

# nawra

national association of  
welfare rights advisers

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

Hosted by Coventry Independent Advice Service  
Council House, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RR

## AGENDA

09:30	<b>Registration:</b> tea and coffee will be available on arrival
10:00	<b>Welcome address:</b> Councillor Linda Bigham, Cabinet Member for Community Development
10:10	<b>Introduction:</b> Alan Markey, NAWRA Chair
10:15	<b>The Phil Hanns Memorial Lecture:</b> Dr Michael Orton, Warwick Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick
10:45	<b>Guest speaker:</b> Sue Royston, Citizens Advice, on Universal Credit and disability
11:15	<b>Break</b>
11:30	<b>Workshops:</b> session one ( <i>please choose one from the four options on the following pages</i> )
12:30	<b>Lunch</b> ( <i>not provided at venue – information about local options will be available at the conference</i> )
13:45	<b>Workshops:</b> session two ( <i>please choose one from the four options on the following pages</i> )
14:45	<b>Refreshment break:</b> tea and coffee break sponsored by 
15:00	<b>Guest speaker:</b> Dan Norris, Child Poverty Action Group, on CPAG's 'early warning system'
15:15	<b>Information exchange</b> and plenary session
16:00	<b>Close</b>

## Workshop Information

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

We have indicated the level of each workshop to help you choose the most appropriate and useful to attend. The levels are:

- **Introductory:** Assumes little or no prior knowledge of the topic or a refresher session
- **Intermediate:** Assumes a reasonable working knowledge of welfare benefits work or some knowledge of the specific topic under discussion
- **Advanced:** Assumes a good working knowledge of welfare benefits work or detailed knowledge of the topic under discussion
- **Practical:** Focusing on developing good practice or offering some 'hints and tips'
- **Theoretical:** Focusing on policy debates or discussion of emerging theory
- **Strategic:** Focusing on planning and putting practical knowledge, and/or theory in to practice

Each workshop will run twice during the day so **please choose two workshops from the following four options:**

### 1: Universal Credit: Tackling the gaping holes in support for disabled people

*Sue Royston (Citizens Advice), Daphne Hall (rightsnet) and Tom Messere (Big Book of Benefits).*

*Level: Strategic*

With the disability premiums and disability elements that were part of legacy benefits disappearing in universal credit, disabled people, both working and non-working, stand to lose massively as they migrate over. Already advisers are seeing increasing numbers of people told to claim universal credit, sometimes incorrectly, who find themselves worse off by more than £2,000 per year.

This workshop will look at what can be done; both on a practical level, to protect clients now including legal challenges, and on a campaigning level to bring about permanent change to protect disabled people's rights and give them security to try work without fear of ending up worse off.

We will be looking at how we might focus on key (winnable?) areas that we can campaign on for change. We welcome the views and ideas of NAWRA members on taking this forward.

The workshop will be led by **Sue Royston** from Citizens Advice, who has worked with Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson on this issue, and NAWRA committee members Tom Messere and Daphne Hall. We will be looking at how we can use our combined influence to get our messages heard in the right places.

**Daphne Hall** has worked in welfare rights since 1990 at CAB, Springfield Psychiatric Hospital and Bristol City Council. She currently works as an editor at rightsnet, is the South-West committee member for NAWRA, and she represents both at the DWP Operational Stakeholder Forum. She has co-ordinated NAWRA responses on various universal credit consultations.

**Tom Messere** has worked in welfare rights since before the last "biggest change since Beveridge" at CAB, a housing association, welfare rights teams and cancer charities. He currently works as an online Benefits Advisor and as a writer/trainer on UC - and other benefits (especially health and disability ones) - at [www.bigbookofbenefits.com](http://www.bigbookofbenefits.com) and for CPAG. He is the South Wales committee member for NAWRA. A long-time critic of the bizarre disability gaps / cuts in UC, his jaw continues to drop at what UC does next...

