**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**](http://www.thcan.org.uk/)**website has information on advice providers services, factsheets,**

**Referrals portal contact Azka-Mir Vicar** [**Azka-Mir.Vicar@island-advice.org.uk**](mailto:Azka-Mir.Vicar@island-advice.org.uk)[**jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk**](mailto: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 31st October – Minutes will be available on THCAN website once they have been agreed – Next meeting will be in January, if you are not already on the invite list for these meetings and would like to attend, please email me

**2.       Free Training**

We are no longer funded to deliver our previous one-off training sessions; however, we are sharing/promoting other organisations free training including DWP training sessions

Benefit awareness sessions for partners of the Department for Work and Pensions are educational meetings designed to inform stakeholders about the various UK state benefits available to the public.

**Universal Credit & New Style JSA w/ Housing** 2:00pm (2hr) Monday 2nd December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NWU5NzMwMmYtMTJmYy00N2VkLThmNGUtY2NhMTQ4NzY0ZDAx%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 367 077 522 329

Passcode: Gv3aC9mJ

**Maternity Allowance & Childcare Costs:** 11:00am (1hr) Tuesday 10th December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OWY0MmU1OTQtOTFhYy00YmI3LWE0N2YtNGY3MzZmZDIwMTVh%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 320 841 985 796

Passcode: Ws2Tf2Qd

**Personal Independence Payment & New Style ESA** 11:00am (1hr30) Friday 13th December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ODcyODQ0MjUtNzQzNy00OWUzLTgwMzctOGEwYWU5MjgxZWM1%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 365 455 021 398

Passcode: D5yY789D

**Carer's Allowance** 2:00pm (1hr30) Monday 16th December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_ZmJmMmUyYjMtMTlkOC00ZTlhLThjZGMtNTliMDFmZTQwNWU2%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 316 314 277 113

Passcode: pQ7H7RE7

**Pension Credit, The New State Pension & Attendance Allowance** 11:00am (1hr30) Tuesday 17th December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MzIwNzIxNDEtMTAyNS00Njk2LWE4Y2UtOGUwZTMyOWNhZTRl%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 359 685 587 401

Passcode: 7W9Wy7XR

**Access to Work** 11:00am (1hr30) Friday 20th December**:**

[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YWM0OGQ3MjktNDUwOS00ZDQ1LTg4YTEtNGQ2MThkNWIyNWMw%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2296f1f6e9-1057-4117-ac28-80cdfe86f8c3%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222d84abe8-5ee5-4d8f-a494-2c537ae750c1%22%7d)

Meeting ID: 342 301 045 714

Passcode: ii2gH97X

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

* **Budgeting advances - extension of repayment period**

The government has announced that the repayment period for budgeting advances in Universal Credit (UC) would increase from 12 months to 24 months. This will only apply to new customers who request a budgeting loan from 4 December.

* **63,000 ESA CLAIMANTS TO MIGRATE TO UC EVERY MONTH FROM FEBRUARY**

The DWP has announced that it is ramping up the managed migration of employment and support allowance (ESA) claimants to UC over the next few months. The numbers involved will be very much greater than the department has dealt with before, up from an average of 36,000 to 63,000 a month from February 2025 until early December 2025.

[Read More and Comment](https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/63,000-esa-claimants-to-migrate-to-uc-every-month-from-february?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=benefits-and-work&utm_content=20+November+2024+Newsletter)

* **OVER A QUARTER OF UC MIGRATIONS HAVE FAILED SO FAR**

Over a quarter of all the households sent a UC mandatory migration notice up to May 2024 failed to make a claim and had their legacy benefits stopped, according to figures released by the DWP last week.

[Read More and Comment](https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/over-a-quarter-of-uc-migrations-have-failed-so-far?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=benefits-and-work&utm_content=20+November+2024+Newsletter)

* **SUCCESSFUL ESA TO UC MANAGED MIGRATION GUIDE**

Benefits and Work has published a detailed members’ guide to “Successful ESA to UC Managed Migration”. The 50 page document takes you through the whole migration process, warning of potential pitfalls.

[Read More and Comment](https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/successful-esa-to-uc-managed-migration-guide?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=benefits-and-work&utm_content=20+November+2024+Newsletter)

* **FALL IN UC SANCTIONS, BUT STILL NEAR RECORD LEVELS**

The proportion of universal credit (UC) claimants who have been sanctioned has fallen in the most recent quarter, but the number of sanctions handed out remains near record levels.

[Read More and Comment](https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/fall-in-uc-sanctions,-but-still-near-record-levels?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=benefits-and-work&utm_content=20+November+2024+Newsletter)

* **HUGE PIP REVIEW WAITING TIMES**

As of September 2024, the median wait for a review initiated by the DWP is :

290 days where it is referred to an assessment provider; and

252 days where it is not referred to an assessment provider.

