

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: Next meeting 22nd September 2pm
- Free Training Sessions: Learning to Advise, Universal Credit for Students, Paying for Fuel, Income Maximisation, Housing and Homelessness
- Benefit Updates
- New Projects, Services and Resources Information
- Vacancies: Carer Centre support worker, Legal Advice Centre solicitor apprenticeship
- Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

1. **Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

This network is for advice workers or anyone dealing with clients on benefit issues in Tower Hamlets. We meet quarterly and discuss services, benefits updates, have presentations from DWP/Housing benefit and other providers. If you have not previously attended a welfare rights advisor forum meeting email me and I will add you to my (zoom) invite list.

Current Agenda items: Food pantry/stores information, fuel debt information and services, benefit updates, advice service capacity and cases updates.

June meeting Minutes are available on [Advice Agencies Information - THCAN](#)

Date of next meeting September 22nd 2pm

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 either Account Bethnal Green or Island House Roserton Street, E14 3PG	
Learning to Advise 13 Days From Sept 22 to March 23	Learning to Advise is a basic course for advice workers, support workers, frontline advisors, reception staff, whether paid or volunteering. It covers all the basics for a new advisor (or can be a good refresher for an existing worker); advice skills, benefits,	Part zoom, part face to face

	housing, employment, immigration, and debt, email me for more information	
Universal Credit for Students 18 th August 11am to 1pm	2-hour session, FACE TO FACE basic session for anyone dealing with this client group, no existing knowledge needed	Fatima Begum Benefit Supervisor Island Advice Face to face
Paying for Fuel 23 rd Sept 1.30 to 4pm	Training Webinar The Paying for Fuel webinar is aimed at frontline workers with no prior knowledge of fuel statements, tariffs or switching. The course will look at how we are charged for gas and electricity, the types of tariffs we use and how we can limit our expenditure. It will help delegates understand the content of fuel statements and how we can use the information to assist householders.	National Energy Advice Lynsey Thompson zoom
Understanding Homelessness 3 rd Nov 10.45am to 12.15pm	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. This webinar is for advisers who want an introduction to homelessness and local authority duties. It is aimed at those with little knowledge	NHAS webinar
Homelessness and Temporary 10 th November 10.45am to 12.15pm	This webinar will cover ✓ The definitions of interim and temporary accommodation ✓ When the duty to provide interim accommodation is triggered ✓ The housing status of those occupying temporary accommodation ✓ Suitability and what this means in relation to temporary accommodation ✓ Challenging the suitability of accommodation This webinar is for staff who are required to give advice on housing options enquiries. Attendees should understand the law and practice around Homelessness Applications (covered in understanding homelessness – above webinar)	NHAS Webinar
Income Maximisation 22 nd Nov 10am to 12noon Zoom	Basic training, no knowledge or experience required 1.Complete benefits check and a 'better-off' calculation 2.Identify possible benefit entitlements / commonly unclaimed benefits, know where to refer for help with benefits 3.Have an awareness of other sources of financial help Discretionary Housing Payments, resident Support Scheme, charity Payments 4.Have an awareness of budgeting/financial statements and possible expenditure reduction considerations for people in financial hardship 6.Have an awareness of when and where to refer clients to for help with debts, benefits and or money advice support	Jo Ellis

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

- [Childcare Choices | 30 Hours Free Childcare, Tax-Free Childcare and More | Help with Costs | GOV.UK](#) check if your client is eligible for and childcare help
- **Fit note changes from 1 July** nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists will be able to certify fit notes in addition to doctors. These professionals should be working within general practice or hospitals as access to the new version of the fit note is limited to these settings. Updated guidance for employers and patients is also available on [GOV.UK](#).

- Cost of Living Payment You may be able to get a payment to help with the cost of living if you're getting certain benefits or tax credits. You do not need to apply, if you're eligible, you'll be paid automatically. These payments are not taxable and will not affect the benefits or tax credits you get.

- **Ukraine**

Find the [workplace group on Support for Ukrainian refugees](#). It's a space for updates on the support we're developing for people affected by the crisis in Ukraine and for you to share information and ask questions

Please use the ['Ukraine' tag on Casebook](#) to help us keep track of how our services are being used

[Read a brief guide to Ukraine Scheme immigration status documents](#) to help identify documents you may come across

[See the government guidance on the new Ukraine schemes on GOV.UK](#)

Free UK immigration and asylum advice to Ukrainian citizens. You can [find more information on the Ukraine Advice Project UK website](#)

Barnardo's Ukrainian Support Helpline provides a holistic support service. You can [find more about the Ukrainian Support Helpline on the Barnardo's website](#)

- **NEW BENEFITS AND WORK YOUTUBE VIDEOS** Benefits and Work has uploaded the first three titles in our series of introductory PIP videos. The free downloads on the Benefits and Work Youtube channel now include:
 - Should you claim PIP?
 - The three-minute guide to PIP points
 - Start your PIP claim today
 - Could you claim PIP for Long Covid?

[Watch the videos](#)

- Private Renters Forum information / power point attached
- For a short time the Council's homelessness self-referral form will not be available on the council's website attached sets this out and alternative channels for reporting homelessness or the risk of homelessness could be shared with THCAN colleagues.

4. New Projects /services and resources in Tower Hamlets

- The LBTH food pantry programme is operating several FOOD Stores across the borough to support people in cases of long-term food insecurity. People in need of support can apply to be members of the FOOD Store, and in return for a small weekly fee will be able to access a significant quantity of repurposed food while also being signposted to receive wraparound support. Flyers and information attached
- Summer activities for kids in LBTH booklet attached

5. Vacancies

- Legal Advice Centre We are currently advertising for solicitor apprentices for the 30-month graduate route (those who have a LLB law degree or the GDL). If you know of anyone who might be interested, please feel free to forward the information onto them. <https://legaladvicecentre.london/solicitor-apprentice/> Applications are to be made via Charity Jobs [here](#).
- Tower Hamlets Carers Centre We are also recruiting for a Carers Support Advocate and I would be grateful if you could include it in your next newsletter <https://www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/carers-centre-tower-hamlets/carers-support-advocate/845940?tsId=6>
- Our Voices Project / Sakinah at Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge. **Peer Worker – Our Voices Project**, the role will work collaboratively with the MITHN’s Mental Health Services team to increase access to mental health and wellbeing support for Muslim women across Tower Hamlets, Newham, and Redbridge. The ideal candidate will share our commitment and purpose around improving access and tackling health inequality. You must have experience of supporting Muslim women from diverse backgrounds, be able to facilitate activities and workshops. To apply for this role, please download the recruitment documents online: <https://www.mithn.org.uk/get-involved/work-for-us> All completed applications should be sent to recruitment@mithn.org.uk. Closing Date: 9am, Monday 8th August 2022 Interviews: Friday 12th August 2022

6. Advice Services

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

All the advice providers listed on www.thcan.org.uk provide benefit advice and help with form filling.

Specialist advice providers Complex/appeal/specialist advice is available at the following organisations Legal Advice Centre - have capacity to take on any type

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	benefits@legaladvicecentre.london or complete the form: https://legaladvicecentre.london/benefit-appeal-representation/	0203 606 0372
Tower Hamlets Law Centre	info@thlc.co.uk	0207 538 4909 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri