**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.  It is available to view (including past information exchanges) on the** [**www.thcan.org.uk**](http://www.thcan.org.uk) **Up-to-date information on advice providers services, factsheets and opening times are also available on the website –feel free to send me information / updates on advice services to included on this**

**Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**See attached minutes on issues (with guidance) that were discussed with DWP UC managers

1 Mandatory Reconsiderations Delays/Process/Not being accepted

2 Housing Costs problems

* Untidy tenancies
* Disputes about who’s responsible for housing costs
* Deductions being made from UC for rent arrears
* Housing costs backdates or change in circumstances
1. Carers Allowance / Carers Element – not being paid
2. Disabled Child Element – not being paid

**Free Training Sessions**

LBTH organisations / volunteers  or paid workers Email:   jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk  to request a place

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Benefit overview**31st March 202010- 4pm | This course provides a basic, general introduction to the benefits system and gives participants foundation upon which further knowledge and skills can be built.* Understand how the benefits system is structured
* Use computer software to complete basic benefit checks
* Be able to advise people on how to make claims and where to go for help with benefit problems
* Have an awareness of welfare reform and universal credit.

**Suitable for** new volunteers, non-advisors, support workers, reception staff  | Account 33 Birkbeck StreetBethnal Green, E2 6JY | Jo EllisTraining Project coordinator |
| **NVQ Level 3 in Advice and Guidance****Information session**19th May 202010am to 1pm | * Are you working or volunteering giving advice and guidance to clients?
* Would you like to obtain an accredited / vocational qualification?

National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) is a work based qualification which recognises the skills and knowledge a person needs to do a job. The candidate needs to demonstrate and prove their competency in Advice and Guidance through written work products, observations in the work place and evidencing their advice abilities, skills and knowledge.  This a developmental qualification, you work at your own pace (with support) through a portfolio, no attendance at training courses is required (although ‘Advice Skills’ course is recommended)Please NOTE NVQ L3 costs £1,200 per candidate.  Candidates will need to obtain funding to do this qualification (the workshop is free and gives information on the qualification and guidance on possible funding sources).  Anyone who has lived in Tower Hamlets for 3 years will be able to apply for funding to cover the fees, if not other options would be self-funding / employer paying for / other grants and donations**Suitable for** advice/information giving advisors (or volunteers) who want to obtain a work relevant qualification   | Account 33 Birkbeck StreetBethnal GreenE2 6JY | Jo EllisTraining Project coordinator |
| **Advice Skills** **For NVQ candidates**9th June10am to 4pm  | Key principles and skills for advice: policy and procedures, structure for initial interview, communication skills, case recording, action plans, referrals **Suitable for** new advisors/volunteers with little or no advice experience, or for anyone who registers for NVQ Level 3 in Advice and Guidance. This session will cover the underpinning knowledge needed to meet the criteria for the NVQ  | Account 33 Birkbeck StreetBethnal GreenE2 6JY | Jo EllisTraining Project coordinator |

**Benefit /Advice Issues Up-dates**

# Alternative 30 December 2019

**Information Exchange**

* **New National Living Wage rate** starts on 1 April 2020 and applies to over 25 yrs old  NLW increasing from £8.21 to £8.72.
* **Gifty Oduro-Anyan is the Youth Outreach Co-ordinator for GamCare**. We run the [BigDeal](https://www.bigdeal.org.uk/) project which serves to provide young people (aged 11-19) with information and support related to gambling. We also provide free training to professionals who work with young people how to recognise problem gambling, conduct brief interventions and run awareness workshops with young people. The purpose of my email is to find out if we could run sessions with your  staff at Tower Hamlets CVS to raise their awareness of problem gambling.

We have an option of two sessions (1 hour or 3 hours) in which the youth facing professionals would to be able to :

-    Identify the impacts, signs, and symptoms of a gambling problem

-    Interact with a young person about problem gambling and screen for it

-    Inform young people about where and how to get help.

Gifty Oduro-Anyan  Youth Outreach Co-ordinator  gifty.oduro-anyan@gamcare.org.uk 0207 801 7005     07366977024

* **Do you support people claiming universal credit in London**? Do you work with people who struggle to access the benefits system (due to disability, language barriers or another reason)? CPAG’s Universal Credit London advice project provides a free advice service and free training to frontline workers who directly support UC claimants living in a London borough. WHO CAN ACCESS THE SERVICE? Advisers or support workers providing free advice or assistance to universal credit claimants living in a London borough. TO CONTACT THE SERVICE Advice: Email: uc-london@cpag.org.uk Call: 020 7812 5221 every Wednesday between 10am-12pm and  2pm-4pm Free UC training: For more information please contact Sabrina Dubash on 020 7812 5220 or sdubash@cpag.org.uk  Free UC training dates for 2020 are:  9th April, 6th July and 12th November 2020  Please see [www.cpag.org.uk/uclondonadvice](http://www.cpag.org.uk/uclondonadvice) for further information. Sabrina Dubash  Welfare Rights Advisor- UC London Advice Project Child Poverty Action Group |30 Micawber Street | London|N1 7TB  Email: sdubash@cpag.org.uk  Tel: 0207 812 5220
* **Notes from the recent tribunal service meeting FYI.**

Admin update about national statistics on appeals from Govt. website (attached) In general the overall number of appeals has reduced and therefore the time for disposing of appeals has reduced.

