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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 and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Fabian Society “Comment” – “How do you value a library?”

Dan Jarvis MP has posted a short piece¹ which calls for a more nuanced approach to public services generally – and libraries in particular – and which includes a number of indications of possible Labour Party approaches to public library services, eg:

“The fallibility of markets has infected our very definition of progress. Government and opposition spend a fair amount of time obsessing about GDP, a measure that ignores sustainability, equality, and community ... Alternatives sometimes struggle with how to value concepts like happiness – but arguably anything is better than a measure which assigns them a value of zero.

The common thread here is that neither markets nor targets signify anything if they miss what matters for real-life wellbeing of people. My constituents in Barnsley are pleased we spent more on the NHS, but they will write about a nurse who really took the time to care for a sick relative. They will be happy to hear GDP is up, but care more about whether they have a steady and rewarding job, a healthy community around them – a chance for a decent life. The two are linked, but they are not the same.

To my mind this is an argument for a deeper, more nuanced approach – one that ties our progressive mission closer to the individual level, and bases it on a fuller definition of wellbeing. We need greater flexibility and intelligence about the society we want to build and the way we build it ...

Negotiating where to draw the line in each circumstance will be the key task. But the old debate between localism and the postcode lottery in some ways over-simplifies the issue. It is not a simple choice between uniformity and inequality. Rather we have to make a case-by-case judgment about what works, about what things need to be universal or prescribed and what can be local or individual. And in making that judgment there are many alternatives to the poles of pure localism and central control.

There is a link here to the idea of the relational state ... Deeper relationships between services and those they serve are valuable as an end in themselves, but also as a means – a way to harness the power of coalitions of users and providers to find solutions for personal and social problems, with government creating the right conditions and providing oversight rather than dictating the outcome.”²

¹ Dan Jarvis. “How do you value a library?”. *Fabian Society*, March 2013. See: <http://www.fabians.org.uk/how-do-you-value-a-library/>.

² Source: email from Frances Hendrix to lis-pub-libs, 29 Mar 2013.

CILIP Update

The April 2013 issue³ includes:

- “You’ve got to be in it to win it”, an interview by Rob Green with Fiona Talbot, the HLF’s Head of Museums, Libraries and Archives, in which Fiona encourages “more organisations stake their claim for a share of some £400m that is currently available for projects in the museums, libraries and archives sector.” [pp22-24]
- Jacqueline May “Information Literacy and your work – a CILIP survey” [pp32-33]
- Eileen Finch “Building accessible picture books”, in which the author describes how she set about creating children’s books in giant print with Braille and illustrations [pp42-43]
- Jenny Townend and Fiona MacLellan “A novel idea ... reading groups as community outreach”, describing “a University of Northampton project which set up reading groups in local community groups to raise literacy levels and aspirations, and to nurture a passion for reading” [pp44-45]
- Carrie Saint Freedman “Digital champions: helping to fill the UK’s digital gaps”, which looks at the work of Go ON Gold⁴, “created to highlight the obstacles faced by disabled people in accessing the internet, and to take steps to get them connected.” [p48]

Museum Practice

The latest *MP*⁵ focuses on museums’ and galleries’ work with prisons, and articles include:

- Rebecca Atkinson “Inside out: museums and prisons”, which looks at the benefits of working with prisons and how such work can be evaluated (it also includes several quotes from John Vincent who was interviewed for this article)
- Rebecca Atkinson “Embarking on successful projects with prisons”, which includes a brief introduction to good practice
- Rebecca Atkinson “Prisoners as volunteers”, which includes case studies from the Museum of East Anglian Life; the Tank Museum, Bovington; and Galleries of Justice Museum, Nottingham
- Rachel Forster “Museum objects and prisoners’ wellbeing”, which reports the outcomes of a project with high-risk prisoners
- Claire Coia “The role of museum work in prisons”: “Objects have the potential to play a key role in supporting rehabilitation, and can be used to enhance or anchor any learning programme, providing alternative routes into education and promoting cultural access.”
- Rebecca Atkinson “Further resources”.

³ *CILIP Update*, April 2013. For further information, see:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/publications/update-magazine/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁴ See: www.go-on-gold.co.uk.

⁵ *Museum Practice* is available online to Museum Association members – see:

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/museums-and-prisons/15042013-inside-out-museums-and-prisons>.

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

Diversify: reflections and recommendations ...

The Museums Association has just published the final report⁶ for the Diversify positive action scheme, which ran from 1998-2011.

The report begins by summarising the impact of Diversify:

“The MA’s Diversify scheme ran from 1998 to 2011. Its original aim was to make museum careers more accessible to people from BAME backgrounds through targeted positive-action training and it was later expanded to other under-represented groups.

In all, 130 individuals and around 50 museums and galleries participated.

Of BAME former Diversify participants responding to a survey:

- 98% felt that Diversify had either been “very important” or “important” to them starting a career in the museum sector
- 90% gained work in museums after completing Diversify training
- 74% are still working in the museum sector (as of June 2011)
- 61% are working in museum management or are on track to work in museum management, the key long-term aim of the Diversify scheme.

