

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 – DWP /meeting summary
2. Free Training Sessions: benefits for pensioners,
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 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.

Last meeting was 20th June with representatives from Job Centre Plus (Universal Credit, Partnership Manager, Housing Payments and East London Job Centre Plus Manager), LBTH and advice sector (Island Advice, Limehouse Project, Toynbee, Age UK, First Love, Legal Advice Centre) and housing associations (Spitalfields, THH, Poplar HARCA, THCH). Full minutes will be available on the next information mailout but we discussed.

- Habitual residency issue
- Handing in/providing documents
- Managed Migration
- Housing costs when tenant has left (unity tenancies)
- Sharing information/contacts for referrals, training and information
- Supporting vulnerable clients
- Various financial support schemes

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
<p>NVQ Level 3 Advice and Guidance Information session</p> <p>2-3pm 19th July</p> <p>Zoom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you working or volunteering giving advice and guidance to clients? • Would you like to obtain an accredited / vocational qualification? <p>National Vocation Qualification (NVQ) is a work based qualification which recognises the skills and knowledge a person needs to do a job. The candidate needs to demonstrate and prove their competency in Advice and Guidance through written work products, observations in the work place and evidencing their advice abilities, skills and knowledge. This a developmental qualification, you work at your own pace (with support) through a portfolio, no attendance at training courses is required</p> <p>Anyone who has lived in Tower Hamlets for 3 years will be able to apply for funding to cover the fees</p> <p><u>Suitable for</u> advice/information giving advisors (or volunteers) who want to obtain a work relevant qualification</p> <p>The information session will explain what NVQs are and how you apply for funding for the qualification. The qualification registration will start in September but deadline for LBTH residents funding application is 28th July</p>	<p>Jo Ellis</p> <p>Zoom</p> <p>Jo Ellis is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.</p> <p>Topic: NVQ information session</p> <p>Time: Jul 19, 2023 02:00 PM London</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting</p> <p>https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88668816879?pwd=L25INVU5K3J4VWRHNHdMck5lSkIXUT09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 886 6881 6879</p> <p>Passcode: 824074</p>
<p>Appeals</p> <p>½ Day</p> <p>Face to Face</p> <p>July</p> <p>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>Benefit specialist Island Advice</p> <p>Island House</p> <p>Roserton Street</p> <p>E14 3PG</p>

sorry has been delayed.

Suitable for Benefit/advice workers with good knowledge of benefit system

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

✓ **DWP published statistics showing the outcome of work capability assessments (WCAs) for universal credit (UC).**

- 65% have limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA) – the UC equivalent of the support group.
- 19% have limited capability for work (LCW).
- 16% were found fit for work.
- By comparison, in the quarter to December 2022, the figures for ESA were:
 - 65% placed in the Support Group
 - 12% placed in the Work-Related Activity Group
 - 22% were found Fit for Work

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **Increases in maximum childcare payments for universal credit**

DWP have confirmed that the increase in the maximum amount payable for childcare payments in universal credit (UC) will take effect from 28 June 2023.

The maximum amounts will be increased from:

£646.35 to £950.92 for one child

£1108.04 to £1630.15 for two or more children

In addition, the amending regulations mean that childcare costs can be met upfront by disregarding payments made by funds provided by the Secretary of State when calculating the childcare costs element in the assessment period when a claimant is moving into, or increasing their hours of work. You can [find the amended Universal Credit regulations on the government's legislation website.](#)

✓ **Deadline extended to pay voluntary Class 3 National Insurance to increase entitlement to state pension**

The government had extended the deadline to July 2023 to pay voluntary contributions from April 2006. This has now been extended further to 5 April 2025.

You can [read more about the extension on GOV.UK.](#)

✓ **Court of Appeal (CoA) decision on the National Insurance Number (NINo) requirement**

Legislation allows the requirement for a NINo in order to qualify for benefits to be satisfied if a client has applied for a NINo, and provided enough information to enable a NINo to be allocated.

The CoA held that Universal Credit (UC) can't be awarded until this information is fully verified. It decided that for the requirement to be satisfied, the DWP must decide whether the information justifies the allocation of a NINo.

