**This is Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network’s welfare rights advisors monthly information exchange, it is sent to around 200 individuals and organisations with an interest in welfare rights in Tower Hamlets and is available to see on the** [**www.thcan.org.uk**](http://www.thcan.org.uk) **Up-to-date information on advice providers services and opening times are available on the website**

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

**1.      REMINDER - Welfare Rights Advisors Forum Meeting – TOMORROW THURSDAY - 28th June 2-4 pm Island Advice Centre**

Agenda - Universal Credit Meeting for Welfare Benefit Caseworkers – cases / problems/ procedures – Martin Williams

* What to do if someone has failed HRT due to have R2R being refused UC 91 day  job seeker
* ESA to UC clients transferring – SDP loss
* Claimants who transfer from ESA to UC and SDP entitlement
* Please send any other UC problematic/cases/issues  - suggestions

**2.**      **Universal Credit / Benefit Update issues**

a)      **The National Audit Office Report** has found that UC causes hardship, is expensive, inefficient and hugely behind schedule It has also found that the supposed gains from UC, such as increased employment, are all unproven and that it will probably never be possible to prove any of them anyway. (shock horror!!!!)  Nonetheless, the NAO also says that UC is now so firmly embedded in jobcentres that there is no practical alternative to continuing with the full rollout

**b)  DWP Draft Managed Migration** rules for UC <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/moving-claimants-to-universal-credit-from-other-working-age-benefits>.  SSAC asking for responses by 20th August. E-mail responses to ssac@ssac.gsi.gov.uk  or write to the Committee Secretary at SSAC, 5th Floor, Caxton House,Tothill St, London SW1H 9NA  Includes how

**c)   DWP COURT DEFEAT OVER ESA TO UC TRANSFERS** Claimants who transfer from ESA to UC as part of the “managed migration” process beginning in July 2019 will have transitional protection. This will mean that they are not worse off, initially at least. But claimants who have a change of circumstances, such as a house move to a new area, get no such protection. As a result, the claimants in the latest court case were almost £180 a month worse off due to the loss of their severe disability premium (SDP) and enhanced disability premium (EDP). The court ruled that this was discriminatory and unlawful and the claimants will now receive the income they lost out on. The DWP announced last week that ESA claimants will no longer be moved to UC until transitional protection begins. They also announced moves to identify claimants who have lost their SDP and repay them the money they have lost out on. However, no mention was made in the government’s statement of any intention to compensate claimants for the loss of their EDP.  Will ask Martin about this

d) We have made enquiry to HB about Non-dependent deductions being made at a high rate where claimants do not provide information about their ND’s circumstances.  Response is:

‘If a claimant informs us that the ND is not in remunerative work, but fails to provide more detailed information we apply a lowest rate ND deduction unless we have good reasons to believe the ND is working. If we have no information at all about the ND’s income or circumstances we will suspect a part of the HB, equal to a high rate ND deduction whilst awaiting information to avoid making an overpayment. Once the information is received we will lift the suspension and thus pay any part of the suspended benefit that is due after a correct ND deduction has been applied. We will, under these circumstances, apply a lowest rate NDD for any past period where we do not have information on the ND’s.

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

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| **Welfare Rights Overview** One day | •      Overview of the benefits system•      check which benefits your clients may be entitled to•      use CPAG handbook/resources•      online calculations and claims**Suitable for** new volunteers and support workers with little or no experience in benefits | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | Jo Ellis12th July 201810am to 4pm |

**4.    Other information / Services**

·         **Free Tower Hamlets Disability Hate Crime Training on 31st July. Free to people who live, work, study or socialise in Tower Hamlets,** this two and a half hour short course will address:

* Who does the law say is 'disabled'?
* What is 'hate crime' against disabled people?
* How big is the problem in Tower Hamlets?
* How often does it get reported?
* Where can victims go to get support?

**Time:** 10am- 12.30pm  **Date:** Tuesday 31st July 2018  **Venue:** Spitalfields Housing Association Community Centre Hall, 117 Vallance Rd, London E1 5ES

**Booking essential**:  <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/disability-hate-crime-training-tickets-47017139530>

* DWP newsletter May attached
* e)   Article: Support for mortgage interest: benefit to loan –  claiming a Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) loan, and the impact of the change from SMI benefit to SMI loan – good article from Shelter attached summarising new rules

**5.**    **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’  (ie 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)