



**THCAN** Tower Hamlets  
Community Advice Network

# Annual Report

2021- 2024

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## Table Of Contents

Introduction, Aims and Objectives .....	3
Introduction .....	3
Benefits of the THCAN network and Referral System .....	4
Amins .....	6
Objectives:.....	6
<b>THCAN</b> Referral System Data.....	7
Total Referral Data 2021-2024.....	7
Referral Outcomes .....	9
Issues Referred .....	11
Social Prescribers on <b>THCAN</b> Referral System .....	15
Local Authority (Tower Hamlets Council) on <b>THCAN</b> Referral System.....	18
Appendix.....	25

# Introduction, Aims and Objectives

## Introduction

The Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (**THCAN**) is an initiative that brings together local advice centres to provide a wide range of free advice and representation to residents of Tower Hamlets. Established in 2010, **THCAN** was created through a partnership between Tower Hamlets' local advice centres and this initiative ensures that residents of Tower Hamlets have access to free, high-quality advice on welfare benefits, debt, housing, and other areas of social welfare law.

**THCAN** includes a comprehensive website listing all advice centres within the borough, complete with their addresses, contact details, and website information. It also offers free self-help resources for individuals seeking information on eligibility criteria and guidance on various types of benefits related to, but not limited to, housing, debt, and welfare.

Additionally, **THCAN** features a centralised, web-based referral system designed to streamline the referral process, making it more efficient and effective for all members of the network. **THCAN** coordinates cross-organisation referrals through a network that includes **53** diverse organisations and **546** registered individual users supporting people across the borough.

It keeps frontline workers informed by sharing updates via a monthly newsletter, workshops, facilitated forums and network meetings, as well as maintaining the **THCAN** website. Furthermore, **THCAN** is committed to developing the advice sector workforce through its volunteer project, fostering new talent and enhancing the skills of those delivering advice and support services.

In 2021 **THCAN** launched a pilot of a direct referral system modelled on the Norfolk Community Advice Network (**NCAN**), in collaboration with *The Children's Society's Community Support Programme*. Furthermore, in 2024, the system secured funding from **NEL NHS**.

In the past year, **13** new organisations joined the network, including Barts Health NHS Trust – Renal, Barts Health NHS Trust – THCNT (Neuro Team), Barts Health Social Prescribing, Bow and Poplar Neighbourhood Mental Health Team, Community Navigator, Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Mental Health Team, The Start for Life Social Prescribers, Tower Hamlets Resident Hub, THEIS,

Ocean Generation, Billy’s Pantry, THCVS, and Aishah Help. Details of all partner organisations in the THCAN network and the support they offer can be found at the [THCAN homepage](#).

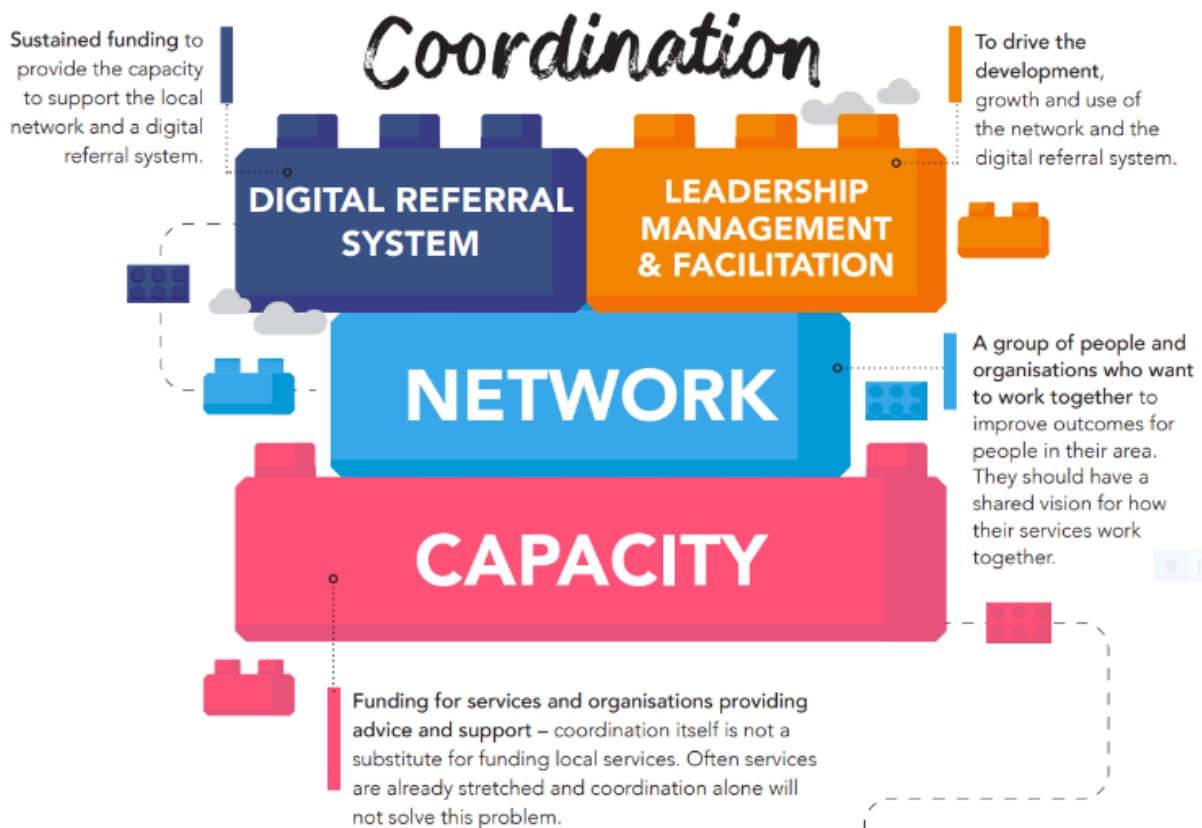


Figure 1: THCAN building Blocks

## Benefits of the THCAN network and Referral System

One of the beneficial outcomes of access to the referral system is the facilitation of a move from a signposting to a referrals mindset, within and across organisations. Robust, accountable referrals are more effective than signposting, particularly when supporting clients who may lack the confidence, knowledge and tools to access help themselves. The burden is removed from the service user and they no longer have to repeat their story several times to get support.

**THCAN** plays a pivotal role in supporting agencies with referrals, ensuring residents can access the full range of support available to them in the easiest way possible ([London Borough of Tower Hamlets: Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network | Local Government Association](#))

**THCAN’s** combination of a strong network and referral mechanism also plays a pivotal role in supporting agencies in Tower Hamlets with improved efficiency and consistency of the referral process.

The system is flexible and easy to use, it empowers agencies to manage their capacity, raise the profile of the support they can offer, and direct people elsewhere when their needs can be best served by another organisation.

The **THCAN** referral system remains the primary direct referral system in the borough for organisations to refer people to advice providers and allows the organisations registered on it to cross-refer between each other; **losing it would represent a real setback in coordination and delivery of crisis support for Tower Hamlets organisations and residents.**

- *THCAN is a great platform for accessing and linking in with various advice centres across the VCSE sector via a referral pathway to access to vital services. **Senior Practitioner (THEIS)***

By bringing referrals across agencies into one space, the network and system not only increases awareness of the breadth of services available, increasing access, but also allows referring agents to track their referrals, preventing clients from slipping through the net.

The system also allows for insight development through top level analysis of referral data, illuminating emerging issues, trends and resident needs in a measurable way. There is significant scope for borough-wide reporting linking together teams and providing whole-system insight into how to best support residents.

- *Tower Hamlets is so dense with support, but it can feel so scattered and disparate. THCAN fulfils an amazing and vital role of pulling everything together in one space, making supporting people so much easier and faster, and also helping us to build stronger and long-standing connections, networks and familiarity between services, which is so important for me and my work. **DH Connector - Safe Connections Community Suicide Prevention Hub***

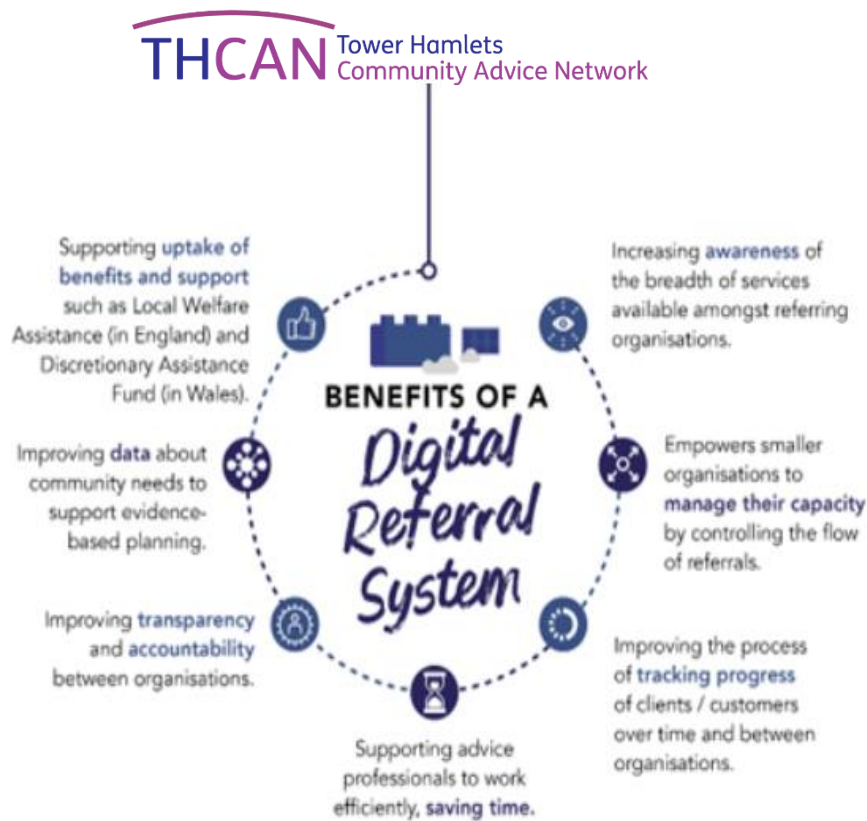


Figure 2: Benefits to THCAN referral system

## Amins

The Referral System is the tool with which THCAN meets its aims of providing access to quality advice in Tower Hamlets.

The Referral System works because it is underpinned by a strong partnership of advice providers who are committed to working together as part of an integrated system, with key stakeholders, including the local authority and healthcare for the benefit of clients and the community.

The primary aim of this report is to analyse the trends, patterns, and outcomes of referrals made between 2021 and 2024. The report seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the referral processes within the specified period, identifying key areas for improvement and best practices.

## Objectives:

1. **To identify trends and patterns** in referral volumes, sources, and issues appearing in data from 2021 to 2024. Ensuring accuracy and completeness for thorough analysis.
2. **To evaluate the effectiveness** of the referral system by analysing outcomes and response times.
3. **To compare year-on-year changes** in referral rates to determine growth, decline, or consistency.
4. **To assess factors influencing referral rates**, including policy changes, external events (e.g.: Pension Credit Programme), or organisational restructuring.
5. **To highlight challenges and bottlenecks** within the referral process, recommending solutions for improvement.
6. **To provide data-driven insights** that support strategic planning and policy formulation for enhancing the referral system.
7. **To identify areas of success** and best practices that can be replicated or scaled within the organisation or across sectors.

## THCAN Referral System Data

### Total Referral Data 2021-2024

The **THCAN referral system** is a robust and efficient tool designed to support Social Prescribers and advice centres in ensuring that residents who seek their services receive the help they need, along with access to the free advice they are entitled to. By streamlining the referral

process, the system allows frontline workers to connect individuals quickly and effectively to the appropriate support services, whether related to welfare benefits, housing, debt, or other social welfare issues. This service is not only utilised by Social Prescribers but is also actively used by **Tower Hamlets Council** and other local organisations, further enhancing the network’s reach and impact across the borough.

*Table*

<b>Referral Data 2021- 2024</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<i>No of Issued referred</i>	494	1637	1615	2342
<i>Referrals Closed</i>	505	1623	1588	1911
<i>Organisation Accepting referral over the</i>	19	33	29	23
<i>Registered organisation using referral</i>	27	47	45	57

**1:Referral Data 2021-2024**

Between the years **2021** and **2024** about **6088** referrals have been made to an average of **26** organisations (Refer to [Table 1](#) above). This does not automatically mean that around **6088** issues have been referred, as some issues may overlap in the referrals made. This can happen for various reasons. For example, there was an influx of **welfare benefits** referrals made during **Q4** of **2024**. This was due to the Local Authority advertising to residents and encouraging them to sign up for **Pension Credit** or make a claim for **Pension Credit**. This encouragement and advertisement led to an influx of clients being referred across the borough, either seeking help with **Welfare Benefits – Form Filling** or seeking **Welfare Benefits** advice.

As can be seen in [Table 1](#) above, the number of referrals increased by more than three times from **2021** to **2022**, with a **231%** increase. Similarly, from **2023** to **2024**, there was a **45%** increase in the number of referrals. Upon analysing the data from **2021** to **2024**, there was an overall increase of approximately **371%** in the number of referrals.

