**Welfare Rights Advisor Information Update April 2015**

1. Tower Hamlets Advice Agencies list updated

Please check and start using the [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) website, it has been updated to include correct contact details for advice agencies in Tower hamlets. Please use it to refer clients. It will eventually have a section for advisors (its there but nothing on it at present) with details of meetings/policy documents/etc. Changes in services/update request should be sent to me.

2. Tower Hamlets Advisors Survey

You should all have received a 'survey monkey' request for advice workers in the past couple of weeks, this is being used to carry out a report on referrals and other information. It will only will take 2-3 minutes (honest) and the opinion of advisors would be really useful. It can be confidential if you would prefer not to provide your details. I'm going to send it out again today, if you haven't received it by Monday and want to do it please email me.

3. Roll-out of Universal Credit

Briefing from TH Welfare Reform Task Group on DLA and statistics on welfare reform issues (attached) The Task Group were informed there are 110 UC claimants in the borough, half of what was expected. One request for personal budgeting help, one request for an advance payment. 50% of them were 18-24 year olds. Steve (from JC+) can still organise Universal Credit information sessions if anyone would like them (stephen.hanshaw@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Digital support to make claims for UC will be provided at Chrisp St Ideas Store Tuesdays 2-4 and Whitechapel Ideas Store Thursdays 2-4 if people need help to claim they will get support to do this, please refer clients.

Six specialist WR advice workers will be given a direct line to contact UC (IAC, CAB, LHP, LAC, THLC, CPAG) to escalate problems, not for everyday enquiries.

4. Crisis and Support Grants

These are continuing, but with a 50% cut. They will only be making direct referrals and payments to Homestore and Emmaus (new Social Enterprise in Chrisp Street) for setting up home costs, this will be between £250 and £750 depending on size of the family. Otherwise the rules are the same - a maximum of 3 payments, referrals for budgeting support and referrals for Discretionary Housing Payments. There will be a referral for financial advice made on 2nd request and 3rd request will be refused if they don’t go for the financial advice.

5. Ali Halil CAB has informed us that the number for the national advice line for the CAB is 03444 111 444. Clients can be booked into for appointments at the local CAB through this number ahalil@eastendcab.org.uk

6. Social Welfare Training April 2015 Benefits Newsletter for Professionals attached

 \* Get Your 2015/2016 Benefit Rates Poster

 \* Tories- £12billion More of Benefit Cuts

 \* UC- 7 Day Waiting

 \* Period Postponed

 \* DLA claimants age 65 years or over transfer to Pensions Directorate in DWP

 \* New ESA Forms