



In  
Partnership  
with

LA Directories  
Limited

MALG  
Network

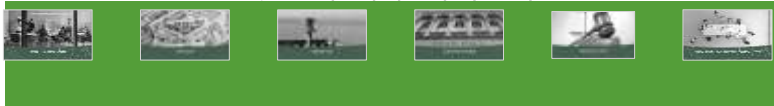


(c) 2026 Visionary Network Ltd. All Rights Reserved

# Revenues and Benefits Discussion Group

[Meeting Link](#)

9 March 2026



# Meet the panel

(not everyone is available every week)

- Naomi Armstrong, Benefits Cambridge City Council
- Laura Bessell, Benefits Manager, Oxford City Council
- Kirsty Brooksmith, London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
- Tom Clark, Liverpool City Council
- Alex Clegg, Resolution Foundation
- Nicki Duckworth, EntitledTo, Marshalling
- Michael Fisher, St Helens Council
- Robert Fox, Swindon Council
- Malcolm Gardner, Visionary Network
- Paul Howarth, Independent Consultant
- Gareth Morgan, Dangos Training & CEO Ferret Information Systems
- Sean O'Sullivan, Visionary Network
- Julie Smethurst, Tameside Council
- Rachael Walker, Visionary Network & The Campaign for Better Policy
- Bob Wagstaff, Visionary Network
- Christina Ward, CIPFA
- Liz Whitehead-Davis, Hexagon Housing

Any comments made by panellists are their own personal views and do not necessarily reflect the positions of their organisations.



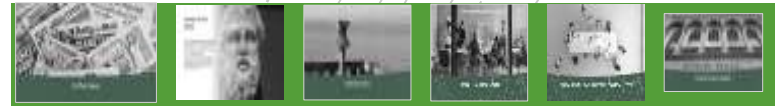
In Partnership with

LA Directories Limited



# Spring Statement

## Spring Statement & the OBR Outlook: Strategic Implications Economic and Fiscal Forecasts for Revenues and Benefits



# Discussion Points

## Funding and Homelessness

**verian**

**Delivering local crisis support: lessons from Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments ahead of the Crisis and Resilience Fund**

Department for Work & Pensions

What the research examined and what it found

- DWP commissioned Verian to explore how local authorities deliver the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and how the schemes interact, to inform the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) in England from April 2026.
- Delivery models varied substantially, shaped by:
  - governance structures, especially where areas had no arrangements (HSF at upper tier) DHPs at lower tier to top tier areas;
  - capitalist local legacies and their structures (such as functions "shared" the schemes);
  - local population and area profile (e.g., housing pressures, deprivation, rurality).
- Interaction between schemes was complex, some areas integrated overnight and referrals and used HSF to supplement DHPs, while others treated the schemes as separate, often due to timing and role separation.
- Local government recognition concerns featured in some tier one areas, with fears about loss of local expertise and discretion when moving to a combined model.

**England SEND reforms: tiered support, mainstream inclusion and a new funding model**

What is changing in the system

- Government proposes a move away from a one size fits all approach, using a tiered model of support so more children's needs are met earlier in mainstream settings.
- Education, Health and Care Plans would increasingly be reserved for children with the most complex needs by 2035, with EHCPs underpinned by evidence based Specialist Provision Packages.
- For children with less complex needs, schools would deliver new Individual Support Plans within mainstream education, backed by a new Inclusive Mainstream Fund over three years.
- The package includes "Experts at Hand", a local bank of specialists that schools can draw on, and a funding boost for Family Hubs to strengthen SEND outreach and support.

**Exceptional Financial Support 2026/27: rising reliance on capitalisation to balance council budgets**

Key facts on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for 2026/27

- Government has agreed around £1.5bn of in principle EFS for 35 English councils for 2026/27, up from 29 councils in 2025/26.
- EFS allows councils under severe pressure to capitalise a set amount of revenue costs, creating one off budget relief in the general fund.
- Councils seeking EFS can be subject to an external assurance review; government expects "robust plans" for improvement and service transformation over the three-year Local Government Finance Settlement period.
- LGA view: EFS is "no longer exceptional" and signals deep, ongoing financial stress across the sector.

**Rough sleeping in England**

summary

**Key facts**

- England recorded 4,793 people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2025, the highest figure since the measure began and the fourth annual increase in a row.
- That is 2% higher than 2024 and 171% above the 2010 baseline.
- The national rate rose to 8.2 people per 100,000, up from 8.0 in 2024, although still below the 2017 peak rate of 8.5.
- London and the South East accounted for 43% of all rough sleepers counted on that single night.
- Government has announced £20m to support action on rough sleeping and homelessness, while flywheels argue that long-term, sustainable funding remains essential.

**Context for decision-makers**

The official baseline is a one-night measure. Riverside points to a monthly estimate of 0,196 people sleeping rough as a stronger indicator of the current level of need, although government notes that the measures are not directly comparable.

**4,793** single night sleepers in autumn 2025

**£50m** new government funding announced



# 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 March 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:

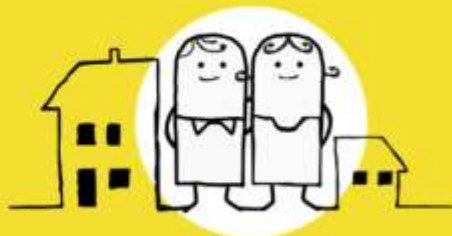
- writing clearer reports, briefings, and committee papers in plain English
- drafting letters, emails, and decision notices that are accurate, consistent, and tone appropriate
- managing staff workload, task prioritisation, and quality checking
- handling enquiries faster, including scripts for contact 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](mailto: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.

Simply 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 easy-to-use tool provides the following features to support you through every step of the CTRS design process.

## Resident Insights

Get a clear and detailed 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

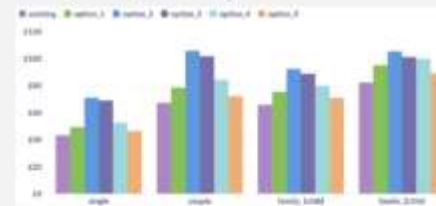
### Total annual cost options



### Detailed analysis per CTR band

ctr_band	number_residents	percentage_residents	single
00%	127	0.7%	119
70%	11,002	60.9%	6,802
90%	767	4.2%	258
40%	1,282	7.4%	339
20%	3,382	18.6%	671
10%	4,451	24.6%	363

### 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	34.85%
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

inbest



# Designing Defensible CTR Schemes

See how councils model change, understand impact,  
and make defensible decisions

[Play Video](#)

# End



**VISIONARY NETWORK**  
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

MALG  
MEMBER

- Malcolm Gardner, Visionary Network Director
- 07946800171  
[mg@malcolmgardner.com](mailto:mg@malcolmgardner.com)  
Book a meeting with Malcolm: [Book Time with MG](#)



# 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 [Info@visionarynetwork.co.uk](mailto:Info@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.



# Main Discussion Points

# England SEND reforms: tiered support, mainstream inclusion and a new funding model

## What is changing in the system

- Government proposes a move away from a one size fits all approach, using a tiered model of support so more children's needs are met earlier in mainstream settings.
- Education, Health and Care Plans would increasingly be reserved for children with the most complex needs by 2035, with EHCPs underpinned by evidence-based Specialist Provision Packages.
- For children with less complex needs, schools would deliver new Individual Support Plans within mainstream education, backed by a new Inclusive Mainstream Fund over three years.
- The package includes “Experts at Hand”, a local bank of specialists that schools can draw on, and a funding boost for Family Hubs to strengthen SEND outreach and support.

# England SEND reforms: tiered support, mainstream inclusion and a new funding model

## Impacts on administration of services

- Local authorities will need to reshape local SEND systems around new tiers, including governance with schools, health partners, and clearer accountability for early support.
- Schools and early years settings will need new processes for identification, support planning, record keeping, and outcomes tracking for Individual Support Plans, as well as consistent use of inclusion standards.

