

**REMINDER** Our basic advice work training program - Learning to Advise (15-week basic advice training) and NVQ level 3 in Advice and Guidance (accredited qualification) is due to start 22<sup>nd</sup> April

If you are a paid worker giving advice that would like to do further training/gain a qualification, we can still accept applications

We are also seeking advice providers that can offer a volunteer placement for a period of 12 months, one day per week (minimum) to applicants that need a supervised volunteer placement (giving benefits, housing and debt advice) whilst doing their training/qualification

Email me for more information

### **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 bookings or want to share information for mailout contact [jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk](mailto:jo.ellis@island-advice.org.uk)

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

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

- **Last meeting 8<sup>th</sup> October** –Representatives from HB attended and gave presentation

<https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fthcan.org.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2025%2F10%2Fwelfare-rights-advisors-minutes-8.10.2025.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

- Next meeting proposed date (TBC) 28<sup>th</sup> April 2pm. Hoping to get someone from Mobility Support LBTH to come along to a meeting due to a lot of Blue Badge issues being highlighted by advisors (haven't been able to get anyone from there to confirm (or even answer!) so might just be a discussion)

#### **2. Free Training**

- **Basic advice work training program**

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We are also seeking advice providers that can offer a placement for a period of 12 months, one day per week (minimum) to applicants that need a supervised volunteer

placement (doing advice in benefits, housing, debt) whilst doing their training/qualification  
Email me for more information

- **Benefits Training delivered by DWP**

Please see attached for this month's DWP Benefit Awareness Sessions, you will need to register via the links on page 2. Please see attached for the upcoming sessions from our disability services team. Any issues please email:

[DisabilityServices.AdvocacyTeam@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:DisabilityServices.AdvocacyTeam@dwp.gov.uk). **Harry McElwee** | Partnership Advisor - East London District | Department for Work and Pensions

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

#### ✓ **Ending of the two-child limit**

More than any other policy, the two-child limit is responsible for driving child poverty to its current record high. This Bill starts to turn things around for the next generation. We applaud government, MPs and Peers for doing the right thing and taking this first, vital step to reduce child poverty in the UK. ;leaflet for reception/interview rooms attached

From 6 April 2026, the two child limit is (finally) removed from universal credit. The resultant increase in maximum award means that working families with three or more children who don't currently claim universal credit may be eligible. Things to note:

As well as boosting payments for those already in receipt of UC, when the two child limit is scrapped in April, families with 3 or more children could become newly eligible for universal credit. This is because the additional child elements increase a family's maximum award so that it is now possible to qualify with a higher income.

Use one of the calculators below to see if families can claim this extra support and the vital 'passported' benefits that come with it, such as Free School Meals -

[Policy in Practice Better Off calculator](#)

[Housing Systems April changes calculator for advisers](#)

[Entitledto benefits calculator](#)

[Turn2us benefits calculator](#)

For those who are already in receipt of universal credit, the DWP is writing to all claimants who may qualify for extra money. However, it is not writing to those who already have the benefit cap applied as they will not benefit currently. Supporting larger families to meet the conditions for an exemption from the cap will be particularly important to enable households to benefit from the change.

It is also possible that some UC claimants with three or more children may not have told the DWP about all of them as they know they would not receive anything for them in their award. They should be encouraged to advise the DWP of their presence as soon as possible.

#### ✓ **Deductions for child maintenance from Universal Credit (UC)**

As reported in [our 2 April 2025 update](#), deductions for child maintenance temporarily moved to the highest priority of deductions. Regulations have now been laid to make this measure permanent.

### ✓ **Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and congenital heart disease**

The DWP have completed a Legal Entitlements and Administrative Practise (LEAP) exercise identifying affected child DLA claimants who have congenital heart disease. The DWP hasn't been able to identify all affected claimants. Those who might be affected should contact the DWP if they haven't been contacted as part of the LEAP exercise. Clients can check if they might be affected by [reading the Guidance: Congenital heart disease: Changes to Disability Living Allowance for children from 1 February 2017 on GOV.UK](#). You can also [read the Stakeholder toolkit: Congenital heart disease review exercise on the rightsnet website](#).

### ✓ **Timms review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)**

The Timms review is meant to ensure PIP is 'fair and fit for the future'. There is now a call for evidence to help inform the review going forward. You can [read more about the Timms review and how to submit evidence on Workvivo](#).

### ✓ **Benefit cap not unlawful discrimination**

In 2017, 4 families brought proceedings for judicial review arguing that the benefit cap in relation to Housing Benefit was unlawful discrimination in breach of Article 14 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), read with [Article 8](#) and/or [Article 1 of Protocol No.1](#). It was argued that the cap unlawfully discriminated against lone parents with children under 2. The claim succeeded at the High Court, but the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court found in favour of the DWP. An application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights. Last week it was unanimously held that the imposition of the cap wasn't unlawful discrimination.

You can [read a summary of the judgment on rightsnet](#)

### ✓ **Extension to managed migration**

The DWP have confirmed that managed migration will extend beyond 31 March 2026. This is to ensure the 'safe transfer' of the remaining income related ESA (irESA) cases. At the time of writing there is no end date for irESA, or working age Housing Benefit. [As reported in our update dated 5 November 2025](#), Income Support and income-based Jobseekers Allowance will be abolished from 1 April 2026.

You can [read the announcement about the extension to the managed migration timetable in LA Welfare Direct 3/2026 on GOV.UK](#).

### ✓ **Entitlement to the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) highest rate mobility component**

To qualify for the highest rate mobility component of DLA under the severe mental impairment criteria, certain criteria must be met. This includes that the claimant displays severe behavioural problems that result in a regular need for physical restraint to prevent injury or property damage.

This case concerned the meaning of 'regular' physical restraint. The claimant's most extreme behaviour only necessitated restraint outdoors. The First-tier Tribunal (FtT) decided that as physical restraint was only needed in one context, the need can't be regular. The Upper Tribunal (UT), applying [SSWP v DM \(DLA\) \[2010\] UKUT 318 \(AAC\)](#) clarified that 'interventions may be regular if they are frequent in one context but infrequent, or even rare, in another context'.

In addition, the UT found that the FT failed in their inquisitorial duty. The appointee wasn't asked about what type of physical restraint might be needed when the claimant was indoors. The FtT also didn't adequately explore the level of support and intervention provided by the claimant's special needs school.

You can [read UA-2025-000842-DLA on the National Archives website](#)

### ✓ **Do you know your State Pension age?**

Between 6 April 2026 and 6 March 2028, the State Pension age will gradually increase from 66 to 67. People born on or after 6 April 1960 will be affected.

We are encouraging everyone to use the free [State Pension age calculator on GOV.UK](#) to find out their exact State Pension age – all you need is your date of birth. You can also use the '[Check your State Pension forecast](#)' tool to see how much you can get and if you can increase it, for example by filling any gaps in your record.

It's also important to know that your State Pension doesn't start automatically. DWP will send a letter inviting you to apply around 4 months before you reach State Pension age.

✓ **Customer Account is a self-serve platform that will give customers access to their benefit records twenty-four hours a day.**

Proof of benefit letters can be downloaded to retain digitally or print, or requested as a letter through the post, or both. Customers who can self-serve should be signposted to [Get proof of your benefits and State Pension - GOV.UK\(link is external\)](#) to obtain a Proof of Benefit Letter or a Letter of Entitlement for benefits

✓ **Housing Benefit propose income tolerance level within working age Council Tax reduction (CTR) scheme**

Please can you share this with other members of the advice forum and if they have any comments to contact me directly. We are looking at a proposal to create an income tolerance level within our working age Council Tax reduction (CTR) scheme and as its advantageous we hope we can do this without the formal consultation that would be required. We are proposing an income tolerance level of £10.00 per week, this equates to a £2.00 per week reduction in CTR when income increases. If their income goes down, they will still see an increase in CTR, this only applies to increases in income. We have identified around 300 CTR claims per month see reductions in CTR due to an insignificant increase in their income, this results in changes to the amount they pay and causes confusion and financial instability.

