

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 to 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 Thursday 25th July 2-3pm (zoom) – if you have not previously attended one of these meetings and wish to come, please email me to be added to my list (minutes are available on the THCAN website). The next meeting should be in October and topic housing costs, Unfortunately I have had no response to my request inviting someone from DWP housing costs section so will make one further attempt (today) otherwise I'll just arrange a meeting without them on this topic. Someone from Housing Benefits is usually agreeable to attend if available

2. Free Training

- ✓ October 7th: 3Bs Money Skills Workshop
- ✓ October 8th and 9th: 7 Signs Employment Workshop

Flyers attached contact: emmie.jenkinshill@cleanslateltd.co.uk

✓ **Wise Age** invite relevant managers, staff and/or clients to free training around age and employment issues and best practice. Introductory sessions and at the end of each we hope to agree further ongoing joint activities.

Wednesday 16 October from 9.30- 13.30: an in-person event for Employers and Age-advocates to employers Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, E2 6HG.

Monday 21 October from 9.30- 13.30 Employment support for over 50s wanting employment;; an in-person event for clients aged 50+. **Professional Development Centre, 229, Bethnal Green Road, London E2 6AB.**

Wednesday 23 October from 13.00 -15.00 on Zoom: Train the Trainers: for advisers working with 50+ in the voluntary and public sector, including boroughs plus DWP age champions and 50+ work coaches

To register for any of these sessions please contact us at contact@wiseage.org.uk

✓ Please see attached details of **Disability Services** events scheduled for November and December 2024, if you have any issues or require more information contact DisabilityServices.AdvocacyTeam@dwp.gov.uk. 07554224835

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

- **Universal Credit (UC) communications**

The DWP have become aware of fake text messages and an app called 'Universal Credit UK'. They are encouraging claimants not to use the app or respond to suspicious text messages while they work with their security teams to investigate.

- ✓ **Case law Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Brief summaries and links to the judgments below.**

- **“The pitfalls of elliptical extrapolation”**

In some cases, you may find the DWP or a tribunal referring to a client's ability to complete one task as evidence that they are able to complete another, different, task. *JM v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* adds to supportive case law that this can only be justified when the tasks are in fact directly comparable.

You can find [a copy of JM v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions: \[2024\] UKUT 283 \(AAC\) on GOV.UK](#).

- **Concessions before appeal**

Sometimes the DWP will concede points should apply for certain activities post-mandatory reconsideration notice but pre-tribunal hearing. *TL v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* says that where this happens, and both parties agree on the concession, the starting point for the first tier should be that these have ceased to become issues under appeal. You can find [a copy of TL v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions \[2024\] UKUT 282 \(AAC\) on GOV.UK](#).

- ✓ **[RR v SSWP \(UC\) \[2024\] UKUT 261 \(AAC\)](#) concerns whether an adult child who lives at home part of the time and at university part of the time counts as a non-dependent for a parent claiming housing costs under UC. The test is not determined by a crude measure of the time spent living at any one address. Decision makers and tribunals must make a holistic assessment of all relevant factors. The UT provides a non-exhaustive list of indicators that may aid in making this assessment.**

- ✓ In [CB v SSWP \[2024\] UKUT 257 \(AAC\)](#), the First-tier Tribunal (FtT) considered revisions of **entitlement and recoverable overpayment decisions** made by the DWP in respect of 5 pension credit claims made from 2005 to 2020. The overpayments were found to result from misrepresentations by the claimant. The FtT erred in failing to explore whether evidence was in fact still available regarding the declarations made for the 2020 claim and considering whether to adjourn.

✓ [CD v SSWP \(UC\) \[2024\] UKUT 256 \(AAC\)](#)

finds that it is not discriminatory to award a bedroom for **UC housing costs to only one separated parent** for a child whose care is shared equally.

