**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Exchange - May 2017**

**Welfare Rights Advisors Forum Meeting Minutes       18th May, 2–4.30pm**

         ATOS presentation on medical assessments - Didn’t turn up, sick

         Universal Credit – discussion

Linda and Rehana from DWP attended and listened to complaints regarding UC. Advisors felt frustrated that we are raising complaints but not getting any responses, it was agreed that Linda and Jo would separately write to Stephen Hanshaw about these and if still no response Jo will take matter up with our MPs after the election – complaints regarding individual clients issues should be emailed to Stephen Hanshaw JCP HOXTON: STEPHEN.HANSHAW@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK also copy in Linda Devereux: LINDA.DEVEREUX@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK - we have had responses from Linda when sending complaints

Also please continue to give clients referral forms if you are sending them to DWP to get help with Universal Credit claims. Please send me a copy I am still following up what’s happening with these claimants

Issues that we have raised about Universal Credit problems

1.    Claimants moving from legacy benefits to UC, why are they being asked to carry out ‘right to reside’ ‘work capability’ assessments?

1. UC refusals – decision is on their journal, they don’t get written confirmation that benefit has been refused, clients are not always aware, they should be sent written decision, can this be done?
2. Can advisors be given a different number to ring when helping clients?
3. Can we do a mandatory review on the UC portal/journal?
4. Our policy of not helping claimants with applying for universal credit and sending them to DWP has had mixed feedback– I haven’t managed to follow up too many of them.  Mostly clients are being told that they won’t get help and that they need to do it themselves, they are being offered use of computers and when it is seen they are struggling they may get some help and/or are asked to come back the following day.  Some refused, some helped, seems to be luck of the draw. Basically the letter that we are sending them with is being dismissed though.

COULD WE HAVE A MORE STRUCTURED REFERRAL SYSTEM WHERE THESE CLIENTS CAN BE FORMALLY REFERRED AND BOOKED IN WITH SOMEONE?

6.    Claimants are not being given their work coach contact details

7.    Complaint/s that have been raised have not been responded to (Linda asked that she be copied in to any from now on)

1. Someone who has had claimed closed, not being able to do a Mandatory Review

**1**.    **Welfare Rights -  Free Training Sessions**

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| **ESA (UC’s Limited Capability for Work requirements)** 2 hours workshop | •       introduction and eligibility•       understanding the points test•       Mandatory reviews/appeals**Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out or want to review WCA knowledge | Island HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | 13th June 20172-4pm Jo Ellis |
| **Personal Independence Payment** | •       introduction and eligibility•       understanding the points test**Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out or want to review PIP knowledge training | Island HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | 11th July 20172-4pm Jo Ellis |

**2**.    **Benefits Information -**  **Information attached**

1.    2 Child limit test cases wanted by CPAG

2.    Child care assistance changes

3.    Information and guidance regarding the council introducing charging for social care <http://www.real.org.uk/get-support/information-help-charging-social-care/>

4.    Mental health evidence for requesting write off of tax credit overpayment

**3**.    **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/#_blank)

**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/#_blank)

**4.  Information on other services/referrals**

**Account 3** – Family Law Clinic – Tuesdays 5.30 – email shah to make a referral   shahb@account3.org.uk

**Legal Advice Centre** – First Saturday of the month referral to Education Legal Advice Session – email Jennie@legaladvicecentre.org.uk

**BBBC**– Getting on With Money budgeting advice 1-2-1 appointments – contact Mosrath: Mosrath.Jahan@bbbc.org.uk

**Horizon** – PIP/DLA appeals (think they’re in Plaistow – Chris Parsons gave contact/recommendation)