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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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## Contents List

**The Network** – page 2

**Did you see ...?**

- *RecordKeeping* – page 2
- *Adults Learning* – page 3

**Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government**

- *Guidance on building a local sense of belonging* – page 3
- *Guidance on meaningful interaction* – page 4
- *New opportunities: fair chances for the future* – page 5
- *New Opportunities website* – page 6
- *New Opportunities White Paper – “Inspiring Communities” policy* – page 6
- *Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility* – page 7
- *What does social mobility mean for literacy?* – page 7

**Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies**

- *Bridging community divides ...* – page 8

**Disability issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations**

- *Rethinking disability representation in museums and galleries* – page 9

## **Disability issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations**

- *Culture and learning: a new agenda for advocacy and action* – page 10

## **Abbreviations and acronyms** – page 12

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## **The Network**

Firstly, The Network is 10 years old this year! The very first newsletter (and launch of The Network) took place in May 1999. Many thanks to those organisations and individuals who have supported us over the last ten years – we have seen some huge developments, but also recognise just how much more there is to do!

Secondly, if you haven't visited our website ([www.seapn.org.uk](http://www.seapn.org.uk)) recently, please do have a look. New features include:

- The listing of an increasing number of events (including those that would formerly have been advertised via Welcome To Your Library)
- New facilities that allow information on key topics to be pulled together from across the site – currently featured are Looked-after children & young people, and LGBTs
- A similar facility to highlight information that is UK-wide or relating to the four Home Nations.

## **Did you see ...?**

### ***RecordKeeping***

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> has some interesting articles, including:

- Peter Devitt and Daniel Scott-Davies “The Royal Air Force Museum ‘Airmen in Exile’ Project” which outlines ways in which material by European citizens who served in the RAF in WW2 has been made accessible [pp14-17]
- James Towe “Changes in society” which shows how North Yorkshire County Council Record Office used some of its material with young offenders [pp22-24].

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<sup>1</sup> *RecordKeeping* December 2008. Further information from: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/recordkeeping.htm/>.

## **Adults Learning**

The latest issue<sup>2</sup> has a number of interesting articles, including:

- James Lee “A duty to protect” which argues the importance of asylum-seekers learning English [pp24-26]
- Jan Novitzky “Towards a health literacy curriculum” [pp28-20]
- Sam Davis “Making an impact” which looks at how one PCT has implemented a health literacy strategy to assist people with type 2 diabetes manage the disease – this involves work with basic skills, one-to-one training, finding new ways of presenting health information [pp30-31].

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## **Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government**

### ***Guidance on building a local sense of belonging***

This new guidance<sup>3</sup> from DCLG looks at building a sense of belonging in a community:

“Last year we worked with the Citizenship Foundation to publish the Citizens’ Day Framework. This guidance is the next step and suggests ways in which councils, voluntary groups and other organisations can encourage a sense of belonging. There are some excellent examples of good practice – which you may want to consider or adapt to your own circumstances. I hope that you will find this a useful resource if you want to support local residents to have a greater sense of belonging to their village, town or city.” [Taken from the foreword by Hazel Blears, p4]

This work builds on the guidance document, *Cohesion delivery framework: overview*<sup>4</sup>, which was published last summer<sup>5</sup>, and which outlines eight key principles on cohesion:

- “Cohesion is relevant to all parts of the country
- Building cohesion has wider benefits to individuals, groups and communities
- Solutions are local and one size does not fit all

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<sup>2</sup> *Adults Learning*, 20 (5) January 2009. Further details from:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/Publications/Periodicals/AdultsLearning/default.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> *Guidance on building a local sense of belonging*. Communities and Local Government, 2009 (ISBN: 978-1-4098-0963-0). Available to download as a pdf (639 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1112832.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Cohesion delivery framework: overview*. DCLG, 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-1-4098-0219-8). Available to download as a pdf (250 kb) from:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/898656.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Reviewed in *The Network Newsletter* 87, July 2008, p5.

- Cohesion is about all parts of the community, not just race and faith issues
- Improving cohesion is about multiple actions tackling a range of causal factors
- Improving cohesion is about both targeted actions and taking account of cohesion in the delivery of other services
- Good practice in one place may not be transferable to another – but it may inspire an action that will work in another place
- Delivery is about common sense solutions that will help people get along better, that is what will make the vision a reality.” [p6 of *Framework*]

What it does is lay out examples of good practice under the following headings:

- Communicating the vision
- Using history, key events in the past and local memories
- Using geographical features and key buildings, parks and other symbols
- Using symbolic events – celebrations, festival, carnivals
- Using activities and shared interests – arts and culture, sport
- Welcoming new residents
- Using activities to promote empowerment.

The case studies are useful examples of work across the country, including West Yorkshire’s “This is Our History” archives project.

This is a useful guide to practical work to build cohesion and empowerment, recommended.

