

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)

www.thcan.org.uk website has information on advice providers services, factsheets, contact details and a referrals portal.

sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk register to use the portal

jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk book training/send info for the mailout

- Welfare Rights Advisors Forum: 9th June 2pm
- Free Training Sessions: Council Tax, Housing Costs benefit entitlement, Benefits for Pensioners,
- Benefit Updates
- New Projects, Services and Resources Information
- Vacancies: Tower Hamlets Law Centre
- 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 link for the next meeting – if you want to attend and are not already on the list, please send me an email and request a link (and recommend agenda items). Next meeting will be **9th June 2pm**

Discussion all agenda items to be confirmed: possibly fuel support/grants/information, invite to new councillors to meet advice providers (including THCAN referrals portal demonstration), Council tax Grant Rebate and Discretionary rebate, presentation from Z2K on campaign for reform of disability benefit assessments

Minutes and information on past meetings are available on [Advice Agencies Information - THCAN](#)

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

Course name, date and time	Course details	Trainer Venue
	Note the face-to-face sessions will be in Island House Roserton Street, E14 3PG	
NVQ Level 3 and 4 Advice and Guidance	National Vocational Qualification - Reminder deadline to apply for funding for LBTH residents is 17 th June. Start any time, average completion time 12 months, City and Guilds qualification Verification Centre; Advice UK	Coordinator Jo Ellis

	Deadline 17th June for Grant for September 2022 cohort	Assessment Centre Island Advice
Council Tax 8th June 10am to 1pm	Dwellings, including exempt dwellings Liability Reducing the bill Billing / collection / recovery Enforcement Options to deal with Council Tax arrears Suitable for advisors and debt workers dealing with clients with council tax debt	Hien Dinh Debt supervisor Face to Face Island House
Benefits for Pensioners 14 th June 10am to 12.30pm	Objectives an overview of the welfare benefits system and the eligibility criteria of benefits for pensioners Retirement Pension Pension Credit Attendance Allowance Housing Costs support for pensioners Different age couples (one pension age one not) Suitable for: anyone working with pensioners' basic course no benefit knowledge or experience needed, for anyone working with clients with benefit problems	Jo Ellis Island Advice Zoom
Housing Costs Eligibility 21 st June 10am to 1pm	<u>Suitable for</u> – basic course for advice workers/support workers, no knowledge of the benefit system is required. Objectives: To give participants an overview and understanding of the rules on: Housing Benefit and the Universal Credit Housing Element Whose eligible, how to claim, changes in circumstances, Local housing Allowance Non-Dependent Deductions Bedroom tax & Benefit Cap	Jo Ellis Training coordinator Island Advice Zoom
Tower Hamlets Allocations - Housing Medical Priority 7 th July 10.30 to 12.30 Zoom	The session will provide information on what advice and information to give these clients and when, where, how to refer them to an advice agency for help Tower Hamlets Transfers and Waiting List <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information on LBTH waiting list: who can join, how to join, priorities & bands, bidding, current average waiting times • Medical Priority: priority on the housing register is given to residents who have medical condition(s) which are worsened by their housing situation: 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 	Shuhel Alom Housing Specialist Island Advice Zoom

Benefits for Students July Date TBC	2-hour session / date and content to be confirmed, basic session for anyone dealing with this client group, no existing knowledge needed Face to Face in Island House – please register your interest and you will be notified of content/dates next week	Fatima Begum Benefit Supervisor Island Advice Face to face
Benefits for Children with Disabilities July Date TBC	2-hour session / date and content to be confirmed, basic session for anyone dealing with this client group, no existing knowledge needed Face to Face in Island House – please register your interest and you will be notified of content/dates next week	Fatima Begum Benefit Supervisor Island Advice Face to face

3. Benefit Updates (Citizens Advice / CPAG /LASA / Benefits and Work updates summary)

- **Cost of Living support announcement - guidance**

These payments will be made directly to eligible people across the UK, so claimants don't need to take any action. Payments will be tax-free, will not count towards the benefit cap, and will not have any impact on existing benefit awards. Included in the package of support:

- a) **£650 one-off Cost of Living Payment** for those on means tested benefits, made in two instalments. This includes all households receiving the following benefits:

Universal Credit
Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
Income Support
Working Tax Credit
Child Tax Credit
Pension Credit

The payment will be made in two lump sums, the first from July, the second in the autumn. Payments from HMRC for those on tax credits only will follow shortly after each to avoid duplicate payments. Claimants will need to be in receipt of, or have begun a claim which is later successful, as of 25 May 2022.