# England SEND reforms: tiered support, mainstream inclusion and a new funding model

## **Workforce, capacity and transition pressures**

- All teachers are to receive training to support children with SEND, alongside funding for early, targeted and small group interventions.
- Government plans include creating 60,000 new specialist places, including in or alongside mainstream settings, intended to reduce reliance on costly and distant provision.
- Sector bodies broadly welcome the direction of travel but emphasise that mainstream inclusion will only work if settings are properly resourced and if councils can lead and hold partners to account.
- County councils warn that, even if national government takes over some SEND costs from 2028, councils face a difficult bridge period; SEND transport pressures, especially in rural areas, remain a major challenge.

# England SEND reforms: tiered support, mainstream inclusion and a new funding model

## Impacts on administration of services

- Workforce: large scale training and recruitment planning across schools, local authority teams and specialist services; likely pressure on educational psychology and therapy capacity.
- Placement planning and transport: increased commissioning, sufficiency planning, and route planning, with heightened demand management during the transition.
- Casework and disputes: changed thresholds and new statutory routes will require careful communication with families and updated local processes to reduce conflict and tribunal volumes.

## Delivering local crisis support: lessons from Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments ahead of the Crisis and Resilience Fund



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

### What the research examined and what it found

- DWP commissioned Verian to explore how local authorities deliver the Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), and how the schemes interact, to inform the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) in England from April 2026.
- Delivery models varied substantially, shaped by:
  - governance structure, especially unitary versus two tier arrangements (HSF at upper tier; DHPs at lower tier in two tier areas)
  - organisational legacy and team structures (which functions “own” the scheme)
  - local population and area profile (need, housing pressures, deprivation, rurality).
- Interaction between schemes was uneven: some areas integrated oversight and referrals and used HSF to supplement DHPs, while others treated the schemes as separate, often due to tiering and role separation.
- Local government reorganisation concerns featured in some two-tier areas, with fears about loss of local expertise and discretion when moving to a combined model.

## Delivering local crisis support: lessons from Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments ahead of the Crisis and Resilience Fund



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

### Impacts on administration of services

- Transition planning workload: authorities need to map current pathways, referral rules, decision rights and data flows across tiers and partners, then redesign for a single CRF model.
- Greater governance and assurance demands where delivery is distributed through voluntary and community sector partners, particularly for outcome reporting and attribution of impact.
- Data sharing and coordination remain practical constraints in two tier settings, affecting joined up casework and strategic planning

## Delivering local crisis support: lessons from Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments ahead of the Crisis and Resilience Fund



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

What is working, what is difficult, and what CRF needs to balance

- Authorities value local discretion and flexibility, particularly where schemes are used alongside advice, triage and referrals, not just one-off payments.
- What is working well includes:
  - partnership working with third party organisations to reach underserved groups and build trust
  - holistic assessment models that use conversation and casework to identify root issues and connect people to wider support
  - some innovative DHP practice, for example proactive work with landlords to reduce rent, prevent repeat crisis and secure more affordable housing options.
- Key delivery challenges reported across areas include: short funding cycles that inhibit longer term resilience building, insufficient funding relative to demand, difficulties targeting those most in need, and managing demand and dependency.
- The main implication for CRF is a required balance between consistency and local flexibility, including clarity on purpose and scope, while retaining local discretion that enables effective targeting and partnership delivery.

## Delivering local crisis support: lessons from Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments ahead of the Crisis and Resilience Fund



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

### Impacts on administration of services

- Operational trade-offs become explicit: speed versus thorough eligibility checks; broad access versus targeting; crisis payments versus prevention and resilience building. This affects staffing, training, quality assurance, and performance frameworks.
- If CRF consolidates housing related support, councils may need new joined up teams and clearer escalation routes across benefits, housing options, homelessness prevention and discretionary support, especially where current responsibilities sit in different services

[Explainer Video](#)

# Rough sleeping in England

## SUMMARY

### Key facts

- England recorded 4,793 people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2025: the highest figure since the measure began and the fourth annual increase in a row.
- That is 3% higher than 2024 and 171% above the 2010 baseline.
- The national rate rose to 8.2 people per 100,000, up from 8.0 in 2024, although still below the 2017 peak rate of 8.5.
- London and the South East accounted for 43% of all rough sleepers counted on that single night.
- Government has announced £50m to support action on rough sleeping and homelessness, while Riverside argues that long-term, sustainable funding remains essential.

### Context for decision-makers

The official snapshot is a one-night measure. Riverside points to a monthly estimate of 9,194 people sleeping rough as a stronger indicator of the sustained scale of need, although government notes the two measures are not directly comparable.

**4,793**

single-night  
snapshot  
for autumn 2025

**£50m**

new government  
funding  
announced

# Rough sleeping in England

## IMPACTS ON ADMINISTRATION OF SERVICES

### Operational pressure

- Higher demand for outreach, safeguarding and emergency accommodation.
- More pressure on supported housing and move-on routes, especially in high-demand regions.

### Administrative implications

- Short-term grants weaken commissioning certainty and staff or bed-capacity planning.
- Better local monitoring is needed because the official figure is based on a single night.
- Treasury choices ahead of the 2027 Spending Review could affect prevention services and supported housing contracts.

### Service administration priorities

- Plan on a multi-year basis where possible, not only around one-off funding rounds.
- Protect specialist roles, including trauma-informed casework and tenancy sustainment.
- Keep supported housing and step-down provision central to service design.
- Strengthen joint working across housing, health, mental health, substance misuse, probation and voluntary sector partners.
- Track prevention, repeat homelessness and sustained move-on as core performance measures.

# Rough sleeping in England

## KEY NUMBERS

**4,793**

people sleeping rough on a single night  
in autumn 2025

**+3%**

increase on 2024  
(fourth annual rise in a row)

**+171%**

higher than the 2010 baseline

**8.2**

people per 100,000 in 2025  
(8.0 in 2024)

**43%**

of all rough sleepers counted were in  
London and the South East

**9,194**

monthly estimate cited by Riverside  
(not directly comparable with the  
snapshot)

Government funding announced: £50m to help deliver the pledge to halve long-term rough sleeping, end unlawful use of B&Bs for families and prevent more households becoming homeless.

## References and links

---

1. Rachel Willcox, *Record-high rough sleeping prompts call for long-term sustainable funding* (5 March 2026), Public Finance. [Open link](#)
2. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, *Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2025* (26 February 2026). [Open link](#)
3. UK Government, *Over £50 million pumped into the fight to tackle homelessness* (26 February 2026). [Open link](#)
4. **MHCLG technical report on methodology and limitations.**  
[Open link](#)

# **Spring Statement & the OBR Outlook: Strategic Implications**

**Economic and Fiscal Forecasts for Revenues  
and Benefits**

---

# The Two-Phased Reality of the OBR Forecast



## The 2026 Squeeze

**Theme:** Acute pressure and high working-age demand.

### Key Drivers:

- Looser labour market despite falling inflation.

### Impacts:

- Severe **Council Tax Reduction** (CTR) churn.
- Surging **crisis support** needs.
- **Local Government Reorganisation** (LGR) acts as an operational amplifier.



## 2027 & Beyond

**Theme:** Structural strain and tight fiscal limits.

### Key Drivers:

- Fiscal environment reliant on high receipts with strictly controlled spending.

### Impacts:

- Welfare spending pressure becomes structurally driven.
- Long-term health and disability trends take precedence.
- Demand requires sustained, high administrative intensity.