Alternatively, the referral closure rate for **2021** is over **100%**, **96.98%** for **2022**, **96.19%** for 2023 and for 2024, it was **79.82%**, with an average rate of **93.25%** from 2021 to 2024. Similarly, the number of organisations using the referral system, either making referrals or accepting or both have increased from just 27 organisations in 2021 to 57 organisations in **2024**. There has been a around **111%** increase in the number of organisations between 2021 to 2024.

According to the values in [Table 1](#) a **decrease** in the number of organisations can be observed from **2022** to **2023**. This decline is due to a reduction in funding provided by the Local Authority in **2023**. The decrease in funding also impacted the operations and functionality of THCAN, leading to a campaign to **save the THCAN** website and referral system ([For more information refer to Appendix 1](#)).



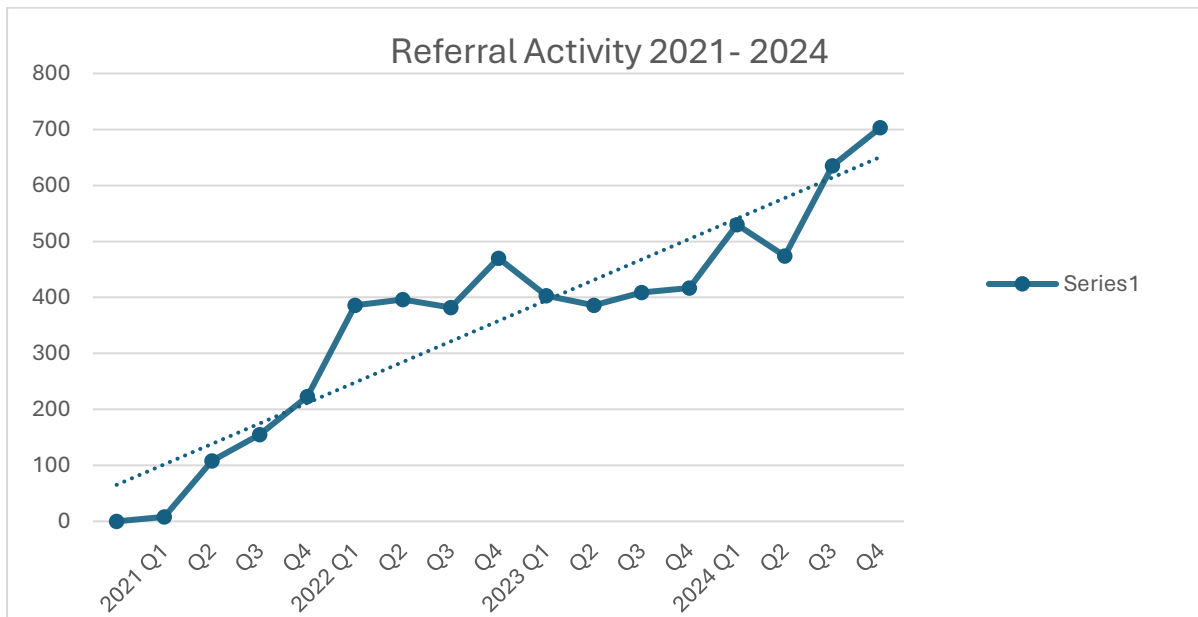


Figure 3:Referral Activity 2021- 2024

As can be seen in [Figure 3](#), the referral data from [Table 1](#) is put into perspective. [Figure 3](#) illustrates the trend in referral activity over time, measured quarterly from **Q1 2021** to **Q4 2024**. The **y-axis** represents referral activity, ranging from **0** to **800**, while the **x-axis** displays quarterly intervals. The data shows an overall upward trend, with a slow start in **2021** followed by a sharp increase in **2022**. While some fluctuations are observed between **2022** and **2023**, the general trajectory remains positive. In **2024**, there is significant growth, with **Q4** reaching the highest recorded level of referral activity. A dotted trendline is included, reinforcing the overall upward movement.

## Referral Outcomes

The referral system operates in a way that allows referrers to direct clients to organisations best suited to provide advice or undertake casework, depending on the specific needs of the individual case. Upon receiving a referral, organisations have the option to either accept or decline it, based on legitimate reasoning and their capacity to assist. Once a referral is received, the organisation must update the status to **Referral Acknowledged** to confirm acceptance. The status should only be changed to **Referral Closed** once the issue has been fully resolved.

An organisation might **decline** a referral for several reasons. First, it could be that the organisation doesn't deal with the specific issue referred, meaning the matter falls outside their scope of services or expertise. However, this is unlikely to happen when only one issue is selected per referral, as the system sorts and displays organisations in the dropdown that accept that particular issue. Hence, it is always advised that the referrer select only **one issue per referral**.

This allows the referrer to accurately pick the organisation that accepts the issue, thereby reducing the rate of declined referrals.

In some cases, the client may already be receiving help elsewhere, so referring them again could be unnecessary or redundant. This issue arises when a single client with a specific issue has been referred to multiple organisations. When the client is dealt with by one organisation first, it creates confusion and wastes the time and resources of the other organisation trying to reach a client who has already received help. This wasted time and resources could have been utilised to assist another client in dire need of advice and attention.

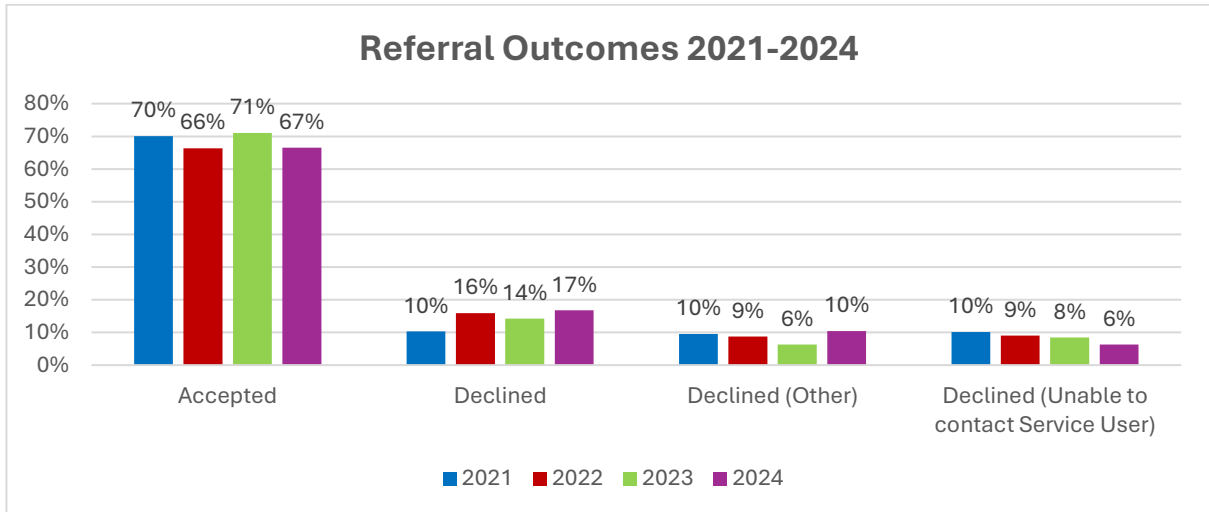
Another common reason for declining a referral is a lack of capacity, where the organisation receiving the referral simply doesn't have the resources or staffing to take on additional cases at that time. To avoid creating confusion and having to decline the referral, the referral receiving organisation may **turn off referral acceptance** or **remove issue** (under managing organisation) in cases of no or limited capacity in the organisation.

Moreover, referrals may also be declined if they are deemed inappropriate, such as when a referral is made to a specialist agency that does not handle the specific issue presented. This also happens when the referrer selects **multiple issue**, causing the system to sort organisations that may only deal with one of the selected issues. To prevent this from happening, the referrer should select **one issue** at **one time** or check whether the referral is appropriate for the organisation by reviewing the agency details available in the **THCAN directory**.

Similarly, a referral might be considered inappropriate if it doesn't align with the client's current needs or situation. Therefore, it is essential to provide as many details as possible about why a referral is required to ensure that receiving organisation can fully assess client's needs.

Lastly, if the service provider is unable to contact the client or other relevant parties, the referral may be declined due to the lack of communication, hindering any further progress. To avoid this from occurring, please ensure your contact information is updated whenever there is a change or contact the THCAN Admin to request an update so that timely amendments can be made.

Therefore, to keep the referral system robust and functioning efficiently, it is important that both the referrer and the referred organisations step up and implement all the recommendations shared. This practice of vigilance from both sides ensures that the system runs smoothly and that no bottlenecks or hiccups occur.



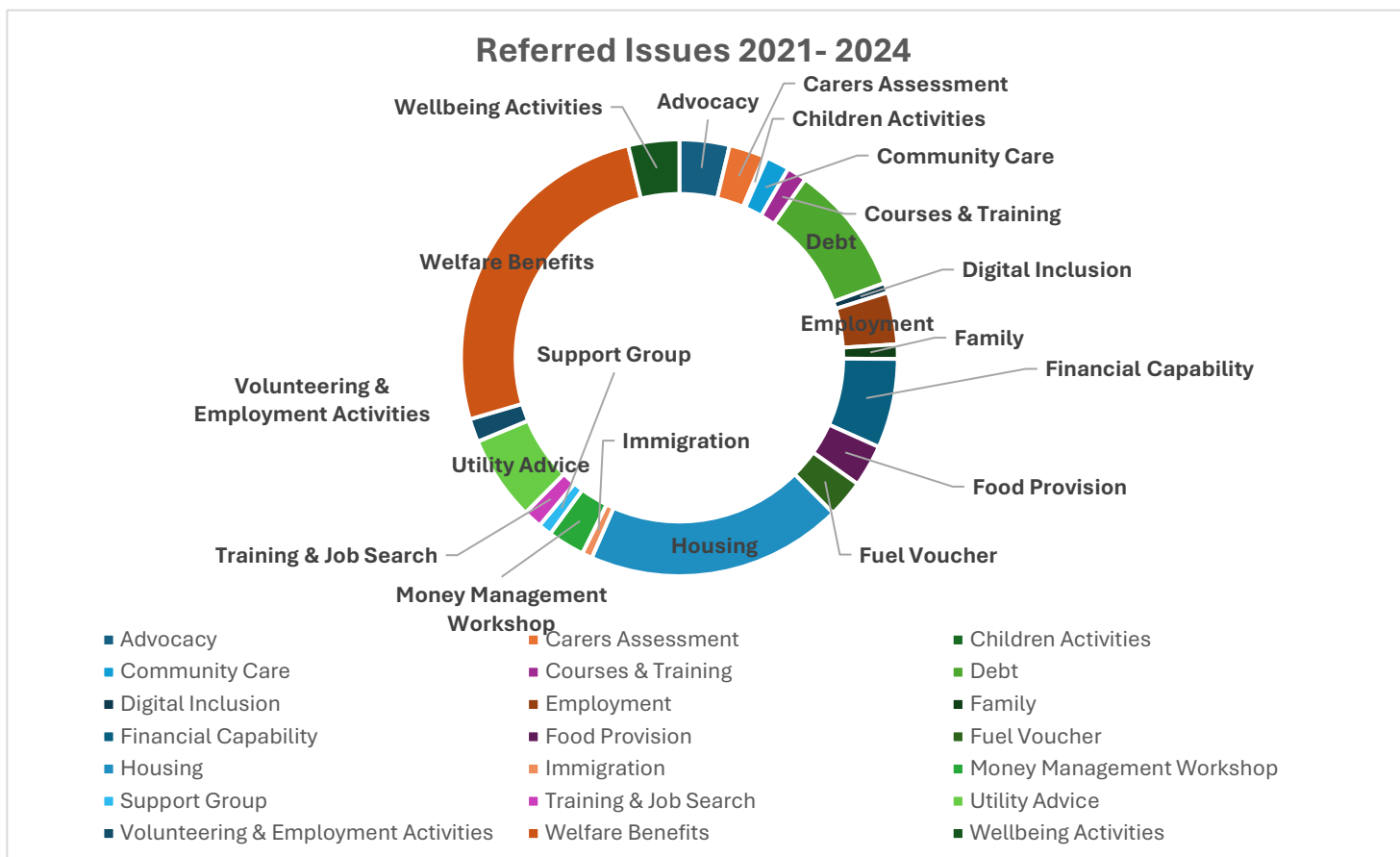
*Figure 4: Referral Outcomes 2021-2024*

As can be seen in [Figure 4](#), The percentage of **accepted** referrals remained relatively stable over the years, fluctuating between **66% and 71%**. Around **71%** of referrals made in **2023** were accepted, marking the **highest rate** of referral **acceptance**. Meanwhile, only **28%** of referrals were declined, the **lowest decline rate** recorded.

Similarly, the year **2024** saw a **67%** of referrals being accepted and around **33 %** of referrals received were declined. Out of which **6%** were declined as the client was **unable to be contacted**.

