



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM ALL OF US

Something happened to one of our computer systems — and you should hear it from us

THFN keeps its records on a computer system supplied by a company called **Beacon**.

On **6 August** we learned that criminals had broken into Beacon's systems. **More than 1,000 charities were caught up in it.** Some of the information we hold about you may have been involved.

We are very sorry. You trusted us with your details, and nothing about this was your fault.

🔒 What you need to do: nothing at all

You do not need to do anything. Everyone affected will get a letter. And if you have a befriender, they or a member of staff will talk it through with you, for as long as you want.

📋 What we have done about it

- Reported it straight away to the **Information Commissioner's Office** and the **Charity Commission**. **The ICO has reviewed it and closed its case**, with no further action required of us.
- Started writing to everyone whose details may have been involved.
- Begun speaking to every client individually.
- Started reviewing how we store your information.

Any questions at all, ring us on **0203 007 9120**. There is no such thing as a silly question here.

www.thfn.org.uk

PLEASE REMEMBER

🚫 THFN will never ask you for these

- Your **PIN**, password or one-time passcode
- Your **bank** or card details
- Money, a fee, or a "refund" of any kind
- Access to your computer, tablet or phone

📞 If someone rings claiming to be us

Put the phone down, wait ten minutes, then ring us back on **0203 007 9120**. A real befriender will always be happy to wait.

SAVE THE DATE

🚌 Our day out to Southend-on-Sea

Tuesday 29 September

Sea air, the world's longest pleasure pier, fish and chips and a proper sit-down by the water. Escorted throughout by staff and volunteers.

Travelling: by coach, leaving and returning to Tower Hamlets

Pick-up: morning — times to be confirmed

Cost: to be confirmed

To book, ring **0203 007 9120** or tell your befriender. Do say what you need on mobility. Places are limited.

Charity no. 1099403

EMAILS AND TEXTS DOING THE ROUNDS

📦 "You have a parcel waiting"

A text says a delivery failed and wants a small fee to rebook. The link copies your card details. Real couriers put a card through your door.

✉️ "HMRC owes you a refund"

HMRC never emails or texts about refunds, and never asks for bank details. However good the logo looks, delete it.

🔥 "Claim your Winter Fuel Payment here"

The Government will never text or email you about the Winter Fuel Payment. If you are eligible it arrives automatically, with a letter. See page 3.

⚠️ "Your account has been suspended"

Bank, NHS, TV licence, energy supplier — the story changes, the trick does not. It wants you frightened enough to click before you think.

🗣️ The new one: a voice that sounds like family

Criminals can now copy a voice from a few seconds of video. You get a call, late on, and it is your son or granddaughter, upset, needing money now.

Agree a family password. One ordinary word only your family knows. If the caller cannot say it, it is not them.

💖 Friendship and romance online

Someone kind gets in touch online and messages every day for weeks, but never manages to meet. Then there is a crisis and they need money. **Nobody who genuinely cares about you will ask you to keep them a secret.**

🛡️ Six habits that beat online scams

- 1 **Stop before you click.** Nothing genuine needs you to act in five minutes.
- 2 **Never use the link.** Type the address in yourself.
- 3 **Never read out a one-time passcode.** Your bank will never ask for it.
- 4 **Tell someone.** Saying it out loud is often the moment it stops sounding right.
- 5 **Keep your devices updated.** When it asks to install an update, say yes.
- 6 **Never feel embarrassed.** These people are professionals.

📢 Report it — it takes two minutes

- Suspicious **text**: forward it free to **7726**, then delete
- Suspicious **email**: forward to **report@phishing.gov.uk**
- Fraud, or an attempt: **Action Fraud, 0300 123 2040**
- Worried about your bank? Dial **159** for its real line
- Cut cold calls: **Telephone Preference Service, 0345 070 0707**

⚠️ If money has already gone

Ring your bank **straight away** on 159, then Action Fraud. Banks can often recover a payment if you are quick. Tell us too — we will help, and we will not judge you.



HEATING YOUR HOME

🔥 Winter Fuel Payment 2026–27

Born **on or before 27 June 1960** and living in England or Wales? You should get **£100 to £300** towards heating. Qualifying week is **21–27 September**.

- **Paid automatically** in November or December. No need to apply.
- A letter comes in **October or November** with the amount.
- **Tax free**. Does not affect your other benefits.
- Income over **£35,000**? HMRC takes it back through your tax.

Nothing by **27 January**? Ring **0800 731 0160**.

⚡ Energy bills are going up again

From **1 October** the price cap rises **4%** — about **£5 a month** more for a typical household.

Struggling? Ring your supplier **before** you fall behind. Ask about the **Priority Services Register** — free extra support for older and disabled customers.

WORTH £3,900 A YEAR — AND OFTEN MISSED

📺 Pension Credit

Tops your weekly income up to **£238** single, **£363.25** for a couple. Savings and a small pension do not rule you out.

Even **£1 a week** unlocks Council Tax Reduction, help with NHS costs, the Warm Home Discount and a free TV licence at 75.