Darron McDermott, Subsidy, ICT and Quality Assurance Manager, Housing Benefits  
[Darron.mcdermott@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:Darron.mcdermott@towerhamlets.gov.uk)

✓

**Benefit uprating**

[The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order 2026](#) now provides for the uprated amounts of social security benefits from April 2026. Further amendments, including an uprate to the Carers Allowance earnings limit from £196 to £204, are included in [The Social Security Benefits Up-rating Regulations 2026](#). Increases to HMRC-administered benefits are contained in [The Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance Up-rating Order 2026](#).

✓ **Statutory Sick Pay changes**

[The Employment Rights Act 2025 \(Statutory Sick Pay\) \(Consequential Amendments\) Regulations 2026](#) effective from 6 April, remove the 3 day waiting period and lower earnings limit for entitlement to SSP.

✓ **'Tell Us Once' service and backdating claims**

In [SSWP v E \[2026\] UKUT 71 \(AAC\)](#), the claimant's partner died in 2020 and she notified the 'Tell Us Once' service within one week, but did not claim Bereavement Support Payments (BSPs) until 4 years later. Her claim was refused as it was out of time. A First tier Tribunal allowed the appeal, finding that the failure of the 'Tell Us Once' service to advise the client of a potential BSP claim was negligent, and that as per the Human Rights Act 1998, the backdating regulations should be read as though they contained a discretion to extend time, otherwise there would have been a breach of the client's ECHR rights under Art 1 1st Protocol (peaceful enjoyment of possessions) and Art 14 (non-discrimination). The SSWP appealed to the Upper Tribunal.

The appeal was allowed, with the Upper Tribunal deciding that there was no obligation on 'Tell Us Once' to advise a claim for benefit ([CG/1067/16](#) approved). The requirement to claim benefit within a specified time was not discriminatory and so the client's ECHR rights were not breached. Nor did the Human Rights Act allow the creation of any discretion in legislation, where none existed.

✓ **Personal Independence Payment case law on planning and following a journey**

In [AH v SSWP \[2026\] UKUT 50 \(AAC\)](#), the clients had been awarded 10 points for mobility activity 1e (Cannot undertake any journey because it would cause overwhelming psychological distress to the claimant), but argued they should instead score 12 points under activity 1f (Cannot follow the route of familiar journey without another person, an assistance dog or an orientation aid).

The UT allowed their appeals and set aside the cases for rehearing, deciding that activity 1f should be considered **before** activity 1e, and giving guidance on how Regulation 4(2A) should be applied when deciding on entitlement to those descriptors.

✓ **Personal Independence Payment (PIP) case law on taking nutrition**

An Upper Tribunal (UT) case found that a claimant's 'rules and rituals' around eating should be taken into account when considering PIP activity 2, taking nutrition. The claimant found the thought of eating distressing, and had developed complex rules and rituals about eating. The UT found that these issues could be relevant for this activity. You can [read the full decision in AM v SSWP UA-2025-000813-PIP](#)

✓ **Case law about backdating Universal Credit (UC)**

Under UC legislation, there must be a causal connection between the circumstance in relation to which backdating is requested (such as a disability), and the reason for the delay in claiming. However, in this case the UT held that all of the client's circumstances as a whole must be considered before this causal test is applied. This means that the cumulative effect of the circumstance, combined with other issues faced by the claimant, should be taken into account. For example, a client's disability may be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back' in causing their delay.

You can [read the full decision in CU v SSWP \[2026\] UKUT 40 \(AAC\)](#)

✓ **Case law about the childcare costs element of UC**

Case law has confirmed the position that childcare charges must be attributed to the assessment period (AP) in which the payment is made, even if the charges relate to childcare in a previous AP. In this case, the claimant paid their childcare charges for both October and November within the November AP. The UT confirmed that both sets of charges should be attributed to the November AP, even though this meant it couldn't all be covered as the monthly maximum was reached. The UT notes that this outcome doesn't serve the policy intent behind the childcare costs element well.

You can [read the full decision in SSWP v YN \[2026\] UKUT 58 \(AAC\)](#).

