**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Update**

**Universal Credit Full Service Meeting**

Tuesday 14th February 10am to 1pm

Please email me to confirm your attendance – DWP want list of names of attendees – I will email information if you are not able to attend

Stephen Hanshaw DWP meeting regarding Universal Credit Full Service meeting:
4th Floor Conference Room, Hoxton Jobcentre, 30 Drysdale Street, London E1 6LT

**Updates/Information**

**Benefit Changes to April 2017 - Timetable**

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.

**April 2017 Bereavement Support Payment**

The current [bereavement benefits](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Your-Situation/Bereaved) ([Bereavement Allowance](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Bereavement-Allowance/What-is-Bereavement-Allowance), [Bereavement Payment](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Bereavement-Payment/What-is-a-Bereavement-Payment), [Widowed Parent’s Allowance](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Widowed-Parent-s-Allowance)) will be replaced with the new Bereavement Support Payment (BSP). This will be introduced for new claims from April 2017.

**Tax Credits and Universal Credit two child limit**

For Child Tax Credit, elements will not be included for a third (or more) child born on or after 6 April 2017 unless an exception applies. Elements will continue to be included for all children born before 6 April 2017.

For Universal Credit, elements will not be included for the third (or more) child who joins the family on or after 6 April 2017 unless an exception applies. Elements will continue to be included for all children who were part of the family before 6 April 2017. Families with more than two children cannot make a new claim for Universal Credit until November 2018, even if they are in a full digital service area. They will have to claim Child Tax Credit in the meantime.

Equivalent changes will be made to the Housing Benefit rules.

**Tax Credit Family Element removed**

People starting a family after April 2017 will no longer be eligible for the Family Element in tax credits. The equivalent in Universal Credit, known as the First Child Element, will also not be available for new claims from April 2017.

**Universal Credit requirements for parents to look for work**

Parents with a youngest child aged 3, including lone parents, are expected to look for work if they want to claim Universal Credit.

**ESA Work-Related Activity component abolished**

From 1 April 2017, new ESA claimants who are placed in the Work-Related Activity Group will receive the same rate of payment as those claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance and the equivalent in Universal Credit.

**Universal Credit Youth Obligation**

From April 2017, 18-21 year olds who have been claiming Universal Credit for six months will have to either apply for training/ apprenticeships or attend a work placements, unless they are exempt (considered to be vulnerable).

**Universal Credit Housing Costs Element removed for young people**

It was proposed in the summer budget 2015 that unemployed claimants aged under 21 would not have a Housing Costs Element included in their Universal Credit from April 2017 unless an exception applies.

**Change in Hardship Payments for mentally ill and homeless**

The government has proposed that [hardship payments](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Emergency-Assistance/Benefit-payments) (of 40% of the benefit amount) be automatically payable to jobseekers who are mentally ill or homeless when they are sanctioned. These claimants currently have to apply for hardship payments when they've been sanctioned and may be refused. The proposal means to add them to the group of vulnerable people who can receive hardship payments whilst under sanction without applying for them first (such as claimants with children or long-term health problems).

**Universal Credit taper to be reduced from 65 per cent to 63 per cent**

From April 2017, the taper rate that applies in Universal Credit will be reduced from 65 per cent to 63 per cent. This means that claimants will be able to keep 37p for every £1 earned in work above work allowances rather than 35p for every £1 earned.

Further Information: [https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Benefit-Changes/Benefit-Changes-Timetable-2017-2018#guide-content](https://www.turn2us.org.uk/Benefit-guides/Benefit-Changes/Benefit-Changes-Timetable-2017-2018)

**DWP Safeguarding Guidance for vulnerable clients**

After the death of a claimant in 2000, the DWP introduced the ‘minimum requirements’. These requirements were designed to ensure that the DWP is ‘not found to be neglectful in [its] duty of care’ towards claimants with a ‘known background of mental illness’. The minimum requirements are: where a claimant has been attending a psychiatric unit, a liaison officer should be appointed to maintain good relations between the Jobcentre Plus and the patient affairs officer, where it is known that a claimant has a social worker designated to her/him, the DWP should liaise closely with the social services department, where there is a known history of mental illness, all cases should be referred to a manager before a decision is made to withdraw benefit. The safeguarding intentions behind the minimum requirements have since been used as the basis of DWP safeguarding guidance.  Information attached

**EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE WORKSHOP DELIVERED BY UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON AT YOUR CENTRE**

My name is Jasbir Panesar and I work within the information advice and guidance service at the University of East London, Stratford. Our service offers impartial information, advice and guidance tailored to meet the needs of individuals who aspire to progress on to university. We also offer dropping or booked appointments, taster sessions, preparatory courses (level 3), advise on equivalence of overseas qualifications and information on student loan.

Part of our service is to offer educational guidance workshops to groups and educational guidance individuals in the community. I am writing to ask if you have any groups or service users whom you feel could benefit from this initiative. There is no charge and I would come with the material to deliver the educational workshop. I am able to come to visit you to discuss how you would like me to deliver the workshop for your groups and service users.

My contact details are 07738194870 / 0208 223 4354 Jasbir Kaur Panesar and my email is j.k.panesar@uel.ac.uk

**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 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/)