# The Macro Paradox Driving Immediate Local Hardship



**1.1%**

GDP Growth in 2026  
(averaging ~1.6% thereafter)



**5.3%**

Unemployment Peak in 2026  
(falling back by 2030)



**2.3%**

CPI Inflation in 2026  
(returning to 2.0% from 2027)

## Key Insight: The Hardship Gap

Real household disposable income growth is weak. The anticipated drop in headline inflation will not prevent immediate local hardship spikes. The 2026 unemployment peak serves as a direct, acute indicator of greater working-age, low-income need that local services must absorb.



**PANEL PROVOCATION:** How can local services effectively anticipate and resource for the acute 2026 need spike given long-term fiscal constraints?

# High Taxes, Elevated Debt, and Squeezed Local Envelopes

**National Tax Take**  
(Historic high of 38.5%  
of GDP by 2030-31)

**Local Authority  
Net Borrowing**  
(£18.3bn in 2025-26)



## Core Vulnerabilities: SEND & DSG Deficits

- Growing sharply into 2027-28 despite one-time central transfers.

## Core Vulnerabilities: HRA & Stat Services

- Extreme stress on Housing Revenue Accounts and Temporary Accommodation.

## Core Vulnerabilities: EFS Reliance

- Exceptional Financial Support expanding annually with no multi-year commitments.



**Panel Provocation:** How exposed is our medium-term financial strategy to SEND and temporary accommodation deficits?

# The Revenue Tightrope Across Council Tax and Business Rates



**£51bn → £67bn**

(Receipts forecast from 2025-26 to 2030-31)

- Supported by >5% policy flexibilities and police precept increases.
- Risk: Higher bills clash with weak real incomes.
- Increased severe arrears and demand for time-to-pay arrangements.



**£34bn → £42bn**

(Receipts forecast from 2025-26 to 2030-31)

- Extreme volatility from revaluation cycles and multiplier changes.
- Vulnerable to relief policy shifts.
- High exposure to empty property relief if weak growth triggers business distress.



**PANEL PROVOCATION:** As headline bills rise against a loosening labour market, what is our operational threshold for collection difficulties?

# Navigating the 2026 Welfare Surge and CTR Churn



## **Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Impact:**

- Higher caseload churn, intense verification load, and complex hardship decisions due to unstable earnings.

## **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP):**

- Demand rising from rent increases and temporary accommodation movements.

## **Crisis Support & Hardship Funds:**

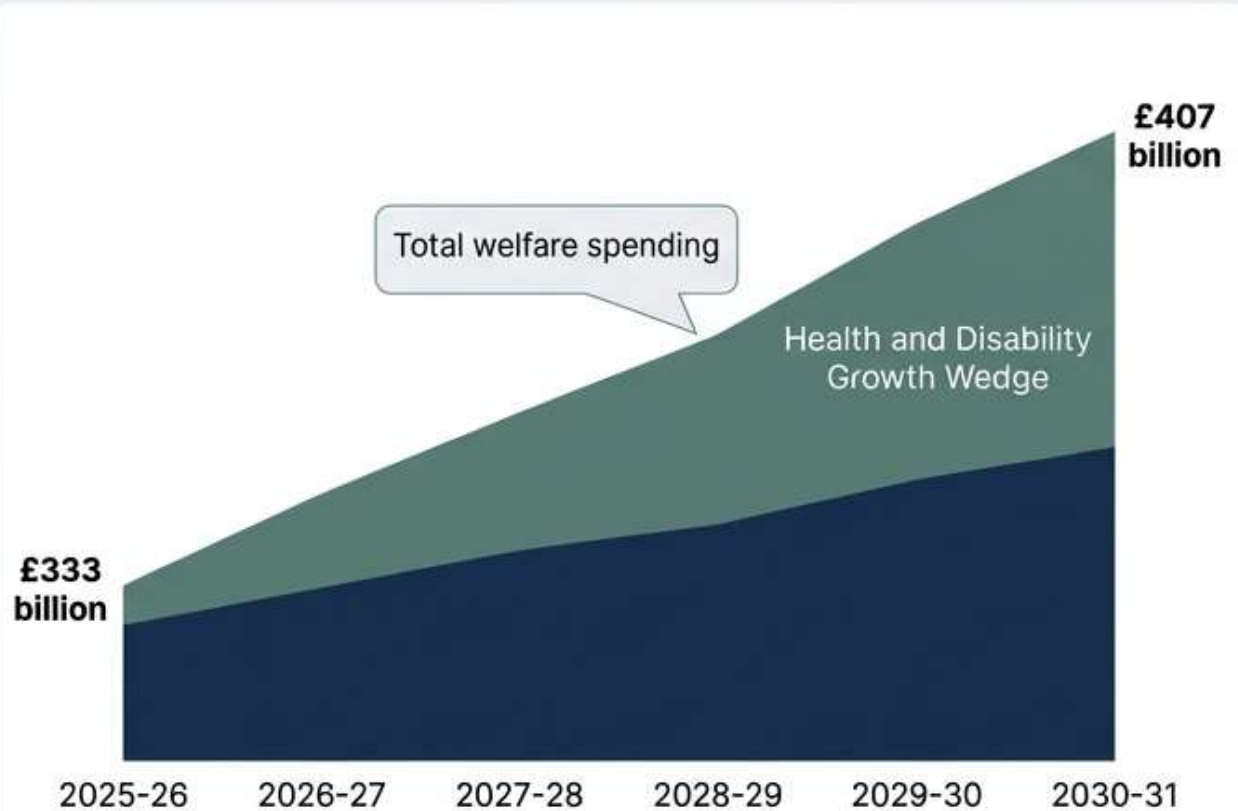
- Hit by labour market entrants requiring immediate intervention despite easing general inflation.

**Key Takeaway:** Strict triage and clear local eligibility rules are critical when demand rises against fixed funding.



**Panel Provocation:** Are our local eligibility rules for discretionary support tightly defined enough to survive a 2026 demand spike?

# The £74bn Structural Shift Towards Health-Driven Welfare



## Core Drivers:

- 📌 Total welfare spending rises to 11.2% of GDP.
- 👤 Growth driven heavily by pensioner spending (triple lock).
- 👤 Continuous post-pandemic rise in disability caseloads.

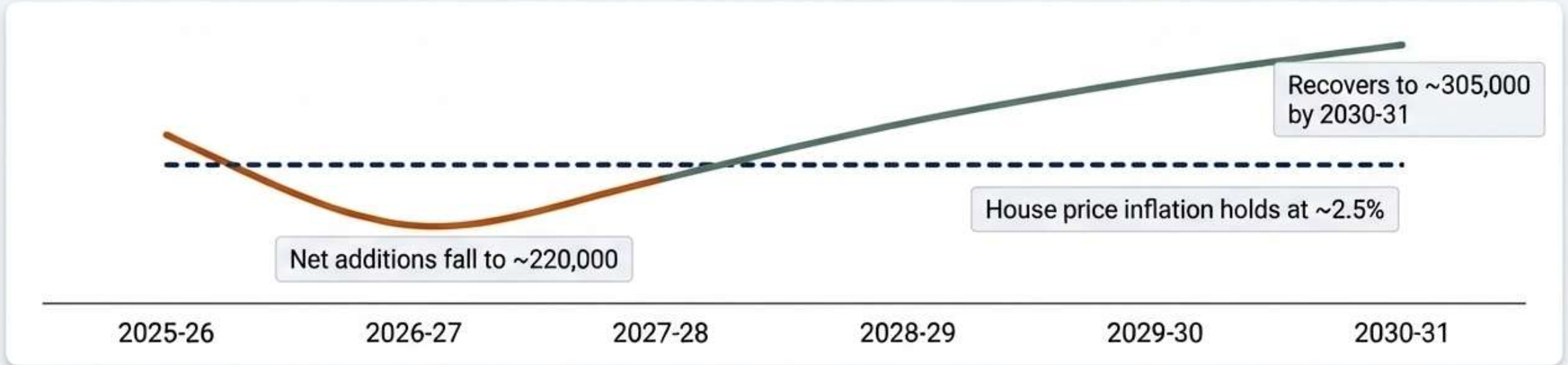
## Local Implications:

- 📌 Need is becoming structurally health-related.
- 🕒 Longer-duration cases.
- 👤 Significantly higher administrative intensity crossing multiple boundaries (CTR, homelessness prevention, safeguarding).