ALL management-level trainees secured employment in museums soon after completing training.” [p4]

The report goes on to set out the need for a scheme such as Diversity; outlines the importance of workforce diversity; highlights the impact of Diversify; and then highlights the key barriers to change – these are identified as:

- Leadership and institutional responsibility
- Entry routes and recruitment practices
- The current economic crisis
- Changes to higher education funding. [p14]

Finally, the report identifies priorities for action for the sector:

1. “Organisational and cultural change. For individual museums to adopt an approach to workforce diversity similar to the notable work that has been done with audience development and participation.

⁶ Lucy Shaw. *Diversify: reflections and recommendations: the final report on the MA’s workforce diversity scheme*. Museums Association, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (329.64 kb) from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=955792>.

2. Institutional responsibility. For boards of individual institutions and museum leaders to take responsibility for diversity, and HLF and national strategic bodies to support the sector strategically with policy and funding.
3. Real change to entry routes to the workforce. A shift to more non-postgraduate routes which needs to encourage and promote new approaches to internships/volunteering.” [p18]

It concludes on an up-beat note:

“The process doesn’t have to be complicated. It’s simple really: good leadership + good practice = diverse and inclusive organisations that value all people.

Let’s stop talking about it and just get on with it.” [p23]

This is an important reminder of just what was achieved via Diversify – and also how much there is still to be achieved.

Working wonders ...

Linking in to this, the Museums Association has just published an action plan⁷ produced by a steering group drawn from the UK museum sector. It is “a call for museums, funders and strategic agencies to recognise the challenges that museums and galleries currently face and support workforce and skills development to meet these challenges.” [p4] It builds on the updated *Cultural Heritage Blueprint*⁸ and summarises the actions that funders, sector bodies and organisations have committed to in the coming years.

It begins by setting the 2013 context in which museums and galleries are working, and then focuses on five key recommendations for workforce development:

1. “Strengthen leadership and management.
2. Develop business, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills.
3. Open up entry to the sector and diversify the workforce.
4. Commit to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff.
5. Develop sector specific skills.” [p4]

The key action in terms of opening up entry to the sector and diversifying the workforce is outlined as:

⁷ *Working wonders: an action plan for the museum workforce*. Museums Association, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (432.72 kb) from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=969394>.

⁸ *The Cultural Heritage Blueprint – a workforce development plan for cultural heritage sector in the UK: museum and gallery update*. Museums Association, 2012. Available to download as a pdf (251.11 kb) from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=919824>.

“The [National Skills Academy] has real potential to support new opportunities for people to enter and train for work in the sector. Museums, galleries and sector bodies must actively engage with the NSA to ensure the needs of the sector are reflected in their work and maximise the opportunities available.” [p28]

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Social justice: transforming lives – one year on

The DWP has just produced this update⁹ to the original report¹⁰. The original was assessed in the *Newsletter*¹¹ last year, and, in that review, we suggested that:

“This is an ambitious programme, and it does identify some of the major issues that need to be transformed.

However, it is limited by choosing not to look at the way that specific factors (such as race, gender, class, sexuality) are likely to have an additional impact; and it is also somewhat tied by having to fit into an overall strategy of spending reductions and resizing of central and local government (whatever Coalition leaders say about these not being policy drivers!).

However, that said, it does give plenty of scope and direction for us to take forward work on promoting social justice, and, provided that there are not more major political changes in the short-term, should provide a ‘route-map’ for the middle-term, with clear Government priorities that we can ‘attach’ our work to.” [p8]

So what does this “One year on” reassessment show?

The report is clear about the scale of the task, for example:

- The gap in attainment for disadvantaged children at age 4 is 19%, 17% at age 11 and 26% at age 16
- 36% of young offenders commit another offence within 12 months

⁹ *Social justice: transforming lives – one year on*. Cm 8606. TSO, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (813 kb) from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192019/CM_8606_Social_Justice.pdf.

There is also a Welsh version available: *Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol: trawsnewid bywydau Flwyddyn yn ddiweddarach*. Available to download as a pdf (269.36 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194131/CM_8606_Social_Justice_welsh.pdf.

¹⁰ *DWP. Social justice: transforming lives*. Cm 8314. TSO, 2012 (ISBN: 9780101831420). Available to download as a pdf (2350 kb) from: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/social-justice-transforming-lives.pdf>.

¹¹ *The Network Newsletter ...*, 133, May 2012, pp2-10.

but also shows that some progress is being made, eg:

- Over the last 3 years, 40% of people who first started drug treatment successfully completed that treatment and did not return
- 75% of adult offenders do not commit another offence within 12 months [all figures taken from p9]

As in the original report, this one focuses on four key areas:

- Supporting families
- Keeping young people on track
- The importance of work
- Supporting the most disadvantaged adults.

Supporting families

The “ambition” includes:

Families are the foundation of our society and we are committed to supporting and strengthening family relationships. Evidence shows that it is good quality ... and sustained parental relationships ... that matter most, providing a nurturing environment, giving children the best possible start in life and the chance of a successful future. The presence of the same two parents, where practicable, in a safe, warm, stable relationship, is therefore especially important.

