

## NAWRA conference

Hosted by Citizens Advice Central Dorset

Friday 5 June 2026

Dorford Centre, Bridport Road, Dorchester, DT1 1RR

Sponsored by:



### AGENDA

- 09:30 **Registration and refreshments**
- 10:00 **Welcome and introductions**
- 10:10 **Keynote speakers:**
- Katie Hale, Head of Revenues and Benefits at Dorset Council
  - Laura Cornette, Business Partner, Communities and Partnerships Team at Dorset Council
- Katie Hale and Laura Cornette will give an update and local authority perspective on recent benefit updates and the Crisis and Resilience Fund.*
- 11:00 **Break and refreshments**
- 11:20 **Spotlight:** CAiD Research and Campaigns
- 11:35 **Workshops:** session one (See 'workshop options' on the following page)
- 12:35 **Lunch** (not provided)
- Delegates are welcome to remain in the building to eat packed lunches. An information sheet with local eatery suggestions will be provided. For Friday prayers, Dorchester Islamic Centre is a five minute walk.

- 13.45        **Workshops:** session two (See ‘workshop options’ on the following page)
- 14.45        **Break and refreshments**
- 15.00        **NAWRA updates**  
Daphne Hall, rightsnet
- An update on NAWRA's activity over the last few months including our campaign for advice to be a statutory duty, ensuring that vulnerable claimants are migrating to UC safely and getting their correct entitlement, and our response to the Timms Review.
- 15:20        **NHS Talking Therapies service**  
Rachael Quick, Rural Senior Employment Advisor, Dorset Healthcare University NHS Trust
- Rachael will describe what NHS Talking Therapies is, who the service is for, and how individuals, colleagues, or clients can access support, including self-referral options, with the aim of increasing awareness and confidence around accessing mental health support when needed.
- 15:30        **Lightning talks: three minute slots for delegates to share innovative ideas**  
Participants can register at the start of the event to give a three-minute talk about any projects or innovations they wish to champion.
- 15:45        **Information exchange**
- 15.55        **Closing remarks**
- 16.00        **Close**

## WORKSHOP OPTIONS

*If you'd like to run a workshop at a future NAWRA conference, please contact [kelly@nawra.org.uk](mailto:kelly@nawra.org.uk)*

Workshops all run twice (once at 11.35am and again at 1.45pm) so please choose **two** of the following:

### **A. Higher or Lower (LCWRA Element)?**

Jane Crawford, Housing Systems

*Workshop level: Intermediate / Practical*

This workshop is about ensuring that those entitled to the LCWRA Element receive it at the higher rate if entitled.

We will look at:

- Being treated as having LCWRA and meeting the ‘severe conditions criteria’.

- Making sure the DWP get the start date on the 'relevant period' right – 'being a pre-2026 claimant'.
- How requesting a MR/appeal of a previous WCA decision could help.
- Options for those that reported their health condition pre-2026, but DWP failed to act.

**B. Oh no not another discrimination workshop! Challenging work-focused interviews: what can lay practitioners do?**

Dan Manville, Greater Manchester Law Centre

*Workshop level: Advanced / Strategic*

People might recall the issues reported in the Guardian where [inpatients at the Forston clinic were being mandated to attend Work Focussed Interviews](#), dragging ward staff with them to JCP or short section 17 discharges. That shouldn't happen anymore! Dan will take us through some real world examples and talk about what lay practitioners can do to try and remedy those situations before the lawyers get involved, and what people can do to involve the lawyers.

**C. Working with Special Rules in the welfare benefit system**

Clare Tonge and Natalie Cash, Citizens Advice Central Dorset, Macmillan Welfare Benefit Team

*Workshop level: Intermediate / Practical*

This workshop will look at applying for welfare benefits as a claimant with a life-limiting diagnosis, understanding how cancer treatment can impact a claimant (and their commitments), how the SR1 form is used and how to challenge non-acceptance of an SR1 by the Department for Work and Pensions.

**D. Welfare reform and mental health**

Tom Messere, Big Book of Benefits and Mental Health

*Workshop level: Intermediate / Practical*

Living with mental health issues can make navigating the "benefits maze" harder at the best of times. But coping with change can make that harder still, especially after some years of worrying rumours, cancelled plans and a 'blame game' on mental health. But now actual changes are biting: the Final Act of UC migration, inadequate safeguarding and last-minute rescues; making sense of April 2026 changes; anxiety-inducing revivals of WCA re-assessments. And looking further ahead to an increasing importance for a ?changing PIP.

This practical workshop is a chance to catch up with an overview of what's occurring, but also to share issues, concerns, practical tips, experience and solidarity (in small groups and then back together again). And to see how we might plan for what we can do - and lobby others to do likewise - in these "interesting times".

