

**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**

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum: meeting 25/11/2021 information
2. Free Training Sessions: medical priority, housing, welfare rights overview
3. Benefit Updates
4. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
5. Vacancies; Disability advocate
6. Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

### **1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

This network is for advice workers in Tower Hamlets. We have quarterly meetings to discuss 'advice issues' Information from 25/11/2021 meeting

- 1, **THCAN referrals portal** - contact Sarah Sauvat [sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk) in you would like to be included or be able to access the referrals port check out [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) to see list of agencies (and other information factsheets/etc)

- 2, **Community Connect**

<https://www.towerhamletsconnect.org/>

Telephone: 0300 303 6070

email: [enquiry@towerhamletsconnect.org](mailto:enquiry@towerhamletsconnect.org)

Opening hours - 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

- 3, **information for social care financial assessments**

Care Act statutory guidance, chapters 8 and Annex B-E:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

This includes lists of income and capital that is involved, and examples of Disability Related Expenditure. Specific info about DRE:

[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Disability\\_Related\\_Expense\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Disability_Related_Expense_Guidance.pdf)

The council's page on financial assessments (some content is out of date):  
[https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health\\_social\\_care/services\\_for\\_older\\_people/care\\_financial\\_assessments.aspx](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health_social_care/services_for_older_people/care_financial_assessments.aspx)

The Dept of Health and Social Care information on Minimum Income Guarantee:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-care-charging-for-local-authorities-2021-to-2022/social-care-charging-for-care-and-support-local-authority-circular-lacdhsc2021>

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## 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
	NOTE: housing sessions are currently FULL, there is a waiting list so if anyone drops out places may become available, also we will repeat them if there is enough interest	
6 <sup>th</sup> December 10 -11am	<p><b>Medical Priority Workshop Tower Hamlets Transfers and Waiting List</b> Suitable for: basic course/information no advice knowledge needed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>General information on waiting list:</b> who can join, how to join, priorities &amp; bands, bidding, average waiting times</li> <li>• <b>Medical Priority;</b> 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</li> <li>• <b>Cases:</b> Examples of successful and failed applications, how, when and where to make effective referrals for medical priority, to THCAN advisors and factsheet</li> </ul>	Shuhel Alom
18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021 10am to 4.30 pm Face to Face Account 3 Birkbeck Street	<p><b>Homelessness Duties - full day/face to face session</b></p> <p>Aimed at trainee advisers and others who would like to develop their knowledge, this webinar provides an introduction to homelessness including local authority duties to homeless people. Delegates learn to: identify possible</p>	NHAS Trainer TBC

	<p>housing options for clients; describe some of the key causes and effects of homelessness; identify the statutory duties owed to homeless people. The training also considers when staff may need to consult a specialist or refer a client to another agency, and identifies resources available, including NHAS consultancy (for NHAS eligible organisations).</p>	
<p><b>25<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b>  <b>10am to 4.30 pm</b>  <b>Face to Face</b>  <b>Account 3</b>  <b>Birkbeck Street</b></p>	<p><b>Housing Status and Security of Tenure - full day session</b>  Suitable for trainee advisers and others who would like to develop their housing knowledge, this webinar introduces housing status and security of tenure. The training covers: identifying a client's housing status and explain why this is so important; identifying what stage in possession proceedings a client has reached and common documents associated with them; identifying situations where a possession order or eviction may be avoidable and identify when urgent action may be needed. It also considers when staff may need to consult a specialist or refer a client to another agency, and identifies resources available, including NHAS consultancy (for NHAS eligible organisations).</p>	<p>NHAS Trainer  TBC</p>
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup></b>  <b>February</b>  <b>10am to 1pm</b></p>	<p><b>Benefits Overview 2 Day Zoom/Digital</b>  Basic course no experience necessary, suitable for anyone working with clients / service users needing welfare rights advice. By the end of the course, you will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete benefits check and a 'better-off' calculation</li> <li>2. Distinguish between means-tested and contribution-based and non-contribution-based benefits</li> <li>3. Understand the principles underlying Universal Credit (UC)</li> <li>5. Be aware of legacy benefits and be aware of what could trigger a claim for UC for legacy claimants</li> <li>6. Understand how housing costs are supported by the benefits System</li> <li>7. Benefits for specific groups: Sick and Disabled, Young People, Students, Families, Self Employed People</li> <li>8. Personal Independence Payments</li> <li>9. What to do if the DWP get a decision wrong</li> <li>10. Useful resources and where to refer</li> </ol>	<p>Jo Ellis  Island Advice Centre</p>

**Direct Payments workshop for clients.** Want to be on direct payments but don't know where to start? Or maybe you're on direct payments already and you're not sure if you're getting the best out of it? If you or someone you care for gets help from social services, you can apply for direct payments. These let you choose and buy the services you need yourself, instead of getting them from your council. **Held over Zoom, this free workshop will feature a guest panel with a live Q&A and cover:**

- The start to end process on direct payments – what are they, how to apply and more.
- Tips and tricks for getting the most out of your direct payments.
- Your responsibilities with direct payments.
- Where to get help and support.

