**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:
2. Free Training Sessions: Dealing with Difficult Situations, Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Benefits for Claimants with Limited Capability for Work
3. Benefit Updates
4. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
5. Vacancies
6. 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 the list please send me an email.  Next meeting will be in May date/agenda not set. Last meeting was council tax recovery March 2022

Minutes and information on past meetings are available on [Advice Agencies Information - THCAN](https://thcan.org.uk/advice-agencies-information/)

**2.       Free** **Training**

 Please email me to arrange a place – some courses are delivered on zoom others face-to-face; they are all free to anyone working/volunteering/living in Tower Hamlets – places are limited

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course name, date and time** | **Course details**  | **Trainer****Venue** |
|  | **Note the face-to-face sessions will be in** **Island House Roserton Street, E14 3PG** |  |
| **Handling Difficult Situations with Clients**19th April 10am to 12 | * Explore what is meant by ‘difficult/demanding clients’
* Discuss reasons why clients are/become ‘difficult’
* Identify responsibilities of the worker and those of the client

Explore practical strategies for dealing with difficult client situations | Jo EllisTraining coordinator**Zoom** |
| **Benefits for claimants with Limited Capability for work****Zoom**26th April10am to 1pm | Limited Capability for Work Suitable for – basic course for advice workers/support workers with some knowledge of the benefit system. 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 • 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 | Jo EllisTraining coordinator**Zoom** |
| **Disability Living Allowance**6th May**Face to Face**10-4  | Parents/cares of children with health problems / disabilities can get DLA if they need a lot more care, attention or supervision than a child of the same age who isn't disabled or they have difficulty walking or getting around outdoors in unfamiliar places, compared to a child of the same age who isn't disabledThis course is suitable for anyone who works with children with additional needs, advisors, support workers to find out about this benefit.  No experience of benefits issues is necessary. The course will cover eligibility, making claims, what additional benefits you could be eligible for and when/where to refer if refused | Fatima BegumWelfare Rights Specialist Island House |
| **Personal Independence Payment**10th May**Zoom**10am to 1pm | **Suitable for** – basic course for advice workers/support workers no knowledge of the benefit system is required.**Aims*** To give an overview of the eligibility criteria and applications for Personal Independence Payment
* To examine the structure of PIP and the assessment process
 | Jo EllisTraining coordinator**Zoom** |
| **Universal Credit****Face to Face****10.30 to 4pm****27th May** | Aims: to give a basic overview of Universal CreditObjectives Learners will be able to understand:* What is universal credit
* Who can/should claim UC

Understand basic structure and calculation of UC | Fatima BegumWelfare Rights Specialist Island Advice |

**3.**   **Benefit Updates**

* **Benefit Advice and other Resources for Ukrainian refugees**

I’m received lots of benefit and other information.  Its changing almost daily and lots of new information / resources. The information that I’ve collected is attached with links on immigration, benefits, housing and some general support.  Please forward any information you think needs to be added

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/immediate-benefit-support-for-those-fleeing-the-invasion-in-ukraine>

In force from 22 March 2022, the [Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has laid emergency regulations](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=40ad457e13&e=588bae1b2e), so that those arriving to the UK from Ukraine as a result of the Russian invasion can access benefits immediately.

Ukrainians will be eligible for Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Carers Allowance and Attendance Allowance. The habitual residence test and any past presence requirements will not apply to these claimants. Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance, and Jobseekers Allowance are also available for those Ukrainians who meet the criteria.

[The Child Benefit (General) Regulations 2006 have also been amended](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=ff7bfcfb0e&e=588bae1b2e) to allow those who are fleeing the invasion in Ukraine to claim child benefit without the requirement to have been living in the UK for at least three months.

[The Tax Credits (Definition and Calculation of Income) Regulations 2002 have been amended](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=0c39841436&e=588bae1b2e) so that monthly payments of £350, paid as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, are disregarded when calculating Tax Credits.

