

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

A partnership of local advice centres that work together to ensure Tower Hamlets residents have access to free, high-quality advice and representation in social welfare law (welfare benefits, debt, housing, employment, immigration, etc) [www.thcan.org.uk](http://www.thcan.org.uk) website has information on advice providers services, factsheets, Referrals portal Sarah Sauvat [sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:sarah.sauvat@island-advice.org.uk) training enquiries or information for mailout contact [jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk)

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum  
Blue Badge application delays/Non-residential care charges
2. Training Information:  
**RECRUITING NOW Learning to Advise/NVQ Level 3 starting April 2026**
3. Benefit Updates
4. New Projects, Services and Resources Information
5. Vacancies: None
6. Advice Services Contacts

## **1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum**

Next meeting date to be confirmed: February/March – if you have not attended in the past and want to attend the meeting please email [jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk) to be added to the zoom link/mailout

- ✓ Non-residential care charges debts
- ✓ Blue badge delays / not being processed

## **2. Free Training**

### ✓ **Advice Work Training Opportunity**

Looking to become an Advice Worker? Gain experience, Learning to Advise certificate and a recognised qualification NVQ Level 3 in Advice and Guidance  
Start date: April 2026, Duration: 12 months, Location E14 3AB : Commitment: 1 day per week training 1 day per week – supervised work experience Please note: This is an unpaid training and work experience opportunity. For more information and application pack contact: [Jo.Ellis@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:Jo.Ellis@island-advice.org.uk) Deadline to apply: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 NOTE: once volunteers have been recruited this course/qualification will be open to paid workers

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

### ✓ **Commencement dates changes introduced by the Renters' Rights Act**

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/legal/renting/changes\\_in\\_force?utm\\_term=68110&utm\\_content=CfP%20December%202025%20Update&utm\\_campaign=11020&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Adestra](https://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/renting/changes_in_force?utm_term=68110&utm_content=CfP%20December%202025%20Update&utm_campaign=11020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Adestra)

### ✓ **Warm Home Discount Scheme extended to 2030/2031**

The Government has announced that the Warm Home Discount will be extended until winter 2030/2031. This means that all eligible households will continue to receive the £150 discount. This will be awarded in line with the current eligibility criteria in place for Warm Home Discount. Eligible customers do not need to apply.

You can [read more on GOV.UK](#).

✓ **Government re-confirms no compensation for WASPI women**

On 29 January 2026, the government re-confirmed that they would not award compensation. You can [read the government's statement refusing to award compensation to the WASPI women on GOV.UK](#).

✓ **OVO to pay redress for Warm Home Discount payment failures**

Ofgem have announced that OVO will repay customers who did not receive their Warm Home Discount payment for 2023/2024. Redress amounts include £150 for all impacted customers. An additional £150 for medically vulnerable customers is available. Customers will also receive £100 for each instance of self-disconnection between 31 March and 31 May 2024. All affected customers have been contacted by OVO and they do not need to take any further action.

You can [read more on the Ofgem website](#).

✓ **Household Support Fund**

Clarification of eligibility information on how HSF payments have been allocated and is attached. Some of these are still to be distributed in the next few weeks so won't be with residents yet. Last month's mail out gave a link for you to use for clients who think they may be eligible and have not received it yet

✓ **Further problems with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants and managed migration**

ESA claimants claiming UC through managed migration may find their limited capability for work and work related activity (LCWRA), or transitionally-protected limited capability for work (LCW) element missing if they apply for UC after their final deadline. This is incorrect. Although the DWP has been alerted to this error, they have stated that a fix will take some time to implement. If the LCWRA or LCW element is missing in such a case, the claimant should request a mandatory reconsideration. You can [read more about this issue in the Managed Migration Toolkit](#).

✓ **Council Tax Reduction scheme amendments**

New regulations amend existing legislation for pension-age claimants. The changes include: Uprating figures for non-dependent deductions, applicable amounts, and premiums in line with inflation

Introducing capital disregards for miscarriage of justice payments, Armed Forces LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme payments, and transitional payments of Scottish Adult Disability Allowance made where someone has moved to England

If a claimant was previously resident in a country that the UK government has advised British nationals to leave, or arranged evacuation of British Nationals from:

The requirement to be habitually resident in Britain before claiming a reduction is removed, for both pension and working-aged claimants

A pension-aged claimant normally resident in Britain can receive support during a temporary absence from home of up to 26 weeks

The legislation comes into force on 13 February 2026 and will apply to schemes for the 2026/2027 council tax year.

