



KENT & MEDWAY Growth Hub

Your gateway to business
growth

CoVID-19 BUSINESS SUPPORT HELPLINE
REPORT 1ST JUNE TO 5TH JUNE

AUTHOR

PHILIP GALPIN

Summary

For those businesses involved with the hospitality or leisure industries, the challenges remain acute and a great source of anxiety for most. Whilst many may have benefited from several programmes of support, the reserves/cashflow/timeline dilemma remains the key area of concern.

This contrasts with the conversations being had with those in other industry sectors who appear to be taking a more measured and considered approach to the future. The advice given tends to be more strategic with topics such as redundancy, diversification and cashflow being most popular.

Brexit has become a more frequent topic and we have been signposting to the Government's Transition information resources on Gov.UK.

We continue to receive calls around businesses re-opening with enquiries ranging from requests for queue barriers to deep cleaning certificates. In response, we have been liaising with Trading Standards, Environmental Health and Kent Fire & Rescue to ensure businesses have clarity around which businesses can open and which must remain closed. In addition to the Gov resources we are developing local video content to support the messages around re-opening.

Every day this week, we have spoken to several businesses that had no idea of the support available. To this end, we will be re-running a radio campaign and approaching stakeholders to assist with penetrating the market further.

Tudor Price

Growth Hub Manager

KMGH COVID 19 HELPLINE

Kent and Medway Growth Hub have been running the Covid-19 helpline on behalf of KCC and the Local Authorities since 25th March 2020

ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

6844 Phone Calls received and made by our call handlers and business advisers and **1575** helped via the webchat facility



ADVICE SESSIONS

2448 individual phone based intensive advice sessions achieved since inception



MOST ENGAGING AREAS

Maidstone area businesses have been the area to use the **phone helpline** most since inception, using it **719 times**. **Ashford** area businesses have used the **webchat** most using it **410 times**.



ADVERTISING & PROMOTION

Hospitality/Leisure Sector businesses have accessed the helpline most with **1103** engagements, just ahead of **Retail** which has had **1098**. **Agriculture** has had the least with **25**