## Issues Referred

The **THCAN** referral system comprises of various issues. These issues available have been carefully selected and are based on client needs within the borough. Some of the most common issues include **Debt**, **Housing** and **Welfare Benefits**.



**Figure 5: Referred Issues 2021-2024**

**Figure 5**, above, presents a visual representation of various issues that have been referred over the period. Displayed in a circular format, the chart categorises referrals into multiple areas such as **Welfare Benefits**, **Housing**, **Employment**, **Immigration**, and **Financial Capability**, among others.

Key referral areas include **Support Groups**, **Utility Advice**, **Training & Job Search**, and **Volunteering & Employment Activities**, indicating a focus on financial stability, housing, and employment support. Other significant categories like **Debt**, **Family**, **Food Provision**, and **Fuel Vouchers** highlight essential welfare and social support needs. Additional services such as **Advocacy**, **Wellbeing Activities**, **Digital Inclusion**, and **Courses & Training** suggest efforts to enhance overall quality of life. The colour-coded legend provides a clear distinction between the various categories, demonstrating the breadth of issues addressed between **2021** and **2024**.

Issues Referred	2021	2021	2021	2021
Advocacy	1.00	29.00	41.00	268.00
Debt	92.00	193.00	229.00	370.00
Employment	8.00	27.00	77.00	240.00

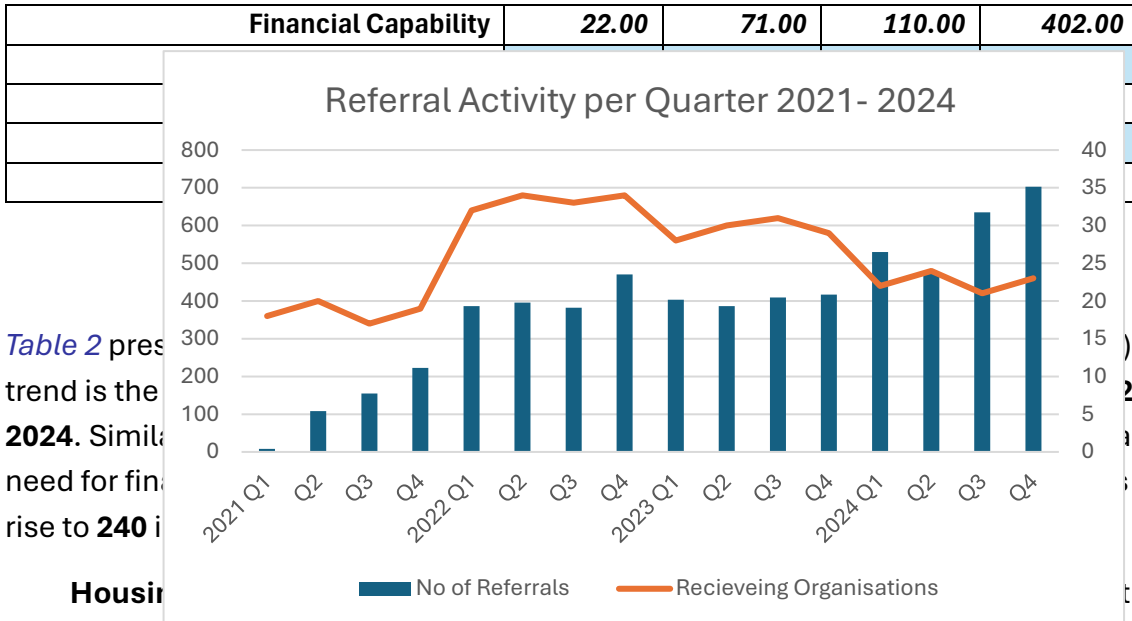


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**Housing** critical areas of concern. Food Provision, which had minimal referrals in 2021 (1.00), saw substantial growth, reaching 189 by 2024.

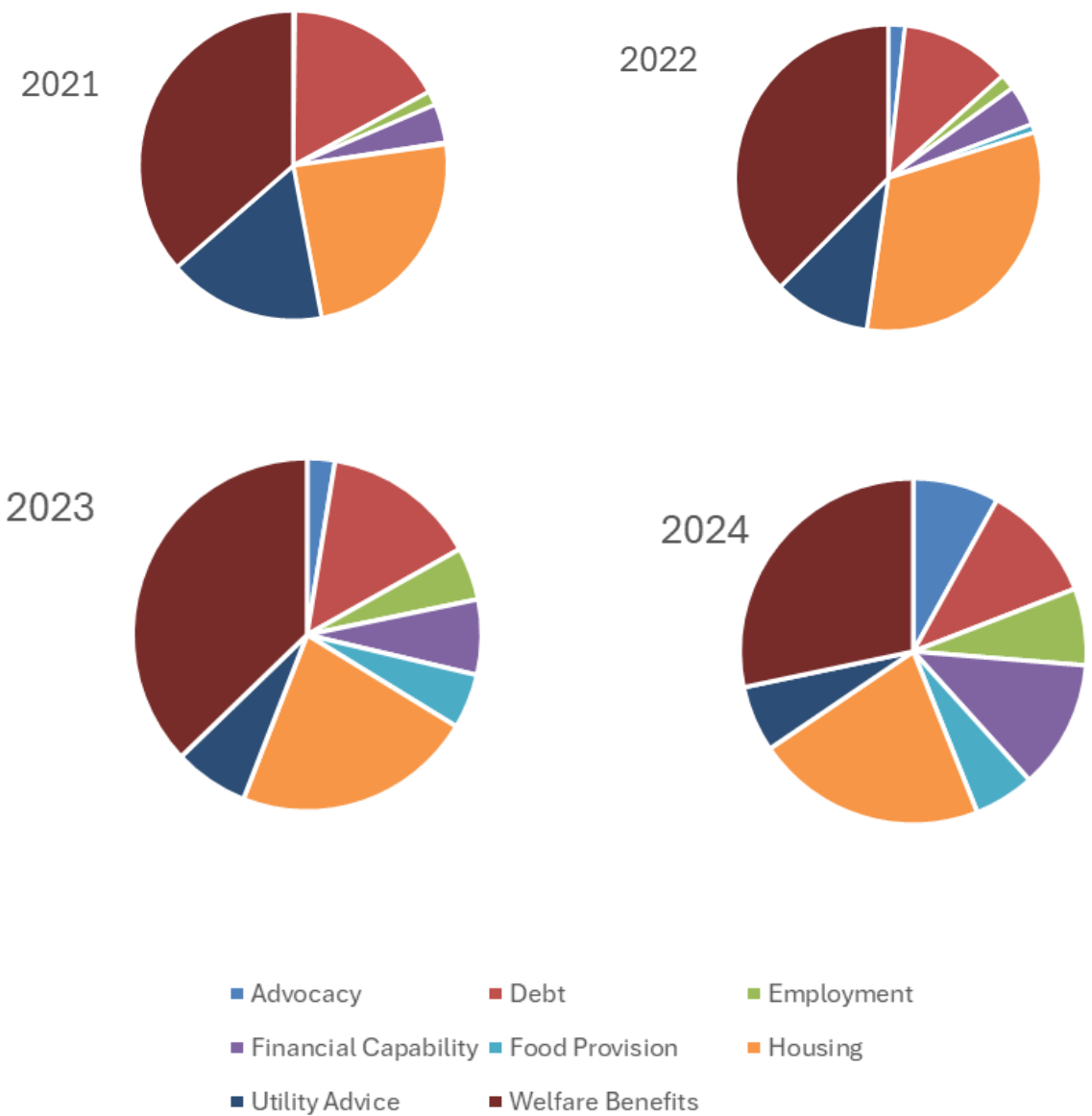
In conclusion, **Welfare Benefits** referrals saw an increase of about 378% increase from 2021 to 2024, similarly **Housing** referrals increased by about 445% from 2021 to 2024

Figure 7: Referral Activity per Quarter 2021-2024

Figure 7 presents data on number of referrals and receiving organizations over time. The blue bars represent the number of referrals made for each quarter between 2021 to 2024. The orange line on the other hand represents the number of organisations receiving referrals per quarter from 2021 to 2024.

Figure 6: Referred Issues 2021-2024

As already mentioned, the number of referrals has drastically increased from **2021** to **2024**, which is reflected in both *Figure 3* and *Figure 7*. The number of receiving organizations follows a fluctuating pattern, peaking around **2022-2023**, before slightly declining and stabilizing towards **2024 Q4**. The data suggests a correlation between the number of referrals and receiving organizations, although variations exist in different quarters. This analysis provides insights into referral trends and the capacity of receiving organizations over the given period.



**Figure 8: Major Issues Referred 2021-2024**

The pie charts above (*Figure 8*) illustrate the distribution of various referral categories from **2021 to 2024**, including **Advocacy, Debt, Employment, Financial Capability, Food Provision, Housing, Utility Advice, and Welfare Benefits**.

Through 2021-2024, **Welfare Benefits** remain one of the highest referred issues, with **Housing** being the second highest and **Debt** being the third highest. From **2021 to 2022**, **Utility Advice** referrals were high; however, they appeared to decline between **2023 and 2024**.

Similarly, referrals for **Financial Capability** increased from **2023 to 2024**, whereas they had declined between **2021 and 2022**. This rise in referrals can be attributed to the addition of **Clean Slate** to the THCAN Referral System. Clean Slate is an organisation that provides programs and guidance to help individuals manage their finances more effectively.

Likewise, the addition of **WorkPath** in **2023** led to an increase in employment referrals between **2023 and 2024**, whereas they were almost negligible between **2021 and 2022**.

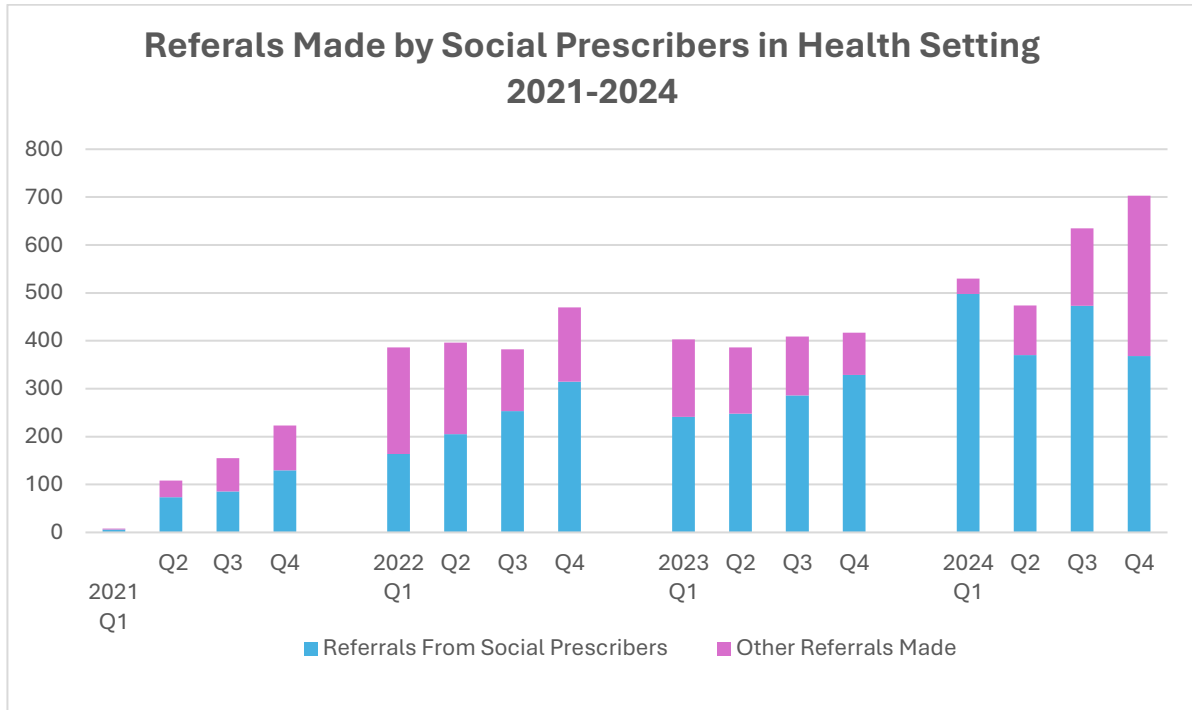
Since the referral system began in **2021**, it can be concluded that, being a new system, only the most common issues—such as **Welfare, Housing, and Debt**—have maintained steady rates. In contrast, referrals for other issues have fluctuated, increasing only after **2022** and following the addition of new organisations.

## Social Prescribers on THCAN Referral System

**THCAN** referral system not only comprises of organisations that send and receive referrals but also includes a huge well-knit network of Social Prescribers located in and around the borough of Tower Hamlets.

About **26** different networks of Social Prescribers currently use the referral system to rid Tower Hamlets residents of issues that have been discussed above. Out of these **26** different networks, some Social Prescribers are based in Housing Association offices and schools, while others mostly are based in hospitals and surgeries (i.e Health Settings).

