

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 has information on advice providers services, factsheets and contact details

- 1.** Welfare Rights Advisors Forum: 9/9/21 minutes attached, next meeting 25/11/2021
- 1.** Free Training Sessions September

11th Oct Medical Priority Workshop
15th Oct Limited Capability for Work
21st oct breathing space
30th Nov Money Management/Energy Workshop

- 2.** Benefit Updates
- 3.** New Projects, Services and Resources Information
- 4.** Vacancies; Legal Advice Centre (solicitor apprenticeship scheme)
- 5.** Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum

This network is for advice workers in Tower Hamlets. 9/9/21 meeting minutes attached.

Next meeting 25th November 2pm – if you have already attended in the past, you will be sent a link. If you have not previously attended, please email request for link to jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk

Issues: High volume of need and lack of capacity for form filling, especially PIP, all agencies now delivering face to face by appointment for most vulnerable clients. Presentation on who is eligible for Severe Disability Premium and Limited Capability for Work additional money (info attached). Healthy start presentation (info attached)

2. Free Training

Please email me to arrange a place – all courses are delivered on **Zoom** and are free to anyone working/volunteering in Tower Hamlets – places are limited

Course name, date and time	Course details – Zoom Courses	Trainer
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<p>11th Oct 10-11am</p>	<p>Medical Priority Workshop Tower Hamlets Transfers and Waiting List Suitable for: basic course/information no advice knowledge needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information on waiting list: who can join, how to join, priorities & bands, bidding, average waiting times • Medical Priority; who is eligible for priority on the housing register due to a medical condition, how and whether there is merit to make an application for medical priority, criteria, assessment (and 'bands) for medical awards • Cases: Examples of successful and failed applications, how, when and where to make effective referrals for medical priority, to THCAN advisors and factsheet 	<p>Shuhel Alom</p>
<p>15th Oct 10-12.30</p>	<p>Limited Capability for Work <u>Suitable for</u> – basic course for advice workers/support workers with some knowledge of the benefit system.</p> <p>The WCA is the assessment is the test that DWP use to assess Universal Credit (and legacy / new style Employment Support Allowance) claimants ability to work or look for work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work capability assessment process and procedure • How the 'points' system works • Tips on completing ESA50 and UC50 forms (work capability assessment form) • How to challenge decisions and where to refer in Tower Hamlets 	<p>Fatima Begum</p>
<p>21st Oct 10-11am</p>	<p>Breathing Space is a new scheme which places a temporary hold on creditor enforcement action to give clients with mental health problems and debts time to seek advice about their debt and find a suitable debt solution.</p> <p>A workshop for anyone seeing clients who have debt problems covers: who is eligible, procedure and where/how to refer suitable 'breathing space' clients</p>	<p>Hien Dinh</p>
<p>30th November 10am to 1pm</p>	<p>Money Management/Energy Workshop</p> <p>Workshops: We deliver free energy workshops, which are fun and interactive and teach participants how to manage their energy costs and maintain a warm home.</p> <p>Topics covered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding which appliances cost more to run • Understanding bills • Reading meters • How to calculate energy costs • How to reduce damp & condensation in the home • Understanding how heating controls and systems work • How to switch supplier/tariff to reduce costs • And more! 	<p>Sharifa Khanom Bromley by Bow Centre</p>

3. Benefit Updates

Citizens Advice Info

Carer's Allowance

Covid-19 related Carer's Allowance easements ended on 31 August 2021.

£20 pw uplift to UC

This ends on 7 September. The last assessment period in which the uplift will apply will therefore be from 6 September to 5 October - you can check [Reg.2\(1\)](#).

Afghan relocation

[Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme](#) has been announced and further details will be expected soon. People coming to the UK on this scheme will be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and so will be eligible for all benefits. Those arriving under ARAP will now be granted ILR immediately and as noted people already relocated to the UK under ARAP will be able to apply free of charge to convert their temporary leave into indefinite leave.

Recoverable hardship payments (RHPs)

Those sanctioned under Universal Credit (UC) can apply for a RHP of 60% of the sanction reduction. However unlike hardship payments payable to those sanctioned on JSA and ESA who do not come under the UC system, UC RHPs are recoverable. Following a [judicial review challenge](#) by the Public Law Project (PLP) the DWP conceded that it had discretion to waive recovery of a RHP, including in cases where the sanction decision had been successfully appealed (as was the case in PLP's challenge). You can read their [note for advisers](#).

Work capability and PIP assessment providers

The DWP [has confirmed](#) that it has extended the existing contract with Maximus UK Services Ltd to provide work capability assessments for employment and support allowance (ESA) and universal credit for an additional 2 years to 31 July 2023. The DWP has also confirmed that it has extended the 4 contracts to deliver PIP health assessment services across the UK to 31 July 2023, through the existing providers Atos Healthcare and Capita

DWP Newsletter DWP - Information/contacts

Jobcentre and UC Enquiry Line Numbers

UC customers must be directed to their online journal or the UC Helpline 0800 328 5644.

For enquiries relating to - Income Support; Employment and Support Allowance including New Style Employment and Support Allowance; and Jobseeker's Allowance including New Style Jobseeker's Allowance - customers should be signposted to either:

JEL 0800169 0190 for jobcentre enquiries

BEL 0800 169 0310 for benefit/payment enquiries

The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) toolkit:

Information to individuals and organisations that support PIP and DLA claimants

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-personal-independence-payment-toolkit-for-partners/the-personal-independence-payment-pip-toolkit>

PIP Consultations for London: PIP consultations
<https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk/consultation-centres/>

Maximus - carries out assessments on behalf of the DWP.
<https://www.chdauk.co.uk/assessment-process>

Universal Credit Toolkit: information about Universal Credit
<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit-toolkit-for-partner-organisations>

UK Online: All 3,000 UK online Centre's partners offer FREE or low cost access to computers and the internet, plus help and support to use them
<https://www.gov.uk/ukonline-centre-internet-access-computer-training>

Finding Work

Job Help website an external Government website with a range of information on finding a job, applying for opportunities and developing skills.