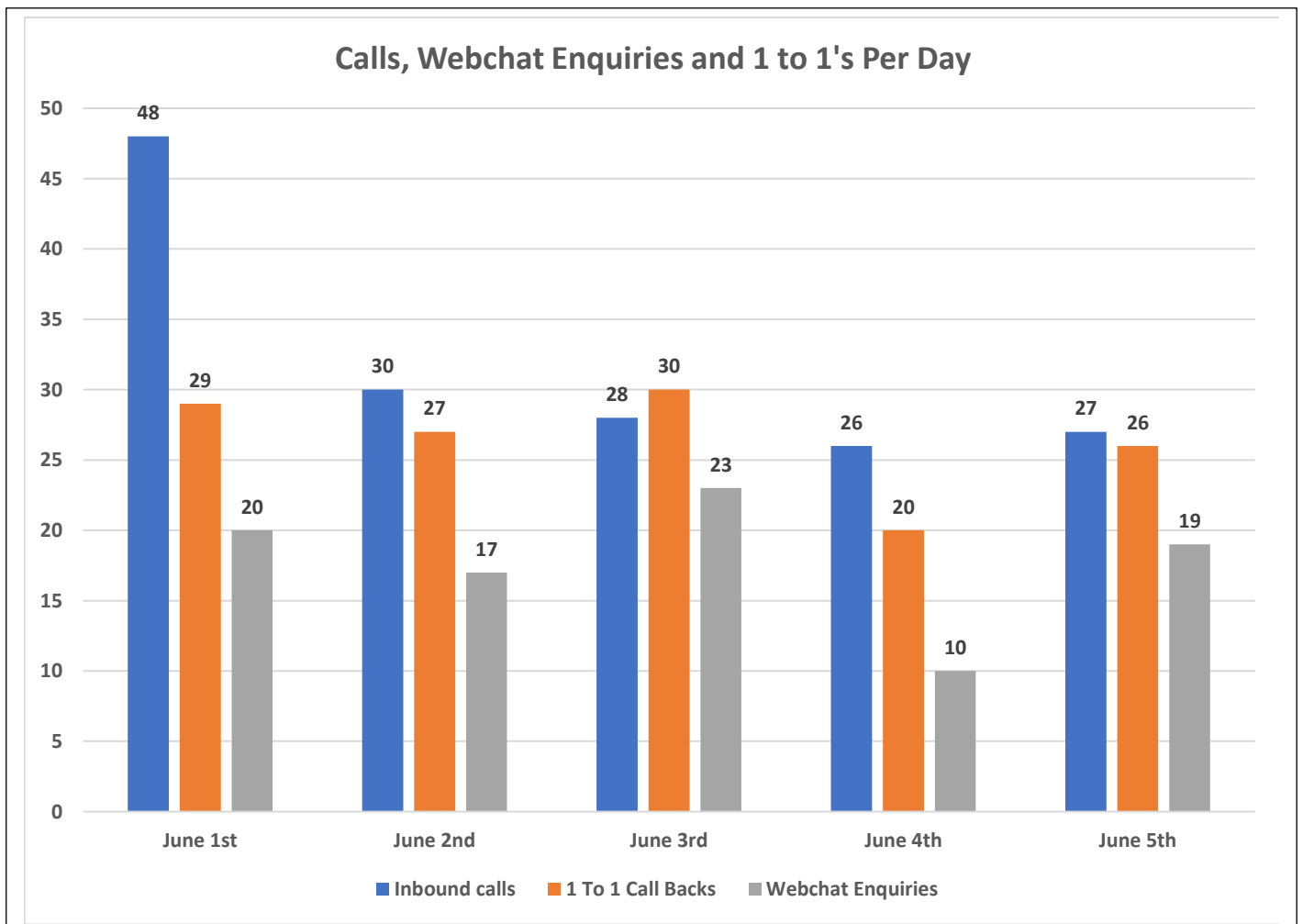
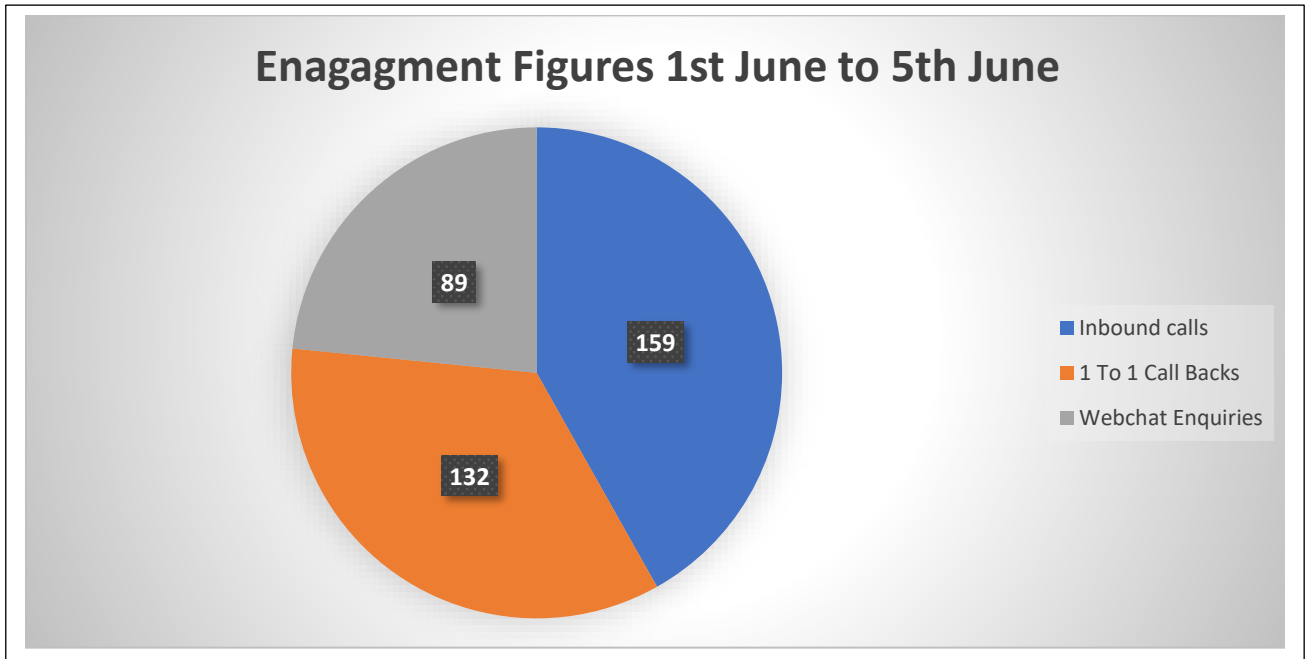
MOST ACCESSED SCHEME

