NAWRA

Committee meeting – 18 October 2023 – on Zoom

Present: Daphne (chair), Lee ,Tom, Julie, Zoey, Michael, Greg, Kelly (minutes)
Apologies: Atif, Corin, Alan, Gareth, Dan, Maureen

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, six 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 12.30pm on 12 December 2023 on Zoom. **Kelly** to send a reminder email to working group members.

Governance
- Welcome to Lee Oliver (Glasgow Council) and Greg Brown (Maggies), our newly elected reps for Scotland.

- Juan Rameriz (Derbyshire County Council), rep for the East Midlands, has stepped down from the committee. The committee offered their thanks to Juan for all his contributions over the years, most recently in hosting a successful NAWRA conference in Nottingham in June 2023. Kelly has emailed members in the East Midlands to invite nominations to fill the post. The closing date is 23 Oct 2023. In the event of two or more nominations an election will be held.

- There will be committee representative elections in all regions in March 2024 with the exception of the East Midlands and Scotland. **Kelly** to organise the call for nominations and ballots in early 2024.

Policy and campaigns
- 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.

Daphne has followed this up with DWP a month ago. We are hoping for wording to be finalised in Nov. **Daphne** to keep us updated.

- 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.

- 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. Agreed to discuss this in detail at our committee meeting in-person on 29 Feb 2024 in Durham.

- 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. The deadline of 8 Feb 2024 is fast approaching.

- NAWRA co-signed a Z2K letter to Guy Oppenheim raising concerns about UC migration and asking for safeguards to be put in place. **Daphne** to forward his response.

- NAWRA has responded to the DWP's consultation on proposed changes to the work capability assessment. Many thanks to Daphne for surveying members and drafting our response. Daphne also represented NAWRA at a consultation event in Cardiff.

- NAWRA has responded to the Work and Pensions Committee inquiry into safeguarding vulnerable claimants. Again, thanks to Daphne for her work on it.

Finance
- Kelly updated the finance report to the second quarter of 2023-24 and circulated it to the committee on 2 Oct 2023.

- **Kelly** to find out the value of NAWRA's reserves.

Next conference

NAWRA will meet on Zoom on Wednesday 6 December 2023 (1.00pm – 4.00pm) and Thursday 7 December 2023 (9.30am – 1.00pm). Despite efforts to find one, there is no host so the committee will put together the agenda.

Future conferences
- 6 and 7 December 2023 – online
- 1 March 2024 – in-person in Durham
- June 2024 – TBC (online)
- Sep 2024 – in-person in Glasgow? **Lee** to confirm.
- Dec 2024 – TBC (online)

Potential hosts
- GMWRAG? With Jigsaw? (**Dan**)
- WRAC? (**Gareth** and **Tom**) combined with Cardiff (Tom Evans at Qualia Law)? Or Swansea Council?
- Greenwich? (**Corin**)
- Leeds? (**Zoey**)
- Central Bedfordshire Council (online)
- Central Borders CAB (online)

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

Next committee meetings

All to fill in Slido poll indicating your preferred days for Committee meetings.

- Mid-Jan 2024 - on Zoom. **Kelly** to confirm date and circulate meeting link.
- 1pm on 29 Feb 2024 - In-person in Durham. **Julie** to confirm venue.

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

AOB
- Tom would like to use the NAWRA updater chart with Dangos. All agreed that this is fine. **Tom** to send the Welsh language translation to Kelly for the NAWRA website.

- 2025 will be NAWRA's 50th birthday.