

IMPORTANT INFORMATION - THCAN Referral Portal Changes

I am pleased to announce The THCAN v.2 is now live as from yesterday on <https://thcan.viitata.com>

Current users What next?

1. You need to reset your password -For security reasons, I have been informed that all users should reset their password to prevent legacy passwords from persisting in the new system as this could cause security and data protection issues.
2. All new referrals need to be made on the new site, and version 1 of the system will remain accessible until end of May
3. Lead users will need to review their organisation profile -see The Organisation Directory [click here](#) (I am happy to help with this)

Meetings Please do not hesitate to book time with me to discuss any issues or if you have any questions on the following link [Book time with Sarah Sauvat: THCAN referral upgrade](#)

Training Please go to [THCAN Referral System - THCAN](#) to access the full training video (7 minutes 40s) Shorter videos are also accessible

NOTE:

if you / your organisation are not current users please contact Sarah to enquire about adding services/ registering yourself on the portal

Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) Newsletter

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

1. Welfare Rights Advisors Forum: April 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

➤ **Meeting 28th April**

Mobility Support LBTH discussion about Blue Badge issues

Non residential service charges – discussion on historical charges and collection practices. LBTH unable to attend and will be (hopefully) coming to next meeting

Minutes will be available on next mailout

2. Free Training

- **DWP East London Partnership Awareness Session Schedule for May.**

Harry McElwee | Partnership Advisor - East London District | Department for Work and Pensions – schedule and links attached

➤ **Financial Support Tower Hamlets and Canary Wharf Further Education Trust**
Help available (grants not loans) Fees support, These are the mandatory charges that your institution charges for your course. Any resident not eligible for mainstream student finance can apply for support with fees. Maintenance support
This is help with study-related costs to help you with your education.
Residents with a household income below £25,000 can apply for maintenance support.
[Tower Hamlets and Canary Wharf Further Education Trust](#)

➤ [Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession \('MVDAC'\) – Free to attend \(London only\) | Rights of Women](#)

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

➤ **CPAG free article from the latest issue of the Welfare Rights Bulletin is:**
[LCWRA element – 'pre-2026 claimant' explained](#) - Carri Swann explains who counts as a 'pre-2026 claimant' and therefore escapes the April 2026 cut to the amount of the UC LCWRA element.

➤ **DWP CONTINUES TO PERSECUTE CARERS**
Last week, the DWP announced that over 200,000 carers allowance overpayments made between April 2015 and September 2025, and which were affected by incorrect guidance on how to average fluctuating earnings, would be reviewed.
The exercise has been prompted by the Sayce report into DWP failings involving carer's allowance.
But even after the findings were announced, the DWP issued another 22,500 overpayment notices. Many more carers will now be forced into debt and distress, repaying money which the DWP will eventually have to give them back.
Even after its failings have been officially exposed, it seems nothing ever really changes at the DWP.
[Read More and Comment](#)

CPAG Benefits updates

➤ **Middle East conflict - habitual residence, past presence, and temporary absence**
In July 2025, the government introduced exemptions from the habitual residence test (HRT) and past presence test (PPT), and increased temporary absences, for people in a country or territory from which the government advised British nationals to leave or arranged their evacuation. (You can [read our email update of 23 July 2025 for more on these changes](#)). The DWP has updated its guidance on this legislation. It now states that the exemptions cover the following countries from 4 March 2026: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Housing Benefit guidance also states that extended temporary absence rules apply in relation to these countries. You can read the updated guidance in [Advice for Decision Making Memo 09-25](#) (PDF, 93KB) and [Decision Maker's Guide Memo 10-25](#) (PDF, 109KB). You can also read [Housing Benefit guidance in adjudication circular A5-2026 on GOV.UK](#).

➤ **PIP case law**

An Upper Tribunal case found that a First-tier Tribunal (FTT) made an error in law by focusing narrowly on the claimant's functional ability on the two days a week she was working. The FTT had not sufficiently explored the claimant's ability on the other 5 days. You can [read the full decision in SH v SSWP \(PIP\) UA-2025-001400-PIP](#).

➤ **Removal of the 2 child limit**

The 2 child limit is removed from Universal Credit (UC) from 6 April 2026. This will increase payments for most families already in receipt of UC, with more than 2 children. Although the DWP recently confirmed that for claimants in receipt of a UC transitional element this will be eroded by any increased UC child element. As well as increasing payments for those already in receipt of UC, when the 2 child limit is scrapped in April families with 3 or more children could become newly eligible for UC. 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. **Advisers might want to consider doing take-up work to ensure that eligible families do not miss out on any new entitlement to UC.**

➤ **The limited capability for work element of universal credit will reduce from £423.27 to £217.26 for most new claimants of UC.**

Most social security benefits across the UK will increase by 3.8%.

The New and Basic State Pension will increase by 4.8%.

The DWP has confirmed the increase in the UC Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) levels from 1 April 2026 due to the increase in the national living wage.

You can [read updated guidance on UC and earnings on GOV.UK](#).

➤ **'Right to try' work**

The government is amending legislation so that starting work will not, in and of itself, trigger a new work capability assessment (WCA) for Universal Credit (UC) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants, or an award review for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants. This takes effect on 30 April 2026.

The DWP still has discretion to carry out a new WCA for UC or ESA, to determine if there's been a relevant change in the claimant's condition. The amendment specifies that starting work is not in itself a relevant change. For PIP, it specifies that starting work is not a reason for a fresh determination. The Explanatory Memorandum to the amendments states:

"It does not prevent a customer from being called for a reassessment for other reasons while they are working. However, evidence about the type of work they are undertaking may still be used to support a reassessment."

You can read [The UC, PIP and ESA \(Amendment\) Regulations 2026 on legislation.gov.uk](#).

➤ **Although Be careful!!!! Benefits and Work Guidance states:**

DWP CONFIRMS STARTING WORK CAN TRIGGER WCA AND PIP REVIEW

The DWP hammered the final nail in the coffin of Labour's recently announced Right To Try work legislation, before it even began on 30 April.

Updated guidance tells decision makers that they should look at the type of work claimants start and, if they suspect it shows that their condition or functional abilities have improved, they should subject them to a work capability assessment and/or personal independence payment (PIP) review.

The new guidance gives a range of examples, including a UC claimant who says he cannot mobilise more than 50 metres but gets a job as a labourer and a UC claimant born without hands who gets an office job in the family firm using voice-activated equipment.

There's also a PIP claimant who can't follow the route of an unfamiliar journey without another person, but who gets a job that involves frequent business travel.

The most important lesson from the new guidance is that the decision makers are likely to pounce on claimants as soon as they start work, rather than giving them time to find out whether the new activities are sustainable for them.

As we said before about the Right To Try work: nothing has changed.

[Read More and Comment](#)

➤ **Gov website Reassessments Information**

If you start working, you will not need to have another assessment unless your health condition changes.

4. New Projects /services, information, and resources

➤ **Renters Rights Act resources/information**

From May 2026, private landlords will no longer be able to evict tenants using Section 21 “no-fault” notices. This change is part of the new Renters’ Rights Act and aims to give renters more security in their homes. But many renters are unsure what the ban actually means, whether landlords can still evict them, and what their rights are if they receive a notice

[Section 21 Evictions Ban: Guide for Renters](#)

➤ **Shelter Renters’ Rights Act resources**

The Renters’ Rights Act is a major reform of private renting in England. It aims to give renters greater security, fairness and stability.

From 1 May 2026, assured shorthold tenancies are replaced with fully assured periodic tenancies and ‘no fault’ section 21 notices are a thing of the past. For further guidance on what the new Act means in practice, including guidance for private renters and debt advisers, see the following Shelter resources.

[Renters' Rights Act: changes for private tenants](#)

[Renters' Rights Act 2025 changes in force](#)

[A guide to the Renters' Rights Act for debt advisers](#)

Links to Shelters previous 3 Spotlight articles here: To see our other Spotlight resources please go to our [website](#).

[Deductions from universal credit](#)

[Challenging an out of time penalty charge notice](#)

[Discretionary reductions of council tax](#)

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 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
 For Family Law, please use the following email Familylaw@legaladvicecentre.London

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

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