65% of all enquiries were regarding the Small **Business Rate Relief Grant**

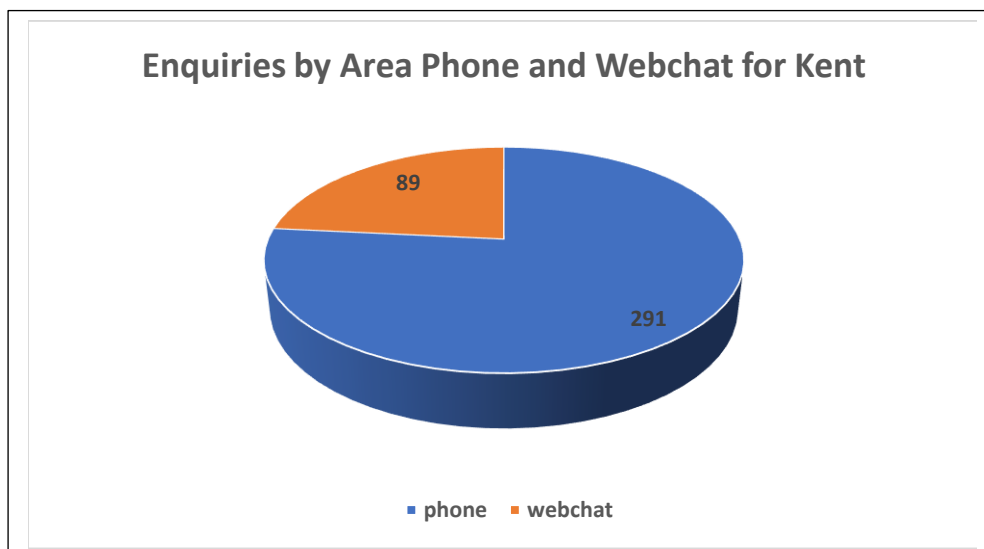
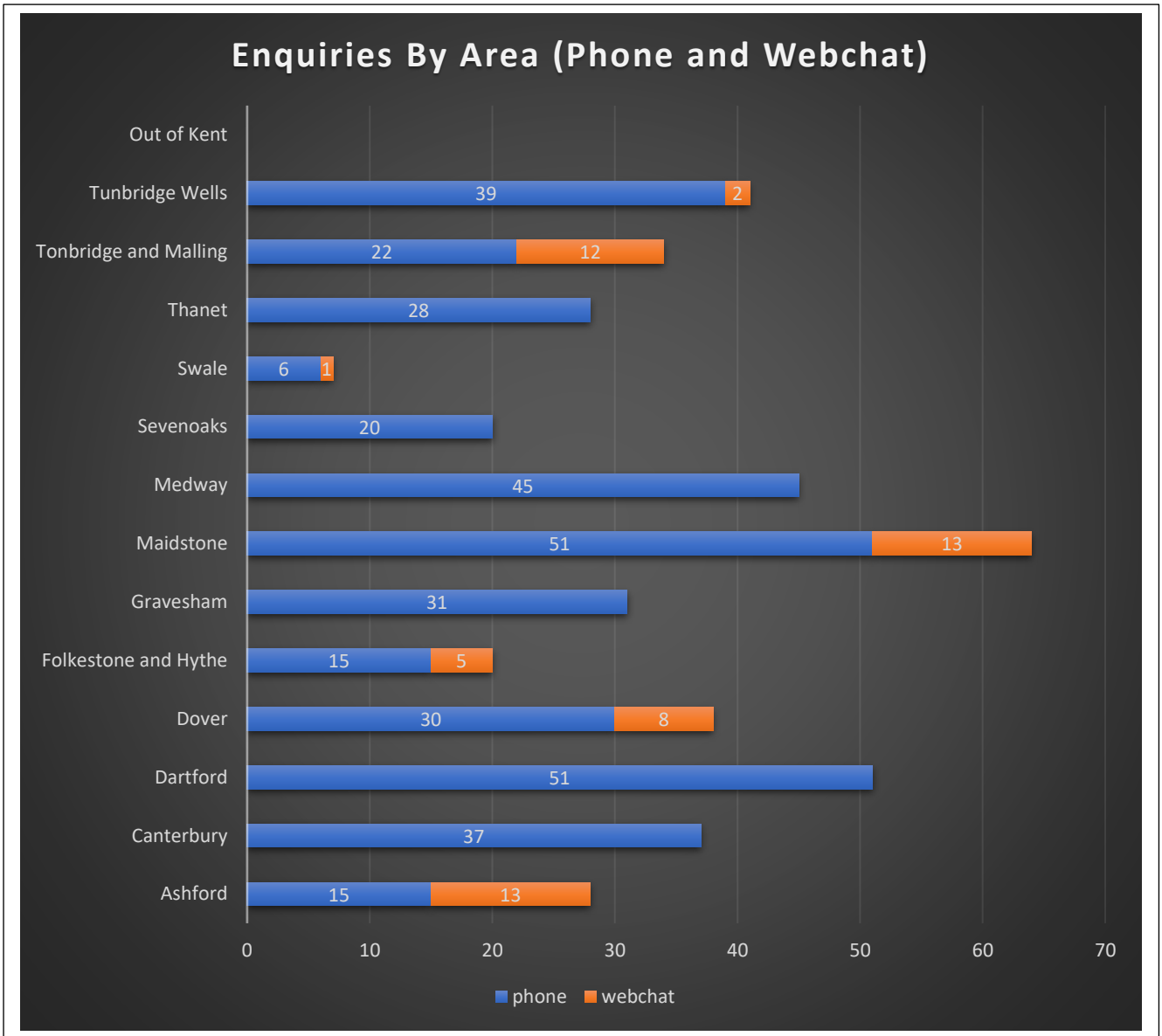


