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

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

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## Did you see ...?

### *Society Now*

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes (amongst a range of interesting short articles and news items):

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<sup>1</sup> *Society Now: ESRC research making an impact*, 9, Spring 2011. Available to download as a pdf (8400 kb) from:  
[http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/Society\\_Now\\_9\\_tcm8-15070.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/images/Society_Now_9_tcm8-15070.pdf).

- “Advice to prevent poverty”, news item:

“Cuts in funding to the voluntary sector are placing the Government’s vision for a big society in jeopardy, according to researcher Dr Jane Holgate of Leeds University Business School. A three-year study of how ethnic minority workers deal with problems they have encountered at work finds evidence of an ‘advice desert’. Problems at work can have a serious impact on employees’ personal lives in terms of ill-health, unemployment and poverty. “The lack of support for employment problems is a serious issue,” argues Dr Holgate. “Current advice agencies are seriously under-funded and this is likely to get worse because of forthcoming cuts. If the big society is to be meaningful, then resources need to be directed at community level to provide the advice and support that is needed.”

The study, conducted among Kurds in Hackney, South Asians in Ealing and Black Caribbeans in Lambeth, was prompted by concerns about the lack of support for workers facing disciplinary and grievance issues ranging from bullying to failure to pay wages (including the National Minimum Wage).” [p3]

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## **Tackling social exclusion – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations**

### ***Family learning and museums, libraries, archives and the cultural sector: embedding a strategic approach to working together***

NIACE and MLA have produced this useful practical guide<sup>2</sup>

“These resources set the context for the strategic development of family learning programmes with museums, libraries, archives and the wider cultural sector. They detail a variety of government priorities where family learning can play an important role in delivering results for the families involved and wider communities. Developments are placed in the context of localism and strategic commissioning.” [p3]

The document includes:

- “What is family learning and a learning family?” This section briefly defines ‘family learning’ (“Family learning refers to learning approaches that engage children and their mothers, fathers, carers or grandparents in learning and involve explicit learning outcomes for adults and children. In its broadest sense, it refers to activities undertaken by families which are

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<sup>2</sup> *Family learning and museums, libraries, archives and the cultural sector: embedding a strategic approach to working together*. MLA and NIACE, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (733 kb) from:

[http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/m/l/mla\\_fl\\_final\\_active.pdf](http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/m/l/mla_fl_final_active.pdf).

planned, are purposeful, and support progression.” [p4]). It also sets out the role of family learning in tackling social exclusion.

- The document then goes on to argue the case for family learning in the museums, libraries, archives and wider cultural sector, followed by ...
- “Key government priorities for family learning in museums, libraries, archives and the wider cultural sector” which includes, for example, social justice, engagement, skills improvement, the Big Society, early intervention, and social mobility.
- A brief outline of the developing role of strategic commissioning
- There are then two very useful planning/evaluation checklists:
  - Checklist for evidencing outcomes and impact for families
  - Family learning quality improvement planning tool
- Finally, there are three case studies:
  - Children’s and adults’ attainment: Grub Club, Community Cooking with Museums Sheffield
  - Early intervention: Engaging Early Years Children and Families with Archives, Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office
  - The Big Society: Who Do We Think We Are? Bagshaw Museum, Batley.

This is a very useful, practical tool for embedding family learning into our work – and ensuring that it is also relevant to Government and local priorities.

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## Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

### **C4EO: three new Families, Parents and Carers Knowledge Reviews**

C4EO have just published these three important pieces of work.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Improving children’s outcomes by supporting parental physical and mental health***

This Review<sup>4</sup>: “... tells us what works in improving the safety, health and wellbeing of children through improving the physical and mental health of mothers, fathers and carers. It is based on a rapid review of the research literature involving systematic searching of literature, analysis of key data,

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<sup>3</sup> Information from the C4EO Newsletter, April 2011.

<sup>4</sup> James Blewett *at al.* *Improving children’s outcomes by supporting parental physical and mental health*. Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (Families, Parents and Carers Knowledge Review 1), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1490 kb) from: [http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/physicalmentalhealth/files/physical\\_mental\\_health\\_full\\_knowledge\\_review.pdf?dm\\_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/physicalmentalhealth/files/physical_mental_health_full_knowledge_review.pdf?dm_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1).

validated local practice examples, views from service providers and the users of services. It summarises the best available evidence that will help service providers to improve services and, ultimately, outcomes for children, young people and their families.” [p5]

The Review highlights some of the data, eg:

- “There are estimated to be: 150,000 young carers in the UK, 30 per cent of who are believed to be caring for adults with mental health needs; 200,000 to 300,000 children and young people living with a parent whose drug use is problematic; and 1.4 million children are living with at least one parent who drinks excessively.” [p5]

From the results of the Review (and emphasised by feedback from service-users and providers), there emerged six key questions:

- “What are the key structural obstacles?
- How can we improve the scope and relevance of the knowledge base?
- How can professional collaboration be facilitated and improved?
- How, as a matter of urgency, can we start building better bridges across and between services?
- How can we keep a focus on the concept of resilience to understanding outcomes for children and young people?
- How can the deterrent impact of stigma be reduced?” [p53]

and the main conclusions give some pointers towards answering these. For us, maybe one of the major issues raised is the barrier created by the divide between children’s and adult services, whereas all the research points to the need for an holistic approach.

