

Research and Campaigns Trustees Report February to April 2026

Report by: Jacqui Clack

Date: 23.4.2026

Contact with Elected Officials: We will be in touch with all newly elected East Surrey Councillors after the May elections, using briefing prepared by national.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Data Gathering: Across Surrey, we have continued to complete monthly research of the gap between LHA rates and rent being charged by private landlords.

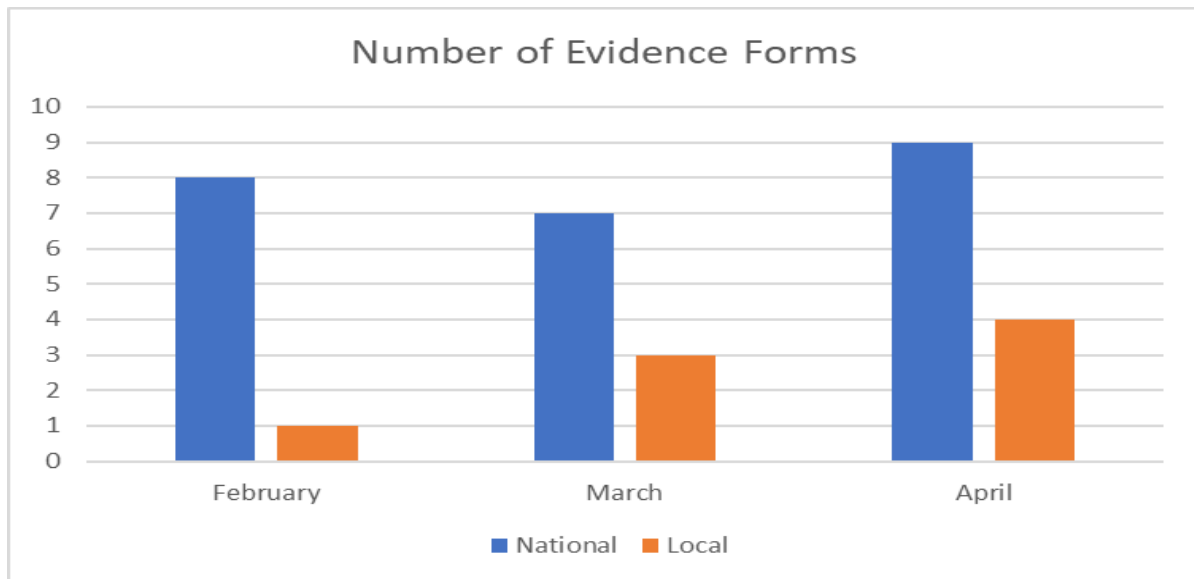
Surrey Research & Campaigns Group is also looking at the provision of **Council Tax Support**. Two key issues include severe digital exclusion and residents being pushed into unreasonably short, unmanageable repayment plans when falling behind with payments.

It was agreed to send comms to the new Unitary Authorities in the summer, covering a range of issues:

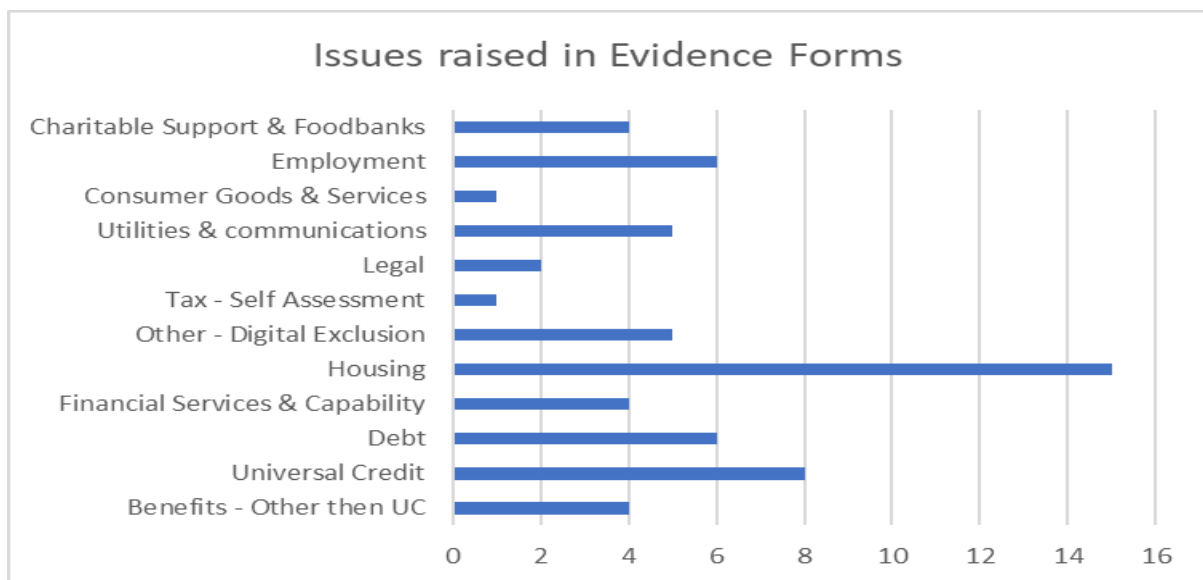
- Raising Awareness of Council Tax Support by the different local authorities is important and could be put on the front page of bills.
- Flagging vulnerability – we could usefully suggest indicators to Councils & improve policy around vulnerability.
- Bailiff exemptions for those on UC – extend to those with mental health problems.
- Equalize capital limits and tariff incomes between pension-age and working-age applicants.
- Bill non-dependents separately with their share of the bill, e.g. adult children living with parents.
- Lower rates for attachment of earnings deductions so they are more manageable.
- Cumulative repayment plans can lead to hardship. Advisers suggest Councils offer clients an opportunity to renegotiate this every year when new bill is issued.

Benefit Cap – The other issue discussed was the need for Evidence Forms relating to the Benefit Cap and changes to the two child limit, where families were found to not be any better off.

Issues and Evidence Forms: From February to April a total of 32 evidence forms were submitted. The chart below indicates the number completed which relate to calls for evidence on national issues of concern compared with local issues.



Clients presented with 61 different issues



Comments on issues in Evidence Forms:

Housing – compared to my last report, housing issues have leapt to the top of the chart. More clients are facing homelessness and lack of affordable accommodation in the last three months.

Employment – more clients have been advised over unfair dismissal, employment rights and appeals and tribunals over the last three months, compared to my last report.

Universal Credit – always high, due to poor administration and incorrect calculations by DWP.

Digital Exclusion – several evidence forms show a number of clients struggling to cope in a digital world.

Local Research & Campaigns concerns

A total of 8 evidence forms were completed related to local issues in the Mole Valley area. I have broken them down into subject areas.

Housing Issues

A number of forms were raised due to housing issues. These include: hardship due to the social landlord's (Clarion) practice of stripping out carpets and flooring when previous tenants move out. Families often cannot afford flooring and lack of flooring often increases heating bills; repairs including lack of information about when repairs will be completed.

Other issues included the local authority not taking appropriate measures to accommodate mental health issues when assigning temporary accommodation when preventing homelessness and delays in communication between the local authority and social services.

Employment

An employer had not followed the correct dismissal procedure.