## NAWRA workshop levels:

<b>Introductory</b>	Assumes little or no prior knowledge of the topic or a refresher session
<b>Intermediate</b>	Assumes a reasonable working knowledge of welfare benefits work or some knowledge of the specific topic under discussion
<b>Advanced</b>	Assumes a good working knowledge of welfare benefits work or detailed knowledge of the topic under discussion

<b>Practical</b>	Focusing on developing good practice or offering some 'hints and tips'
<b>Theoretical</b>	Focusing on policy debates or discussion of emerging theory
<b>Strategic</b>	Focusing on planning and putting practical knowledge, and/or theory into practice

## EXHIBITOR



[Housing Systems](#) is one of the leading second tier benefits advice services - developing the tools advisers need to resolve complex benefit issues quickly and stay fully informed on changes to the welfare benefit system.

Used by over 350 local authorities, charities and social housing providers, the extensive ucnotes website is packed full of information, commentary and tips. It also hosts various resources – whether it's a calculator, standard letter, mapping tool, flowchart or leaflet to support customers.

The respected email query service answers over 3,000 benefit queries a year, giving a full and detailed response usually within one working day.

The monthly newsletters and articles keep advisers up to date with benefits news and hot topics. And the monthly online Friday Fun Quizzes raises awareness of key topics and increases knowledge and skills.

They deliver more than 150 training courses a year - both online and face-to-face and have developed a unique suite of 20 welfare benefit related e-learning courses. They also host regular webinars and conferences.

## SOCIAL EVENING

NAWRA members will be meeting up for food and drinks from 6pm on Thursday 4 June at [The Brewhouse and Kitchen](#), 27 Weymouth Avenue, Dorchester, DT1 1QY. **Please note the change of venue.**

We will have a NAWRA sign on the tabletop and everyone is welcome to join us. Both entrances are accessible to wheelchair users and there is a disabled toilet.

## LOCATION AND TRANSPORT

The conference will take place at Dorford Centre, Bridport Road, Dorchester, DT1 1RR.



The what3words address is [///relished.regularly.junior](https://www.what3words.com/?q=///relished.regularly.junior)

### By train:

There are two railway stations in the centre of Dorchester.

- Dorchester South: On the main line from London Waterloo to Weymouth. Change at Poole or Southampton for services to the east and north of Britain. The station is a 13 minute walk to venue.
- Dorchester West: Direct services to Bristol, Cardiff and Weymouth. Change at Cardiff, Newport or Bristol for services to Wales & the Midlands. Change at Bristol, Bath, Westbury or Yeovil for trains to the southwest. The station is an 11 minute walk to venue.

### By bus:

- There are lots of [local buses](#) into Dorchester.

### By car:

- There are a number of [Pay & Display car parks in Dorchester](#). The nearest car park to the Dorford Centre is the Top O' Town car park which is opposite the venue.
- There is limited disabled parking at the Dorford Centre. Please let us know in advance if you require this.

## THINGS TO DO LOCALLY

Why not make a weekend of it? If you're interested in staying in Dorset longer, the [Visit Dorset](#) website has some fantastic suggestions for things to do.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The venue is accessible to those who have a disability. There is a lift and disabled toilets. There is limited disabled parking. Please let us know in advance if you require this.

**Quiet Room:** A room will be made available for prayer or quiet reflection. Please ask staff on the day for its location.

## ACCOMMODATION

The following hotels offer budget options within walking distance of the conference venue and railway station:

- [Premier Inn Dorchester](#) 0333 321 9278 / Accessible rooms available / Limited on site parking, nearby pay and display car park / 12 mins walk to Dorford Centre
- [Sleeping Bear Hotel](#) 01305 262660 / Accessible rooms available / On site parking limited, book in advance (£10 a day) / Dog friendly / 2 minute walk to Dorford Centre
- [The Kings Arms Hotel](#) 01305 238238 / Accessible rooms available / Parking available / Dog friendly / 8 minute walk to the Dorford Centre
- [The Junction Hotel](#) 01305 755000 / Accessible rooms available / Parking available / Dog friendly / 8 minute walk to the Dorford Centre
- [Duchess of Cornwall Inn](#) 01305 757569 / Accessible rooms available / Parking available / Dog friendly / 25 minute walk or 10 minute bus ride (No 6 or 10)
- [Westwood House](#) 03105 268018 / Limited disability access (see website) / No parking (Use Top O' Town car park) / 2 minute walk to Dorford Centre

There are also a number of independent B&Bs in Weymouth. Both trains and buses run frequently from Weymouth to Dorchester.

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

Find out more about [joining](#).

If you have any queries about the meeting please contact:

Kelly Smith, NAWRA secretary: [kelly@nawra.org.uk](mailto:kelly@nawra.org.uk)

Sian Alvis, Citizens Advice Central Dorset: [sian.alvis@centralca.org.uk](mailto:sian.alvis@centralca.org.uk)

[www.nawra.org.uk](http://www.nawra.org.uk)