Find a Job website an external website with nearly 65,500 vacancies

Civil Service Jobs Search for jobs in the Civil Service.

4. New Projects /services and resources in Tower Hamlets

➤ **Taking Control of Your Life (TCOYL)**

The "Taking Control Of Your Life" (TCOYL) project provides issue based action planning support to local disabled residents.

Some things we have helped with:

- Identifying and accessing local services in the community.
- Finding funding for therapies, white goods, clothing, and adaptations.
- Personal Health Budgets.
- Accessing and getting funding for sport activities.
- Help with getting around the community, local parking permits, blue badges, mobility schemes.
- Becoming more employment ready.
- Setting up a business/social enterprise.
- Accessing educational support.

If you wish to refer or discuss this project, please contact Dhwani Shah,
Dhwani.shah@real.org.uk

➤ **CATCH Disability Hate Crime Advocacy (<https://www.catch-hatecrime.org.uk/>)**

Real is part of the Communities Against Hate (CATCH) partnership in London. CATCH is a group of charities working to end hate crime. We're here to give specialist advice and help to people targeted with violence, abuse or harassment

because of their race, religion, disability, sexuality or gender identity. CATCH is open to anyone experiencing hate in London.

How can we help?

- provide a safe space to talk
- explore the options available to you
- advise on your rights and how to use them
- support you to report to police if you choose to
- help you access other support and services you need, such as counselling or housing.
- We will never pressure you into taking any action you aren't comfortable with, and we won't share information about you without your permission.

If you would like to talk to us, you can call us directly on 020 7001 2177 or emailreal.advocacy@real.org.uk. Or you can refer through the CATCH website here: <https://www.catch-hatecrime.org.uk/>

- **Campaign to respond to DWP Health and Disability Green Paper** I am emailing from [Z2K](#) – an anti-poverty charity that provides welfare and housing advice, and uses the evidence from this Casework to campaign for change.

In July, the Department for Work and Pensions finally published its long overdue consultation on health and disability benefits – the Health and Disability Green Paper. Z2K's opinion is that this Green Paper fails to propose any fundamental or meaningful change to health and disability benefits and focuses too much on reducing benefits spending and pushing people into work.

We've launched a [campaign action](#) which allows people to quickly respond to this Green Paper – with an Easy Read guide for doing so also provided. Our response template can be edited, so people can insert their own experiences and feedback if they would like. After responding to the Green Paper, there is also then the option to send a briefing to their MP on the inadequacy of this consultation.

We're reaching out to you because we want as many with experience of the system responding to this Green Paper and flagging its inadequacies with their MP as possible. We would be grateful, therefore, if you could you share this action with your networks: <https://z2k.eaction.org.uk/RespondGreenPaper>. The deadline for responding is the 11th of October.

- **The Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre**

We are reaching out regarding our **Social Welfare Benefits Clinic**. Through this clinic the Queen Mary Legal Advice Centre offers free form filling assistance for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims and assistance with completing the work capability questionnaire for Universal Credit and Employment Support Allowance (ESA). This clinic runs as a virtual drop-in service on Monday evenings between 17:30 – 19:30. Our first drop-in session will be on 18th October 2021.

Please find attached our promotional material for you to look at which lists all relevant dates for this drop-in service. We would be very grateful if you could display this on your notice boards, or mention our service in your newsletter.

Clients can contact us via telephone 020 7882 3931 or email lac@qmul.ac.uk to book an appointment with us.

➤ **Eastend Energy Fit Project**

Bromley by Bow Centre have capacity to take on cases and can offer telephone or face to face appointments. We can support clients from any London borough.

The project can:

- Help clear priority utility debts e.g. gas, electric and water
- Purchase essential household items e.g. washing machine, cooker
- Help access other sources of funding and support e.g. Warm Home Discount Scheme, Water sure
- Provide energy efficiency advice (LED light bulbs)
- Fuel top up vouchers (subject to availability/funding)
- Help with practical actions and solutions e.g. tariff checks, payment plans, accessing the priority register, meter moves, free gas and safety checks
- Income maximisation (applying for additional benefits)

Attached is our leaflet, you can pass our details direct to your clients or you can email their names, contact details and a bit of blurb on their issues to: eastendenergyfit@bbbc.org.uk

5. Vacancies

- Legal Advice Centre: Temp Caseworker – attached JD contact Shah Begum shah@legaladvicecentre.london
- Please share these vacancies among your networks. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/eastlondon/about-us/work-for-us/>
Adam Pervoe Age UK

6. Advice Services

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

All advice providers are continuing to assist clients through telephone and digital means (video booth, email, whatsapp, zoom, etc) some face to face is now being offered

Specialist advice providers

All the advice providers listed on www.thcan.org.uk provide benefit advice and help with form filling. Complex/appeal/specialist advice is available at the following organisations

Legal Advice Centre - have capacity to take on any type of First Tier Tribunal welfare benefit cases, please refer by emailing benefits@legaladvicecentre.london or completing the form: <https://legaladvicecentre.london/benefit-appeal-representation/>

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
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