

Advice demand related to Coronavirus

Monitoring the effects on
the Citizens Advice service

Update 30 March 2020



Summary

This note pulls together different data sources - page views and searches of our online content, clients helped by our local service for sick pay, and clients whose casenote includes a reference to coronavirus. The timeframe for this data is Sunday 22 March to Saturday 28 March.

We have seen:

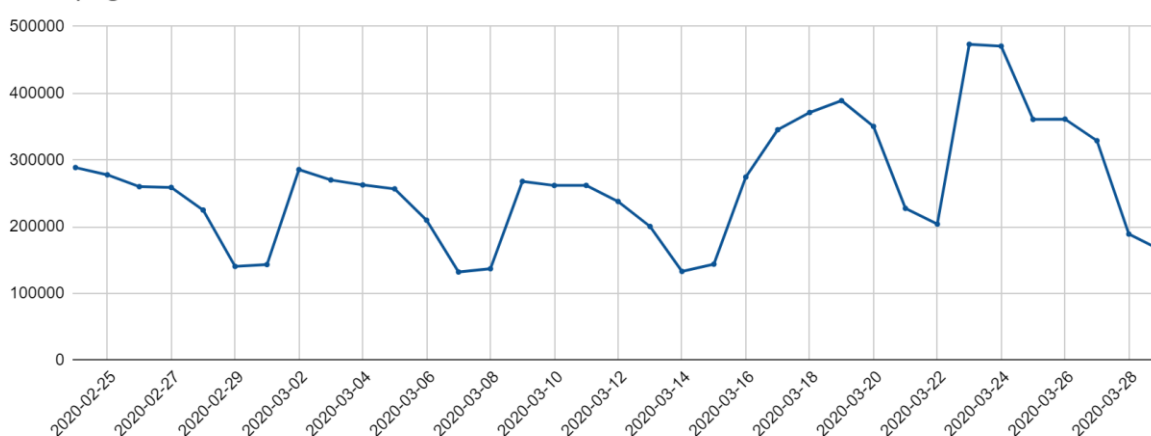
- The busiest week ever on our [website](#) with 2.4 million pageviews, surpassing the previous weekly high of 2.2 million pageviews
- We've introduced new pages to meet specific demands related to paying bills and furloughing
- One of those new pages, 'what to do if you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus' was the most viewed page, surpassing the pageviews of our main coronavirus page
- We published this page on Friday 20 March. Its pageviews rose steadily over the weekend, followed by a steep increase on Monday 23 March which carried over onto Tuesday 24 March
- This page links out to our Universal Credit and other coronavirus specific advice pages. Consequently, their pageviews increased sharply and continued to show strong traffic throughout the week.
- Searches for "self employed coronavirus" have increased by 352% from last week whereas searches for "sick pay" decreased by almost 500%.
- The number of cases referencing coronavirus have doubled in our Local Citizens Advice service, and continued to increase in the Consumer Service
- Universal Credit remains the top issue for clients accessing Local Citizens Advice, but employment advice is the second-most sought after advice area

1 Our online service

In response to heightened concern about coronavirus, we set up a page [“coronavirus - what it means for you”](#). This page links to other pages on our website as well as external resources from reputable sources, for instance gov.uk. Monitoring searches and page views on the website gives us a good metric of concern about the virus.

Traffic to the website continued to increase last week, surpassing the record high numbers set the week before. Between Sunday 22 and Saturday 28 March, there were 2.4m pageviews on the website, an increase of 200,000 pageviews compared to the previous week. The record for the busiest day ever was broken again last week, with 473,000 pageviews on Monday 23 March, followed closely by 470,000 pageviews on Tuesday 24 March.