**Panel Provocation:** Are our housing, debt, and social care interfaces prepared for longer-duration, health-driven welfare cases?

# Housing Supply Dips When Temporary Accommodation Needs Peak



## Operational Squeeze

**The dangerous timing mismatch:** Near-term supply weakness directly collides with rising unemployment. This ensures relentless pressure on affordability and temporary accommodation capacity, while higher social rent flexibilities drive up welfare interactions.

**Panel Provocation:** What are our immediate concerns regarding temporary accommodation capacity during the 2026 supply dip?

# Local Government Reorganisation as a Demand Amplifier

LGR happens within this highly constrained OBR fiscal environment, compounding operational risks.



**Panel Provocation:** Should we treat LGR purely as a risk to be mitigated, or are there harmonisation opportunities we actively welcome?

# Mapping Our Service Impacts: Risk vs. Resilience

	Areas of Operational Concern	Opportunities to Welcome / Stabilize
<b>Labour Market</b>	Managing severe CTR churn and immediate hardship demands.	Refining and tightening triage protocols.
<b>Structural Shifts</b>	Adapting to health-related welfare longevity and complexity.	Integrating advice services and cross-boundary teams.
<b>Financial Fragility</b>	Exposure to structural SEND deficits and EFS reliance.	Implementing rigorous in-year monitoring and debt reduction.



**Final Discussion: Based on the March 2026 OBR Outlook, where do your service lines face the greatest exposure, and what policy levers do we pull first?**

# Simplifying Crisis and Resilience Fund Delivery for Councils with the Inbest CMS

A comprehensive platform designed to help local authorities meet DWP requirements while building long-term resident financial resilience.

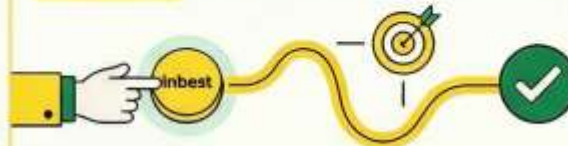
## The CRF Challenge



### Navigating the New £842m Consolidated Grant

The CRF replaces HSF and DHPs, requiring councils to deliver crisis payments and resilience services. However, mandatory six-monthly reporting across 30+ data tables—covering demographics, spend, and outcomes—creates a significant administrative burden for local teams tasked with building long-term financial stability for low-income households.

## The Nudge



### A Cost-Neutral Solution for Smarter Delivery

The Inbest CMS automates CRF delivery by identifying eligible residents and tracking outcomes, importantly, CRF guidance permits using funds for "data and analytics for targeting support" and "digital referral systems," meaning the grant itself can fully fund the Inbest platform.

## How It Works: Six Tiles

- ### 1 Enrichment and Segmentation

Process administrative data to identify residents missing benefits or eligible for specific Crisis and Resilience Fund support strands.
- ### 2 Targeted Campaign Definition

Define campaign objectives and select resident segments using pre-configured, automated workflows and communication templates for email or text.
- ### 3 Proactive Resident Outreach

Reach residents via SMS or WhatsApp with personalized links to a pre-fixed benefits calculator to check eligibility in minutes.
- ### 4 Flexible Case Management

Support self-serve or advice-led delivery with a structured audit trail for recording advice, actions, and referral outcomes.
- ### 5 Reach Previously Unknown Households

Deploy web-based landing pages to reach households not currently receiving Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit.
- ### 6 Automated MI Reporting

Generate DWP-required six-monthly returns automatically, covering demographics, spend categories, and resilience outcomes without manual work.

## What Councils Get

- ✓ End-to-end platform for identifying vulnerable residents. A single system to manage the entire resident journey from identification to outcome.
- ✓ Automated reporting aligned with DWP requirements. Pre-configured reports that eliminate the need for manual spreadsheets and data gathering.
- ✓ Improved benefit take-up and financial resilience. Direct impact on resident income through automated eligibility checks and warm referrals.
- ✓ Reduced administrative burden through digital workflows. Automation of follow-ups and reminders to increase efficiency for internal teams.
- ✓ Cost-neutral implementation using CRF administrative. Full compliance with DWP guidance for allowable digital and IT costs.

## Proof Points

- £36**  
Resident income generated for every £1 invested.
- £5.2M**  
Pension Credit secured through targeted campaigns.
- 30+**  
Councils currently using the Inbest Benefits Calculator.

## Delivery Options

- Internal delivery with Inbest support.** Full set-up, configuration, and training for council teams.
- Fully managed service by partner agencies.** Turnkey delivery using welfare agencies already on the platform.
- Flexible self-serve and hybrid models.** Tailored delivery approaches to fit council capacity and needs.



**Book a meeting to see the Inbest CMS in action.**  
Schedule a demo to explore how the platform fits your specific CRF requirements.

**Email [info@inbest.ai](mailto:info@inbest.ai) or visit [www.inbest.ai](http://www.inbest.ai) to begin.**  
Get in touch to start your council's transition to data-driven CRF delivery.



# COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION CLEAR & CONCISE

Let us make it simple for you

- ✓ Save money
- ✓ Improve efficiency
- ✓ Help your vulnerable citizens
- ✓ Build trust

[www.visionarynetwork.co.uk](http://www.visionarynetwork.co.uk)



Welcome to a  
new era of  
council tax  
deduction  
schemes

Bristol City  
Council Case  
Study

For more information email [info@visionarynetwork.co.uk](mailto:info@visionarynetwork.co.uk)



In the news

# Adult Social Care Reform

## Why reform is being pushed now

- Baroness Casey said adult social care depends too heavily on services that are pieced together, underfunded, inconsistent and difficult for the public to understand.
  - She linked the need for reform to major demographic and health pressures, including an older population, rising illness and higher levels of disability.
  - She argued that social care was not built into the post war settlement in the same way as the NHS, and that the current system is no longer fit for purpose.
  - Casey called for an honest national conversation so the public can help shape what health and care services should look like in future.
  - She said reform needs a clear public mandate, especially as many taxpayers may not fully understand what social care is or how it works.



# Adult Social Care Reform

## What the commission may mean for services

- The Independent Commission into Adult Social Care has been asked to produce practical recommendations to make services more preventative, more productive and more empowering for people who need care, families and carers.
  - Casey said councils have been hollowed out by austerity and tight funding, leaving them in a gatekeeping role and often limited to doing the bare minimum.
  - Early priorities raised by Casey include a new National Safeguarding Board, greater investment in dementia trials, a dementia tsar, and a fast track passport for people diagnosed with motor neurone disease.
  - Nuffield Trust said meaningful reform will require political backing and proper funding, even if that means difficult choices against other spending priorities.
  - The Local Government Association welcomed the focus on safeguarding and prevention, and highlighted the continuing role of councils in improving rights and support under the Care Act 2014



# Adult Social Care Reform

## Administration impacts on services

- Councils and partners may face new national requirements on safeguarding, accountability and reporting if a National Safeguarding Board is created.
  - A stronger prevention focus could require earlier intervention, better assessment pathways and closer co ordination between adult social care, health, housing and community support.
  - Any move towards clearer national entitlements or faster access routes, such as a passport for motor neurone disease, would require process redesign, staff guidance and updated case management systems.
  - Greater emphasis on dementia and frailty may increase demand for specialist pathways, commissioning changes and workforce development.
  - If reform is not matched by funding, councils may continue to face pressure on thresholds, waiting times, assessments and care package delivery.