COVID 19 HELPLINE

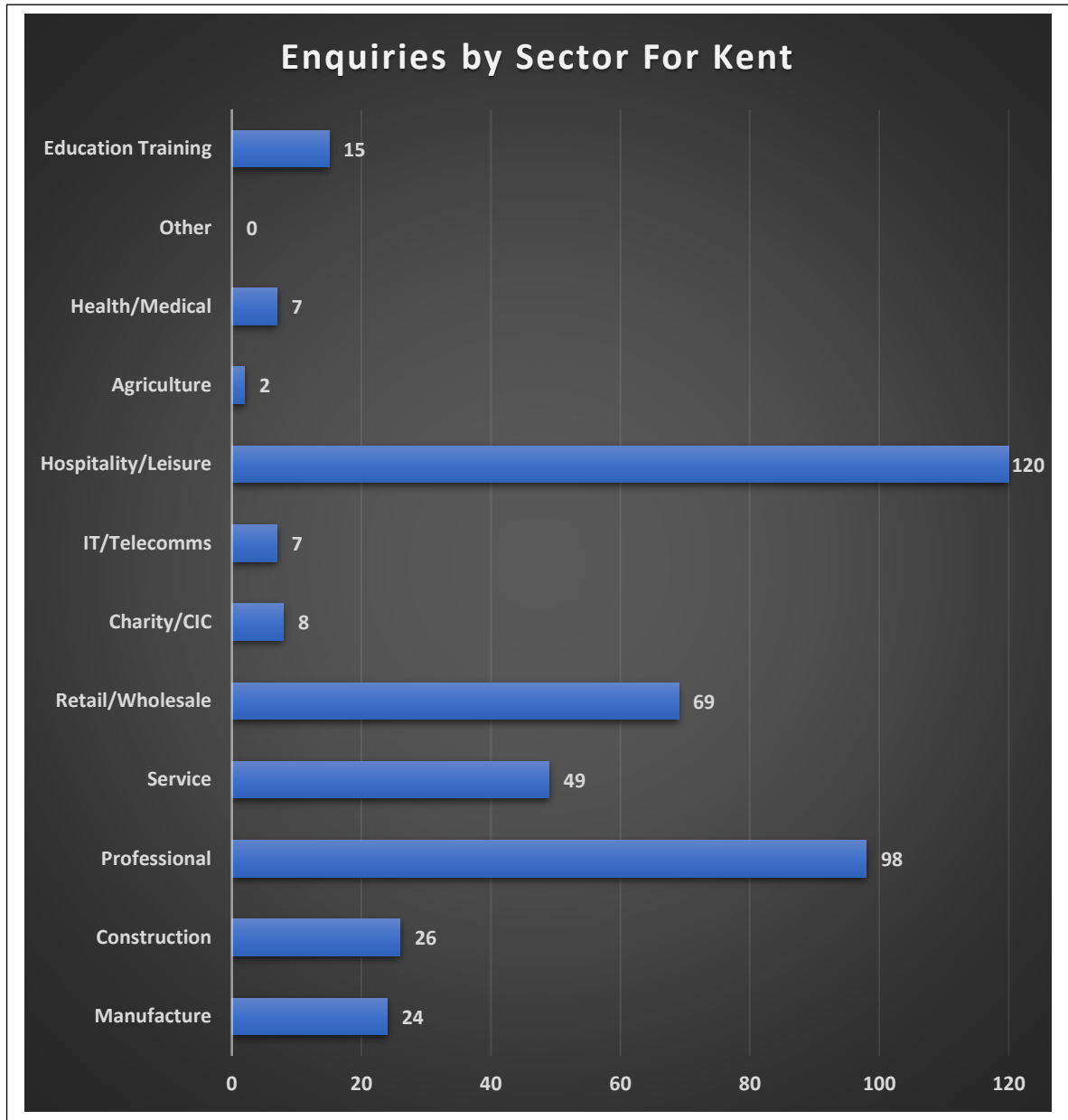
COVID 19 Helpline Engagement 1.6.20 to 5.6.20



Enquiries by Area for Phone and Webchat



Enquiries by Sector for Kent



Summary of Programmes and Support

General:

Maidstone and Dartford area users accessed the helpline most this week, with Maidstone users accessing both the webchat and helpline most combined. Swale areas users accessed the services least again this week.

Contact with the hub has dropped to a degree this week, with about half the calls we were getting on average, which is about a quarter of the calls we were receiving at the height of the programme. Whilst most of the businesses this week have been in touch for assistance with the Discretionary Top Up Grant, there has been an increase in businesses looking for assistance with reopening, quite often around compliance.

All local authorities now have a live Discretionary grant application form up now and we have alerted all the businesses that registered their interest on the holding page we set up on our site.

The Bounce Back Loans have had a very small amount of interest, though it's expected that more interest will be received from businesses that missed out once the Top Up Grants are given out.

We continue to receive a relatively broad spectrum of sectors accessing of our services, but it's interesting to note that professional sector businesses got in touch most this week, followed by Retail, with the Hospitality /Leisure industry contacting in far fewer numbers this week, though it was still the 3rd highest.

Business Interruption loan:

This has become entirely irrelevant and receives no interest.

Bounce Back Loan:

This has received a very small amount of interest this week as businesses are far more focussed on the Discretionary Top Up Grant. As mentioned earlier it's expected to receive more interest once it's apparent who is receiving the Top Up Grant.

Rate Relief and Retail, Tourism and Leisure Grants:

These have mostly been paid. Any interest we have now continues to be regarding any challenging of decisions, something with which we've had a degree of success with assisting businesses with.

Top Up Grant:

This has been by far the most accessed scheme this week. This assistance has been in the form of support provided for the applications and making businesses aware of the opening in for the live application deadlines.

Commercial Tenants:

Again, we've not had any interest this week with this issue, but it remains to be seen what the outcome will be when this protection scheme ends. There will likely be much more interest in this in the future.

HMRC Tax holiday

No interest this week, as has been the case for the past 8 weeks.

VAT holiday

No interest this week, as has been the case for the past 8 weeks.

Job Retention Scheme

Payments for this have come through to most companies and we've not had any contact about this this week.

This scheme and its progression in the coming months have been very clearly laid out for businesses which will allow a good level of time for planning how to manage this going forward.

Self Employed Income Scheme

This has been paid out largely.

As mentioned last week, the amendment that allows Self Employed businesses to access the Top Up Grant is highly welcome, especially in light of many Self Employed not receiving a huge amount of funding due to low profits.

Statutory Sick Pay refund

It continues unchanged that hardly any businesses have asked about this, largely as most businesses feel the obligation to pay their contracted sick pay to the staff who are sick, but also due to infection levels in the area before the lock down not effecting the businesses.

Most who can post-lockdown have furloughed their staff negating the need for sick pay.

Essential Workers, Essential Journeys and Businesses Reopening

There has been a little less confusion about this. The helpline is currently helping businesses try and reopen in as safe a manner as possible, with the first of these enquiries coming through in numbers this week.

We are still working with the county council to look at a grant scheme to help purchase PPE for the workplace and this might be a good idea nationally when rebooting the economy to help businesses return to a work quicker.

