**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Exchange –August 2017**

**1.  Universal Credit Update**

**MP/DWP/UC complaint - case examples needed urgently – especially where you have made a complaint but received no response – send client name NI No and brief details of problems**

* Complaint sent to MP Jim Fitzpatrick on behalf of THCAN regarding problems we’ve identified with Universal Credit, he has stated he is:

*“putting together a case to present to the front bench and minister responsible for Social Security regarding the UC shambles. Do you have any anecdotal evidence/cases we can include to show what a disgrace the roll out is”*

I’ve sent a summary of some of the cases/clients that have been sent by advisors (attached) – if you sent me a case it should be on there but only put client’s initials on them.

* Response from Gerry Reardon -  Universal Credit Hub Operations Manager, Customer Communications & Intelligence

*‘DWP is committed to providing a robust independent complaint handling service that comprises a two-tier complaint function; first tier complaint resolution undertaken by specific teams around the country and second tier complaint review, which my team undertakes if customers remain dissatisfied with the first tier response.*

*I was concerned to read of the issues you are having with a number of clients in the Poplar and Limehouse area so I have copied in my colleagues in London & Home Counties complaint resolution team to alert them there will be some cases for DWP to resolve. However, the information contained in the document, attached for ease of reference, is insufficient to enable us to take any action as we cannot identify anyone from it. I understand why of course, given Data Protection law for passing personal information via unsecured email, but perhaps you could contact me at a convenient time so we may establish who the customers are and investigate their issues with UC.*

*I am also very concerned you have so far found the DWP’s complaint handling process ineffective. I would like to assure you that both my team and the other DWP complaint resolution teams around the country are committed to providing a high quality effective complaint resolution service.*

*The other issues contained within your document relate to UC Policy so I will need to consult policy colleagues on those points in order to obtain a response as my focus in on the quality of service delivery’*

**So basically please keep sending me your Universal Credit complaints/problems – please get client’s authority for use to forward them to this person – I’ll need their full name and NI No.**

**2.  Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

Thursday, September 28th 2–4pm, Island House, Roserton Street, E14 3PG

Agenda items: Universal Credit, Council Tax Support – anything else anyone wants on agenda let me know

**3. Welfare Rights -  Free Training Session – email me to book place if you want to attend**

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| **Disability Living Allowance/benefits for children with disabilities** | Suitable for: basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out or want to review knowledge training on benefits for children with disabilities | Island HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | ThursdayDate to be confirmedSeptember10am to 1pm Fatima Begum |

**4.   Welfare Rights Benefit changes**

A)   See DWP newsletter

B)   CPAG test case on tax credit appeals – 27 July 2016

In an important test case brought by CPAG, it has been held that tax credit claimants have always been able to make a late appeal against decisions made by HMRC.

[The decision](http://www.osscsc.gov.uk/Aspx/view.aspx?id=4917) reverses previous case law which held that late appeals were not possible in the period between 2008 and 2014, and means that thousands of claimants may now be able to have refusals to admit their late appeal reconsidered.

In the case, HMRC had decided in 2012 that the claimant, VK, had been overpaid credits in 2010/11, as she had claimed as a single person but was now considered to have been a member of a couple. Her appeal was made outside the basic 30 day time limit. Applying previous case law, the appeal tribunal refused to consider her appeal as, due to an error in drafting new legislation in 2008, the rule permitting a late appeal had been removed. However, judges in the Upper Tribunal have now ruled that that was wrong, and that rules always did allow late tax credit appeals to be considered.

Many claimants, especially those subject to controversial HMRC decisions about overpayments made before 2014 and who tried to appeal late but were barred, may be affected by the decision. CPAG estimate that somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 claimants may be in this situation.

youngest child, and are now waiting for our day in court.

**5.  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)