

**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: Next meeting 25/11/2021
- 1.** Free Training Sessions September (medical priority, money management)
- 2.** Benefit Updates
- 3.** New Projects, Services and Resources Information
- 4.** Vacancies; Legal Advice Centre / Look Ahead / Zacchaeus Project
- 5.** Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

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

**Next meeting 25<sup>th</sup> November 2pm**

If you have attended an advisors forum in the past, you will be sent a link. If you have not previously attended, email request for link to [jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk) Issues:

1. Referrals:
  - The THCAN referral portal now has 21 organisations using the resource (including advice centres, social prescribers, schools), Sarah from IAC will do a quick demonstration and answer questions, if your agency is not already signed up to the portal it will be the opportunity to consider doing so.
  - Tower Hamlets Connect (formerly Local Link) Age UK has recently been awarded the lead for this advice funding and they will introduce the new service
2. Social Care assessments information – Rowan from Real will do a presentation on how LBTH assesses service users for social care costs

## **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
<p><b>30<sup>th</sup> November</b> <b>10am to 1pm</b></p>	<p><b>Money Management/Energy Workshop</b></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"> <li>• Understanding which appliances cost more to run</li> <li>• Understanding bills</li> <li>• Reading meters</li> <li>• How to calculate energy costs</li> <li>• How to reduce damp &amp; condensation in the home</li> <li>• Understanding how heating controls and systems work</li> <li>• How to switch supplier/tariff to reduce costs</li> <li>• And more!</li> </ul>	<p>Sharifa Khanom Bromley by Bow Centre</p>
<p><b>6<sup>th</sup> Dec</b> <b>10 -11am</b></p>	<p><b>Medical Priority Workshop Tower Hamlets Transfers and Waiting List</b></p> <p>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>	<p>Shuhel Alom</p>

### 3. Benefit Updates

#### Universal Credit

- The taper rate that applies to earnings in Universal Credit will be reduced from 63% to 55%

- The work allowance will be increased by £500 a year for households with children or where a household member has limited capability for work
- The temporary increase in the surplus earnings threshold to £2,500 will continue until April 2023 when it will be reduced to £300.
- These changes should be introduced by 1 December 2021.

**Extension to coronavirus related provisions ESA:** those affected by coronavirus and who meet other eligibility conditions can continue to be treated as having limited capability for work for ESA without submitting a fit note

**Independent Case Examiner (ICE) reports** ‘steady stream’ of cases where claimants are misadvised by the DWP to claim Universal Credit (UC)

**End of working tax credit ‘working hours’ easement**

An easement for Working Tax Credit (WTC), which allows claimants whose working hours are reduced due to coronavirus to be treated as working their normal hours, will be lifted from 25 November 2021.

**Post Office card accounts** HMRC has confirmed it will no longer make tax credit or child benefit payments into Post Office card accounts from 30 November 2021.

**Upper Tribunal decision - engaging with others (Personal Independence Payment (PIP) - activity 9)** CPIP/1627/2020 is a helpful Upper Tribunal decision for claimants who can engage with others but only in a certain setting. The claimant was on the autistic spectrum. There was evidence they could engage with others when visiting a Warhammer shop and participating in gaming events. The First-tier Tribunal (FTT) concluded that they could socialise adequately. The Upper Tribunal allowed the claimant’s appeal finding that the FTT had placed too much weight on evidence of what the claimant could do. They had failed to consider whether the claimant was capable of engaging with people more generally. Advisers will find this decision helpful in challenging decisions where a claimant has problems engaging with others but has been denied points under PIP activity 9 because they can manage the activity in specific circumstances.

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

- We are here to help people with suicidal thoughts and feelings; Attached information Mind in Tower Hamlets and Newham
- NEC Fuel Advice Bulletin We have made substantial updates to Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills.
- Useful Pension Credit Information DWP guide
- Ali Halil <[ahalil@eastendcab.org.uk](mailto:ahalil@eastendcab.org.uk)> **Subject:** RE: Windrush fund from CAB

- We have a fund available for any people affected by Windrush and we would really like to distribute the money. If you have any client that you feel would be eligible please let us know. Citizens Advice Eastend 32 Greatorex Street E1 5NP
- Tel 0207 247 1050/ temp contact 0203 855 4472
- BBBC survey want to get people from diverse backgrounds to inform about how they have been impacted during the pandemic. There is a £15 incentive for participants who engage in the survey. **Tahmina Begum**

## 5. Vacancies

- Zacchaeus Project is recruiting for a Advice and Guidance Co-ordinator. Please find more information attached
- Mental Health Support Worker) fixed-term contract for 1 year with possibility of becoming permanent. You can apply for the vacancy by following the below link. <https://jobs.lookahead.org.uk/>
- **Law Centre Senior Administrator Full Time Up to £25,000 p.a.** apply, please download the recruitment pack from our website – [www.thlc.co.uk/jobs](http://www.thlc.co.uk/jobs) and return the application form to [recruitment@thlc.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@thlc.co.uk) by **Sunday 24 October 2021**.

## 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/>

Organisation	E-mail	Tel Advice
--------------	--------	------------

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