

Research and Campaigns Trustees Report May to July 2026

Report by: Jacqui Clack

Date: 30.7.2026

Introduction – It has been another fairly quiet quarter on the research and campaigns front.

Contact with Elected Officials: There has been no contact with elected officials this quarter by Research & Campaigns. However, in September there will be contact made with the newly elected councillors of East Surrey by one of the Surrey Research & Campaigns Group related to recommendations for Council Tax Support Policy which will cover the whole area.

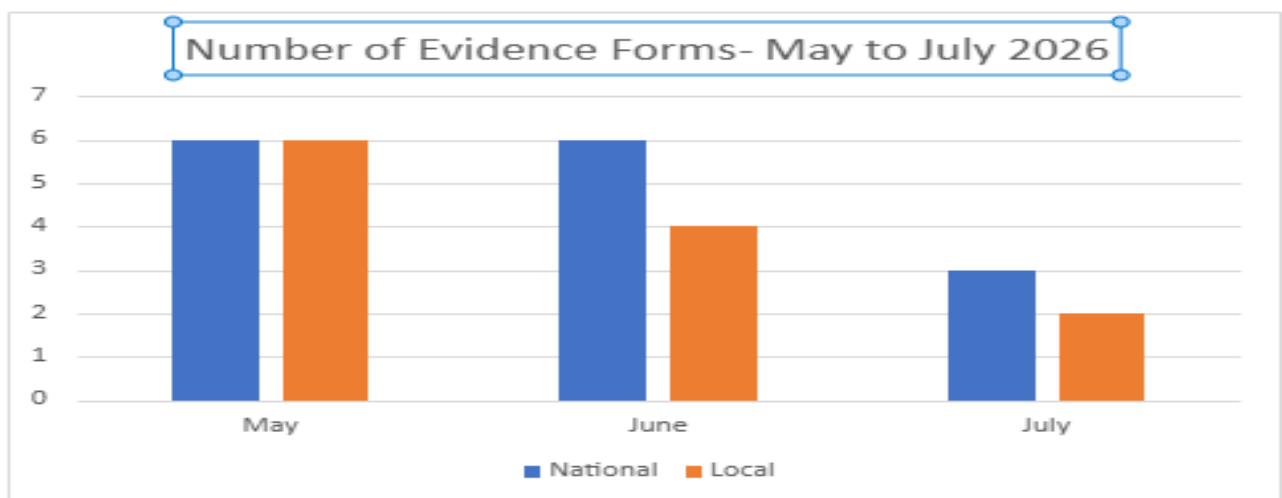
Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Data Gathering: I have continued to complete monthly research of the gap between LHA rates and rent being charged by private landlords. Surrey Research & Campaigns Group has decided not to continue to gather this information as a group for now, partly due to poor feedback from local offices this year, but also due to up-and-coming changes in the structure of East and West Surrey. Local offices can continue their own research if they want, which I will continue to do.

Alison (CEO) was also able to use some of the data with members of the NHS England National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme pilot across Surrey Downs to show how much the lack of affordable housing is an issue in the area.