- b) **£150 Disability Cost of Living Payment** for those who receive the following

Disability Living Allowance (including Child Disability Living Allowance)
Personal Independence Payment
Attendance Allowance
Scottish Disability Benefits
Armed Forces Independence Payment
Constant Attendance Allowance
War Pension Mobility Supplement

For the many disability benefit recipients who receive means tested benefits, this £150 will come on top of the £650 they will receive separately.

- c) **Energy Bills Support Scheme Households** will get £400 of support with their energy bills through an expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme. Doubling the £200 of support announced earlier this year, now be made as a grant, which will not be recovered through higher bills in future years.
- **Managed migration of people claiming legacy benefits**, housing benefits, working tax credit, child tax credit income-related ESA, income-based JSA and income support to Universal Credit. Bolton and Medway are the first two areas that will go live. You can [read the legislation relating to managed migration on GOV.UK](#).
- **Benefits Calculator [Turn2us Benefits Calculator](#)** Turn2us, has amended the calculator to include recent arrivals from Ukraine and effect of hosting someone
- **Changes to Child Benefit (CB) and Tax Credits (TC) legislation** CB legislation has been changed so that claimants can be required to provide bank account details, and payments can be suspended if the details are not provided.
- **Late Tax Credit Declarations** Under changes to TC legislation it will no longer be possible for a late TC Annual Declaration, if the good cause for lateness isn't accepted, to be treated as a new TC claim from the date of the declaration.
- **Fit Note Changes From 6 April** the way GPs sign fit notes is changing. GPs will be able to authorise fit notes digitally without the need to print and sign them. This means instead of a handwritten signature in ink, fit notes will have the doctor's name included in the form, which can either be printed or sent digitally to patients. These changes do not otherwise change the purpose and function of the fit note. While this is being rolled out the existing fit note will still be legally valid and should be accepted until we notify that it is being withdrawn.
- **Bereavement Services changes** From 11 April 2022, Claimants will be able to access the following single phone number 0800 151 2012
- **CPAG further guidance on no fault overpayments** Attached update

4. New Projects /services and resources in Tower Hamlets

- **Request for evidence on temporary accommodation** The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Households in Temporary Accommodation has launched a call for evidence on the standards of temporary accommodation in England.

Seeking evidence on the following: the conditions/standards of temporary accommodation properties, how it impacts the health, negative resident experiences while in temporary accommodation, out of area placements and any other lived experiences of staying in temporary accommodation. They would also be keen to hear directly from those living in temporary accommodation and/or looking for photographic evidence if possible. CCS would be able to feed this back to our Policy Team at The Children's Society, who can share with

the APPG, or you can submit evidence directly here: [Call for evidence - Households in Temporary Accommodation APPG](#) (householdshintemporaryaccommodation.co.uk) Priya.Edwards@childrenssociety.org.uk www.coordinatedcommunitysupport.org.uk

- **Council's new Homelessness online self-referral facility** information attached - Service Manager Homelessness Housing Options Service
- **Digital Skills support program Tower Hamlets** for TH residents who lack digital skills and need more support. They offer free remote training and support for residents who need help with essential IT skills including: How to video call friends and family, Using social media such as Facebook (inc. internet safety), Arranging GP appointments by video, Shopping online (due to travel restrictions), online banking, how to access your social landlord housing portal, Government forms online & on the phone (benefits such as universal credit), Help with energy or switching bills. They are providing either 121 support where a dedicated tutor will visit them in their home ,or they can come along to a classroom session which will be located at WorkPath offices. A dedicated team will contact them to find out their preference and see what is best for them individually. If you have any residents that you feel would benefit from the training, please refer them to training code: **T-00674**. If you do not have access to Salesforce, please send us their full name, mobile number, and email address.

5. Vacancies

Tower Hamlets Law Centre – attached

Look Ahead 2 support worker's vacancies with Look Ahead Independent Living Community Support (ILCS). To view job details or apply on-line [click here](#). If you need any further information about the roles, you can contact us directly on 0207 422 0821 or contact Look Ahead recruitment team on 0207 368 4637. **Marufuz Zaman**

6. Advice Services

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

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 Tues & Wed 10am to 12

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