



ISSN 1475-8202

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Number 101, September 2009

(formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

Contents List

Did you see ...?

- *ARC Magazine* – page 2
- *Public Library Journal* – page 2
- *Literacy Today* – page 2

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *Beyond tolerance ...* – page 3
- *Building cohesive communities: what frontline staff and community activists need to know* – page 5

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

- “Reading is good for you – spread the word” – page 6

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *Good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective* – page 6

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 8

Did you see ...?

ARC Magazine

The October issue¹ has a number of interesting articles around the theme of 'education, development and training', including:

- "Sustaining communities", a brief report on the third annual Community Archives Conference [pp8-9]

Public Library Journal

The Autumn 2009 issue² includes a lot of interesting pieces, including:

- Genevieve Clarke "Getting ready to work", using the Six Book Challenge in workplaces [pp2-3]
- Steve Crump "Opening up libraries for deaf people", looking at the needs of D/deaf people [pp4-5]
- Fiona Heffernan "Outside Story: welcoming the homeless", which looks at the work developed by the London Libraries Development Agency project [pp6-7]
- Peter Brown and Sheila Barford "'This PC stuff': learning new IT skills at any age" [p11]
- Caroline Barker "Natural partners", which looks at the partnership between the BBC and libraries, particularly around the "Headroom"³ initiative [p15]
- Ayub Khan and Janet Everett "A fresh start", which looks at redesigning a mobile library service for the 21st century [pp16-18]
- John Vincent "Tackling social exclusion – where have we got to?", which celebrates The Network's 10th anniversary and looks at progress, generally and in public libraries, in tackling social exclusion [pp19-20]
- Alison Wheeler and Ayub Khan "Commissioning: a new era for libraries", which looks at the new role of commissioning services, with particular reference to tackling social exclusion [pp23-24, 27].

Literacy Today

The October issue⁴ has a number of interesting articles, including:

¹ *ARC Magazine* no.242, October 2009. Further information from the Society of Archivists,

<http://www.archives.org.uk/publications/arcthesocietysmonthlymagazine.html>.

² *Public Library Journal*, 24 (3), Autumn 2009. Further information from:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/public/journal>.

³ "Headroom" is "a campaign to help you cope with the everyday stresses and strains of life and provide a safe place to start finding answers to more complex problems."

For further information, see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/headroom/>.

⁴ *Literacy Today* 60, October 2009. For further information, see:

<http://www.educationpublishing.com/>.

- Wayne Holmes “Catch up literacy for children in care” [pp9-10]
 - “Viewpoint” column – Jonathan Douglas looks at the end of the National Strategies and the role of literacy in community cohesion [pp11-12]
 - Suzy Rigg “A Manifesto is born”, on the launch of the National Literacy Trust’s “Manifesto for Literacy” [pp12-13]
-

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Beyond tolerance ...

The EHRC has just launched this new report⁵.

“It would be easy to be complacent about the developments in sexual orientation equality in the last 10 years. Employment rights, civil partnerships, changes to adoption law and the removal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 have all transformed the everyday lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. Today, there are openly lesbian and gay politicians in each of the three main political parties: this would have been unthinkable even a few decades ago ...

Our groundbreaking new research shows that in 21st century Britain, despite legal advances, homophobia still has an unacceptable everyday impact on the lives of LGB people. Attitudes have undergone a sea change over the last few decades, with much greater understanding and tolerance. However, the fact that LGB people feel that they can’t be open about their sexual orientation in their local neighbourhood, that LGB students still experience unacceptably high levels of bullying, and that LGB people would not even consider certain jobs for fear of other people’s reaction, is a worrying sign that prejudice and discrimination still limit people’s choices and chances in life.” [p4]

This report:

“... calls for a new and radical approach. Traditionally, sexual orientation has been seen as a private matter, not the business of wider society. Of course, the private lives of individuals are not for public consumption, but without clearer evidence – on where LGB people live, where they work, what their experiences and needs of public services are – we are missing a vital piece of the jigsaw when it comes to making public policy. Evidence is the key to making services reflect everyone’s experiences and meet their needs. Therefore we consider it vital to start collecting more robust data.” [p5]

⁵ *Beyond tolerance: making sexual orientation a public matter*. EHRC, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (1180 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/beyond_tolerance.pdf.

