

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

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum – 23rd May 2pm to 3.30pm
2. Free Training Sessions: benefits for pensioners, advice skills, , medical priority, limited capability for work
3. Benefit Updates
4. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
5. Vacancies: Bromley by Bow Centre and TH Law Centre
6. 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.

Next meeting will be 23rd May 2pm -3.30pm 2023

Face to face venue to be confirmed (has anyone got somewhere that we can use?)

I will also have video / digital option for anyone that can't attend face to face

- Managed Migration and feedback/information from DWP representatives
- Discussion on Resident Support and Household Support Fund – these funds are being reviewed by LBTH and I want to give them some feedback from advisors on any issues of concern

2. Free Training

Please email me to arrange a place – some courses are delivered on zoom others face-to-face (either Island Advice Centre, E14 3PG); they are all free to anyone working, volunteering, or living in Tower Hamlets – places are limited and allocated on first come first serve.

Course name, date, and time	Course details	Trainer Venue
Benefits for Pensioners 4 th May 10am to 12.30pm	<p>Objectives an overview of provisions in the welfare benefits system and the eligibility criteria of benefits for pensioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand Pension Age • Retirement Pension • Pension Credit • Different age couples (one pension age one not) • Disability Benefits / Attendance Allowance • Housing Costs support for pensioners 	Jo Ellis Training coordinator Island Advice Zoom

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals • Resources <p>Suitable for: Basic Course, no benefit knowledge or experience needed, for anyone working with clients of pension age</p>	
<p>Advice Skills</p> <p>2 sessions 11th and 25th May 10am to 12.30</p>	<p>Objective: An Advice UK course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understand key principles of giving advice and apply/use them within your work. ▶ Understand the advice process and your role as an advisor. ▶ Be able to conduct effective interviews. <p>Explore best practice in working with clients. Key principles which underlie advice giving. Techniques to improve communications skills (face to face and telephone/digital), stages in the advice process, emergencies, referrals and resources, case recording and reviews, Suitable for: advice workers, anyone new to advice including volunteers, existing advisors as a 'refresher', reception staff</p>	<p>Jo Ellis Training coordinator Island Advice Zoom (Advice UK's Advice Skills unit)</p>
<p>Medical priority within LBTH allocations policy</p> <p>15th June 10am to 11.30am</p>	<p>Aim: to help developing a better understanding of the criteria for joining the housing register, Medical Priority Process within the housing allocation of London Borough of Tower Hamlets It will include the grounds to apply, the application process and the potential outcomes and options following an application . Suitable for front line non adviser and/or front-line generalist adviser</p>	<p>Shuhel Alom Training coordinator Island Advice Zoom</p>
<p>Work Capability for work on Universal Credit</p> <p>22nd June 10am to 12.30pm</p>	<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Jo Ellis Island Advice Centre Zoom</p>
<p>Appeals 10am to 1pm Face to Face June Date to be confirmed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding procedure for Mandatory Reconsiderations and appeals • how to set out an appeal submission; format, checking case law, presenting the case for your client <p>Suitable for Benefit/advice workers with good knowledge of benefit system</p>	<p>Benefit specialist Island Advice Island House Roserton Street E14 3PG</p>

3. Benefit Updates (Information from articles produced by Citizens Advice / CPAG /LASA / Benefits and Work updates summary)

- **Managed migration** The DWP have announced an intention to move more Tax Credit (TC) claimants over to Universal Credit (UC) via managed migration.

From May, East London area will be part of managed migration – we will be finding out more about this at the welfare rights advisors forum (23rd May see above). Here is a roundup of

our (DWP) current resources of managed migration: [Adviser Online article 'A guide to managed migration' on Medium](#)

Universal Credit will be expanded to more tax credit claimants. From April 2023, more tax credit claimants will be asked to claim Universal Credit (UC) in order to continue to receive the benefit they are entitled to. Households that receive tax credits only will be the first to be asked to make the move to UC. Those affected will receive a letter from DWP notifying them of the action they need to take, and the support available to help them. Where an individual's entitlement to UC would be lower than their legacy benefits entitlement, they may be entitled to a top-up payment known as Transitional Protection. This means that their UC entitlement will be the same as their legacy benefit entitlement at the point they move.