The forum will take place on 01.12.2021 from 11am at till 12:30pm.

To sign up for find out more, please do not hesitate to contact us on 07458 304616 or 07305811946 or email [TCOYL@real.org.uk](mailto:TCOYL@real.org.uk). Alternatively you can book directly via our Eventbrite [here](#).

### **3. Benefit Updates**

- **DWP statistics show a 'sharp rise' in UC sanction decisions**  
From April 2021 face-to-face interventions resumed in jobcentres. The resultant increase in adverse sanction decisions can be seen in the sharp rise and in July 2021 there were 16,000 adverse sanction decisions.' In May 2021, there were under 2,000.
- **Increase in UC work allowance and reduction of taper**  
In force from 24 November 2021, [the Universal Credit \(Work Allowance and Taper\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) provide for a reduction in UC taper rate from 63% to 55% together with an increase in the lower work allowance from £293 to £335 pm and an increase in the higher work allowance from £515 to £557 pm. For claimants already entitled to Universal Credit on 24 November, the changes apply for any assessment period that ends on or after that date. So the earliest assessment period that could be affected will be from 25 October to 24 November.
- **Adviser Online** Earlier this month Fiona Seymour published a new article on what happens to a carer's Income Support claim when the disabled person they care for loses their disability benefit. You can read [UC or not UC? That is the question on Adviser Online](#).
- **Mandatory vaccinations - care home regulations are now in force**  
On 11 November, the [law changed to make vaccinations mandatory in English care homes](#). Since then, the benefits team have already seen cases where staff have been dismissed for refusing vaccinations. These clients are looking to claim benefits and advisers are, understandably, questioning whether or not they can be sanctioned.
- **New DWP guidance for claimants without a status under the European Union Settlement Scheme** The DWP have issued new guidance to their decision makers. [ADM 19-21](#) and [DMG memo 14/21](#) cover how a claimant can continue to be entitled to benefits, while awaiting a settlement scheme decision. These packs would be useful to refer to if a client provides their certificate of application but still gets

rejected on settlement grounds. The Expert Advice team have recently updated/published 2 articles that may be of interest: Carlos Hagi's article on [Benefit Entitlement for EEA/Swiss Nationals and their Family Members](#) Djamilla Hitchins' article [The EU Settlement Scheme — which family members can still apply?](#)

- **Sanctioning those on new style benefits**

'up to now, DWP has not applied sanctions to new style benefits, however, a sanctions process is being introduced which will enable this to happen'.

- **Disabled students and Universal Credit (UC)**

The government has issued new regulations that could make it harder for disabled students to qualify for UC. Claimants who are 'receiving education' are generally unable to qualify for UC, although there are exceptions. An exception currently applies to students who receive a disability benefit and have been found to have limited capability for work (LCW) or limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA). For UC claims made on or after 15 December 2021, this exception will only apply to students who both: get the disability benefit have been determined to have LCW or LCWRA before they started receiving education This is more restrictive than the current exception, which requires disabled students whose course has already started to have had a determination of LCW or LCWRA before the date of their UC claim.

#### **4. New Projects /services and resources in Tower Hamlets**

- The Support for Migrant Victims Scheme is now taking referrals, it will provide support to victims of domestic and other forms of gender-related abuse who are subject to the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) Rule. Support provided includes:
  - Safe accommodation for up to 12 weeks. There will also be discretion to award an additional 4 weeks of funds in exceptional cases of hardship.
  - Weekly subsistence payments calculated in line with the current rate of support for asylum seekers.
  - IDVA support and other appropriate befriending and welfare assistance service to improve safety and well-being outcomes for survivors.
  - Signposting to qualified immigration law practitioners to provide advice and representation on settlement options.

**For referral pathway, read leaflet attached. Please circulate this widely.**

#### **5. Vacancies**

- Hate crime advocate position on behalf of Choice in Hackney attached
- Age UK volunteer and network coordinator <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/eastlondon/about-us/work-for-us/>

#### **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](http://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](mailto:benefits@legaladvicecentre.london) or completing the form: <https://legaladvicecentre.london/benefit-appeal-representation/>

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>E-mail</b>	<b>Tel Advice</b>
Citizens Advice Bureau	<a href="mailto:advice@eastendcab.org.uk">advice@eastendcab.org.uk</a>	0203 855 4472
Island Advice Centre	<a href="mailto:admin@island-advice.org.uk">admin@island-advice.org.uk</a>	0207 987 9379 Mon to Fri 10am
Legal Advice Centre	<a href="mailto:admin@legaladvicecentre.london">admin@legaladvicecentre.london</a>	0203 606 0372
Tower Hamlets Law Centre	<a href="mailto:info@thlc.co.uk">info@thlc.co.uk</a>	0207 538 4909 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri