

## **Research and Campaigns Trustees Report November 2025 to 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Report by:** Jacqui Clack

**Date:** 28.1.2026

Introduction – It has been a fairly quiet time on the Research & Campaigns front compared to the previous period.

**Contact with Elected Officials:** There have been no issues to raise with Elected Officials from the Research & Campaigns Team since my last report and we have had no requests from Central Citizens Advice to do so on any issues they are focusing on.

**Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Data Gathering:** I have continued to complete monthly research of the gap between LHA rates and rent being charged by private landlords because this is useful information to pass on to our local MPs when meetings take place. Although there are sometimes single rooms in shared accommodation that are within the LHA rate, we have yet to see any other housing that can be covered fully by welfare benefits and often the gap in what the government allows and what private landlords charge is in terms of hundreds of pounds difference. This means tenants are being forced to use government funds intended for essentials like food or utility bills to pay rent instead, just to avoid becoming homeless.

Another impact is that Mole Valley District Council finds it increasingly difficult to place homeless families in emergency or temporary accommodation in the Mole Valley area and so families are moved to more affordable boroughs away from their schools, places of employment and support networks.

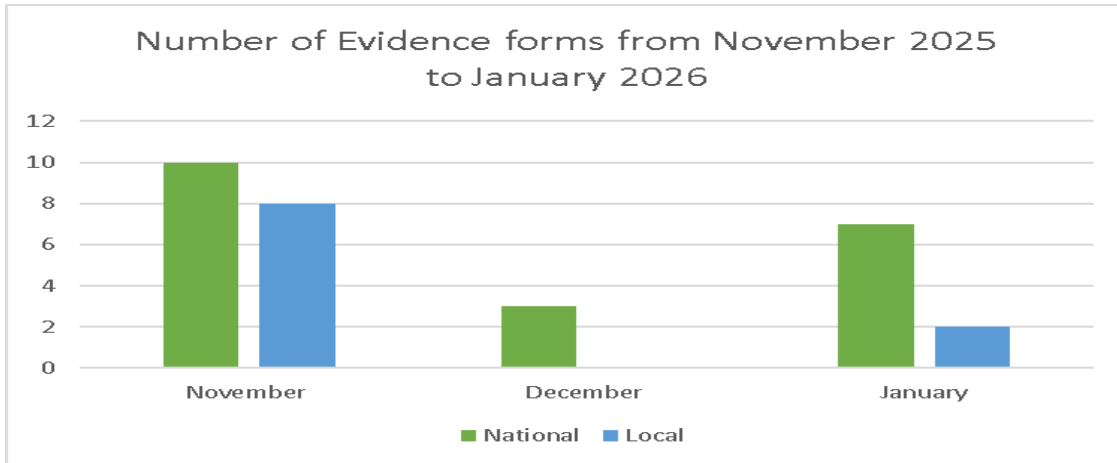
This is why we continually monitor the situation to lobby for an increase in LHA to match the most affordable private rented accommodation in the area.

**Surrey Research & Campaigns Group:** I attended the meeting 17<sup>th</sup> December. The group discussed the following:

