**Tower Hamlets Welfare Rights Advisors Information Exchange - October 2017**

**1.    Universal Credit Updates**

**A)   Support for making Universal Credit claim**

Job Centre Plus have agreed the following referral / support sessions for new claimants needing help with the online claim process.  I’ve had mixed feedback about this some saying they are being sent away, others being assisted and supported.  The claimant needs to be able to actually put in their own password and use the keyboard. The only other alternative is a telephone claim.

You need to email the appropriate JC+ staff with the client’s name, telephone number and national insurance number – telling them which day/session they are going to attend.  The client to just needs to turn up during session times.

Claimants who don’t need support but want to use computers can attend the offices to use them Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

**Poplar Jobcentre Plus:**13 Dod Street, E14 7EP

Escalation process: AKTAR.KHAN1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Referral process: JUHEL.ULLAH@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK

Referral day and times: Tuesday 10.00 – 12.00, Thursday 10.00 – 12.00

**City Tower Jobcentre:**13 West Tenter St, E1 8DT

Escalation and Referral process: Ibrahim.Butt@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Referral day and times: Monday 10.00- 12.00, Wednesday 10.00 – 12.00

**Telephone claims:**

Telephone: **0345 600 0723**.
Textphone: **0345 600 0743**

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.
Calls to this number can cost up to 9p a minute from a landline, or between 8p and 55p a minute from a mobile (phone supplier can tell you how much you'll pay) - you can call and ask them to call you back.  Also, I don’t think this has happened yet but the universal credit helpline WILL be made free. Labour challenged the government over the charge for people using mobile phones to get help.  David Gauke, the Work and Pensions secretary, told MPs all charges would be abolished by the end of the year.

**B)  Complaint to MP re: Universal Credit problems**

Jim Fitzpatrick has used information we’ve supplied to pursue complaints/challenge around roll out of UC and problems, last information exchange had details of what I’d sent (on behalf of THCAN and covering all issues we have discussed at Welfare Rights Forum) and the response Jim Fitzpatrick received.  Attached is Jim’s response to this – I’d sent him comments which are included in the response.  Don’t think I’ll be doing much more but the problems are at least being recognised and debated.CPAG and many other campaigns and reports are continuing.

**C)  Summary of practical issues with UC system** (attached) – this covers all the topics that were raised at last Welfare Rights Forum and been provided by Martin Williams (CPAG)

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

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| **ESA (& UC’s Limited Capability for Work requirements)**2 hours workshop | •      Introduction and eligibility•      understanding the points test•      UC and Limited Capability for work**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 | 23rd November2-4pm Jo Ellis |
| **Appeals**2 hour workshop  | •     Mandatory Reconsiderations•     deadlines and procedure for appeals•     preparing a submission•     late appeals•     hearings**Suitable for** Benefit/advice workers with good knowledge of benefit system | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG  | 30th November2-4pm Fatima Begum  |
| **Housing Costs** 2 hour workshop  | •      Renting and Homeowners entitlement to help with rent•      who’s entitled, how’s it calculated•      Non-dependent deductions•      Bedroom tax**Suitable for** Benefit/advice workers with some knowledge of benefit system | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | 14th December10am to 12Fatima Begum  |

**3.    Welfare Rights Benefit changes**

A)   <https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/3676-18-october-2017-update?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Benefits%20and%20Work&utm_content=v1+October+18+2017+newsletter>

Some info on taped ESA/PIP medicals and claimants’ parliamentary comments on their experience of PIP/ESA assessments, deadline for comments is 10/11/17

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/pip-esa-assessments-17-19/>

B)   Government will no longer roll out changes that would have capped benefit for social housing and supported homes (i.e. a proposed change that will not now happen)

**4.    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)