



In
Partnership
with

LA Directories
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MALG
Network



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Revenues and Benefits Discussion Group

22 December 2025

Happy
Christmas
from the Panel



HB Subsidy Audit 2024/25: No More CAKE, and the Slice Just Got Smaller

There are now only **two firms** willing to audit Housing Benefit subsidy claims — and both face tougher conditions. The 2024/25 audit brings:

- The **end of CAKE**, meaning no more easy reconciliations
- A **£50 de minimis** (a penny used to be an error)
- **Increased scrutiny** and fewer people who still understand the process

For many councils, that means **more risk, more rework, and higher costs**.

Our **subsidy support service** helps you stay audit-ready and compliant without the stress.

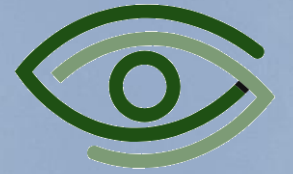
We'll:

- Review your subsidy claim before submission (or even complete it for you)
- Identify and resolve problem areas early
- Liaise with your auditors to minimise queries
- Provide targeted advice from experienced subsidy specialists

Don't go hungry without CAKE.

Let us take the weight of the subsidy audit off your plate.

Contact us to discuss a fixed-fee support package tailored to your authority. [**info@visionarynetwork.co.uk**](mailto:info@visionarynetwork.co.uk)



VISIONARY NETWORK
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

AI IMPACT

Practical sessions for Revenues and Benefit Teams in February

CLARITY

Writing clearer reports and papers enhances understanding and decision-making quality across all services involved.



EFFICIENCY

Managing workload effectively allows teams to handle inquiries faster and improve stakeholder communication through AI integration.



GOVERNANCE

Ensuring governance and information security builds trust while utilizing AI tools safely and responsibly in services.



REGISTER NOW

Secure your spot for this transformative series today!



Arriving in February 2026 Using AI in Revenues and Benefits Services

A practical series of 60-to-90-minute online sessions designed for council Revenues and Benefits teams who want to use AI safely and effectively to save time, improve consistency, and strengthen resident support, without losing professional judgement or accountability.

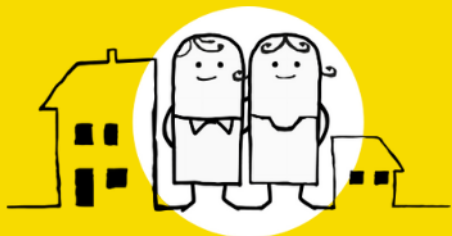
We will cover practical use cases such as:

- writing clearer reports, briefings, and committee papers in plain English
- drafting letters, emails, and decision notices that are accurate, consistent, and tone appropriate
- managing staff workload, task prioritisation, and quality checking
- handling enquiries faster, including scripts for contact centres and casework prompts for officers
- improving communication with stakeholders, preceptors, advice agencies, landlords, and internal teams
- designing take up campaigns and targeted messaging, including segmentation ideas
- analysing data, spotting patterns, and turning caseload information into insights
- reducing avoidable revisions, appeals risk, and repeat contact
- governance, information security, and practical guardrails for day-to-day use

Ideal for heads of service, team leaders, system administrators, performance and policy leads, and front-line officers.

Register your interest at info@visionarynetwork.co.uk

Redesign your CTR scheme with ease



Opportunity

The Inbest CTR Design Tool is an online application to help Revenues & Benefits teams design Council Tax Reduction Schemes.

Upload your anonymised CTRS caseload and use our analytics and modelling features to design schemes that meet the council's budget requirements, simplify administration, and protect vulnerable households.

This tool provides the following features to support you through every step of the CTRS design process.

Resident Insights

Get a clear understanding of your caseload by analysing your residents' circumstances and financial situation.

Use these insights—such as the number of residents with capital above certain thresholds or those out of work—to identify opportunities for savings while ensuring continued support for those in need.

CTRS Modelling

Set up different CTRS options and assess their impact using your caseload data.

Then, you can use our analytics dashboard to view potential savings, see how changes affect different segments of residents, and assess the risk of arrears.

Each simulation takes only a few seconds, and you can run as many as needed, refining them until you find the perfect fit for your council.

Automatic Reporting

The tool generates a detailed impact report and the information you need for your Equality Impact Analysis.

This report presents clear, data-driven insights to elected members, supports internal reviews, and informs consultations for confident decision-making.

Our dashboard provides the insights you need to make informed decisions

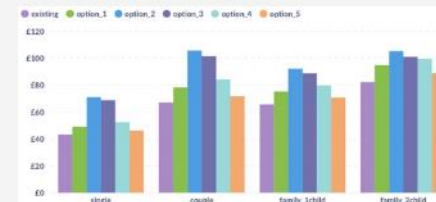
Total annual cost options



Detailed analysis per CTR band

ctr_discount	number_residents	percentage_residents	single
100%	127	0.7%	119
70%	11,032	60.91%	6,002
50%	767	4.23%	258
40%	1,352	7.46%	359
25%	3,382	18.67%	672
12%	1,452	8.02%	283

Average CT payment by households



Identification of impacted residents

householdType	decreased_number	decreased_pct
single	2,763	35.92%
partnerChildren	1,579	44.73%
singleChildren	2,178	36.85%
partner	773	79.04%
total	7,293	40.27%

"Working with Inbest has completely transformed the way we understand our CTR data. Inbest has helped us extract meaningful insights that enabled us to make informed decisions when modelling and designing the best possible scheme for our residents."

Inbest is always working on innovative solutions to support the streamlining of our processes and enhancing our services. As well as the work modelling the CTR Schemes, this year they have also supported us with our Pension Credit caseload and a Data Mismatches report."

Penny Mitchell, Council Tax Service Manager at Salford Council

"We asked Inbest to model different CTS schemes for us at short notice. We had our results in the dashboard within a few days and this enabled us to review the data which reflected each scheme option. This included areas such as cost and savings and how each scheme would affect our residents."

"When we required tweaks to the results Inbest ensured these were made instantly. An excellent service for a reasonable rate."

Nick Houlton, Finance Manager (Revenues and Benefits) at London Borough of Barnet

"Modelling a new Council Tax Reduction scheme can be challenging. However, working with Visionary Network and Inbest on the 2025/2026 scheme was a resounding success due to their support, knowledge, and technology."

"The service provided under tight deadlines was exceptional. Appreciation is extended to Manu, Malcolm, and Paul for their time and patience."

Lucie White, Operational Finance Manager at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

End



VISIONARY NETWORK
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

MALG
MEMBER

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Book a meeting with Malcolm: [Book Time with MG](#)



VISIONARY NETWORK
The independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

Join the discussion

Each Monday lunchtime, a panel of professionals leads a discussion on revenue and benefits administration issues. The panel consists of council & housing officers, policy advisors, and analysts.

It is a free service that is well attended. Attendees make good contributions; everyone gets a chance to speak. Attendees includes senior managers, team leaders, suppliers, and support staff

You can join in the discussion during the week (and start some new ones) by joining our WhatsApp group: <https://bit.ly/3Qjrkqe>

Links to the recordings and the slide packs plus other relevant documents will be posted into both the WhatsApp group and in the Teams Channel and emailed to those who attended and subscribers to the group.

To sign up just email malcolm@visionarynetwork.co.uk with your name, organisation and email address. We are inclusive because sharing information and good practice is essential. You don't have to attend every session; recordings will be available.



VISIONARY NETWORK
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

Welcome to a
new era of
council tax
deduction
schemes

Bristol City
Council Case
Study



In
Partnership
with

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”

Save money, improve efficiency,,
help your vulnerable citizens,
build trust.

<http://www.visionarynetwork.co.uk>



Finding the
right
information
has never been
easier with



The law and practice relating to Welfare Benefits is complex, detailed, open to interpretation and endlessly dynamic

LA Directories Ltd is here to help professionals across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland correctly and efficiently identify and understand the ever-changing law and guidance that governs the calculation of entitlement to Housing Benefit, Rates (Northern Ireland), Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payment.

LA Directories Ltd takes the law and guidance relating to Housing Benefit, Rates, Universal Credit, Council Tax Reduction and Discretionary Housing Payment then interprets and consolidates it into three product ranges...

- The Benefits Directory a web-based knowledge management solution
- The Training Directory provision of open and in-house training courses at all levels
- Consultancy services

Local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland are using our services as well as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

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Ferret Information Systems Ltd



Ferret Information Systems was established in 1987 and is the largest company in Europe in the field of law dealing with welfare benefits and similar areas of determinative, compliance, and regulatory law.



our training services:

Ferret is well placed to provide training services and its team of specialists have wide experience of benefits and housing grant legislation. We also provide consultancy to organisations, companies and government on the impact of legislative and policy changes.



our products:

Ferret produces a wide variety of systems, designed to provide support tools for advice workers, and also to provide information and advice directly to the public. Ferret specialises in a holistic assessment of financial circumstances relating to welfare benefits and tax credits entitlement, coupled with software development methodology which offers a high level of flexibility and rapid updating to reflect rule changes.



our platforms:

Systems supported include network, desktop, laptop, mobile devices, Internet and Intranet systems, and a public access system in multi-lingual, multi-media form for touch screen kiosks and public access PC's.



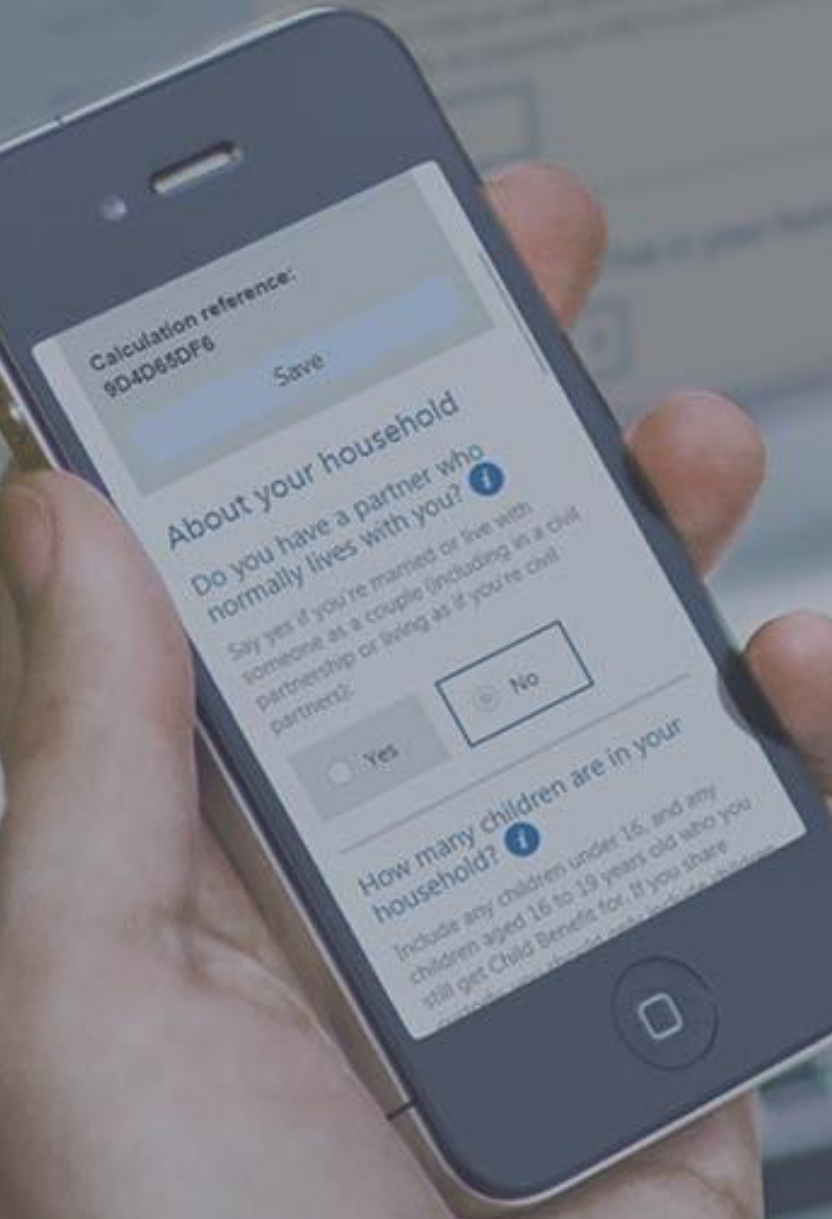
our customers:

Users of Ferret systems include government departments, local authorities, housing associations, CABx, HIA's and other advice agencies, universities, social welfare organisations, libraries, solicitors and financial advisers.

<https://www.ferret.co.uk/>

entitledto

independent | accurate | reliable



Our mission is to help everyone to access the benefits they're entitled to.

Since 2000 we have used our in-depth knowledge of the UK's social security system to build a range of authoritative and accurate calculators to help you and your clients understand their legitimate benefits entitlement.

Our tools are designed to be quick, simple and easy to use, so your staff and clients feel empowered to deal with the benefits system with confidence.

In response to evolving business needs and ongoing local and national policy changes, we will continue to work with and for our clients to develop new features and functionality.

Our goal is to assist your teams in adapting to legislative changes and welfare reform so you can help more people find out what benefits they are entitled to, thereby improving their circumstances and those of their families.



Ascendant Solutions
data management

Barnet Council has become the first local authority to launch the Ascendant apply4.online application form, designed to support residents with the rise in cost of living.

The InBest benefits calculator has been integrated into Ascendant's apply4.online support application, to make it easier for people who are experiencing financial difficulties to find out what support is available to them.

It includes information on benefits such as Universal Credit, Pensions Credit, Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, as well as local financial support initiatives including council tax support and the residents support fund.

Barnet Council Leader, Cllr Barry Rawlings said: "The cost-of-living crisis is affecting us all, and we want to ensure Barnet residents know what financial support is available to them and how they can access these services.

"It is very positive to see Barnet is the first local authority to launch this free tool, and we hope to see many other local councils doing the same to help their residents."

To find out what financial support is available to help with the cost-of-living visit [Barnet Council Benefits Calculator](#)



Apply4.Online®



In the news

Council funding rebalance and council tax referendum powers in six area

Key facts

- Government has given six councils in and around London permission to raise council tax above the usual 5% limit for two years, without needing to hold a local referendum.
- The councils named are Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Wandsworth, Hammersmith and Fulham, City of London, and Windsor and Maidenhead.
- This sits alongside a wider funding rebalance, phased in over three years from 2026, intended to shift a greater share of government funding towards areas with higher deprivation and more properties in lower council tax bands.
- Ministers argue the changes make the funding model fairer; opponents argue it penalises councils that have kept council tax low.
- Independent analysis cited in the coverage suggests these six councils remain among those facing the largest falls in their share of government funding, even after adjustments that reduced the impact on inner London compared with earlier proposals.

Council funding rebalance and council tax referendum powers in six area

Impacts on administration of services

- Budget setting and medium term planning: finance teams in the affected councils will need to rework assumptions across the three year settlement, including scenarios that combine reduced grant share with higher council tax levers and service demand pressures.
- Council tax administration: billing, communications, hardship and recovery processes may need to adjust to larger rises, including increased contact volumes, complaints, and requests for support.
- Policy and governance: removing the referendum requirement reduces the procedural burden of a vote, but increases the importance of transparency, consultation, equality impact thinking, and clear member decision making to maintain public confidence.
- Wider local impacts: higher bills can raise demand for Council Tax Reduction, discretionary support and debt advice services, which creates knock on work for revenues, benefits and customer contact functions.
- Sector wide precedent: other councils will watch closely, because the principle of suspending referendum controls, even temporarily, may shape expectations in future settlements.