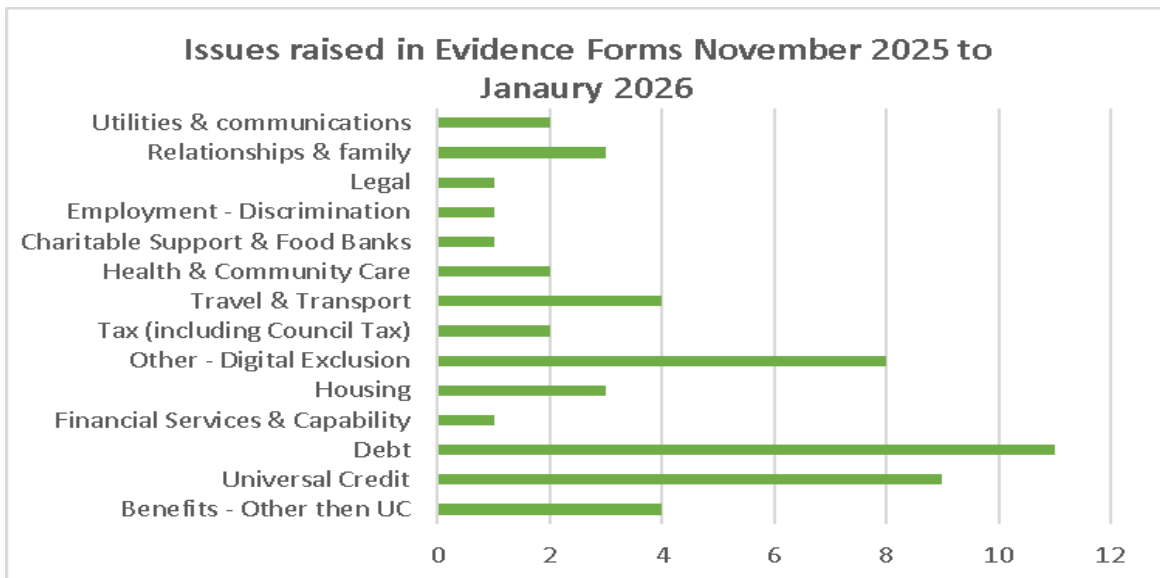
Key points discussed at the meeting were:

- The need for evidence forms to be collected about any negative impact of the Two Child Limit being removed on the ongoing benefit cap with Universal Credit.
- Continuing issues related to families struggling due to Local Housing Allowance limitations.
- Monitoring of Stone Water Housing Association who has taken over from Mount Green HA and is picking up unpaid service charges where Mount Green made mistakes and writing to tenants to clear their debts quickly or face eviction.
- The group agreed to submit recommendations to the new Unitary Authorities for Council Tax support schemes. We are compiling our comments at the moment.

**Issues and Evidence Forms:** From 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025 to 28<sup>th</sup> January a total of 30 evidence forms were submitted. The chart below indicates the number of evidence forms completed which relate to calls for evidence on national issues of concern compared with local issues.



However, during November 2025 to the end of January 2026, the 30 evidence forms picked up a total of 52 different issues clients presented with, as multiple problems can be recorded within a single evidence form.



Debt during the last three months has overtaken Universal Credit for the highest number of evidence forms raised by advisors.

Universal Credit comes in second. Within that, three evidence forms were related to deductions clients were having taken from their benefits and four were related to issues around Managed Migration from old style benefits onto Universal Credit.

Digital exclusion is still very high, coming in third highest group where an evidence form was raised, although digital exclusion often comes into other issues too, so the real number is higher.

We continue the practice of raising the need for evidence forms within most weekly staff meetings and our local newsletter continues to have a regular section reminding advisors of the key issues where evidence forms need to be completed and other news that is happening on a local or Surrey wide level.

## **Local Research & Campaigns concerns**

A total of 10 evidence forms were completed which related to local issues in the Mole Valley area. I have broken them down into subject areas.

## **Council Tax and Bailiff Action**

Council tax debt collectors have demanded unaffordable amounts in a very short period. This was only prevented when smaller monthly repayment amounts and a budget plan was agreed with the debt collectors.

## **Mole Valley District Council Administration**

Issues with Mole Valley District Council's (MVDC) online application form for Discretionary Housing Payment and poor communication with MVDC via phone calls and letters has led to confusion and annoyance.

## **Medical issues**

Issues with a GP refusing to sign a required form and a chemist charging a fixed fee each month for filling up medication dosette boxes were reported to us.

## **Local Housing Associations**

New HA landlord Stone Water with properties in Mole Valley requires tenants to create an online account for all communication including repairs and complaints. This means that some tenants are unable to communicate effectively with their landlord due to digital exclusion.

Computer generated communication errors from Clarion Housing Association regarding possession action causing confusion and worry.

## **Digital Exclusion**

Employers may require their staff to log in at work via a mobile phone app which may not be available on older phones.

Difficulties in booking speed awareness courses without access to a computer and emails.