Gaps in Funding

This remains to be the same groups as have been missing out for some time. Newly Self Employed, Directors who took dividends and who's businesses can't afford to borrow, businesses that can't afford to borrow and haven't qualified for grant, whether due to uncertainty about the economic outcome or a lack of liquidity on their part.

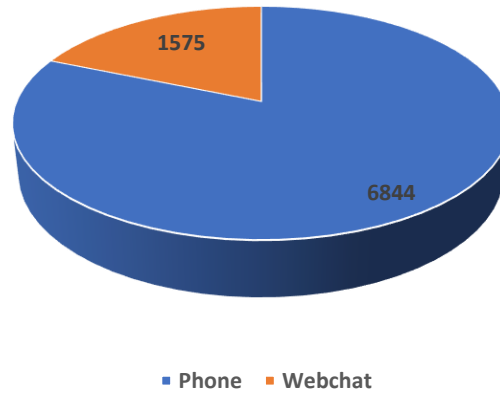
As mentioned in the self-employed section an area of worry is that a huge amount of self-employed businesses are in a position as this scheme essentially covered costs for the prior months of the lockdown when they received it leaving not as much to utilise in the current and coming months. This could potentially see a large amount of them to cease trading once this funding dwindles.

Hopefully, the Top Up Grant will cover a large amount of these businesses, though obviously not all will get this limited funding.

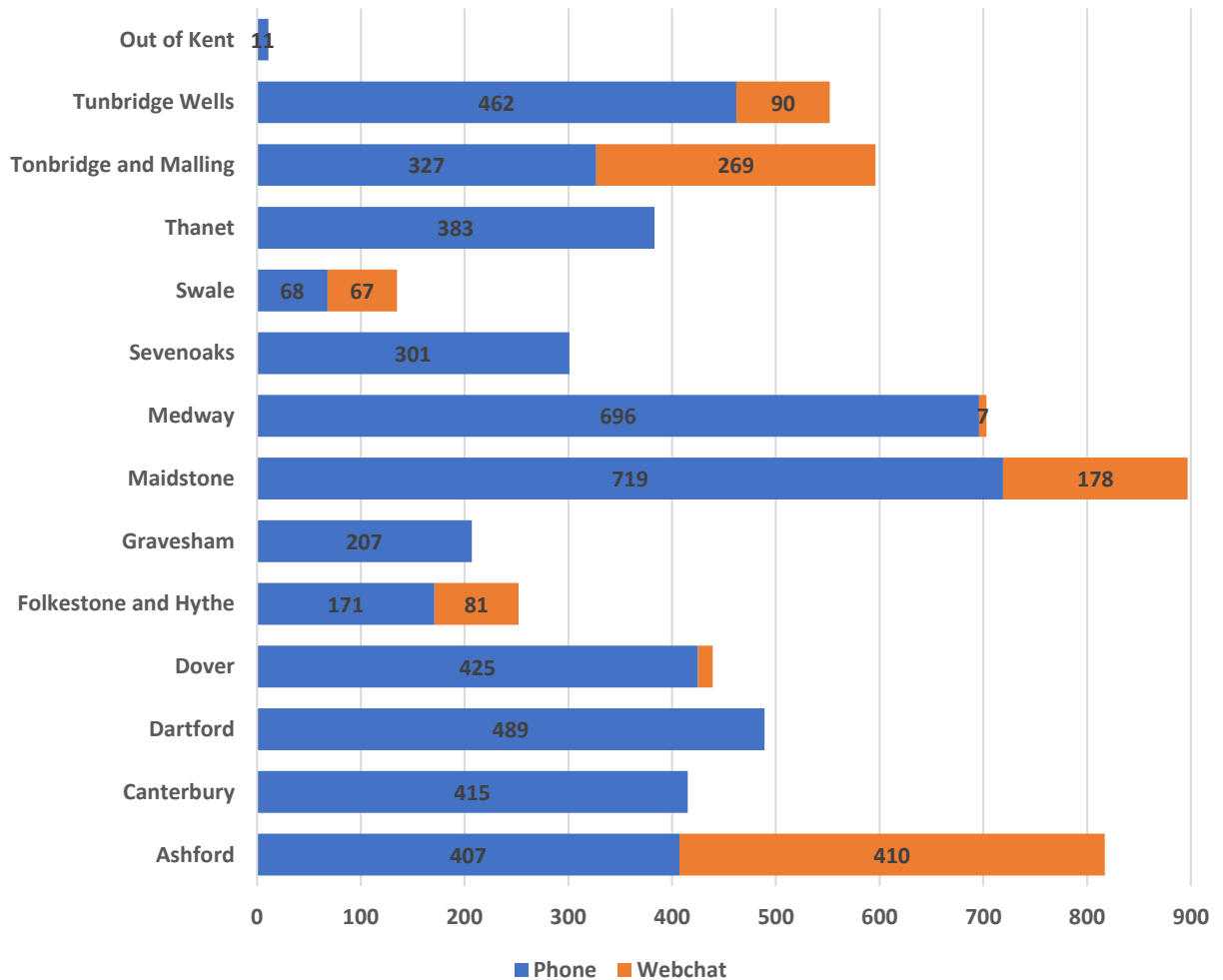
As schemes begin to come to an end it will become more apparent where further gaps are and will be of concern in areas such as tenancy of premises and staff retention, as well as general business liquidity.

