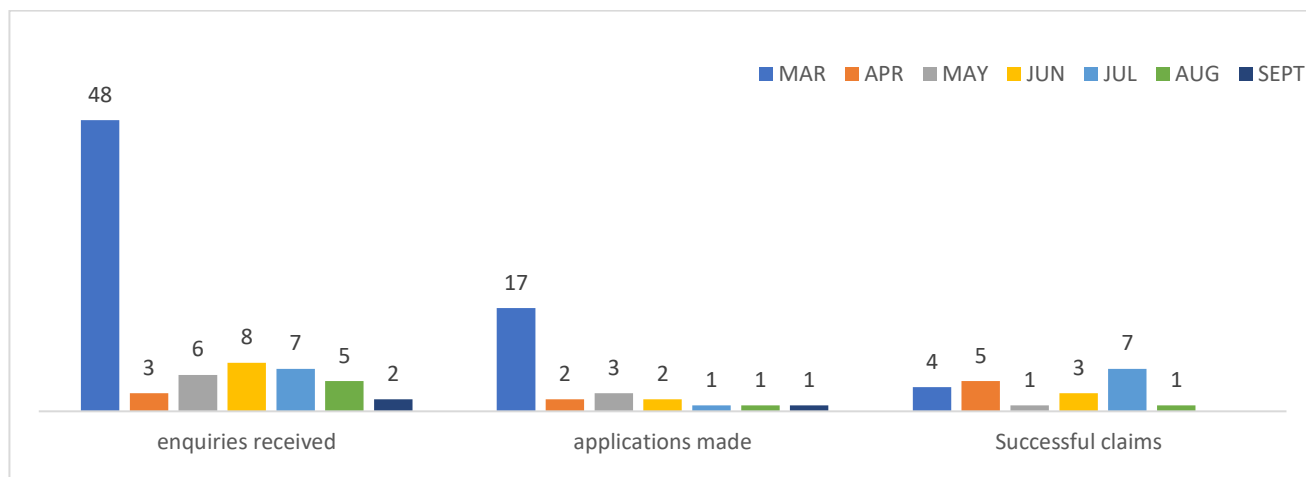


Whilst there is no definitive answer to why there was a peak during July, we do know that 'support for families during schools holidays' had a peak in hits as well as, school uniforms became a focus.

3.5. Pension Credit Uptake

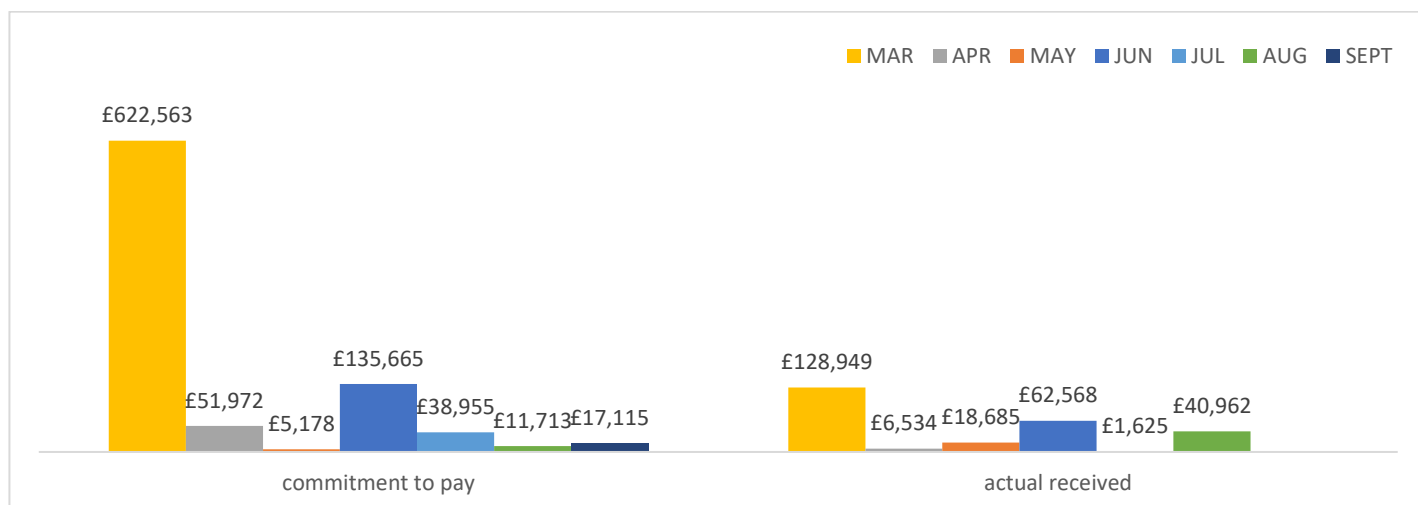
This is a targeted campaign to raise the awareness of pension credit and to help residents apply for the entitlement. There are indicatively **3,000** households not claiming this benefit within Stockport. It should be noted that several partners and other non-council services have been supporting with the Pension Credit Uptake campaign and that many residents applied independently once they were made aware that they were eligible for pension credit (this does not include the extra value this would bring to a resident being awarded pension credit e.g. free dental, TV licence etc.).

The chart below looks only at RAS for supported applications



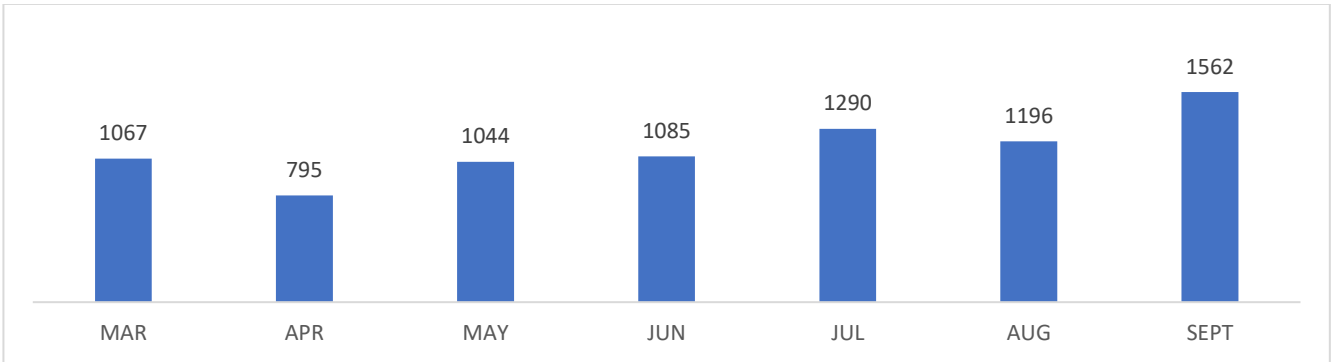
3.6. Adult Social Care Charging Recovery

Since Oct 22, we have agreed **£863K commitments to pay** and **£259K actual monies received** via the ASC debt recovery project. This was achieved with sensitive bespoke intervention of the outreach team targeting an agreed cohort (residents, their families or advocates) to assist with understanding why payments were outstanding; many cases related to bill(s) not being paid due to disputes of care hours, which we have resolved, incorrect addresses on invoices, inability to speak with the correct person in council to pay debts. There are in general 2 FTE that undertake this work in partnership with ASC. It should also be noted that this work is not linear because the resource used is shared across the Cost of Living Advice Line and Outreach work and so sometimes there are dips in progress when the team are called to support with peaks in other demand.