The report outlines the position we are in today, setting out the positive developments that have taken place over the last 12 years, but contrasting these with the homophobia and violence that many LGB people face.

It emphasises the need for better collection of data, in order to be able to argue the case for provision and to assess correctly the extent of discrimination, and then focuses on a number of specific areas:

- Employment
- Education
- Hate crimes and hate incidents
- Access to healthcare.

Finally, the report outlines the steps that the EHRC will take to ensure progress – many of these applying to local authorities and other public bodies, as well as to the private sector.

This is an important piece of work which raises the profile of LGB issues – highly recommended.

This document has drawn on a number of new pieces of research from the EHRC. These are:

- *Sexual orientation explored ...*⁶
- *Sexual orientation research review 2008*⁷
- *Estimating the size and composition of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population in Britain*⁸
- *Homophobic hate crimes and hate incidents*⁹

⁶ Gavin Ellison and Briony Gunstone. *Sexual orientation explored: a study of identity, attraction behaviour and attitudes in 2009*. EHRC (Research Report 35), 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84206-224-1). Available to download as a pdf (1360 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research35_so_explored.pdf.

⁷ Martin Mitchell *et al.* *Sexual orientation research review 2008*. EHRC (Research Report 34), 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84206-113-8). Available to download as a pdf (1210 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/sexual_orientation_research_review.pdf.

⁸ Peter J Aspinall. *Estimating the size and composition of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population in Britain*. EHRC (Research Report 37), 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84206-225-8). Available to download as a pdf (1920 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research_37_estimating_lgbpop.pdf.

⁹ Sam Dick. *Homophobic hate crimes and hate incidents*. EHRC (Research Summary 38), 2009. Available to download as a pdf (615 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research38_so_hatecrime.pdf.

- *The experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and students in higher education*¹⁰
- *Moving forward ...*¹¹

Building cohesive communities: what frontline staff and community activists need to know

This is new good practice guidance¹² from DCLG:

“This is a short practical guide for busy activists and frontline staff working on community cohesion.” [p4]

The authors have focused on the common questions, issues and training needs that they have identified in working with people to develop community cohesion – these are:

- Promoting Interaction between people and groups
- Tackling local attitudes, perception and myths
- Building trust in local institutions
- Developing the role of young people
- Developing effective community leadership.
- Developing a local sense of belonging
- Developing commitment to a shared future
- Developing community resilience
- Using communications and the media to promote cohesion
- Tackling the underlying causes of poor community cohesion.

For each, they ask key questions (“What do we mean by ...?” “Why is it important to ...?”); and then set out the key steps in developing each area, for example:

- “Spend time finding out the relevant facts about your local area, eg the numbers of A8 migrants, housing allocation policy, etc, and work out how you are going to keep this information up-to-date

¹⁰ Gill Valentine and Nichola Wood. *The experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual staff and students in higher education*. EHRC (Research Summary 39), 2009. Available to download as a pdf (620.11 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research39_so_education.pdf.

¹¹ Sue Botcherby and Chris Creegan. *Moving forward: putting sexual orientation in the public domain*. EHRC (Research Summary 40), 2009. Available to download as a pdf (418.83 kb) from: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/research40_so_moving_forward.pdf.

¹² Jo Broadwood and Nicola Sugden. *Building cohesive communities: what frontline staff and community activists need to know*. DCLG, 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-4098-1910-3). Available to download as a pdf (422 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1357439.pdf>.