Council funding rebalance and council tax referendum powers in six area

Key numbers and examples

- Permission applies for 2026 and 2027.
- Government's stated rationale includes that these areas have very low council tax levels; Band D bills are reported as between £450 and £1,280 lower than the England average.
- The settlement assumptions reported alongside the story include an overall increase in council funding next year of £3.9bn, described as 5.8%, based on councils raising council tax by up to 5%.
- Recent examples of exceptional increases referenced in the coverage: Birmingham over 17% across two years; Croydon 15% in 2023.

References

- BBC News, Paul Seddon, Labour lifts council tax cap in six southern areas, published 17 December 2025.
- Institute for Fiscal Studies commentary on the 2026 to 2027 local government funding settlement and distributional impacts, published December 2025.
- Government publication on the draft council tax referendum principles for 2026 to 2027, published 17 December 2025.

Reform run councils and exceptional council tax rises: Worcestershire seeks up to 10%

Key facts

- Worcestershire County Council, run by Reform UK since May 2025, is seeking central government permission to raise council tax by up to 10% next year, above the usual 5% threshold.
- The council cites “unsustainable” financial pressures, mainly rising demand and costs in adult and children’s social care.
- Opposition councillors accuse Reform of breaking election pledges to cut waste and reduce bills; Reform argues it inherited severe financial problems from the previous Conservative administration.
- The council is also asking government for Exceptional Financial Support, described as an emergency loan, to help manage the gap.
- The article notes that multiple Reform run councils are signalling potential tax rises next year, reflecting wider pressure on statutory services.

Reform run councils and exceptional council tax rises: Worcestershire seeks up to 10%

Impacts on administration of services

- Budget setting and governance: a higher proposed rise increases the complexity of budget options, scrutiny requirements, and member decision making; it also raises the political and reputational stakes of the final settlement.
- Council tax administration: larger increases typically drive higher contact volumes, more complaints, and more requests for support; billing, recovery, and customer services may need additional capacity and clearer communications.
- Financial resilience and controls: applying for Exceptional Financial Support increases reporting, monitoring, and assurance demands, including tighter in year spend controls and more frequent financial updates.
- Demand management in social care: if the core driver is social care pressure, councils often need parallel work on demand management, commissioning, market costs, and pathway redesign, not just funding decisions.
- Wider local support services: higher bills can increase Council Tax Reduction caseload pressure and referrals to welfare rights and debt advice services.

Reform run councils and exceptional council tax rises: Worcestershire seeks up to 10%

Key numbers and examples

- Reported funding gap: £74 million for 2026 to 2027.
- Reported Exceptional Financial Support request: £43.6 million.
- Band D council tax: about £2,300 a year; a 10% rise would take it to about £2,530.
- Reform took control in May 2025, winning 27 seats, reported as 31.7% of the vote.
- The council is described as having among the lowest council tax rates nationally.

References

- The Times, Helena Kelly, Reform council plans 10% tax increase, published 16 December 2025.

UK inflation falls as food and clothing prices ease

Key facts

- The Office for National Statistics says CPI inflation fell to 3.2% in the year to November 2025, down from 3.6% in October.
- This is described as the lowest inflation rate in eight months, but it remains above the Bank of England's 2% target.
- The fall was mainly driven by lower food prices, with tobacco and women's clothing also contributing.
- The ONS notes that falling inflation does not mean prices are falling overall; it means prices are rising more slowly.
- Coverage and market commentary suggest the figures strengthen the case for a Bank of England interest rate cut at its next decision.

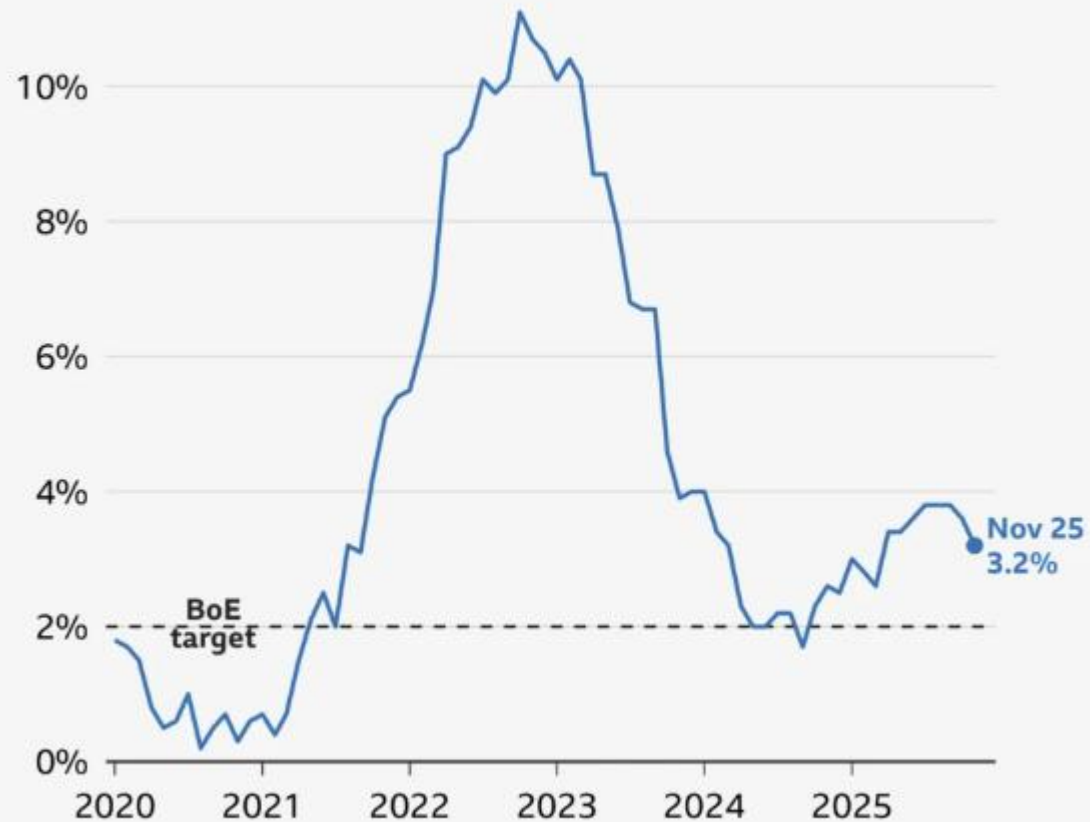
Impacts on administration of services

- Benefits and debt: slower inflation can reduce pressure on uprating and emergency support over time, but households still face high price levels, so demand for local welfare support and debt advice may remain elevated.
- Commissioning and budgets: easing inflation in goods such as food and some retail categories may help with some procurement pressures, but councils and public services still face persistence in service cost inflation, especially where labour and contracts dominate.
- Communications and expectations: public bodies will need clear messaging that inflation easing does not mean costs have returned to pre cost of living levels, particularly when explaining budget decisions and charges.
- Wider economic sensitivity: if interest rates fall, this can affect council treasury management, borrowing costs, and household affordability, which can influence arrears and collection performance across bills.

UK inflation
falls as food
and clothing
prices ease

UK inflation falls to 3.2% in November

Annual UK inflation rate



Inflation measure is the Consumer Prices Index (CPI)

Source: Office for National Statistics

BBC

UK inflation falls as food and clothing prices ease

UK inflation falls as food and clothing prices ease

Key numbers and detail

- CPI inflation: 3.2% in the year to November 2025; 3.6% in the year to October 2025.
- Food and non-alcoholic beverages: 4.2% in the year to November; 4.9% in October.
- Alcohol and tobacco: 4.0% in November; 5.9% in October.
- Clothing and footwear: -0.6% in November; +0.3% in October.
- Furniture and household goods: -0.3% in November; +0.3% in October.
- Restaurants and hotels: 3.5% in November; 3.8% in October.
- International comparisons cited: France 0.8%, Germany 2.6%; US inflation referenced as 3% (noting different methodology).
- Bank of England base rate referenced: held at 4% at the last two meetings, down from a prior peak of 5.25%.

References

- BBC News live reporting, “Food prices help drive UK inflation to lowest rate in eight months”, 17 December 2025.
- Office for National Statistics statements and commentary quoted within the BBC coverage, including ONS chief economist Grant Fitzner.

UK labour market: youth unemployment rising, hiring pressure and policy responses

Key facts

- The UK unemployment rate rose to 5.1% in the three months to October 2025, up from 4.3% a year earlier.
- Younger workers were hit hardest: the number of unemployed 18 to 24 year olds rose by 85,000 over the three months, described as the largest rise since November 2022.
- Employers and recruiters cited a weakening labour market, with some firms slowing or freezing hiring ahead of the Budget while awaiting clarity on taxation and spending plans.
- Payroll employee estimates fell by 149,000 over the year to October, a drop of 0.5%.
- Businesses raised concerns that removing the two tier minimum wage and moving to a single adult rate could reduce entry level hiring, particularly for younger workers with limited experience.
- The Department for Work and Pensions announced that Alan Milburn will lead a review into the drivers of rising youth unemployment, focused on young people not in education, employment or training.

UK labour market: youth unemployment rising, hiring pressure and policy responses

Impacts on administration of services

- Increased demand on employment support: higher unemployment, especially among young adults, is likely to increase Jobcentre workload, more intensive claimant support, and greater pressure on local employability and skills provision.
- Programme design and commissioning: a youth focused review and promised expansions in apprenticeships and workplace opportunities imply new delivery requirements, provider management, monitoring, and outcome reporting.
- Employer engagement: if hiring at entry level is weakening, services may need stronger employer liaison, targeted incentives, and more work experience brokerage to create entry routes.
- Communications and expectations management: rising job competition means clearer messaging to young people about pathways, eligibility, and realistic timelines, as well as support for those cycling between short term roles and unemployment.
- Cross government coordination: closer alignment is likely between employment support, apprenticeships, and health related interventions, given discussion of mental health and inactivity alongside labour market weakness.

UK labour market: youth unemployment rising, hiring pressure and policy responses

Key numbers and detail

- Unemployment rate: 5.1% (three months to October 2025); 4.3% in the same period a year earlier.
- Youth unemployment change: unemployed 18 to 24 year olds up by 85,000 in the three months to October.
- Payroll employees: down 149,000 year on year in October, down 0.5%.
- Wage growth: average pay up 4.6% excluding bonuses (Aug to Oct 2025).
 - Private sector pay growth slowed from 4.2% to 3.9%.
 - Public sector pay growth rose from 6.6% to 7.6%.
- Interest rates context: Bank of England decision due Thursday; base rate referenced as 4%.
- Government response quoted: investment of £1.5bn to deliver 50,000 apprenticeships and 350,000 new workplace opportunities for young people.

References


- BBC News, Emer Moreau, Young workers hit hard as UK unemployment rate rises to 5.1%, published 16 December 2025.
- Office for National Statistics labour market release and commentary quoted in the BBC report, including remarks from the ONS Director of Economic Statistics.
- Department for Work and Pensions announcement referenced in the BBC report on the Alan Milburn review and youth opportunities package.



Carer's allowance overpayments: accountability, culture and system design

Key events and accountability debate

- Senior DWP official **Neil Couling** told staff that “individual failings” by carers were “at the heart” of the carer’s allowance crisis, despite an independent review finding systemic DWP failures were to blame.
- In his internal blog he accepted an error in “byzantine” guidance on averaging earnings, but claimed the core problem was carers not reporting changes in their earnings; the blog was removed after media inquiries.
- The Sayce review, commissioned by government, concluded that long standing DWP leadership failures and poor benefit design led to unacceptable overpayments and could not be blamed on carers.
- The review highlighted severe impacts on carers, including shame, distress, suicidal thoughts and feeling “at the whim of a faceless machine”, after being hit with large debts and penalties.
- Charities and politicians condemned Couling’s comments as a serious misjudgement that ignores the review’s findings; they urged DWP to focus on fixing the system and returning money to carers.
- Ministers and the department publicly distanced themselves from the blog, reaffirming that confusing rules and processes were central to the problem and that the Sayce recommendations will be implemented.



Carer's allowance overpayments: accountability, culture and system design

Impacts on administration, compliance and service culture

- DWP must review guidance, letters and digital journeys so that earnings rules and reporting duties are clear, consistent and easy to comply with, rather than relying on carers to navigate complexity unaided.
- Reassessment of historic cases requires a major administrative exercise: extra staff, revised internal guidance, case review processes and quality control to decide when to reduce, cancel or refund debts.
- Overpayment and recovery policies will need rebalancing to reflect departmental responsibility when design and communication are at fault, rather than treating carers primarily as non compliant claimants.
- Trust and culture are central: internal messaging that blames claimants cuts across official commitments to put things right and risks undermining staff understanding of the department's accepted failures.
- Frontline staff will require training on new rules, communications and a more compassionate approach, including awareness of the mental health impact of debt pursuit and overpayment letters on carers.
- The episode underlines the need for stronger leadership oversight of risk, better escalation of whistleblower and audit warnings, and more systematic testing of how complex rules operate in real people's lives.

Carer's allowance overpayments: accountability, culture and system design

Key numbers and scale of impact (optional)

- Historic overpayments
 - Between 2019 and 2025, around **180,000 carers** built up carer's allowance overpayments totalling about **£300m**, roughly **one in five** of all claimants.
 - Some carers faced penalties and debts of up to **£20,000**; **854** were convicted of fraud.
- Case review and remediation
 - Government plans to review around **200,000** overpayment cases from the past 10 years.
 - About **26,000** carers are expected to have their debts **cancelled, reduced or refunded**.
- Rules and guidance
 - The Sayce review found outdated, complex rules on averaging earnings and unclear reporting processes were central to the build up of overpayments.
 - DWP has begun updating internal guidance, improving letters and adding extra staff to prevent carers building up large debts in future.

References and links

- Patrick Butler, "Senior DWP civil servant blames victims for carer's allowance scandal", *The Guardian*, 7 December 2025.
- Liz Sayce, Independent review of carer's allowance overpayments (government commissioned, 2025).
- DWP statements and ministerial responses to the Sayce review, including commitments on reassessment of historic cases and revised guidance.
- Earlier Guardian investigation into carer's allowance overpayments and penalties, which prompted the independent review.

Child poverty strategy and future welfare reform

Strategy aims and policy direction

- Government has launched a new child poverty strategy framed as long term investment in children's lives, not just income redistribution.
- Flagship policy: ending the two-child limit in Universal Credit, at an estimated cost of £3bn, expected to lift around 450,000 children out of poverty by 2031.
- Other measures include: support to help parents choose cheaper baby formula; faster moves out of temporary accommodation; expansion of breakfast clubs; and extension of free school lunches.
- Pat McFadden stresses that the current welfare system is not doing enough to help people into work and that costs are rising; he is clear the government is not "backing away" from further reform.
- Reform is framed around employment: every person moved into work is seen as improving their own prospects and reducing long term benefit spending, rather than cuts being set first and policy "retrofitted" to a savings target.
- The strategy sits alongside two major reviews: the Timms review of disability benefits and the Alan Milburn review on youth inactivity.

Child poverty strategy and future welfare reform

Impacts on administration and services

- DWP and Jobcentre Plus will need to align conditionality, employment support and disability benefit reforms with the child poverty objectives; messaging must stress work as a route out of poverty rather than simply cost cutting.
- Local authorities and schools face new delivery asks around breakfast clubs, extended free school meals and speeding up moves from temporary accommodation, with implications for staffing, commissioning and school catering capacity.
- Housing and homelessness teams will need to adapt allocations, commissioning and partnership working to reduce time families spend in temporary accommodation, potentially under tighter performance expectations.
- Benefit administration systems must incorporate the removal of the two child limit and any subsequent changes from the Timms/Milburn reviews, with clear communication to claimants and advice agencies.
- Cross government coordination (Treasury, DWP, DfE, DLUHC) will be critical to ensure that welfare reforms designed to “encourage work” do not inadvertently undermine child poverty goals, for example through harsher sanctions or tighter eligibility.
- Narrative and stakeholder management will matter; ministers are positioning reforms as pro work and pro children, while rebutting claims the Budget favoured those out of work, which will shape how frontline staff and partners talk to families about changes.