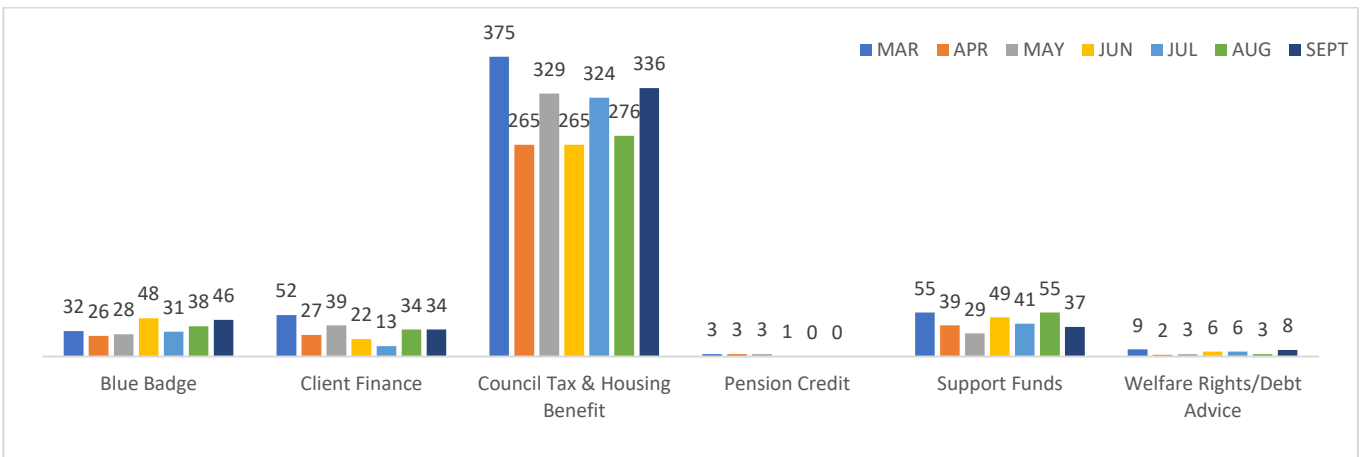


3.7. Stopford House Reception

Stopford House has two Customer Support Officers who are specialists in providing support to residents with queries relating to council matters and oversee the visitor experience for the council. Each month, visitor information is recorded alongside the issues or enquiry presented. The overall number of visitors are recorded below.

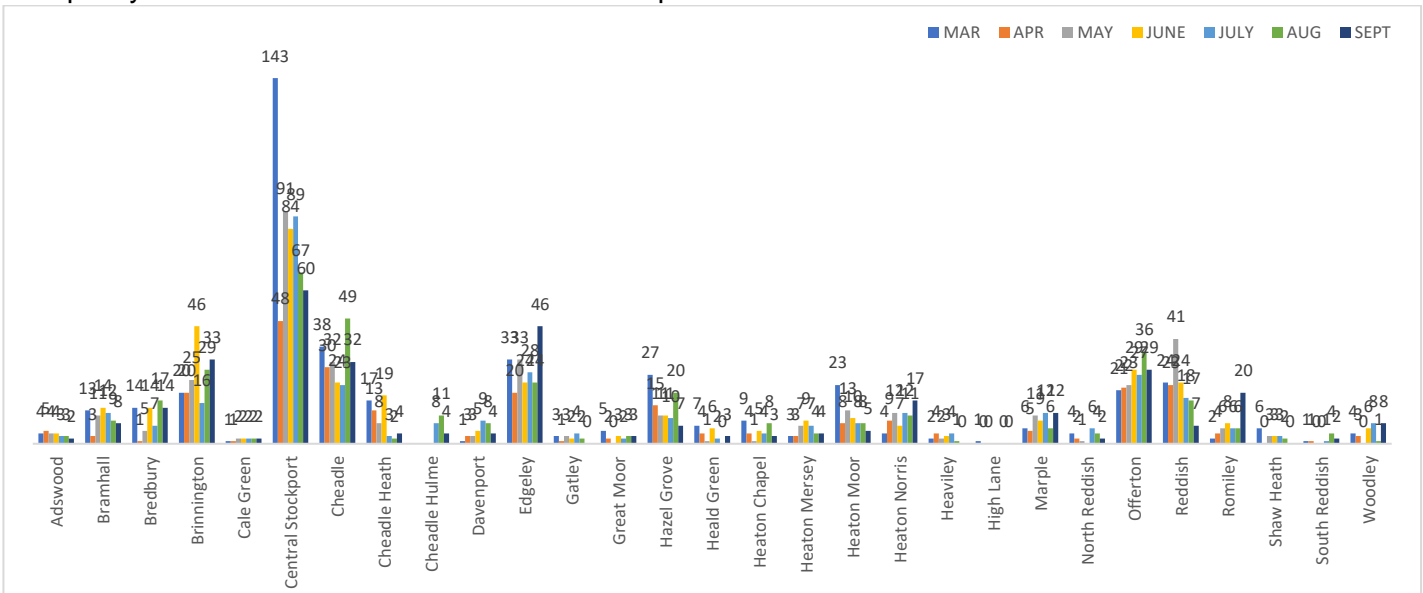


Circa **30%** of all visitors to the council reception relate to Blue Badge, Client Finance, Council Tax & Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Support Funds and Welfare Rights/Debt Advice. In September, we saw **461** of residents seeking support for financial support when visiting Stopford House.

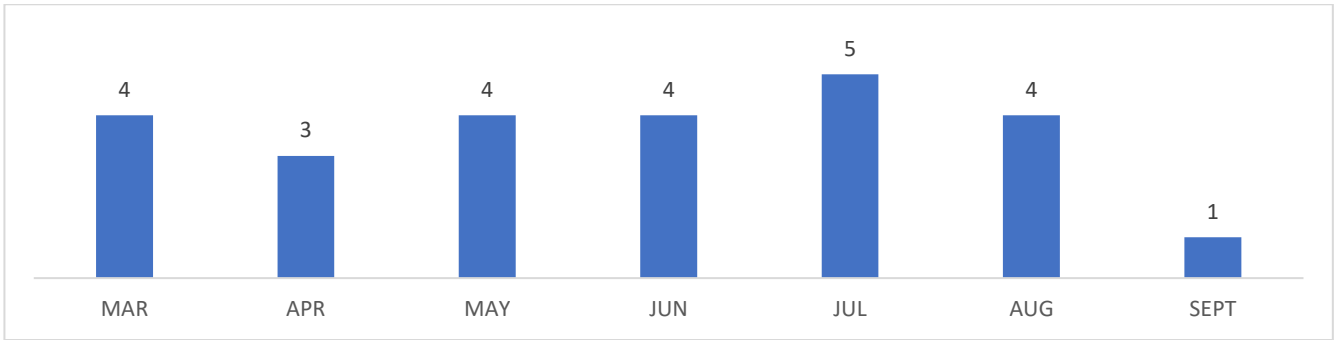


Visitors for CAS, who are collocated at Stopford House are not recorded in the above chart figures

Where we have the known locations for residents, the travelled from location is below. Please note this is not split by Ward and is exclusive to the above enquiries.

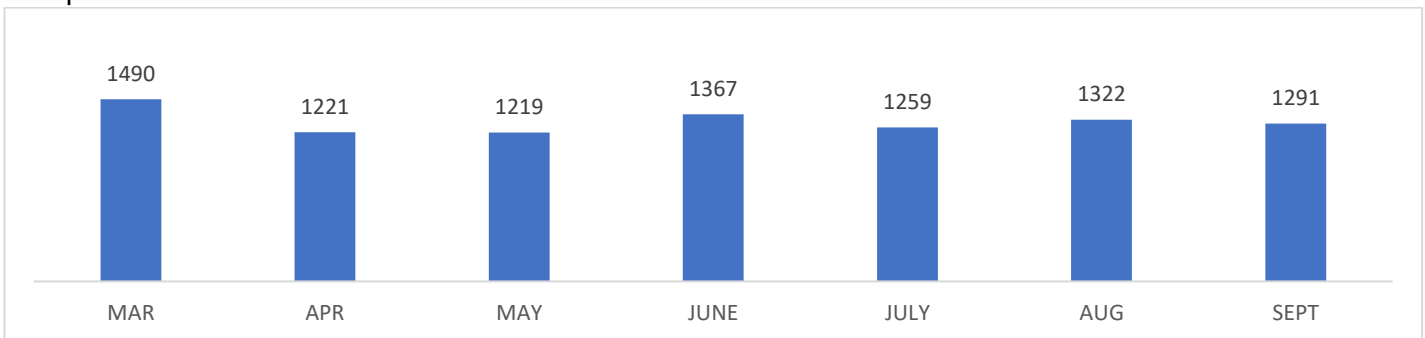


On occasion, residents / families present at Stopford House reception with immediate needs and in distress. Depending on the case, they are warm referred to either social care, housing / Stockport Homes, Citizens Advice and/or supported with referral applications. The number of crisis presentations are below.

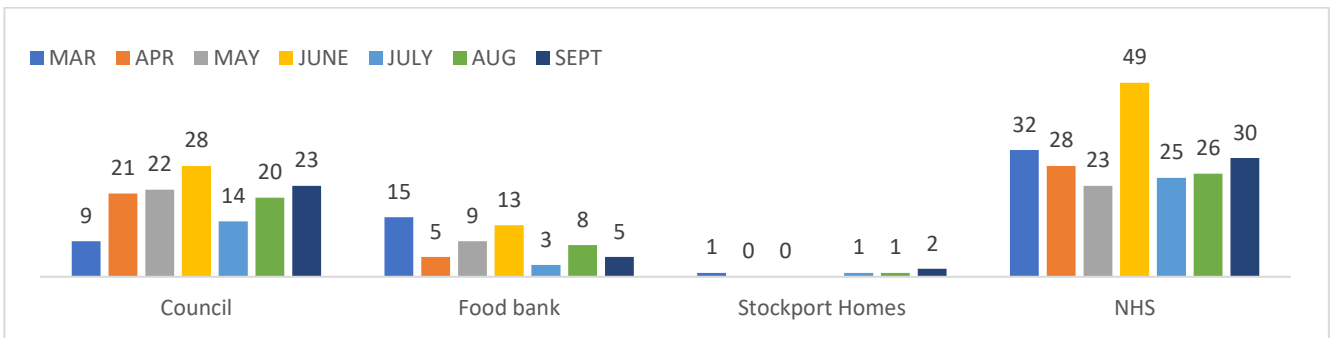


4. Citizens Advice Stockport (CAS)

This is a range of information that has been provided by CAS. The number of unique Stockport residents who presented to the CAS are below.