✓ **Case law on PIP fixed period awards**

A UT decision held that where a Tribunal decides to specify a fixed period for a PIP award, it needs to explain why it has chosen this fixed period, and why it has decided that an indefinite award is not appropriate. You can [read the full decision in ZM v SSWP \[2026\] UKUT 59 \(AAC\)](#).

✓ **PIP CLAIM SUCCESS RATES CONTINUE TO FALL**

The chances of making a successful claim are continuing to fall, with only just over a one in three chance of a new claimant getting an award. For the quarter ending January 2026, the

percentage of new claims that received an award was just 35%, down from 43% a year ago. Looking only at new PIP claims which got as far as the assessment stage, the success rate was 45%, down from 51% a year ago. There has been no change to PIP rules, regulations or caselaw that would explain this continuing steep fall in successful claims. [Read More and Comment](#)

### ✓ **ALMOST 100,000 WAIT FOR APPEAL AS SUCCESS RATES FALL**

Almost 100,000 social security claimants are waiting for their appeals to be heard, an increase of 25% over the preceding year. There has been a 35% increase in the number of UC appeals, a 4% increase in PIP appeals and a 64% increase in DLA appeals. Success rates for claimants have fallen in relation to all the main benefits. 58% of appeals were won by the claimant, a fall of 2% compared to the year before. PIP 64%, down 3%, DLA 59%, down 2%, UC 48%, down 1%, ESA 42%, down 11%. Members can download guides to appeals for all these benefits.

[Read More and Comment](#)

### ✓ **Failure to listen to claimant's representative contributed to error of law**

In *KU v SSWP* the upper tribunal (UT) considered the difference between a late application for supersession and a late application for revision in relation to a Universal Credit (UC) award. The first-tier tribunal (FtT) erred in law by considering Regulation 36 of the Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance (Decisions and Appeals) Regulations 2013, which applies to late applications for a supersession, rather than Regulation 6 of these regulations that allows for a late application for a revision. The UT found the decision of the FtT to be 'confused' due to their apparent misunderstanding of the differences between revisions and supersessions. The UT allowed the appeal on these grounds, but also considered the fairness of the appeal hearing as the FtT 'repeatedly interrupted' the claimant's representative when she sought to point out the correct provisions to the judge at the appeal hearing. The UT found that these 'constant interruptions' were such as to interfere with the fairness of the appeal hearing and prevented the representative from making their case which was ultimately found to be correct in law.

You can [read \*KU v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions 2026 UKUT 38 \(AAC\) UA-2025-000563-USTA\* on the Rightsnet website \[PDF\]](#).

### ✓ **Failure to adjourn tribunal when a claimant is too upset to give evidence can amount to an error of law**

In *NRB v SSWP* the UT considered whether the failure of the first-tier tribunal FtT to adjourn when the claimant became too distressed to give evidence amounted to an error of law. In this case, the evidence required from the claimant was crucial to deciding the appeal correctly. This meant that the failure to adjourn to allow the claimant to give evidence at a future hearing amounted to a procedural error that was material to the appeal. The UT remitted the case back to a FtT for a new hearing. You can [read \*NRB v The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions UA-2024-001671-PIP\* on The National Archives website](#).

### ✓ **Removal of the two child limit and the UC transitional element**

The DWP have confirmed, where the removal of the two child limit in April 2026 results in an increased UC child element, this will erode any UC transitional element payable. This was confirmed in a response to an adviser enquiry which was directed to the DWP stakeholder engagement team forum.

### ✓ **CPAG Welfare Rights: searchable caselaw summaries**

We've launched a new online resource for advisers, bringing together over a decade of caselaw summaries from our *Welfare Rights Bulletin*. It already includes summaries of several hundred cases and we'll continue to update it regularly with new cases relevant to your advice work.

How to access the caselaw summaries When you follow the link below, you'll be prompted to [log in](#) to our website with your usual email address and password. If you haven't got a login for our site, you'll need to [create an account](#).

✓ **Personal Independence Payment (PIP) case law - too much emphasis on stable medication and the ability to work**

In *JW v SSWP*, the claimant was refused PIP. In justifying the refusal, the health care professional referred to a lack of medication changes (i.e no increase) and the claimant's ability to maintain employment.

This was despite the fact the claimant stated they had taken extensive sickness periods, been demoted, had to use their annual leave for sickness and that their job was now, as a result of their conditions, hanging on 'by a thread'

It was also noted that the reason the medication had not changed in 7 years was because they were already receiving the maximum dose.

The claimant's appeal against the decision was allowed and remitted to a new hearing. This will be a useful case to cite when employment is presented as an issue for PIP without further investigation as to why exactly this prevents descriptors being satisfied. It's also a good reminder to check and give reasons as to why medication/other interventions have not increased so that this too cannot be given disproportionate weight. You can [find a summary of JW v SSWP on rightsnet](#). (Details of [how Citizens Advice staff can access rightsnet under the national subscription are available on the intranet](#)).

✓ **WCA STILL GOING IN 2031, OVER HALF OF WELFARE SAVINGS NOT FROM CLAIMANTS**

Information obtained by Benefits and Work shows that the number of work capability assessment (WCA) reassessments will be at their height in in 2031, years after the DWP claim that the WCA will have been abolished. It also shows that over half of the £1.9 billion welfare savings set out in the budget will not come from claimants. Instead £1.2 billion, 57%, will come from reducing the number of PIP award reviews, which will cut down on payments to assessment companies and/or DWP administrative costs. 31%, will come from increasing the number of WCA reassessments, where there is currently a massive backlog. 8% , will be the result of having a higher proportion of PIP face-to-face assessments, where the refusal rate is higher than for telephone assessments. And 3%, will be due to more WCA face-to-face assessments. With the PIP 4-point rule abandoned and now the axing of the WCA apparently years behind schedule, Labour's Pathways To Work Green Paper looks to be in tatters. [Read More and Comment](#)

✓ **DWP BELATEDLY REVEALS THAT OVER HALF OF PIP ASSESSORS LEAVE IN THEIR FIRST YEAR**

A report which the DWP has sat on for over three years reveals that over half of all PIP/WCA assessors leave within their first year. It shows that approximately 40% of recruits leave during training and an astonishing 52% leave within the first year of employment. This means that 2,000 to 3,000 new full-time equivalent assessors have to be recruited each year, which is approximately 60% to 90% of the total of the assessor workforce . One of the suggestions made in the report is that the DWP consider recruiting other health professionals, including midwives and prescribing pharmacists. Benefits and Work wld not be surprised to see trials of this suggestion begin before the year is out.[Read More and Comment](#)

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

- ✓ Please see the below email being circulated for SHEWISE – any information, please contact [saima@shewise.org](mailto:saima@shewise.org)

We are inviting your organisations to refer eligible service users to our upcoming **Nayee Shuruaat (A Fresh Start)** programme; a 10-week self-awareness and educational intervention for South Asian women who have experienced domestic abuse. **Location:** Nari Centre, 61 Vallance Road, E1 5AB

**Dates:** 13 April – 15 June 2026 **Time:** 12:30–15:00 **Duration:** 10 weeks

**Capacity:** Up to 15 women

- ✓ **"Tower Hamlets Council has distributed the final Post Office payout cash vouchers from the Household Support Fund.**

Residents should receive these before the end of the month. The same guidance with enquiring about eligibility applies, whereby partners can use the online form and a resident will be told if they are eligible for the payment or not". We're sending out small payments to residents identified in our benefits data as newly in arrears and information on how to access debt advice

#### ✓ **Pension Credit Mail out**

We're sending out the attached letters in the next few days to residents identified by our benefits data as likely eligible for Pension Credit and not already claiming. This campaign is GLA funded and 564 residents will receive a letter.

Remember that Island House can be contacted to help with benefit check and claiming PC contact Cathy Weir [cathy.weir@island-house.org](mailto:cathy.weir@island-house.org) to book

#### 5. Vacancies

- ✓ **Job opening within Money A+E. Job Description attached.**

#### 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 Tuesday 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