This well-established and highly coordinated network of Social Prescribers has facilitated approximately **4,044** different referrals from the year **2021** up until the end of **2024**. Among these, a significant portion—**1,447** referrals—were specifically made to address housing-related issues, highlighting the crucial role Social Prescribers play in supporting individuals facing housing challenges. Additionally, this dedicated network has also made around **1,389** referrals related to welfare benefits, ensuring that individuals receive the financial and social support they need to improve their overall well-being.



*Figure 9: Referrals Made by Social Prescribers in Health Setting -2021-2024*

*Figure 9* provides a quarterly breakdown of referral trends over a four-year period. It differentiates between "**Referrals From Social Prescribers**" (depicted in blue) and "**Other Referrals Made**" (depicted in pink). A clear upward trajectory can be observed, indicating that the role of Social Prescribers in facilitating referrals has grown significantly over time.

In **2021**, the number of referrals was relatively low, with only a small number recorded in the early quarters. However, there was a gradual increase by **Q4**, suggesting that the network of Social Prescribers was still in its early stages but gaining momentum. Moving into **2022**, there is a significant rise in referral activity, particularly in **Q1** and **Q4**, where total referrals surpass **400**. This marks a pivotal point where Social Prescribers began making a more substantial impact.

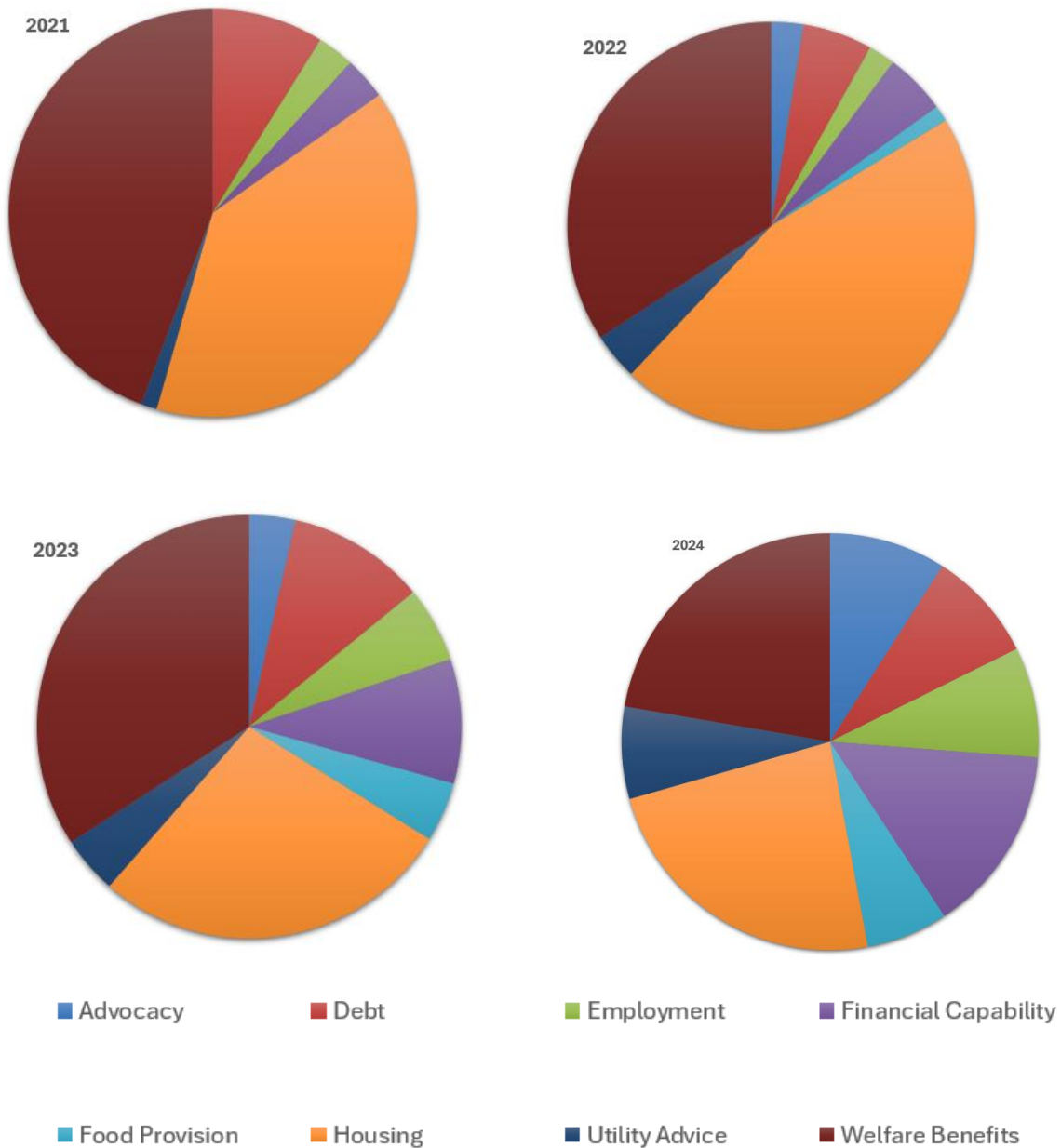
Throughout **2023**, referral numbers remained relatively stable, with minor fluctuations across the quarters. Despite some variations, the overall trend suggests a consistent demand for Social Prescriber services. The blue bars remain a dominant portion of the total referrals, reinforcing their essential role in connecting individuals to necessary support services.

In **2024**, a more pronounced increase in referrals is evident, particularly in **Q3** and **Q4**, where the total number reaches its highest level, exceeding **700** referrals. This sharp rise indicates an expanding network of Social Prescribers and possibly an increasing reliance on their services within the healthcare setting. Notably, the share of "**Other Referrals Made**" (pink bars) has also grown, suggesting that the overall referral system is expanding beyond just Social Prescribers.

Overall, the data highlights a continuous and significant rise in referral activity, showcasing the increasing role of Social Prescribers in linking individuals to housing, and welfare services. The steady growth suggests that their contributions have become an integral part of the referral



system, addressing various social determinants of Tower Hamlet residents and improving their overall outcomes.



*Figure 10: Issues Referred By Social Prescribers in a Health Setting*

The four pie charts illustrated *Figure 10*, highlight different categories of referrals over the years. Each chart is divided into various segments representing issues such as **Debt**, **Employment**, **Financial Capability**, **Advocacy**, **Food provision**, **Housing**, **Utility advice**, and **Welfare benefits**.

In **2021**, majority of referrals were for **Debt-related issues** and **Housing**, indicating a strong need for financial and accommodation support. Other categories, such as **Employment**, **Financial capability** and **Food provision**, had smaller proportions.

In **2022**, the pattern remained similar, with **Debt** and **Housing** continuing to dominate, but there was a slight increase in referrals for **Utility advice** and **Advocacy**. This shift suggests a growing recognition of the need for broader support services beyond financial assistance.

By **2023**, the distribution of referrals became more diverse. While **Debt** and **Housing** still made up a significant share, there was a noticeable increase in **Financial capability and Welfare benefits** referrals. This indicates an expanding role of Social Prescribers in supporting individuals beyond just immediate financial crises, focusing more on long-term financial stability.

In **2024**, the referral distribution appears even more balanced. While **Debt** and **Housing** remain crucial, there is a substantial increase in **Employment, Financial Capability, and Utility advice** referrals. This suggests that Social Prescribers are addressing a wider range of social determinants and helping Tower Hamlets residents achieve more sustainable economic and living conditions.

Overall, the data shows an **evolution in referral patterns**, with an increasing emphasis on diverse support services beyond just financial and housing needs. The growing role of Social Prescribers in addressing Employment, Financial literacy, and Welfare benefits highlights their crucial contribution to social well-being in a health setting.

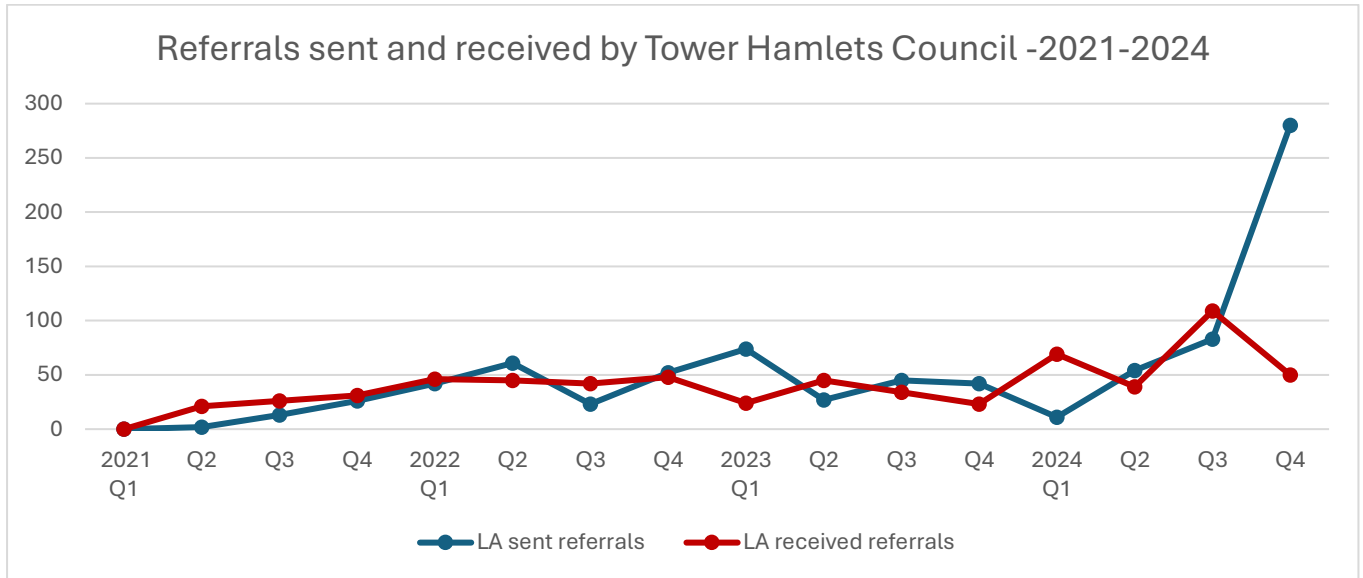
## Local Authority (Tower Hamlets Council) on **THCAN** Referral System

On top of a well-knit system of Social prescribers, the Tower Hamlets Council acts as integral part of the THCAN referral system. Via the THCAN referral system, the Local Authority, can not only receive referrals, but can also send referrals to other organisations.

As a key stakeholder, **Tower Hamlets Council** actively contributes to the network by facilitating referrals through the THCAN system, ensuring that individuals receive timely and appropriate assistance. This collaboration helps streamline the process of accessing services by allowing professionals, including **Social Prescribers**, healthcare providers, and council officers, to refer residents to relevant support organisations efficiently.

Through its participation in THCAN, the council enhances its ability to address a wide range of issues affecting residents, including **housing concerns, welfare benefits, debt management, and employment support**. The referral system reduces the burden on individuals seeking help by providing a single point of access to multiple services, improving overall service coordination and response times.

Tower Hamlets Council's involvement in **THCAN reflects its commitment to supporting vulnerable residents**, promoting social inclusion, and ensuring that people in need can easily connect with the right services to improve their well-being and financial stability.



*Figure 11: Referrals Sent & Received by the Local Authority (Tower Hamlets Council) 2021-2025*

*Figure 11* above illustrates the number of referrals sent and received by Tower Hamlets Council from 2021 to 2024. It highlights two key trends: "LA sent referrals" i.e the referrals sent by the Local Authority to other organisation receiving referrals via THCAN referral system and "LA received referrals" i.e the referrals were made to the Local Authority by other organisations via the THCAN referral system.