### ***Improving children’s outcomes by supporting couple relationships, reducing family conflict and addressing domestic violence***

The second Knowledge Review<sup>5</sup> has less of direct relevance to us, although, interestingly, a key recommendation involves local authority archives:

“A lot of information about parents, carers, children and families in the UK exists in, for example, national surveys, birth cohort studies, opinion polls and attitude surveys. Records of births, marriages, deaths, and crime and health records provide information about population trends over time. Within these data sets, there is some information about differences between minority ethnic groups although definitional problems often complicate interpretation of this data. There is also a huge body of relevant information, gathered through locally conducted consultations and mapping exercises ...

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<sup>5</sup> Helen Barrett *et al.* *Improving children’s outcomes by supporting couple relationships, reducing family conflict and addressing domestic violence*. Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (Families, Parents and Carers Knowledge Review 2), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1310 kb) from: [http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/reducingconflict/files/reducing\\_conflict\\_full\\_knowledge\\_review.pdf?dm\\_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/reducingconflict/files/reducing_conflict_full_knowledge_review.pdf?dm_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1).

In spite of this wealth of information, there are distinct gaps in the evidence base with regard to information about the incidence of domestic violence among couples with children and about the incidence of divorce among couples with children. The data available in national records routinely fails to differentiate between couples with children and those without. Within the research literature, there are inconsistencies, too, that can make it difficult to compare between studies where researchers have used varying definitions of terms or where terms have not been defined clearly enough, for example, in the use of the term 'conflict' which can refer to many different sorts of actual behaviour. The information held in local authority archives is currently not easy to access, if it were effectively collated, it could provide more localised insights into the nature of services and how they work for particular communities in specific settings." [p48]

### ***The impact of parenting and family support strategies on children and young people's outcomes***

The third Knowledge Review<sup>6</sup> "... identifies what works when it comes to delivering support and intervention with mothers, fathers and carers of seven- to 19-year-olds<sup>1</sup> designed to improve children and young people's attainment, behaviour and emotional outcomes. This rapid review of the research summarises the best available evidence to enable service commissioners to improve practice and outcomes for children and young people." [p1]

The 'key messages' highlight the main findings:

- "The most commonly reported needs of parents and carers are advice and emotional support, which may be met without referral to specialist services. Other types of available support include counselling, vocational and parenting skills training, and financial support.
- School-based programmes aimed at parents and carers have been shown to improve child behaviour, educational outcomes and family relationships; reduce the likelihood of substance misuse; and increase uptake of services by reducing the fear of being stigmatised among service users.
- Effective school-based services offer a one-to-one and face-to-face approach to parents; provide a range of services in one location; and maintain the long-term effects of the intervention.
- Community-based programmes that use joined-up multi-agency approaches with a well-trained workforce; using the media to engage hard-to-reach people; and using both practical and therapeutic

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<sup>6</sup> Alison O'Mara *et al.* *The impact of parenting and family support strategies on children and young people's outcomes*. Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (Families, Parents and Carers Knowledge Review 3), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1530 kb) from: [http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/effectivesupport/files/effective\\_support\\_full\\_knowledge\\_review.pdf?dm\\_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1](http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/effectivesupport/files/effective_support_full_knowledge_review.pdf?dm_i=7SL,EC6G,12Q3JN,156ZG,1).

- interventions simultaneously, can improve child behaviour and welfare, and reduce juvenile crime and time spent in care.
- Interventions are more likely to be effective when they are informed by the views of parents identified by a thorough needs assessment, especially for hard-to-reach groups.
  - The review did not find robust evidence that policy interventions designed to address family income can improve child outcomes.
  - The programmes for child conduct disorders and full service extended schools may be delivered at a low cost, but evidence is sparse. Collection of good-quality cost and outcome data is a priority if commissioners are to calculate value for money and to benchmark costs and outcomes from different effective services.” [p1]

The emphasis on joined-up and community-based working, as well as the need for effective information provision link could closely to our own provision, and this is underlined by their findings about resources:

- “Young people welcome access to a range of information and support, including social media as well as more traditional sources.
- Parents, carers and service providers need to know that the services they are involved with will continue to be resourced.
- Parents and carers prefer services to be offered universally rather than targeted at those with highest risk, as a way of reducing stigmatisation.
- Service providers recognise the need for the multi-agency team to be well trained and supported.” [p2]

Finally, as we know all too well:

- “Sharing good practices within and across local authorities can improve services.” [p4]

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

C4EO = Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services

ESRC = Economic and Social Research Council

MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

NIACE = National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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