Overall Statistics for the Helpline

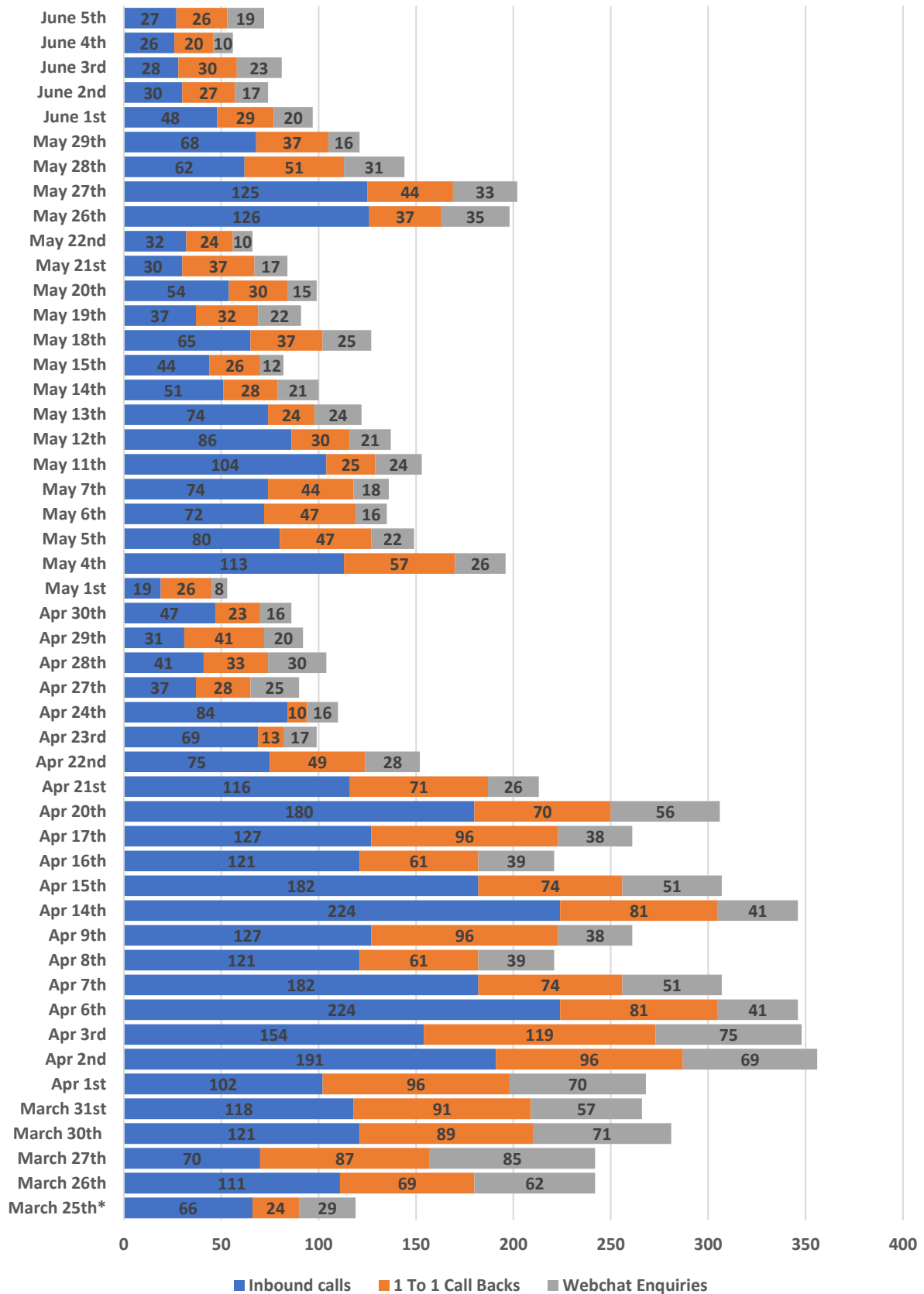
Contact Method Since Inception



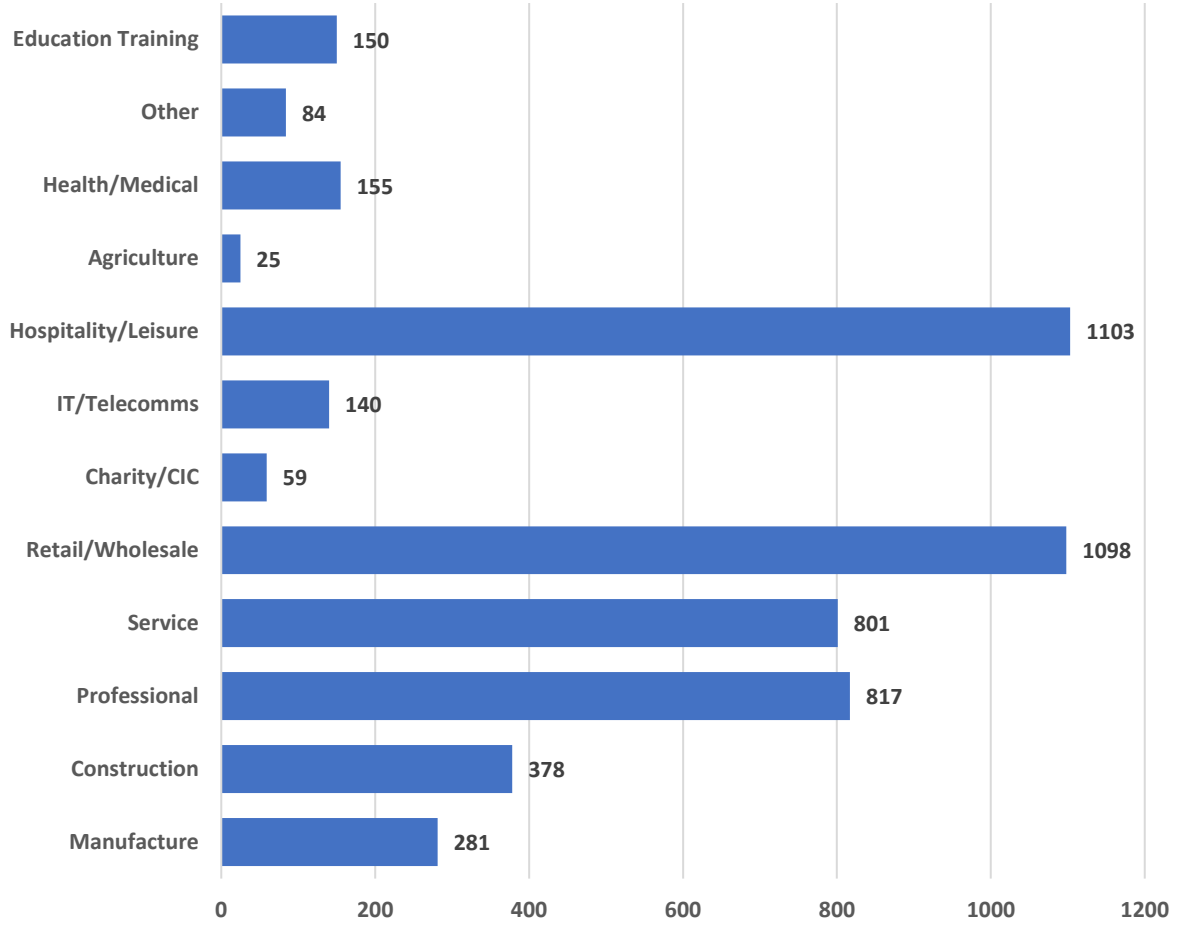
Enquiries by Area



Daily Contact with Clients Since Inception



Enquiries by Sector



Customer Feedback w/c 1st May 2020

Hi Philip,

Thank you very much.

I have actually dropped the Gravesham council a email explaining how helpful you have been and actually how much it would benefit us.

Thanks again and will keep you in the loop.

Tan

Sent from my iPho

Hi Simon

I hope you are keeping well, I would like to thank you for the information you sent in your last email. After contacting Sheila and David they have reconsider our application and granted us a grant, we would not have got anywhere without your help.

Many Thanks

Bryan

Thank you so much for your help Mr Pilgrim

I had success in uploading the form tonight (I had to retype it all again), but I have a reference number for the application

