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

**1.    Welfare Rights Advisors Forum Meeting – 28th June 2pm Island Advice Centre**

Universal Credit Benefit Caseworkers – cases / problems / procedures

Please send agenda suggestions (such as cases no client details)

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

a)  UC and NHS prescriptions info

Being entitled to Universal Credit doesn't automatically entitle you to free NHS prescriptions as you must meet [additional qualifying criteria](http://contactcentreservices.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/selfnhsukokb/AskUs_ECS/template.do?name=Am+I+entitled+to+free+NHS+prescriptions+if+I+am+in+receipt+of+Universal+Credit%3F&id=30981), such as your take home pay being below a certain amount.  Your entitlement is based on your Universal Credit statement for the last complete assessment period prior to collecting your prescription and it is your responsibility to check your entitlement before claiming it for free.   
If you [qualify for free NHS prescriptions via Universal Credit](https://contactcentreservices.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/selfnhsukokb/AskUs_ECS/template.do?name=Am+I+entitled+to+free+NHS+prescriptions+if+I+am+in+receipt+of+Universal+Credit%3F&id=30981) , please select box K (Income Based Job Seekers Allowance) on the back of your prescriptions.  
If you have any queries regarding the Prescription Exemption Checking Service you can visit our 'Ask Us' page at [www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/) or email [nhsbsa.pecs@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:nhsbsa.pecs@nhsbsa.nhs.uk) or telephone us on 0300 330 9291.

b)  JCP HACKNEY bdc customer services <[HACKNEY.BDCCUSTOMERSERVICES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK](mailto:HACKNEY.BDCCUSTOMERSERVICES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK)>  
From 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.

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

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| **Personal Independence Payment eligibility and appeals**  One day | •      Introduction and eligibility  •      Understanding the points test  **Suitable for** from basic information to casework/specialist, suitable for anyone including benefit advisors who deal with PIP claims and either do (or want to start doing) Mandatory Reconsiderations and appeals | Island Advice  Island House  Roserton Street  E14 3PG | Fatima Begum  21st June 2018  10am to 4pm |
| **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 Advice  Island House  Roserton Street  E14 3PG | Jo Ellis  12th July 2018  10am to 4pm |

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| **NVQ Level 3 or 4 in Advice and Guidance** – email/phone for information | Accredited qualification for advice workers. NVQ requires preparation of portfolio of work. Observation and assessment of work-based activities. Charge for NVQ’s    •      Level 3 - £1,200 – advisor level  •      Level 4 - £1,600 – caseworker / supervisor level  •      Progression from Level 3 to Level 4 £1,200    NOTE: Employers MAY consider contributing/paying OR if you have 3 years residency in Tower Hamlets you may be eligible for a grant for these costs | Can start any time but funding deadline for LBTH residents is 15thJune |

**4. Other information / Services**

* DWP benefit overpayment recovery guide – attached
* V. Ciorraga-Cruz  [V.Ciorraga-Cruz@thlc.co.uk](mailto:V.Ciorraga-Cruz@thlc.co.uk)  - Tower Hamlets Housing Forum will take place on 14th June 2018 at Tower Hamlets Law Centre (address below my signature) from 2.45 pm to 5.30 – email him if you would like to attend
* WP Newsletter April 2018 - attached
* Local Authority UC Changes / information bulletin - attached

**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’ (i.e. send client to drop in advice session) for assistance. Referrals can be emailed to [admin@legaladvicecentre.org](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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)