

NAWRA

Committee meeting – 12 July 2023 – on Zoom

Present: Daphne (chair), Gareth, Zoey, Corin, Kelly (minutes)

Apologies: Alan, Maureen, Julie, Michael, Atif, Tom, Juan, Dan

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 17 October 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

- Craig Samuel has stepped down from the committee. Everyone on the committee sends their heartfelt thanks to Craig who has done such an amazing job in the role, particularly overseeing some of the development of the devolved benefits. Recruitment of a second rep for Scotland to go ahead. **Action:** Daphne to draft copy for Kelly to send to members with a closing date for nominations of 10 August 2023. In the event of three or more nominations an election will be held.

Policy and campaigns

- As anticipated, the Early Legal Advice Pilot Scheme in Greater Manchester and Middlesbrough was [not a success](#).
- The UC50 is still not routinely sent out to trigger the WCA. Daphne has met with officials again to look at how the process for issuing UC50s can be improved and be made more reliable. DWP advise us that it transpires that when a claimant submits a fitnote a 'to-do' is automatically created for them. Currently this to-do is not populated but they realise that this is the ideal place to put information about what a UC50 is, the WCA process, when to expect the UC50 and what to do if it doesn't arrive - in effect what we initially asked for 18 months ago. DWP tell us that they hope to work on the wording of this communication over the summer with a view to

it hopefully going live early autumn. Hopefully, this will bring some improvements. **Kelly** to email members with this update.

- 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** is thinking of 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.

Gareth and **Corin** to put together a workshop on council tax in England, including banding, discounting and modelling.

- 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. 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.
- 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 provide an update.

- Durham Council is carrying out a Bereavement Support Payment take up campaign in light of the new remedial order. **Julie** to share materials.
- NAWRA co-signed a Z2K letter to Guy Oppenheim raising concerns about UC migration and asking for safeguards to be put in place.
- Sonia Meikle at Hammersmith and Fulham Council has been in touch to raise the issue of mixed aged couples who are close in age. **Daphne** to suggest she contacts Paul Treloar at Age UK.

Finance

- **Kelly** to update the finance report for the first quarter of 2023-24 and circulate it to the committee.
- **All** to read the proposed changes to the expenses policy. If there are no objections the new policy will be adopted on 26 July 2023.
- **Kelly** to find out the value of NAWRA's reserves.

Next conference

NAWRA will meet on Zoom on Wed 13 Sep 2023 (1.00pm – 4.00pm) and Thurs 14 Sep 2023 (9.30am – 12.30pm). There is no host so the committee will put together the agenda.

Future conferences

- December 2023 – online
- March 2024 – in person
- June 2024 – TBC
- Dec 2024 – TBC

Potential hosts

- GMWRAG? (**Dan**)
- WRAC? (**Gareth** and **Tom**) combined with Cardiff (Tom Evans at Qualia Law)? Or Swansea Council?
- Greenwich? (**Corin**)
- Leeds? (**Zoey**)

Kelly to email members to appeal for hosts.

Potential speakers and workshops

- **Kelly** to upload the '*Future NAWRA conferences – ideas and offers*' working document to Teams.

Next committee meetings

- 2-4pm on 16 August 2023 – planning meeting for Sep 2023 conference. **Kelly** to send out invitation to committee members.
- 2-4pm on 11 October 2023 – full committee meeting

We agreed to continue holding committee meetings on Zoom as some members have difficulties with Teams accounts.

AOB

None.