

# nawra

national association of  
welfare rights advisers

This event is sponsored by:



**Thursday 4 and Friday 5 March 2021**

**On Zoom – register on Eventbrite (see your email from NAWRA)**

## **AGENDA**

### **Day 1: Thursday 4 March 2021 (1.00pm to 4.30pm)**

1.00 **Welcome and introductions**

1.10 **AGM** including annual report and finance report

1.25 **Improving equality and diversity** Atif Kaudri and Daphne Hall (NAWRA committee) and Lindsey Poole (Advice Services Alliance)

ASA will talk about its new research project looking into the key issues of BAME advice services.

Organisations working with communities experiencing racial inequalities have been hit particularly hard during the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, the problems their clients experience have increased and become more complex. Stretched beyond capacity, BAME groups are under-represented in strategic level meetings within the advice sector. As a consequence, the opportunities to influence decisions regarding strategy, policy or funding issues are missed and the important role of BAME organisations is not fully recognised.

ASA's research project is investigating the issues and the support needs of small advice organisations working with BAME communities.

2.10 **Break**

2.20 **Dangos - Bridging the advice gap in Wales** Gareth Morgan (Ferret) and Tom Messere (Big Book of Benefits)

Dangos is a new Welsh government funded online project to improve awareness, knowledge and skills of frontline workers about benefits and related areas. It aims to enable them to be better channels for getting people in need in touch with expert help and advice. Although only launched a few weeks ago, it has already demonstrated the enormous demand for this

kind of training and the willingness of workers to participate in signposting and referrals.

- 2.50      **Scottish benefit package demo** Craig Samuel (City of Edinburgh Council)
- NAWRA were invited to help in the development of a benefit package with social enterprise [Inbest](#) and we are thrilled to have Manuel Peleteiro, our first international speaker from Bali.
- Manuel Peleteiro from Inbest will be presenting on the package and developments in place with Scotland.
- Inbest are a social enterprise and already provide a platform for University of Edinburgh Business School, Scotcash and most recently our friends at [Freshstart](#).
- Inbest are part of [Scottish Government Fintech](#) who try to establish innovative and collaborative working together.
- We shall hear from Manu on the vision and workings with how Inbest partner and develop financial wellbeing, capability and resilience of vulnerable households.

- 3.20      **Break**

- 3.30      **Welfare rights and the House of Commons Library** Steven Kennedy and Frank Hobson (House of Commons Library)
- This presentation will give a short introduction to the House of Commons Library Research and Information service and our work in relation to welfare rights. We'll explain who we are and what we do (and don't do), how we help MPs and their staff (both at Westminster and in their constituencies), and how we fit into the wider policy and advice landscapes.

- 3.50      **Problems claiming universal credit with a terminal illness: why the special rules don't work** Aida Shoush (St Christopher's Hospice)
- A look at some of the problems encountered when supporting terminally ill claimants making claims for universal credit and some proposals for improving the experience. These were raised in a letter recently sent to the DWP by the Association of Palliative Care Social Workers following feedback from their members.

- 4.15      **Wrap up and close** by 4.30pm

**Social evening: Thursday 4 March 2021 (7.00pm to 9.00pm)**

In the evening all members are welcome to join a virtual NAWRA social evening.

**Day 2: Friday 5 March 2021 (9.30am to 1.15pm)**

9.30 **Welcome and introductions**

9.40 **The impact of the coronavirus crisis on older industrial Britain** Professor Christina Beatty, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University

The coronavirus crisis is far from over but with vaccines now being rolled out across the country there is at least the prospect of an end to the pandemic. The national picture on infections, deaths and damage to the economy are well documented but the impacts of the crisis on different parts of the country are less well understood. This evidence gap matters because before the crisis the UK was already a highly unequal country, with some regions and local areas lagging well behind others in terms of prosperity, well-being and life chances. The government has also made repeated commitments to 'level up' the economy.

[This study by Professor Christina Beatty and Professor Steve Fothergill helps fill the evidence gap.](#) It looks specifically at older industrial Britain and uses official data to build a picture of: the situation prior to the crisis, documenting the disadvantage in terms of health, jobs, incomes and unemployment; the public health crisis itself, looking at how older industrial Britain has been affected compared to other parts of the country; and the impact of the crisis on the economy and labour market in these areas.

Professor Christina Beatty has nearly 30 years' experience of undertaking applied policy research on the interaction of welfare, labour markets and housing policy. Funders of her research include central and local government, Housing Associations and charities such as JRF, CRISIS and OXFAM. Her research focuses on the social and economic disparities across different parts of Britain. Over the past ten years this has included research highlighting the cumulative and uneven impact of welfare reform on places which underpins the Financial Times Austerity Audit.

10.40 **Tribunal hearings** Julie Kirkby (Durham County Council)

The good the bad and the ugly: A look back what we have learnt from virtual hearings. Is this the future, are Face to Face hearings a thing of the past? After a year of telephone and video link hearings we'll look at how advisers have managed to adapt and if this has been a positive experience for organisations and appellants.

11.40 **Break**

11.50 **A word from our sponsor**

A catch up on developments at Big Book of Benefits: in-house training and the new *Big Book of Benefits and Mental Health 2021-22*. More details and useful free downloads at: [www.bigbookofbenefits.com](http://www.bigbookofbenefits.com).

11.55 **Recent and forthcoming changes** Tom Messere (Big Book of Benefits)

We gather hot on the heels of the Budget, so will finally know of plans for the future of UC/Tax Credit uplifts, COVID schemes and other rabbits. A chance to catch up on other recent and forthcoming changes too e.g.: biting benefit caps, life after the SDP Gateway, what's safeguarding?, ESA timing out, the latest timetable for Scottish benefits and more.

A "what's occurring?" run through of changes combines with your questions, thoughts and shared experiences on these changes and greyer areas concerns e.g.: health assessments, work conditionality or just dealing with DWP. Any particular areas for NAWRA to evidence gather, lobby or campaign? What news of the next [NAWRA Benefit Changes chart](#)?

12.40 **Short break:** Just time for quick stretch, dance and top up your cups

12.45 **'We Are Debt Advisers' campaign** Richard Holland (Salford Council)

[We Are Debt Advisers \(WADA\)](#) is a campaigning group formed in November 2020, made up of debt advisers in the voluntary and public sectors. WADA is an independent voice for the grassroots of debt advice and believes that too many decisions about debt advice are made by government talking to the public affairs departments of major national charities, ignoring the advisers who do the job every day, many with decades of frontline experience. WADA has recently delivered a briefing on the government's 'Breathing Space' scheme and held an online meeting of 140+ debt advisers to draw up a response to the Insolvency Service's Debt Relief Order consultation.

1.00 **Information exchange, round up and close** by 1.30

**Yoga session: Friday 5 March 2021 (2.00pm to 3.00pm)**

So, a year into Covid, are the pressures building up? Come and join Daphne Hall (NAWRA Vice-Chair, rightsnet) in a yoga session using slow movement and breath to help relieve tension.

Open to all levels - different options will be offered - and you are invited to take breaks whenever feels right - just focusing on the breath is a great stress reliever!

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The conference is free to attend but open to NAWRA members only.

[Find out more about joining](#)

If you have any queries about the conference please contact  
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[www.nawra.org.uk](http://www.nawra.org.uk)