**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Exchange**

**Universal Credit Full Service Meeting**

Tuesday 14th February 10am to 1pm - Minutes

· Full service for Universal Credit starts by following postcode areas:

o  E14 and E3 on 22nd February

o  E1, E1W, EC2, EC3, EC4 on 29th March

o  E2 not until June 2018 (Hoxton area)

·  Tower Hamlets will have 3 models going on at once – direct.gov website has postcode checker for claimants:

o   UC full service (everyone)

o   UC single gateway (single with no dependents)

o   Old system

·     Full service applicants making new claims will be opening a DWP account, get a journal, a to-do list – it’s a digital service and Job Centre Plus will have computers 9-5 and provide support with claims, there will be challenges if no computer skills

·     There will be provision for someone to make a telephone claim, phoning DWP they will do the online claim over the phone

·         Also visiting team will have extended provisions

·         There will be interpreters (telephone applications)

·         Claimant will have to attend local JC+ with information/evidence and to agree/sign the claimant commitment

·         There will be a 6 week wait for payments with new claimants but advance payments can be requested by telephone – no payment for first week, payments are then made a month in arrears

·         There are some exceptions to the waiting days (i.e. care leaver)

·         Clients need to self-disclose where there are problems such as additions, health, DV, care leaving – recognise claimants may not want to disclose but could miss out on exemptions/waiting day removal and alternative payment arrangements AND claimant commitment my not be suitable

·         Discussion around work coaches – they will have training and hope to identify difficulties and offer support but letting coaches know about vulnerability issues will be essential

·         Discretionary Housing Payments will still exist and still be administered by Local Authority

·         Claimants will be able to give explicit consent for another person/agency to act on their behalf

·         Youtube videos give information on how to make UC claim –

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy06rAVZuss>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7GUu7Xa7Nw>
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PwTeW0yqbQ>

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They are trying out different models of support (e.g. digital inclusion training) but it’s a new system and welcome feedback, comments, especially where there are problems so they can improve (email Stephen Hanshaw), JCP HOXTON: STEPHEN.HANSHAW@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

**Updates/Information**

·         Interested to learn British Sign Language? deafPLUS is set up a new course for people who would like to learn BSL Level 1, great for beginner!  This will be held at deafPLUS office, Whitechapel contact:  geraldine.o’halloran@deafplus.org

·         The Tower Hamlets Housing Forum meeting will take placeon **Thursday 9th March 2017 at 2.00 pm**.  Email V. Ciorraga-Cruz: V.Ciorraga-Cruz@thlc.co.uk

·         Digital Champion course available for Staff or Volunteers.  31st March or 24th April.  One day workshop will be held at:   Idea Store, Chrisp Street, 1 Vesey Path, East India Dock Road, E14 6BT   Email:  Sarah Carpenter sarah@we-are-digital.co.uk

·         Work Capability Assessment app for clients who are going through an assessment process

**Benefit Updates**

**TWO CHILD LIMIT UPDATE**

The UK government has published its response to the consultation on the exceptions to the two child limit to be applied to child tax credit for third or subsequent children born on or after 6 April 2017. Around 50 organisations responded, including [CPAG](http://cpag-mail.org.uk/5MI-4QDZO-HILBJ-2GRMFE-1/c.aspx). As previously stated, the response does not consider any comments about the overall policy, or other potential exceptions.

The announced exceptions, with some adjustments following the consultation, are;

* Multiple births, other than a first child in a multiple birth where the claimant already had two or more children as part of their CTC claim. The explanation for this is that families may have chosen to have one additional child, but generally do not choose to have a multiple birth. The child element will be awarded for all third or subsequent children born as part of a multiple birth, but not for the first child in a multiple birth, where there are already two or more children.
* Formal caring arrangements. The response clarifies that if a relevant court order expires on reaching age 16, the qualifying young person will remain exempt if the claimant has been continuously responsible for him/her since then.
* Informal caring arrangements. The government maintains that a social worker should provide verification, but will allow flexibility for evidence from others to be accepted if this becomes required or appropriate.
* Children under 16 who become parents of a child, where the claimant is responsible for the under 16 and the baby.

Children likely to have been conceived as a result of rape. This exception has been extended to include children conceived in coercive or controlling relationships. There is a requirement not to be living with the alleged perpetrator.  Third party evidence may be required from one of a list of approved professionals, including health care professionals, social workers and relevant specialist charities, to be set out in guidance, with the ability to add to it in future.

Please note that information about some of these changes may be limited at present and also subject to further change. Although some will happen quickly, others may be introduced gradually over several years.

**Referrals to Tower Hamlets Specialist Welfare Rights Caseworkers**

**Legal Advice Centre**: Only take referrals for appeals when got the appeal bundle, not Mandatory Reconsideration.  Otherwise can be ‘signposted’ (i.e. send client to drop in advice session) for assistance. Referrals can be emailed to admin@legaladvicecentre.org they will email back to confirm that clients have been booked – full guidance available on [www.thcan.org.uk/advice-agencies-information/](http://www.thcan.org.uk/advice-agencies-information/)

**Law Centre**: Chris Parsons very limited capacity but to email or phone him, has no particular criteria: c.parsons@thlc.org.uk

**Island Advice**: Tower Hamlets clients only, limited casework and usually all appointments are taken up through our drop-in advice session clients but can try by email  steph@island-advice.org.uk  or phone direct line 020 7538 0094 (phone number is for advisors only). Clients can ring 0207 987 9379

**CAB** advisor Eukay email eukandu@eastendcab.org.uk. Also their full drop-in services sessions are available on:  [www.thcan.org.uk/advice-agencies-information/](http://www.thcan.org.uk/advice-agencies-information/)