You can [read the Council Tax Reduction Schemes \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2026 on GOV.UK](#).

You can [read the guidance issued to local authorities in Council Tax. information letter 1/2026 on GOV.UK.](#)

✓ **Beware of scams impersonating HMCTS**

Scammers are impersonating HMCTS enforcement teams and courts through phone calls, emails, and text messages to demand payments or personal details.

You can [find guidance on how your clients can recognise these scams on GOV.UK](#)

✓ **Appeal against a second claim for benefit can be treated as a revision request against an earlier refusal**

In the case of [MR v SSWP \(RP\) \[2025\] UKUT 418 \(AAC\)](#), the client reached state pension age on 3 March 2022 and claimed state pension on 27 February 2023. This was refused due to an incomplete national insurance (NI) record. On 7 September 2023, HMRC amended the client's NI record to award missing homes responsibilities protection. On 9 December 2023, she reclaimed state pension which was backdated for the maximum 12 month period and paid from 9 December 2022. That decision was upheld at First tier Tribunal, and the client appealed. The Upper Tribunal decided that the client's appeal against the second decision should have been treated as a request for an official error revision of the refusal of the first claim (as the defective NI record was HMRC's error) and awarded state pension from 3 March 2022 - the maximum backdate period for a claim made on 27 February 2023.

Similar conclusions (i.e. that a challenge to a later decision can be treated as a challenge to an earlier decision) were reached in a previous decision - [R\(JSA\)2/04](#).

✓ **Closed period supersession**

In [SSWP v NC](#), the client had notified DWP on 29 October 2024 that they would be out of GB for the period 13 November 2024 - 17 December 2024. On 1 November, the DWP superseded the UC entitlement to remove it from 18 October 2024, as the absence was expected to exceed one month. On appeal, a First Tier Tribunal decided that UC should have been reinstated from 18 November (the start of the assessment period in which the client returned) by way of a closed period supersession. The First tier Tribunal distinguished the case of [SSWP v SC](#) (see [our update from 24 September 2025](#)), on the grounds that when the supersession decision was made on 1 November, the client was in GB and the date of return was known. On appeal, the Upper Tribunal held that this was an incorrect interpretation of [SSWP v SC](#), and that having correctly ended UC from 18 October, DWP could not then use a closed period supersession to re-award it from 18 November without a new claim for UC having been made.

✓ **Relevant threshold for calculating surplus earnings for Universal Credit (UC) to remain at £2500 from April 2026**

The DWP has made a determination that the relevant threshold for purposes of calculating surplus earnings for UC will remain at £2500 until 31 March 2027.

For further information you can [read the Secretary of State determination under Regulation 5 of the Universal Credit \(Surpluses and Self-Employed \(Digital Service\) Amendment\) Regulations 2015.](#)

✓ **Court of Appeal decides that exposure to sunlight was not 'medical treatment' for the purposes of regulation 153 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Regulations 2008**

Under regulation 153, a claimant continues to be entitled to ESA during the first 26 weeks of a temporary absence abroad where that absence is solely in connection with arrangements made for medical treatment of a condition. The Upper Tribunal (UT) had decided that a claimant who benefitted from exposure to sunlight and was supervised by her husband, a doctor, was entitled to receive ESA for 26 weeks whilst staying in Spain. In overturning the UT decision the Court of Appeal decided that the UT was wrong to apply the 'solely'

requirement only to the period exceeding the first four weeks, the sole reason for the entire absence must be for treatment. The court also decided that exposure to sunlight is not 'medical treatment' in this context, 'treatment' is not something that one does to oneself; there is a need to receive it through the activity of another person. Also, 'arrangements for treatment' refers to medical arrangements, not general travel and the claimant's husband was not appropriately qualified to supervise treatment.

You can [read Secretary of State for Work & Pensions v NJ \[2026\] EWCA Civ 23 on the National Archives website](#)

✓ **ESA claimants who fail to migrate to universal credit by their final deadline**

DWP confirms they should have the limited capability for work-related activity (LCWRA) element included from the start of any subsequent claim.