Child poverty strategy and future welfare reform

Key numbers and framing

- Ending the two child limit:
 - Estimated fiscal cost: **£3bn**.
 - Estimated poverty impact: **~450,000 children** lifted out of poverty by **2031**.
- Youth inactivity and lifetime cost framing:
 - McFadden's estimate: a young person who remains on benefits long term may lose about **£1m** in lifetime earnings and cost the state around **£1m**.
- Reform pipeline:
 - Disability benefits: **Timms review** under way.
 - Youth inactivity and opportunities: separate review led by **Alan Milburn**.
- Political positioning:
 - Ministers reject the claim that the Budget helps people on benefits more than workers.
 - McFadden argues the 2017 two child limit was "never really about saving money" but a political dividing line using children as "the weapon of choice".

References and links

- Rowena Mason, "Labour launches child poverty strategy but hints costly welfare system has to change", *The Guardian*, 6 December 2025.
- HM Government child poverty strategy (2025) and associated DWP statements.
- Timms review of disability benefits (terms of reference and interim outputs).
- Alan Milburn review on youth inactivity and employment.

Universal Credit fraud and error: DWP's updated approach

- DWP is launching a new “Tell DWP” campaign and website to make it easier for Universal Credit claimants to report changes of circumstances, especially household changes and “living together” situations.
- “Living together” fraud and error is now the second most common cause of UC overpayments; DWP sees this as one of its most persistent risks.
- The department is extending “periodic redeclaration” so claimants are regularly prompted to confirm household details that are hard to verify using data, such as who lives in the property and household composition.
- Household tests for income related benefits are estimated to save around £40bn in public spending but remain a major area of friction because there is no definitive data source that proves whether people are living together.
- DWP has been given £6.7bn (2020–21 to 2028–29) specifically to tackle fraud and error; this funds data analytics, targeted case reviews and wider counter fraud activity.
- The Fraud, Error and Recovery Act (Royal Assent 2 December 2025) and the extension of targeted case review to Pension Credit are intended to push fraud and error rates down further.

Universal Credit fraud and error: DWP's updated approach

Impact on administration of services

- **New digital and contact processes:** The Tell DWP service and wider redeclaration process will require new communication journeys, system changes and staff training; call centres and digital support teams may see increased contact from claimants updating circumstances.
- **Increased verification workload:** Expanded household checks and targeted case reviews will add to caseloads for caseworkers; managers will need to balance fraud work with processing times and service standards.
- **Greater reliance on data analytics:** Investment in analytics will change workflows, with staff responding to risk scores and referrals rather than only reacting to self reported information; this may require new skills mixes and closer work between policy, IT and operations.
- **Managing citizen friction and trust:** Because household status is hard to prove from data alone, there is a risk of disputes and complaints; DWP will need clear guidance, consistent decision making and careful messaging to maintain legitimacy while challenging suspected fraud.
- **Ongoing “test and learn” culture:** The plan relies on piloting, evaluating and scaling interventions; this implies continuous change for front line staff, iterative system updates and the need for robust feedback loops to improve processes without destabilising service delivery.

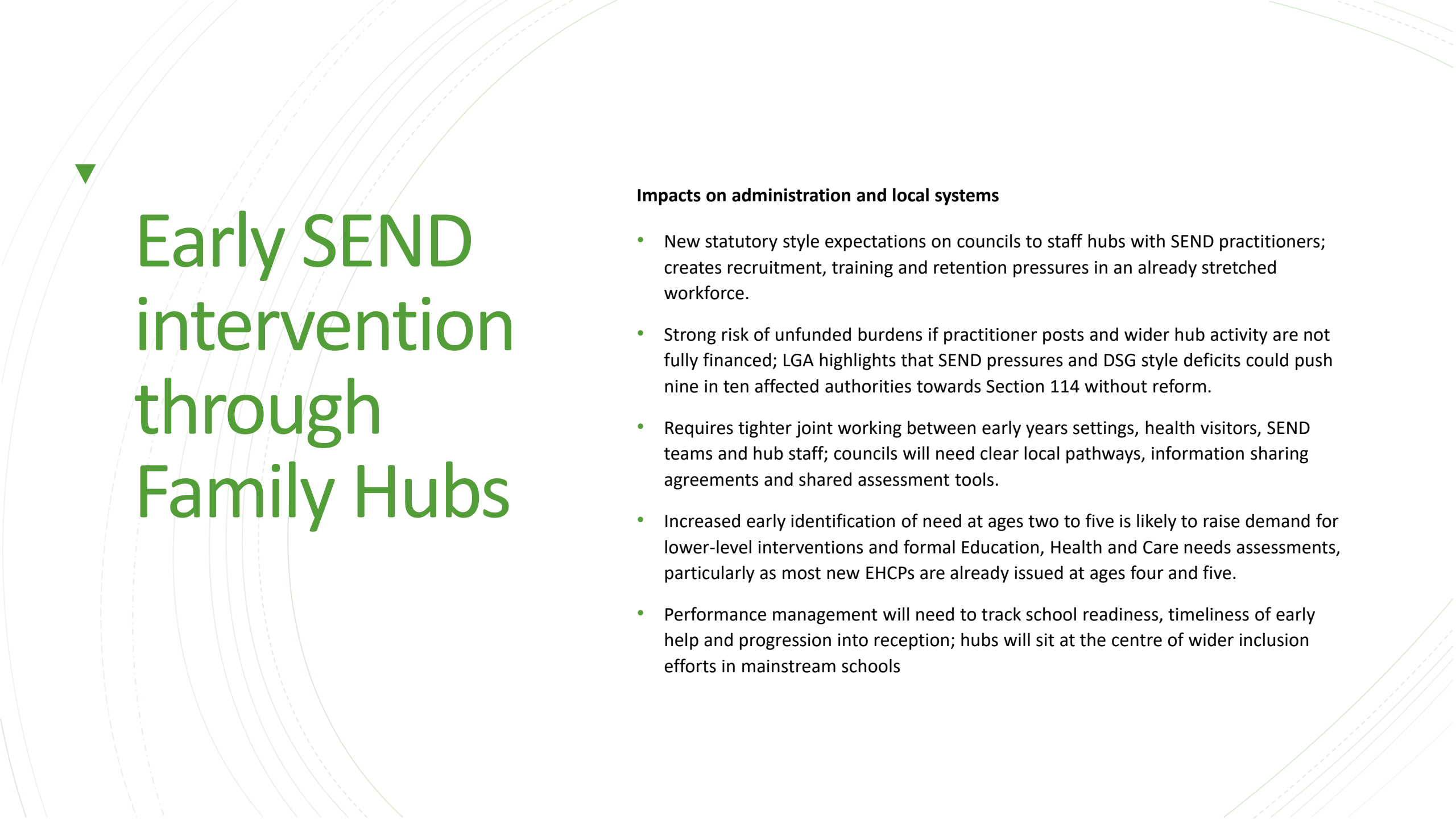
Universal Credit fraud and error: DWP's updated approach

Key numbers and performance trends

- **£6.7bn** dedicated DWP funding for fraud and error initiatives across **2020–21 to 2028–29**.
- NAO estimates of benefit expenditure overpaid:
 - **3.6% (£9.7bn)** in **2023–24**.
 - **3.3% (£9.5bn)** in **2024–25**; improving but still above pre pandemic levels.
- **37 consecutive years** of DWP accounts being qualified because of material fraud and error (up to and including **2025**).
- **£40bn**: approximate public spending saved by applying household tests across income related benefits.
- OBR forecasts suggest overpayments will fall to **2.8% of benefit expenditure by 2028–29**, the lowest level since tax credits were introduced.

References and links

- Public Finance article: Rachel Willcox, “DWP gives MPs updates on universal credit fraud and error efforts”, 5 December 2025.
- National Audit Office (NAO) report on DWP fraud and error, October 2025.
- Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), Economic and Fiscal Outlook and fraud and error projections (published alongside the November 2025 Budget).
- Fraud, Error and Recovery Act 2025 (received Royal Assent 2 December 2025).
- DWP guidance and communications on “Tell DWP” and Universal Credit change of circumstances (forthcoming in early 2026).



Early SEND intervention through Family Hubs

Impacts on administration and local systems

- New statutory style expectations on councils to staff hubs with SEND practitioners; creates recruitment, training and retention pressures in an already stretched workforce.
- Strong risk of unfunded burdens if practitioner posts and wider hub activity are not fully financed; LGA highlights that SEND pressures and DSG style deficits could push nine in ten affected authorities towards Section 114 without reform.
- Requires tighter joint working between early years settings, health visitors, SEND teams and hub staff; councils will need clear local pathways, information sharing agreements and shared assessment tools.
- Increased early identification of need at ages two to five is likely to raise demand for lower-level interventions and formal Education, Health and Care needs assessments, particularly as most new EHCPs are already issued at ages four and five.
- Performance management will need to track school readiness, timeliness of early help and progression into reception; hubs will sit at the centre of wider inclusion efforts in mainstream schools

Early SEND intervention through Family Hubs

Key numbers and pressures

- £500m for 1,000 hubs over three years.
- 70% of hubs to be in the 30% most disadvantaged communities.
- Access gap:
 - 1 in 4 families with children under five lack access to children's centres or Family Hubs.
 - Rises to 1 in 3 among lower income families.
- Analysis suggests mounting SEND deficits could leave up to 9 in 10 affected councils at risk of issuing a Section 114 notice without major reform.
- Data shows the most common ages for EHCPs to be issued are now four and five, reinforcing the need for robust early years pathways.

References and links

- Rachel Willcox, "Early intervention SEND support targets savings and better outcomes", 5 December 2025.
- Department for Education announcements on Best Start Family Hubs and early years SEND strategy.
- Local Government Association: statements and briefings from the Children, Young People and Families Board on SEND pressures and high needs deficits.
- Forthcoming government schools white paper on inclusion and mainstream support for children with SEND.

Digital leadership and systems integration in local government reform

Policy message and strategic direction

- Localis warns that new English unitary councils must place digital leaders at the top decision-making table or risk weakening devolution and wider public service reform.
- Digital systems integration should be treated as a combined social and technical change programme; simply standardising processes and data is seen as a missed opportunity.
- Fragmentation, legacy systems, supplier lock in and tight finances are identified as major risks that could derail integration projects.
- The report calls for a rails first, interface led digital strategy, with governance that embeds cyber security and data ethics from the outset.
- New strategic authorities are encouraged to use their greater scale to negotiate better with suppliers, mandate exit plans and insist on data portability and open, documented APIs without prohibitive fees.
- Consolidating data from multiple organisations into a single, jointly governed analytics spine is presented as essential for preventative services and complex cross agency care planning.

Digital leadership and systems integration in local government reform

Impacts on administration and organisation

- Governance structures must formally include chief digital or data leaders in core decision forums; this alters senior leadership composition and reporting lines.
- Councils will need to redesign commercial and procurement processes to address supplier lock in; requiring exit plans and open standards may lengthen procurements but should reduce long term risk.
- Only around 2% of the workforce is currently in digital or data roles; addressing this will require ring fenced funding for skills, new career pathways and alignment with frameworks such as the Government Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework.
- Administrative processes will increasingly rely on shared data platforms across partner agencies; this requires common data standards, joint information governance and clear operational protocols for shared analytics.
- A rails first, interface led approach implies disciplined programme management with multiyear timelines, clear milestones and strong portfolio oversight; councils will need to balance transformation ambitions with day-to-day service delivery stability.

Digital leadership and systems integration in local government reform

Key numbers and structural risks

Digital leadership and systems integration in local government reform

- Around 2% of local authority headcount currently works in digital or data adjacent roles, highlighting a major skills and capacity gap.
- New unitary and strategic authorities are expected to coordinate multiple legacy systems and suppliers, increasing the complexity and risk of integration projects.
- Localis argues that, handled well, local government reorganisation and devolution can lock in resilience and efficiency; handled poorly, it simply rearranges fragmented and costly legacy systems and undermines the promise of public service reform.

References and links

- Rachel Willcox, Digital leaders key to public service reform, Localis study finds, 3 December 2025.
- Localis report commissioned by TechnologyOne on digital systems integration and devolution in new English unitaries.
- Government Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework (Cabinet Office and Central Digital and Data Office).

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

What is different and what has happened so far

- ADP replaced PIP in Scotland from 2022, with the same eligibility rules and payment rates, but a deliberate change of ethos; Social Security Scotland aims to treat claimants with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Key delivery differences include:
 - Online applications available from the outset.
 - Remote first consultations, with in person only if requested.
 - In house health and social care practitioners rather than private assessment providers.
 - A clear commitment to respond to redeterminations within 56 days.
- Qualitative evidence suggests claimants experience ADP as more respectful and straightforward than PIP; people report feeling safer and more secure in the process, despite long waits and a complex form.
- New applications spiked when ADP was introduced but have since tracked England and Wales closely; since March 2022, new working age disability claims have risen by a similar proportion in Scotland and in England and Wales.
- Award rates followed a familiar bedding in pattern; initial ADP award rates were high but have since fallen and by 2025 are lower than PIP award rates in England and Wales, with a smaller share of awards at enhanced rates.
- Early review data shows fewer ADP awards reduced or removed at review than for PIP, but the gap has narrowed significantly over time as processes bed in.

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

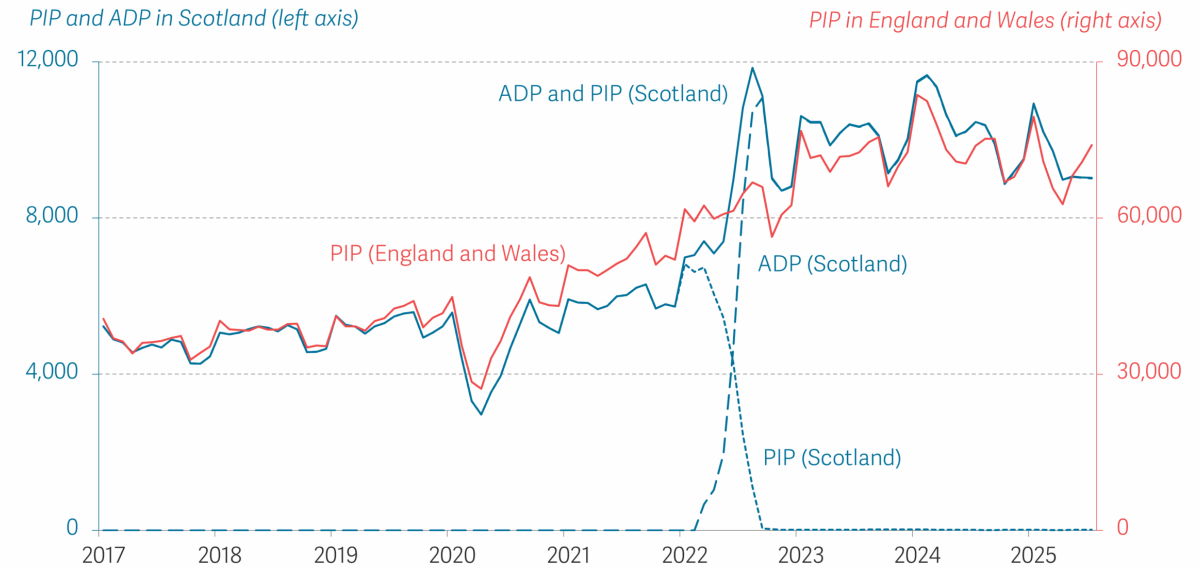
Impacts on administration, caseloads and system design

- Delivery changes require sustained administrative capacity in Social Security Scotland; digital systems, in house clinicians and remote consultations all need investment, training and supervision.
- Remote first consultations and online claims can widen access, but they create new demands around digital support, communication and safeguarding for people who struggle with online processes.
- Rising redetermination rates mean more work in case maintenance and quality assurance; the higher success rate of ADP redeterminations than PIP MRs may reduce appeals and claimant stress, but it also underlines the need to improve first time decision quality.
- Light touch, person centred reviews and the introduction of indefinite awards are likely to lengthen award durations for some groups; administrators must balance reduced stress for claimants with a robust approach to reassessing those whose conditions change.
- Although ADP currently pays fewer enhanced rate awards than PIP, Scottish spending on disability benefits in 2023 to 24 exceeded the block grant allocation, highlighting the importance of accurate forecasting, close monitoring of review outcomes and control of administrative costs.
- For the Timms Review and other reformers, the central lesson is that improving claimant experience is compatible with broadly similar caseload and cost trends, but is not a quick route to large savings; reducing disability benefit caseloads will require wider action on health, employment and support, not only changes to assessment processes.

