



**Hosted by the Staffordshire University**

**Friday 2 December 2016**

Staffordshire University (Film Theatre), College Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, ST4 2EF

## **AGENDA**

- 9.30           **Registration and refreshments**
- 10.00          **Welcome:** Nigel Thomas, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, Staffordshire University
- 10.10          **Courses offered by Staffordshire University**
- 10.30          **Guest speaker**  
Patrick Butler – Social Policy Editor, The Guardian  
*Austerity and social security*
- 11.15          **Break**
- 11.30          **Workshops** - session one (see 'workshop options' on following page)
- 12.30          **Lunch** (not provided at the venue)
- 1.30           **Guest speaker:**  
Ruth Smeeth – MP for Stoke-on-Trent North  
*The impact of holiday hunger*
- 2.30          **Workshops** - session two (see 'workshop options' on following page)
- 3.30          **Information exchange and NAWRA updates**
- 4.00          **Close**

## WORKSHOP OPTIONS

Each workshop lasts an hour and runs twice (once at 11.30am and again at 2.30pm). Please choose **two** from the following options.

*Workshops are led by NAWRA members who have offered to share their expertise with fellow welfare rights advisers. If you'd like to run a workshop at a future NAWRA meeting please contact [kelly@nawra.org.uk](mailto:kelly@nawra.org.uk)*

*NAWRA workshop levels:*

<b>Introductory</b>	assumes little or no prior knowledge of the topic or a refresher session
<b>Intermediate</b>	assumes a reasonable working knowledge of welfare benefits work will be needed or some knowledge of the specific topic under discussion
<b>Advanced</b>	assumes a good working knowledge of welfare benefits work or detailed knowledge of the topic under discussion
<b>Practical</b>	focusing on developing good practice or offering some 'hints and tips'
<b>Theoretical</b>	focusing on policy debates or discussion of emerging theory
<b>Strategic</b>	focus on planning to put practical knowledge, and/or theory, into practice

### **A. Working with corporate deputies** - Keith Thompson, Northumberland Welfare Rights Workshop level: practical

Local authorities need to administer the financial affairs of their residents when those residents lack the mental capacity to do this for themselves, and where no other suitable person is available to do it.

A Court of Protection appointed deputy takes all decisions relating to a resident's finances including benefit claims. In some cases, the local authority might be an appointee for DWP purposes without being appointed as a deputy.

The location of the deputyship team can vary from council to council. There aren't always links with their welfare rights team which could lead them to make a decision that might not be in the best interests of the resident.

This workshop will look at the role of corporate deputies, and where you might find them in your council, as well as a brief look at how mental capacity is assessed in relation to finances.

We will then look at some examples where the deputyship team and welfare rights working together has increased the income of residents and also, in some cases, revenue for the authority. In the current financial climate, the latter could be another way to highlight how a welfare rights team provides additional value to their council.

If your team already has good links with the deputyship team, please come along and share the good practice. If you aren't already involved with your deputyship team, then come along to find a way to win them over!

- B. Discretionary Housing Payments – The law and good practice** - Richard Machin, lecturer in social welfare law, policy and advice practice at Staffordshire University and Mark Perlic, member of the management team of the City of Wolverhampton's Welfare Rights Service

Workshop level: intermediate/practical

*This workshop is aimed at both new and seasoned advisers who wish to acquire a better understanding of the law behind DHPs and explore issues of "good practice".*

The ability to access Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) has played an ever increasing role in sustaining Housing Benefit (and Universal Credit) claimants in their homes in the long shadow of welfare reform. The introduction of the much reduced Benefit Cap will put far greater pressures on already strained budgets. This workshop is designed to examine:

- the rules surrounding DHPs and "good practice" in the claiming and decision-making process; and
- why access to DHPs can be a postcode lottery

It is incumbent upon advisers to ensure that "good practice" is adopted in their local authority area. This workshop will give you the tools and understanding necessary to make effective applications for DHPs and address poor local practice where access to these payments is less than fair and equitable.

- C. Putting the security back into social security** - Michael Orton, Warwick University

Workshop level: theoretical

*What practical, concrete steps can be taken to put the security back into social security - in the short to medium term (and if this includes additional costs, how can it be funded)?* is the question this workshop will tackle.

The recasting of social security as problematic, and now toxic, 'welfare' - which fails to prevent hunger, never mind ensure security - is well documented. A recent report ([Secure & Free: 5+ solutions to socio-economic insecurity](#)) found that on issues such as housing and Early Childhood Education and Care, there are many ideas available within civil society and much consensus. However, on the core issue of social security in relation to income the same is not the case and there is a dearth of relevant thinking at academic, policy and political levels.

This is a participatory session with participants invited to discuss and identify answers to the workshop question.

**D. Representation at tribunal** - Jacqui Gardner and Julie Tipping, Social welfare law, policy and advice practice at Staffordshire University  
Workshop level: intermediate/practical

This workshop is for welfare rights workers who are expected to represent appellants at social security tribunals and will cover the principles of representation and the rights and duties of a representative. We will also be looking at the judicial views towards representatives. The session is designed to be interactive and is suitable for those who have limited experience and wish to increase their confidence.

## SPEAKERS

**Patrick Butler** is editor of society, health and education policy for The Guardian newspaper.

**Ruth Smeeth** is MP for Stoke-on-Trent North. She was first elected in May 2015. She is a former trade union officer and activist and formerly the Deputy Director of HOPE not hate, the anti-extremism and anti-racism campaign.

## LOCATION AND TRANSPORT

The meeting will be held at the Film Theatre, on the Stoke campus of Staffordshire University (not the Stafford campus!) – College Rd, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2EF. Located inside the Flaxman Building on College Road, it is easily accessible and within walking distance of Stoke Railway station.

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about/campuses/stoke/>

### By rail:

The College Road campus is a five minute walk from Stoke-on-Trent railway station.

### By bus:

To plan a bus journey go to [www.travelinemidlands.co.uk](http://www.travelinemidlands.co.uk)

### By car:

If you intend to travel by car please email [kelly@nawra.org.uk](mailto:kelly@nawra.org.uk) before 6pm on 30<sup>th</sup> November for directions of which car park to use and to request a parking permit to display on your windscreen.

### By bicycle:

Route 5/55 of the National Cycle Network (NCN) runs past the Stoke-on-Trent campus. The main open section of NCN route 5 in Staffordshire offers traffic free cycling between Barlaston and Kidsgrove through Stoke-on-Trent. The University has cycle parking facilities on campus.

## SOCIAL EVENING

There will be a special, free screening of The Divide at 7.15pm on Thurs 1 Dec. The screening is in room R001 in the Science Centre on Leek Road:

<http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about/campuses/stoke/>

The Divide tells the story of 7 individuals striving for a better life in the modern day US and UK - where the top 0.1% owns as much wealth as the bottom 90%. By plotting these tales together, the film uncovers how virtually every aspect of our lives is controlled by one factor: the size of the gap between rich and poor. Watch the [trailer](#). If you would like to attend the screening please contact Richard Machin ([richard.machin@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:richard.machin@staffs.ac.uk)) before 6pm on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November so that he can reserve you a space.

After the screening of the film NAWRA members will be going to The Terrace pub, 185 Leek Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2BW - [www.theterrace-stoke.co.uk](http://www.theterrace-stoke.co.uk) at 9pm.

If you have any queries about the meeting please contact  
Kelly Smith, NAWRA Secretary [kelly@nawra.org.uk](mailto:kelly@nawra.org.uk)

[www.nawra.org.uk](http://www.nawra.org.uk)