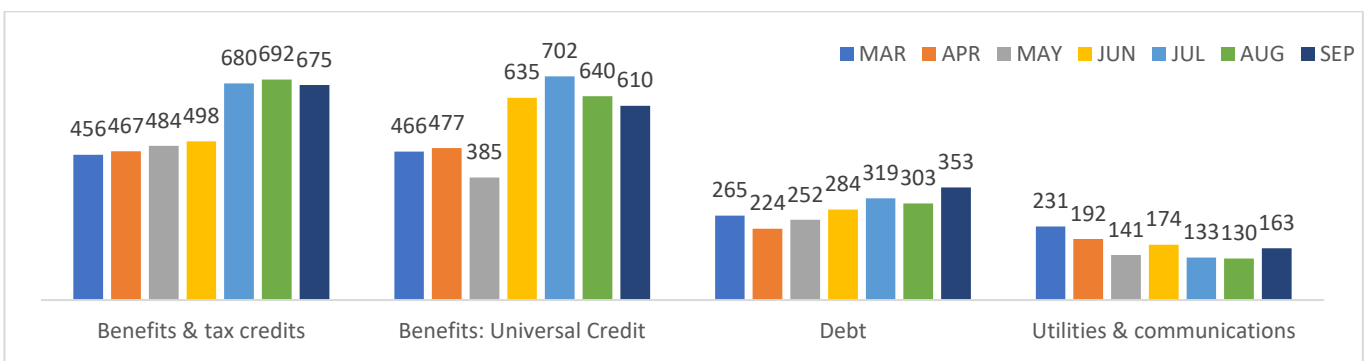


Of these, warm referrals into the CAS are illustrated below

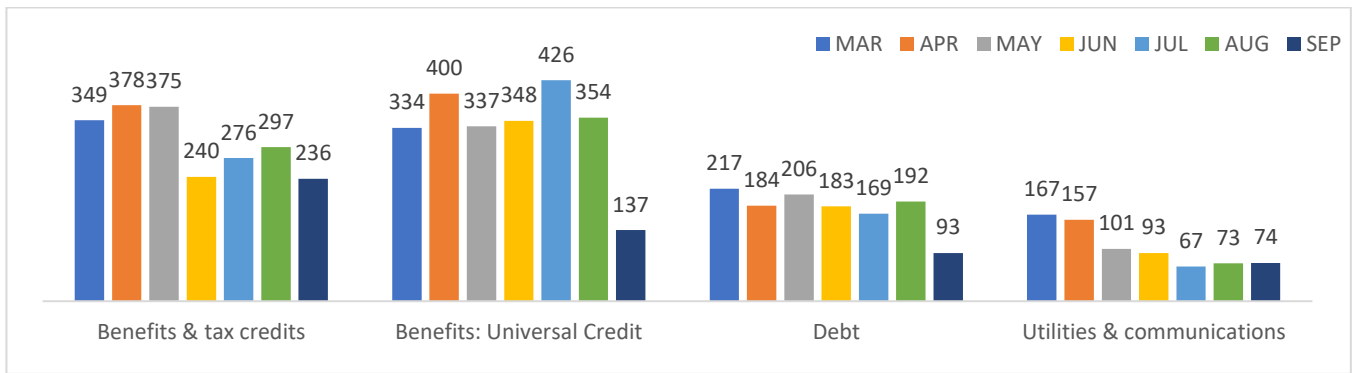


The number of issues raised by residents who called the CAS are below and it must be noted this is only a selection of issues that the CAS undertake to provide advice and support as part of the commission with Stockport Council.

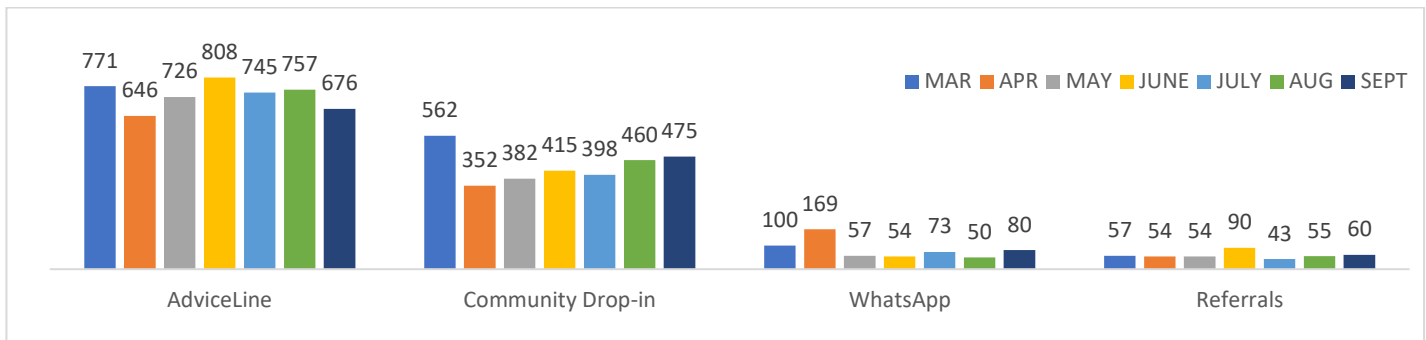
Issue



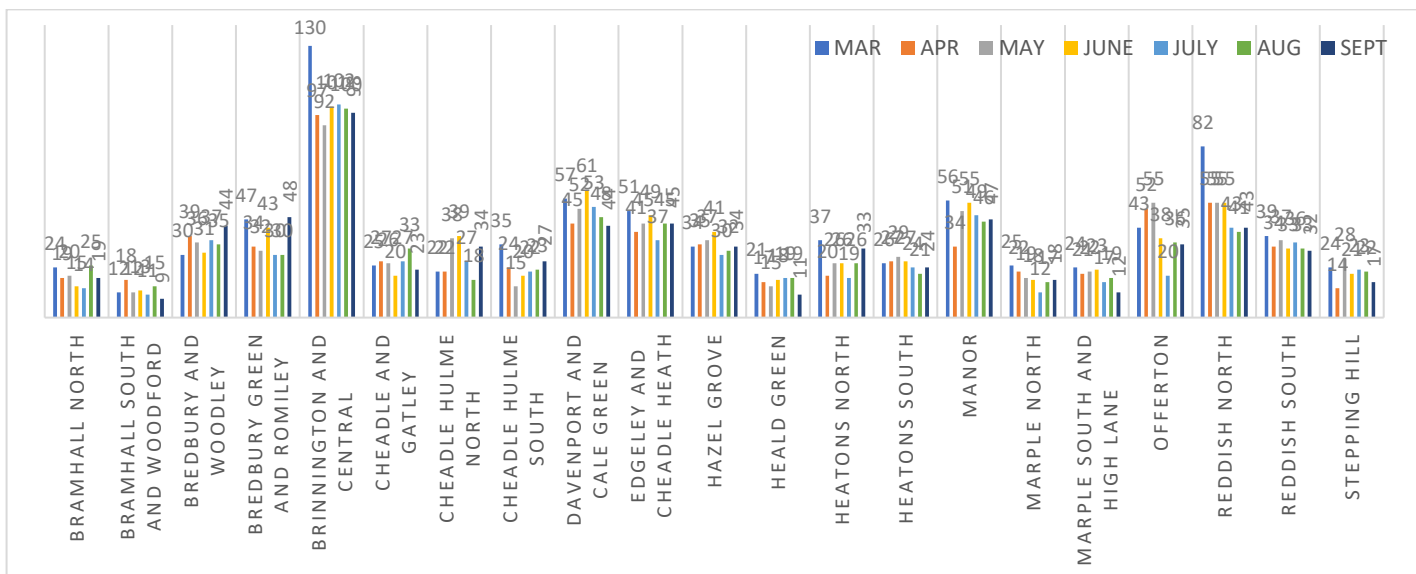
Advice Line advice and triage



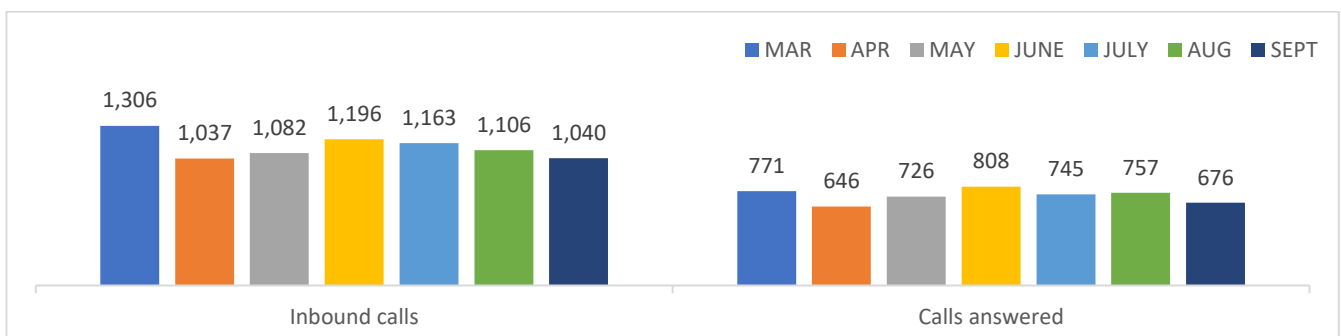
These are the channels used by Stockport residents to communicate with the CAS about their issues.