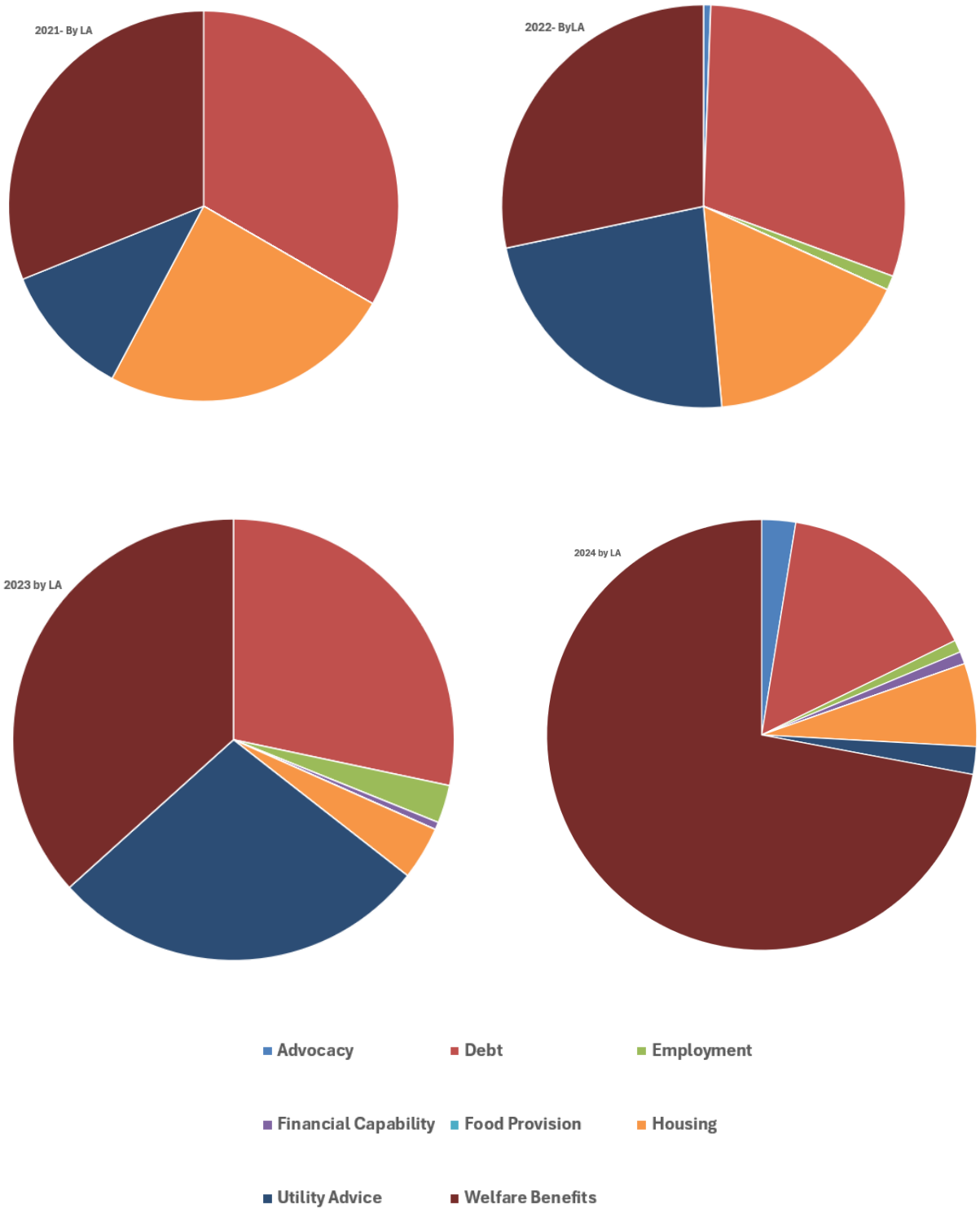
Over time, both trends exhibit fluctuations, with a notable surge in referrals sent towards the end of **2024**. The number of sent referrals shows a gradual increase from **2021**, with periodic peaks and dips. A significant early peak occurs around **Q1-Q2 2022**, followed by fluctuations throughout **2023**. However, the most dramatic change happens in Q4 2024, where **sent referrals** rise sharply to nearly **300**. This suggests a sudden increase in outgoing referrals, potentially due to administrative capacity issues or funding changes.

Received referrals, on the other hand, follow a more stable pattern, with moderate fluctuations over time. While there is a slight increase in **Q3 2024**, this trend does not continue into **Q4**, unlike sent referrals. The data indicates that while the number of referrals sent out spiked significantly, the number of received referrals did not experience the same level of growth.

Several factors could explain these trends. The sudden increase in sent referrals in late **2024** may be due to changes in local government policies i.e increase in Welfare benefits form filling (Pension Credit), an increased demand for services, or adjustments in administrative processes. Additionally, seasonal variations or external factors such as demographic shifts might have influenced the overall trends.

The discrepancy between sent and received referrals underscores the significant role of the THCAN referral system in supporting the local authority. This trend also suggests that THCAN serves as a vital gateway for directing residents to essential services, particularly when the council's manpower is stretched.

Overall, the data highlights a steady rise in both sent and received referrals over the years, with notable fluctuations. The sharp increase in **Q4 2024** for sent referrals stands out as a key point of interest, warranting further investigation into its causes and potential impacts.



*Figure 12: Issues Referred by the Local Authority ( Sent) 2021-2025*

*Figure 12* illustrate the various issues referred by the local authority from **2021** to **2025**, categorized into multiple sectors such as **advocacy, debt, employment, financial capability, food provision, housing, utility advice, and welfare benefits**. The data provides insight into the predominant concerns within the community and how referral patterns have evolved over time.

A significant portion of the referrals across all years is related to **debt**, suggesting that financial struggles remain a key issue for residents. The large share of debt-related cases indicates a consistent need for financial support and debt management services. **Advocacy** also represents a substantial segment, reflecting the need for guidance and representation in various matters, possibly including legal support, benefits claims, and other social welfare concerns.

Another notable category is **housing**, which, although a smaller proportion compared to **debt** and **advocacy**, remains a crucial issue. This highlights ongoing challenges related to accommodation, homelessness prevention, and access to affordable housing. **Welfare benefits** referrals are also present, emphasizing the reliance on social security systems to assist vulnerable individuals and families. Over the years, slight variations can be observed, with some categories gaining prominence while others decrease.

**Employment, financial capability, food provision, and utility advice** account for smaller portions in the referral data. However, their presence signifies the multifaceted nature of support required by the community. The **increase in diversity of referral issues over time** may indicate a growing complexity in residents' needs, necessitating a well-rounded support system from the local authority and its partners.

Overall, the data suggests that financial difficulties, housing, and welfare benefits remain the most pressing concerns, while other categories highlight additional socio-economic challenges. **THCAN** referral system plays a crucial role in directing individuals to the necessary support services, ensuring that those in need receive appropriate assistance adequately. Understanding these trends can help shape future policies and resource allocation to better address the evolving needs of the borough.

## Appendix 1 - Registered Organisations

Organisations currently registered to use the THCAN referral portal, approximately two organisations join each month

1. Account3
2. Age UK
3. Aisha's help
4. APASEN
5. Bangabandhu Primary School
6. Barts health NHS trust – Renal
7. Bart's health NHS trust –THCNT (neuro team)
8. Bart's health NHS trust Social Prescribing
9. Bow and Poplar Neighbourhood Mental Health Team
10. Bow Food Bank
11. Bromley by Bow Centre
12. Carers Centre Tower Hamlets
13. Chisenhale School
14. Clean Slate
15. Community Navigators
16. Deaf Plus
17. Deaf Plus Health & Wellbeing
18. Debt Free Advice (Toynbee Hall)
19. E14 Billy's Pantry (@Island House Community Centre)
20. East End CAB
21. East End Energy Fit
22. Family Action
23. Financial Health Centre
24. First Love Foundation
25. Gateway Housing Association
26. Island Advice Centre

27. Island House SKILLS
28. LEAP
29. Limehouse Project
30. LinkAge Plus
31. Look Ahead ILCS
32. Manorfield School
33. Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham & Redbridge
34. Neighbours In Poplar
35. Ocean Regeneration
36. Positive East
37. Praxis
38. REAL
39. REFEO
40. Rooted Finance ( formerly Fair Money Advice)
41. Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - all networks:

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 1 - The Mission Practice

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 6 - Bromley by Bow HC

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 6 - St Andrews HC

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 6 - St Paul's Way MC

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 6 - Wellington Way HC

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 6 - XX Place

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 - City Square group

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 - Goodmans Field

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 - Harford HC

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 - Jubilee Street

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 -St Katharines Dock

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Network 9 -The Wapping Group

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Social Prescribers Network 1

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Social Prescribers Network 2

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Social Prescribers Network 5

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Social Prescribers Network 7

Social Prescribers Tower Hamlets - Social Prescribers Network 8

42. Spitalfields Housing Association

43. St Hilda's Advice Services & St Hilda's Programmes

44. Stifford Centre

45. St Margaret's House

46. TH Connect Partnership

TH Connect partnership - AGE UK

TH Connect partnership - Apasen

TH Connect partnership - Bromley By Bow Centre

TH Connect partnership - Deaf PLUS

TH Connect partnership - Island Advice Centre

TH Connect partnership - Limehouse Project

TH Connect partnership - Positive East

TH Connect partnership - REAL

TH Connect partnership - Tower Hamlets Law Centre

47. THCVS

48. THEIS

49. Tower Hamlets Council resident Support Outreach team (tackling poverty team)

50. Tower Hamlets Law Centre

51. Tower Hamlets Council Resident's Hub

52. Toynbee Hall

53. Working Well Trust Upskill Project

54. WorkPath



## Appendix 2: Open Letter and Letters of Support for THCAN



From Sarah Sauvat  
Island Advice /THCAN  
[sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk)  
IAC, Roserton Street London E14 3PG  
Tel 07401513777

Dear Mayor

Dear Chief Executive

Dear Commissioners

23/10/2023

### **Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN)**

We are writing to raise our grave concerns about the impending closure of THCAN.

THCAN has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for ten years. The decision made on 13/10/2023 by the Local Authority to no longer fund its work will have significant implications across many different organisations in the borough, and for the local residents they serve.

#### **Without THCAN, from November there will be NO MORE:**

- Volunteer Training Project.
- Free training & workshops.
- Welfare rights forums
- Newsletters
- THCAN Website ([www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk))
- THCAN referral site

#### **This is a huge concern at a time when:**

- A workforce shortage is being experienced across the voluntary sector;
- Funding for social welfare rights advice continues to be reduced rather than increase in light of inflation and cost of living
- Demand for advice and support is increasing;
- Social welfare cases are becoming more complex, for reasons including the cost-of-living crisis and Universal Credit claims migration.

We ask the Local Authority to support the essential infrastructure and capacity-building work of THCAN as a matter of urgency, to help avoid a long- term crisis for front line services.

THCAN received £50,000 a year and in return:

- delivered 37 free courses on social welfare and advice related issues to 471 staff and volunteers last year only
  - trained 15 volunteers each year to become qualified advice workers. (During their training, they provided 3 FTE annually of free support to organisations in the borough [10 Years of HCAN Presentation - THCAN](#))
  - issued 10 to 12 monthly newsletters - 'THCAN Welfare Rights Information' - sent to over 800 people a year with summaries of changes to the law, information about services and changes to front line workers;
  - facilitated numerous network meetings with front line advice providers, DWP, housing benefit, council tax recovery – learning from each other and building good relationships and partnerships;
  - maintained the THCAN website [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk), which has been in existence for the last 10 years and had over 9000 users in the last year. The website has become a crucial first point of access for many front-line workers in Tower Hamlets to find details of all free local advice providers, useful links, and factsheets on social welfare law issues;
  - established a very successful online referral system in the borough for referring social welfare cases between advice agencies. [THCAN Referral Site Presentation - THCAN](#) Developed over the last 2½ years, the system's portal now has over 46 organisations and 450 registered individuals, with over 3000 referrals made. The system has been so successful that it was recorded as an example of best practice by the Local Government Association: <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/london-borough-tower-hamlets-tower-hamlets-community-advice-network>
- 
- ✓ THCAN strongly believes coordination, collaboration and support is key to ensure services continue to be able to address residents' underlying issues and make best use of limited resources.
  - ✓ THCAN has been in existence for decades and has helped many individuals into work in the advice sector
  - ✓ THCAN has helped many front-line workers in the voluntary sector and statutory sector, developing their knowledge through training and workshops
  - ✓ THCAN has helped improve communications between the voluntary sector and statutory sector by raising issues affecting local residents through quarterly welfare rights forum meetings and its newsletter,
  - ✓ THCAN has helped create better collaboration and coordination of different services through the THCAN website and referral portal.
  - ✓ THCAN has been running projects for the benefit of Tower Hamlets residents and services for 20 years in a very cost-effective manner and often cited as a good practice example of collaboration and networking between local authority and other statutory services and the VCS.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew because of THCAN's work will stop, leading to residents facing disjointed and less well informed and uncoordinated services. We therefore urge the Local Authority to continue to financially support the work of THCAN and would like to arrange a meeting between Steering group members and relevant bodies to discuss the future of the THCAN work.

Your Sincerely

**Sarah Sauvat Centre manager of Island Advice Centre**



**Vicky Scott THCVS CEO**



**Larissa Howell Director of Services East London AgeUK**



**Eddie Coppinger, Legal Advice Centre University House**



**Martin South, Chief Executive, Tower Hamlets Law Centre**



**Matt Dronfield, Managing Director of Debt Free Advice**

*Matt Dransfield*

TOYNBEE  
HALL



**F** Debt Free Advice

**Elly de Decker Bromley By Bow Advice Centre Executive Director**



**Farida Yesmin C.E.O Limehouse Project**



**Ali Halil Team Leader Tower Hamlets and Hackney Citizens Advice**



**Anike Olaitan-Omole|Head of Service, First Love Foundation Advocacy & Advice Service**

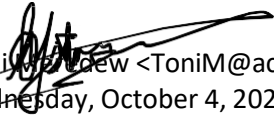


**Emmie Jenkins Hill, Head of Programmes, Clean Slate**



**Alketa Hystuma |Advice Team Leader, First Love Foundation Advocacy & Advice Service**



  
**From:** Toni Meredith <ToniM@account3.org.uk>

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 7:00 AM

**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Afazul Hoque <Afazul.Hoque@towerhamlets.gov.uk>

**Cc:** saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>; Sajibur Chowdhury <Sajibur.Chowdhury@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; Ali Halil <ahalil@eastendcab.org.uk>

**Subject:** THCAN - infra structure support most boroughs would love to have

**Dear Mayor of Tower Hamlets, partners and colleagues**

I am writing to express my concern about the impending loss of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project was co-produced with the sector and the council and has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications in the whole of the advice sector.