- Support local community leaders to understand the current complexities of racism and prejudice, and how it impacts on people in your area
- Ensure that local politicians are well informed about all local communities and understand the impact their words might have on community relations and community tensions
- Promote the benefits of diverse communities, more equal societies and a shared future ...
- Tackle difficult conversations with care and allow fears to be expressed ...” [p10]

They also give a couple of things to “Watch out for”; and conclude each chapter with a simple diagram that shows the main points in terms of what you need to do to:

- Plan
- Take action – “if it suits your area”
- Watch out for issues
- Take the next steps.

This is a really useful, practical guide which will be good background for planning outreach and community engagement work. Recommended.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“Reading is good for you – spread the word”

The October issue¹³ of CILIP *Library & Information Update* includes a report by Debbie Hicks of The Reading Agency’s work to raise the profile of libraries in the bibliotherapy field.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective

This report¹⁴ from the EHRC Scotland was published in Spring 2009.

¹³ *Library & Information Update* October 2009, pp46-48.

¹⁴ *Good practice in community engagement from an equality perspective*. EHRC, 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84206-163-3). Available to download as a pdf (461.85 kb) from:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/good_practice_in_community_engagement.pdf.

“There has been a growing emphasis in recent years on involving groups and individuals in the community in services, issues and decisions affecting them, through ‘community engagement’. There has also been a growing recognition of the need to involve equality groups (that is, those affected by issues relating to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief). There is now a considerable body of knowledge about good practice in community engagement generally, and about the involvement of equality groups ... This review brings together existing knowledge and examples of good practice to identify some key messages about effective community engagement.

The review does not provide a comprehensive ‘how to’ guide to community engagement, nor does it evaluate the nature or extent of current community engagement practice. Instead, it draws on evidence from formal evaluations of community engagement work, other literature and some examples of current practice to help to inform current and future work in this area.” [p2]

The report identifies key methods for community engagement, the benefits and barriers, and focuses on the three main areas where there has been much practice, but where there also needs to be improvement:

- Planning and preparation
- Implementation and practice
- Monitoring, evaluation and review, and feedback.

The recommendations for approaching community engagement are particularly helpful:

- “Ensure that community engagement with a clear commitment to equality is promoted as a priority and is reflected in policy, practice, ethos, direction and leadership.
- Develop appropriate structures and mechanisms for the involvement of community members in all relevant aspects of their work, ensuring that these promote the highest possible level of participation and involvement for the purposes of the engagement and make it easy for community members to be heard and listened to.
- Recognise the need for the engagement to involve all relevant stakeholders, and identify and address any potential barriers to participation by equality groups.
- Recognise the implications of the commitment to an inclusive and participative approach for the methods used and the means of implementation, and ensure a widespread understanding of this among all of those involved.
- Take a clearly defined and transparent approach to the engagement, following the key stages, considering all of the relevant decisions required and ensuring that all participants are aware of the structures

and mechanisms for their input, as well as the parameters of their involvement.

- Promote a proactive approach to identifying and engaging with seldom heard groups, raising awareness of the engagement, developing capacity where required, and enabling and encouraging involvement (and ongoing involvement), as suggested within the report.
- Continue to develop new contacts in the community and develop existing relationships.
- Base all aspects of community engagement practice upon the National Standards for Community Engagement and other good practice guidance [and there is a list of such guidance in Annex 4 of the report]
- Carry out work that is consistent with the findings of this review, and follow the 'do's and don'ts' suggested at Annex 1 [of the report – these are also very helpful].
- Ensure that experiences are shared within the organisation or partnership and with other relevant organisations and individuals, and that knowledge, skills and practice continue to develop in accordance with broader developments in community engagement and equality work." [pp55-56]

This is a very useful background document for those of us looking at improving community engagement.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

DCLG = Department of Communities and Local Government

EHRC = Equality and Human Rights Commission

This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

John Vincent
Wisteria Cottage
Nadderwater
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 0845 128 4897

E-mail: john@nadder.org.uk

September 2009