Where we have the known locations for residents, the travelled from location is below. Please note this is not split by Ward and is exclusive to the above enquiries.



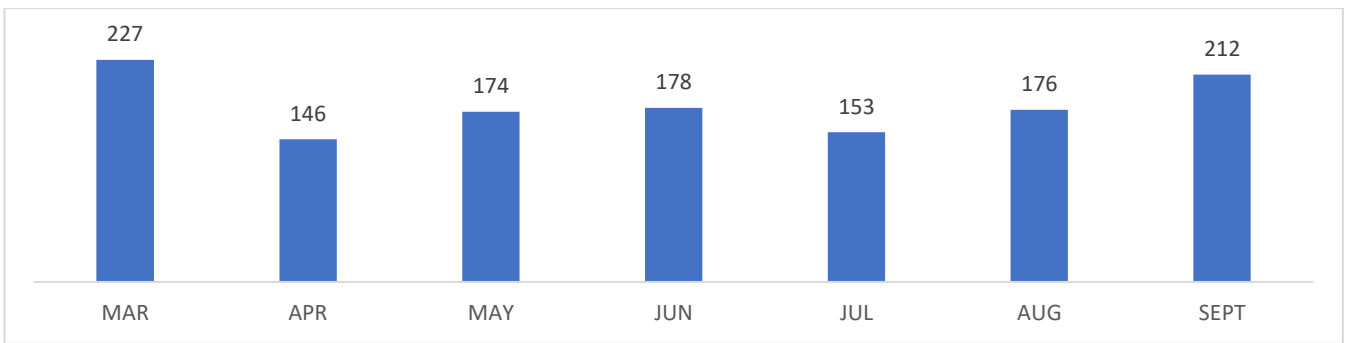
4.1. Advice line summary



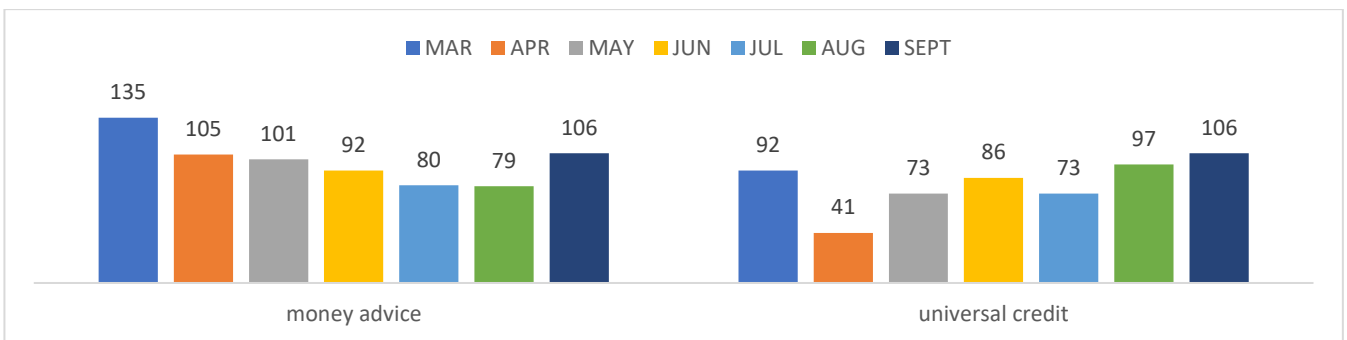
In July, the answer rate was **65%**, the average wait time for the advice line was **14 minutes** in September.

5. Stockport Homes Group (SHG) Money Advice Team

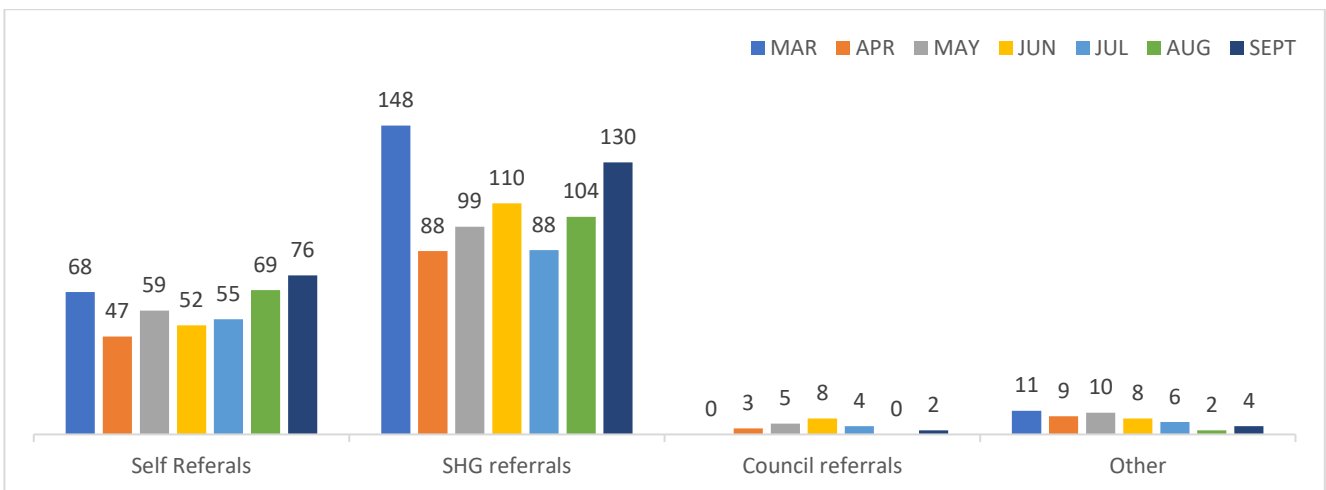
This is a range of information that has been provided by SHG. The number of unique Stockport residents who presented to SHG are below.



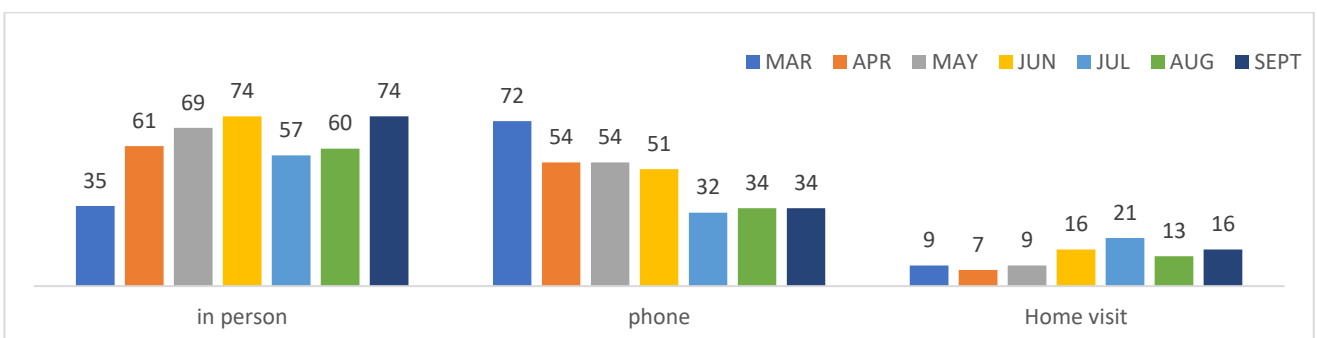
Of these, the key areas of advice and support related to.