THCAN has played a major part in creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.

THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, developing their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new work force, a work force with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.

THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years. This website has become a first point of access for many front line workers in Tower Hamlets.

Over 46 organisations and 450 registered front line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for many residents in crisis.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now likely end leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinforming services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis .

afazaa

**It allows Advice Workers to have a set of peers across the borough to facilitate translations, professional development and partnership working which is key to efficient service delivery**

**We hope that the Local Authority would re-consider and continue to fund THCAN valuable work.**

Toni Meredith MBE

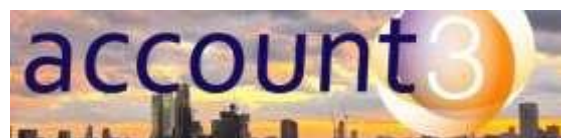
account3

1-3 Birkbeck Street

London E2 6JY

[www.account3.org.uk](http://www.account3.org.uk)

[tonim@account3.org.uk](mailto:tonim@account3.org.uk)



**From:** Teya Cooper <Teya.Cooper@praxis.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 5, 2023 12:32 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk  
**Cc:** THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** SAVE THE ESSENTIAL THCAN NETWORK

Dear Mayor

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work. This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.*

*THCAN has strongly contributed to creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.*

*THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, developing their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new work force, a work force with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.*

*THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years. This website has become a first point of access for many front line workers in Tower Hamlets.*

*Over 46 organisations and 450 registered front line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for many residents in crisis.*

*All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now likely end leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinforming services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis .*

**We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.**

**Teya Cooper – Volunteer & Welfare Coordinator – Praxis Community Projects**

**Teya Cooper**  
**Coordinator**  
078620016



Pott Street, London E2 0EF  
Telephone: 020 7729 7985  
Fax: 020 7729 0134

Email: [admin@praxis.org.uk](mailto:admin@praxis.org.uk)  
[www.praxis.org.uk](http://www.praxis.org.uk)

Chair: Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Chief Executive: Sally Daghlian OBE.  
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**From:** Alaya Begum <alaya@sthildas.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 1:13 PM  
**To:** Mayor <mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; stephen.halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Cc:** Rachel Keogh <RachelKeogh@sthildas.org.uk>; Jo Ellis <Jo.Ellis@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** PLEASE SAVE THCAN

Dear *Mayor Rahman*

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

*I was a trainee of the Advice Training Project almost 20 years ago. Since then, I have been working in the advice field first as a Generalist Advisor and now as an Advice Coordinator. During the last 20 years, the training, help and support I have received through THCAN has been invaluable.*

*They have helped train me and supported me throughout, enabling me to help hundreds of clients with form filling, advocacy, reconsiderations, appeals, backdated benefits and almost every issue that falls under the remit of a generalist advisor. They prepared me to be a lifeline for clients who were scared, desperate and often without any help. Through THCAN we have helped improve the lives of many Tower Hamlets residents with issues like welfare rights, debt, housing and helped maximise the income of many by millions of pounds throughout the years.*

*THCAN have provided Advice Training Project participants to support in running advice services by volunteering. Many of these volunteers have then been able to go on and secure profitable employment in advice, much like myself. None of this would have been possible without THCAN.*

*THCAN held forum meetings that helped open lines of communications between advisors, clients and Government organisations including Tower Hamlets Council and agencies within. These meetings were pivotal for advisors and agencies that had the aim of keeping each other informed of any changes and issues that were likely to affect people. Without the forum meetings and follow up emails, a crucial support system will end.*

*By stopping the funding of THCAN you are not just ending the vital work and support being provided to advisers and the people of Tower Hamlets but you are cutting off the arms of advice and support. This is how vital this service is.*

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Alaya Begum  
Advice Coordinator  
(Monday - Friday)

St. Hilda's East Community Centre | 18 Club Row | London | E2 7EY | Tel:  
020 7739 8066

Email: [alaya@sthildas.org.uk](mailto:alaya@sthildas.org.uk) | Web: [www.sthildas.org.uk](http://www.sthildas.org.uk) | Registered Charity  
No: 212208



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**From:** Anike Olaitan-Omole <Anike@firstlovefoundation.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 9, 2023 2:41 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: Decision to Stop Funding THCAN

*Dear Mayor*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*The THCAN stands as a flagship for the borough's commitment to excellence in information services for local residents and providers, and its loss will be incalculable.*

*As a member of the THCAN, Tower Hamlets residents have critical ease of access to the advice and advocacy services provided by First Love Foundation. Additionally, First Love Foundation can directly access information about capacity within other services we refer clients to. This has delivered a much better client experience, and the loss of this would be devastating to those who use services within the borough. It would mean that access to timely advice is reduced, when the need for advice services has risen exponentially as a result of the post-pandemic cost-of-living crisis.*

***First Love Foundation agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN's invaluable work.***

*Best Regards*

Anike

**Anike Olaitan-Omole** | Head of Service



tel: direct line: 020 3839 8884

tel: Advice Service: 020 3839 9002

email.

[Anike@firstlovefoundation.org.uk](mailto:Anike@firstlovefoundation.org.uk) web.  
[firstlovefoundation.org.uk](http://firstlovefoundation.org.uk)

**From:** Michelle Davis <Michelle.Gidden@gatewayhousing.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 3:27 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** My concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work  
**Importance:** High

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*I know that the closing of THCAN will have a negative impact on the residents of Tower Hamlets (TH), who are already struggling in this current cost of living crisis. This will only but put TH in the spotlight negatively again (with the last time being about refuse collection). THCAN provide an invaluable service to assist vulnerable tenants secure their tenancies – we have had DWP appeals revised, we have had the DWP backdate claims, we have had extra funds enabled such as through DHP awards or the RSS (to name a few) leading to us being able to avoid evictions, contributing to keeping the eviction rate extremely low.*

**We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.**

*Michelle Davis*

*Early Interventions and Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer*

Michelle Davis  
Income and Tenancy Sustainment Officer

At Gateway we are working flexibly, so whilst I'm sending this email to you now, you are not expected to send a response outside your normal working hours.



Gateway Housing Association  
409-413 Mile End Road,  
London, E3 4PB

T: 020 8709 4311  
M: 07484057993  
E: [Michelle.Gidden@gatewayhousing.org.uk](mailto:Michelle.Gidden@gatewayhousing.org.uk)  
W: [www.gatewayhousing.org.uk](http://www.gatewayhousing.org.uk)

**From:** Emilia Lyczba (THLC) <e.lyczba@thlc.co.uk>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 6, 2023 10:43 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk  
**Cc:** saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Island Advice THCAN crucial in cost of living crisis

*Dear Mayor*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*I have been cooperating with Island Advice THCAN since 2020 and the vast majority of my clients benefitted from their service. Information on the benefits, debt and housing advice THCAN offers is exceptional. Furthermore, THCAN has provided the local community with many trainings allowing people who often come from disadvantaged areas to increase their knowledge and either change their circumstances or even take up employment; which is invaluable in today's cost of living crisis. Island Advice THCAN do not only increases Tower Hamlets' residents income and benefit income; but they empower those who do not have their voice.*

*Moreover, one of the crucial sources for the network of advisers in the borough being so versatile (as the ongoing change requires) and equipped, is THCAN – I cannot imagine it no longer being there.*

*We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.*

*Name : Emilia Lyczba*

*Project/department : Tower Hamlets Law Centre*

*Job title : Welfare Benefits Caseworker*

*Yours faithfully,*

**Emilia Lyczba**

**Welfare Benefits Caseworker**



Switchboard: 0207 538 4909 | DD: 0207 531 5666  
Unit 1, St. Anne Street, off 789 Commercial Road, London E14 7HG





**From:** Adam Pervoe <adam.pervoe@ageukeastlondon.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 12, 2023 4:07 PM  
**To:** Sarah Sauvat <sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** My two-pennies worth THCAN

***Taking Age UK East London as an example, we have three advisors and two volunteers working in our services who came into the sector as volunteers trained by Island Advice under the aegis of THCAN. Two of these have been with us for over 10 years. I can honestly say that we would not have been able to continue to deliver our advice service throughout the pandemic and during the cost-of-living crisis without THCAN previously having supplied us with motivated, skilled advice volunteers who often go on to become paid employees and long-serving community champions. The value of this support to communities in Tower Hamlets is incalculable. The numbers of people supported and the income they have generated for our most vulnerable residents is huge and often life changing. There is certain to be a skills gap and services will struggle recruit volunteers and staff from now on. The recruitment crisis in advice is already critical.***

***This is a short-sighted decision that will actively work to frustrate the wider efforts being made by LBTH to tackle poverty and address the cost of living. THCAN is exceptional value for money; it coordinates the independent advice sector locally and is trusted by our communities when, sad to say, the Local Authority is not. This will impact the most vulnerable and is sure to have a detrimental effect on the local advice sector at a desperate time when cuts, surging demand and widening health inequality bite.***

**From:** Kelechi Nwichi-Holdsworth <K.Nwichi-Holdsworth@limehouseproject.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 1:41 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: THCAN

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

*As a trainee advisor at Limehouse Project, I have really benefitted from the trainings and teachings provided by the THCAN project from Island Advice and is helping me to grow individually and within Limehouse Project, which is also reflecting on the work and advice I provide to my clients.*

**Kind Regards,**

**KC Nwichi-Holdsworth**

**Trainee Social Welfare Advisor**

**Limehouse Project St Anne Street - Unit 2 |789-791 Commercial Road | London E14 7HG**



**From:** Rukeya Khan <Rukeya.Khan@toynbeehall.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 11:27 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Mayor's Fund Programme and THCAN funding

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

I am a resident of Tower Hamlets and I benefited from the volunteer programme run by THCAN. I was a volunteer on the learning to advise project run by THCAN and I went on to work in the adviser sector as a result of the training and support I received from THCAN. I have had a very successful career in the advice sector as a direct result of the training and development I received through THCAN. At my current role at Toynbee Hall, we have accepted volunteers from the THCAN learning to advise project to support us in the work we do helping Tower Hamlets residents access advice and support on the problems they are facing. The project has enabled us to support many more people than we would have been able to otherwise. As an organisation, we have found the free Trainings & Workshops, Welfare Right Forums and the Newsletters coordinated by THCAN to be valuable to the work we do. I am disappointed to see this crucial work is not being funded and ask that this decision be reversed as a matter of priority.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Rukeya Khan  
Advice Centre Manager  
Toynbee Hall

**Rukeya Khan**

Advice Centre Manager

**Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial Street, E1 6LS**



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[DD 07943 501 437](tel:0207943501437) Ext. 020 7247 4017 M 07943 501 437 E [Rukeya.Khan@toynbeehall.org.uk](mailto:Rukeya.Khan@toynbeehall.org.uk)



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Facebook



Instagram

Toynbee Hall 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS

T 02072476943 | W [www.toynbeehall.org.uk](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk)

**From:** BRIDEN, Richard (BARTS HEALTH NHS TRUST) <richard.briden@nhs.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 5, 2023 10:27 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Withdrawal of Funding From THCAN

*Dear Mayor*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*The service for which I work has greatly benefited from THCAN over the years and I hope will continue to do so. It provides an important forum for sharing best practice and disseminating information on significant developments in Benefits Law.*

*THCAN has been instrumental in facilitating the efficiency of our service, not least by providing access to actual individuals in sufficient positions of seniority within statutory bodies to effect change within those bodies based on information and evidence provided to them at THCAN meetings.*

*In practical terms, THCAN has obtained and shared appropriate contacts to enable advisers to escalate issues within these bodies and expedite satisfactory resolutions on behalf of our clients.*

*The training provided by THCAN has enabled volunteers and support workers to up-skill their benefits knowledge which is then both disseminated within the community and reduces the number of erroneous or inappropriate referrals we receive thereby improving the efficacy of our service and the outcomes for service users.*

*I sincerely believe that the withdrawal of funding from THCAN will have a significant detrimental impact on our service and many others and respectfully request that the decision be reconsidered and reversed.*

***We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.***

Yours faithfully

Richard Briden (Welfare Rights Specialist Caseworker)

**Macmillan Cancer Support Toynbee Hall**

Toynbee Hall 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS

T 02072476943 | W [www.toynbeehall.org.uk](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk)



**From:** Sade Stephens <sade.stephens@arnhemwharf.towerhamlets.sch.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 1:37 PM  
**To:** 'mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk' <mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk>;  
'saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk' <saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk>;  
'maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk' <maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk>;  
'Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk' <Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Support to keep THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Kind Regards

Sade Stephens  
Deputy Inclusion Leader & DDSL

### *Working hours- Tuesday to Friday*

Arnhem Wharf Primary  
School 1 Arnhem Place

Isle of Dogs  
E14 3RP

Tel: 0207 515 4310



**From:** Paul Scannell <scannell\_paul@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 10:58 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Re: Impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work

Dear Mayor

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

I was trained by THCAN and am now an FCA qualified and permissioned debt adviser providing free debt advice to local residents. There is nowhere else in the Borough providing such a wonderful facility helping local residents become local adviser for the benefit of the local community. Please look around and ask yourself, who else provides this service?

