

NAWRA

Committee meeting – 5 April 2023 – on Zoom

Present: Daphne (chair), Michael, Zoey, Corin, Juan, Dan, Craig, Kelly (minutes)

Apologies: Alan, Maureen, Julie, Gareth, Atif, Tom

Communications and publicity

- **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 9 May 2023 on Zoom. **Kelly** to send a reminder email to working group members and the full membership.
- **All** to be active in recruiting new organisations eligible for free membership.

Governance

- Recruitment of a second rep for Scotland to go ahead later in the year.

Policy and campaigns

- The Early Legal Advice Pilot Scheme is taking place in Greater Manchester and Middlesbrough and went live in Nov 2022. There have been teething problems with IT. Shelter dropped out. In Manchester, only GMLC, Citizens Advice and a private practice are participating. The control group part of the project was abandoned due to criticism. Providers can now refer their own clients. The project will end at the end of the financial year. No news from Middlesbrough. **Dan** to contact through the Law Centre Network.
- 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. See minutes of 25 Jan 2023 for details.

Daphne will meet with officials again in April.

- 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.

Gareth doing some analysis.

We could send an FOI request to every local authority. Alternatively, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) would have the data. This would allow NAWRA members to lobby their own local authorities. **Gareth** to investigate.

- 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 has been speaking to the GLA. Some money from the next tranche of the [Household Support Fund](#) can be used to fund advice services.

Dan has had an introduction to GMCA's Public Reform Directorate by Kate Green who is now the deputy mayor of Greater Manchester. He would like to talk to them about the London Councils project around succession routes to see if he can stir up some interest in something similar at GMCA level. **Dan** to arrange a meeting with interested parties. We discussed the possible use of NAWRA reserves, perhaps along with help from another funder to take this work forward.

- At our last meeting, we discussed the problems that arise when Job Centres will not refer claimants to food banks, only signpost them. Trussell Trust has met with DWP to discuss this problem but DWP have not changed their position. They are going to send guidance to work coaches instead. In Greenwich, the Job Centre will stop referring to the foodbank and send people to the council instead.
- Laura Trott MP replied to Dan's letter about the delays in processing claims for pension credit. See the [NAWRA website](#) for a full update.

Thangam Debbonaire MP tabled a written question on current average pension credit processing times to which Laura Trott MP has declined to find an answer.

Dan to consider requesting another PQ next month if no progress is made.

- Durham Council is carrying out a Bereavement Support Payment take up campaign in light of the new remedial order. **Julie** to share materials.

Finance

- **Kelly** to update the finance report and finalise it for 2022-23 and circulate 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 in-person at The University of Law, Nottingham Campus on Thursday 8 June 2023. Thanks to Juan for securing the venue for free. There will be space for four workshops. **Juan** to contact Faye to see what she has got planned and what help might be needed.

Advice Pro is unable to attend with a stall but they have offered to sponsor refreshments.

Future conferences

- September 2023 – Online meeting hosted by Citizens Advice Ipswich? **Kelly** to contact Heather Carmichael at Citizens Advice Ipswich to confirm.
- December 2023 – Online
- **Craig** to suggest a date and venue for an in-person conference in Edinburgh in 2024.

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.
- GMWRAG (**Dan**)
- WRAC (**Gareth** and **Tom**) combined with Cardiff (Tom Evans at Qualia Law)?
- Greenwich? (**Corin**)
- **Kelly** to appeal for hosts for conferences online in Dec 2023 and in 2024.

Next committee meetings

- 2-4pm on 5 July 2023 now on Teams
- 2-4pm on 11 October 2023 now on Teams

AOB

None.