## 2: EU nationals 'Living Rights'

*Jane Nelson (Central England Law Centre)*

*Level: Intermediate*

Jane has been working on a European Commission funded Project (Living Rights) since September 2016 that seeks to advise EU nationals on their rights around benefits, housing, discrimination and residence.

She will be facilitating an interactive workshop around the rights of EU nationals and sharing some of the learning from the project. She will also lead a practical discussion highlighting issues the project encountered with DWP, Local Authority and HMRC, particularly errors made in EEA nationals entitlements. There will also be an opportunity to discuss Permanent Residence as far as it impacts on benefits. Participants should ideally have some knowledge and experience of HRT and Right to Reside issues.

**Jane Nelson** is a Project worker based at Birmingham Community Law Centre, part of Central England Law Centre. She has worked in welfare rights as a caseworker and trainer for over 25 years, predominantly in the voluntary sector at Birmingham Settlement, Birmingham TUC Centre for the Unemployed and at Birmingham CAB. She also worked for 11 years at Birmingham City Council as a Welfare Rights Training and Support Officer. Jane's particular interest and speciality is benefits for EEA nationals.

## 3: The future direction of advice services

*Scott McNally (Assistant Assessments and Awards Manager, Durham County Council)*

*Level: Theoretical/Strategic*

Durham Welfare Rights have been involved in the Advice in County Durham Partnership (a public and voluntary sector partnership) to provide a 'no wrong door' approach to advice in County Durham. The development of the Partnership has improved relationships across the public and voluntary sector, reducing duplication and improving governance and advice standards across the sector within County Durham. It has also raised issues as to how we look at the delivery of advice in the future. the challenges of UC and the expected pressures

on advice providers may require new thinking around advice provision. Moreover, tools or (threats) such as 'Entitled To' and 'BetterOff Kirklees' suggest that there is an imperative for the advice sector to address the challenges, threats and opportunities posed by technology and profit driven initiatives.

**Scott McInally** has worked in Welfare Rights since 1991, primarily as a tribunal representative with extensive experience of representation at First Tier and Upper Tribunals. Scott has been a manager within Welfare Rights since 2000 and has managed Community Development, Supported Employment and Travellers Liaison Services in the past. As well as managing Durham Welfare Rights, he is the link between Durham County Council and the Advice in County Durham Partnership.

#### 4: Employment and Support Allowance – current issues

*Diane Goolding (Senior Benefits Caseworker, Coventry Independent Advice Service) and Janet Gurney (Welfare Benefits Caseworker, Central England Law Centre)*

*Level: Practical/Intermediate*

This workshop looks at the issues facing ESA clients disputing WCA decisions, including the consequences of misleading advice from DWP, repeat claims, the application of Reg 30 and early migration under UC full service. It aims to give practical ideas of how to counter this.

**Janet Gurney** is a full time Welfare Benefits Caseworker for Coventry Law centre with more than 30 years' experience in Welfare Rights Advice. She represents at Appeal tribunals, provides training and is responsible for Coventry Law Centre's social policy work and maintaining their 'Benefits Aware' website.

**Diane Goolding** is the Senior Benefits Caseworker with Coventry Independent Advice Service. She previously worked for Coventry City Council's Benefits Advice Line for 11 years.

### Guest speaker profiles

#### Dr Michael Orton

Dr Michael Orton is Senior Research Fellow at the Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) based at the University of Warwick here in Coventry.

Michael's work forms part of the IER research theme of Work, Welfare and Public Policy and is based on social policy analysis, and core issues of poverty, work/welfare and inequalities.

Michael joined IER in 2002, having spent the previous year as a Research Fellow in the Department of Sociology, also at Warwick. Prior to that he worked for over 15 years in the voluntary sector and local government. This included working for Citizens Advice Bureau (from being a volunteer through to Bureau Manager), an anti-poverty policy role in a local authority Finance Department, and being an Investigator for the Local Government Ombudsman - with the latter including a year working for the New South Wales Ombudsman, Sydney.