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

Number of monthly applications for PIP and ADP in Scotland (left axis) and for PIP in England and Wales (right axis), among new claimants

Resolution Foundation



Notes: Chart shows three-month rolling averages. For ADP, applications refer to Part 1 applications registered. We include new claims only, and not case transfers from PIP to ADP, or DLA to PIP.

Source: RF analysis of DWP, Stat-Xplore; Social Security Scotland, Adult Disability Payment statistics.

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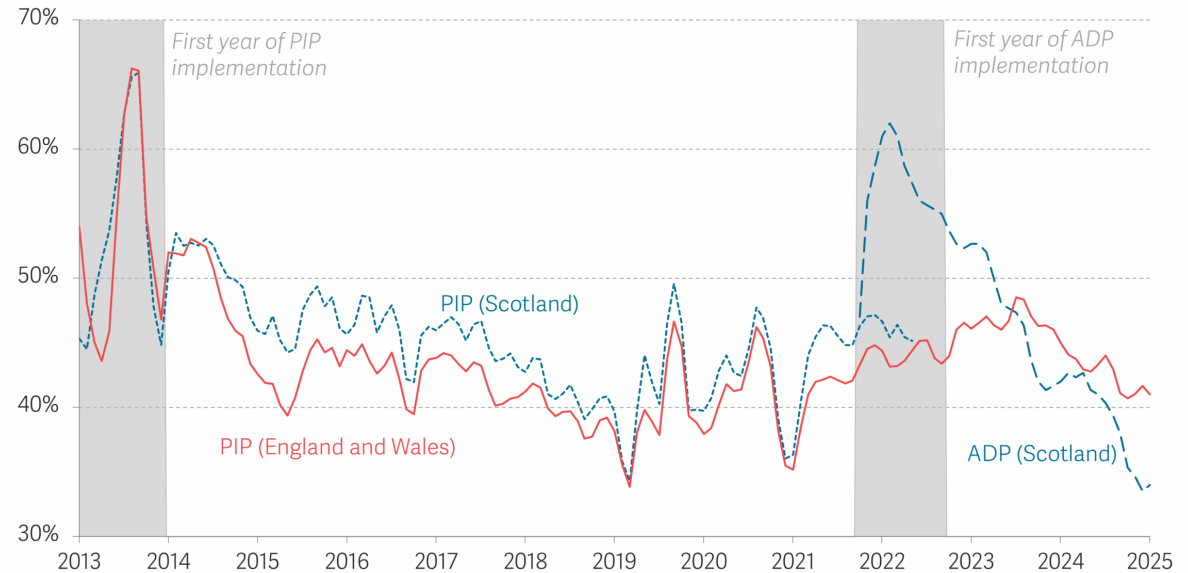
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Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

Initial award rate for new applications for PIP and ADP in Scotland and PIP in England and Wales

Resolution Foundation



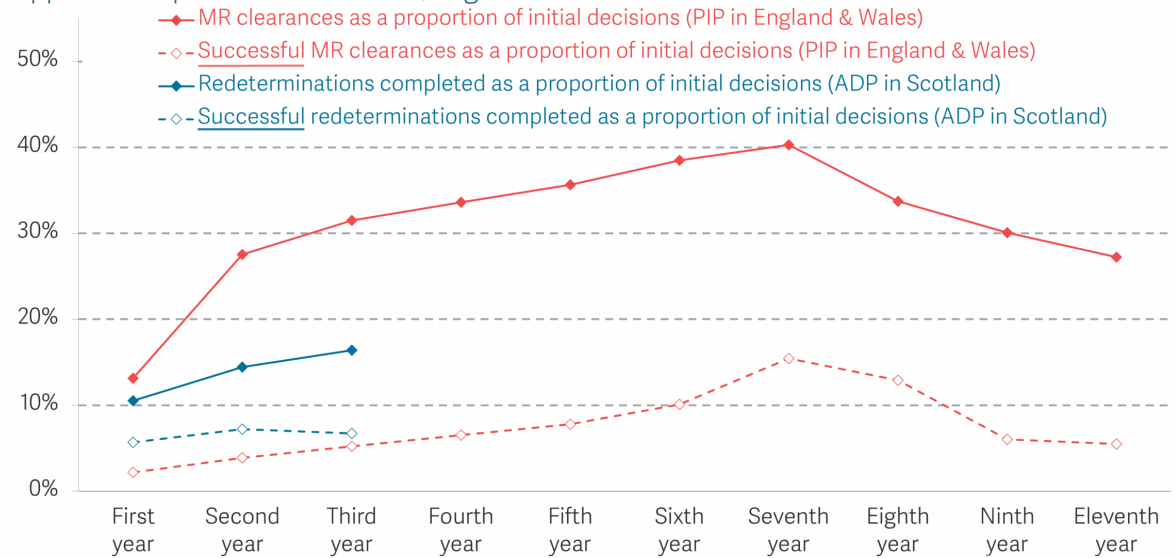
Notes: Chart shows three-months rolling averages. We include new claims only, and not case transfers from PIP to ADP, or DLA to PIP. Chart shows initial award rates, not those following Mandatory Reconsiderations, redeterminations or appeals. © Resolution Foundation 2025 resolutionfoundation.org

Source: RF analysis of DWP, Stat-Xplore; Social Security Scotland, Adult Disability Payment statistics.

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

New applications or reviews for ADP in Scotland that result in a redetermination, as a share of all new ADP applications or reviews processed; and new applications for PIP in England and Wales that result in mandatory reconsideration, as a share of all new PIP applications processed: Scotland/England and Wales

Resolution Foundation

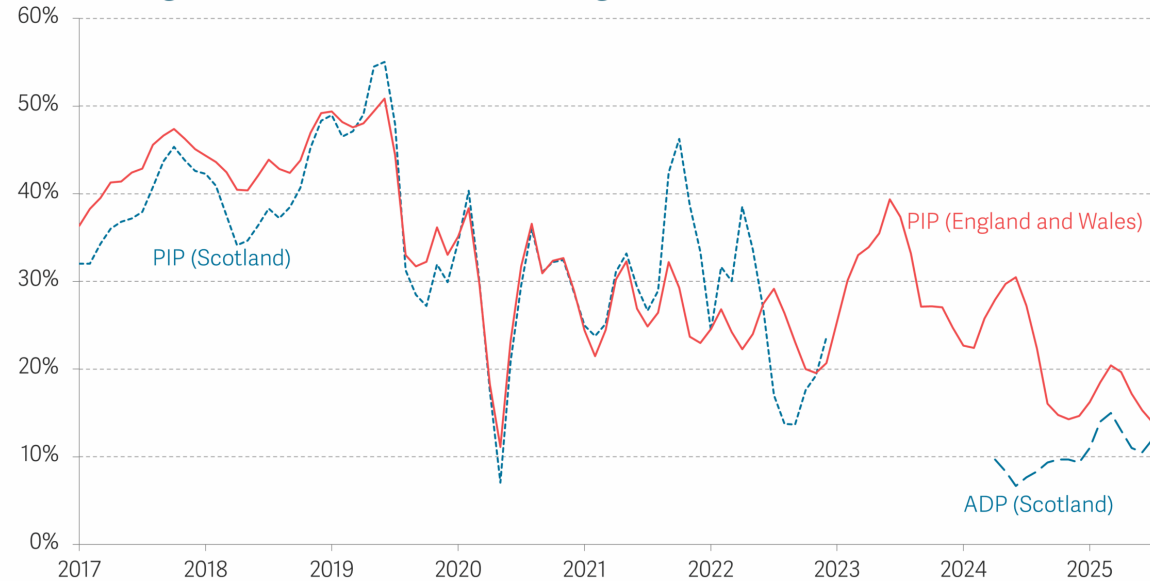


Notes: The ADP data refers to 2023-24, 2024-25 and the first four months of 2025-26. For ADP, redetermination data includes both redeterminations of new applications and of reviews among new claimants, and so we have included both in the denominator. The PIP data refers to 2014-15 to 2024-25. Data is for new claims only, and not case transfers from PIP to ADP, or DLA to PIP. Source: RF analysis of DWP, Stat-Xplore; Social Security Scotland, Adult Disability Payment statistics. © Resolution Foundation 2025 resolutionfoundation.org

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

Proportion of planned reviews among new applicants for PIP/ADP that result in the benefit being reduced or removed: Scotland/England and Wales

Resolution Foundation



Notes: Data is for new claims only, and not case transfers from PIP to ADP, or DLA to PIP. Data is for planned reviews only. Source: RF analysis of DWP, Stat-Xplore; Social Security Scotland, Adult Disability Payment statistics.

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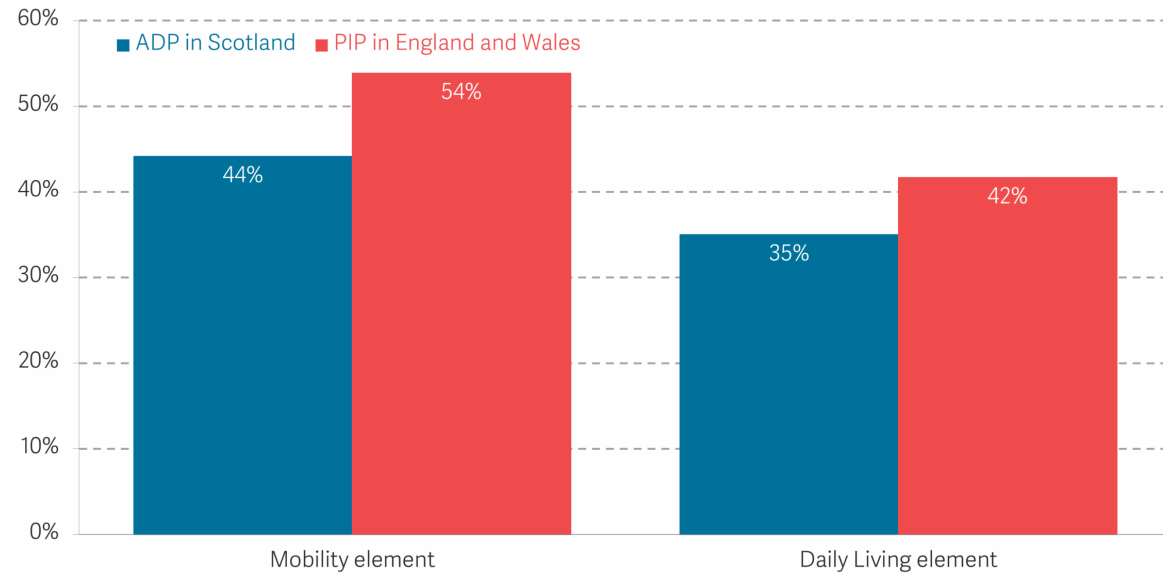
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Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

Proportion of new mobility and Daily Living awards for ADP in Scotland and PIP in England and Wales that resulted in an enhanced award: January-July 2025

Resolution Foundation



Notes: Data is for new claims only, and not case transfers from PIP to ADP, or DLA to PIP. Data refers to the proportion of decisions where the mobility/Daily Living element is awarded that are paid at the enhanced rate; nil awards are not included in the denominator.
Source: RF analysis of DWP, Stat-Xplore; Social Security Scotland, Adult Disability Payment statistics.

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Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

Key numbers and trends (optional)

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

- New claims growth since introduction
 - March 2022 to July 2025: monthly new disability benefit claims up 11 per cent in Scotland and 10 per cent in England and Wales.
 - July 2017 to July 2024: monthly new working age disability claims up 104 per cent in Scotland and 103 per cent in England and Wales.
- Award rates
 - Early ADP award rate peak: around 64 per cent in autumn 2022, similar to early PIP peaks.
 - By 2025: ADP new claim award rate about 37 per cent versus 42 per cent for PIP in England and Wales.
- Redeterminations and MRs
 - 2023 to 24: ADP redeterminations were 11 per cent of applications or reviews, with 54 per cent success.
 - Early 2025 to 26: redeterminations around one in six to one in five applications or reviews, with success rates around two in five; by contrast, only 17 per cent of PIP MRs were successful in 2016 to 17.
- Reviews and award reductions
 - Summer 2024: 7 per cent of planned ADP reviews versus 33 per cent of PIP reviews led to reduced or removed awards.
 - Summer 2025: gap narrowed to 12 per cent for ADP and 14 per cent for PIP.
- Caseload and spending
 - Working age disability benefit receipt in Scotland rose from 8.3 per cent to 11.6 per cent of adults between February 2022 and July 2025, a 43 per cent increase; England and Wales rose from 6.1 per cent to 8.3 per cent, a 41 per cent increase.
 - 2023 to 24: Scottish Government spent £2.6 billion on ADP and PIP, around £141 million or 6 per cent above block grant funding.
 - Among new decisions in early 2025: enhanced rate awards were less common in ADP than PIP, for both mobility and daily living components.

Adult Disability Payment and PIP: early lessons for disability benefit reform

References and links

- Resolution Foundation and Safety Nets project Spotlight on Adult Disability Payment and PIP, 2025.
- S Ray Chaudhuri and T Waters, *What has happened to disability benefits in Scotland? An update*, Institute for Fiscal Studies, November 2024.
- E Congreve, *New awards of disability benefits for adults: Comparing Scotland with England and Wales*, Scottish Health Equity Research Unit, November 2024.
- Audit Scotland, *Adult Disability Payment*, September 2025.
- Scottish Fiscal Commission, *Scotland's Economic and Fiscal Forecasts*, January 2025 and December 2024.
- DWP, *Apply for PIP Digital Self Serve: Evaluation Summary*, December 2024.
- safetynets.study, forthcoming policy brief on devolution and disability support, accessed 1 December 2025.

Access to social housing for the lowest income households

Key findings and policy context

- Crisis research finds that people on the lowest incomes, including many benefit claimants, are being denied access to social housing in England because they are deemed too financially risky.
- A shrinking supply of social homes means housing associations use stricter criteria to select tenants, effectively “rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic” rather than meeting overall need.
- Affordability checks and minimum income thresholds are increasingly used; households whose income is mainly from benefits are often refused due to fears they cannot sustain tenancies.
- Welfare policies are a major driver; the benefit cap and frozen housing benefit rates are frequently cited as reasons for heightened affordability checks and gatekeeping.
- People with more complex needs are also more likely to be refused because providers fear tenancy failure if they cannot fund appropriate support.
- Crisis calls for a Scottish style legal duty on housing associations to rehouse homeless households, plus welfare benefits that reflect actual rent and living costs and a major expansion of social housebuilding.