Around 800,000 who qualify never claim. Ring **0800 99 1234**, or ask us and we will help.

🏠 Council tax: Tower Hamlets relief fund

Combined income under **£60,000** and not already getting council tax support? This year's **2.99% increase can be covered**. Apply at towerhamlets.gov.uk/costofliving or ring **020 7364 5000**.

📞 Also worth a phone call

- **Resident Support Scheme** — crisis grants for any resident. **020 7364 5040**
- **Attendance Allowance** — £76.70 or £114.60 a week. Not means tested, not taxed
- **Warm Home Discount** — £150 off your electricity

BOOK IT NOW, HAVE IT IN OCTOBER

⊕ Your free flu and COVID jabs

Bookings opened on **17 August**. Vaccinations for older people start **1 October**, and the NHS wants most people done by the end of November.

Both jabs can be done in one appointment. Ring your GP or pharmacy. **If you are housebound, say so** — the NHS must come to you, and we can help you ask.

WHO GETS WHAT

Flu jab: everyone aged **65 and over**, anyone in a clinical risk group, care home residents, and unpaid carers.

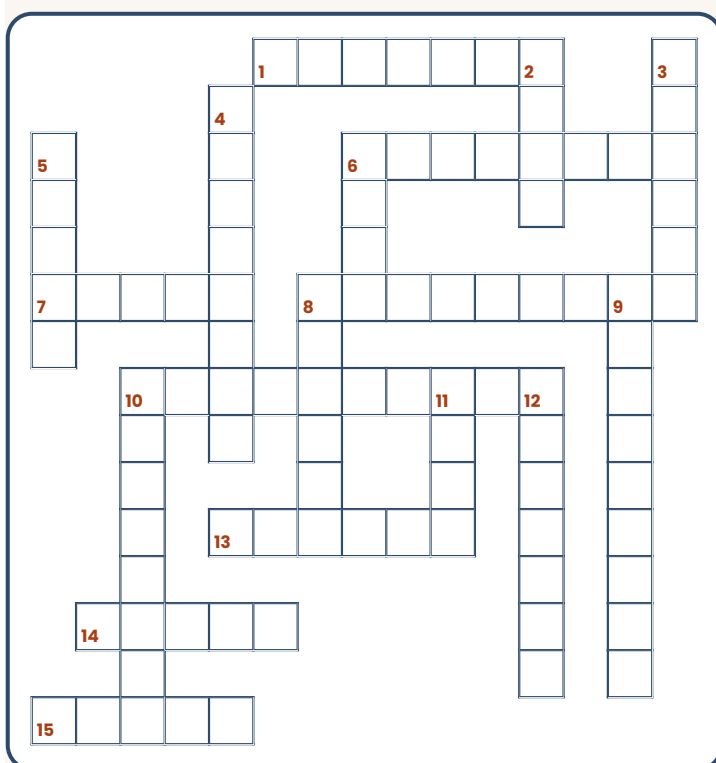
COVID jab this autumn: everyone aged **75 and over**, care home residents, and people with a weakened immune system.



Take a break: the seaside crossword

In honour of our Southend day out — every answer is a holiday word

Page 4 • August 2026



Across

1. Sheltered place where boats moor (7)
6. 'Wish you were here' — sent by post (8)
7. How we will travel there and back (5)
8. Paved walkway along the seafront (9)
10. Built with a bucket and spade (10)
13. Amusements with slot machines (6)
14. Small seafront hut selling ice creams (5)
15. Souvenir picked up on the sand (5)

Down

2. Seaside stick of sweet with the town's name through it (4)
3. Dip your feet in the shallows (6)
4. Essex resort at the end of the line — and our September outing (8)
5. Sand and shingle by the sea (5)
6. Southend has the longest pleasure one in the world (4)
8. Lunch eaten outdoors (6)
9. Striped folding seat for the beach (9)
10. What we all hope for on the day (8)
11. It goes out a long way on the Thames Estuary (4)
12. Wide river mouth, as at Southend (7)

We have refreshed our website

There is a new look to www.thfn.org.uk — tidier, easier to read on a phone, and simpler to find your way around.

Not online? Nothing changes for you. Ring **0203 007 9120** and we will post anything out.

ANSWERS. ACROSS: 1 HARBOUR · 6 POSTCARD · 7 COACH · 8 PROMENADE · 10 SANDCASTLE · 13 ARCADE · 14 KIOSK · 15 SHELL. DOWN: 2 ROCK · 3 PADDLE · 4 SOUTHEND · 5 BEACH · 6 PIER · 8 PICNIC · 9 DECKCHAIR · 10 SUNSHINE · 11 TIDE · 12 ESTUARY.

GET IN TOUCH

Tower Hamlets Friends & Neighbours

St Margaret's House
21 Old Ford Road
London E2 9PL

Telephone 0203 007 9120

Email admin@thfn.org.uk

Web www.thfn.org.uk

Office open Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm. If you would like this newsletter in **large print**, or read aloud to you, just ask.

www.thfn.org.uk

Befriending in Tower Hamlets since 1947