# Temporary accommodation funding pressure

- Analysis by the Local Government Association says government subsidy has failed to keep pace with councils' temporary accommodation costs in England since 2017 to 2018, leaving a cumulative shortfall of £1.5bn.
- Without reform, the gap between councils' housing benefit payments and DWP reimbursement is projected to almost double over the next four years and could reach nearly £4bn by 2029 to 2030.
- The core issue is that DWP reimbursement is still capped at 90% of local housing allowance rates based on 2011 levels, rather than current market conditions.
- Councils are therefore meeting rising temporary accommodation costs from already stretched budgets, while homelessness pressures continue to grow.
- The LGA argues this is a fixable policy problem rather than an unavoidable cost pressure.

# Temporary accommodation funding pressure

## Impact on administration of services

- Housing and homelessness services face worsening budget pressure as more funding is diverted into temporary accommodation rather than prevention, tenancy sustainment, and housing supply.
- Finance teams must manage a growing mismatch between actual expenditure and subsidy recovery, increasing in-year pressures and medium-term financial risk.
- More officer time is likely to be absorbed by subsidy monitoring, budget controls, forecasting, and attempts to contain placement costs.
- Pressure on temporary accommodation budgets can reduce councils' ability to invest in upstream homelessness prevention and broader service resilience.
- If the subsidy rules are not updated, councils may face a continued cycle of reactive crisis management rather than planned service improvement.

# ETHICS & INTEGRITY Commission

## Public Sector Ombudsman Reform

Why the review has been launched

- The Ethics and Integrity Commission has chosen the public sector ombudsman system as the subject of its first review.
- The review is framed around whether ombudsman services could help spot signs of systemic public sector failure earlier, before problems escalate into major scandals or lengthy public inquiries.
- The article links this to serious past failures including Windrush, Grenfell, infected blood and the Horizon IT scandal, all of which caused deep damage to public trust.
- The review builds on earlier work under the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which argued that public bodies need stronger systems and cultures to recognise and respond to early warning signs.
- A central concern is that public institutions can behave defensively, sometimes treating warning signs as isolated mistakes rather than symptoms of wider institutional failure.

# ETHICS & INTEGRITY Commission

## Public Sector Ombudsman Reform

What reform could mean for services and administration

- Ombudsman services are presented as having a distinctive vantage point because they investigate individual complaints independently and can see recurring friction points where systems fail the public.
- The review will consider whether ombudsman schemes should do more than resolve individual complaints, including identifying trends, investigating systemic failings and supporting institutional learning.
- It will look at whether ombudsman schemes have sufficient powers to begin systemic investigations, whether complaint handling standards should become statutory, and whether ombudsman recommendations should be binding.
- It will also examine oversight arrangements and how to make the ombudsman landscape easier for the public to understand and use.

# ETHICS & INTEGRITY Commission

## Public Sector Ombudsman Reform

Administration impacts on services

- Public bodies may face stronger complaint handling duties, especially if current advisory complaint standards are replaced by statutory requirements.
- If ombudsman recommendations become binding, authorities may need tighter governance, faster compliance processes and clearer accountability arrangements.
- A greater focus on systemic failure could increase expectations for trend analysis, learning from complaints and earlier internal escalation of risks.
  - Services may need better record keeping, stronger case management systems and improved cross departmental reporting to demonstrate that warning signs are being identified and acted upon.
- Simplifying the ombudsman landscape could also create pressure for clearer signposting, public communications and front line staff guidance across public services.

Restricted - Policy

## The Department

How a Violent  
Government  
Bureaucracy  
Killed Hundreds  
and Hid the

# DWP Failings, Deaths and Benefit Decision Making

- **Headline**
- Newly published DWP internal process review (IPR) summaries show repeated operational failings in cases involving claimant deaths or serious harm; Disability News Service reports this information was not available to MPs during debates on disability benefit cuts in summer 2025.
- **Scale of reviews and “learning actions”**
- **DWP publications (official summaries):**
  - **2020–21:** 40 IPRs completed; learning identified in 38; **129** agreed activities.
  - **2021–22:** 57 IPRs completed; learning identified in 53; **256** agreed activities.
- **DNS report (subset figures highlighted in the article):**
  - Across 2020–21 and 2021–22: **97** IPRs total; includes **PIP** and **Universal Credit** cases with deaths or serious harm, with multiple “agreed activities” to address failings.
- **Why it matters operationally**
- The reported issues include missed referrals, weak safeguarding responses, communication barriers (including digital access), and failures to apply internal processes consistently (for example around mental health risk and follow up).
- The timing is politically salient because major policy decisions on disability related benefits were debated and voted on before the information was in the public domain (per DNS)

Restricted - Policy

## The Department

How a Violent  
Government  
Bureaucracy  
Killed Hundreds  
and Hid the

# DWP Failings, Deaths and Benefit Decision Making

- **Common failure themes (as described in the DNS reporting)**
- **Failure to act on vulnerability signals:** missed escalation when mental health deteriorated; inconsistent responses to suicidal ideation; sanctions applied without adequately considering mental health context.
- **Process and handoff failures:** missed referral for work capability assessment after a health condition was declared; weak follow up after financial difficulty disclosures; record keeping failures after death.
- **Digital exclusion and access barriers:** examples where lack of internet access was not addressed through alternative communication routes, contributing to adverse outcomes.
- **Supplier and quality assurance risks:** references to substandard assessment reports and subsequent assurance or audit activity.

Restricted - Policy

## The Department

How a Violent  
Government  
Bureaucracy  
Killed Hundreds  
and Hid the

DWP Failings,  
Deaths and Benefit  
Decision Making

- **Administrative and service delivery implications**
- **Quality control:** strengthens the case for routine assurance on decision making, assessments, and complaint handling, including clear ownership for corrective actions.
- **Safeguarding and vulnerability protocols:** reinforces the need for consistent application of internal “at risk” processes, with audit trails and management oversight.
- **Access and channel strategy:** highlights the operational risk of “digital by default” where alternative channels are not proactively offered to people with access barriers.

# SNP candidate stands down after benefits fraud claim

- Sally Donald, selected as the SNP candidate for Edinburgh Southern, stood down after reports she is being investigated by Social Security Scotland over claims for Adult Disability Payment (ADP).
- Donald has denied wrongdoing and said she stepped aside to avoid distracting from the campaign.

## Key system points (process and oversight)

- If Social Security Scotland investigates suspected fraud, it can interview a claimant under caution and can report cases to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service where evidence supports that step.
- The issue was raised at First Minister's Questions, with the First Minister arguing the probe shows the system is operating as intended, while opposition figures used it to argue the system is too "light touch".



## SNP candidate stands down after benefits fraud claim

Why it matters for public services and administration

- Operational credibility: high profile cases amplify scrutiny of counter fraud controls, referral thresholds, and transparency in enforcement outcomes.
- Political risk: questions shift quickly from the individual case to governance, ministerial awareness, and whether the system is perceived as consistent and fair.



## SNP candidate stands down after benefits fraud claim

### Questions that tend to follow in practice

- Consistency and proportionality: how potential fraud is identified, triaged, and escalated, and whether the public sees outcomes as timely and even handed.
- Burden on delivery teams: whether counter fraud activity is resourced to investigate properly while maintaining throughput for legitimate claims.
- Communications discipline: clear separation between allegation, investigation, and outcome, and careful language to avoid prejudicing processes.