How else can the local community receive free help and advice?

I wholeheartedly agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Paul Scannell LL.B (Hons) MIMA (CERT) Debt Advice worker

**From:** Rejaul Haque <Rejaul.Haque@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 11:07 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** THCAN

Dear Mayor,

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

I have personally found THCAN to be a valuable resource to access the vast network of specialist advisers and agencies to ensure my own clients are amply supported holistically. It would be upsetting to see THCAN not being available in the future and would undoubtedly effect Tower Hamlets most vulnerable as a repercussion. I would implore the Mayor to reconsider his actions and think of the potential deteriorating effect this would have on the community as whole.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Kind Regards,

Rejaul HAQUE  
Debt Adviser  
Island Advice Centre



**From:** Aimee Muir <aimee@allhallowsbow.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 9:34 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Funding for THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman,

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

As an employee of two volunteer sector organisations in Tower Hamlets, First Love Foundation and Fern Street Family Centre, I can attest that both of these organisations were able to provide an improved service to greater numbers of residents thanks to the highly professional work of THCAN, receiving their free training and advice and accessing their network of support services for referrals.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Blessings

**Aimee Muir** | Centre Manager



*Fern Street Family Centre is a project of All Hallows Bow Church (registered charity no 1153020)*

**From:** Ahmed, Ishtyaq <IshtyaqAhmed@lookahead.org.uk>

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 9:10 AM

**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

**Subject:** SAVE THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Kind Regards

**Ishtyaq Ahmed | Support Worker | ILCS**

Look Ahead | 55 Barnsley Street, London E1 5RB

Tel: 020 7422 0821

DDI: 077 0297 1406



If you want to find out more about Look Ahead, visit us on at [www.lookahead.org.uk](http://www.lookahead.org.uk) or contact our Head Office on 020 7368 4600

**From:** Fuzz Dix <fuzz@stlukesmillwall.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 6, 2023 10:34 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Urgent Funding Required

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

***THCAN supported our foodbank clients throughout Covid and have continued to support our local residents with housing and debt advice. They are accessible, available, friendly and professional, and the work they are doing is essential in holding together our increasingly-fragmented and over-stretched statutory and VCS services.***

***We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.***

***Please re-consider them as essential beneficiaries of your funding,***

Kind regards,  
Fuzz  
Fuzz Dix (Mrs)  
Children's and Families Pastor  
St Luke's Millwall  
Alpha Grove London  
mobile: 07730 594755 [www.stlukesmillwall.org](http://www.stlukesmillwall.org)



The St Luke's Mission Initiative is a Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in England Number 8351330, Registered Charity Number 1151021.

**From:** Lizzy Hameed <Lizzy.Hameed@towerhamlets.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 5, 2023 12:44 PM  
**To:** Mayor <Mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; Saied Ahmed <Saied.Ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk>;  
Mohammed Maium Miah Talukdar <Maium.Talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; Stephen Halsey  
<Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk>; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Save THCAN

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*THCAN has been useful in forwarding referrals from Housing Association to the Housing Options Homelessness Prevention Project. Thereby assisting to prevent family and vulnerable single people in the borough becoming roofless...*

***We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.***

## **Lizzy Hameed**

Prevention Liaison Officer

Housing Options Service | London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
Place Directorate

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor | Tower Hamlets Town Hall  
160 Whitechapel Road

London E1 1BG

**Tel:** 0207 364 7497

**Mobile:** 07949 655 054

✉ [lizzy.hameed@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:lizzy.hameed@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

🌐 [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**From:** Pauline <[roachpauline181@googlemail.com](mailto:roachpauline181@googlemail.com)>

Sent: Monday, October 9, 2023 12:32 PM

**To:** [mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

**Cc:** [saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk);  
[Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk); THCAN <[thcan@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:thcan@island-advice.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Continued THCAN Funding

Dear Mayor

We have made a number of referrals to THCAN, which has prevented tenant evictions, resolved benefit issues, and successfully assisted with mandatory reconsiderations for PIP. Residents and staff have also attended a number of THCAN training sessions equipping them with knowledge and information to support residents in Tower Hamlets. We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work. Your sincerely Pauline Roach Tenancy Support Officer

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Your sincerely



Pauline Roach Tenancy Support Office

**From:** Ruki <[Ruki@sthildas.org.uk](mailto:Ruki@sthildas.org.uk)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 18, 2023 3:34 PM

**To:** [mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk);  
[maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [stephen.halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk); THCAN  
<[thcan@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:thcan@island-advice.org.uk)>

**Subject:** Closure of Island Advice THCAN work

Dear Mayor Rahman,

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

I know first hand how important a service THCAN has provided to local advice organisations through the years. St Hilda's East's Advice Coordinator trained through the Advice Training Project almost 20 years ago and she continues to benefit their support and guidance to this day.

I agree full-heartedly with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Kind regards,

**Rukia Hashi**

Children and Young People's Programme Manager (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)

St. Hilda's East Community Centre | 18 Club Row | London | E2 7EY | Tel:  
07873554022 | Fax: 020 7729 5172

Email: [Ruki@sthildas.org.uk](mailto:Ruki@sthildas.org.uk) | Web: [www.sthildas.org.uk](http://www.sthildas.org.uk) | Registered Charity No: 212208



**From:** David Halliday <David.Halliday@mindthnr.org.uk>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 5, 2023 12:52 PM

**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

**Subject:** THCAN

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*Tower Hamlets is so dense with support but it can feel so scattered and disparate. THCAN fulfils an amazing and vital role of pulling everything together in one space, making supporting people so much easier and faster, and also helping us to build stronger and long-standing connections, networks and familiarity between services, which is so important for me and my work.*

***We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.***

**David Halliday (he/him)**

**Connector - Safe Connections Community Suicide Prevention Hub**

Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge  
13 Whitethorn Street, London, E3 4DA

Tel: 020 7510 1081 (main switchboard)

Mobile: 07309 105285



Mindthnr Website and Social Media  
[Website](#) [Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#)  
[Twitter](#) [TikTok](#) [Facebook](#)

Safe Connections Suicide Prevention Helpline: 0300 561 0115  
Mon-Fri 9:30am-4:30pm

**From:** Khanam, Tasnim <TasnimKhanam@lookahead.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 9:10 AM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** SAVE THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years.

The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now end, leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinforming services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis.

Kind Regards

**Tasnim Khanam | Support Worker | Tower Hamlets ILCS**

Look Ahead | DDI: 020 7422 0821 | Mobile: 07703826368



**From:** R B <ripabegum@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 13, 2023 4:05 PM  
**To:** maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk  
**Cc:** THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Save THCAN

Dear *Maium Talukdar*

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years.

The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.

THCAN has strongly contributed to creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.

THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, develop their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new workforce, a workforce with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.

THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years.

This website has become a first point of access for many front-line workers in Tower Hamlets and over 46 organisations and 450 registered front-line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for resident in crisis.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now end, leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and misinformed services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

*Ripa Begum*  
*Paediatric Nurse*

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** BACON, Matthew (EAST LONDON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST) <matthew.bacon@nhs.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 3, 2023 4:13 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN  
<thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** DONT CLOSE THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

**THCAN looks like a great platform for accessing and linking in with various advice centres across the VCSE sector! Defunding this is extremely unwise as it will harm referral pathways and access to vital services.**

**We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.**

*Matt Bacon*

**Matthew Bacon**

Senior Practitioner / CPN

Tower Hamlets Early Intervention Service  
(THEIS) 51 Three Colts Lane | London | E2 6BF

East London NHS Foundation Trust

☎ 020 3487 1310 / 07388998709

✉ [matthew.bacon@nhs.net](mailto:matthew.bacon@nhs.net)

**this email is accessed between 9am – 5pm (Monday to Friday)**

**Team email address: [elft.theis@nhs.net](mailto:elft.theis@nhs.net)**

**Team telephone number: 020 3487 1310**

**24 hour Mental Health Crisis Helpline on 0800 073 0003**

Find us online at [www.elft.nhs.uk](http://www.elft.nhs.uk) | Find us on [Facebook](#) | Follow us on [Twitter](#)



**From:** Suna Mala <[Suna.Mala@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:Suna.Mala@island-advice.org.uk)>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 5, 2023 11:06 AM

**To:** [mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk); [Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk); THCAN <[thcan@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:thcan@island-advice.org.uk)>

**Subject:** THCAN

*Dear Mayor*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.*

*This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years.*

*The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.*

*THCAN has strongly contributed to creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.*

*THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, developing their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new work force, a work force with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.*

*THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years. This website has become a first point of access for many front line worker in Tower Hamlets.*

*Over 46 organisations and 450 registered front line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for many residents in crisis.*

*All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now likely end leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinformed services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis .*

Kind regards,

**Suna Mala**

Island Advice Centre  
Island House  
Roserton Street  
London  
E14 3PG



From: rkmatin02@gmail.com <rkmatin02@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, October 6, 2023 10:13 PM

To: mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;

maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; stephen.halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

Subject: RE: SAVE

THCAN Dear Mayor

Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

News of THCAN being closed simply because of no funding I cannot express my incredulity and no doubt I speak for many people in the community across Tower Hamlets, neighbouring Boroughs, all of those who have had contact with THCAN, be it service users or partners everyone who has benefitted immensely from the services provided particularly the training and volunteer project.

THCAN is an intermediary, filling the gap in services enabling the vulnerable to receive the most needed help which would be unexploited if THCAN did not exist.

I have benefitted from the training and volunteer project myself, having had an interest in social welfare I was able to go through the training project, volunteer for work experience and gain employment with further qualification gained.

Undoubtably, THCAN played a significant part for individuals and service providers who have been able to accomplish their specific goals and thrive success in their field of expertise.

It is very concerning that the Mayor is shutting down such a crucial service which no doubt is the core of Tower Hamlets.

It is incomprehensible that THCAN did not meet the priorities set by the Mayors funding programme, the community is losing a service which provides many people including disadvantaged people a pathway to develop skills, gain or improve their qualification and secure employment.

The Mayor's decision not to fund THCAN has left the community dumbfounded and urge the Mayor to re- evaluate.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.



Runa Kamali-Matin

Welfare Rights Caseworker

From: Mags Ossie <mossie592@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, October 6, 2023 11:34 AM

To: mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Cc: Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

Subject: Save THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.

THCAN has strongly contributed to creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the

lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.

THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, developing their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new work force, a work force with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.

THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years. This website has become a first point of access for many front-line workers in Tower Hamlets and over 46 organisations and 450 registered front line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for resident in crisis.

They have provided invaluable assistance to the people of Tower Hamlets. I have personally benefitted from their free training courses imparting both experience and knowledge which is so important to my role as a Trainee Adviser.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now end, leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinforming services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis .

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Regards

Margaret  
Osibote Trainee  
Adviser

From: Shaheda Nargish <hashi458@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Friday, October 6, 2023 12:48 PM  
To: saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>; Jo Ellis  
<Jo.Ellis@island-advice.org.uk>; Sarah Sauvat <sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk>; Nargis Shaheda  
<Nargis.Shaheda@island-advice.org.uk>  
Subject: Please save our THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

Its been 12 years since I have had opportunity to get involved with Island Advice Centre through a dedicated project manager who has been running multiple projects and activities to motivate people

in the community regardless of their age, ethnicity and religion to create an engaging area in this community. Now is the time when we need this more than ever before as people are struggling to maintain their mental and physical wellbeing.

I officially joined Island Advice Centre last year through a Volunteer Advisor Training Project along with some very hard working and dedicated advisors and people from different backgrounds and community organisations from Tower Hamlets. After successfully completing the training, I am now volunteering as a trainee advisor in this organisation.

I can say undoubtedly that Island Advice Centre delivers an excellent service with all of its dedicated staff and members within the community as a whole to improve the living conditions, prevent homelessness, maintain people's wellbeing, help to overcome the cost of living crisis, overcome debt problems, help the elderly and disabled persons, and ensuring welfare rights are practiced as per people's need and make a positive impact on their personal and social life. This organisation ensures a nice, encouraging, and supportive work environment to each and every person involved with this organisation.

