

## Hosting NAWRA - a simple guide

**Introduction:** Did you ever think that you, and/or your organisation would like to host a meeting of NAWRA and experience the kudos and profile it could attract by doing so? Initially thinking this was a good idea, were you then put off by the fear of the apparent enormity of the task and potential financial costs incurred? Well fear no more! This document is offered as a guide to just how enjoyable, rewarding, simple and uncomplicated the task can be. It is broken down into easy to understand step-by-step things to do lists.

**Making the decision to be a host:** If you are member of a team or organisation it is best to discuss it with them first. It is always better to have everyone on board so that each person will be able to share the load. Although the vast majority of meetings have been hosted by Local Authorities, do not let this put you off as one voluntary organisation in the Northwest with a budget of £1500 per annum and only 5 voluntary members successfully hosted a meeting at which 123 people attended. Although it should be added that their local authority's help [Wigan MBC] was invaluable to them as they provided an excellent venue free of charge, it does show that hosting a meeting can be done on a "shoestring" with 5 part time volunteers. Don't forget the plusses as well. It will give your organisation an opportunity to show off your local community and those who provide funds. The profile gained will of course serve to provide proof of your service to your local councillors and the like. If there is a general consensus of agreement but people would like to find out more, your local member of the NAWRA committee will be happy to come to talk to you about the logistics of a meeting. They will probably have hosted a meeting themselves or, if they haven't, they will be able to put you in touch with a committee member who has.

**Starting to plan:** Recently there has been a good forward list of hosts, which means anyone considering being a host will have plenty of time to work on and plan the event. Principally, decide what time of year you would prefer to hold a meeting – they are 4 x yearly, usually on the first Friday of March, June, September and December. The exact date can be a bit flexible. This decided, contact the NAWRA Secretary who will place your offer before the committee. This group co-ordinate the meeting diary and will be able to let you know if the date you have in mind will be possible or, if not, would be able to offer you a different date.

**Is there a suitable venue to in which to hold the meeting?** Generally speaking a suitable venue would offer good access and consist of a main meeting room for at least 100 people. As well as this main meeting room, it will be necessary to have 3 other smaller meeting rooms seating about 20-25 people each in which to hold workshops. Previous hosts have found that their local authority have accommodated them, often free of charge. This is always a good starting point. As suggested above, there can be some considerable kudos attached to hosting a NAWRA. Of course this can be advantageous in that those who can help with venues, e.g. local elected members, may well like to bask in some of the reflected glory attached to hosting the meeting.

**What about the meeting and the agenda?** The host's main responsibility in this regard will be to draw up an agenda for the day. You will note that CPAG do email the agenda to members. NAWRA meetings are only open to members. If there are local advice agencies who you think would be interested in attending then the NAWRA secretary would be happy to provide membership information. Advertising the meeting has to be done well in advance in order to ensure good attendance so the agenda would ideally be finalised and sent to the NAWRA Secretary at least six weeks before the meeting. A sample agenda is provided below as assistance. It is by no means

carved in granite and is changeable to the host's own requirements. We have a policy of not inviting representatives of the DWP, HMRC or their contractors to our meetings. This is to ensure that our members are free to discuss the best ways to advise their clients. The host may have a speaker in mind so they will make that invitation. If this is not possible, the NAWRA committee will help with this if any is needed. Indeed, NAWRA will make monies available to meet the out of pocket expenses of a speaker, but not a fee, for attendance at the meeting. This is also the case for workshop leaders. Members of NAWRA can usually be relied upon to volunteer their assistance in providing leadership and ideas for workshops. Workshops need not be original and can cover or update ground already looked at. Anything interesting and useful for welfare rights advisers is a good idea for a work. Issues brought up at information exchanges may also be a source of ideas for workshops. It's best to run one workshop pitched at an introductory or refresher level. Workshops are an opportunity for a good exchange of thought, ideas and experiences and need not be rocket science. They need not be serious, technical and meaningful, though they can be. Basically all that you need is an idea and someone, or two, to open a debate. Again, the committee will assist if required.

### *Agenda*

**date**

**Venue: A. Place, A. Town**

9.30 **Registration and refreshments**

10.00 Domestics (toilets, fire drills etc), then

**Welcome:** Welcome from a dignitary or Councillor etc. of the locality

10.15 **Keynote speech - Very important person who knows a lot about something people might find useful**

Followed by Q&A from the floor

11.00 **Break**

11.15 **Workshops** - session one

Choose from:

- **A useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
*(A person with some knowledge of the issue)*
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
*(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)*
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)

12.15 **Lunch** (not provided at the venue – some recommendations from the host can be helpful)

1.45 **Workshops** - session two  
Choose from the same four workshops as AM:

- **A useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(A person with some knowledge of the issue)
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)
- **Another useful issue about Welfare Rights**  
(Another person with some knowledge of the issue)

2.45 **Break**

3.00 **Information exchange, feedback from workshops and AOB**

4.00 **Close**

*Will I need to send anything else to CPAG that will be useful as information? e.g. What about the day/night before the meeting?* The host has usually selected a decent pub for a bit of a pre-meeting social get-together for those who live locally and those who have travelled and are staying overnight. This information will normally be sent out with the invitation and agenda of the meeting. Some hosts, and by no means all, have been known to negotiate with local hotels and the like for special rates for night before attendees. Similarly, hosts often provide details of local hotels and potential websites for accommodation in the area. A good source for this can be local tourism contacts. Remember, a NAWRA meeting will expose your area to people from throughout Scotland, Wales and England. Let the powers-that-be be made aware of this.

Please provide the NAWRA Secretary with contact details for guest speakers and those running workshops. The NAWRA Secretary will contact them to request their Powerpoint slides in advance of the meeting.

*What about the Tea and Coffee?* This is often last minute but nonetheless important consideration. This can be an expensive item and does need some organising. NAWRA may be able to contribute to the cost. Although there is some variability in this provision, a minimum requirement would be for arrival at the meeting and the morning break. There's no need to provide lunch.

*What should the host do on the day and at the meeting?* Although there are no hard and fast rules about how much or how little the host should do at the meeting, a guide would be to make a list before the day. A list might include:

- Who shall chair and open the meeting? The Chair of NAWRA or someone from the hosting organisation?
- Who will staff the table to get delegates to sign in and sign up for workshops? The NAWRA Secretary will provide signing in sheets.

- Can we blu-tak NAWRA signs to the doors in the venue? The NAWRA Secretary will provide the workshops signs.
- Will workshop rooms be allocated in advance or according to the popularity of each workshop?
- Who will organise laptops, projectors and flip charts?
- Is this venue accessible to people with disabilities?

**What shall happen at the end?** Most people get away as soon as they can. However, a few of the delegates sometimes stay on for an after meeting get together for an hour or two. The person closing the meeting usually announces the venue.

The above is intended as a guide and has drawn from the experiences of people who have hosted meetings previously. Although it is a fairly comprehensive guide, it does not pretend to be the definitive answer to all you may need. It is certainly not the answer to all of the problems you may encounter and should not be held to be the "absolutely best way of doing things". It is certain that new hosts will have their own ideas of how things should be done and will probably offer at least an insight as to how things may be improved.

Should anyone require any further information about this, or any other subject concerning NAWRA, please contact the NAWRA secretary.

***Thank you  
P. J. Hill  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2004***