### Practical takeaways for administrators

- Recheck local guidance and scripts for staff on: “under investigation” versus “decision made”, evidence standards, and escalation routes.
- Ensure your public facing explanations of fraud processes describe safeguards and routes of challenge, not just sanction



# Department for Work & Pensions

Managed  
migration to  
Universal Credit,  
what the latest  
official figures  
show

- **Scale of managed migration so far (to 10 September 2025):** 1,821,989 households were sent a managed migration notice; 1,574,075 claimed Universal Credit within their migration window; 237,796 had their legacy benefits closed because they **did not** claim within the window; 808,633 households received Transitional Protection (TP).
- **Claim and closure rates (to 10 September 2025):** 86% claimed in time; 13% were closed for non claim (the remainder were still within a window or had other outcomes).
- **Why this matters:** closures are not a technicality. If households later claim UC outside the managed process they may **not** get the same protection (and support levels can differ from legacy benefits). This is a known risk point for households that miss or do not complete the notice process



# Department for Work & Pensions

Managed  
migration to  
Universal Credit,  
what the latest  
official figures  
show

## What drives non claim, and where councils and partners see pressure points

- **Non claim is often about perceived eligibility and process friction, not just “opting out”:**  
DWP’s evaluation work (focused on tax credit households invited to move) shows non claim links strongly to how financially reliant households were on legacy support and whether they had savings, plus misconceptions about eligibility and concerns about being worse off.
- **Common reasons include:**  
uncertainty about savings and eligibility (including savings and capital limit concerns), worries about being worse off, and complexity for self employed households in judging eligibility against variable earnings and savings.
- **Practical implications for local welfare and revenues teams:**
  - more residents arriving after a gap in benefit income, sometimes in crisis, with knock on effects for **Council Tax collection and CTR** and for demand on discretionary support and advice services;
  - the households least likely to claim in time are not always the least vulnerable, especially where digital access, confidence, or perceptions of the system are barriers.



## Housing Benefit debt recoveries, April to September 2025

- **Outstanding stock: £1.45bn** HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of **Q2 FYE 2026** (July 2025); **£127m (8%) lower** than at the start of Q2 FYE 2025.
- **Flows in the first half of the year (Q1–Q2):**
  - **Overpayments identified: £205m** (down **£15m** on the first two quarters of FYE 2025)
  - **Recovered: £210m** (down **£12m**)
  - **Written off: £43m** (up **£9m**)
  - **Net effect:** recoveries plus write offs (**£254m**) exceeded newly identified overpayments (**£205m**), continuing the post 2018 pattern of a falling outstanding stock.
- **Context for interpretation:** HB caseload continues to reduce because most new working age claims are now UC, and managed migration is shrinking HB further; this affects both volumes of overpayments identified and the amounts recovered.



# Housing Benefit debt recoveries, April to September 2025

## Regional profile and operational implications

- **Concentration of outstanding debt:** London holds the largest share, **£537m (37%)** of GB outstanding at the start of Q2 FYE 2026.  
Next largest: **South East £168m (12%)**, **North West £133m (9%)**, **West Midlands £124m (9%)**, **Scotland £112m (8%)**.
- **Where overpayments are being identified (Q1–Q2):**  
London identified **£48m (23%)** of GB total; West Midlands **£27m (13%)**; South East **£27m (13%)**.
- **Per claimant monthly identification (indicator, not a “typical case”):** GB **£20.29**; highest **London £26.84** and **West Midlands £26.83**; lowest **North East £10.88**.
- **Implications for councils:**
  - With HB volumes declining, performance is increasingly about managing the **legacy debt stock**, aligning recovery routes with changing claimant circumstances (including UC) and ensuring write off policies remain evidence based and consistent.
  - London’s share suggests material exposure is concentrated geographically, so regional benchmarking can be more useful than GB averages when planning resourcing and controls.



# A14/2025 Housing Benefit uprating for the financial year ending March 2027

## What changes, and when

- **Main HB uprating takes effect in advance of the main benefit rate changes**, aligned to common rent change timings.
- Effective dates:
  - **Wednesday 1 April 2026** for cases where rent is paid **monthly** (or at intervals that are not a week or multiples of a week).
  - **Monday 6 April 2026** for cases where rent is paid **weekly** (or a multiple of a week)



# A14/2025 Housing Benefit uprating for the financial year ending March 2027

## Uprating measures to apply in assessments

- **State Pension (basic and new State Pension)** uprated by **4.8%** (triple lock, aligned to earnings).
- **Pension Credit Standard Minimum Guarantee** increased by **4.8%** (to match the cash increase in basic State Pension).
- **Savings Credit maximum** increased by **CPI at 3.8%**.
- **Working age benefits**, including **UC main elements and HB personal allowances**, uprated by **CPI at 3.8%**.
- **Certain disability premiums and additions**, and **ESA Support Group premiums**, uprated by **CPI at 3.8%**.



# A14/2025 Housing Benefit uprating for the financial year ending March 2027

## Systems and processing: practical cautions

- Many LA systems uprate by applying a **standard percentage increase**. The circular flags that, because different elements can be uprated by different indices, LAs should **review whether a blanket percentage still produces correct determinations**.
- **ATLAS uprating notifications** are issued for benefits on CIS **except** several categories, including (not exhaustive): AA, DLA, PIP, AFIP, Scottish disability benefits, Carer's Allowance, State Pension, Bereavement benefits, and others listed in the circular. If you uprate by percentage, you should **compare any subsequent ATLAS notifications against LA system data** as a minimum.
- Since December 2019, LAs can use **PSCS uprating automation via an API lookup** to obtain the PSCS amount when needed, avoiding manual uprating of PSCS amounts.



# A14/2025 Housing Benefit uprating for the financial year ending March 2027

## Specific items called out as unchanged or notable

- **Childcare disregards** remain:
  - £175.00 for one child
  - £300.00 for two or more children
- **Additional earnings disregard** remains **£17.10**.
- **Statutory fuel deductions**: government has decided to **freeze** these rates for the year.
- **Savings Credit maximum** from April 2026: **£17.96 single, £20.10 couple**, but the circular is explicit these cannot be used to estimate entitlement; Pension Service calculation must be used for HB (SPC) cases.

## What teams should do with the circular

- It updates both the **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Manual** and the **Housing Benefit Overpayments Guide** (the circular lists the specific paragraphs to annotate).

# Quote of the Week

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.” - Greek Proverb

Greek proverbs form a rich oral tradition that captures the values, struggles, and insights of Hellenic culture. Their vivid metaphors and timeless lessons continue to shape modern thinking across the world.



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

There are now only **a very few firms** willing to audit Housing Benefit subsidy claims — and all 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



# Other Workshops





**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





# 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

# Trustpilot

"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 do so in permanent roles for the 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!"

*#TeamBSS - Sam Goddard*



# Revenues Manager (Academy)



3 months initially | £450 per day Umbrella | Hybrid

## **Purpose and impact:**

The role of the Revenues Manager is to ensure delivery of a high-quality Council Tax and Business Rates (NDR) billing and recovery service in line with customer requirements and regulations and to drive forward cost-efficient digital services and performance. As part of the Management Team the role holder will deputise for the AD and provide strong professional leadership and management for the Revenues service for West Northamptonshire Council.

## **Accountable to:**

As part of the Revenues and Benefits Team in the wider Finance Directorate, the role holder is accountable to the Assistant Director of Revenues and Benefits, responsible for the direct line management of 7 Team Leaders.

## **What we're looking for:**

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Management experience is essential as this role will be managing 7 direct reports
- Needs somebody who has experience dealing with poor performance
- Strong technical and management skills
- Extensive knowledge of Council Tax and Business Rates legislation
- Up to date knowledge of current best practice in both Council Tax and Business Rates
- Proven track record of finding creative solutions to a wide range of people management challenges
- Knowledge of local government policies and procedures

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Subsidy Officer (MRI/Academy)



6 months initially | £32 per hour Umbrella | Hybrid

Hours per week: 37

Location: Part Remote (ideally 2-3 days in the office)

1. To ensure that benefit claims are being assessed accurately and paid correctly and in line with legislation and guidance.
2. To assist in the completion of the Housing Benefit subsidy returns and claims including working with auditors
3. To ensure that the subsidy position improves and income to the Council is maximised.
4. To support the Training and Resilience team by identifying development needs of officers through Subsidy checking.

