

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 full minutes are now available on the THCAN website (advisors information) [Advice Agencies Information - THCAN](#)

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
Income Maximisation 24 th August 2023 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
21st September 10am - 1pm ZOOM	Welfare Benefits Overview Basic course no experience necessary, suitable for anyone working with clients / service users needing welfare rights advice. An introduction to the system of welfare benefits, with a brief overview of benefits and their qualifying conditions.	Jo Ellis Zoom

	<p>Content includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete benefits check and a 'better-off' calculation 2. Understand the principles underlying Universal Credit 3. Be aware of legacy benefits and be aware of what could trigger a claim for UC for legacy claimants 4. Details on Disability Benefits; Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance 5. Useful resources and where to refer 	
<p>28th Sept</p> <p>11am to 3pm</p> <p>Face to Face</p>	<p>Universal Credit</p> <p>Aims: to give a basic overview of Universal Credit</p> <p>Objectives Learners will be able to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is universal credit • Who can/should claim UC • Understand basic structure and calculating UC 	<p>Fatima Begum</p> <p>Island House E14 3PG</p>

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

✓ Imminent work-related requirement increase for caregivers

A 24 July press release confirms an increase of jobcentre requirements for parents and caregivers on Universal Credit (UC), with more planned to follow. Beginning immediately, claimants responsible for young children will be instructed to engage at least 50% more than they are now.

Those with a one-year-old will be asked to attend a work-focused meeting 'every three months instead of the current every six months'. Those with two-year-olds will start meeting their work coach 'every month instead of the current every three months'.

Affected claimants will be told of the increase at their next work coach appointment. Also announced are plans from 'Autumn' to increase the maximum work-related activity and work availability expected to 30 hours a week, for parents of children aged three to twelve. Failure to engage with these measures could result in sanction. However, it is important to bear in mind:

requirements should always be reasonable for the claimant's circumstances and even if the requirement can be seen as reasonable, someone shouldn't be sanctioned if they have 'good reason' for not complying. Clients should inform their work coach of personal circumstances that may impact their ability to attend, as soon as they can. The DWP should consider the claimant's childcare and caring responsibilities as a starting point, as well as taking into account health, emergencies or any other issue that could reasonably impact someone's ability to take part. Even if the DWP does not know of these at the time the client is sanctioned, clients should still tell them as soon as possible, as this will go towards arguing that they had 'good reason' and so should not be sanctioned. It's also worth checking what work-related requirement group the client is in, as this could mean that they cannot be sanctioned at all.

[Details on how to check you're in the right work-related requirement group are available on Advisernet.](#)

✓ Personal Independence Payment (PIP) light touch reviews

Some PIP claimants whose condition is severe and unlikely to change are subject to a 'light touch review'. This means their award will only be reconsidered after 10 years. This can apply if a claimant: is over pension age, or has a severe, lifelong condition and receives the enhanced rate of both daily living and mobility components. The DWP has developed a simplified form to be used in these cases. These are due to be introduced in August 2023. The DWP do not expect an assessment with a health professional will be required for most of these claimants. Contact should be restricted to checking whether anything has changed and confirming that information held by the DWP is up to date. You can [see an example of the proposed form on the rightsnet website](#).

✓ **REPORT A MISSING COST OF LIVING PAYMENT**

The DWP have published an online form to report missing Cost of Living payments from earlier this year. The form covers: The £150 Disability Cost of Living payment, paid between 20 June 2023 and 4 July 2023 for most eligible claimants. The £301 Cost of Living payment, paid between 25 April 2023 and 17 May 2023 for most eligible claimants.

You can use the form to report either of these payments as missing, although if you want to report both as missing you will have to complete the form twice. [Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **LCWRA element being added to UC from the wrong date:**

CPAG - The Early Warning System collects case examples from welfare rights advisers. We use this evidence for campaigns, in discussions with government and in advice resources. We continue to hear about the [When moving straight from ESA to UC](#)

The issue

In the simplest cases, you should expect to see the element added to your client's award three months after they first provide a fit note ([see sources](#)). In other cases the rules can take some explaining.

Here are some examples of the types of mistakes we hear about on the Early Warning System.

When moving straight from ESA to UC

Somebody moves from old-style ESA (support group) to UC, without a gap. In this situation, they should generally have a LCWRA element included in their UC from day one. [See sources](#)

New claim, first WCA

Somebody makes a new UC claim. They aren't moving straight from ESA in the way described [above](#). Perhaps it's their first time claiming a health-related benefit. They declare their health condition in their UC claim and provide a fit note right away. They

wait for a work capability assessment and then get a decision that they have LCWRA. However, the element is only paid from the date of that decision.

This is wrong. In this case the LCWRA element should generally be paid from the fourth UC assessment period. [See sources](#)

Already on UC, first WCA

In the next scenario, a claimant is already getting UC, without LCW or LCWRA status, then they report a new or worsening health condition that affects their ability to work. They provide a fit note. The DWP assesses them and finds them to have LCWRA – but the element is only paid from the date of the DWP's decision.

Again, this isn't right. This claimant should get the LCWRA element from the point three months after submitting a fit note. [See sources](#)

Already on UC with LCW, new WCA

A claimant is already getting UC and has LCW status. They report a new or worsening health condition and ask the DWP to reassess them and supersede their award to include a LCWRA element. The DWP does this – but the LCWRA element is only paid from the date of the DWP's supersession decision.

This one is complicated. Technically, DWP may have grounds for paying the element only from the decision date. However, they also have grounds for paying it from the date that they were notified of a change of circumstances – and they should use this more generous rule where it applies. [See sources](#)

Note that things *might* be different if the LCWRA element is awarded as the result of a routine re-assessment (ie, if it was not prompted by the claimant telling the DWP about a change of circumstances).

Contributory ESA alongside UC

A claimant is getting contributory ESA alongside their UC. They have already had a work capability assessment for ESA and been put in the support group. In this situation, they should get a LCWRA element in their UC without needing another assessment – and this should be paid from the date they were put in the support group. [See sources](#)

- ✓ **Deadline to pay voluntary National Insurance (NI) Contributions to increase
State Pension extended**

New regulations extend the deadline for paying voluntary class 3 NI contributions for the period 2006 to 2016, and for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 tax years. The deadline had already been extended to 31 July 2023 and will now be 5 April 2025. This gives some people more opportunity to build their contributions record under the transitional arrangements for the new State Pension. You can [read the regulations extending the deadline for voluntary NICs on GOV.UK](#).

- ✓ **Missing Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP)**

The DWP and HMRC are identifying people who may have HRP missing from their NI record because they claimed Child Benefit without a NI Number between 1978 and 2000. This could affect their current entitlement to State Pension. The DWP states that it will start contacting affected people from Autumn 2023.

You can read the [DWP guidance on correcting NI records with missing HRP on GOV.UK](#).

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

None

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