

NAWRA

Committee meeting – 25 Jan 2023– on Zoom

Present: Alan (chair), Daphne, Zoey, Juan, Julie, Corin, Dan, Gareth, Atif, Kelly (minutes)

Apologies: Maureen, Michael, Tom, Craig

Communications and publicity

- **Tom** and **Daphne** updated the benefits updater chart and presented it at the NAWRA meeting on 8 Dec 2022.
- **Dan** to reconvene the social media working group, involving Will Hadwen and Gary Vaux.

Equality and Diversity

- Notes from working group meetings can be found on the [NAWRA website](#).
- So far, four organisations working with people with protected characteristics have been invited to join NAWRA for free and have accepted this offer. **All** to consider nominating any organisation that they feel meets the criteria for free membership.
- The next working group meeting will take place at 1pm on 14 March 2023 on Zoom. **Kelly** to send a reminder email to working group members and the full membership. **Atif** to invite members to join the working group at the NAWRA meeting in Oxford on 10 March 2023.

Governance

- Recruitment of a second rep for Scotland to go ahead. **Kelly** to email Craig.

Policy and campaigns

- The Early Legal Advice Pilot Scheme is taking place in Greater Manchester and Middlesbrough. A total of 40,000 people have been invited to seek help via council tax letters. In a recent change, it is now possible to refer in to the project. Julie has had no news from Middlesbrough. **Dan** to give feedback on progress.
- The UC50 is still not routinely sent out to trigger the WCA. In response to our letter to the secretary of state, Daphne had a meeting with officials. They are working on a digital UC50 process, but it is unclear how the start of the digital process would be triggered so it may not resolve the process. DWP are due to come back to us on this.

Progress on this might be impacted by the forthcoming white paper and changes to assessment contract holders.

In the short-term we have requested a non-automated short-term solution where the work coach puts something in the claimant's journal about the UC50. DWP have said they will consider this.

They have also said they will look at doing more data analysis on the extent of this problem. They have agreed to a follow up meeting in 2-3 months.

Carla Clarke at CELC is talking with Tom Royston about potential litigation.

For more information, see Daphne's email of 26 Jan 2023.

- Local authorities in England are responsible for designing their own council tax support schemes. There are large differences between schemes. Benefit calculators have collated all the information about each local authority's scheme. However, there has been no comparison between types of scheme and levels of arrears. Corin contacted Policy in Practice to ask if they would like to do a workshop at future conference. June would be best. **Corin** to circulate the email. More in-depth research needed.
- General election campaign preparation (a short manifesto?) to influence the current government and opposition parties. Discussion on whether this would cover technical details or broader social policy matters. The next general election might not take place until the end of 2024.
- There are various discussions ongoing about the future of advice sector. **Corin** to arrange a meeting with interested parties.
- Job Centres will not refer claimants to food banks. They will only signpost by giving claimants a slip of paper with the local food bank's details. In Greenwich, Trussell Trust has moved their referrals system online so that they can predict food demand. However, because the Job Centre only signpost to their food bank they never know how many people are going to turn up. This means that they have occasionally run out of food. The Job Centre will not start to use the online referral system because of their policy position. **Corin** to draft email to members to find out the extent of the problem elsewhere. **Daphne** will raise through DWP stakeholders group once we have more information.

Finance

- As at 31 Dec 2022, NAWRA had 293 members. Income from membership fees this year totals £23,360. We have spent £10,000 on CPAG's admin/management fee, £784.75 on committee expenses, £1,543.29 on meetings and £490.32 on web-based expenses. **Kelly** to circulate updated finance report to the committee.
- **All** to submit expenses claims for attendance at in-person Committee meetings using the claim form, if employers will not pay.

Next conference

Our next conference will take place on Friday 10 March at Northway Community Centre, 45 Dora Carr Cl, Oxford OX3 9RU (with thanks to Atif). **Kelly** to invite Advice Pro to sponsor the event and have a stall.

Future conferences

- June 2023 – Nottingham Law School. Thanks to Juan, Faye Deverell has kindly offered the venue for free. There is space for four workshops. **Juan** to confirm date (possibly 8 June 2023).

Ideas:

- Dan on using students in benefit appeals. Gareth has done some work on law clinics
 - Richard Machin?
 - Managed migration?
 - Council tax reductions?
- September 2023 – Scotland? Online?
 - December 2023 – Online meeting hosted by Citizens Advice Ipswich? **Kelly** to contact Heather Carmichael at Citizens Advice Ipswich to suggest this date.

Potential hosts:

- Ipswich (Heather Carmichael at Citizens Advice Ipswich) – Zoom conference. Suffolk County Council and other welfare rights advisers across Suffolk may also be involved.
- Cardiff (Tom Evans at Qualia Law)
- Edinburgh (**Craig**)
- GMWRAG (**Dan**)
- WRAC (**Gareth** and **Tom**)

Next committee meetings

- 1-5pm on 9 March 2023 in person at Northway Community Centre, Dora Carr Close, Oxford OX3 9RU
- 2-4pm on 5 April 2023 on Zoom
- 2-4pm on 5 July 2023 on Zoom
- 2-4pm on 11 October 2023 on Zoom

AOB

Following the sad deaths of both Rob Jenkins (Stockport Council) and Andy Campbell (Greenwich Council), we agreed to pay tribute to them at the conference in Oxford on 10 March 2023 and on the website. **Daphne** to contact Helen at Stockport.