

Happy new year to you all 😊

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: next meeting 3/3/2022
2. Free Training Sessions: welfare rights overview, Understanding Homelessness & Housing: Local Authority Duties, Employment Rights
1. Benefit Updates
2. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
3. Vacancies;
4. Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum

This network is for advice workers in Tower Hamlets. Anyone who has previously attended will be sent a ling for the next meeting – if you want to attend and are not already on this list please send me an email to request. Also suggestions for training/information/speakers. Minutes and information on past meetings is available on [Advice Agencies Information - THCAN](#)

The next meeting will be Thursday 3rd March 2pm to 3.30pm and the topic will be council tax reduction and recovery issues – representatives from the council tax team

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
Benefits Overview 2 Day Zoom/Digital	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: 1. Complete benefits check and a 'better-off'	Jo Ellis Island Advice Centre

<p>1st and 8th February 10am to 1pm</p>	<p>calculation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Distinguish between means-tested and contribution-based and non-contribution-based benefits 3. Understand the principles underlying Universal Credit (UC) 5. Be aware of legacy benefits and be aware of what could trigger a claim for UC for legacy claimants 6. Understand how housing costs are supported by the benefits System 7. Benefits for specific groups: Sick and Disabled, Young People, Students, Families, Self Employed People 8. Personal Independence Payments 9. What to do if the DWP get a decision wrong 10. Useful resources and where to refer 	
<p>Understanding Homelessness & Housing: Local Authority Duties</p> <p>Webinar 10.30 – 12 17th February</p>	<p>Aim: To provide an introduction to local authority homelessness duties</p> <p>This webinar will cover: ✓ the duties owed to homeless people by local authorities ✓ the five tests of homelessness using case studies ✓ identify when accommodation duties are triggered and what this means</p> <p>Suitable for advisers who want an introduction to homelessness and local authority duties, so they are aware of the legislation. It is aimed at those with little knowledge so is not suitable for those who are experienced advisers and are involved in dealing with homelessness on a day to day basis as part of their role.</p>	<p>NHAS Webinar Hosted by Island Advice email jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk to book a place</p>
<p>Employment Rights/Law</p> <p>8th March 10.30 to 12.30</p>	<p>Basic course no experience necessary, useful for generalist advisors who want to identify when a client has an employment right</p> <p>By the end of the course learners will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a client’s employment status • List the main legislation underpinning employment law • Understand the difference between contractual and statutory rights • Explain the basic rights conferred by employment law and how the law works in practice in relation to them 	<p>Elisabeth Davey Legal Advice Centre</p>

REAL Creating your own care plan workshop held via Zoom, **25.01.2022 from 2-3:30pm**. Contact 07458 304616 or 07305811946 or email TCOYL@real.org.uk. Alternatively you can book directly via our Eventbrite [here](#)

This session will be delivered by a client who herself receives social care, and who has been writing her own care plan for the past six years. She finds there is a huge difference in quality when she writes the plan versus when it is written by social

services. Creating her Own Care Plan has been instrumental in her fight for receiving the right care she is entitled to.

3. Benefit Updates

- **Claimants due to attend an appointment at a Jobcentre will be given option for telephone appointment**

Following negotiations between the DWP and PCS union, Jobcentre staff are to be given new operational procedures to reduce the number of people coming into offices. A [PCS union statement](#) says: 'Work coaches based in Jobcentres are being instructed to contact customers who are booked in to check if the customer is comfortable coming into the office and feels safe to do so. As an alternative they will be offered a telephone interview.'

- **No fit notes required until 27 January 2022**

Following the [change to the Statutory Sick Pay \(SSP\) regulations](#), the DWP has added notifications to benefit entitlement pages to say that fit notes will not be required. The [medical evidence section of the Universal Credit \(UC\) page](#) now says: Temporary change to fit notes - You do not have to provide a fit note (sick note) for Universal Credit until 27 January 2022. This will not affect your claim. There is no need to ask your GP for a fit note before then. This is to give GPs more time to work on the coronavirus vaccination boosters.

[LA Welfare Bulletin 12/21](#) explains the changes and has some FAQs for how this will work for benefits and medical evidence regulation exceptions. In practice, hopefully the DWP will act in accordance with the announced changes. However, we can't rule out the possibility that there will be issues because the legislation hasn't been changed.

- **Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates frozen for a second year**

In force from 28 January 2022, the [Rent Officers \(Housing Benefit and Universal Credit Functions\) \(Amendment and Modification\) Order 2021](#) makes provision to freeze LHA rates for 2022/2023 at the rates set for 2020/2021.

- **Disregard of certain compensation payments for means tested benefits**

In force from 1 January 2022, the [Social Security \(Income and Capital Disregards\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2021](#) amend regulations relating to the calculation of Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, State Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit to provide for the disregard of certain compensation payments as income and capital. The regulations apply to payments made under any of the four schemes currently operating, or that are in the process of being established, that compensate victims of historical institutional child abuse in Northern Ireland, Scotland and the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Islington. They will also apply to any future schemes providing compensation for historical institutional child abuse in the UK which are established or approved by the Secretary of State.