Access to social housing for the lowest income households

Impacts on administration of services

- Housing associations are pushed into more intensive financial risk assessment of applicants, increasing administrative workload on allocations teams and shifting culture towards risk avoidance rather than need.
- Use of affordability checks and income thresholds creates a “catch-22” for homelessness services: councils refer people into social housing pathways, but the very poverty that creates need also leads to refusal, cycling people back into homelessness or temporary accommodation.
- Frontline staff must manage more complex decisions and difficult conversations, including explaining refusals to highly vulnerable applicants and dealing with resulting complaints and challenges.
- Benefit design and housing policy are increasingly interdependent; local authorities and housing associations must spend more time modelling the impact of welfare caps and freezes on rent collection and tenancy sustainment.
- Overwhelming levels of housing need mean allocations systems struggle to “meaningfully prioritise” applicants, undermining confidence in local housing registers and making it harder to demonstrate fairness and transparency to residents.
- If barriers persist, pressures will rise across homelessness, temporary accommodation, support services and wider local safety nets, making strategic prevention work harder and more costly to deliver.

Access to social housing for the lowest income households

Key numbers and pressures

- Around one third of surveyed housing associations say affordability checks have led to applicants being denied a social home.
- Nearly one quarter report that households below a set income threshold can be excluded from the housing register.
- 71% of housing associations say benefit restrictions (including the benefit cap and frozen housing support) are a key reason for increased affordability checks and refusals.
- Homeless households' access to social lettings:
 - England: 27% of new social lets go to homeless households.
 - Scotland: 54% of new social lets go to homeless households, where housing associations have a legal rehousing duty.
- Government response cites:
 - £1bn to tackle homelessness.
 - A claimed "record" £39bn investment for social and affordable housing, with further detail promised in a forthcoming homelessness strategy.

References and links

- Jessica Murray, "People on lowest incomes being denied access to social housing, research finds", *The Guardian*, 8 December 2025.
- Crisis, Heriot-Watt University and UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence – survey and report on social housing access and affordability checks.
- Crisis policy calls on legal duties for housing associations to rehouse homeless households (Scottish model), benefit reform and expanded social housebuilding.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government statements on homelessness funding, social and affordable housing investment and the forthcoming homelessness strategy.

Social security spending and the OBR: 'spiralling' claim challenged

Key developments and narrative

- Disability News Service reports that the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has removed a long-running chart that clearly showed social security spending as a stable share of GDP, undermining claims that it is “spiralling out of control”.
- Earlier Economic and Fiscal Outlooks (EFOs) showed welfare spending at about 11.1 per cent of GDP, forecast to edge down to 11.0 per cent before a slight rise back to 11.1 per cent by 2029–30; updated March 2025 figures suggested it would be even lower.
- In the latest EFO, chart 5.2 has been redesigned: instead of plotting welfare as a percentage of GDP year-by-year from 2010–11, it now shows changes in different spending areas relative to 2010–11, making it much harder to demonstrate that social security has not “spiralled”.
- The article argues that this change helps ministers and commentators justify future cuts to disability and out-of-work benefits, including proposals to restrict the health element of Universal Credit for disabled young people under 22.
- OBR’s press office refused to explain why the historic series was removed, and the Treasury has not said whether it requested the change, raising questions about transparency and the watchdog’s independence at a time when its chair has just resigned over a separate publication error.

Social security spending and the OBR: 'spiralling' claim challenged

Impacts on administration, scrutiny and policy making

- Analysts, journalists, campaigners and parliamentarians lose a simple, official time series that allowed quick checks on whether welfare spending as a share of GDP was actually rising; this makes evidence-based challenge to “spiralling welfare” narratives more complex and time-consuming.
- Without clear historical charts, DWP, Treasury and local government debates may lean more heavily on political framing rather than verifiable trends, increasing the risk of policy built on misleading claims about affordability.
- Think tanks, academics and voluntary organisations will need to reconstruct series from tables (for example EFO table 5.1) to monitor whether decisions such as scrapping the two-child limit genuinely alter the welfare share of GDP, which adds analytical workload and raises barriers for smaller organisations.
- For local authorities and service providers, public perception that social security is “out of control” can be used to justify tighter eligibility, harsher conditionality and reduced local support, even though official data show the welfare share of GDP is broadly flat or falling.
- The episode may erode trust in the OBR as a neutral arbiter, prompting calls for clearer publication standards, stronger safeguards against politically convenient presentation changes and more open engagement with external users of its data.

Social security spending and the OBR: 'spiralling' claim challenged

Key numbers and trends

- Historic series (October 2024 EFO):
 - Welfare spending as share of GDP: 12 per cent in 2010–11, falling and then stabilising around 11.1 per cent.
 - Forecast to fall to 11.0 per cent in 2027–28 and 2028–29, before a slight rise back to 11.1 per cent in 2029–30.
- Updated forecasts (March 2025 EFO):
 - Showed welfare spending as a share of GDP expected to be even lower than those October 2024 projections.
- Latest EFO (Budget 2025):
 - 2024–25 actual/forecast welfare share: 10.8 per cent of GDP (vs 11.1 per cent forecast previously).
 - 2025–26 forecast: 10.9 per cent of GDP (vs 11.1 per cent previously).
 - Forecast shares for the following four years unchanged from earlier projections.
- Presentation change:
 - Previous chart 5.2: welfare spending as a percentage of GDP, year-by-year from 2010–11.
 - New chart 5.2: each spending area shown relative to its 2010–11 share, obscuring the absolute welfare-to-GDP ratio over time.

References and links

- Disability News Service, “Watchdog’s silence after removing figures that showed social security spending is not ‘spiralling’”, 4 December 2025.
- OBR, Economic and Fiscal Outlook, October 2024 – chapter 5 and chart 5.2 (welfare spending as a share of GDP).
- OBR, Economic and Fiscal Outlook, March 2025 – chapter 5 and chart 5.2 (updated welfare share series).
- OBR, Economic and Fiscal Outlook, November 2025 – chapter 5, table 5.1 and revised chart 5.2.
- HM Treasury and DWP public statements and policy documents referencing “spiralling” welfare or rising social security costs (for context).

Disability benefits cuts, reassessments and transparency after the 2025 Budget

What the Budget changes imply

- Budget documents show plans to increase DWP “capacity” for Work Capability Assessment (WCA) reassessments and to expand face-to-face assessments for both WCAs and Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- The Treasury also says PIP award reviews will be less frequent, extending review periods to cut “unnecessary” reassessments and free capacity for WCA reassessments.
- Together, these changes are forecast to save:
 - £85m in 2026–27
 - £310m in 2027–28
 - £520m in 2028–29
 - £580m in 2029–30
 - £455m in 2030–31
– almost £2bn over five years.
- Treasury has claimed these are not new policies but the costing of “existing plans”, yet neither Treasury nor DWP has identified when these plans were formally announced, particularly around PIP review frequency.
- Disability News Service highlights this as another failure of transparency from DWP, despite Sir Stephen Timms’ 2024 promise that Labour would open the department up to proper public scrutiny.

Disability benefits cuts, reassessments and transparency after the 2025 Budget

Administrative and system impacts

- Increasing WCA reassessments and face-to-face assessments will require significant operational capacity: booking systems, provider staffing, venues and caseworker time, with potential knock-on effects on waiting times and backlogs.
- Changing PIP review cycles will mean revising internal guidance, IT systems and claimant communications; it could reduce churn for stable conditions but, combined with savings targets, may also tighten decision making or extend periods before awards are increased.
- Lack of clarity makes it harder for disabled people, advice agencies and local authorities to plan; they cannot yet tell who will face more reassessments, who will benefit from longer awards, or where the £2bn in “savings” actually falls.
- At the same time, the new Public Authorities (Fraud, Error, and Recovery) Act gives DWP wide-ranging anti-fraud powers, including compelling banks to scan accounts of means-tested benefit claimants for potential eligibility breaches, raising major data-sharing and governance demands.
- MPs and disability organisations warn that, without stronger safeguards, these powers and untransparent cuts risk repeating past harms from austerity-era welfare reforms, undermining trust in the system and increasing fear among disabled claimants.

Disability benefits cuts, reassessments and transparency after the 2025 Budget

Key numbers and new powers (optional)

- Forecast savings from disability benefit changes (mainly WCAs, PIP assessments and review cycles):
 - 2026–27: £85m
 - 2027–28: £310m
 - 2028–29: £520m
 - 2029–30: £580m
 - 2030–31: £455m
 - Total: £1.95bn over five years.
- No published DWP breakdown yet of:
 - How many extra WCAs or PIP assessments will be carried out.
 - How many PIP claimants will get longer awards and how many may face tougher WCA outcomes.
- Public Authorities (Fraud, Error, and Recovery) Act:
 - Enables DWP to require banks to run data sweeps on benefit claimants' accounts and report potential breaches.
 - Criticised by campaigners as the "bank spying bill", with concerns about proportionality, safeguards and the risk of serious hardship if errors occur.

References and links

- Disability News Service, "DWP and Treasury silent over mystery of £2 billion cuts to disability benefits", 4 December 2025.
- HM Treasury, Budget 2025 documents – especially welfare and disability benefit policy costings.
- DWP, Pathways to Work green paper (March 2025) and subsequent speeches on disability benefits and assessments.
- Public Authorities (Fraud, Error, and Recovery) Act 2025 and parliamentary debates on anti-fraud powers and safeguards.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2026 to 2027: clarity, demand and SEND deficits

What the provisional settlement says, and what CIPFA says is missing

- Government has published a provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for England for 2026/27, alongside indicative allocations over a three-year period, following Fair Funding Review 2.0.
- Ministers present this as a return to multiyear settlements, intended to support stability and forward planning.
- Councils are still being asked to set budgets with major uncertainty about how rising demand and existing deficits will be funded, according to CIPFA.
- SEND and DSG deficits: government recognises continuing pressure; the DSG statutory override runs to the end of 2027/28, with a stated intention that post override SEND funding will be managed within central government spending totals, and further arrangements for historic and accruing deficits to follow, with support not unlimited.
- Consultation on the provisional settlement runs from 17 December 2025 to 14 January 2026; the final settlement is due in early 2026.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2026 to 2027: clarity, demand and SEND deficits

Sector reactions, and impacts on administration of services

- County Councils Network: warns some county and unitary councils will see grant reductions; estimates at least 90% of the increase in total core spending power for CCN members comes from assumed 5% council tax rises; argues late changes favour London and metropolitan boroughs, citing the Recovery Grant and removal of “remoteness” from most of the formula.
- Local Government Association: says budget setting remains extremely challenging; calls for protection from real terms cuts, sustainable funding, and reform of SEND and adult social care; warns more councils may need Exceptional Financial Support.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2026 to 2027: clarity, demand and SEND deficits

- Administrative impacts likely to show up quickly in finance teams:
 - heavier scenario modelling and sensitivity analysis (grant shifts, council tax assumptions, demand pressures), plus member briefings and public comms that explain what is, and is not, funded; especially around SEND deficits and the end of the statutory override period.
 - additional workload from consultation response, distributional analysis, and equality and service impact assessment as allocations change between areas.
 - stronger focus on assurance and programme delivery in SEND, linked to access to future support, alongside engagement with advisers and best practice programmes.
 - if more councils move towards Exceptional Financial Support, expect added pressure on s151 capacity, governance, and treasury management, with knock on impacts on service planning timetables.
- Government also signals an Outcomes Framework for local government from Spring 2026, which may add reporting and performance management requirements alongside the new funding regime.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2026 to 2027: clarity, demand and SEND deficits

Key numbers and dates

- Consultation window: 17 December 2025 to 14 January 2026.
- Core Spending Power: expected to total up to £77.7 billion in 2026/27, stated as over £9.2 billion higher than 2024/25; government also cites up to 9.7% real terms growth in core spending power from 2024/25 to 2028/29
- CCN estimate: at least 90% of CCN members' increase in total core spending power comes from presumed 5% council tax rises.
- SEND and DSG: statutory override ends at the end of 2027/28; government says councils should not plan on meeting deficits in full, but any future support will not be unlimited.

References and links

- Public Finance (Rachel Willcox), CIPFA warns settlement "lacks clarity" (19 December 2025).
- GOV.UK, Provisional local government finance settlement 2026 to 2027: consultation (published 17 December 2025).
- GOV.UK, Provisional settlement document collection 2026/27 to 2028/29 (published 17 December 2025).
- County Councils Network, CCN response to the provisional settlement (17 December 2025).
- Local Government Association, statement on the provisional settlement (December 2025).
- UK Parliament, Written Ministerial Statement on the provisional settlement (17 December 2025).
- Institute for Fiscal Studies, analysis of redistribution under the settlement (17 December 2025).



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Understanding the cost of public services: PAC findings on data, IT and productivity

What the PAC report says

- Central government spends vast sums running public services, but most departments do not have a sufficiently granular understanding of what specific services cost, which limits their ability to improve productivity and efficiency.
- Departments are not required or incentivised enough to identify and use detailed costing information, and existing standards are applied inconsistently.
- The PAC calls for a significant cultural shift across the civil service, including better use of data and clearer accountability for senior leaders (notably permanent secretaries) in owning service cost information.
- Legacy IT and siloed data are described as major barriers to collecting and analysing cost data, complicating benchmarking and “unit cost” style analysis.
- The report links this directly to the productivity agenda, arguing that without better cost visibility, plans for more affordable services will not land as intended.

Understanding the cost of public services: PAC findings on data, IT and productivity

Impacts on administration of services

- Budgeting, performance and scrutiny: finance, commercial and service teams can expect more pressure to evidence cost drivers, quantify the impact of policy or process changes, and demonstrate where productivity is being improved within individual services.
- Data and systems work becomes operational, not optional: departments are likely to need practical, repeatable approaches to capturing service costs, improving data quality, and joining up back office and operational data, rather than relying on one off exercises.
- Time recording and workforce insights: the PAC highlights that there is no standard civil service policy on time recording and that use remains optional; moving towards consistent practice would create an immediate administrative and change management workload, but is positioned as necessary for productivity gains.
- Governance and accountability: the PAC pushes for clearer ownership, including expectations on permanent secretaries, and stronger end to end service accountability (for example through senior service owners) to make total service costs visible and actionable.
- Digital capacity constraints: the report flags ongoing difficulty recruiting and retaining senior digital leaders because pay still trails industry rates in London and the South East, which affects delivery pace for systems and data improvement programmes.
- AI and cyber resilience: AI is presented as a potential enabler for connecting disparate data, but legacy systems are described as a barrier and a cyber resilience risk; the PAC urges a focused approach with prioritisation and clear milestones to avoid drift.

Understanding the cost of public services: PAC findings on data, IT and productivity

Optional key numbers, dates and concrete asks

- Scale of spend: in 2024 to 2025, central government departments spent an estimated £450 billion on day to day running costs of public services, grants and administration, around 35% of public spending.
- Legacy tech cost pressure: legacy systems are described as around one third of government's technology estate but almost half of its costs.
- Top 75 digital services: a past programme to assess costs in the most used services closed with only 29 of the top 75 assessed as "great", with limited sponsorship cited as a constraint.
- Time bound expectations highlighted in the report:
 - HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office should set out how they will hold senior leaders to account for cost identification as part of the Treasury Minute response. [UK](#)
 - HM Treasury and the Government Finance Function should set out concrete ways departments must start identifying and recording service costs within six months.
 - DSIT should provide a baselined list of legacy systems and indicate priority systems for deeper investigation within six months.

References and links

- Public Accounts Committee news release, Govt's hazy understanding of the cost of public services must be improved (12 December 2025). House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, Government services: Identifying costs, Fifty Eighth Report of Session 2024 to 2026 (published 12 December 2025).
- Public Finance, PAC says government has hazy understanding of public services costs (Rachel Willcox, 17 December 2025).

Youth inactivity review: youth minimum wage, entry level jobs and welfare reform

Key facts from the article

- Alan Milburn is leading an inquiry into rising inactivity among young people, and says the youth minimum wage will be reviewed as part of that work.
- He warns that without tackling “uncomfortable truths” about the labour market, the UK risks creating a “lost generation” of young people pushed onto long term benefits.
- Milburn describes the rising welfare bill as fiscally and economically unsustainable, but says reform must prioritise reducing social injustice and expanding opportunities to “learn and earn”, rather than being framed mainly as cost cutting.
- He signals the review will examine whether the government’s direction of travel, equalising youth minimum wage rates with the adult rate, could risk pricing some young people out of entry level jobs, in a labour market he describes as fragile.
- He also highlights a steep rise in mental health related claims among young people and says the review will look carefully at how policy interacts with anxiety and depression, including the risk of a route from mild or moderate conditions into long term benefit reliance.
- The intervention sits in a politically sensitive space, given Labour’s prior commitment to end lower minimum wage rates for younger workers, and concerns from unions about any shift away from equalisation.

Youth inactivity review: youth minimum wage, entry level jobs and welfare reform

Impacts on administration of services

- More cross government coordination: closer alignment between welfare, skills, employment support, health and employer facing policy, with shared evidence, common measures and consistent messaging.
- Higher analytical workload: more modelling of youth wage policy impacts on recruitment and retention, alongside analysis of inactivity drivers and the effectiveness of different interventions.
- Operational change in employment support: if the review pushes stronger “earning or learning” pathways, Jobcentre and commissioned programmes may need redesigned offers, improved triage, and tighter links to local education and training provision.
- Health and work interface pressure: any stronger focus on mental health and sickness claims is likely to increase joint working, referral processes, and demands on assessment and support services.
- Stakeholder management and communications: the outcome will require careful handling across employers, unions, young people, and the public, particularly if recommendations are seen as reducing protections or widening pay gaps

Youth inactivity review: youth minimum wage, entry level jobs and welfare reform

Optional key numbers and dates

- Around a quarter of 16- to 24-year-olds are described as not in education, employment or training in the context of the review.
- Milburn's final report is expected in summer 2026.
- The article notes that government has been increasing youth minimum wage rates and is seeking to move towards equalisation with the adult rate, which has prompted debate about potential impacts on entry level employment.

References

- The Guardian, Pippa Crerar, Alan Milburn to review rise in youth minimum wage, 19 December 2025.

Quote of the Week

“Three phrases that sum up Christmas are: Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men, and Batteries not Included.” - **Anon**

Anon is a quietly formidable presence—an observer who notices everything and speaks only when it matters. Known for sharp insight and an instinct for cutting through noise, Anon leaves a mark without ever needing the spotlight.





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LGR & S114 Watch

Devolution strategy to 2050: roles for strategic authorities

Core message and proposed direction

- LGIU report argues that even if current devolution plans are fully delivered, England will still be one of the most centralised large democracies without a clear 25 year strategy.
- The report calls for a new long term pathway following the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, focused on revitalising local and regional democracy and unlocking growth.
- Core organising principle:
 - Frontline, people centred services should sit with local authorities by default.
 - Strategic authorities should focus on areas needing scale and coordination.
 - Central government should set frameworks, standards and long term funding, intervening only when necessary.
- Strategic authorities need a clear mandate and a defined purpose rather than the current opaque, deal based arrangements.
- The report proposes five key roles for strategic authorities:
 - Strategic convenor; prosperity engine; collaboration platform; regional champion; and bridge between local government and the centre.
- Responsibilities of strategic authorities should be clearly delineated from those of unitary authorities to avoid overlap and confusion.

Devolution strategy to 2050: roles for strategic authorities

Implications for governance and administration

- Shift from “deal based pragmatism” to a functional, principle led settlement: “local by default, regional where it adds value, national only where necessary”; this implies re mapping responsibilities and powers.
- Councils and combined authorities would need clear, enduring role descriptions, reducing duplication and making accountability for outcomes more transparent to residents.
- Strategic authorities would be expected to invest in their capacity to act as convenors and collaboration platforms, which may require new structures, dedicated staff and shared regional programmes.
- Central government and Whitehall departments would need to modernise around devolution, changing funding, oversight and performance frameworks to support a more stable, long term settlement.
- Establishing a statutory Mayoral Council for England, as recommended, would add a new formal layer of intergovernmental coordination; this would reshape engagement between mayors, local authorities and central government on policy, funding and reform.

Devolution strategy to 2050: roles for strategic authorities

Structural recommendations and time horizon (optional)

- The LGIU sets out a 25-year vision to 2050, arguing for a coherent and durable governance framework, not just incremental deals.
- Ten recommendations for the next decade include:
 - Defining a clear national strategic purpose for all strategic authorities.
 - Mapping a functional and enduring division of responsibilities between local, strategic and national levels.
 - Modernising Whitehall structures, roles and incentives around devolution.
 - Establishing a statutory Mayoral Council for England to formalise collective leadership and dialogue with the centre.
- The overall aim is a system that can reliably deliver for citizens, with less central micromanagement and stronger local and regional accountability.

References and links

- Christian Doherty, “Devolution opportunity ‘does not guarantee success’ without clear strategy”, 3 December 2025.
- Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), *Looking to 2050: The future of local government in England*.
- Forthcoming / related material on the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and associated government policy papers.



Local authority finances at breaking point

Key findings and policy context

- Councils in England and Wales warn finances are at “breaking point”, with more authorities expected to issue effective bankruptcy notices without a significant funding uplift.
- Since the start of the funding crisis, 29 councils have required exceptional government financial support, including Croydon, Thurrock and Birmingham.
- Cost and demand pressures are described as “unrelenting”, especially in children’s and adults’ social care, homelessness and SEND home to school transport.
- Councils are awaiting the outcome of the fair funding review 2.0 and the 2026–27 settlement; leaders fear revised formulas will leave many high need areas worse off despite claims that the review will help deprived councils.
- National government statements emphasise that council tax can rise by up to 5 per cent without a referendum, but local leaders argue this shifts the burden onto residents rather than fixing the underlying funding model.
- Political debate continues over whether changes correct historic bias towards wealthier areas or simply rearrange limited resources; both Labour and Conservative led councils expect further difficult budget decisions.



Local authority finances at breaking point

Impacts on administration and local services

- Finance and leadership teams are trying to close large in year and medium term gaps through rapid savings plans, often finalising budgets only weeks after seeing the settlement, which undermines orderly financial planning.
- Core statutory services are under pressure; councils report having to choose between raising council tax, cutting essential services, increasing fees and charges or selling assets, with limited room to protect prevention and early help.
- Use of exceptional financial support and rolling government loans keeps some authorities technically solvent but creates long term liabilities that they have little realistic prospect of repaying.
- Service managers in social care, housing and SEND must plan for further efficiencies on top of previous cuts, increasing the risk of unmet need, service rationing and higher downstream costs, for example through rising homelessness or care breakdowns.
- Communication with residents becomes more difficult as councils seek to justify tax decisions, asset disposals and visible service reductions while maintaining trust and democratic accountability.
- Sector bodies warn of a “system wide” risk of financial failure, pushing councils to strengthen medium term financial strategies, risk registers and monitoring systems, and to explore more joint working and restructuring simply to stay viable.


Local authority finances at breaking point

Key numbers and pressures

- 29 councils so far have been unable to meet obligations without exceptional government support; sector forecasts suggest more will follow without extra funding.
- Norfolk County Council faces a £62m gap to be met through “efficiencies”, with a remaining £6m still to be closed by service cuts or lifting council tax from 3 per cent to the 4.99 per cent cap; council tax has risen from 42 per cent to 60 per cent of its income in four years.
- Since 2012 Norfolk reports cumulative savings of £652m, illustrating the depth of past reductions; similar long term savings have been implemented across many authorities.
- Local authority borrowing has reached about £1,500 per person and is expected to rise; many of the roughly 30 councils with exceptional support are rolling over these loans to stay afloat.
- London boroughs face a £1bn funding shortfall this year and a cumulative £4.7bn gap across 2025–26 to 2028–29; London Councils warns that up to half of boroughs could need emergency support by 2028.
- A Key Cities survey reports that around 60 per cent of councils expect to use asset sales next year to close deficits, underlining how far one off measures are now embedded in budget strategies.

References and links


- Phillip Inman, “Local authorities in England and Wales warn finances at ‘breaking point’”, The Guardian, 8 December 2025.
- Local Government Association statements on local government finance pressures and demand led services.
- London Councils briefings on London borough budget gaps and exceptional financial support.
- CIPFA commentary on local authority borrowing and exceptional financial support.
- Public statements and guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the fair funding review 2.0 and council tax referendum limits.

A map of the United Kingdom is shown in the background, with several cities labeled: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Isle of Man (U.K.), Liverpool, and Amsterdam. A large green speech bubble is overlaid on the map, containing the title text. The speech bubble has a tail pointing towards the bottom center.

Devolution priority areas: delayed mayoral elections and implications

What has changed

- Government is considering delaying inaugural mayoral elections in four “Devolution Priority Programme” areas from May 2026 to May 2028:
 - Greater Essex
 - Hampshire and the Solent
 - Norfolk and Suffolk
 - Sussex and Brighton
- Reason given is to complete local government reorganisation first, so mayors start with “effective and empowered” structures in place and can “hit the ground running”.
- Mayoral elections for Cumbria Combined Authority and Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority will proceed as planned in May 2027 because unitary councils are already in place.
- All six combined authorities are confirmed to receive 30 year investment funds totalling almost £6 billion across the group, despite the delay in mayoral polls.
- District Councils’ Network calls the delay “a backwards step” that prolongs the power imbalance between metropolitan and non metropolitan England, noting that around 28 million people still lack access to mayoral devolution.
- County Councils Network describes the decision as “bitterly disappointing” after significant local effort to be ready for May 2026 and warns of uncertainty for other counties viewing reorganisation as the route to greater devolution.



Devolution priority areas: delayed mayoral elections and implications

Impacts on administration and services

- Strategic authorities and county councils must maintain momentum on reorganisation and combined authority design without the immediate clarity and accountability that mayoral elections would have provided.
- Access to the full package of devolved powers, strategic levers and mayoral visibility is deferred for at least two years, potentially slowing place based economic strategies, transport integration and long term investment planning.
- Local government officers face extended periods of dual focus: running existing councils while preparing new governance and financial frameworks, with added uncertainty over the timing and shape of final devolution deals.
- The delay may complicate budget and medium term financial planning, as some powers and funding streams tied to mayoral status now arrive later; councils may seek interim arrangements to secure as many powers as possible before 2028.
- Communications with residents and partners will need to reset expectations about when visible changes such as mayoral elections, new branding and governance structures will occur, while explaining that investment funds and capacity funding are still progressing.
- Nationally, the decision raises questions about the government's wider devolution timetable and may prompt other county areas to reassess whether reorganisation will deliver the pace of change originally envisaged

Devolution priority areas: delayed mayoral elections and implications

Key numbers and scope

- Areas with mayoral elections potentially delayed from May 2026 to May 2028: 4
 - Greater Essex
 - Hampshire and the Solent
 - Norfolk and Suffolk
 - Sussex and Brighton
- Areas proceeding as planned in May 2027: 2
 - Cumbria Combined Authority
 - Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority
- Investment funds:
 - Almost £6 billion in total over 30 years across the six combined authorities.
- Population context:
 - District Councils' Network highlights approximately 28 million people in non metropolitan areas still without mayoral devolution, even after recent expansions.

References and links

- "Devolution priority programme areas to have mayoral elections delayed by two years", 4 December 2025.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government update on Devolution Priority Programme and combined authority investment funds.
- Statements by:
 - Cllr Richard Wright, Chair, District Councils' Network.
 - Cllr Matthew Hicks, Chair, County Councils Network.



Legal Issues of Note

Foodbank governance and alleged fraud: implications for councils and funders

Key facts and allegations

- Labour councillor Colette Goulding has been suspended after reports that private companies linked to The Big Help Group, founded by her partner Peter Mitchell, received large sums from Knowsley Foodbank.
- A DEFRA letter states that Knowsley Foodbank is under investigation by the Charity Commission and, reportedly, the Serious Fraud Office over alleged fraud, mismanagement and misappropriation of funds.
- DEFRA reversed a decision to award a £173,000 grant after the foodbank failed to supply documentation and did not disclose ongoing regulatory investigations during the grant process.
- Knowsley Foodbank, set up to prevent and relieve poverty, has ceased operating, with trustees reporting a financial “black hole” after Knowsley Council halted monthly payments.
- The Charity Commission is investigating both Knowsley Foodbank and linked charities associated with the Big Help Group, which itself has gone into liquidation.
- Peter Mitchell denies any wrongdoing by himself or Goulding, says payments from the foodbank would have been for legitimate services, and states he is pursuing separate civil fraud action against a finance firm.

Foodbank governance and alleged fraud: implications for councils and funders

Impacts on administration, governance and local services

- Central government departments face heightened pressure to strengthen grant due diligence, ongoing monitoring and disclosure requirements, including checks for parallel regulatory or criminal investigations.
- Local authorities that fund foodbanks and wider voluntary sector partners will need tighter grant conditions, financial reporting and conflict of interest policies, especially where councillors or ex councillors are involved in governance.
- Charity trustees are reminded of their legal duties around financial oversight, prompt reporting of serious incidents and transparency with regulators and funders; failure can trigger regulatory intervention and loss of public confidence.
- Suspension or closure of a major foodbank creates immediate gaps in emergency food provision, pushing demand onto other charities, local welfare schemes and wider council safety net services.
- Political parties may need to review their vetting, declarations of interest and standards procedures where members are closely associated with charities or companies under investigation.
- The case underlines the need for joined up oversight between DEFRA, local authorities, the Charity Commission and, where relevant, the SFO, to minimise duplicated funding risks and to safeguard services to vulnerable residents when a provider fails.

Foodbank governance and alleged fraud: implications for councils and funders

Key numbers and risk signals

- £173,000 DEFRA grant offer reversed after concerns over documentation and non disclosure of investigations.
- Up to £50,000 per month previously paid to Knowsley Foodbank by Knowsley Council before payments were halted.
- Reported £195,000 transferred from Knowsley Foodbank to companies within the Big Help Group structure.
- Investigations by the Charity Commission into Knowsley Foodbank and related charities, with the DEFRA letter indicating an SFO investigation commencing around June 2025.
- The Big Help Project has gone into liquidation; both Peter Mitchell and Colette Goulding were declared bankrupt in May 2025.

References and links

- BBC News, "Councillor suspended after foodbank 'fraud' report", 6 December 2025.
- DEFRA correspondence to Knowsley Foodbank, 29 August 2025, concerning grant withdrawal and reference to regulatory investigations.
- Charity Commission updates on investigations into Knowsley Foodbank and charities linked to The Big Help Group.
- Public statements from Knowsley Council and trustees of Knowsley Foodbank regarding funding suspension and serious incident reporting.