Michael's work has been published widely in journal articles, research reports and book chapters. He has appeared as an expert witness before a Parliamentary Committee Inquiry, and his work has featured in Parliamentary Questions and attracted a variety of media coverage.

Current/recent projects include:

- Solving poverty: reforming social security/welfare benefits
- Identifying how to put the 'security' back into social security
- A theory of practice and change for a world without poverty

In a personal capacity, Michael is a member of the Oxfam UK Poverty Programme Advisory Group and Contact Point for the West Midlands Grassroots Progressive Principles initiative.

## Sue Royston

After working as a welfare rights adviser, Sue spent five years as a senior policy researcher in Citizens Advice, where she wrote a series of reports on UC and the likely impact on different groups. Separately from her work at Citizens Advice she also supported Baroness Meacher in her role leading the cross-benchers' response to the 2011 Welfare Reform Bill and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson in her parliamentary work on UC. Since retirement she has done some consultancy work for the Disability Benefits Consortium on the impact of UC. She also volunteers at her local CAB researching the impact on clients of being in an early rollout 'full service' UC area.

## Social events

### Thursday 30th November

NAWRA members are invited to join colleagues for food and refreshments on the evening before the conference. An area has been set aside at the following venue, so please ask for NAWRA when you arrive if you can't see anyone you know! The venue is:

- [Drapers Bar](#), Earl St, Coventry CV1 5RU

Drapers Bar is located between the Council House and the [Herbert Art Gallery and Museum](#).

### Friday 1st December

The annual **NAWRA Christmas Party!**

If you are staying in Coventry for the evening after the conference, you are invited to join us for a meal and refreshments. **You must book a place in advance** via [Eventbrite](#).

If you can't stay for the party, there will be an opportunity for post-event refreshments with colleagues before you leave Coventry. Details will be announced on the day.

## Location and transport

The meeting and workshops will take place in the Council House, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RR. All rooms are accessible but if you have any specific requirements or questions, please contact us in advance.

You can download a city centre map [here](#) – this also includes a range of fascinating facts about the City of Coventry! The Council House is located just in front of location 2 on the map, at the junction of High Street and Earl Street.

*Arrival by rail:* Coventry is easily reached by train. The station is located on the edge of the city centre, approximately 10 minutes' walk from the conference venue. A map of the station and surrounding area can be found [here](#).

*Arrival by coach:* If you are travelling by National Express coach, make sure you choose Pool Meadow Bus Station as your destination. This is in the city centre and is approximately 10 minutes' walk to the conference venue. Further details can be found on the [National Express](#) website.

*Arrival by car:* Coventry is easily accessed by car (and our famous ring road!). Information about parking can be found on the [city council website](#). The nearest long-stay parking for the venue is on [New Union Street](#).

## Accommodation

There are several hotel chains close to the city centre. These include:

- [Premier Inn](#) (Belgrade Plaza or Earlsdon Park are both central)
- [Ramada Hotel](#)
- [Ibis Coventry Centre](#)

You can also use the usual search engines or the tourist website at [www.visitcoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk](http://www.visitcoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk)

## Things to do

If you are staying in the area for the weekend, there are lots of things to see and do in Coventry and the surrounding area. Coventry has been shortlisted for [City of Culture 2021](#) and these are just a few of the things to enjoy!

- [Coventry Transport Museum](#) boasts the world's largest collection of British road transport. Admission is free. Highly recommended.
- [Coventry Music Museum](#) – Coventry is the home of Two-Tone and The Special's hit 'Ghost Town' was famously written about the city. Coventry was also the home of [Delia Derbyshire](#), for all you Doctor Who fans!
- [St Marys Guildhall](#) is one of the finest example of a medieval guild hall in the country.

- [Coventry Cathedrals](#) – the old and new versions are both worth a visit, and they are both just behind our conference venue.
- See the Coventry and Warwickshire [tourism website](#) for more information and ideas for places to visit.