- **ONLINE PIP2 FORM NOW OFFERED TO ALL NEW CLAIMANTS** A digital version of the PIP2 'How your disability affects you' claim form is being offered to all new claimants. Though you can still choose to be sent a paper form instead.

- **HMCTS evaluation of remote hearings during the Covid-19 outbreak**
HMCTS has conducted an evaluation of remote hearings This concluded that where a hearing is deemed suitable for remote participation, video hearings should take precedence over audio hearings in most contexts wherever possible unless there are specific support requests or technical issues.

- **Useful DWP services and contacts below**

1. Touchbase: News and articles from across government for advisers, employers and organisations that help people find jobs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/touchbase-dwp-news-about-work-working-age-benefits-and-services>

2. The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) toolkit: This toolkit provides 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>

3. Independent Assessment Service: Each person claiming PIP is unique and might face all kinds of challenges from a wide range of health conditions or disabilities. The Independent Assessment Service work in partnership with trusted organisations, and their experienced health professionals are fully trained to understand the complex effects of living with a health condition or disability

<https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk/>

3a. PIP Consultations for London: These sites are used for PIP consultations.

<https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk/consultation-centres/>

3b Independent Assessment Service:

<https://www.mypipassessment.co.uk>

4. Maximus - The Health Assessment Advisory Service arranges and carries out assessments on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). If you are claiming benefits as a result of a disability or injury, you may be required by DWP to have an assessment with a qualified Healthcare Professional as part of your claim process.

<https://www.chdauk.co.uk/assessment-process>

5. Universal Credit Toolkit: This toolkit contains information about Universal Credit and the changes it brings.

<https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit-toolkit-for-partner-organisations>

6. HM Revenue and Customs Employer Bulletin: A bi-monthly magazine for employers and agents giving up-to-date information on payroll topics.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-revenue-and-customs-employer-bulletin>

7. 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>

8. Supporting people back to work: Useful links to support people back to work.

[@JCPinEastLondon Twitter](#) account

[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 for job seekers with nearly 65,500 vacancies

[Find a Job website](#) an external website for employers to post their opportunities

[@JCPJobsPlusMore](#) National Employer and Partnership Teams National Twitter account.

[Civil Service Jobs](#) Search for jobs in the Civil Service.

4. New Projects /services and resources in Tower Hamlets

- **Safe Connections Suicide Prevention Hub and Helpline**

Our Community Suicide Prevention Hub – **Safe Connections** service will operate across seven boroughs across Northeast London (**Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Havering, and Barking & Dagenham**), and The City. Suicide Prevention Helpline number is: **0300 561 0115** and currently operates Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 4.30pm. We are a self-referral service that provides a warm and safe space to explore suicidal feelings, triggers, and the underlying causes. We will support callers to find and access other local services in the community, that can support to manage, or reduce suicidal feelings. Anyone who calls outside of our operating hours can leave an answerphone message and we will get back to them as soon as possible. Or, if making the first call is challenging for someone, then people can email us at safeconnections@mithn.org.uk and we can call them to start conversations and connections. So please provide your clients with the helpline number and/or safe connections email address, depending on what makes them more comfortable to refer themselves. **New information and advice service for Tower Hamlets**

- **Tower Hamlets Connect** is a new service co-produced with residents and local organisations, which will help residents access support around health and social care, including housing, welfare and benefits and consumer issues.

The service will also be able to help residents with wider issues, such as anyone experiencing financial difficulty by putting people in touch with experienced advisors. It will also provide in-person support with options to book one-to-one appointments with advisors for advice and advocacy in the community. *Tower Hamlets Connect* can also be accessed face-to-face in the community at drop in sessions and appointments at various times in GP practices, health clinics and in the home (outreach schedule published on the online portal).

On behalf of Tower Hamlets Together, the council commissioned Age UK East London (and its partners) to deliver the new *Tower Hamlets Connect* service, which replaces the Local Link service and the Tower Hamlets Health Advice Link service. The consortium of wider local partners working with Age UK East London includes Apasen, Bromley by Bow, Tower Hamlets Law Centre, Limehouse Project, Real, Positive East, Island House, Deaf Plus.

Tower Hamlets Connect contact

online www.towerhamletsconnect.org.

helpline on 0300 303 6070 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Out of hours calls are diverted to the Adult Social Care duty team (0207 364 4079).

5. Vacancies

- The Zacchaeus project full-time Advice & Guidance Co-ordinator. contact Sally Yoxall by email on admin@mcth.org.uk or telephone: 020 8880 7301
The Zacchaeus Project Bow Road Methodist Church 1 Merchant Street E3 4LY
Tel: 020 8983 1568 / 07712 332324

- LHP Advice Services **Money & Debt Advisor** and **Money & Debt Caseworker** - see the links below for information.

[Charity Debt advisor, Jobs | Charityjob.co.uk](#)
[Charity Debt case worker, Jobs | Charityjob.co.uk](#)

6. Advice Services

Tower Hamlets Advice benefit advice services details [Advice Centres - THCAN](#)

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 Wed 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