**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Exchange – January 2018**

1. **Welfare Rights Advisors Forum: 8th March 2-4pm Island House, Roserton Street, E14 3PG**

**Agenda – please send requests for items**

Information on the calculation and appealing against charging for LBTH care services – short presentation

Universal Credit – discussion on problem areas and tactics

Will also ask Housing Benefit if they can attend – any queries/issues email and let me know

1. **Universal Credit Updates**

**A)  Support for making Universal Credit claims in Tower Hamlets and Benefit office closure/changes**

Tenter Street DWP has closed down

Services delivered by City Tower Jobcentre Plus for the following postcodes will move to Poplar Jobcentre Plus, 13 Dod Street, London E14 7EP

E10, E12, E13, E14, E1W

Services delivered by City Tower Jobcentre Plus for the following postcodes will move to Hoxton Jobcentre Plus, 30 Drysdale Street, London N1 6LT

EC2, EC3, EC4, E11, E15, E16, E17, E18

Referrals for assistance with claiming Universal Credits to Dod Street attached – not had any confirmation as to whether/when this assistance is available in City office

**B)  CPAG email advice for universal credit, child benefit, child tax credit or working tax credit****advice@cpag.org.uk**

**C)  UC Changes**COMING INTO EFFECT 14 FEBRUARY 2018 – detailed below

**D)  Universal Credit new FREEPHONE numbers**

Universal Credit live service 0800 328 9344

Universal Credit full service 0800 328 5644

 Universal Credit Text phone 0800 328 1344

**3.    Welfare Rights -  Free Training Sessions  – email me to book place**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Universal Credit** 2 hour workshop | •      General information about this new benefit including: claims, conditionality, sanctions**Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out any UC training | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | Thursday 8thFeb2-4pmFatima Begum |
| **ESA (UC’s Limited Capability for Work requirements)** 2 hour 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 AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | Thursday 1stMarch2-4pmJo Ellis |

**3.   Welfare Rights Benefit changes 2018**

**A)**        From January 2018, the amount a claimant could receive from an advance payment of Universal Credit will increase from up to 50% of their estimated entitlement to up to 100%. Claimants will be able to receive an advance payment within five days of applying. The period in which the advance is recovered will be increased from six months to 12 months

**B)**        From February 2018, the government will remove the seven-day waiting period for Universal Credit, so that the claim starts from the date of application. This means that if Universal Credit is paid on time, claimants will wait five weeks for their first payment instead of six weeks.

**C)**From 6 April 2018, Support for Mortgage Interest will no longer exist as a benefit for new or existing claimants. Claimants will instead be invited to apply for a loan if they want to continue to be supported.  Loans will be repaid upon the sale of a claimant’s house; or on a claimant’s return to work if the borrower can afford it.

**D)**From April 2018 those already on Housing Benefit will continue to receive their award for the first two weeks of their Universal Credit claim. This will be an unrecoverable payment.  The government will also make it easier for claimants to have the housing element of their award paid directly to their landlord. Claimants who live in privately rented properties who have their Housing Benefit paid directly to landlords have this option at the beginning of a claim for Universal Credit

**4.    Other information attached**

* UC and other benefit changes further information and timetables (Turn to Us and CPAG)
* Debt advice forum minutes Dec 2017 meeting
* LEAP – referrals for energy efficiency advice in Tower Hamlets
* DWP newsletter
* PIP appeal appellant diary template – for clients to record their daily living need and help

**5.    Tower Hamlets Specialist Welfare Rights Caseworkers Referrals - Information on Tower Hamlets services and events**

**A)   Specialist Welfare Rights Workers Referrals for Tower Hamlets Residents**

**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 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)