

Brexit 'timebomb' is benefit claims threat

A LAW centre chief has warned of "another Windrush scandal" following a surge in requests for legal help with Brexit.

Sean Canning, chief executive of Camden Community Law Centre, said the free expert service has been flooded with concerns about how Britain leaving the EU will impact on benefits.

There are urgent concerns for elderly and vulnerable EU nationals in Camden who still haven't applied to the settlement scheme ahead of the December 31 deadline.

Mr Canning said: "Brexit is lurking, it hasn't gone away. The queries around Brexit are mainly about applying for settled status. If you've been here five years you can have settled status – less than that it's pre-settled status."

"Pre-settled doesn't entitle you to access all the benefits you were on before. So we are getting people ringing up saying

by TOM FOOT

they have been turned down. Camden has one of the highest EU populations in London.

"I fear another Windrush situation because there are loads of people here legitimately who simply haven't applied, or do not want to because they don't agree with it."

"Older people, who have been living under the radar all their lives, don't see why they should suddenly apply for settled status. It's a timebomb."

The Law Centre experienced a big increase in requests for help from Camden residents "fleeing domestic abuse" in the first lockdown.

Immigration solicitor Joanna Sherman said: "Lockdown has forced many women and families to endure

already intolerable conditions and abusive relationships in often unsatisfactory accommodation, placing themselves and their children at risk. During this challenging period we have worked with victims to support them to get Home Office restrictions removed so that they can access services including public funds."

Camden Community Law Centre (CCLC), based in Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town, was set up in 1973. It provides

free and independent legal advice to people living, working and studying in Camden. The focus is on employment, housing, welfare, asylum and immigration.

At the start of the pandemic concerns over housing rock-

eted but this has since "quietened" following the government's extension of the ban on evictions until the spring.

Mr Canning added: "The worry is now that when possession proceedings do take off, there's going to be an issue about representation. A lot of courts are operating with remote technology and that is discriminatory against a lot of tenants who wouldn't be able to cope with the tech."

The CCLC's immigration team is celebrating after being awarded an "excellent" rating by the Legal Aid Agency.

A report by the auditor said: "What is particularly impressive is the team's ability to provide high quality representation to vulnerable clients."

The CCLC is currently open by appointment only. Visit their website <https://cclc.org.uk/> for more details or call 020 7284 6510.



Alex Bowie, Shiri Shalmy and Katie Higgins of Co-Operation Kentish Town

Asylum kids' birthday bash!

CHILDREN who missed out on a birthday treat this year because they were fleeing war and persecution are in for a special celebration next week, writes Dan Carrier.

Charity Co-Operation Kentish Town is organising a giant, Covid-safe birthday bash for around 100 youngsters. The group, which is based in the Highgate Centre, Highgate Road, has been running a co-operative food hub for over a year – and have upped their services during the Covid-19 crisis.

They have offered support to more than 150 new families seeking asylum and settling in Camden, and now want to bring an extra bit of cheer to the younger people who have been forced to leave their homes and travel to a new country.

Organiser Shiri Shalmy said: "We are delighted to have been able to welcome new neighbours to Kentish Town. We are lucky to be in a position to offer friendship and solidarity, and help between us build a sense of community."

Now they are seeking help through donations, gifts of toys and home-baked birthday cakes for a day-long event on December 18.

Ms Shalmy added: "We want to offer the chance for people in Camden to show their kindness, show that we are welcoming, and show that the idea of creating a 'hostile environment' towards refugees does not happen here."

To donate, or find out more information, visit <https://opencollective.com/cooperation-town>



Joanna Sherman

Christmas Appeal We are Open Everyday

JAN LEEMING READING THE NEWS FOR
HIGHGATE NEWTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Welcome

I was delighted to be asked to support this fabulous project. HNCC are a wonderful, dedicated team who have responded and treated every person as an individual with kindness and respect. The public have really got behind them with donations of food and money and I will be carrying on supporting their efforts into 2021. The fresh vegetables brought for every food parcel add quality and a chance to have a healthy diet rather than just tinned food.

What is the Winter Food Campaign?

The winter of 2020/21 is a hard one for everyone due to the Covid19 pandemic, but it hits the disadvantaged and elderly particularly hard. HNCC will remain open over the holidays to provide a meal on Christmas day to people who are vulnerable or alone, and daily activities from the 26th to 31st December. Our volunteers are at hand to deliver a smile and Christmas treats to the many people in our neighbourhood who are affected by food poverty, loneliness and isolation. Between now and Feb we hope to raise £35,000 to extend our services and build on the learning we have done throughout the pandemic. It is our aim to ensure that our community

is supported and resilient and with your donation and working together with our neighbours, we can create a resilient, happy and food secure community in the Highgate Hampstead area. Your donations will be used to support our food programme through our food bank and meals on wheels service. It will also allow us to provide much-needed company and support over the Christmas period. Please, if you can, consider helping those in the local community most at need. I look forward to joining you at events planned once we are through this Covid crisis which has caused so much pain and loss of life.

I fully support the Christmas appeal with the Camden New Journal.

Best wishes
JAN LEEMING



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for further information.

www.highgatentown.org.uk

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