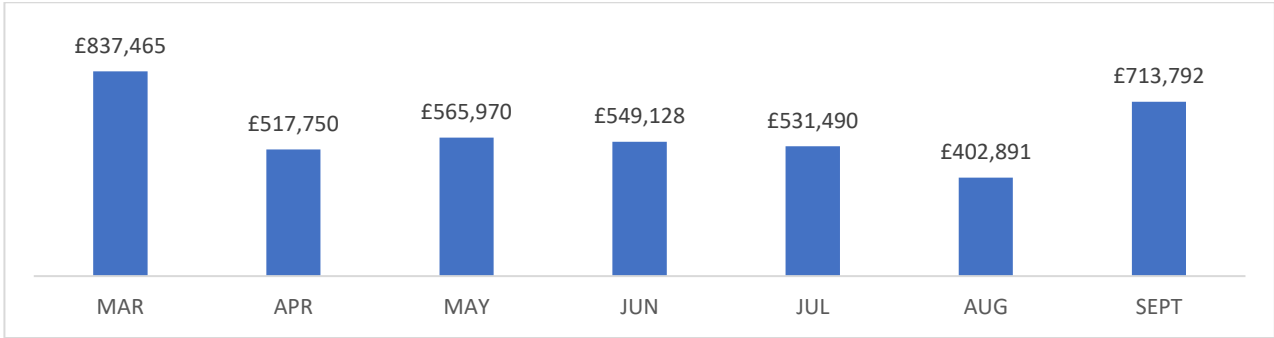
The method to which residents accessed SHG advice and support are as follows:-



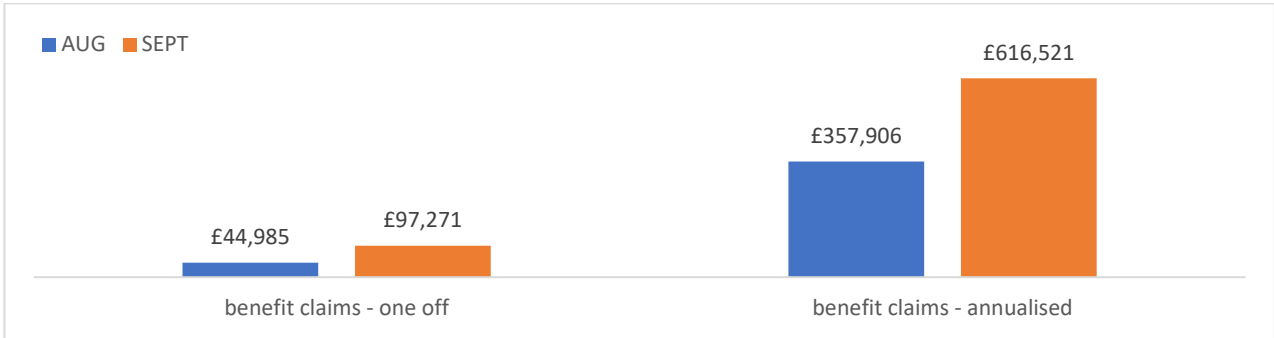
The delivery method of advice and support is typically as follows.



The outcome of the advice and support requested by residents is as follows. The financial gain that follows is a combination of one off payments plus annualised income from benefit increases, HSF and discretionary housing payments.