Council tax premiums on second homes: Warwick's legal error

What went wrong and why it is unlawful

- Warwick District Council introduced a 100% council tax premium on second homes using new powers from April 2025, but the Monitoring Officer has found it was not applied lawfully.
- Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and accompanying guidance, the council must:
 - Make a formal determination at least one year before the year of implementation; and
 - Explicitly specify the percentage premium (up to 100%) and “have regard” to government guidance.
- Council decisions in February 2023, 2024 and 2025 did not explicitly determine the % premium; the only clear 100% figure appeared in a February 2025 Cabinet policy decision.
- Cabinet was entitled to adopt a policy, but only full Council can make the legal determination, and must show it has actively considered the statutory guidance factors (e.g. impact on local communities, economy, tourism and empty homes).
- After a public query, officers took legal and Counsel's advice; the Monitoring Officer issued a section 5 report (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) concluding the premium had been incorrectly approved and therefore wrongly charged.

Council tax premiums on second homes: Warwick's legal error

Administrative impacts and next steps

- The council is advised it must:
 - Refund second homes premiums collected in 2025/26 from liable payers; and
 - Notify all properties to which the premium would have applied, including those currently exempt.
- Revenues and finance teams will need to:
 - Recalculate council tax bills, process refunds, amend accounts and update recovery activity;
 - Adjust the medium-term financial plan to replace lost income through other savings or income for 2026/27.
- The Monitoring Officer recommends that, if Warwick wishes to reintroduce a premium, it must “start afresh”, including:
 - Engagement and consultation with key stakeholders on the statutory guidance factors;
 - A clear, minuted Council decision explicitly setting the percentage and showing how the guidance has been considered.
- The case underlines the need for robust governance around council tax premiums and close coordination between Cabinet, full Council, Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer before implementation.

Council tax premiums on second homes: Warwick's legal error

Key numbers and risks

- Premium level applied: 100% on second homes (now found to be incorrectly determined).
- Financial impact: introduction of the premium worth about £45,000 per year to Warwick District Council.
- Budget effect: the £45,000 will need to be replaced “through other means” when setting the 2026/27 budget.
- Scale of administrative correction:
 - A number of properties have paid the premium and are due refunds;
 - “Far greater” numbers had the premium applied but were exempt from payment and must still be formally notified of the corrected position.

References and links

- Council “acted outside the law” when applying second homes council tax premium, Monitoring Officer finds, 4 December 2025.
- Local Government & Housing Act 1989, section 5 (Monitoring Officer reports).
- Local Government Finance Act 1992, including section 11C on council tax premiums.
- Government guidance on council tax premiums for second homes and long-term empty properties (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 1 November 2024).

FOI enforcement: ICO 'names and shames' non- compliant public bodies

Key developments and ICO action

- ICO has issued enforcement notices and practice recommendations after finding “significant failures” to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- London Borough of Enfield
 - Enforcement notice for failing its FOI duties.
 - In September 2025 it had at least 271 FOI requests over a month old, with some more “possibly unlogged”.
 - Ordered to ensure all FOIs are logged within three months and all overdue requests answered within six.
- London Borough of Redbridge
 - Practice recommendation following “consistently poor” FOI performance and “significant numbers” of overdue requests.
 - Must produce an action plan by end of December to reach at least 90% on-time responses and clear backlog by March 2026.
- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
 - Enforcement notice after FOI compliance of just 14–50% across late 2024 and 2025.
 - 67 of 222 open requests were more than one year old; trust admitted poor staffing levels and low FOI awareness.
- ICO has also issued practice recommendations to eight Northern Ireland government departments for failing to publish FOI compliance statistics as required.
- ICO frames this as a deliberate “firm approach” to systemic transparency issues, with a review of impact planned in the new year.

FOI enforcement: ICO 'names and shames' non- compliant public bodies

Impacts on administration, governance and service delivery

- Affected bodies must rapidly strengthen FOI governance: clear logging processes, ownership, escalation routes and performance monitoring to meet ICO deadlines.
- Backlog clearance will require short-term resourcing (extra staff, overtime, or process automation) and may divert capacity from other corporate support tasks.
- Organisations will need improved training and awareness for managers and staff, especially in large bodies like NHS trusts where requests often cut across multiple teams and systems.
- Publishing FOI statistics and meeting timeliness targets will become a regular performance metric; failure risks further regulatory action and reputational damage.
- Councils and NHS bodies may need closer coordination between FOI, records management, legal and communications teams to ensure requests are handled consistently and advice to requesters is clear.
- The “name and shame” approach is likely to push other authorities to review their own FOI compliance proactively, to avoid enforcement and to demonstrate integrity and openness to residents and service users.

FOI enforcement: ICO 'names and shames' non- compliant public bodies

Key numbers, targets and timelines (optional)

- Enfield Council
 - 271 FOI requests more than one month old in September 2025, plus some unlogged.
 - ICO deadlines: all FOIs logged within three months; all overdue requests answered within six.
- Redbridge Council
 - Must submit an FOI improvement action plan by end of December 2025.
 - Target: at least 90% of FOIs answered on time and backlog cleared by March 2026.
- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
 - FOI compliance rates between 14% and 50% across Q4 2024/25 to Q2 2025/26.
 - 67 of 222 open FOI requests more than one year old.
- Northern Ireland departments
 - Eight departments issued with practice recommendations for failing to publish FOI compliance statistics.

References and links

- "ICO 'names and shames' public authorities over FOI failures", 4 December 2025.
- Information Commissioner's Office – enforcement notices and practice recommendations on FOI compliance.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 and ICO guidance on timeliness and publication of statistics.
- Public statements from:
 - Phillip Angell, Head of FOI and Transparency, ICO.
 - Enfield Council spokesperson on responding to the enforcement notice.

UK Anti Corruption Strategy 2025: local government, procurement and public trust

What the strategy covers

- Government has published the UK Anti Corruption Strategy 2025, setting out its approach to reducing harm from corruption to growth, security and democracy, with 123 commitments across government.
- A key focus is tackling “corrupt insiders” in the public sector through stronger screening or vetting, better information sharing, and updated guidance in higher risk areas.
- Local government measures include a proposed mandatory code of conduct for elected members, with meaningful sanctions, and a new statutory Local Audit Office in England.
- The strategy also emphasises improving corruption training for public sector officials, with a particular focus on procurement.
- Anti money laundering supervision is set to be consolidated, with the Financial Conduct Authority taking responsibility for supervising professional services firms, replacing the current patchwork of 22 supervisory bodies

UK Anti Corruption Strategy 2025: local government, procurement and public trust

Impacts on administration of services

- Procurement and contract management: expect stronger due diligence, clearer red flags, and more consistent training and assurance, alongside tighter controls over conflicts of interest and insider risk in commissioning and procurement.
- Governance, standards and audit: councils may need to prepare for new conduct requirements, associated investigations and sanctions processes, plus interaction with a new Local Audit Office and any revised audit expectations.
- Workforce and HR: increased emphasis on screening, vetting, and information sharing means more structured processes, better record keeping, and clearer escalation routes for suspected insider risk.
- Data and collaboration: more joining up between audit, counter fraud, HR, procurement, and legal teams, with clearer documentation of decisions and controls to evidence “what we did, why, and when”.
- Professional services and compliance: changes to AML supervision will affect how regulated professional services are overseen, which is likely to feed into procurement assurance, supplier risk management, and expectations of advisers and providers working with the public sector

UK Anti Corruption Strategy 2025: local government, procurement and public trust

key numbers and context

- Local government fraud estimate: Public Finance reports an estimate of £2.2bn annual fraud cost to local government, including £876m attributed to procurement fraud (cited to CIPFA Counter Fraud Centre and the LGA).
- Public concern: a Home Office published survey reports high concern about corruption, 87% concerned about corruption in at least one group of politicians, 86% for at least one group of public sector employees; 63% concerned about corruption among local government employees. [GOV.UK](#)
- International perception: Transparency International records the UK at 20th globally in the Corruption Perceptions Index, with a score of 71, described by TI UK as the UK's lowest standing since the index revamp in 2012.

References and links

- Public Finance, Government publishes anti corruption strategy (Rachel Willcox, 10 December 2025).
- GOV.UK, UK anti corruption strategy 2025 (published 8 December 2025, includes the PDF).
- UK Parliament, Written Ministerial Statement on the UK Anti Corruption Strategy (8 December 2025).
- GOV.UK, UK public's concerns, perceptions and understanding of corruption (published 8 December 2025).
- Transparency International UK, CPI commentary (10 February 2025) and TI country profile for CPI 2024

Polygamous working fraud in local government: Barnet prosecution and lessons for controls

Key facts

- Barnet Council prosecuted a former employee for “polygamous working”, holding more than one full time job at the same time.
- The former employee, Sally Bodom, worked as a Business Support Officer in Barnet Council’s Family Services department while also employed full time by Croydon Council in its Housing department.
- Barnet says the issue was flagged through a National Fraud Initiative exercise in July 2024.
- The council states that both employment contracts prohibited undeclared additional employment that could interfere with duties.
- Bodom pleaded guilty to fraud by false representation and fraud by failing to disclose.
- The case was presented publicly as a deterrent, with comments from Barnet’s council leader and the Cabinet Office ministerial team connected to the Public Sector Fraud Authority and the National Fraud Initiative.

Polygamous working fraud in local government: Barnet prosecution and lessons for controls

Impacts on administration of services

- HR and contracts: councils may tighten declarations of secondary employment, refresh contract wording, and increase reminders at onboarding, annual appraisal and role changes.
- Hybrid working controls: more emphasis on clear location expectations, attendance requirements, manager oversight, and evidencing working time and outputs, especially where staff can work remotely.
- Payroll and counter fraud: greater routine use of data matching, payroll cross checks, and targeted internal reviews for high risk roles or patterns (for example, duplicate employments across public bodies).
- Line management practice: stronger expectations for supervision, task tracking, and performance management to identify where capacity and availability do not align with contracted hours.
- Disciplinary and prosecution pathways: clearer internal escalation routes between HR, internal audit, counter fraud teams, legal services and the police or courts, including early evidence preservation and consistent communications.
- Culture and messaging: increased internal comms about fraud risks and consequences, balancing deterrence with fair processes for staff who have legitimate second jobs that are disclosed and approved.

Polygamous working fraud in local government: Barnet prosecution and lessons for controls

Optional key numbers and dates

- Sentencing: 16 December 2025, 12 month prison sentence suspended for 2 years; unpaid work and rehabilitation activity requirements; compensation to Barnet of £10,000.
- Detection trigger: National Fraud Initiative exercise, July 2024.
- Employment overlap: Croydon employment verified from July 2016; Barnet record shows four days per week initially, moving to full time in March 2024.
- Pay figure cited by Barnet: in excess of £60,000 in salary over the period of employment with Barnet.
- Guilty plea: 30 October 2025, at Willesden Magistrates Court; offences were fraud by false representation and fraud by failing to disclose.

References

- Barnet Council statement, Council prosecutes former employee for “polygamous working”, 18 December 2025.

Care charging and Disability Related Expenditure: Kent agrees practice changes after judicial review threat

Key facts

- Judicial review proceedings were issued against Kent County Council over its care charging policy; the claimant alleged the approach led to overcharging for social care.
- Permission for judicial review was granted on all grounds; a two-day trial was listed for 3 and 4 December 2025, but the case settled shortly before the hearing.
- The council maintains its policy was not unlawful but agreed to significant changes to its practice guidance and processes, which will affect how the policy operates in practice.
- The dispute centred on Disability Related Expenditure (DRE). When disability benefits are treated as income in care charging, councils must deduct the additional disability costs that a person is incurring.
- Kent's long-standing approach was to apply a standard DRE deduction and only carry out an individual DRE assessment if a person requested one.
- The claimant said she faced sharp increases in care charges after a policy change in September 2024, could not afford the new charges, cancelled care, and later found she had overpaid because her DRE had never been assessed.

Care charging and Disability Related Expenditure: Kent agrees practice changes after judicial review threat

What is changing, and impacts on administration

- Charging communications: annual charging letters will explicitly refer to DRE and signpost how to request an assessment, including via an updated factsheet.
- Practitioner practice: internal guidance will require practitioners to explain, before charging begins, what DRE is, typical expenses that may count, how DRE can affect charges, how to request an assessment, and what evidence is needed.
- Assurance and audit trail: the case management system will be updated so practitioners must confirm the DRE discussion happened and the factsheet was provided; if not, they must record an explanation for non compliance.
- Backdating and refunds: internal guidance will be updated to include concrete examples of when discretion to backdate DRE further should be exercised, addressing concerns about delays between requesting an assessment and the assessment being completed.
- Operational implications: likely increase in DRE enquiries, assessments, and evidence checking; stronger requirements for staff training, consistent recording, supervision, and quality assurance; potential financial impacts from changed charging outcomes and backdating decisions.

Care charging and Disability Related Expenditure: Kent agrees practice changes after judicial review threat

Optional key numbers and dates

- Trial listing: 3 and 4 December 2025; settlement reached days before trial.
- Standard DRE amounts cited: £21 set in 2003; reduced to £17 in 2011.
- Policy change cited: September 2024 change to disregarding higher level disability benefits, said to affect thousands with sharp weekly increases.
- Budget contingency cited by the council: £900,000 to help with increased DRE.
- Goodwill remedy: council agreed to credit a goodwill amount to the claimant to reduce future care charges.

References

- Article: Council agrees to make changes to practice guidance on care charging following judicial review threat, dated 15 December 2025.
- Claimant's representatives: Gold Jennings Solicitors, quoted within the article.
- Statutory framework referenced in the article: Care Act 2014; Equality Act 2010, section 149.



Job Adverts From Business Smart Solutions



BUSINESS SMART

SOLUTIONS LTD

Your Revenues and Benefits Recruitment Partner





Meet The Team



**Ben
Moreton**
CEO



**Mark
Thomas**
Operations



**Chris
Sharratt**
Talent Partner



"Best decision I've made in years was to join BSS. Ben has been fantastic at every stage during the past 10 months, and is already putting me forward for more senior roles where I had struggled to past few years.

Very personal approach from day one, reassuring and highly knowledgeable! Would highly recommend for anyone wanting to progress their career or just looking for a change!"





Generic Revenues & Benefits Officer (Civica OpenRevenues)

Permanent | Circa £30,000.00 per annum | Hybrid

Our good client in the East of England is seeking multiple Revenues & Benefits Officers, on a permanent, full-time basis.

Roles are offered on a remote basis with the understanding you may be asked to work from the office once every 2-3 days, and initially for the first few days for training & set-up.

- Assessment of HB & CTR claims
- To determine Council Tax liability in accordance with relevant primary legislation and case law
- To have and maintain a working knowledge of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and case law
- Determine and award discounts and exemptions in
- Gather information, explain decisions, and provide advice to the public and their representatives by email, letter, and

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- A minimum of 3 years Revenues or Benefits experience
- Be a skilled Civica OpenRevenues user

To find out more or to apply

>> Click here to view the full advert <<

Trainee Enforcement Agent



Permanent | £25,000 basic salary | London or Nationwide

Salary: £25,000 basic salary increasing to £28,500 once your earnings are uncapped. (We pay fees on a pro-rata basis).

Core responsibilities of the role include:

- Undertaking field based/Classroom training to learn the necessary skills to become a Certificated Enforcement Agent.
- Travelling to various addresses, observing and job
- Completion of training course resulting in Level 2
- Completion of the Level 2 Taking Control of Goods examination.
- Attending the County Court, either in person or virtually to demonstrate that you are a fit and proper person to be

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- No experience is required as all training will be supplied.
- Ideal candidates will have worked in relevant roles including Civil Enforcement, Armed Forces, Security, Police, Parking/traffic Management, and jobs where Customer Service is a key element of the role.
- Full clean UK driving license is required (minimum of 2 years).