Fingers crossed

Thanking you once again

Sandra

Sandra and Brian Woodfall

My Farmers Market Limited

Thank you Paul, you were enormously helpful this morning.

Take care

Min

Thanks Paul,

You've been extremely helpful.

Regards

Paula

Paula Sharpe

Proprietor

Graham Webb Beauty Clinic

Hi Tim,

Thank you kindly for your support. I have applied this morning and am not holding my breath but let's see.

I am also putting plan together. Talking with you has helped me think clearly & prompted me to act on my to do list.

Many thanks and speak soon,

Laure

Laure Debout

Hello Paul

Just to say many thanks for your attention to our questions. Appreciate information and options given, will investigate further.

Kind regards

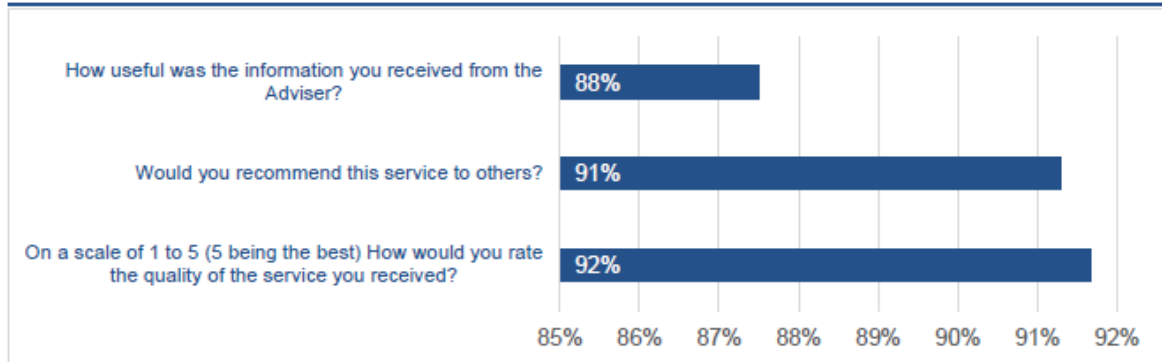
Linda Burgess

END

ANNEX B

Webchat Customer Satisfaction

Feedback



What type of support do you feel is missing?