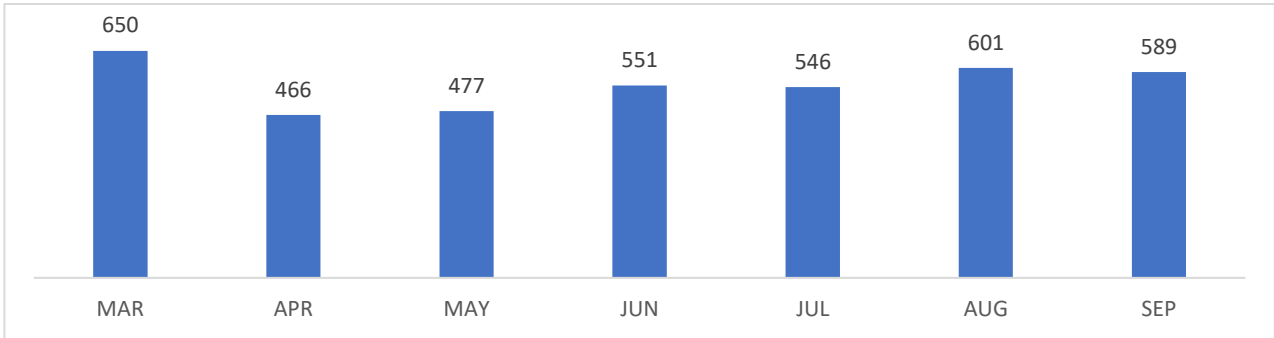


This can be split in to the following categories from August 23

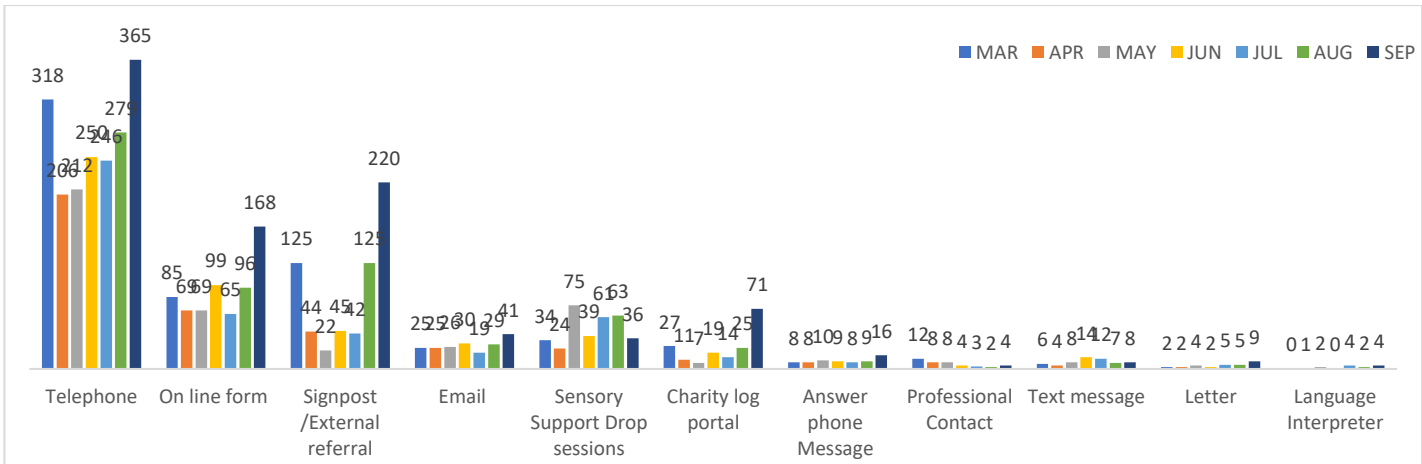


6. Stockport Support Hub

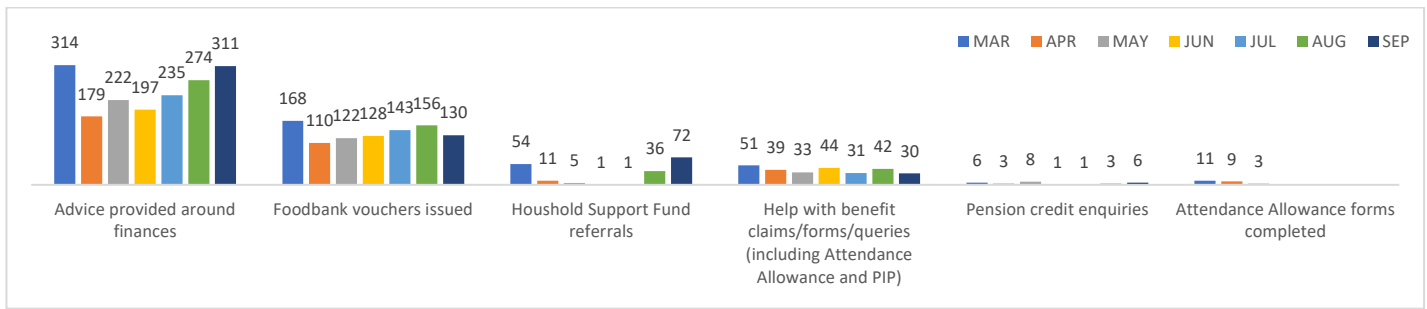
The chart below relates to the number of new resident referrals for the Stockport Support Hub.



The methods of contact used by Residents included.

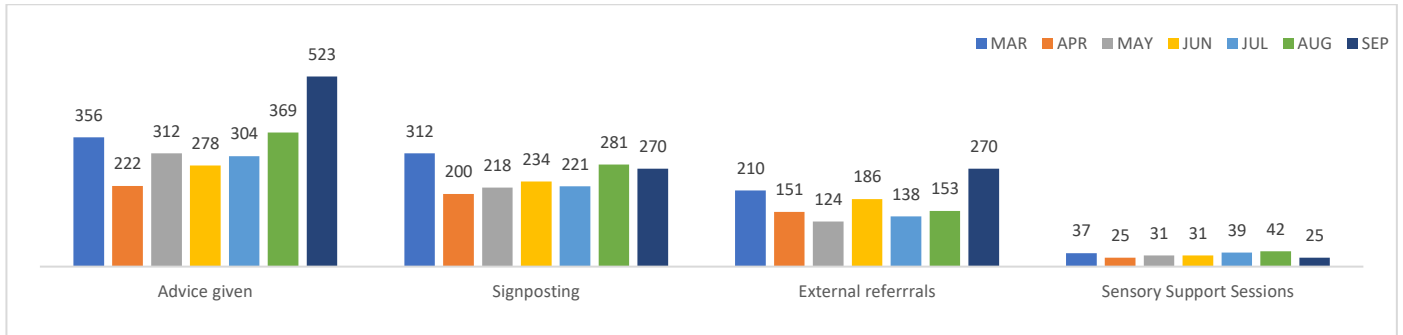


Of these, the key areas of financial advice and support related to:-

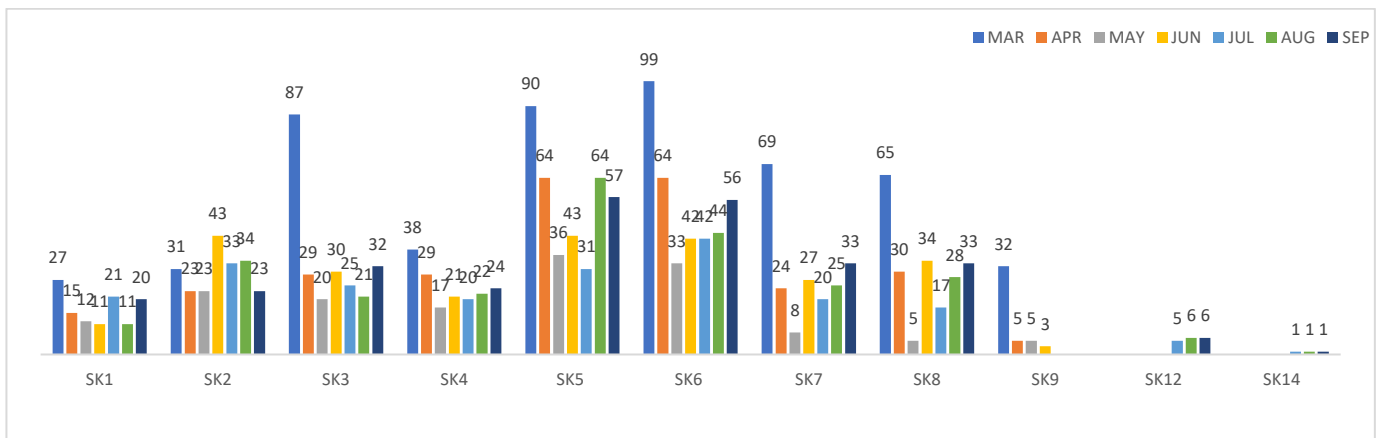


(note this is a segment of the total issues presented)

Following advice and support, this was provided to our residents.



Where we have the known locations for residents, the location is below. Please note this is organised by postcode.



7. In the eyes of the resident – their stories – case studies – September 2023

This section looks at the stories we heard and how we supported our residents.

7.1. Supporting residents with Cost of Living

Background

Resident A is a single parent with three teenage children. She was previously self employed and during the covid pandemic her business ceased trading. Post pandemic Resident A has been struggling financially whilst trying to restart her own business. Because of this, she has been struggling to put food on the table, had growing debts, council tax arrears and was using her credit card to pay for household bills to get by each month. Resident A knew she needed help but didn't know what was available until she saw the COL line advertised in a School Meal Support letter and decided to call.

What we did

Immediately, resident A was issued with food bank voucher and details of the Pantry membership to help feed her teenage children. This was followed with support to complete a support funds and council tax discretionary support application. To make sure she was being awarded the right amount from the benefits system, an appointment was made via a warm referral to the Citizens Advice for a thorough benefits review. Resident A was also provided with links to contact her energy supplier for help with paying her gas / electricity bills.

