

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 send info for the mailout

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum
2. Training Information
3. Benefit Updates
4. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
5. Vacancies:
6. Advice Services Contacts (specialist advisors)

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum

Last meeting 25th April – we had speakers from, Housing Benefit (Darron McDermott) and (Jakir Hussein) DWP. If you wish to attend future meetings you should email me to be added to the list (they are held quarterly). Full minutes will be available on THCAN website, issues discussed included:

- UC Problems with communication, getting DWP to agree to speak to advisors after client has left, offering to ring back and then not doing so, not answering calls or returning emails – DWP agreed to share their most recent escalation contact list – old one is on THCAN website (not received it yet). This lists senior staff with their emails (goes out of date quickly). Initially advisors should try to contact general number/journals to make a query then if no response use the escalation emails.
- Difficulty/challenges in getting consent to discuss/act on behalf of client's - Claimants can give permission for advisors to speak to UC staff by putting this in writing on their journal.
- DWP are doing training sessions, details of these are in these mailouts (below)
- DWP are also doing weekly meetings Wednesday 2pm on Teams. Topic UC 'migration' – if you want to attend these and don't get a link contact Umme who will put you on her list
- Untidy tenancies. Legislation and template letter attached. Both HB and advisors confirm despite there being a clear right to some clients being treated as having full rent liability. This continues to be a problem issue
- Getting Limited Capability for Work Related Activity, assessment, and additional money issues. We try and do a short presentation/training session on this at next meeting (Fatima Begum IAC has added relevant legislation link to the minutes)

2. Free Training

We are no longer funded to deliver our previous one-off training sessions; however we are delivering Advice First Aid and Learning to Advise we can also deliver tailored courses to organisations for a charge. DWP are delivering training sessions

✓ DWP Training Sessions

Universal Credit & JSA – 11am Monday 13th May (1hr30)

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 328 712 724 328

Passcode: r8vVS2

Universal Credit & Housing – 11am Tuesday 14th May (1hr)

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 310 801 458 552

Passcode: yXhysn

PIP & ESA – 11am Monday 20th May (1hr30)

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 319 899 484 461

Passcode: NgBG44

Pension Credit, New State Pension & Attendance Allowance – 11am Tuesday 21st May (1hr30)

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 363 473 281 420

Passcode: fLHTQs

Carer's Allowance – 11am Monday 27th May (1hr)

Microsoft Teams [Need help?](#)

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 362 571 897 792

Passcode: Gx4DrP

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

✓ Increase in Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) for UC

From 13 May 2024 the AET is increased to 18 hours pw at the national living wage for a single claimant and 29 hours pw for a couple. This is currently equivalent to £892 per month for single claimants and £1,437 for a couple.

The original regulations amending the AET were revoked to change the coming into force date to 13 May.

You can [read the Universal Credit \(Administrative Earnings Threshold\) \(Amendment\) \(No.2\) Regulations 2024 on legislation.gov.uk](#).

✓ Change to Housing Benefit (HB) regulations on calculating self employed earnings to remove deduction for class 2 national insurance (NI) contributions

The Chancellor announced in the [Autumn Statement 2023](#) that self-employed people will not be liable to pay class 2 NI contributions from 6 April 2024. The HB Regulations have been amended from 6 April 2024 by [Social Security \(Class 2 National Insurance Contributions\) \(Consequential Amendments and Savings\) Regulations 2024](#) to remove references to class 2 NI contributions. Class 2 NI contributions will no longer be deducted when working out the income of self-employed claimants. The change applies when working out self-employed net income from 6 April 2024 - it will not apply to any income before that date.

You can [read DWP guidance on the changes in HB Circular A6/2024 on GOV.UK](#)

✓ Universal Credit (UC) and Pension Credit (PC) claims where partner is a self-sufficient EEA national relying on UK partner's benefit

DWP guidance in [ADM Memo 04/24](#) and [DMG Memo 03/04](#) outlines how DWP will deal with claims while waiting for it's appeal against the decision in [SSWP v WV \[2023\] UKUT 112 \(AAC\)](#) ('WV').

WV decided that an EEA national who relied on their UK partners' legacy benefits may in some circumstances be considered to have a right to reside as a self-sufficient person. This might apply where the claimant is a UK national in receipt of social assistance and their partner is an EEA national with pre-settled status whose presence in the household does not increase the amount paid.