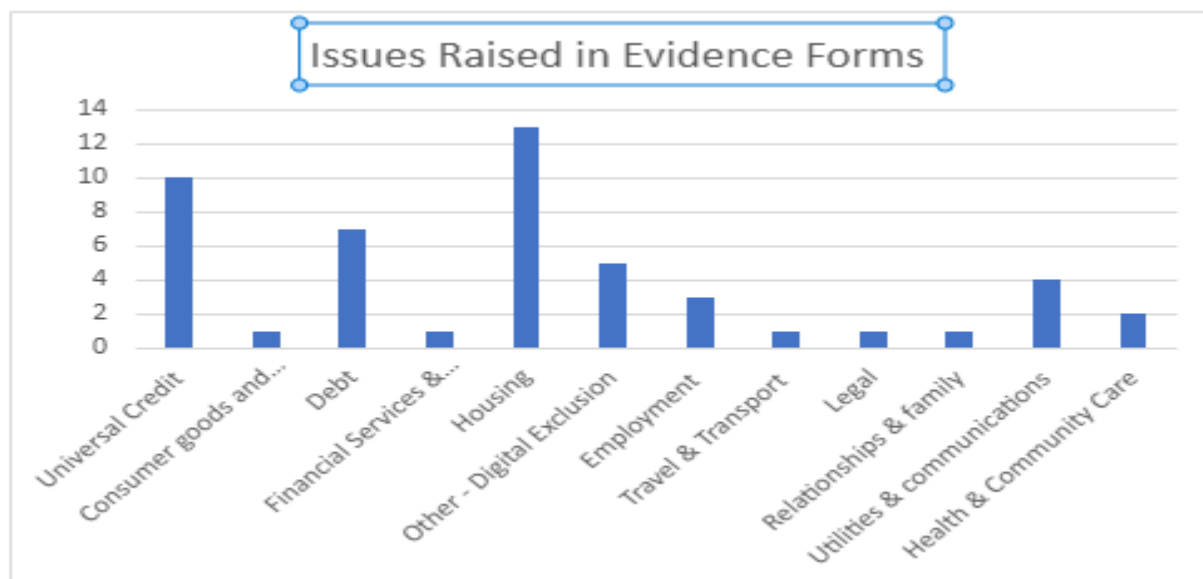
Surrey Research & Campaigns Group: I attended the meeting on Wednesday 3rd June. Shelley Grainger from Woking Citizens Advice, who heads up the group, had drafted an email to be sent to the newly elected councillors. After a thorough discussion, it was agreed that the draft email would be forward to individual Citizens Advice CEOs for comment or approval and then once all had responded this final email would be sent out by one representative for East Surrey and another for West Surrey. Shelley Grainger will send the email out on behalf of West Surrey but a nominee for East Surrey is yet to be agreed.

The other issue which was given some focus was Fraud. The Research & Campaigns Officer at Reigate & Banstead Citizens Advice had run some workshops in the community for vulnerable people to educate them on how to protect themselves from fraud. It was agreed to give this issue some more attention at our next meeting.

Issues and Evidence Forms: From 1st May to 30th July a total of 49 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.



This quarter the total number of issues raised on the evidence forms is the same as the number of evidence forms, as several advisors have created separate forms to record the different issues their clients were facing.



Comments on issues in Evidence Forms:

Housing – Housing issues are at the top of the chart for issues raised by advisors in evidence forms. The main areas highlighted in the evidence is split equally between issues with social housing providers and private landlords, or facing homelessness due to a lack of affordable accommodation in the area.

Universal Credit – This area of our advice work is always quite high. Six forms were related to issues with the housing payment within Universal Credit, either delayed or incorrect payments, two cases were related to childcare costs and the other two cases were related to self-employed clients who always face greater struggles with Universal Credit.

Digital Exclusion – There has been a more accurate recording of digital exclusion this quarter, as advisors seem to be separating this issue from the main issue and creating two evidence forms to highlight this area.

Local Research & Campaigns concerns:

Bailiffs & Council Tax Debt

Refusal of Jacob's debt collection agency to negotiate a reasonable repayment plan for a vulnerable customer, nor explain why.

Housing

Clarion Housing Association comes top of the list in evidence forms created where clients have faced difficulties with their social landlord:

In one case, Clarion failed to verify the rent increase to Universal Credit and so the incorrect amount was being paid, resulting in a build-up of rent arrears and undue stress.

Clarion did not provide any help and support to a vulnerable tenant when Clarion asked them to temporarily move their belongings out of their property whilst repair work needed to be carried out to fix problems emanating from the Clarion property above.

Separately, Clarion failed to complete significant repair works for damp and mould meaning Clarion do not appear to be adhering to the requirements of Awab's law.

Clarion also failed to help a new tenant apply for furniture and white goods.

In non-Clarion related cases, one client was only notified of a multi-year shortfall in their rent once the debt had been passed to a debt collector. The debt had arisen due to both the lack of information given to the client and the limited communication between Surrey County Council and Universal Credit to avoid the shortfall in rent.

Homelessness risk is increasing due to people being unable to find affordable private rented accommodation in the local area.

In another case, a letting agent is not willing to consider letting to tenants unless they have a minimum income of £45,000 a year to be considered for renting a one bed flat.

Utilities and Parking

SES water company had lost an application a client made for a Water Sure discount in 2025 which resulted in a client having to pay full charges despite being entitled to a discount.

Euro Car Parks Parking Charges: There is no facility to speak to ECP on the phone except to pay fines. Clients who receive the PCN late due to the local postal service miss out on the possibility of paying a fine at a reduced rate. The only options then are to appeal which means that you lose the discounted fine option, furthermore the ECP website does not function correctly and keeps asking for information that has already been entered or when all information has been entered in full the website takes one back to the beginning again.