A [press release from the  DWP](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=4c02612874&e=588bae1b2e) outlines further support available from the DWP stating that:  ‘Translation services are available to help new arrivals with phone applications, with Work Coaches in DWP Job Centres on hand to support people making claims online. DWP staff are also delivering additional face-to-face assistance to those who need it – including tailored support to find work and advice on benefit eligibility’.’

The legislation is here-   <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/344/contents/made>   and for child benefit here:   <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/346/made>

* **Contacting Universal Credit on Behalf of Clients**

We have asked if advisors could have a direct line contact when helping their clients (basically it’s a no to that but here’s information on how to contact UC on behalf of your client (from DWP)

Universal Credit claimants are able to self-serve via their on-line account.

If an issue cannot be resolved via the claimant’s on-line account, contact the UC Telephony Service on **0800 328 5644**

You can directly contact a UC claimant’s case manager on their behalf. You should have the following information about the claimant before you call:

* the telephone number the claimant has registered with UC
* the first line of their address
* their postcode
* their date of birth
* permission from the claimant for you to act for them.

For information about getting a claimant’s permission to contact a case manager on their behalf, read [Universal Credit consent and disclosure of information](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-consent-and-disclosure-of-information).

* The Government has announced it is [**freezing Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates**](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673302?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==) at 2020/21 levels for another year.

* **PIP, DLA, ESA AND UC APPEALS SUCCESS RATES ALL FALL**

The success rate for appeals has fallen across all the major benefits, the latest quarterly figures released by HM Courts & Tribunals Service this month reveal.

The figures relate to the period October to December 2021.

* The PIP success rate was 68%, down 6% on a year ago.
* The DLA success rate was 65%, down 1% on a year ago.
* The ESA success rate was 60%, down 9% on a year ago.
* The UC success rate was 46%, down 11% on a year ago.
* **DWP CONFIRMS PIP AWARDS WILL CONTINUE**

The DWP has confirmed in its latest personal independence payment (PIP) statistical release that many planned award reviews are on hold, but that claimants will continue to receive their current level of benefit until a review takes place.  The delay is caused by the DWP prioritising new claims over reviews. there are now over a third of a million (340,000) new claims ‘in progress’ – mostly waiting for an assessment - the delays could be very long indeed.

* **Energy rebate grant (From Tower Hamlets website):**

Following the Government’s announcement regarding the £150 Energy Rebate Grant, if you are not already paying by direct debit you can sign up to pay by this method online.  This will ensure a refund of the grant can be issued straight into your bank account.  The £150 award will be issued from April 2022 onwards.

<https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council_and_democracy/council_tax/Do_I_qualify_for_a_discount.aspx>

**CPAG Early Warning System collects evidence from advisers about how changes to the benefits system are affecting their clients. We have same issues coming up repeatedly, please look out for them and see advice below.**

* ​[**Some claimants are losing 50 per cent or more of their housing costs help**](#one) after splitting up with a partner or suffering a bereavement.

Where a claimant isn't named on the tenancy agreement for the place where they live, or where the claimant is a joint tenant but the other tenant no longer lives with them, they might struggle to get help with housing costs. The same issues can arise both with housing benefit (HB) and with the housing costs element of universal credit (UC).

**Joint tenants: "untidy tenancies"** Where a claimant is a joint tenant and the other tenant no longer lives in the property, the claimant is described as having an "untidy tenancy".

S/he should usually be treated as liable for all of the rent, on the principle of joint and several liability. For UC, relevant rules are set out in [paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 and paragraph 24(5) of Schedule 4 to the Universal Credit Regulations 2013](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673304?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==). For HB, they're in [regulations 8(1)(c)(i) and 12(5) of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673305?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==). Of course, there might be more than two joint tenants, making things even less 'tidy'.

A claimant might need to provide a certain amount of evidence about their circumstances, but in basic terms, an untidy tenancy should not stop most them from getting help with 100 per cent of their rent, and they should not need to negotiate a new tenancy agreement in order to do so.

