

Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 September 2023

On Zoom

AGENDA

Day 1: Wednesday 13 September (1.00pm to 4.00pm)

1.00 Introductions and welcome

Daphne Hall, rightsnet and NAWRA vice chair

1.10 Greater London Authority's Robust Safety Net and Propel

Adrian McDowell, Senior Policy and Projects Officer and Nick MacAndrews, Principal Policy and Projects Officer in the Financial Hardship Team at the Greater London Authority (GLA)

Adrian will provide a summary of the London Partnership Board's approach to financial hardship through its [Robust Safety Net](#) mission. The Robust Safety Net focuses on providing advice in community settings, benefit uptake, approaches to local welfare and strategic advice coordination. Nick will focus on strategic advice coordination, particularly the work of [Propel](#) and attempts to respond to the workforce issues within the advice sector.

[Slido # 4576757](#)

2.00 Break

2.10 Universal credit deductions: update on PLP's ongoing research

Jagna Olejniczak (Public Law Project)

Public Law Project is gathering evidence into the issues claimants face when dealing with universal credit deductions. Jagna will share the initial findings on the awareness and accessibility of options that should be available to mitigate the hardship caused by reduced allowance (including suspension of repayments, reduction of their rate and waiving the debt which led to the deductions) and the barriers to challenging the overpayment decision.

[Slido # 2751957](#)

2.40 DWP and its role in safeguarding vulnerable claimants

Daphne Hall (rightsnet)

Following a big increase in the number of Internal Process Reviews carried out by the DWP to investigate allegations of inadequate case handling that may have resulted in serious harm, the Work and Pensions Committee has launched an [inquiry into safeguarding vulnerable claimants](#).

NAWRA is seeking to submit a response to the inquiry and has already sought members' views via a survey. This is a brief opportunity to look at the key issues being examined and to input your views in order that our response is as representative as it can be.

[Slido # 6542056](#)

2.50 **Break**

3.00 **Trends in Council Tax Support schemes**

Gareth Morgan (Ferret) and Corin Hammersley (Royal Borough of Greenwich)

This workshop will look at the way in which Council tax support schemes, particularly in England, are developing and the consequences that follow these changes.

It will look at the variation in the schemes and the development of banded and discount schemes including the process of change required for a scheme.

There are competing pressures on council tax and council tax reduction schemes which will be looked at together with the interaction of Universal Credit and Council tax reduction.

[Slido # 1447500](#)

4.00 **Close**

Day 2: Thursday 14 September 2023 (9.30am to 1.00pm)

9.30 **Welcome and introductions**

Daphne Hall (rightsnet and NAWRA vice chair)

9.40 **Towards a trauma-informed social security system: Lessons from the Sanctions, Support and Service Leavers project**

Lisa Scullion, Professor of Social Policy and Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Inclusive Society at the University of Salford

This presentation reflects on findings of a [five-year research project focusing on veterans' experiences of the benefits system](#), which has helped to advocate for the integration of trauma-informed practice within the benefits system.

Lisa is Professor of Social Policy and Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Inclusive Society at the University of Salford. Lisa has delivered over 60 research projects, with a commitment to the importance of qualitative inquiry for shaping policy and practice. Lisa's work focuses specifically on understanding the impact of UK welfare reforms.

[Slido # 9914182](#)

10.10 **The Advice Quality Standard - how can it help you?**

Jo Chimes (Advice Services Alliance)

The Advice Services Alliance is fiercely proud of the [Advice Quality Standard](#) (the AQS) and the role it plays in driving the development of access to social justice in this country. The AQS is held by over 600 separate local advice services across England and Wales who provide advice on social welfare legal problems.

It is a standard which is owned and driven by the sector itself and yet is independent of any of the national advice networks or any individual funders or regulators. This session will look at the benefits of the AQS, and the work ASA is doing to better understand some of the current challenges for advice organisations, and how we can help to provide support to meet those challenges.

We will also explore what makes a quality advice service, with lots of practical tips and ideas. For example: how can you demonstrate the value of the advice you give; what does strategic advice-giving look like; and how to prevent 'adviser burnout'.

This session from the Advice Services Alliance will be practical, interactive and with lots of opportunity to discuss and ask questions.

[Slido # 1499177](#)

10.40 **Break**

10.50 **Getting LCW/LCWRA status for people who are in work**

Lindsay Fletcher and Sarah Batty (The Benefits Training Co)

It is often possible for the Work Capability Assessment to be carried out in universal credit when a claimant is working.

This presentation looks at the process and implications for achieving Limited Capability for Work (LCW) / Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA) status for claimants who are in work.

What will be covered?

- How and when is it possible to have the Work Capability Assessment process started for people who are in work?
- How can I ensure income is maximised via the UC work allowance as well as via the LCWRA element for people who are in work?
- When is a disability benefit needed and what happens if it is awarded retrospectively?
- How is it different for the 'treated as' rules (e.g. cancer treatments)?
- The 16-hour x National Minimum Wage rule - how can I make sure earnings are assessed correctly?

[Slido # 3247420](#)

11.35 **Break**

11.45 **Re-revising decisions - lapsed appeals**

Diane Sechi (South West London Law Centres) and Elizabeth Whittaker (Simmons & Simmons LLP)

The DWP practice of further reviewing decisions once appeals have been lodged is fairly common practice. The process for these further revisions and lapsing of appeals is subject to Best Practice guidelines to ensure fairness and transparency. In practice, it would appear that the guidelines are not being followed and the report [‘Quality Focus? The Reality of Lapsed Appeals’](#), investigates some of the concerns arising for appellants as a result of non-compliance with the Best Practice Guidance.

Slido # 8946159

12.30 **Information Exchange**

Slido # 1313295

13.00 **Close**

The conference is free to attend but open to NAWRA members only.

[Find out more about joining](#)

If you have any queries about the conference please contact

Kelly Smith, NAWRA secretary

kelly@nawra.org.uk

www.nawra.org.uk