

Research & Campaigns Bulletin

June 2024

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The Rise of Legal Issues & Justice Advice

More people than ever are coming to us with legal problems. But what is driving this change?



Our Justice Advice team have seen an **84%** overall increase in issues reported to them this year.*

There has been an **87% increase** in face to face appointments needed, as well as a **30% increase** in all activities recorded by the team at Bournemouth Courts. This means that the work is becoming **more complex**, covering a **wider breadth** of issues. The support and guidance we can give is not always enough for clients.

Family issues are on the rise, and our clients are not always equipped to deal with court processes.

There is an average **92%** increase in family legal matters, such as divorce and child arrangements. However, with many court processes being **digitised**, this adds further complexity at times of great stress. **The court is not yet fully and consistently adapted to those who are unrepresented, who may not be able to manage expanded digital processes alone.**



There is a crisis in legal housing issues, with renters heavily affected by possessions and evictions.

There has been a **74% increase** in issues recorded by the Justice Advice team across housing, which is driven by no fault eviction action. Many landlords are opting to sell properties which have become unaffordable to keep, causing homelessness and debt for renters as they try to keep up with court costs, pushing them into further financial stress.



The cost of living has created a perfect storm for legal issues.

The people we are advising are **more vulnerable** and **less resilient**, with access to many **fewer resources**. Savings that may have been used for legal representation are often decimated. They are **facing barriers**, such as **digitisation**, and a **lack of access to Legal Aid**. This makes legal problems more complex. Support and guidance from Citizens Advice is not always enough where legal representation is what's really needed.

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Kelly's Story

Kelly*, 36, is the mother of 2 young children, and lives in rented accommodation. She is recently separated, is going through a divorce, and her husband has moved out. Kelly thinks she may need to go through the court to organise child arrangements.

Kelly has been issued with a Section 21 eviction notice, because her landlord needs to sell the property she lives in due to increased costs. Kelly has lived there for more than ten years. She is a nurse, but she is struggling to afford increased local rental rates, and to pass strict letting agency affordability criteria. She has no guarantor to help. Kelly has been told that she may have to go into emergency accommodation if she cannot find a suitable place to live. Kelly is anxious because the children's father would like residency of the children, and without secure housing, she cannot guarantee to the court that she has a secure home for the children.

Our team assisted Kelly to check whether the eviction process was taking place correctly. We assisted her with a response to the court defending the possession claim, asking for more time before the eviction takes place. We ensured she was linked with BCP council and Let's Talk Renting to assist with finding new accommodation within the timeframe. We also assisted Kelly to understand what to expect with the no fault divorce process, which would take approximately 6 months. After discussion with our team, Kelly decided that it might be better for her and her ex-partner to come to an agreement between themselves about the children via mediation. If mediation is unsuccessful, Kelly hopes that by the time she has to make legal child arrangements, her housing situation will have been resolved.

*Names and some details have been changed to protect anonymity.

Citizens Advice BCP's information and advice is available to everyone - whoever they are, whatever their problem.

We can be contacted via [adviceline on 0808 2787 939](tel:08082787939), or via the 'Get Advice' page on our website.