➤ **End of life rules change:**

Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) have now caught up with the already in-force changes to income-related benefits. From Monday 3 April, special rules benefit claims can be brought by those whose death is reasonably to be expected within 12 months (instead of 6 months).

The SR1 form has now replaced the DS1500 and GOV.UK guidance to clients, and their medical professionals, has been updated to reflect this.

➤ **DWP guidance on changes to benefit cap limits in Universal Credit (UC)**

The new benefit cap rates are:

For couples and lone parents, £22,020 outside London and £25,323 in London

For single people without children, £14,753 outside London and £16,967 in London

The new rates apply in any UC assessment period beginning on or after 10 April 2023. [You can read the guidance on benefit cap limits in ADM Memo 09/23.](#)

➤ **Upper Tribunal (UT) decision on Tax Credit (TC) finalisations when client claims UC**

The UT confirms how income is calculated when a TC award is finalised mid-year due to a UC claim under [Regulation 12A Universal Credit \(Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2014](#), which modifies the TC legislation. A 'notional current year's income' must be calculated using the income actually received during the part of the tax year covered by the TC award, rather than using an amount directly attributable to that period. The amount of the notional current year's income will therefore depend on the exact timing of the UC claim. In this case, it was higher than the client's annual income, leading to an overpayment. [You can read the UT decision on tax credit finalisations UA-2021-001169-TC on GOV.UK](#)

➤ **Support for Mortgage Interest loan scheme extended to 200,000**

More Universal Credit claimants will be eligible for mortgage help.

They will be able to access help towards mortgage interest on their home or certain home improvements worth up to £200,000. Claimants will be able to receive the support after just three months of being on Universal Credit (previously, and they now do not have to be unemployed to do so. They will also be able to re-claim the support if they leave Universal Credit but return within six months

[Government extends mortgage support for benefit claimants - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

➤ **Change to Fuel Direct ongoing consumption**

From 1 April 2023, energy suppliers can resume requesting new deductions or increases to existing deductions for Fuel Direct ongoing consumption payments but must have the claimant's consent first. For new requests, suppliers must also seek a claimant's consent before the request is sent to DWP. Claimants can request a MR to challenge deductions from benefits.

[Manage deductions from your benefits to pay debts and bills - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

➤ **PIP POINTS FOR OVEREATING**

An upper tribunal judge has held that over-eating can be grounds for scoring PIP points, if the problem is linked to a physical or mental health condition.

[Read More and Comment](#)

➤ **CPAG updated information on energy grants and rights:**

- [Grants and benefits to help you pay your energy bills](#) with information for those who need to claim the Energy Bill Support Scheme £400 discount.
- [Stop your energy supplier moving you to prepayment](#) with more information on the Priority Services Register.
- [Compare how much electrical appliances cost to use](#) to explain the KW/h and Economy 7 tariffs.

4. New Projects /services, information, and resources in Tower Hamlets

- **NHAS homeless advice service resource** <https://www.nhas.org.uk/>

Need help with housing or welfare benefits enquiries?

Call the Expert Advice Service on 0300 330 0517 or [speak to an adviser via webchat](#).

Need support with a tricky debt case?

Call the Specialist Debt Advice Service on 03300 580 404, [submit an enquiry online](#) or [speak to an adviser via webchat](#).

- **Tower Hamlets Recovery college are delivering workshops for Bengali & Somali communities** in both English and the respective languages by peer tutors and experts by profession. They will be taking place across Tower Hamlets and free to access. see attached our Summer term booklet. sazidun.haque@nhs.net

- **Change Grow Live Trial project**, funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). "Peer Mentors" will deliver time-limited mentoring support which inspires, motivates and supports clients

Email - DWPMentoringLondon@cgl.org.uk

Website – www.changegrowlive.org/dwp-peer-mentoring-service

5. Vacancies

- BBBC have a casual advisor role available to support the Advice Team It's a short-term casual contract and we can't commit to a number of hours but we expect it to be approx. 30 hours per week but will likely to vary week by week. Please find attached JD, we will be accepting expressions of interest for this role. people@bbbc.org.uk
- Chris Parsons c.parsons@thlc.co.uk We are advertising a welfare benefits caseworker. See attached job advert

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

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