Total pageviews on the website

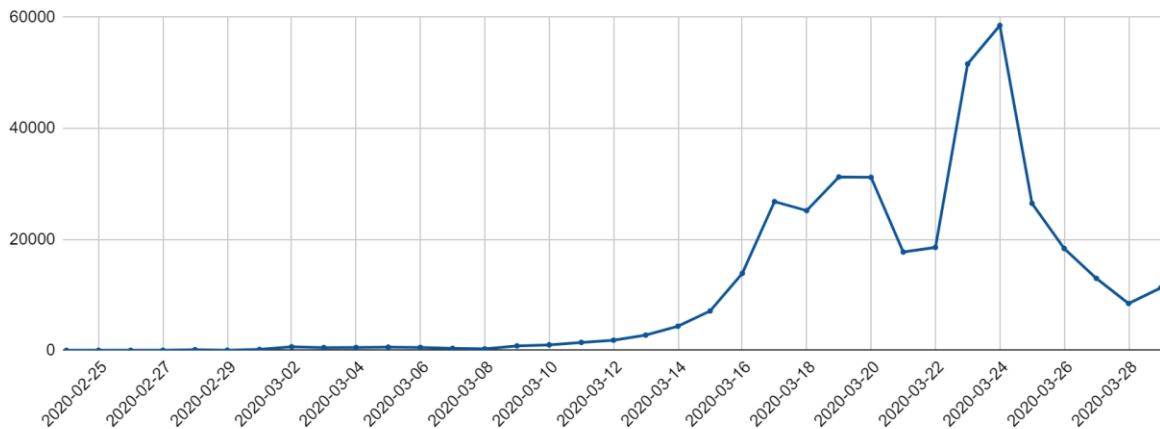


Page views on relevant pages

The chart below shows the daily pageviews trend of the main coronavirus page, set up at the end of February. It shows data up to and including Sunday 29 March. We only include people who spent at least 30 seconds on the page, and exclude where possible our own advisors.

The page saw a massive spike in views after the usual weekend lull, peaking at 58,000 pageviews on Tuesday 24 March. This coincides with the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday evening about stricter social distancing measures.

Pageviews of the "Coronavirus - what it means for you" page



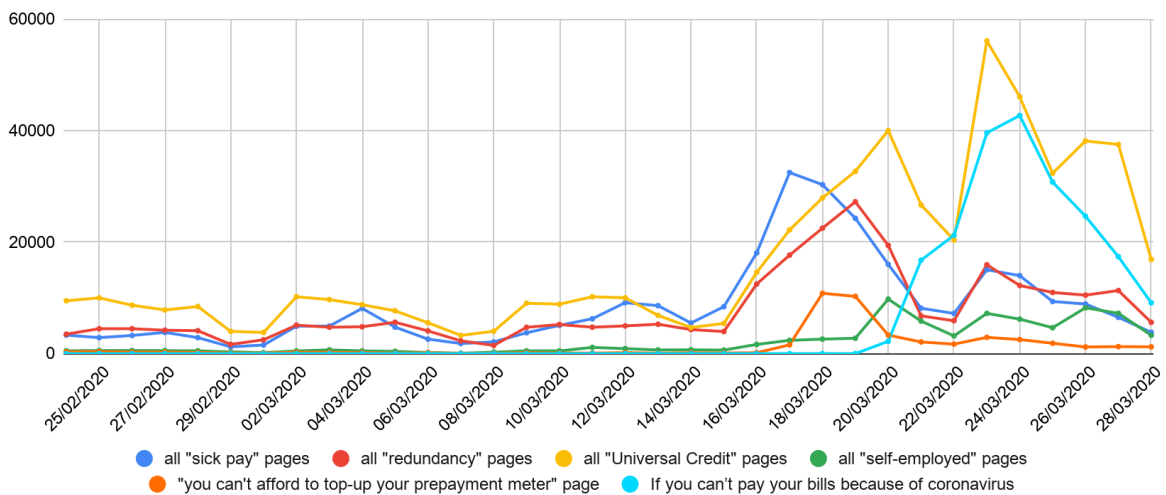
Number of page views for Coronavirus related pages

Top 10 individual advice pages	Pageviews (22/03 to 28/03)	%change (last week)	%change (last year)	Movement from week (15/03 to 21/03)
If you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus (published on 20 March)	181,500	873%	NA	New Entry
Coronavirus - what it means for you	180,800	28%	NA	Down 1 place
Coronavirus - check what benefits you can get (published on 24 March)	66,000	NA	NA	New Entry
Check if you're entitled to sick pay	44,000	-56%	684%	Down 2 places
Check if you can get Universal Credit	43,000	65%	NA	Up 1 place
How the minimum income floor works if you're self employed	38,000	54%	2196%	Up 1 place
Coronavirus - if your employer has told you not to work (published on 25 March)	37,000	NA	NA	New Entry
If you're struggling with living costs	32,000	184%	NA	New Entry
Eligibility for ESA	30,000	-17%	799%	Down 6 places
Get help applying for Universal Credit	25,000	89%	NA	New Entry