What happened

Support Funds awarded an amount to help with energy bill arrears and a warm referral for pantry membership. The discretionary application was successful to help with her arrears. Citizens Advice checked her benefit entitlements and is helping with her benefits application and credit card debt; all of the children are now on free school meals and her daughter who started college in September receives a £20pw award which has made a huge difference to their family. Resident A said the additional support has really helped her to get back on her feet

7.2. Supporting residents with Mental Health

Background

Resident B has a serious long-term mental health condition and had claimed for a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in February 22. Sadly the application was rejected and the resident did not ask for a mandatory reconsideration because he was hospitalised not long after.

What we did

RAS were able to ask for a very late reconsideration as we were just within the absolute deadline of 13 months. Even though, there was evidence from the Consultant Psychiatrist for this application, the reconsideration was turned down. Following this, RAS lodged an appeal to the DWP.

What happened

DWP looked at the appeal and contacted us to say she was going to supersede the appeal without the need for a hearing and awarded the enhanced rate daily living and enhanced rate mobility components. This resulted in a weekly cash gain of £172.75 and a one off payment of £12,737. Without the intervention of a Benefits Appeal Advisor who requested a Mandatory Reconsideration for the original decision – this money – which the resident had been entitled to all along – would have been lost

7.3. Support residents with debt

Background

Resident C is self employed, owns his property and was going through the divorce process. Unfortunately, his earnings from self-employment were very low - he had earned less than £2,000 in a 6 months period. When he came to see the RAS team he had almost no income and had debt problems and was selling his personal belongings to survive. His brother was helping but the resident felt this was a blow to his self-esteem. He told the RAS team that he was unable to pay his council tax and other household bills. He had

never claimed any state benefits in his life and didn't know how the welfare system worked. He was reluctant to go to the foodbank and said he would 'rather starve'.

What we did

RAS helped him to apply for Universal Credit, Council Tax Support and a grant from HSF fund to help with immediate needs whilst the benefit applications were being processed. He was also supported by a qualified Debt Advisor to help negotiate affordable payment arrangements with his creditors.

What happened

The resident commented by saying "Finally, my life is much more balanced than when we met and I would like to repeat my gratitude for all the help, advice and support that you provided - you established the platform enabling me to move forward with my life for which I am eternally grateful. Thanking you for your time".

7.4. Supporting Older Residents

Background

Resident D (Mrs D), aged 80 is very ill and disabled and is cared for full time by her husband, aged 84 and they had recently celebrated 60 years of marriage. Mr D was dedicated to his wife however, he had prostate cancer and blood/bone cancer and was receiving treatment. Given Mrs D's condition they have to use a lot of water for washing clothes and showering because Mrs D had a catheter and was housebound. The couple were very worried about keeping the house warm given both of their health issues. They were also concerned because the nurse who used to visit had stopped around last September because of staffing pressures. Mr D felt alone and was uncertain about who to contact for help. Mr D was at a loss until a chance conversation with his local Councillor. From this, the Councillor contacted the council to see if we could help. On hearing this news, the COL team mobilised immediately and began a wraparound service for the resident.

What we did

The COL team made a warm referral to Adult Social Care for additional support and as a result of this, the couple were assessed; then contacted Age UK on behalf of Mr and Mrs D for help with a new boiler to better heat the house; the COL team also visited Mr and Mrs D in person, at their own home to see if they could help improve their income by supporting them to complete a Pension Credit and Council Tax Discretionary Support application. They also referred the couple to Disability Stockport for help towards new bedding - theirs were perishing from all the washing.

What happened

Age UK helped towards the cost of the new boiler which is being fitted in October, just in time for the winter; Adult Social Care visited the couple to assess their needs and are going to fit a handrail at the front of the property as well as a new step because their step is too low for Mrs D to use safely. They also received a lamp to help with reading. Council Tax Support have reviewed their application for support and the Pension Credit application is in progress.

7.5. Supporting Stockport Homes tenants

Background

When a Stockport Homes Rent officer spoke with one of our young tenants about her missing rent payment, she took the time to understand why the payment had been missed and to understand the tenant's household circumstances. It transpired that the customer had been struggling financially for a long time but had been prioritising paying her bills. She was working full time as well as being a single parent to a young baby, but was struggling to make ends meet and this had a negative impact on her mental health.

What we did

The rent officer quickly realised that she had been missing out on benefits for her child, and as such it was no wonder she was struggling so much! The Money Advice team did a benefits check to help the resident to maximise her income and realised that the resident had missed out on almost two years of Child Benefit, UC Child Element, and hadn't been benefitting from the UC work allowance.

What happened

The Money Advice Team and an arrangement on her rent and helped to apply for the benefits that the resident was entitled to. This has meant the world of difference to this tenant.

7.6. Supporting residents at the Stockport Support Hub

Background

A resident was referred to The Stockport Support Hub by our partners at Home Support workers following concerns that he had switched off his heating due to the rises in energy bills and rent increases. When our Key Workers from Your Support met with the resident, he was sat under a blanket in a cold room, his home had become unmanageable and was not in a good condition. He could not afford to pay the rent to his private landlord. He was in arrears with British Gas who would not allow him to set up a direct debit until the debt was cleared. Together, we completed a benefits check to ensure the resident was in receipt of all available benefits and there was a dispute over his Local Housing Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit which we resolved through working with Welfare Rights and DWP.

What we did

The Support Hub helped the resident to access the Household Support Fund, and he received support with his financial circumstances. They then applied for a Discretionary Housing Payment; also completed a claim for energy support through the British Gas Trust fund to help with his arrears which enabled him to arrange an affordable Direct Debit.

What happened

The Resident also engaged with Home Support who carried out a deep clean of his home, and Handy Help from Age UK completed repairs to his lighting. The resident feels more motivated and has contacted British Gas independently to address his debts. He felt able to meet up with old colleagues that he contacted through the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. (SSAFA) widening his social network improving his wellbeing and support from others.

Feedback from the resident 'My Key Worker has done a lot to support me, I am very thankful for all the work we completed. My Key Worker did more for me than any other service has and I would not have had the same support if I had contacted anyone else.'

8. Key to abbreviations

SITREP – Situation report

RAS - Resident Advice and Support – Stockport Council

CAS - Citizens Advice Stockport

SSH - Stockport Support Services Hub

SHG - Stockport Homes Group Money Advice Service

PIP – Personal independent payment

DA – Discretionary award

DHP – Discretionary housing payment

SLA – Service level agreement

COL – Cost of living

HSF – Household Support Funds

AA – Attendance Allowance

PIP – Personal independence payment

UC – Universal Credit

CMHT – Community Mental Health team

DRO – Debt relief order

CTS – Council Tax Support

HUGGG - a government scheme called Help Us Get Good Government

For any enquiries about the data in this SITREP, please contact soulla.jones@stockport.gov.uk