
nawra

national association of
welfare rights advisers

Hosted by NAWRA

Friday 9th March 2012

@ Amnesty International UK, The Human Rights Action Centre,
17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA

AGENDA

- 09.30 **Registration and refreshments**
- 10.00 **Welcome:** Alan Markey – NAWRA chair
- 10.05 **Annual General Meeting**
1. Notes from 2011 AGM
 2. Annual report
 3. Financial report
 4. Tabled motions
 (i) Membership fees
- 10.45 **Guest speaker: Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson** will offer her perspective on the governments welfare reform agenda.
- 11.40 **Break** – tea/coffee will be available
- 12.00 **Workshops** – session one (see ‘workshop options’ on following pages)
- Appealing ESA conversion decisions
 - Right to Reside : challenges and rights
 - Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment: Where can we go from here?
 - Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner: the impact of LHA changes and the Benefit Cap
- 13.00 **Lunch** – there are a number of pubs/cafes/restaurants nearby.
- 14.00 **Workshops** – session two (see ‘workshop options’ below)
- 15.00 **Break**
- 15.15 **Information exchange and plenary** – an opportunity to discuss issues, share ideas, feedback from workshops and any other business.
- 16.00 **Close**

TRAVEL INFORMATION

A venue map along with transport details, directions and other useful information can be found at www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10151

GUEST SPEAKER

Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson is Britain's best-known and most successful Paralympic athlete, having won 11 gold medals and 6 London wheelchair marathons. In 2000 Tanni was awarded the OBE in recognition of her services to sport and in 2004 she was made a DBE. Alongside her impressive sporting achievements, Tanni has actively lobbied and promoted many issues associated with disability. In 2010 Tanni was appointed to the House of Lords, where she serves as a non party political crossbench peer. Recently, she has been extremely influential in the debate surrounding the governments welfare reform agenda, particularly on the plans to replace DLA with the Personal Independence Payment.

WORKSHOP OPTIONS

1. **Appealing ESA conversion decisions** – Martin Williams, Child Poverty Action Group

Almost all claimants of IS on grounds of incapacity, IB and SDA are or will be tested to see if they have limited capability for work and therefore whether they qualify to have their awards converted to ESA. Those found not to have limited capability for work can appeal against that decision. Such appeals will usually involve the issue of how many points a claimant should score under the test.

However, it is arguable that many of those decisions are unlawful because the letters sent to claimants informing them about the process do not include the information required. If that is right then such claimants can also argue on appeal that the decision ending their existing award of benefit is unlawful and that they should have their IS/IB etc restored. Martin will discuss the merits of this argument and look at some practical considerations in taking cases on this basis.

2. **Right to Reside : challenges and rights** – Adam Weiss and Sarah St. Vincent, The AIRE Centre

The AIRE Centre (Advice on Individual Rights in Europe) is a London-based charity and law centre whose mission is to promote awareness of European law rights and assist marginalised individuals and those in vulnerable circumstances. In addition to taking cases (mostly on behalf of migrants) to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the AIRE Centre also provides free specialist legal advice on EU law, particularly the rights of EEA nationals and their family members.

The objective of the workshop is to improve participants' understanding of the right-to-reside test, with a focus on recent case law, action the European Commission has taken to challenge the test and the rights of particularly vulnerable migrants under the test, including survivors of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking. The workshop will encourage participation and group problem-solving on case studies inspired from the AIRE Centre's work.

Adam Weiss is Assistant Director of The AIRE Centre and is involved in all the Centre's work on migration issues, including numerous cases before the ECtHR as well as the vast majority of The AIRE Centre's advice work. Sarah St. Vincent has been awarded a Skadden Fellowship to work at the Aire Centre on European law issues affecting migrant women in the UK.

3. Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment: Where can we go from here? – Jane Emerson, Welfare Rights Officer

From April 2013, as part of the Welfare Reform bill, the government proposes to abolish DLA and to replace it with a completely new benefit, the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Although PIP would still be a cash benefit, and non means-tested, the criteria and assessment process would be very different, especially as there would be set scoring descriptors and face-to-face healthcare interviews (very similar to Employment and Support Allowance).

DLA is probably the most important income maximisation benefit for disabled people and is a key part of welfare rights work. The government's stated aim for PIP is to cut the current DLA budget by twenty per cent. Jane will outline the proposed PIP criteria and then will lead a discussion around will the consultation process so far, the emerging campaign to save DLA, and what we can do to help. We will share and discuss ideas around campaigning.

Jane has worked in front-line local authority welfare rights since 1989. As well as providing training and benefits awareness for local authority, healthcare professionals and community groups, her main work involves disability benefits casework and tribunal representation.

4. Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner: the impact of LHA changes and the Benefit Cap – Sarah Clarke, Child Poverty Action Group

This workshop will explore recent and forthcoming benefit changes that will particularly affect claimants living in and around London, especially changes to LHA rules and the benefit cap.

Sarah Clarke is the solicitors in CPAGs Citizens' Rights Office. She carries out test case work in social security law at CPAG and contributes to the 'Welfare Benefits and Tax Credits Handbook'.

PRE-MEETING SOCIAL EVENT

Thursday 8th March

If you are arriving on Thursday, why not join us from 7pm onwards at:

**The Prince Arthur ,
80-82 Eversholt Street ,
Euston
London NW1 1BX**

Web: www.golden-p.co.uk

Email: info@golden-p.co.uk

Map: <http://g.co/maps/dau9t>

Telephone: 020 7387 2165

The Prince Arthur is one of the few pubs in London that offers table service for both food and drink. From Euston Station, when you leave the station turn left and walk down the stairs past Marks & Spencers. Turn left onto Eversholt Street and Prince Arthur is 50 yards down the street on your right. From Kings Cross station, it is about 10 minutes walk or one stop on the tube.