To find out more or to apply

>> Click here to view the full advert <<

Benefits Team Leader (NEC/Northgate)



3 months | £35 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

Our good client in the North West is seeking a Benefits Team Leader on a fully remote basis.

The successful candidate must have strong Housing skills, be an large team.

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- Strong Housing Benefit/Council Tax Reduction assessment skills
- The ability to lead and motivate a Benefits team
- Knowledge & understanding of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Decisions & Appeals Regulations 2001
- An advanced NEC (Northgate) user

To find out more or to apply

>> Click here to view the full advert <<

Senior NDR Officer (NEC) 16hrs per week



8 weeks initially | £30 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

The role requires an experienced Interim Senior NDR/Business Rates Officer on a short-term basis who can help the team with complex queries, writing procedures & training.

The role is offered on a fully remote basis, laptop will be couriered.

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- Strong Senior Revenues/NDR skills
- Experience of NEC(Northgate)
- IRRV qualified or relevant experience
- Able to deal with complex queries and support new members of staff
- Write procedures and support with training

To find out more or to apply

>> [Click here to view the full advert](#) <<

Revenues Manager (Academy)



3 months initially | £450 per day (umbrella) | Hybrid

Location: Hybrid – 2-3 days in the office per week

Purpose and impact:

high-quality Council Tax and Business Rates (NDR) billing and service in line with customer requirements and performance.

As part of the Management Team the role holder will deputise for the AD and provide strong professional leadership and for the Revenues service for West

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- IRRV qualified to current Level 7
- Extensive knowledge of Council Tax and Business Rates legislation
- Up to date knowledge of current best practice in both Council Tax and Business Rates
- Management experience is essential as this role will be managing 7 direct reports

To find out more or to apply

>> Click here to view the full advert <<

Business Analyst Revenues & Benefits



Until 31 May 2026 | £450 per day (umbrella) | Hybrid

Hours per week: 18.50 -- 2.5 days per week (Tuesday & Thursday full days, half-day at candidate discretion)

We are looking for an experienced Business Analyst to support moving our NEC Revenues & Benefits System to the cloud (Software As A Service). We will be pursuing the following lines of enquiry:

- Reviewing existing processes for the “as is” solution - to determine our baseline
- Reviewing, with IT specialists, the function of existing standard processes
- Reviewing new modules that will be implemented as part of the project and producing new process flow maps for end users
- Identifying if this move present any opportunities for beneficial changes

What we're looking for:

main skills/knowledge:

- Experience with NEC Revenues & Benefits (Previously known as Northgate i-world)
- Experience with cloud migrations
- Experiencing in producing process documentation, process maps and flow charts
- Must be skilled in working proactively, methodically and collaboratively with a project team
- Domain knowledge of Local Authority highly desirable

To find out more or to apply

>> Click here to view the full advert <<

Are you ready to take the next step in your career?

As an experienced Revenues or Benefits professional, the new year is the perfect time to explore exciting interim/contract opportunities in the public sector. Whether you're looking for a fresh challenge, greater flexibility, or a role where you can make a real impact – we're here to help.

[✨ Start your journey today – register now!](#)

Want to learn more about increasing your earning potential and fast track your career progression? Reach out and we'll be more than happy to help

[Contact us here](#)



Payroll Solutions

At BSS, we are dedicated to simplifying your contractor journey by providing you with efficient, tailored payroll solutions.



umbrella.co.uk
account | consult | reward

Our partnership with Umbrella.co.uk solidifies our commitment to ensuring you maximise your take-home pay, get paid on time and keep things stress free.

Umbrella.co.uk is one of the UK's leading umbrella companies.

Managed by qualified accountants and being FCSA accredited, it assures you of its high standards.



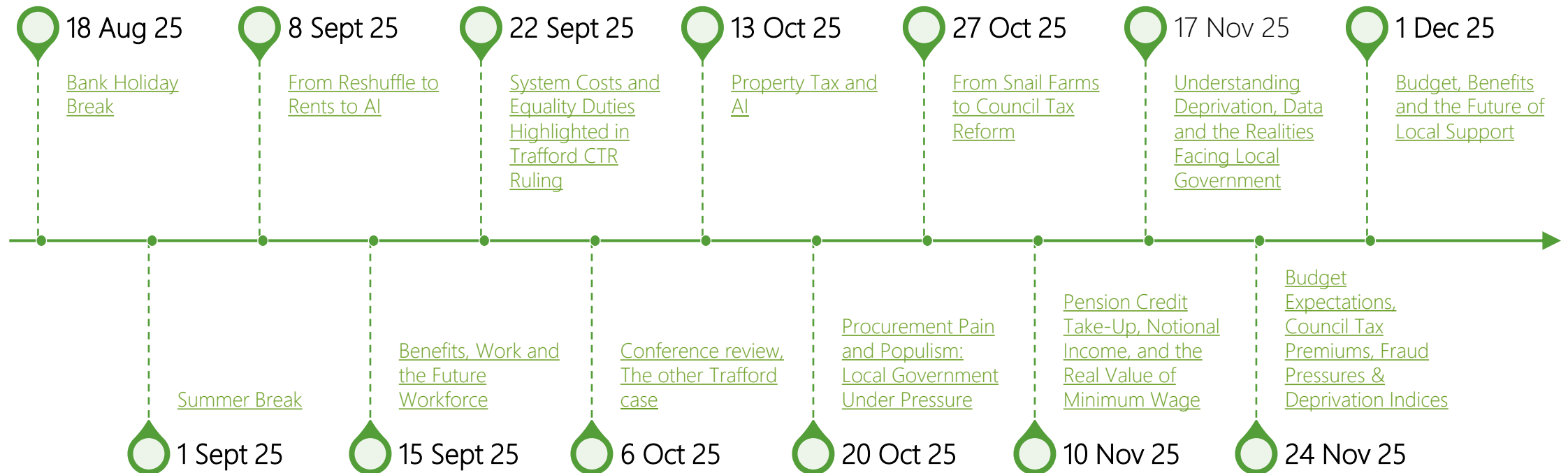
"BSS has provided us with excellent support since 2022. The range of expertise they have on their books is second to none, and they are without doubt my first choice when looking for staff.

What I particularly like is how well they support everyone, and they really look after their people, which is unlike any other agency I have worked with in 30 years.

Congratulations to Ben and the team !"
#TeamBSS Client - Simon Rosser

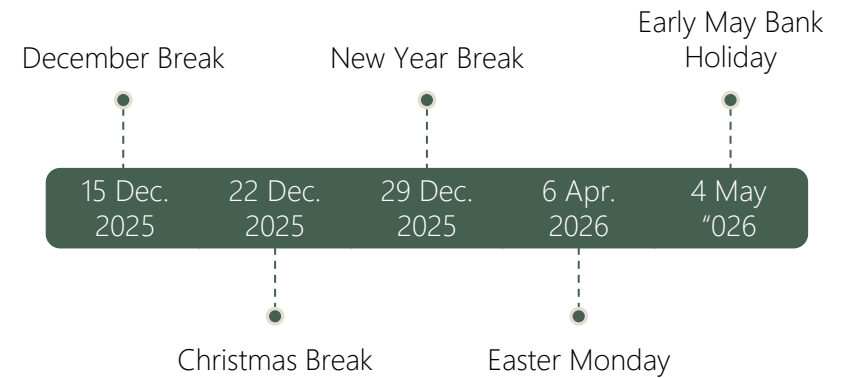


Previous Recordings





Dates where there will be no sessions





Other Workshops



Thursday 29th January 2026

2026: Reorganisation, Reform & Results: Shaping the Future of Local Government

Leeds Civic Hall, Calverley
Street, LS1 1UR



Reorganisation, Reform & Results: Shaping the Future of Local Government

Event by [Ascendant Solutions Ltd](#)

Thu, Jan 29, 2026, 9:30 AM (your
local time)

Live and Online

Event

link<https://preview.mailerlite.io/forms/657684/168311692752585951/share>



WELFARE TOGETHER

Vulnerability & Debt Advice Skills Training



Welfare
Together

Join Tracey Stone & Fiona Monk in Leeds 26th January 2026

Improve your teams key support skills

Focus areas for the day:

Spot vulnerability indicators and adapt support accordingly
Identify and prioritise debts effectively

Tackle difficult money conversations without judgement
Connect people with the right debt advice services

What attendees have said:



“It’s not often you attend a course and find that you’re totally engaged from start to finish, and the time seemed to go by very quickly.” – FK



“I really enjoyed the session.”- LP





“REACHING, HELPING, AND EMPOWERING”

We're excited to offer **in-person training** - on 26th January 2026,
@1 Park Lane, Leeds LS3 1EP.

Registration from 9:30am
Start 10am - 3pm

details to be confirmed.

Special offer: £99 + vat per person – **only £79 + vat** if booked
st December 2025.

Guest Speakers – Greg Flewitt & Deborah Nigh

Book now to secure your team's place - Spaces are limited, so please book early.

Email Tracey.stone@welfaretogether.co.uk





VISIONARY NETWORK
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

Replay: Public Finance x Visionary Network 2 April 12:00

Title: Crisis, Cuts & Community: Rethinking Local Tax & Support in the 114 Era

Link: <https://view6.workcast.net/register?cpak=6070531364001666>

Access the recording



In
Partnership
with

LA Directories
Limited



Blogs

Thoughts from the panel

Blogs



Budget 2025: Impacts on Revenues & Benefits Administration, Housing and Local Government Finance by Malcolm Gardner

[Budget 2025: Impacts on Revenues & Benefits Administration, Housing and Local Government Finance – Visionary Network](#)

Why We Should Not Be Surprised That Reform UK's Councils Are Struggling by Malcolm Gardner

[Why We Should Not Be Surprised That Reform UK's Councils Are Struggling – Visionary Network](#)

The Appointment of McFadden to DWPS by Malcolm Gardner

<https://visionarynetwork.co.uk/2025/09/06/the-implications-of-pat-mcfaddens-appointment-to-work-pensions-and-skills/>

The Case for Plain English Council Tax Reduction Schemes by Paul Howarth

<https://visionarynetwork.co.uk/2025/06/19/the-case-for-plain-english-council-tax-reduction-schemes/>

Reform UK's "Department of National Efficiency": A High-Stakes Gamble in Local Government Reform By Malcolm Gardner

<https://visionarynetwork.co.uk/2025/06/09/reform-uks-department-of-national-efficiency-a-high-stakes-gamble-in-local-government-reform/>

Blogs

Benefits in the Future

- Big differences in Pension Credit take-up revealed
 - [Big differences in Pension Credit take-up revealed – Benefits in the Future](#)
- The 'new' government is continuing to be extremely generous...to itself?
 - <https://benefitsinthefuture.com/the-new-government-is-continuing-to-be-extremely-generousto-itself/>
- AI – The accurate answer to benefits information – Gareth Morgan
 - <https://benefitsinthefuture.com/ai-the-accurate-answer-to-benefits-information/>

Blogs

entitledto
independent | accurate | reliable

- [Benefit take-up may be getting worse, but it's hard to know](#)
by Phil Agulnik
- Move to UC - Stats Update 12 August 25 by Phil Agulnik
 - [Move to UC - Stats Update 12 August 25](#)
- Could settling disputes through back-pay put benefits at risk?
By Phil Agulnik
 - <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/blog/2023/january/could-settling-disputes-through-back-pay-put-benefits-at-risk>

[Stairway to headroom](#) Putting the Autumn Budget 2025 decisions on tax, spending and borrowing into context

by [Hannah Aldridge](#) and [Mike Brewer](#) and [Elliott Christensen](#) and [Tom Clark](#) and [Alex Clegg](#) and [Nye Cominetti](#) and [Adam Corlett](#) and [Ruth Curtice](#) and [Julia Diniz](#) and [Sophie Hale](#) and [Lindsay Judge](#) and [Zachary Leather](#) and [Jonathan Marshall](#) and [Charlie McCurdy](#) and [Louise Murphy](#) and [Simon Pittaway](#) and [Hannah Slaughter](#) and [James Smith](#) and [Imogen Stone](#) and [Greg Thwaites](#) and [Lalitha Try](#)

[The localisation era](#) Assessing the post-2013 rise of localised social security by [Alex Clegg](#)

This report is part of the project [Safety Nets: social security for families in a devolved UK](#), funded by the Nuffield Foundation. It examines the growth of *localised social security* in the UK from 2013, focusing on how responsibilities for discretionary support and Council Tax Reduction (CTR) have shifted from the UK government to local authorities. Localised support makes up only a small share of overall social security spending, but it has expanded significantly, driven first by the 2013 localism reforms and later by the Covid-19 pandemic. The report evaluates when local delivery works well, where it falls short, and what principles should guide any future reform.

What the latest Universal Credit Health data tells us about benefit claims across Britain by Louise Murphy

[What the latest Universal Credit Health data tells us about benefit claims across Britain • Resolution Foundation](#)

A healthy State? Putting the 2025 Spending Review into context by RF Staff

[A healthhttps://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/healthy-state/hy State? • Resolution Foundation](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/healthy-state/hy State?)

Institute of Fiscal Studies Blogs

All our IFS analysis of Chancellor Rachel Reeves' Autumn Budget 2025.

- [Government finances and spending](#)
- [Poverty, inequality and social mobility](#)
- [Savings, pensions and wealth](#)
- [Taxes and benefits](#)

England's SEND crisis: costs, challenges and the case for reform by Luke Sibieta Darcey Snape

[England's SEND crisis: costs, challenges and the case for reform | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

Who enters the public sector? By Matthew Nibloe Clara von Bismarck-Osten

[Who enters the public sector? | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

Exploring regional differences in public spending across England by Bee Boileau Max Warner Ben Zaranko

<https://ifs.org.uk/articles/exploring-regional-differences-public-spending-across-england>

IFS Spring Statement Analysis

<https://ifs.org.uk/collections/spring-statement-2025>





VISIONARY NETWORK

About Visionary Network

Visionary Network



VISIONARY NETWORK
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

- Visionary Network is a not-for-profit organisation, whose objective is to encourage thought leadership and good practice in the field of public service.
- We are independent and will draw on views, ideas and practices from any practitioner and/or organisation committed to public service.
- We encourage debate, and the fair exchange of ideas, viewpoints and philosophies.
- Any products we do produce will be for the betterment of society, public sector led and if costed will reflect our not-for-profit values.
- Our focus is on improving the knowledge, health, environment and lives of our citizens through better administration and access to services.

A nonprofit organisation is a type of organisation that is formed for a specific social or charitable purpose rather than for profit. Its primary goal is to serve the needs of a particular community, cause, or interest, and any profits or revenue generated are reinvested back into the organisation to further its mission, rather than being distributed as profits to owners or shareholders.



Visionary Network Partnership



A dynamic consortium of private sector companies is uniting to transform public service delivery across the nation. By harnessing cutting-edge technologies and innovative methodologies, this partnership is dedicated to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector performance. Their focus is on optimising the use of resources and budgets, ensuring that every pound of public funds is directed towards improving citizens' lives. This group is at the forefront of digital transformation, leveraging data analytics and advanced technological solutions to streamline operations and reduce waste, ultimately supporting a more responsive and agile public sector.

Working closely with public sector organisations and collaborating amongst themselves, the partnership fosters a culture of innovation and disruption. By pooling their diverse expertise, the companies involved can tackle longstanding challenges with fresh, inventive approaches that deliver measurable improvements in service delivery. Their cooperative efforts not only drive substantial cost savings but also set a new benchmark for how the public sector can benefit from private sector ingenuity. In doing so, they reaffirm their commitment to ensuring that public funds are utilised to create a tangible, positive impact on the community.