[Read More and Comment](https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/huge-pip-review-waiting-times-due-to-dwp,-not-assessment-providers?utm_source=iContact&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=benefits-and-work&utm_content=20+November+2024+Newsletter)

**CASE LAW UPDATES**

* **DWP need a legal basis to close a claim for Universal Credit (UC)**

In [PHC v The SSWP (UC): [2024] UKUT 340 (AAC)](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=1dcf824369&e=588bae1b2e) the Upper Tribunal (UT) reiterated the need for the DWP to decide on entitlement before closing a Universal Credit (UC) claim. The claimant’s UC claim was ‘closed’ due to a ‘failure’ to provide evidence of identity for herself and her children. This decision was upheld by the First-tier Tribunal (FtT). The UT considered several legal provisions that the DWP submitted that would allow a claim to be closed in these circumstances. Rejecting most of these, the UT found that a:

‘Decision as to whether the claimant has established her identity is part of an investigation of entitlement and not relevant to whether a claim has been made in required manner - [ED v SSWP [2020] UKUT 352 (AAC)](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=a5e25cb1ef&e=588bae1b2e) considered’.

The UT further stated:  
‘This appeal is a further example of the occasional gap (some might say the occasional chasm) between what the law says on the one hand about the adjudication of claims for benefit and how the DWP actually operates its decision-making arrangements on the other.’

* **Upper Tribunal decision QWH v SSWP [2024] UKUT 339 (AAC)**

In [QW v SSWP [2024] UKUT 339 (AAC)](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=4e6ac4e9e8&e=588bae1b2e) the UT considered the correct application of the test of whether personal independence payments (PIP) descriptors were satisfied on over 50% of relevant days. Under [Reg 7 of the SS (PIP) Regulations 2013,](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=6814903635&e=588bae1b2e) descriptors are awarded where they are satisfied on over 50% of the days of the required period. The UT found that the FtT had misapplied the test in [Regulation 7](https://citizensadvice.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f2e5709e33ab37630d8a8d4be&id=97f448d7d6&e=588bae1b2e) as they had considered whether the descriptor applied for more than 50% of the time or for a majority of the time rather than 'on over 50% of the days of the required period'. The UT stated that the misapplication of this test could have led the FtT to reject any needs for activity 1 by imposing too high a bar. Satisfying a descriptor on 50% of the days is a lower test as it can be satisfied even if the descriptor is satisfied for less than 51% of the day

* **Information / factsheets attached**

* **2025 benefit rates**

1. **New Projects /services, information, and resources**

* **Warm Home Discount Scheme**

The Warm Home Discount Scheme is a one-off £150 discount off your electricity bill. If you’re eligible, your electricity supplier will apply the discount to your bill. The money is not paid to you.

* **Boost State Pension with online payments**

Individuals have less than 6 months to fill any gaps in their National Insurance records from 2006 onwards to maximise their State Pension • Government encourages people to act now and check their National Insurance record. People have until 5 April 2025 to maximise their State Pension by making voluntary National Insurance contributions to fill any gaps in their NI record between 6 April 2006 and 5 April 2018.

* **Launch Event for the Winter Fuel Payment,**

**Thursday, 5th December 2025, at the Whitechapel Idea Store at 1pm.** We would be delighted if you could join us and be part of this important event.  This event is an excellent opportunity to connect with the community and share valuable information about the Winter Fuel Payment initiative. If you have service users or residents who would benefit from attending, we warmly invite you to extend this invitation to them.  Please help us spread the word, and if you are interested in attending, kindly reach out to me directly. We look forward to your support and participation in making this event a success.Resident Support Team Leader  [Sarah.Akinwunmi@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Akinwunmi@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | |  | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **The Employment Rights Bill** is being described as the biggest upgrade to workers’ rights in a generation.  Introduced on 10 October 2024, it provides the legislative framework that will put Labour’s plans for the workplace – originally outlined in its ‘Plan to Make Work Pay’ document – into action. |      |  | | --- | | Download guide | | | |

1. **Vacancies**

NONE this month

1. **Advice Services**

Tower Hamlets Advice benefit advice services details   [Advice Centres - THCAN](https://thcan.org.uk/advice-centres/)

Specialistadvice providers   All the advice providers listed on [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk/) provide benefit advice and help with form filling.

**Legal Advice Centre**  PIP appeals and Family Law matters.  For PIP, please use the following email [Benefits@legaladvicecentre.London](mailto:Benefits@legaladvicecentre.London)

For Family Law, please use the following email [Familylaw@legaladvicecentre.London](mailto:Familylaw@legaladvicecentre.London)

**Complex/appeal/specialist advice is available at the below organisations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Organisation | E-mail | Tel Advice |
| Citizens Advice Bureau | [advice@eastendcab.org.uk](mailto:advice@eastendcab.org.uk) | 0203 855 4472 |
| Island Advice Centre | [admin@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:admin@island-advice.org.uk) | 0207 987 9379  Tuesday 10am to 12 |
| Legal Advice Centre | [admin@legaladvicecentre.london](mailto:admin@legaladvicecentre.london) | 0203 606 0372 |
| Tower Hamlets Law Centre | [info@thlc.co.uk](mailto:info@thlc.co.uk) | 0207 538 4909  9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri |