Research and Campaigns Trustees' Report
August–October 2026

Report by: Jacqui Clack **Date:** 29th October 2026

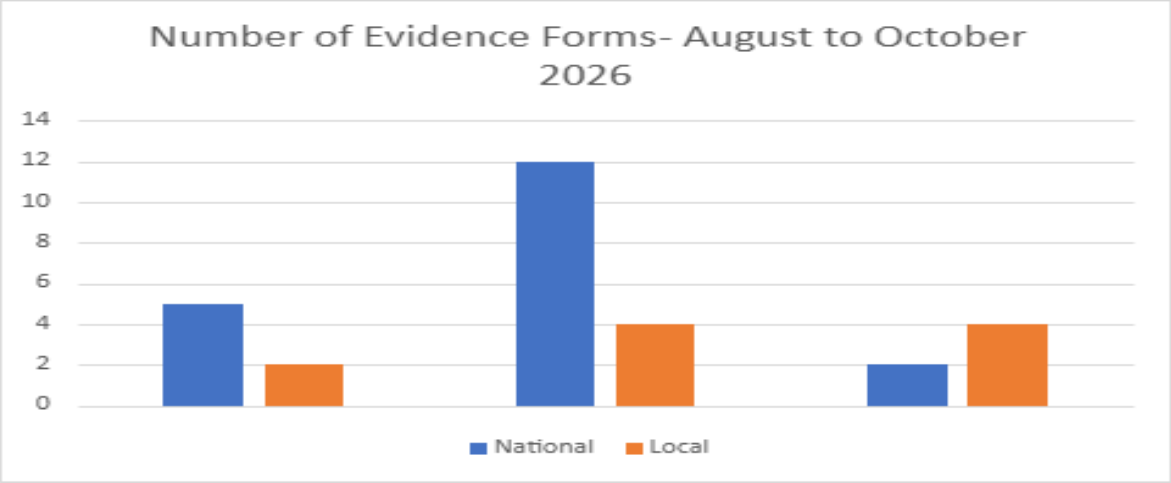
Contacting local officials about Council Tax Support scheme: The R&C team covering the East Surrey Local Citizens Advice offices (LCAs) wrote to the Shadow Councillors for the East Surrey unitary authority regarding Council Tax Support as they consider the Council Tax Support Policy for the whole of East Surrey going forward. Several recommendations were made. The West Surrey team did the same.

Local Housing Allowance Research

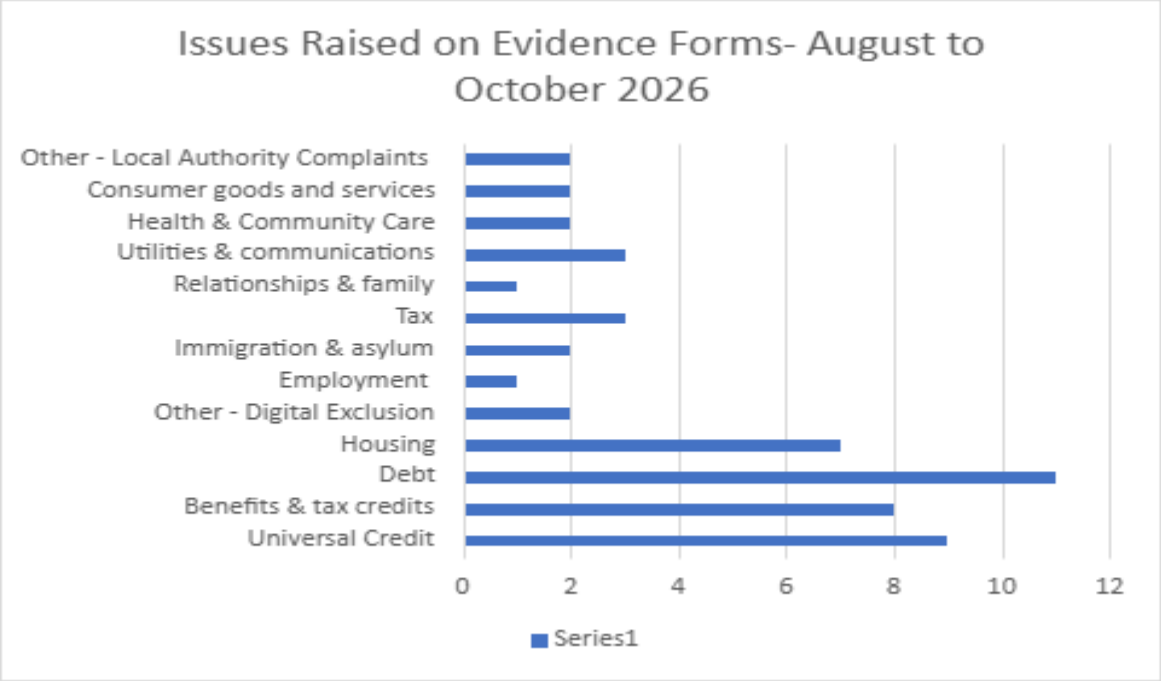
I have continued to produce a monthly report of the gap between Local Housing Allowance rates and private rents in the Mole Valley area. In most sizes of available accommodation there is a significant increase in the shortfall between median rent and the Local Housing Allowance. Additionally, I am also monitoring the number of properties available for rent and in one to three bedroomed properties there has been a decrease in the number of properties available, with one bedroomed properties facing a significant decrease in Leatherhead. This may be due to the changes in law and expectations required of private landlords, some of whom have decided to sell rather than renting out their properties.