However, families are becoming more unstable, with about 300,000 families separating each year ...

It is therefore vital that we reduce the number of families that are breaking down and experiencing conflict.” [p11]

The report looks at developments over the past year, including initiatives:

- Promoting positive family relationships
- Supporting troubled families
- Supporting separating families to minimise the impact on children
- Improving the adoption and care system
- Tackling domestic violence.

Keeping young people on track

The report highlights the following developments:

- The introduction of the Pupil Premium
- Measures to tackle absenteeism and school exclusions
- Offering an alternative to gangs
- Rehabilitation through the Youth Justice System.

The importance of work

This area is absolutely critical – but is also probably the most controversial, including:

- The introduction of Universal Credit
- The introduction of the Work Programme
- Supporting disadvantaged young people.

Supporting the most disadvantaged adults

“We believe that the most effective way of addressing multiple disadvantage is through joined-up, multi-agency initiatives that seek to address problems in the round, rather than in isolation, delivering sustained outcomes over the long term.

For individuals experiencing drug or alcohol dependency, ill health, homelessness, or who have been drawn into a destructive cycle of debt or criminal activity, this requires a step change in the way that social programmes are delivered – transforming lives rather than maintaining people in disadvantage.

In order to achieve this cultural shift we are pioneering new approaches, including payment by results and Social Impact Bonds, in order to drive the outcomes we want to see and develop an evidence base of what works ...” [p33]

The report identifies the ways in which this strategy has been developed over the past year.

The report then goes on to look at **Delivering social justice**.

“To turn our vision for social justice into a reality, we need effective services that challenge the status quo – using innovative delivery mechanisms to harness inspirational community leadership, and building strong partnerships across the public, private, voluntary, and social enterprise sectors.” [p40]

The delivery focuses on:

- Strengthening the social investment market
- Championing greater innovation in commissioning and delivery
- Ensuring that local leaders take charge of delivery.

The report concludes:

“In total, this report outlines substantial progress against over 100 commitments set out in *Social Justice: transforming lives*. This is a strong and positive start.

Yet there is still more to be done. We will know we are succeeding when, over time, we see progress against our seven Key Indicators:

1. Reducing the proportion of children affected by family breakdown.
2. Closing the attainment gap so that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are equally as able to realise their educational potential as their more advantaged peers.
3. Reducing the reoffending rate for young people.
4. Reducing the proportion of the working-age population who are currently assessed as being capable of work or work-related activity, but who are claiming working-age benefits and have been for at least three out of the past four years.
5. Increasing the proportion of those first entering drug or alcohol treatment over a three year period, who had: exited successfully by the end of that period; achieved employment; not been convicted of a criminal offence; or achieved all three of these outcomes.
6. Increasing both the proportion of adults who do not go on to reoffend over a 12 month period, and the proportion of adult offenders who are in work 12 months later.
7. Growing the size of the social investment market, and increasing the effectiveness of organisations working with disadvantaged groups by drawing in social finance.

To achieve this in the years ahead, we will continue to strive for further systemic change, developing innovative solutions that challenge the status quo and address the underlying causes of poverty. We will continue to drive change at the heart of government, as well as working with local authorities, community and voluntary organisations, and social entrepreneurs, to change the way that we think about and help the families and individuals most in need. In doing so, we will make social justice a reality for everyone in the United Kingdom.” [pp46-47]

The progress report is supported by:

- *Progress on commitments in “Social Justice: transforming lives”* – outlines of progress laid out in tabular form¹²
- *Social Justice Outcomes Framework April 2013*¹³ – this document may well be useful to support arguments supporting our involvement in social justice work, as it:

“... presents a more detailed picture of the disadvantage the Social Justice strategy seeks to address. It also provides an update on our work to finalise the indicators that make up the Outcomes Framework. We would like to thank all those, inside and outside of government, who have provided us with their

¹² *Progress on commitments in “Social Justice: transforming lives”*. DWP, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (414.48 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192023/progress_HMgov_templateDL.pdf.

¹³ *Social Justice Outcomes Framework April 2013*. DWP, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (208.36 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192024/v3_14.51_SJ_OUTCOMES_FRAMEWORK_APRIL_2013_-_FINAL_VERSION.pdf.

thoughts and expertise to develop the Framework ... It is important to reiterate that these indicators are not a set of targets. Rather, they have been designed to help the Government shape future policy by highlighting priorities and identifying where good progress is being made and where more work needs to be done.” [p3]

Commentary

The same provisos apply as they did when the original report was published: there is a valuable recognition of some of the major areas that require work to improve, although, set in the context of budget reductions, the solutions may not necessarily work.

However, it does still provide an overall ‘steer’ in terms of critical areas of work that we may also wish to address – and, maybe, we can build on the report’s statement that:

“This progress report now focuses on how we are delivering on our vision for social justice. That means embedding the social justice principles into service delivery at national and local level, in government and across the private and voluntary sectors – transforming lives in the process.” [p8]

Abbreviations and acronyms

BAME = Black, Asian and Minority-Ethnic
DWP = Department for Work and Pension
TSO = The Stationery Office

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