[Read more](#) Advisers should submit a mandatory reconsideration for any clients that have not had the LCWRA element included in the above circumstances, and email details (eg. Name and NINO) to [daphne@nawra.org.uk](mailto:daphne@nawra.org.uk)

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

✓ **Benefit Checks appointments**

Island House Community Centre, Roserton Street, E14 3PG

Tel: 020 7531 0312 /0310 [cathy.weir@island-house.org](mailto:cathy.weir@island-house.org) Information attached

✓ **Free expert advice about financial support | Tower Hamlets | Family Hubs**

New advice sessions available see attached poster

✓ **Advice appointments in GP surgeries, map/contacts attached**

✓ **Free Legal Advice Session St Hildas**

Pro-bono clinics 6-8pm, first come, first served basis

- Wednesday clinic 6-8pm open to residents of all boroughs: Sonali Gardens, 79 Tarling Street, E1 0AT. housing, welfare benefits, consumer and contract issues and employment offers follow up meetings with clients/some casework.
- Thursday clinic 18 Club Row, E2 7EY employment, consumer and housing law advice. Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham residents only.
- If a client's first language is Bengali we run a daytime advice clinic (appointment only) and the advisor is a Bengali speaker who supports with PIP applications. If you call us on 0207 739 8066 we can arrange an appointment

✓ **Warm Hubs**

Service running in Idea Stores and libraries, offering residents a warm space with refreshments. They have a large stock of **warm packs** to hand out to service users so that they are equipped to keep warm at home too, anyone who needs can receive these. The service will **close at the end of this month**

✓ **Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop (DA OSS).**

Resource Centre (Nari Centre), 61 Vallance Road, E1 5AB. Monday 10:00am – 12:00pm

This initiative brings together statutory and non-statutory partners, including: Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), LBTH VAWG, DA & WS Team, LBTH Homelessness Service, Legal firms, Nour (specialist Sylheti-speaking counsellors), MIND (mental health support), Solace Women's Aid (with Hopscotch providing specialist support for Bangladeshi women), SHEWISE (trauma-informed support for South Asian and Middle Eastern women)

✓ **Sanctuary Scheme support survivors of domestic abuse who wish to remain safely in their own homes.**

A multi-agency response that aims to improve the safety and security of survivors of domestic abuse through the installation of enhanced security measures in their homes. This can include reinforced doors, window locks, security film, fireproof letterboxes, gates / grills for the front door / front or back garden and in some cases, a secure "sanctuary room." The scheme is intended to reduce the risk of further harm, enable the survivor ample time to contact the emergency services and prevent homelessness by enabling survivors to remain in their homes when it is safe to do so. Referrals and eligibility criteria attached

✓ **Tower Hamlets Connect**

Tower Hamlets Connect can help you to live an independent, healthy and fulfilling life. Providing free, independent, quality-assured information, advice and advocacy across health, social care and social welfare to resolve issues, Tower Hamlets Connect aims to prevent or delay any needs or problems from getting worse. Tower Hamlets Connect operates as your access point to Adult Social Care services in the borough. <https://www.towerhamletsconnect.org/just-say-hello/>

✓ **Resources to help you give advice**

You or your client can contact the consumer service to get help with: gas, electricity supply or billing issues, heat network supply or billing issues problems with energy efficiency work

✓ **Real D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent 16-25 year-olds workshop.**

The workshop will include 1-1 CV advice and an interactive interview practice session. Real Offices in Jack Dash House, 2 Lawn Close, E14 9YQ. Tuesday 17 February, 10:30am-4pm. Open to all Tower Hamlets residents aged 16-25 who are D/deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (ADHD, autism etc). Lunch and refreshments will be provided. All participants will be given a voucher for their attendance.

Fill out form: [CV and Interview Workshop \(16-25\) with Real DPO - Tuesday 17 February – Fill out form.](#) Attached a poster to share

✓ **Event held by Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Adults Board (TH SAB)**

The event is for residents to learn more about how they can keep safe and supported in the borough. **Tuesday 10 February 2026, at the Tower Hamlets Town Hall, Grocers Wing** 9.30am to 1pm See the poster attached

5. **Vacancies**

None this month

6. **Advice Services**

Tower Hamlets Advice benefit advice services details [Advice Centres - THCAN](#)

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

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

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

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

Organisation	E-mail	Tel Advice
Citizens Advice Bureau	<a href="mailto:advice@eastendcab.org.uk">advice@eastendcab.org.uk</a>	0203 855 4472
Island Advice Centre	<a href="mailto:admin@island-advice.org.uk">admin@island-advice.org.uk</a>	0207 987 9379 Thursday 10am to 12
Legal Advice Centre	<a href="mailto:admin@legaladvicecentre.london">admin@legaladvicecentre.london</a>	0203 606 0372
Tower Hamlets Law Centre	<a href="mailto:info@thlc.co.uk">info@thlc.co.uk</a>	0207 538 4909 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri