**Croydon Council Welfare Benefit Advice, supporting Council Tenant residents**

Three Welfare Benefit Advisers in Croydon provide *dedicated support to ‘Council Tenant’ residents (only)* with applications for various benefits (Council Tax and Housing benefits, Universal Credit, Carers Allowance, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, and Disability Living Allowance). Advisers also support residents throughout the benefit process (such as if a benefit application is refused, we will help to challenge this decision, through the Mandatory Reconsideration (Review) and Appeals Process.

Universal Credit and Legacy benefits: Benefits, such as Employment & Support Allowance, Job Seekers Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Income Support are being phased out, and will now fall under the Universal Credit umbrella. Universal Credit is an online benefit for working age residents living in secure, unsupported accommodation, replacing six main benefits (Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit) and these benefits are known as ‘legacy’ benefits. A managed migration is happening, with most people moving over to Universal Credit by the end of 2025.

Universal Credit claims are applied for on-line on the Gov.uk website. *Universal Credit benefit can be claimed over the telephone on 0800 328 5644 for vulnerable residents*, with learning difficulties, severe care needs (disability or impairment), or those lacking digital skills. Although we support residents with applications for Universal Credit, i.e. complete the on-line benefit claim on their behalf (set up, create usernames and passwords, help with security questions, help to navigate the Universal Credit account) we do not retain passwords for GDPR reasons. Our Advisers do not retain passwords, or assist residents in progressing the Universal Credit claim. However, residents/claimants can call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 5644 for advice, support and to request a Universal Credit advance payment.

*Most pensioners (aged 66 and above) are advised to claim Housing Benefit* *for help with the cost of their rent (not Universal Credit)* ***unless*** *they are in a mixed age couple relationship*. Where one resident is of working age, and the other is pensionable age, then the DWP will advise the couple to claim Universal Credit benefit instead, *unless* they are residing in temporary accommodation. *All residents residing in temporary accommodation properties, will be advised to claim Housing Benefit for help with the cost of the rent*.

We support residents experiencing ‘financial hardship’ with referrals to ‘Food Banks’ but *we do not support residents with ‘Debts’ particularly debts that are historic, spanning back years* (such as Council Tax debt). In these cases, they should contact a debt advisory service, or the Council Tax Department direct (**0208 726 7000**).  *Neither do we support residents with completion of ‘Financial Assessment Forms’* which are usually issued to residents that have received a ‘care package’ from the Council.

*We do not provide advice on re-housing issues*, or *tenancy related matters or on repair issues*. We signpost or refer such enquiries to our Intranet page at [www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/) where Croydon Council services can be accessed on-line, or we advise residents/agencies to contact the council direct on **0208 726 6000**.

Referrals for Croydon Council Tenants to our service that require our *‘specialised support’*.  We always encourage and try to empower residents to make simple telephone calls themselves, but this is not always possible. If you are making a referral to our team, please complete our referral form, and return to: CouncilTenantsWBA@croydon.gov.uk

Once received, the referral will be allocated the appropriate adviser. We aim to contact the resident within five working days, however, this does not always mean that the resident will get a face-to-face appointment, or home visit within five working days. Face to face appointments can be between two weeks to four weeks.