**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**

**ADVICE CENTRE MANAGERS: We are carrying out annual update of the THCAN website – please can you check your organisations entry and ensure opening times / service details are correct**

**Also comments, suggestions (compliments ) on the website welcome – by end of February for updates please**

**Free Training Session**

**Housing Costs and Benefits**

* Renting and Homeowners entitlement to help with housing costs – (Universal Credit )
* Whose still entitled to Housing Benefit
* whose entitled, how’s it calculated
* Non-dependent deductions
* Bedroom tax

**Suitable for** Basic course but will assume some knowledge of benefit system

**Venue** Island Advice Centre, Island House, Roserton Street, E14 3PG

**Trainer** Fatima Begum

**Date** 14th March 1-4pm

**Email** jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk to book a place

**Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

**Thursday 7th March 2-4pm** Please let me know if you have a room available to hold the meeting (about 20 participants) – agenda information will be sent out with next information email, let me know if any items you want included

**Benefit Up-dates**

* **3 or more children**  From 1 February 2019, the HB gateway for households with 3 or more children will be closed. All new claims for claimants with more than 3 children should be signposted to UC to make a claim and no longer taken for legacy benefit. Exceptions still apply
* living in specified accommodation
* living in temporary accommodation
* entitled to SDP
* **Severe disability premium** From 16 January 2019, **existing claimants** entitled to an award of an existing benefit that includes the SDP are prevented from naturally migrating to UC following a change of circumstances. In addition, claimants who have a short break in their legacy benefit that received a SDP in the last month, and continue to satisfy the conditions of entitlement to the premium, will be prevented from naturally migrating to UC. These claimants **will continue to receive the relevant legacy benefit(s)** appropriate to their change of circumstance and will only move to UC via managed migration and will, therefore, at that time be eligible for transitional protection; safeguarding their existing benefit entitlement.
* **Exclusion of mixed-age couples from entitlement to pension credit** from 15 May 2019 New legislation has been issued in relation to the exclusion of mixed-age couples, where one has reached state pension age and the other is of working age, from entitlement to pension credit. If a member of a mixed-age couple has entitlement to pension credit or pension-age housing benefit on the day before the appointed day (15 May 2019), entitlement as part of that couple may continue after the appointed day the couple will have to remain on legacy benefits (and no additional pensioner premium award)

**Social Policy/Campaign Information**

We have written on behalf of THCAN to complain about the tribunals hearings service: delays increasing, postponements/adjournments increasing, poor administration – they have requested examples of cases if we want to take it further – please send any examples you have – complaint letter attached

**Benefits and Work Campaign info/stats**

* One third of DLA claimants with a mental health condition get no award at all, when assessed for PIP.
* Instead of cutting costs by 20% as the DWP intended, the introduction of PIP is going to increase costs by 20%.
* 4,600 MORE PIP CLAIMANTS ENTITLED TO ARREARS claimants who had their DLA award stopped after they failed to attend a face-to-face assessment or to provide information in connection with moving to PIP. The upper tribunal found that where good cause had been shown, the claimants should have had their DLA reinstated until a decision was made about their eligibility for PIP. The DWP are now reviewing the cases of all claimants since the date of the decision, 23 November 2017, who failed to attend an assessment or failed to provide evidence but were subsequently found to have good cause.
* UNIVERSAL CREDIT SOFTWARE CAN’T COPE WITH NEW COURT RULING
Cases where claimants are paid monthly and sometimes receive two months’ pay in the same UC assessment period, because of issues such as bank holidays have won court case. The DWP effectively docked the claimants’ income by deciding that they were only entitled to one month’s work allowance for the two pay packets, meaning that the claimants were £192 worse off. Court ruling has required  DWP will not only have to make back payments to affected claimants, they will also now have to do manual calculations for anyone who gets two pay packets in the same month.
* DWP BEGINS MOVING EXISTING PIP CLAIMANTS TO 10 YEAR ‘LIGHT TOUCH’ REVIEWS DWP announced that it has begun deciding which existing PIP claimants will be moved to having only have a ‘light touch’ review every 10 years, instead of a more frequent full review. The light touch reviews will be aimed primarily at claimants who have been awarded the enhanced rates of both components of PIP and whose condition is unlikely to improve.
* ESA TO UC TRANSFER POSTPONED The government is postponing the introduction of regulations for the mass transfer of claimants from legacy benefits such as ESA to UC, in the face of a threatened backbench revolt. Instead, only a pilot transfer of 10,000 claimants will take place this year..

**Information exchange/services**

* LBTH has circulated details in the link below about the **EU settlement scheme** <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council_and_democracy/The_Brexit_Commission/EU_Citizens_Brexit_Toolkit.aspx>
* **Help with Universal Credit Claims** and Maintenance for Tower Hamlets residents now available.  I’ve attached details of Citizens advice and Tower Hamlets Residents Support for UC claimants – this is draft and waiting for time/confirmation – final version will be on THCAN website as a fact sheet
* **Attached job fair** leaflet being provided by BBBC 27th Feb please refer clients to help them to attend on the day
* Tower hamlets council have commissioned a **survey to find out how UC claimants are finding this new benefit**.  It would be good if everyone could encourage or help their client's complete this survey so that LBTH can made aware of all the difficulties that clients are facing with claiming UC.  <https://www.audiencenet.co.uk/towerhamlets/>
* The **Tower Hamlets Housing Advisors forum** was held 31st January (too late to attend this one obviously) if you are interested in attending these please contact Sadaf Mir s.mir@thlc.co.uk

**Specialist Welfare Rights Advisors 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)