However there has been a problem with DWP responding to appeals.  HMCTS give DWP 35 days to respond to appeal notice and provide the appeal bundle but currently they are taking 60 days.

Advice from HMCTS is that there is no need for Adviser/appellants to chase this up (unless specific case with exceptional circs) as they are aware of the problem and chasing it up with DWP .

Where no response by DWP after chase up, the case will be listed without the bundle, and be heard on the available evidence. Appellant can provide whatever information and evidence they have.

SSSC1 reform: end to end digital process was due to be in place by Nov 2019, but now target is for March 2020

Evidence sharing with DWP-Online appeal forms: DWP will now have access to relevant case data so no need for HMCTS to post it to them which will mean DWP can access it quicker. This is currently for PIP appeals and from Feb for ESA.

Paper appeals are scanned in bulk

Judges interlocutory work is now done digitally too.

Digital appeals are not processed in Bradford

Travel costs for hearings- appellant has to call the contact centre and get 2 quotes and present evidence of mobility issues…this can be existing evidence from within the bundle-the call centre or administrative staff cannot be expected to look through bundle, appellant is to provide evidence...in practice they should not have to pay for extra evidence, things like blue badge or patient summary, or existing medical evidence in support of appeal can be accepted.

Quotes are checked, taxi fares can only be claimed under 2 circs-see attached guidance.

No cash at venue-must claim at least 14 days before hearing if need the money in advance, otherwise have to claim after-must show receipts

Payments are made by bacs

Advisers asked if the process can be made more clear and started from an earlier stage e.g. from the SSCS1

PIP and ESA appeals-*track* your appeal will be changed to *manage* your appeals online

You can now upload evidence digitally

DWP-trialling this with UC but still early stages

Discussed Code of Conduct for judicial members (after complaint about Doctor on panel)

Panel members take oath and HMCTS provide regular training, and appraisals every year for judicial members

There is a judicial complaints process and regional Judge looks into this

Telephone hearings can be requested at Sutton (if appellant can’t attend in person and wants to give oral evidence), but no domiciliary hearings

* **Tower Hamlets Councils Enterprise Team** - aim to encourage and support enterprise and entrepreneurial activity to increase opportunity, prosperity and mobility in Tower Hamlets, the Enterprise Team is developing a training initiative for local residents who wish to set up an enterprise or have an interest in becoming entrepreneurs. Delivered in partnership with a local support agency, 1-2-1 business support is also available for start-ups. Individuals who complete the start-up programme will have the opportunity to receive advice on accessing business funding from a range of sources.Helping start-up and small businesses find suitable workspaces *We also aim to offer a signposting and advice service for businesses on a range of issues such as: licensing, planning advice services, starting a business and other generic support.* If you would like to meet to find out more, or you know of anyone who this may be of interest to, please get in contact. My email address is abu.khan@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Place Directorate,  London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Employment & Skills Centre, 55 Upper Bank Street, London E14 5GR, tel: 020 7364 0739, web: [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/enterprise](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/enterprise)

**Vacancies**

* Peppe Rella info@vcth.org.uk **We are recruiting a Volunteering Advisor** £31,435 (£15,718 part-time) Are you a great advocate for volunteering? Would you like to help Tower Hamlets residents and workers find the perfect volunteering opportunity?  We are seeking a temporary, part-time Volunteering Advisor to join our small, friendly team in Spitalfields, E1. You will have great interpersonal skills, and previous experience of providing advice to disadvantaged people in a professional setting. You will feel passionately about making volunteering inclusive and open to all. Strong admin skills and the ability to monitor projects effectively are a must. We are looking for someone who is available for 6 months, commencing March 2020, and able to work 17.5hrs per week during office hours (Monday to Thursday). Deadline for applications is 10am on Monday 24 February 2020.
* Haringey Migrant Support Centre is recruiting a Caseworker for Migrant Families and Young People.  Full details, a job description and an application form are attached to this email. This post is part of the "Moving Out of Hardship" project (funded by the National Lottery Community Fund), which is a joint project between Haringey Migrant Support Centre, Hackney Migrant Centre and Coram Children's Legal Centre. The post holder will work alongside an Immigration Advisor employed by CCLC who provides weekly outreach advice consultations and follow-up support to vulnerable clients. The Caseworker will guide clients on addressing immediate difficulties around housing and destitution.  This is a part-time position for two days a week with a salary of £27,938 (pro rata). The closing date for applications is Tuesday 31st March at 5pm, interviews are to be held in the w/c Monday 13th April and the anticipated start date is the w/c Monday 18th May.  Applications for this post should be sent by email to joinus@haringeymsc.org (please write “Caseworker recruitment” in the header).

**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)