

NAWRA

Notes from Equality and Diversity working group meeting 12 May 2022

Present:

Atif Kaudri – Mind (Chair)
Will Hadwen – CPAG in Scotland and Benefits Training Company
Jacob Cain – Bristol City Council
Michael Shanks – Norfolk Community Law Service
Jan Eberhart – Salford Welfare Rights
Bhavani Sarma – Central Bedfordshire Council
Riley Bartholomew – Deafblind Scotland
Keith Thompson – Northumberland Council
Bez Ely – Disability Law Service
Kelly Smith – Child Poverty Action Group / NAWRA Secretary (minutes)

Apologies:

Alan Markey – Coventry Independent Advice Service
Sangeeta Enright – Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Daphne Hall – Rightsnet
Stuart Goodman – Rainbow Money Advice
Juan Ramirez – Derbyshire County Council
Dan Norris – Child Poverty Action Group

1. Notes from the last meeting(s)

These can be found on the [new Equality and Diversity page](#) of the NAWRA website. Notes agreed.

2. Researching and adopting good practice guides written by other organisations

Thanks to working group members who sent the following good practice guides. They have been adopted and are now on the NAWRA website:

- [NAWRA's trans and non-binary good practice policy](#)
- [Changing for the better: How to include trans people in your workplace \(Stonewall Scotland and Scottish Transgender Alliance\)](#)
- [Including non-binary people: Guidance for service providers and employers \(by Scottish Trans and Equality Network\)](#)

Action: All members to send good practice guides on other protected characteristics to kelly@nawra.org.uk for discussion and adoption.

3. Making a commitment to equality and diversity a condition of joining NAWRA at signup stage

Action: Kelly to change the [joining form](#) so that all potential new members are required to state their commitment to equality and diversity.

4. Examining barriers to entry and establishing a scheme to allow small organisations with little funding to join NAWRA for a reduced fee or for free

So far, two organisations have been invited to join NAWRA for free and have accepted this offer.

Action: all members to consider nominating any organisation that they feel meets the criteria for free membership by emailing Atif at a.kaudri@mind.org.uk with the details.

5. Contributing to work on equality and diversity in the wider rights and advice sector

Members of the working group were invited to share their views as and when they arise.

6. Making meetings accessible and inclusive

In-person meetings:

- good disability access and reserved spaces
- non-gendered toilets (or make toilets non-gendered with temporary signage about the facilities inside e.g. 'urinals and two stalled toilets')
- a quiet space available that can be used for wellness, breakout time or prayer
- explore the option to make a video recording (or perhaps just audio) of the speakers for those unable to attend in person
- consider offering an online-only workshop at an in-person conference.9

Online meetings:

- Closed captioning **Action:** Kelly to work out how to make closed captioning the default on Zoom and update [NAWRA's instructions for delegates](#).
- Adopting a 'Zoom protocol' for deaf or hard of hearing participants (keep your head still, speak clearly, do not cover your mouth, look directly into the camera, ensure your face is lit so you can be seen). See also these [guidelines from UCL's Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre](#).
- Requesting that participants add their pronouns to their Zoom name field
- Using 'voice to text' software such as Dragon or Microsoft Office to create a transcript of the meeting.

7. The direction of the working group going forward

We considered the possibility of setting up a Teams channel for the working group. However, some members have security settings which mean that, although they can join a Teams call, they are unable to participate in Teams chat with external organisations.

8. AOB

Will Hadwen suggested offering free training for non-members to help contextualise the benefits system. This would be an online session for less-experienced advisers. We would need to approach organisations who we think would benefit from this. The session could be recorded, uploaded to the NAWRA website and disseminated more widely afterwards. The aim would be to improve the skills and confidence of the participants. In addition, non-members may be encouraged to join NAWRA.

Action: Will to put something in writing and send it to Kelly for the consideration of the NAWRA Executive Committee.

NAWRA is now an associate member of [Equally Ours](#).

9. Next meeting

Agreed that the next meeting of the equality and diversity working group will take place in Sep 2022. **Action:** **Atif** to confirm date and time and **Kelly** to circulate the invitation to the full NAWRA membership.