**People who are not named tenants**

When a resident is not named at all in the tenancy agreement for the place where they live, they might nonetheless be able to get help with their housing costs. Briefly, this will be possible when the named tenant is not paying the rent and it is reasonable to treat the other resident as being liable to pay it. For UC the relevant rules are once again in [paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Universal Credit Regulations 2013](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673307?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==), and for HB, they're in [regulation 8 of the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673308?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==).

CPAG has produced a number of tools and resources on the topic of rent liability. These include [*mandatory reconsideration request templates*](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673309?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==) and [*judicial review pre-action letter templates*](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673310?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==): several are specifically about untidy tenancies and one is about liability for rent when not a named tenant. CPAG's Judicial Review Project is on hand to offer guidance about using the templates. You can also refer to CPAG's Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook, Chapters 6 and 10, for more information.

And if your client is struggling to get help with housing costs and you're not sure what their rights are, please [*contact CPAG's advice services*](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5673311?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==).

* **Carer’s allowance but no carer element**

Every universal credit (UC) claimant who starts to get carer’s allowance should have a carer element added to their UC. However, this doesn’t happen automatically.

We have been hearing about claimants who have gone for months or even years with no carer element, simply having the full amount of carer’s allowance deducted from their UC.

As soon as this error is spotted, your client can ask to have a carer element added to their UC award, and they should receive arrears going back to when the carer’s allowance started. This applies even if your client failed to mention their carer's allowance to UC earlier.

(Technically speaking, what your client is doing is asking for a supersession, with the effective date being the first day of the assessment period in which their carer's allowance started. The relevant rules are in [paragraphs 21 and 31 of Schedule 1 to the Universal Credit (etc) (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2013](http://ca.engagingnetworks.app/page/email/click/2010/5827278?email=egOFzEwxY99jey3%2FZwPFgKEcLEoGCkWZkd8Dle4TdN0=&campid=H3YaczdX%2BM%2BzFWMrHGgntg==).)

***In a case where there is a delay in getting a missing carer element added, you might consider using our specific pre-action*** [***letter template***](https://cpag.org.uk/welfare-rights/judicial-review/judicial-review-pre-action-letters/carers-following-death)***(JR64). The Judicial Review Project is on hand to help you adapt and use the template.***

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

* Free food / food banks / in Tower Hamlets – updated leaflet attached (will be put on THCAN website)
* **Healthy Start** is going digital — if you are still receiving paper vouchers you need to reapply for a prepaid digital card NOW. To reapply (or to see if you are eligible for Healthy Start support) visit the NHS website today [https://orlo.uk/fR05h](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Forlo.uk%2FfR05h&data=04%7C01%7CEmma.Foord%40towerhamlets.gov.uk%7Cfadf9418332841301b7808d9b4b7c7eb%7C3c0aec87f983418fb3dcd35db83fb5d2%7C0%7C0%7C637739523749317306%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=ntZS2%2BVrokVmYRPbjV0J2nQ0bjZD5SjghMrXIZ04q04%3D&reserved=0)

If you are more than ten weeks pregnant or have a child under four, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk.

Visit [https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthystart.nhs.uk%2Fhow-to-apply%2F&data=04%7C01%7CEmma.Foord%40towerhamlets.gov.uk%7Cfadf9418332841301b7808d9b4b7c7eb%7C3c0aec87f983418fb3dcd35db83fb5d2%7C0%7C0%7C637739523749327272%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=7Ez9FTvOuAcj8x0HKAcSVughrWnWfqPOfNPWpe674pg%3D&reserved=0) to learn more and apply.

Almost half of all families currently receiving Healthy Start have NOT yet applied

* Wise Age’s **London Older Workers Employment Survival (LOWES)**project.  We do hope that your organisation would be interested in working with us to help your 50+ clients to find employment or self employment [**https://wiseage.org.uk/register/**](https://wiseage.org.uk/register/) barbara.deason@wiseage.org.uk 3, Birkbeck Street
* I'm pleased to let you know that the Tower Hamlets 'Worrying about money?' leaflet is now available online from the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN): [www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cash-first-leaflets](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.foodaidnetwork.org.uk%2Fcash-first-leaflets&data=04%7C01%7Csue.denning%40towerhamlets.gov.uk%7Cb8b79207cdda4d88b55208da08bbbae2%7C3c0aec87f983418fb3dcd35db83fb5d2%7C0%7C0%7C637831900349440990%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=F4Ox5oB1BUk6k9opZ15I4jE5N1v7hkJTaMiV4cHh5vg%3D&reserved=0).