The guidance confirms that decisions on joint UC claims will not be stayed as that would prevent payment to the other partner. Instead, where a joint claim involves an EEA claimant relying on their right to reside as a self-sufficient person, a decision will be made without taking the UT decision into account. Once the Court of Appeal decision is known, claims affected will be reviewed by DWP.

If an EEA national in the above circumstances is the claimant for PC, a decision will be stayed

✓ Bromley By Bow Insights been commissioned by Tower Hamlets Together to undertake a stocktake of social welfare advice provision in the borough,

to develop a better understanding of how people who need advice and assistance with social welfare problems, such as welfare benefits, housing, debt, and immigration, access advice services and are assisted to resolve their problems.. They are surveying frontline statutory and voluntary sector staff and volunteers, in health, social care, social prescribing, foodbanks, hospitals etc to find out how access to social welfare advice provision can be improved and better integrated. The survey will be open until the 17th May, and we are keen that it is promoted widely, so please forward to any relevant partners and colleagues. Thank you for your time and support in completing the survey. We value your participation and look forward to hearing your views.

Please Complete the survey [HERE](#) It should only take about 20 minutes to complete.

✓ **Council Tax Cost of Living Relief Fund**

If you live in Tower Hamlets and have a household income that is less than £49,500 you might be eligible for the Council Tax Cost of Living Relief Fund.

Eligibility

To be eligible your household must: be named on the Council Tax bill. not be in receipt of Council Tax reduction. live in the property you are claiming for, you must have lived there before 1 April 2024.

have less than £49,500 combined household income. have less than £16,000 combined household

savings. [https://forms.towerhamlets.gov.uk/en/service/Council Tax Cost of Living Relief Fund](https://forms.towerhamlets.gov.uk/en/service/Council_Tax_Cost_of_Living_Relief_Fund)

✓ **Information / factsheets attached**

- DWP - Disability Services Advocacy Team June 2024 External Stakeholder Sessions attached
- The Peer Mentoring Pilot Project bridges the gap between DWP Job Centres and Recovery Services. Empowering individuals struggling with substance misuse who are unemployed, peer mentors can take clients to appointments, fellowship meetings, onward refers and more.
- **Courses and help for people struggling with their food bills in Tower Hamlets and Newham!** We are Bags of Taste Here is a link to our website: www.bagssoftaste.org We run courses, to target people who are struggling with their health or food bills and who are on benefits or on low income. When the course is completed we keep supporting healthy cooking habits through our Bags of Taste graduates Facebook and/or WhatsApp group, where further recipes are to be found, and a community of like-minded people to stay in touch and keep learning about healthy cooking principles and budgeting skills.
- **Starting from Saturday 6th April, the benefits rates in the UK will be increased.**

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

- **Link In** - Bi-monthly meetup for men offering a range of trips out, social activities, counsellor led sharing circle, 1-1 support to build connections and boost confidence getting out and about. Particularly welcomes those who are experiencing isolation and loneliness. **Saturdays 12:30 - 3:30pm** - Various destinations.
- **Burcham Street Gardeners** - Relaxed and friendly weekly social offering a range of nature based creative and gardening activities. **Saturdays 9:30 - 12:00pm**
- **The Wild Women Collective** - Supportive monthly women's meetup and sharing circle packed with tips and techniques to boost wellbeing. **Next meetup Tuesday 7th May 5:45 - 7:15pm at The Cabin.** *Contact twwcinspire@gmail.com
- **The Men's Cabin** - Weekly social for men offering a wide range of creative, cooking and conversational activities. **Wednesdays 2:00 - 4:00pm** at The Cabin. *Contact: TheMensCabin@gmail.com
- **Digital Drop in session** – Island House, help and support with any advice/digital issues
- **Caxton Hall Activity schedule**

5. Vacancies

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 below organisations

Legal Advice Centre we have spare capacity concerning PIP appeals and Family Law matters. In terms of PIP appeals, we are happy to take on cases from MR stage. In terms of Family Law, we will take any matter, including non-molestation orders and Section 8 child arrangement issues. We will take such cases regardless of the clients income. For PIP, please use the following email

Benefits@legaladvicecentre.London

For Family Law, please use the following email

Familylaw@legaladvicecentre.London

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