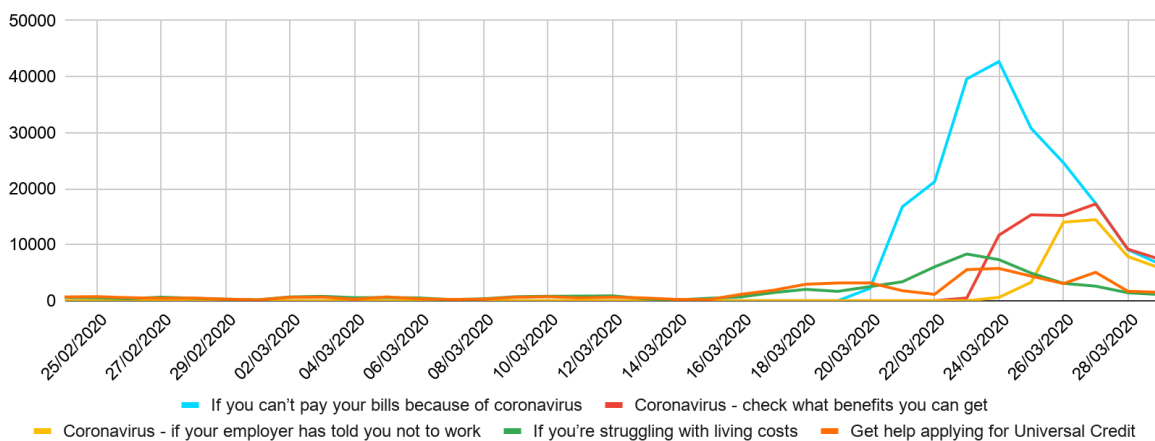
Our most viewed advice pages have changed drastically last week, with half of them being new entries. We have released three of these pages in the last week based on emerging client issues relating to coronavirus - namely clients struggling to cope with bills and living costs due to redundancy.

Views of relevant pages over time

Pageviews of top coronavirus issue pages



Pageviews of "New Entry" pages in the top 10 individual advice pages



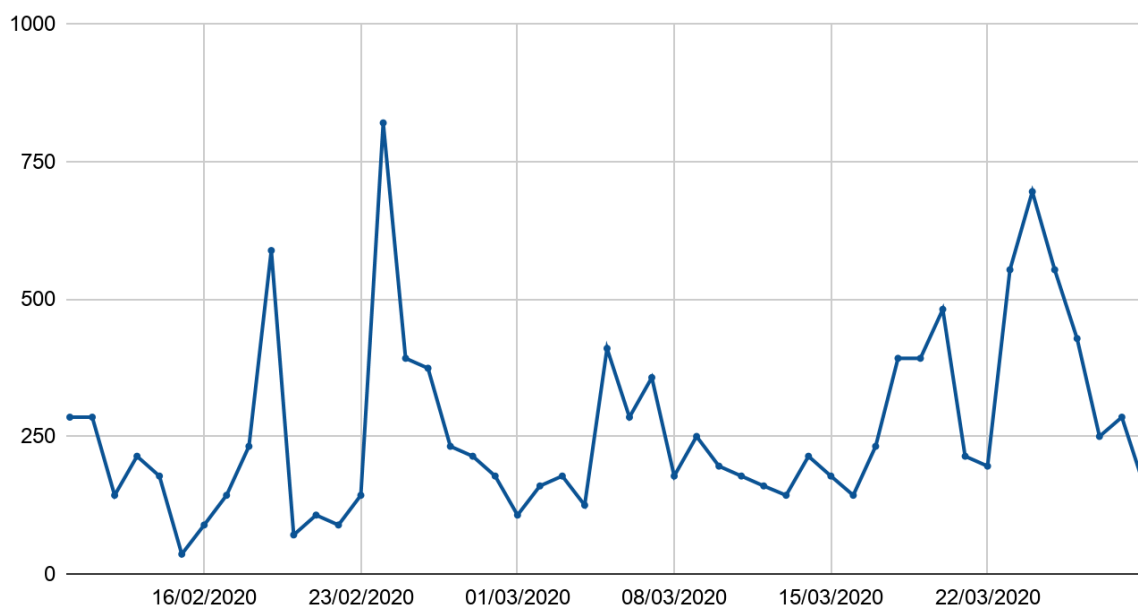
Pageviews of our Universal Credit pages and the newly released “If you can’t pay your bills because of coronavirus page” peaked on 23 March and 24 March respectively.

