**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 –  September  2018**

1. **Welfare Rights Advisors Forum Meeting - NEXT WEEK**

**Thursday - 20th September 2-4 pm**

**Note it’s not in Island Advice** Carer’s centre Tower Hamlets, 21 Brayford Square, Stepney, London  E1 0SG

**Agenda**

* Introductions
* Council Tax Reduction – Jo Ellis
	+ - Consultation on new rules
		- Section 13 reductions
* Universal Credit
	+ Problems and tactics
* **3pm** Seven Hanshaw DWP Manager presentation on current LBTH Universal Credit issues
* Any other Business and information exchange

**2.**      **Advice Worker Training Project   starting 18th Sept - next week – course is full but late applications can be accepted and put on waiting list**

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

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|   **Disability Living Allowance /** **Benefits for children with disabilities**2 hours workshop | * introduction and eligibility for DLA (for children)

**Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out or want to review DLA for children will include eligibility for other benefits relating to disabled children | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | Fatima Begum2pm to 4pm27th September |
| **Universal Credit** **One day** | * 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
 | The BarnBromley by Bow CentreSt Leonards RdE3 | Fatima Begum18th October 201810am to 4pm |
| **Immigration status and benefits**2 hour workshop | How immigration status effects entitlement to benefits, right to reside, EEA nationals NOTE this is not an immigration course, there will be no information on immigration issues **Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who haven’t already carried out or want to review knowledge training | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | Fatima Begum29th November 2018 2pm to 4pm |

**4.    Other information / Services**

1. General information Q&A on common issues around Universal Credit – attached.
2. New email address (effective from 18th May) for any complaints about JSA/ESA/IS. This is as an alternative to complaining to Hackney customer services (or an escalation of a complaint to Hackney).

L.E.CRT@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK - LONDON AND ESSEX COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION TEAM

The Hackney customer service team has now been closed but we have been informed that the email contact can still be used; HACKNEY.BDCCUSTOMERSERVICES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK  **F**rom 21 May 2018 Hackney will no longer  be processing ESA work other than that related to Work Capability Assessments (outcomes , groups  etc.). ESA related work (claims maintenance) will be dealt with by Caerphilly

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1. DWP newsletters July and August attached

D   **Sending Fit Notes to DWP**

      **Email** to DWP for ESA   <https://www.gov.uk/send-fit-note>   You’ll need: your fit note signed by your doctor, your National Insurance number, a phone or tablet with a camera, or a computer with a saved    photo or copy of your fit note

You can **post** your fit note instead.  The address you should use depends on where you live. Tower Hamlets mostly,  Freepost, DWP, Mail Handling site A, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV98 2eb

E  CPAG is carrying out a campaign ‘The Early Warning System’ (EWS) gathers information and case studies about the impact of welfare reform on children and families ‘We have been talking to universal credit director general Neil Couling and secretary of state Esther McVey about the roll-out of UC. Using reports submitted by advisers to the EWS we set out the [eight most significant problems with universal credit](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Early%20Warning%20System%20Top%20UC%20Issues%20July%202018.pdf).  The more reports we get from advisers, the stronger our evidence is when we talk to the Department of Work and Pensions. So we need you to get involved with the EWS.  If you are working on an intractable problem, a case which exemplifies the difficulties a community you work with are having with their benefits or an issue which you would like the wider world to know about, we want to hear from you. You can contact us via [our case reporting form](https://childpovertyactiongroup.wufoo.com/forms/m1vc0zeg1sr9zgh/), by email ews@cpag.org.uk or by calling 020 7812 5226. We need basic details and it only takes a couple of minutes to submit a case study. We treat all our case studies with complete anonymity. In return we will keep you informed about EWS activities and successes. You’ll be first to receive our reports and newsletters.

# F   CPAG **Legal victory for disabled people**

The DWP has announced that it will correct underpayments of employment and support allowance for all disabled people affected by a mistake since 2011. Employment and support allowance (ESA) came in as a new benefit for people with disabilities in 2008. From 2011 the coalition government started moving people over from incapacity benefit to ESA. However, many people who were moved onto ‘contributory ESA’ were not assessed for entitlement to ‘income-related ESA’, which is means tested. These people therefore missed out on additional support such as the enhanced and severe disability premium – which helps them manage the additional costs associated with their disability.  When the government started to correct their error, they limited backdated payments to a date in October 2014.  CPAG issued a legal challenge earlier this year against this course of action – the government should have been correcting the underpayments to the date when they began in 2011. And the government has now conceded that CPAG was correct. As a result, many thousands of people with disabilities will receive money they should have had all along – money that will help support them and their families.

     G    Guidance that has been issued to social landlords on housing costs under Universal Credit can be viewed on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing--2>

     H    Pension Credit amounts for children CPAG info

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| Currently, people over pension credit age (approaching 65) who are responsible for children can claim child tax credit. However, tax credits are being     abolished, and replaced by universal credit for working age claimants, but people over pension credit age cannot claim UC.  From 1 February 2019, they will claim a child addition in pension credit instead. The pension credit rules have been amended so that an amount for a child can be included, but this does not apply to a claimant who is already getting tax credits. The basic amount for a child is the same as in CTC and UC, with a higher amount for one child born before 6 April 2017. However, the lower rate for disabled children is less than half the amount in CTC, as in UC. The way pension credit is calculated could also leave people significantly worse off. For example, a single person with a pension income of £16,000 who is responsible for two children would currently be entitled to maximum child tax credit, but would not get any pension credit, even when two child amounts are included.The rules on responsibility for a child looked after and accommodated by the local authority also follow the more restrictive wording used for universal credit. Some kinship carers, who are responsible for a child where the local authority is not paying for maintenance or accommodation, may find that they can qualify for CTC but would not qualify for pension credit child amounts unless they have parental responsibility for the child.  One other difference, which could make some claimants better off with pension credit child amounts, is that there is no two-child limit in the pension credit rules. Some claimants affected by the two-child limit, if one or both of a couple reaches pension credit age, may be well advised to switch to pension credit from 1 February 2019, but to do so they would first have to give up their tax credits or universal credit award.       I    Two Child Limit  info The Government has also published [statistics](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719458/Two_children_and_exceptions_in_tax_credits_and_Universal_Credit_April_2018.pdf) on the two-child limit in its first year, which reveal:* 73,530 households in the UK were affected by the two-child limit
* 70,620 (96 %) are not receiving a child element for at least one child in their household
* 2,900 households (4 %) are receiving an exception to the policy, of which 2,440 (84%) were due to multiple births, 270 (9%), were for non-parental care and 190 (7%) received an exception for non-consensual conception
* 59% of households affected by the policy are in work
* 62% of households affected by the policy are couples

**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)   | ` |  |