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Strong technical skills
- Strong MRI/Academy user
- Demonstrate the ability to take on board and understand complex legislation
- Proven track record of finding creative solutions to a wide range of people management challenges
- Knowledge of local government policies and procedures

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Revenues & Benefits Officer (Civica OpenRevenues)



Permanent | Circa £30,000.00 per annum | Remote

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 1 day per month, and initially for the first few days for training & set-up.

Duties include:

- 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 accordance with primary legislation and case law
- Gather information, explain decisions, and provide advice to the public and their representatives by email, letter, and telephone regarding council tax liability

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these 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 <<](#)

# Benefits Assessment Officer (MRI/Academy)



4 months initially | £25 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

Our good client in the midlands is seeking a Benefits Assessment Officer on a fully remote basis to assess HBAA reviews.

The successful candidate must have strong Housing Benefit assessment skills and be an advanced MRI(Academy) user.

Role to include:

- carry out Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction assessments
- Undertake HBAA reviews
- Provide high quality customer and stakeholder support

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Strong Housing Benefit assessment skills
- Knowledge & understanding of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Decisions & Appeals Regulations 2001
- Skilled in the assessment of supported accommodation claims
- An advanced MRI (Academy) user

To find out more or to apply  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Benefits Officer (NEC Northgate)



6 months initially | £25 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

Our client in the South West is seeking a Benefits Officer on a fully remote basis.

The successful candidate must have strong Housing Benefit assessment skills and be an advanced NEC (Northgate) user.

Rate: £25.00ph (umbrella)

Term: 6 months initially

Location: Fully remote

Role: The ability to assess all claim types to include new claims, changes in circumstances, DHP's, VEP's, HBAA & ATLAS.

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Strong Housing Benefit assessment skills
- Knowledge & understanding of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 and Decisions & Appeals Regulations 2001
- Skilled in the assessment of supported accommodation claims
- An advanced NEC (Northgate) user

To find out more or to apply  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Customer Services Advisor (NEC Northgate)



Until 16 Jun 2026 initially | £23.05 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

To resolve a broad range of Revenues & Benefits enquiries received via telephone to provide an efficient and effective customer experience, resolving as many requests at first point of contact as possible.

1 Receive all customer enquiries and service requests via the telephone to resolve as many requests at first point of contact as possible

2 Update appropriate IT systems in order to record and maintain an electronic record of customer details and their service requests

3 Maintain awareness of appropriate regulatory and legal standards to ensure compliance through day to day activities

4 Manage customer complaints, compliments and suggestions in accordance with the council's procedures

5 Contribute ideas that create efficiencies or improvements in customer facing and other processes

6 Understand and contribute to the overall objectives of Customer Services, including supporting specific campaigns as appropriate, such as encouraging self service or direct debit payments

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Detailed knowledge of a broad range of council services
- Ability to acquire a good knowledge of customer services technology
- Ability to acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the processes required to administer services
- Health and Safety Procedures
- Call Handling standards

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Revenues Officer (Civica Open Revs)



2 months initially | £22.35 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

Rate: £22.35 per hour (umbrella)

Term: 2 months initially

Hours per week: 37 hours per week

Location: Fully Remote

**PURPOSE OF THE JOB:** To ensure that all Council Tax, NDR and Sundry Income records are maintained to enable correct billing and recovery of charges.

## **What we're looking for:**

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Experience of interpreting legislation.
- Previous experience of working within a revenues environment for at least two years.
- Have a working knowledge of Council Tax and NDR legislation and a basic knowledge of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit Overpayment Sundry Income
- IRRV Technician

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Revenues Officer (Academy)



Maternity Cover | £26 per hour (umbrella) | Remote

The role requires an experienced Interim Revenues Officer (Billing and Recovery).

The role is offered on a remote basis, with the occasional office day.

Rate: £26.00 per hour (umbrella)

Term: Maternity Cover

Location: Remote

## **What we're looking for:**

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Strong Revenues/NDR Skills
- Experience of the MRI/Capita One (Academy) system
- IRRV qualified or relevant experience

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Senior Application Support Officer (NEC)



16 weeks initially | £2400 per day (umbrella) | Hybrid

This role is to support some specific project work for our Revenues and Benefits department.

The Senior Application Support Officer is responsible for day to day supervision and management of an identified area of the Application Support Team. The team are responsible for managing the day to day running of Bristol City Councils IT applications, this includes a helpdesk function; system upgrades; access, event and request fulfilment processes, and for ensuring all other associated tasks are carried out effectively and timely. Ensuring effective management of IT incidents/requests and their resolution, providing appropriate and timely updates minimising impact to customers and stakeholders.

The postholder will be responsible for a team of up to 10 officers who carry out monitoring, advise, and upkeep of IT systems/processes and liaison with stakeholders/suppliers. To help planning, productivity and functioning of the team.

The postholder will oversee team development of systems and processes to ensure effective running of IT systems and recording of data in line with statutory legislation changes; change programmes and data protection/GDPR.

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Must have extensive knowledge of NEC EDM (previously call Info@Work document management) and NEC Revs and Bens Applications in particular the back end administration function in order to support the implementation of new modules
- NEC EDM modules to be implemented are Data Integration Hub, Email Connect and Document Bundling
- Must be able to demonstrate previous experience of leading on implementation of modules including planning and scoping of work involved, liaising with business users, setting up back end parameters, managing and undertaking testing

**To find out more or to apply**  
[>> Click here to view the full advert <<](#)

# Product Specialist (Benefits Directory)



Permanent | £45,000.00 pa | Predominantly Remote

Business Smart Solutions is pleased to be working with its partners at Infoshare+ to source a Product Specialist for the Benefits Directory. Infoshare+ acquired the Benefits Directory in August 2025 and is looking to further support Kim Larkin and her team by introducing this exciting new role.

This opportunity would be well suited to someone who thrives on interpreting complex Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support legislation into an easy-to-digest format.

The role is offered on a permanent, full-time basis and is predominantly remote, with clearly defined career progression for the right candidate.

## What we're looking for:

We're looking for candidates who have these main skills/knowledge:

- Ability to read and interpret complex Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support legislation and case law changes
- Update the Benefits Directory in line with legislative and case law changes
- Provide technical responses to incoming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support queries, and offer guidance on wider welfare schemes
- A genuine interest in Housing Benefit Temporary, Supported and Specified Accommodation
- Interpret Council Tax Support schemes, including the prescribed pensioner scheme and local working-age schemes
- Provide product user training
- Support business development activities

**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.

[!\[\]\(219010b6a472470bc3b4aea51089a627\_img.jpg\) 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 Solution

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



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.

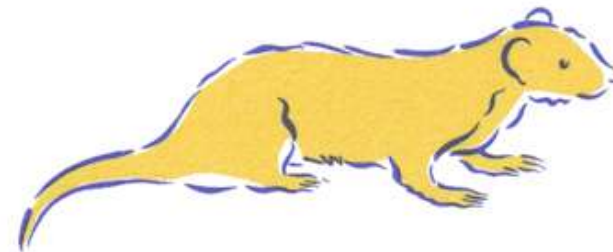
What I particularly like is how well they support everyone, and they really look after their people, which is unlike any other agency I have worked with in 30 years.

Congratulations to Ben and the team !"

#TeamBSS Client – Simon Rosser



## 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**®



# Session Information

# Previous Recordings



# Dates where there will be no sessions





# Stats & References

# Temporary accommodation funding pressure

## Key numbers and stats

- £1.5bn cumulative gap since 2017 to 2018.
- Nearly £4bn projected cumulative gap by 2029 to 2030 without action.
- 132,000 households in temporary accommodation.
- 172,000 children living in temporary accommodation.
- 2024 to 2025 total council housing benefit spend on temporary accommodation: £1.27bn.
- 2024 to 2025 DWP reimbursement: £911m.
- 2024 to 2025 annual gap: almost £360m.
- Annual gap projected to rise to £595m by the end of the period, a 65% increase.
- LGA says uprating reimbursement to 90% of current LHA rates could reduce the projected cumulative cost by 37%.