✓ **LABOUR ADOPTS BANK SURVEILLANCE PLAN**

Labour is to revive plans to force banks to carry out surveillance on claimants' accounts and give the DWP police type power to search premises and seize possessions. The *Fraud, Error and Debt Bill* will give the DWP: power to force banks and financial institutions to share data that may show indications of potential benefit overpayments, new powers of search and seizure, so the DWP can take greater control investigations into criminal gangs defrauding the taxpayer, power to recover debts from individuals who can pay money back but have avoided doing so. The outline of the new bill was published today by the

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **MORE PIP REVIEWS BUT FEWER ASSESSMENTS**

The DWP have recruited additional PIP case managers and are now aiming to increase the number of PIP review decisions made without the need for the claimant to attend an assessment. The news underlines the importance of giving detailed information when making a fresh claim or a review claim

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **RECORD 3.5 MILLION PEOPLE NOW GETTING PIP**

The latest PIP statistics show that at the end of July there were 3.5 million claimants entitled to PIP in England and Wales, a rise of 3% over the last quarter.

37% received the highest level of award, up from 36% in April.

The success rate for new claims was: 46% for all new claims, this is identical to the same period last year, 53% for claims that got as far as assessment, an increase from 52% in July 2023, Most awards were very short, however: 79% were short term (0 to 2 years), 13% were longer term (over 2 years), 7% were ongoing

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **AUDIO RECORD YOUR WCA ON YOUR PHONE**

Claimants have the right to audio record their work capability assessment for UC or ESA using their phone or other device.

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **NEW PIP AND WCA ASSESSMENT COMPANIES**

A new system for work capability assessments (WCA) and personal independence payment (PIP) assessments. The Health Assessment Advisory Service (HAAS) has taken over providing WCA and PIP assessments. HAAS is part of the DWP. It provides training, guidance and software for assessors. But the assessors themselves still work for private sector companies. There are four of these now involved in carrying out benefits assessments: Maximus, Capita, Serco and Ingeus.

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **ONE THIRD OF UC MIGRATION CLAIMANTS FAIL TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL CLAIM**

Statistics released in August by the DWP show that 32% of all claimants sent a UC migration notice failed to make a successful claim and had their legacy benefits terminated. In total 284,660 individuals did not make a valid claim and had their benefits stopped up to the end of February 2024.

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **CLAIM AA ONLINE**

The option to claim AA online has been quietly introduced by the DWP on their main AA page on gov.uk. A limited number of online applications now become available every Monday but, once they have all been used, no more are forthcoming until the following week. As well as scarcity, the new service seems to have a number of drawbacks, including: no obvious way to save a partly completed form; no way of submitting additional evidence online; no additional information boxes, just tick box responses for difficulties with a given activity. Readers applying for AA may want to stick to paper applications for now, unless the current online service is improved.

[Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **Hackney Job Centre Plus** are keen to build a comprehensive network of support within the community to help provide better outcomes for customers who have a disability or health condition which impacts on their ability to find and sustain paid employment. Our **Disability Employment Advisor's** are interested in how they could work collaboratively to provide holistic support. If your workplace is around the Hackney Borough and this is of interest to you, please contact me

ROWON.SMITH@DWP.GOV.UK.

✓ **Migration to UC**

The DWP is continuing to send notice letters to people on legacy benefits including Tax Credits. People claiming these benefits are being moved to Universal Credit- If your client has received a Universal Credit migration notice letter, make sure they understand the deadline that has been provided. **Here are important things to**

know about deadlines: The deadline to migrate to Universal Credit will be three months after the date the notice letter was sent, their legacy benefits will stop after this deadline, Make a successful claim for Universal Credit by the deadline

The timing of that claim can be important so that they can prevent gaps between claims

From July to November 2024, people over State Pension age who get Tax Credits will start receiving letters from the DWP or HMRC. These letters will tell your client to apply to either **Universal Credit** or **Pension Credit**. They will receive either a 'migration notice' with the date they need to apply for Universal Credit or a 'tax credit closure notice' with the date they need to apply for Pension Credit by. **It's very important that they apply for Universal Credit or Pension Credit by the date in**

their notice letter. If they don't, they could lose transitional protection, which is extra money added to their benefit

[Universal Credit Migration Notice - Migration Notices | Turn2us](#)

✓ Information / factsheets attached

✓ **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and University Bursary schemes**

You can apply for EMA or a University bursary until **11 November 2024**.

