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

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

**Agenda**

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

2.    LBTH Housing Benefit Section – Lee Fearon and Clive Buckman - CSG/DHP and HB update

3.    Universal Credit – discussion on problem areas and tactics

4.    Information exchange: referrals, updates on services, any other business

**2.   Universal Credit Updates**

**A)**    **Universal Credit transition to full service**

New date for full Universal Credit service to be delivered nationally for all types of claimants has been amended to December 2018

Updated Roll Out Schedule: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-transition-to-full-service>

**B)**    **First Universal Credit Payment Paid Quicker**

From 14 February 2018 **everyone** is entitled to Universal Credit from the first day they claim, removing 7 days some had to wait (so new claimants will wait 5 rather than 6 weeks for first payment).

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

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| **Benefit overpayments and Recovery** 2 hour workshop |          General information about benefit overpayments         Which/when can overpayments be challenged         How are overpayments recovered**Suitable for** experienced advisors and debt workers dealing with clients with overpayments of benefit | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | April – date to be confirmed2-4pmFatima Begum |
| **Appeal Submissions** 2 hours workshop | •        The appeal bundle•        Evidence for appeals•        How to prepare a submission for your clients case**Suitable for** advisors who have experience in Mandatory Reconsiderations and SSCS1 forms who would want to prepare a submission (summary of your client’s cases) for their hearing | Island AdviceIsland HouseRoserton StreetE14 3PG | May – date to be confirmed2-4pmFatima Begum |

**4.    Welfare Rights Benefit changes**

A)      Housing Benefits for 18-25 year olds – list of claimants that **ARE** eligible for housing costs has been extended – see attached summary (sorry I’m not sure if this a change or if it is just more clarification, either ways its attached).

B)      DWP lost a high court case about discriminating against PIP mobility claimants with mental health conditions. As a result, DWP will be looking again at 1.6 million PIP claims to see if claimants should get more points for mobility.  Minister for disabled people, Sarah Newton, stated, *“Nobody is going to be called in for a face-to-face assessment, and nobody is going to have money taken away from them”.*  Not clear, who is going to be checked, how and when the checks will be carried out or whether people will be told when they have been checked.

c)         DWP are writing out to inform claimants receiving support for mortgage interest that this will be replaced by a loan from 6th April 2018 and inviting them to **apply** for it. 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

**5.    Other information**

         DWP newsletters January and February – attached

        Updated Factsheets (available on THCAN website) <http://thcan.org.uk/factsheets/>

 Most updates are due to inclusion of information on Universal Credit

  [Adviser Checklist – Benefit Cap 2018 update](http://thcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Benefit-Cap-2018.docx)

  [Appealing Against a Benefits Decision](http://thcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Appeal-factsheet-2018.docx)

  [Universal Credit](http://thcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Universal-Credit-factsheet-2018.docx)

  [ESA Appeals](http://thcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ESA-UC-Appeals-on-work-capability-2018.docx)

  [Advice after completing ESA50](http://thcan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ESA50-UC50-advice-after-completing-form.docx)

       Tower Hamlets Foodbank have changed their referral system, contact Distributor@firstlovefoundation.org.uk for more information. NOTE: I am in the process of putting together a list of foodbanks and other emergency (food suppliers) for clients in emergency situations. If you have any information/contacts that you think should be included on this please send them to me

        Assistance with Universal Credit Claims in Tower Hamlets – information for advisors who have client/s who need support/help with making a claim **(information for advisors not claimants)**

       St Hildas Legal Advice session leaflet.  Also note there are a number of FREE legal advice sessions in Tower Hamlets listed on the THCAN website – mostly volunteer solicitors  <http://thcan.org.uk/legal-advice/>

**6.    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’  (ie send client to drop in advice session) for assistance. Referrals can be emailed toadmin@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)

B)    There are a lot of local **policy developments affecting the Tower Hamlets Voluntary and Community Sector** at the moment that will affect MSG funded organisations from next year.  Information from THCVS is attached and there is a THCAN meeting in here on 9th March 2pm (contact steph@island-advice.org.uk), a THCVS meeting on 16th March (contact Gemma Cossins gemma.cossins@thcvs.org.uk ) THCAN partnership has/is making written representations but if you would like to get involved in further activities/action that is being taken by the from the advice sector please attend the meeting on 9th, I think the one on the 16th is for all voluntary sector. There is and a cabinet meeting on the 20th March