As a small business owner I feel left out of support when I know how much support is being given elsewhere

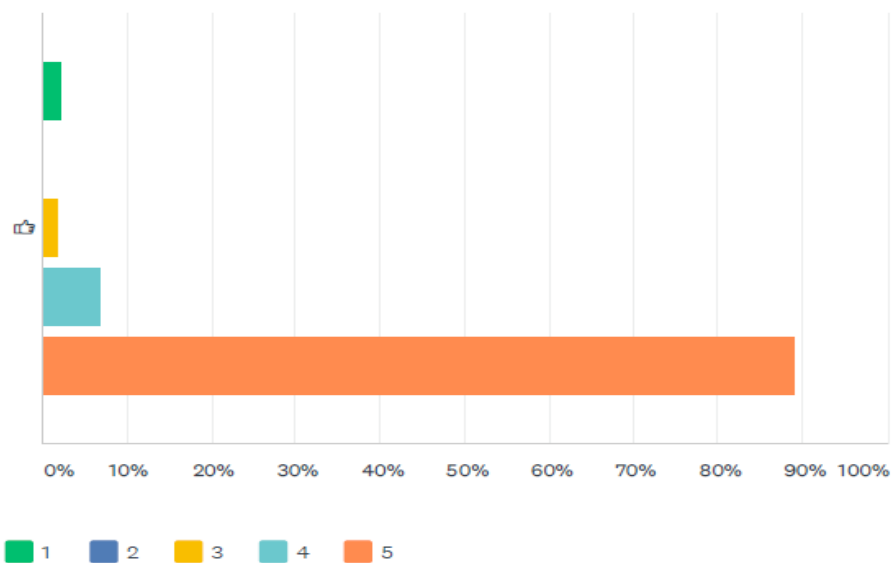
No contact from TMBC

funding advise

COVID Helpline Customer Satisfaction

Q1 How would you rate the quality of the service you received?

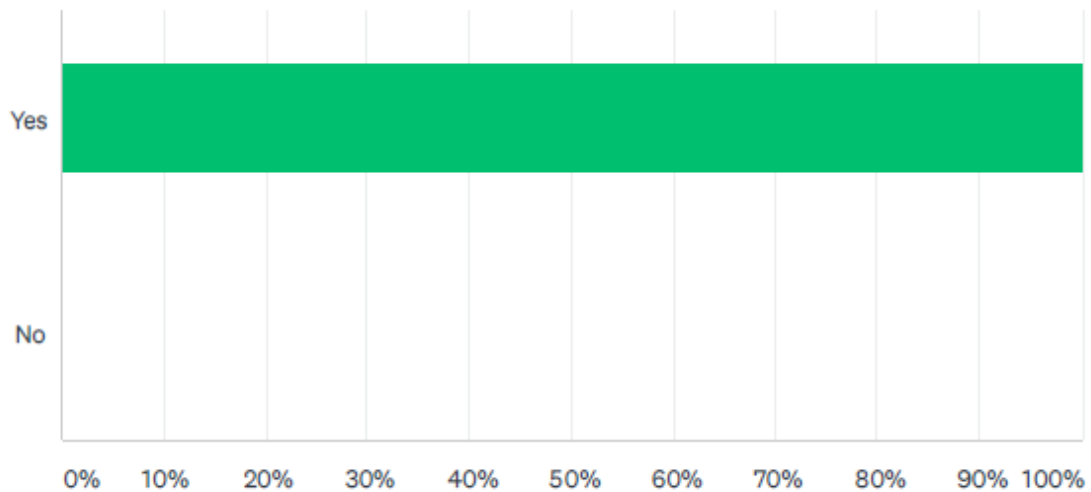
Answered: 274 Skipped: 5



	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
👍	2.19%	0.00%	1.82%	6.93%	89.05%	274	4.81
	6	0	5	19	244		

Q2 Would you recommend this helpline to others?

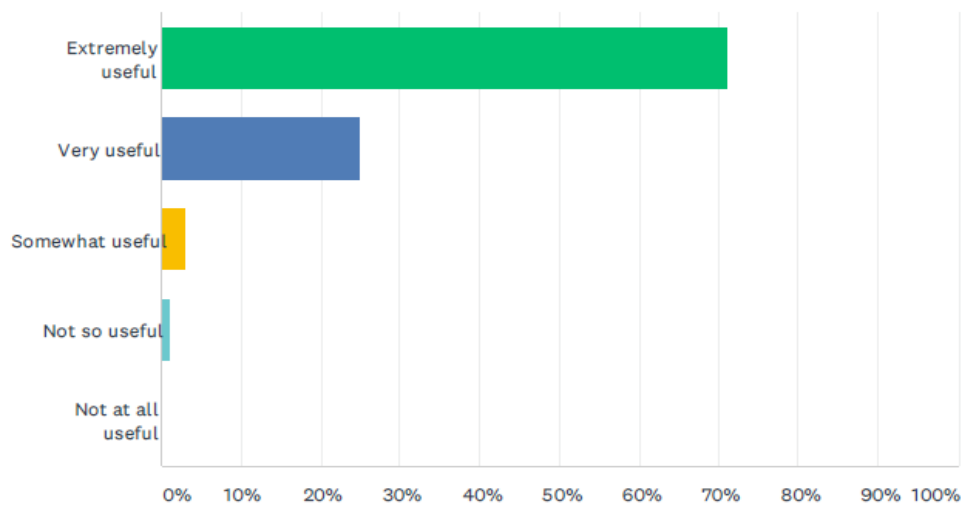
Answered: 273 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	273
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		273

Q3 How useful was the information you received from the Adviser?

Answered: 277 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Extremely useful		71.12%	197
Very useful		24.91%	69
Somewhat useful		2.89%	8
Not so useful		1.08%	3
Not at all useful		0.00%	0
TOTAL			277