It was really a shock and very alarming as a Tower Hamlets resident to find out that the Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) doesn't meet the priorities set by the Mayor's Fund Programme and that it will no longer be funded. It is more concerning that voluntary sector organisations like Island Advice and many others are experiencing shortages of manpower and workforce. I feel proud to have had the opportunity to work closely with this organisation's staff and members and I feel great by serving people from this community.

So, my heartiest request to you Mayor, as our elected leader of this borough, is that you lend us your continuous support and response to save the Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) and I agree with the Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN's incomparable, vitally invaluable work.

Yours sincerely,  
Nargish Shaheda  
Trainee Advisor  
Island Advice

**From:** John Pang <johnjohnp2@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, October 9, 2023 3:27 PM

**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**Subject:** Concern Surrounding the Impending Closure of the Island Advice THCAN work

Dear Mayor

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

As an ex-volunteer in the Island Advice Centre's debt and welfare benefits advice team, I have seen, firsthand, how passionate the employees, and other volunteers, have been at helping the community. From giving advice on what benefits many can qualify for, to giving in-depth technical expertise on governmental systems and behavioral suggestions that one can undertake to better their financial health. With current events being the way they are, people's financial and mental health have been stretched far beyond their tolerable limits and the need for these voluntary no-judgement advice systems is paramount to the health of a community as a whole. To no longer provide precious and necessary funding for such systems is to exacerbate existing social issues and inequalities. The negative impact of this

decision is compounded by the existing social welfare rights advice worker shortage and will no doubt make this situation worse.

Beyond the industry as a whole, volunteering at the Island Advice Centre has helped me in a myriad of ways. Beyond improving my knowledge about the public sector and the apparatuses built within it, volunteering has helped me improve my confidence and meet more diverse individuals, both at work and as clients than if I had not done so. By volunteering, I have greatly expanded my horizons and understood myself to a greater degree.

I agree with the Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue funding THCAN strongly urge you to reconsider your decision.

John Pang  
Flat 305, Vega House  
17 Hemming St, E1 5GA

**From:** jbettesworth <jbettesworth@aol.com>

**Sent:** Monday, October 9, 2023 1:56 PM

**To:** Mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk

**Cc:** THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

**Subject:** Subject: URGENT - continued funding for Island Advice THCAN work

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work due to loss of funding from Tower Hamlets.*

***This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years and the decision to stop funding this work will have significant negative implications, directly affecting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our diverse local communities.***

*As a volunteer working at Tower Hamlets poverty reduction projects for over 6 years, I have attended training sessions in welfare benefits provided through THCAN and found these incredibly valuable, both for my volunteer work and in supporting vulnerable local people within the community to access welfare support. During these training courses, I have met a wide range of workers from different local settings, including a number of Town Hall staff who have expressed their appreciation for the excellent training provided.*

***I agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN's valuable work.***

***Yours sincerely***

***Judith Bettesworth***

***Volunteer at Bow Foodbank and (previously) First Love Foundation***

**From:** Bridgit Tai <Bridgit.Tai@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 6, 2023 5:00 PM  
**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk  
**Cc:** saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; Stephen.Halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>  
**Subject:** Save THCAN

Dear Mayor Rahman

I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice THCAN work.

This project has been instrumental in supporting advice services in Tower Hamlets for many years. The decision to stop funding this work will have significant implications.

THCAN has strongly contributed to creating better collaboration and coordination between different statutory services and the voluntary sector, raising issues Tower Hamlets residents faced with the relevant authorities in view of improving the lives of Tower Hamlets residents and the services they receive.

THCAN has helped many Tower Hamlets residents' skilling up, developing their social welfare knowledge, support local advice agencies through volunteering and becoming a new work force, a work force with lived experience and a strong understanding of the community.

THCAN website has over 9000 users [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) in the last year and has been in existence for the last 10 years. This website has become a first point of access for many front-line workers in Tower Hamlets and over 46 organisations and 450 registered front line workers are on the THCAN referrals portal which allowed organisations from multiple sectors to make 3350 cross referrals enabling a no wrong door approach for resident in crisis.

All these beneficial services are now at risk and the infrastructure which grew through THCAN's work will now end, leading to Tower Hamlets' residents facing disjointed and disinformed services and difficulties accessing the service they need in times of crisis.

We agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.

Kind regards,

**Bridgit Tai**

Debt & Financial Capability Advice Worker

Volunteer on Fridays only (10am to 4pm)  
Island Advice Centre  
Island House  
Roserton Street  
London E14 3PG  
Tel: 0207 987 9379



**From:** Mahmuda Khanom <Mahmuda171@hotmail.com>

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 4, 2023 12:42 AM

**To:** mayor@towerhamlets.gov.uk; saied.ahmed@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk; maium.talukdar@towerhamlets.gov.uk;  
stephen.halsey@towerhamlets.gov.uk; THCAN <thcan@island-advice.org.uk>

**Subject:** RE: DO NOT CUT THCAN FUNDING PLEASE!!!!

*Dear Mayor Rahman*

*I am writing to express my concern about the impending closure of Island Advice  
THCAN work.*

***As a person who has benefited greatly from THCAN training, I would like to tell you a little about myself. My name is Mahmuda Khanom I started a course in NVQ level 3 in information advice and guidance in September 2010 with Island Advice Centre. I was given the opportunity to volunteer whilst studying the course so that I could be well equipped through comprehensive training, guidance and volunteering work experience in offering advice and advocacy in Welfare Benefits, Housing, Debt and Immigration to support the most vulnerable individuals in our society and community.***

***As a person with multiple and severe health difficulties to name a few .. Renal Lupus, Lupus SLE, Bipolar Affective Disorder, Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder, I was sectioned under the mental health Act due to experiencing psychosis and having both physical and mental needs, I would find myself being judged, excluded and isolated from society. I was often***



***unable to even find a job or voluntary roles once I disclosed my health problems. Even sustaining jobs with all my health issues were extremely challenging as organisations and employers would be inconsiderate towards***

**my disabilities. I felt overwhelmed and could not find my purpose in life, I was subsequently very depressed, anxious, had low mood, no motivation and even contemplated suicide.**

**I couldn't escape my reality every passing day made my mental health worse, I was completely alone, reclused and hopeless. I don't have GCSE's and don't have a higher education degree either, I felt as though I was never going to make anything of my life. I couldn't change my circumstances and I was under the community mental health team in Tower Hamlets. I would try to attend the day centre at Pritchard's Road E2 but I didn't have any friends and didn't fit in either as most people at the centre were more vulnerable than me and I didn't have anything in common with anyone else in the centre except that we were in-patients at the Mile End Mental Health Hospital in 2008 to 2009.**

**I remember exactly in June 2010 there was an advertisement in Tower Hamlets Council's Newspaper about a training course for NVQ level 3 in Advice Work and the entry requirements were just an English and Maths test. I thought about it for a month as I didn't know if I could be in a public orientated role, made me quite nervous to be around people, my worry was whether I could pass the test, manage my fear of getting up from bed each day and could I cope in such an environment. My weakness has always been maths, I was second guessing that I will fail the test. Nonetheless, I anxiously responded to the advert and contacted the course coordinator named Ms Jo Ellis at Island Advice Centre who offered me an appointment for the test in order for me to get a space on the training course.**

**I informed Ms Ellis of my health difficulties, she made me feel comfortable, she was caring, friendly, accommodating and understanding from the outset.**

**However, my nightmare became true I passed the English test but I was a few marks off from passing the maths test. I really liked Ms Ellis, I was completely taken back as to how lovely she was. She made me feel very welcomed, I grew adamant I wanted to do the course and couldn't take no for an answer, so I called Ms Ellis repeatedly just for a chance to get on the course. My determination paid off, Jo Ellis made an exception due to my health problems and allowed me to join the course.**

**Since starting the course in September 2010, I have also completed NVQ level 4 in information, advice and guidance which is a huge achievement for me. I felt I was part of something great, inclusive, powerful, all-encompassing, with**

*sense of community as well as fighting for rights and justice for the voiceless and marginalised. I volunteered with Island Advice Centre for 4 years, I took time out of volunteering due to health deteriorating as I got pregnant in 2014, I went back to volunteering in February 2018, I did have some breaks due to health issues, but once I felt better, I would go back to volunteering for two or*

three days a week. I believe my training with THCAN gave me a new lease of life, I found my calling and purpose in life, I wanted to help people and I thrived in delivering much needed support to disadvantaged members of my community. I finally felt part of a family at Island Advice. I was accepted for being who I am, I connected with people from all walks of life who were experiencing similar predicaments I faced. I kept up with training through THCAN which allowed me to keep up date knowledge and information to welfare rights law, legislation, regulations as well as networking with other agencies and statutory organisations and kept up with housing and debt matters through THCAN.

All my volunteering paid off, as I was employed on part time basis as a Welfare Rights Caseworker for Tower Hamlets Law Centre in 2019 for 2 years. This was a huge accomplishment for me. I never thought I could get a paid job and doubted my abilities. A Caseworker job became available at Island Advice Centre, I applied and I got the job, my dream came true, I was employed by Island Advice Centre for 2 years, but my health worsened so I left in December 2022. Whilst as a volunteer I was awarded certificates City and Guilds for the courses I completed in NVQ LEVEL 3 AND NVQ LEVEL 4.

I was also given multiple awards for the many years of volunteering and I was also the representative for volunteers as a member of the committee/ board at Island Advice Centre. I have spent last 13 years on and off in Welfare Rights Advice and Casework. I consider myself to be exceptional in my field of work. I have represented hundreds of clients at Tribunal Hearings and managed all aspects of cases from Form applications to Appeals. This confidence gives me so much joy, that I am actually good at something so rewarding and I can use my skills to make another person's life better. Being an advisor Caseworker gave me so much satisfaction, a sense of self-worth self-esteem that no one can take away from me. I was no longer dwelling on being useless, or ruminating with self-pity, the negativity, self-destructive thoughts were no longer controlling my mind like a prisoner. I felt talented, courageous, I can apply my knowledge and aptitude to tackle difficult situations with tact and diplomacy. I can see how far I have come even my family and friends have much respect for my abilities which means a lot to me. People come to me for advice and assistance all the time, I feel empowered and

strong willed, I have faced many obstacles and hurdles in my life and believe that to every problem there is a solution out there for it, I kept trying many revolving doors to find the right one.

***Although I am a bit slow with things, but I guess being on a large dose of anti-psychotic medication has this effect on me. But I don't let my mental health define who I am, I've learnt to be kind to myself and keep fighting to live and not to just exist, I aspire to be 'someone' that people remember, my special qualities are that I am selfless, warm hearted, relatable, inviting and a giving***

**person who loves to help and support others in their time of need and hardship.**

**I wanted to be the best Welfare Rights Caseworker and I achieved my goals because someone believed in me (Ms Jo Ellis) she gave me the chance to learn and grow as a person, gave me the tools I needed through in-house training THCAN so I could make a difference in people's lives. When I think about how far I have come, my heart tremble with happiness, I get teary when I think that I almost gave up on myself and never envisaged I would amount to anything in my life.**

**I am so passionate about advice work and even though I'm not currently working, once I feel better I will go back to Advice and Casework at Island Advice Centre as that's where I belong. I love to help people and that's what keeps me going.**

**This is just my story, now imagine how many hundreds of trainees that joined the course and training have benefitted from this THCAN course as well as those securing good jobs due to this training.**

**As an electorate of Mr Lutfur Rahman's I have always believed in Mr Rahman's manifesto, ethos and commitment to the residents of Tower Hamlets. I am a dedicated supporter of Mr Rahman, I would not usually go out of my way to write an email and speak of the most personal aspects of my life, but this news of the THCAN funding being cut has forced me to write to my Mayor urging him to reconsider withdrawing this much needed funding to help members of the community like me who have no prior qualifications like GCSE's or Degree, but do really well in training courses that give first hand experience whilst learning and training concurrently.**

**It is so important that people like myself have the opportunity to engage and even excel in vocational training courses which needs continued funding as it can change lives! I am living proof!**

**I don't think I will ever be a graduate in anything anytime soon, but I feel**

***having such training courses that THCAN provide and deliver gives people like me hope to a better foreseeable future. More importantly to be good at something is immeasurable, I am the product of hope and opportunity, I often attend many training sessions with THCAN as I like to keep myself updated with existing and or changes to DWP legislation that affect us all.***

***I am very upset to have been informed by my former employer Island Advice Centre of the THCAN funding cuts.***

***The cost of living crisis has hit us all mentally and financially, the need for more organisations to give advice and advocacy is immensely more now than ever, the demand for services is beyond capacity, more volunteers and staff***

***are needed. To have effective, efficient skilled and knowledgeable advisors and Caseworker to meet the EVER INCREASING demands of residents THCAN training is imperative!***

***I have supported many families through my work as an advisor and Caseworker but Fundamentally I developed my understanding, experience and expertise from my training with THCAN.***

***I agree with Island Advice Centre that the Local Authority should continue to fund THCAN valuable work.***

***Miss Mahmuda Khanom***

***Former employee Welfare Rights Caseworker of Island Advice THCAN***