## References and links

- Rachel Willcox, Councils' temporary accommodation funding gap set to hit £4bn, 5 March 2026.
- Local Government Association analysis cited in the article.
- Department for Work and Pensions temporary accommodation subsidy arrangements.
- Local housing allowance framework.

# Public Sector Ombudsman Reform

## Key numbers and headline facts

- Article published on 3 March 2026.
- The review is the first review launched by the new Ethics and Integrity Commission.
- The terms of reference contain 7 main areas of inquiry.
- These include public expectations, systemic investigations, powers, oversight, complaint standards, whether recommendations should be binding, and easier public navigation of the ombudsman system.
- The review is seeking evidence from experts, stakeholders and the public to support practical and workable recommendations.

## References and links

- Ewen Fergusson, Could public sector ombudsman services prevent systemic public sector failures?, 3 March 2026.
- Published in connection with the government's Ethics and Integrity Commission review of public ombudsman services.
- Referenced background:
  - Recognising and responding to early warning signs in public sector bodies, Committee on Standards in Public Life
  - Review terms of reference published with the call for evidence

# Adult Social Care Reform

## Key numbers and headline facts

- Speech delivered on 6 March 2026.
  - The NHS was referenced as having been created 80 years ago.
  - The first report from the commission is due later in 2026.
  - The commission's purpose is to improve productivity, prevention and people's power within adult social care.
  - Proposed early measures mentioned by Casey included 4 specific actions: a National Safeguarding Board, increased dementia trial investment, a dementia tsar, and a fast-track passport for motor neurone disease.

## References and links

- Rachel Willcox, Call for 'mandate from the people' on social care reform, 6 March 2026.
- Speech by Baroness Casey at the Nuffield Trust Summit, reported in the article above.
- Comments reported from:
  - Natasha Curry, Deputy Director of Policy, Nuffield Trust
  - Louise Gittins, Chair, Local Government Association

# Temporary accommodation funding pressure

## Key numbers and stats

- £1.5bn cumulative gap since 2017 to 2018.
- Nearly £4bn projected cumulative gap by 2029 to 2030 without action.
- 132,000 households in temporary accommodation.
- 172,000 children living in temporary accommodation.
- 2024 to 2025 total council housing benefit spend on temporary accommodation: £1.27bn.
- 2024 to 2025 DWP reimbursement: £911m.
- 2024 to 2025 annual gap: almost £360m.
- Annual gap projected to rise to £595m by the end of the period, a 65% increase.
- LGA says uprating reimbursement to 90% of current LHA rates could reduce the projected cumulative cost by 37%.

## References and links

- Rachel Willcox, Councils' temporary accommodation funding gap set to hit £4bn, 5 March 2026.
- Local Government Association analysis cited in the article.
- Department for Work and Pensions temporary accommodation subsidy arrangements.
- Local housing allowance framework.

# DWP Failings, Deaths and Benefit Decision Making

## Key numbers

- **2020–21 (DWP summary):** 40 IPRs; learning in 38; **129** agreed activities.
- **2021–22 (DWP summary):** 57 IPRs; learning in 53; **256** agreed activities.
- **DNS framing:** 97 IPRs across 2020–21 and 2021–22; with multiple PIP and UC related actions, and the allegation that MPs were not told ahead of key votes.

## References and links slide

- Disability News Service: “Scores of DWP failings linked to deaths were kept from MPs voting on benefit cuts, secret reports reveal” (5 March 2026).
- DWP: *Advanced Customer Support: Learning and improving from serious cases 2020 to 2021* (published document).
- DWP: *Advanced Customer Support: Learning and improving from serious cases 2021 to 2022* (published document).

# SNP candidate stands down after benefits fraud claim

## Key references and links

- STV News (PA Media), Benefits probe into SNP candidate shows system is working, Swinney claims, 5 March 2026.
- PA Media via Yahoo News, Ex SNP Holyrood candidate told to repay £20,000 in benefits, 2026.

# Managed migration to Universal Credit, what the latest official figures show

## References

- DWP, **Move to Universal Credit official statistics** (headline managed migration totals and outcomes to 10 September 2025).
- DWP, **Evaluation of those invited to move to Universal Credit from tax credits** (behavioural drivers of claiming and non claim).

# Housing Benefit debt recoveries, April to September 2025

## References

- DWP, *Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries statistics: April 2025 to September 2025* (published 4 March 2026).

# DWP Failings, Deaths and Benefit Decision Making

## Key numbers

- **2020–21 (DWP summary):** 40 IPRs; learning in 38; **129** agreed activities.
- **2021–22 (DWP summary):** 57 IPRs; learning in 53; **256** agreed activities.
- **DNS framing:** 97 IPRs across 2020–21 and 2021–22; with multiple PIP and UC related actions, and the allegation that MPs were not told ahead of key votes.

## References and links slide

- Disability News Service: “Scores of DWP failings linked to deaths were kept from MPs voting on benefit cuts, secret reports reveal” (5 March 2026).
- DWP: *Advanced Customer Support: Learning and improving from serious cases 2020 to 2021* (published document).
- DWP: *Advanced Customer Support: Learning and improving from serious cases 2021 to 2022* (published document).

# SNP candidate stands down after benefits fraud claim

## Key references and links

- STV News (PA Media), Benefits probe into SNP candidate shows system is working, Swinney claims, 5 March 2026.
- PA Media via Yahoo News, Ex SNP Holyrood candidate told to repay £20,000 in benefits, 2026.

# Managed migration to Universal Credit, what the latest official figures show

## References

- DWP, **Move to Universal Credit official statistics** (headline managed migration totals and outcomes to 10 September 2025).
- DWP, **Evaluation of those invited to move to Universal Credit from tax credits** (behavioural drivers of claiming and non claim).

# Housing Benefit debt recoveries, April to September 2025

## References

- DWP, *Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries statistics: April 2025 to September 2025* (published 4 March 2026).



# Blogs

Thoughts from the panel

# Blogs



**VISIONARY NETWORK**  
The Independent Local Tax and Welfare Network

[Briefing note: fiscal and economic context and what it means for local tax, welfare support and local government finance \(March 2026\) by Malcolm Gardner](#)

[Budget 2025: Impacts on Revenues & Benefits Administration, Housing and Local Government Finance by Malcolm Gardner](#)

[Why We Should Not Be Surprised That Reform UK's Councils Are Struggling by Malcolm Gardner](#)

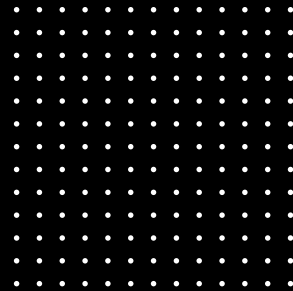
[The Case for Plain English Council Tax Reduction Schemes by Paul Howarth](#)

<https://benefitsinthefuture.com/>



Benefits in the Future

Blogs



- 'tis the season to be jolly... misleading, in the Daily Mail
- Lies, Damned Lies and the Telegraph
- Big differences in Pension Credit take-up revealed – Benefits in the Future

# Blogs

- [Local Authorities left with their hands-tied by lifting of the 2-child limit](#) by Phil Agulnik and Karen Holmes
- [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

**entitledto**  
independent | accurate | reliable

[Unsung Britain: working harder, getting nowhere](#) by Mike Brewer

How recent decades have squeezed the households who can least afford it

[Lifting living standards](#) By Ruth Curtis

Resolution Foundation's priorities for 2026 and beyond

[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.



[IFS: Is the minimum wage costing jobs?](#)

[Farage's Flagship Council \(And Other Stories From Rotten Boroughs\)](#)

## Podcasts



# 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.