The aim of this work is to reduce the need for charitable food aid by helping people access any existing financial entitlements and advice on income maximisation as a cash first response to food insecurity. Many local partners helped to produce the leaflet and are listed on it.

* **WARMER HOMES ADVICE SERVICE** The Mayor of London’s Warmer Homes Advice Service is a pan-London programme offering advice and financial support for fuel poor households. Clients can be referred or contact the service themselves. Services are free and include: • Telephone advice on saving energy and keeping warm at home • Home energy visits with installation of small measures such as draught excluders • Advice and support with energy bill debt and billing disputes with suppliers • Grants of up to £20,000 per household to improve heating and insulation • Support with applications for energy bill discounts Clients can self-refer directly to the Warmer Homes Advise Service providers: • North and East London: 0300 555 0195, shine@islington.gov.uk • West London: 0800 365 3005, GreenDoctorsLDN@groundwork.org.uk • South London: 0808 169 1779, [www.cact.org.uk/swtw](http://www.cact.org.uk/swtw) Professionals can refer clients directly via a single point of contact: [www.london.gov.uk/warmer-homes-referral](http://www.london.gov.uk/warmer-homes-referral)
* Shalim Uddin, I recently had a conversation with the councils Tackling Poverty Team around support for those in the Private Rented Sector struggling to manage financially with utility bills in some cases doubling in cost/s. I was provided with the following link and statement below. If you feel this would be of benefit to you or others then please do apply for support and if you require further info and advice you can contact the Tackling Poverty Team directly on 020 7364 4082 Tackling Poverty Programme [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.towerhamlets.gov.uk%2F&data=04%7C01%7CShalim.Uddin%40towerhamlets.gov.uk%7Cd1cf7fd58dc34c0287d408d9db314ddc%7C3c0aec87f983418fb3dcd35db83fb5d2%7C0%7C0%7C637781827062239863%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=A3jb3PBhEdawdcsqntbXFdtvWNV0uJeXGYxxmQJ3%2BwA%3D&reserved=0).

*“Each resident in this situation checks to see if they are entitles to the warm homes discount which gives £140 off energy bills to qualifying low income households- it has to be applied for, it’s not automatic.”*

*For one off support people can contact the CAB or Bromley by Bow if they have a prepay meter- they both have an amount of funding to hand out top up cards. For those not on a prepay the council’s resident support scheme may help- it’s on an assessment basis so they would have to apply and is one off help not ongoing. Details of how to apply are here* [*https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/advice\_and\_benefits/Residents\_Support\_Scheme.aspx*](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.towerhamlets.gov.uk%2Flgnl%2Fadvice_and_benefits%2FResidents_Support_Scheme.aspx&data=04%7C01%7CShalim.Uddin%40towerhamlets.gov.uk%7C26991159903e4077055b08d9f6fe2c87%7C3c0aec87f983418fb3dcd35db83fb5d2%7C0%7C0%7C637812393783075121%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=a0inR3CBSIBttfBRL%2FklFe2%2FkWp%2B%2BqxR9nJKyimz%2FT0%3D&reserved=0) *and everyone who applies is also supported to ensure they are receiving any appropriate discounts.*

* Link in Men – meet up activities
* Private Renters / Housing updates info attached

**5.        Vacancies**

* NONE

**6.        Advice Services**

Tower Hamlets Advice benefit advice services details   [Advice Centres - THCAN](https://thcan.org.uk/advice-centres/)

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 or completing the form: <https://legaladvicecentre.london/benefit-appeal-representation/>

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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 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  |