Issues and Evidence Forms: A total of 29 evidence forms were submitted between 1st August and 29th October. This is a drop of 20 evidence forms when compared to last quarter, and so further efforts to encourage advisors to complete them is perhaps needed.

The first chart below compares forms relating to national calls for evidence compared with those concerning local issues.



A total of 53 issues were raised in the 29 evidence forms that were completed. The number of issues recorded does not match the number of evidence forms. Where clients faced several distinct problems, advisers generally submitted a separate form for each issue.



Key Themes from Evidence Forms

Debt - is the most frequent reason advisors and case workers raised evidence forms this quarter. Repayment of debts related to rent, utilities and council tax are some of the reasons why clients approached Citizens Advice for help, while over payments on benefits and deductions due to payment in advance or loans from Universal Credit were the other causes of debt.

Universal Credit - Nine evidence forms concerned Universal Credit, four were related to delayed or incorrect housing payments with an even spread of other issues clients had difficulties with.

Benefits & Tax Credits – Issues related to claiming Personal Independence Payment was the reason for some evidence forms being raised as clients sought to challenge negative decisions on claims. The other issues under this section related to difficulties clients face in claiming Council Tax Support.

Housing – Housing remains high among the reasons an evidence form is raised. Cases were still split broadly between problems with social housing providers, difficulties with private landlords, and homelessness caused by the shortage of affordable accommodation.

Immigration & Asylum – This quarter, two evidence forms were raised as clients with no recourse to public funds sought advice from Citizens Advice.

Digital exclusion – Only two evidence forms were raised due to clients facing digital exclusion this quarter.

Encouraging Evidence Submission

The need for evidence forms continues to be raised at relevant weekly staff meetings. The regular internal newsletter also includes regular reminders about priority issues and updates on local and Surrey-wide activity.

Local Research and Campaigns Concerns

The following cases illustrate recurring barriers affecting local clients and how we have helped.

Housing

- A single client with health issues is finding it hard to afford their monthly rent and would like to move, but finding more affordable housing is difficult and MVDC are saying they are unable to assist unless the client becomes homeless.
- Another client is disputing his service charge with Clarion Housing Association. He did not receive a response about the amounts and then received a Notice Seeking Possession after he withheld payment due to lack of contact. The client is having to pay service charges that he believes are incorrect to avoid becoming homeless.
- A young person who experienced domestic abuse and is facing homelessness is fearful of living in shared accommodation but is unable to find affordable self-contained accommodation due to their age because the Local Housing Allowance would only cover a room in a shared house up to the age of 35.
- An older client received a Notice Seeking Possession for rent arrears without having any previous notification that the rent was no longer being paid because it was in the name of their partner who had moved out. The client advised MVDC at the time but had not been advised to apply in their own name.
- MVDC's website regarding the eligibility for over 55s sheltered housing appeared inconsistent with their housing allocations policy. The impact was that it put people off applying who might be entitled to apply (the website has now been updated after a phone call from Citizens Advice).

Council Tax Support

- A client faced a council tax bill because Council Tax Support does not cover two homes when moving.
- An advisor raised an evidence form after seeing a client who was entitled to less Council Tax Support while on Statutory Sick Pay than if they had been claiming full Universal Credit which left them £10 a week worse off.

Administration of Applying to Surrey County Council Resilience Fund

- Applying for a crisis grant from the Resilience Fund was a difficulty faced by two clients this quarter. One found difficulty inputting data into the online application and had to repeat the process several times before the application was finally accepted.
- Another client was unable to apply at all because they had lost their mobile phone and had no income to replace it.

Utility Issues

- A client has been in dispute with a local water company. When seeking details of their arbitration service, the client was told they had to find it online themselves. This put a barrier in the way of our client seeking redress.