Education Maintenance Allowance allows pupils in Sixth Form schools and colleges to apply for £600 to support them with their studies. Eligibility for EMA: Between 16 and 19 years old on 1 September 2024, on a full time study programme at a recognised sixth form provision/college, household annual income (excluding Housing benefit and Council tax reduction) needs to be below £25,000, a resident of Tower Hamlets for three years unless you are a refugee on the Ukraine or Afghan scheme, need at least a 95% attendance record at the end of your first term

https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/education_and_learning/school_finance_and_support/EMA-and-University-Bursary-awards/EMA-and-University-Bursary.aspx

✓ **free digital sessions for the 50+** Tower Hamlets residents.

Linessa Ollivierre Main Office No: 020 8981 7124 82 Russia Lane, London E2 9LU [Digital Inclusion Page](#)

✓ **Housing and Health** Final version A guide to supporting Tower Hamlets residents with housing issues

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

✓ **Child Poverty Action Group** have partnered with a will – writing specialist, the National Free Wills Network to offer free wills. There is no obligation to leave a gift to CPAG when using this service. But a small gift can make a huge difference. If you have any questions or need help, please contact me on 020 3955 4497 or reply to this email. **Alice Morgan** Legacies Officer

✓ Thousands of people missing **Home Responsibilities Protection** on their National Insurance record could boost their State Pension during Pensions Awareness Week - [Check you're not missing State Pension payments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

✓ **Stop Loan Sharks** illegal money lenders/loan sharks are targeting individuals whose first language is not English. Loan sharks target anyone they perceive as vulnerable, this can lead to being charged extortionate interest and subjected to a

range of threats, intimidation and harassment. ClearVoice translation company and now have resources translated into 20 languages
Please visit www.stoploansharks.co.uk/resources to access these materials

✓ Please see attached a guide which we hope will prove useful in supporting **Tower Hamlets residents with housing problems**. We may also need to update this version in the light of pending legislation and would want you to make sure you are also updating your contacts and networks when this arrives. If you have comments on the guide, please email matthew.quin@towerhamlets.gov.uk

✓ **Island House Benefit Checks for pensioners.**

Support for pensioners with benefit checks and Pension Credit applications. Please feel free to signpost/refer clients of pension age to check: Pension Credit and attendance allowance entitlement. Or email Cathy Weir cathy.weir@island-house.org with the clients name, telephone number (and email address if they have one) and they will get a call back/telephone advice, Island House, Roserton Street, E14 3PG

✓ **LBTH are refreshing their VCS Strategy** and have just launched the second phase of **consultation** and are keen to hear from the VCS, the community and partners on what they think of the draft vision and objectives and ideas of actions we can take to support the VCS. All information on how to get involved can be found here: [VCS strategy consultation \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](http://VCSstrategyconsultation.towerhamlets.gov.uk).

5. **Vacancies**

✓ Limehouse Project

We have two exciting new positions at Limehouse Project. Please find the JD and application information in the link below. <https://limehouseproject.org.uk/get-involved/#EmploymentOpportunities>

✓ Island Advice – two roles details attached

Welfare Right Supervisor **Salary: So2 (£36,000 to £42,000 PA), plus 8% pension contribution**

Hours: 35 hours per week / part time post available pro rata JD and application form attached – contact Sarah Sauvat sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk for more info

Island Advice Centre has secured funding from Wakefield & Tetley for a 14 hours per week Trainee Adviser Application/information attached and to be returned to sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk

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