**Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) is a partnership of local advice centres that work together to ensure Tower Hamlets residents have access to free, high quality advice and representation in social welfare law  (welfare benefits, debt, housing , employment, immigration, etc) Our website**[**www.thcan.org.uk**](http://www.thcan.org.uk/)**has information on advice providers services, factsheets and contact details**

**Items in this months information exchange**

1.      Welfare rights advisors meeting / minutes /action points

2.      FREE  Training sessions October/November  (Resident Support Scheme, Persona Independence Payment, Universal Credit)

3.      Information and resources

4.      Specialist benefit advice workers contacts

**1.        Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

Date of next meeting 3/12/20 2pm  Please email me to request the zoom meeting id/password

Minutes 2/10/20 - complaints/escalation process (DWP/CPAG representatives) - attached

September meeting action points

* **DWP Problems/Complaints/escalation process**  DWP Parvez requested details of complaints that advisors had made that had received no response – sent these to him and have had confirmation that 2 have been resolved, one in progress but is getting responded to.  DWP Parvez agreed to send details of contacts for complaints/escalation of complaints – I’m still waiting for this information but on attached minutes I have detailed one that was sent by Samantha DWP

Martin Williams CPAG recommends use of threat of Judicial Review and use of template letters where issues are not resolved in a reasonable time (minutes details this info - attached) – this is a very successful way of dealing with benefit delays/problems – everyone who has used this had 100% success rate

* **Advice Services Provision**  All advice agencies represented (IAC, BBBC, CAB, Toynbee, Apasen, Age UK, Tackling Poverty), continue to provide advice by phone/digitally however we are also (quietly!!) providing occasional client face to face appointments where it has been impossible to advise otherwise.  Some clients are so digitally excluded/difficult to advise without face to face that although we are not promoting it, a few clients are/have been given appointments

**2.        Free** **Training**

 Please email me for zoom id and password for UC or PIP training - Isabelle for the RSS one

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| **Resident Support Scheme**22nd October 1pm – 2.30pm | * **Suitable for** – anyone dealing with clients who may be in financial hardship.

The session will cover an overview of the RSS in Tower Hamlets, as well as detailed information on issues such as how to make applications, eligibility criteria, examples of good applications, how items are awarded and application questions that are often missed. You will also be able to learn how to become an approved partner and the benefits of that. Email:  Isabelle.Rothstein@childrenssociety.org.uk for teams link | Ali Ahmed     LBTHRob Iredale  Northgate |
| **Personal Independence Payment**5th November11am to 1.30 pm | * **Suitable for**  - advisors and support staff that deal with people with disability benefits

The session will cover the criteria, eligibility and claims process for PIP, this is a disability benefit for working age clients – a vital additional source of additional income for people with daily living or mobility problems | Fatima BegumWelfare Benefit Specialist IAC |
| **Universal Credit** Zoom training session23rd November 11am to 1pm |  General information about Universal Credit  including: claims, conditionality, sanctions •        **Suitable for** basic session but suitable for anyone including benefit advisors  | Fatima BegumIsland Advice |

 **3.**   **Information and Resources**

**Help with Tax Problems**  TaxAid: [www.taxaid.org.uk](http://www.taxaid.org.uk)  and Tax Help for Older People: [www.taxvol.org.uk](http://www.taxvol.org.uk)  support vulnerable, low-income, gig economy workers and older people still working who struggle with tax across the UK.  We can help you support the vulnerable people who contact you take control of their finances by submitting their 2019/2020 tax returns this autumn rather than waiting until the January deadline. Signposting your beneficiaries and clients to our free charitable tax service when they cannot afford paid tax advice.

**New package to support and enforce self-isolation** [A new package has been announced to support and enforce self-isolation](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-package-to-support-and-enforce-self-isolation?utm_source=9bbf854f-0ede-4ae1-a21e-4e4b2c859357&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) . People are now required by law to self-isolate, supported by a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result

**Self-Employment Income Support Scheme   £500 Self-isolation payments** a [£500 lump sum to encourage compliance with self-isolation](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=d131aa1742&e=588bae1b2e). The payment is for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result of self-isolating.

Local Authorities have now been given a [briefing document on how these payments will be administered](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=7e86f2dba0&e=588bae1b2e).

The scheme will be for those asked to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020, with a system aiming to be in place by 12th October. Where necessary, payments will be backdated to the 28th. Those asked to self-isolate before this date will not be eligible. This scheme will be run until 31 January 2021, under review. The £500 will be paid in a lump sum. It can be claimed more than once if the claimant has to repeatedly self-isolate. Applicants will be able to apply online, or via telephone for the digitally excluded.

This may just be an oversimplification of ‘paid’ and we will await further information.

**IT Training** Island House Community Centre is a  UK online centre delivering I.T training for anyone wanting to learn digital skills, running 2 classes a week, 1 for total beginners, and a drop in for anyone to use laptops, or complete quick and easy bite size courses on Make it Click. Seeing people 1-2-1 in IHCC by appointment please can you promote these resources to your network , families etc, all FREE and easy

Cathy  Weir cathy.weir@island-house.org

**Community Interpreting Level 1 Course** commencing 6th Nov 2020. This Level 1 course will be delivered online via Zoom every Friday between 10:00am-12:15pm, we have plans to progress onto a Level 2 course in January. Zubair Ahmed  Zubair.Ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk

All details on the course is available on the attached leaflet

Constant changes are hard to keep up with but this is a basic/simple to understand website for clients/support workers to do benefit checks/look for grants and financial support when furloughed, shielding, self employed, employed and shielding <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support/benefits-and-coronavirus-help-for-employees>

**4.        Advice Services**

 Tower Hamlets Advice benefit advice services details  <http://thcan.org.uk/covid-19-emergency-advice-provision/>

**Specialist** advice providers

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|  **Organisation** | **E-mail** | **Tel Advice** |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | advice@eastendcab.org.uk | 0203 855 4472 |
| Island Advice Centre | admin@island-advice.org.uk | 0207 987 9379 Mon to Fri 10am to 4pm |
| Legal Advice Centre | admin@legaladvicecentre.london | 0203 606 0372 |
| Tower Hamlets Law Centre | info@thlc.co.uk | 0207 538 4909  9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri  |