While the views of the “If you can’t pay your bills because of coronavirus page” fell back later during the week, views of our Universal Credit pages remained strong throughout (first chart).

Our newly released coronavirus pages on “check what benefits you can get” and “if your employer has told you not to work” have also shown consistently high pageviews since their mid-week launch (second chart).

Below, we look at longer term trends for the [check if something might be a scam](#) page, going back to the beginning of February to identify any concerning trends.

Views of the “Check if something might be a scam” web page



The spikes on 19 and 24 February are related to awareness campaigns around our scams action service, driven both by posts from our social media accounts and television programmes regarding scams awareness.

Outside of these peaks, last Tuesday (24 March) saw the busiest single day in terms of pageviews, and last week was busier than any week outside the campaigns. However, the rises are not of the same order as those we are seeing elsewhere on the website, and this page was not in the 25 most viewed advice pages last week.

Searches

Below is a list of searches (sorted by impressions) related to coronavirus, which people used on Google to arrive at any part of our website. The data covers the week beginning 22nd March. We have also captured the clicks on a url to get to our website as a proportion of impressions for each of these searches (URL CTR).

Impression and url click clicks have increased on the previous reporting period (15-21 March), with 23% and 28% increases respectively. Notably, people are now seeking out more general information on coronavirus, with over a quarter of impressions coming from two search terms that previously had not featured in this report (coronavirus, coronavirus uk).

Searches for sick pay now makes up only one of the top six searches, whereas previously it was the top four searches.

Impressions for “self employed coronavirus” have increased by 352% on previous week.

	Searches on Google for 'sick' or 'corona' and how many people click on Citizens Advice (any page)	Impressions	Url Clicks	URL CTR
1.	coronavirus	430,054	2,259	0.53%
2.	self employed coronavirus	124,376	1,635	1.31%
3.	statutory sick pay	60,293	320	0.53%
4.	coronavirus uk	50,554	902	1.78%
5.	coronavirus self employed	38,037	864	2.27%
6.	universal credit coronavirus	30,538	782	2.56%
	Grand total	1,609,677	90,673	5.63%

2 Our local network

Our network gives advice on a wide range of topics, including some related to concerns around coronavirus. We do not offer general advice on health care, but can advise on sick pay and related matters.

Data from casenotes

We have now set up a tag for advisors to log any coronavirus related issues. It was fully operational all of last week. The table below shows the number of times it was used and the issues it was used on. The table refers to P1 numbers . P1 is the highest grouping - the least detailed - in our case classification system.

CoronaVirusTag : P1 numbers by day

Count of clients

AICPart1 (group)	23 M.. Mon	24 M.. Tue	25 M.. Wed	26 M.. Thu	27 M.. Fri	Grand Total
Benefits Universal Credit	846	1,038	1,053	948	1,036	4,634
Benefits & tax credits	575	616	698	632	593	2,948
Employment	506	576	648	771	677	3,017
Debt	84	109	99	127	103	487
Other	95	104	111	126	143	552
Financial services & capability	66	68	77	68	57	330
Housing	89	96	125	121	96	495
All other	138	172	192	222	198	894
Grand Total	1,599	1,883	2,035	2,018	1,917	8,657

The number of clients whose casenotes had used the coronavirus tag nearly doubled from the previous reporting period of 15-21 March, from 4,409 to 8,657. We saw 49,000 clients overall last week, so coronavirus-related queries represent around 18% of the total. The most common issue of concern remains Universal Credit, but this week more clients are seeing us about employment issues than other benefits and tax credits.

Client numbers have stabilised this week, averaging 1,700 clients a day.

Data from our consumer service

We have added the ability to search for cases where coronavirus is mentioned in the casenote. Last week, there were nearly 3,300 cases with the coronavirus flag.

The mix of cases is changing as the numbers grow. For instance, last week we saw almost 500 cases with the coronavirus tag for issues covering travel and accommodation related goods/services (hotels, holiday/travel, other holidays). Previously, cases about meat, poultry and pre-prepared food topped the number of cases.

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Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

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