However, the CoA did find that an advance payment of UC can be made while the client is still waiting for their NINo application to be verified. A client can qualify for an advance payment if the DWP considers it likely that the conditions of entitlement to UC will be met. The CoA found that this can happen when the client doesn't yet have a NINo, and that it's unlawful to exclude claimants in this position from advance payments.

You can [read the Court of Appeal's decision on the NINo case](#), and you can

✓ **Self-sufficiency and Right to Reside**

In SSWP v W V (UC): [2023] UKUT 112 (AAC) the upper tribunal (UT) considered whether a person who had been reliant on social assistance benefits paid to a partner could demonstrate self-sufficiency in relation to satisfying the right to reside for UC. In this case, the amount of benefits paid were reduced due to the presence of the claimant. The UT concluded that the resources made available to the claimant by their partner amounted to what the State considered necessary for a couple and are sufficient to meet Article 8(4) of Directive 2004/38. Following C-247/20-VI, it was accepted the claimant had comprehensive sickness insurance cover. This meant that he had been self-sufficient for the purposes of Article 7 of the Directive and the case was within the scope of C-140/12- Brey. Considering the individual circumstances of the claimant and the collective impact, the UT concluded that the burden on the UK's social assistance system which would arise by paying UC would not be an unreasonable one.

✓ **Court of Appeal dismisses DWP appeal on unlawfulness of guidance on third party deductions for utility debt**

In the case of Timson, R (On the Application Of) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (SSWP), the High Court had ruled that guidance to decision makers regarding certain third party deductions was unlawful for legacy benefits including income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The guidance presented a misleading picture of the true legal position, in this case for fuel and water charges, that there was no obligation to contact claimants for representations and further evidence before making a decision.

The Court of Appeal in [2023] EWCA Civ 656 has upheld the High Court's decision and dismissed all of the SSWP's grounds of appeal.

You can:

[Read the Timson, R \(On the Application Of\) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions \[2022\] High Court decision.](#)

[Read the Timson, R \(On the Application Of\) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions \[2023\] the Court of Appeal decision.](#)

Note that the decisions do not apply to Universal Credit.

✓ **Tribunal's reference to learning difficulties rather a learning disability was an error of law**

In Upper Tribunal (UT) case UA-2023-000041-PIP (Personal Independence Payment) the claimant had been in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) care and mobility components but had to claim PIP, which was refused. The Tribunal awarded the standard rate of the daily living component only. The claimant appealed through his appointee.

The UT confirmed that, although a diagnosis is not necessary to qualify for PIP, it may be relevant to entitlement. The Tribunal failed to appreciate the importance of distinguishing between evidence of learning difficulties and learning disability. It treated the 2 terms as interchangeable or considered that there was no practical difference for the purposes of entitlement.

You [can read the Upper Tribunal decision on GOV.UK](#).

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

✓ **Residents Hub Pension Credit Session**

Benefit check and help to apply for Pension Credit Thursday 20th July 10am to 12 noon – information attached

✓ **Down Sizing information**

Details on priority and payments for social tenants wanting to move into smaller properties

✓ **Poplar and Limehouse Network Wellbeing Support Group**

Group for people with low mood and/or anxiety: Health and Wellbeing Coaches alongside Talking Therapies starting on Tuesday 27th June (over 5 sessions).

Leaflet Attached

✓ **Bromley by Bow Centre Funding from the Energy Redress Scheme successful**

- **Delivery of energy workshops**, 1:1 energy support and recruiting and training volunteers in the community to become Energy Champions and Ambassadors
- **Energy Champions** will undertake a Level 1 OCN accredited fuel poverty course (generally one day per week for 6-7 weeks). Reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed and lunch will be provided. *Leaflet attached.*
- **Energy Ambassadors** will undertake a 2 day training session on energy related topics
- Residents can contact the team for support for **more in-depth 1:1 advice** - accessing grants, alleviating debts, negotiating payment plans etc.
- We will be delivering **free** energy workshops in the community- organisations can get in touch if they would like to host a workshop for their service users

email empower@bbbc.org.uk

5. **Vacancies**

None

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