There is a companion report:

### ***Guidance on meaningful interaction***

This guidance<sup>6</sup> sets out the benefits gained from “meaningful interactions” between people:

- “Encouraging interaction is about making it easier for people to do all the things they would do naturally, but feel unable to – whether that’s about the design of public space, supporting volunteering and clubs, or supporting people who bring others together
- Interaction is an integral part of other activities – so if you wish to take specific actions to bring people together from different backgrounds,

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<sup>6</sup> *Guidance on meaningful interaction: how encouraging positive relationships between people can help build community cohesion.* Communities and Local Government, 2009 (ISBN: 978-1-4098-0961-6). Available to download as a pdf (539 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1112887.pdf>.

then it is most effective to make this a natural outcome of another activity

- Deciding to support interaction means that your organisation may need to make a commitment to it, as success depends on sustaining this work not one off events
- You may wish to promote its benefits, to promote a “culture of civility” and help people feel they have a voice ...” [p6]

Again, it includes a number of examples of good practice, including Tower Hamlets’s Idea Stores and the Living Library.

### ***New opportunities: fair chances for the future***

This new White Paper<sup>7</sup> has just been published (and you may well have seen media coverage of it!)

The key thrust of the Paper is how the UK can build “an upwardly mobile society” [p4]:

“There is more to do to enable everyone, whatever their background, to fulfil their talents and potential. But with the right policies, we can both raise the overall level of skills, incomes and the number of good jobs, while at the same time building a fair society. “ [p4]

To do this, we need to position the economy:

“This White Paper identifies a series of steps we must take as a country in the coming months and years. They include:

- placing the UK in the forefront of global research and innovation;
- transforming our national digital infrastructure;
- promoting enterprise at every level from the schoolroom to the boardroom;
- taking a new strategic approach to encouraging the development of innovative industry, including tailored support for sectors in the UK economy, such as low carbon technology industry; and
- personalising high-quality public services that consumers increasingly demand. “ [p5]

However, at the same time, we need to find ways of increasing people’s capabilities; these include:

- “support for parents and children in the early years which have a profound impact on later life chances;
- success in school, as educational attainment at 16 remains one of the most important determinants of future success;

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<sup>7</sup> *New opportunities: fair chances for the future*. Cm 7533. The Stationery Office, 2009 £26.60 (ISBN: 978-0-10-175332-6). Available to download as a pdf (974.59 Kb) from: <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/media/9102/NewOpportunities.pdf>.

- investment during the critical transition years from compulsory education through further and higher education and into work; and
- fresh opportunities to get on in work throughout people's lives, ensuring they have continuing chances to fulfil their potential. " [p6]

Finally, the Paper stresses the importance of supporting families and empowering communities as the means of achieving this necessary growth in capabilities.

## **New Opportunities website**

The Government has launched a new, semi-participative section on its website<sup>8</sup> devoted to the White Paper and giving easy access to it, chapter by chapter.

## **New Opportunities White Paper – “Inspiring Communities” policy**

As a response to the “Aspiration and attainment” discussion paper<sup>9, 10</sup>, DCLG have announced, via the White Paper, the launch of this new policy and funding stream:

“In some deprived communities, as well as economic disadvantage, lower expectations and low self-esteem can hold people back. So we will establish a new Inspiring Communities campaign to bring together local businesses, schools, agencies, parents and the wider neighbourhood to find innovative ways to raise the aspirations of young people. We will develop new opportunities and, crucially, work to build up the confidence and motivation that young people and their families need to take up what is already on offer.

The community can play a particular role in helping support young people when they leave school. Evidence shows that providing chances for local volunteering can prevent young people from feeling excluded from wider society and help unlock their potential. We are supporting the independent charity v with £117 million of funding to help provide thousands of new volunteering opportunities across the country. This will include 1,000 new full-time volunteering places within the public sector where the support and training provided will equip young people with the skills to find permanent jobs.

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<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.hmg.gov.uk/newopportunities.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> *Aspiration and attainment amongst young people in deprived communities: analysis and discussion paper*. Cabinet Office (Social Exclusion Task Force Short Studies), 2008. Available to download as a pdf (870 kb) from: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/109339/aspirations\\_evidence\\_pack.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/109339/aspirations_evidence_pack.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> This was covered in *Network Newsletter* 92 December 2008, pp3-4. See: [http://www.seapn.org.uk/content\\_files/files/newsletter\\_ns\\_92.pdf](http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/newsletter_ns_92.pdf).

Public bodies, including local government, have a crucial role in helping people to fulfil their potential and in removing the barriers that hold people back. We have already legislated to require public authorities to tackle the inequality that arises from race, gender, or disability. But we know that inequality does not just come from your gender or ethnicity, your sexual orientation or your disability. Co-existing and interwoven with these specific inequalities lies the persistent inequality of social class.

Given the important role that public policies and services play in supporting individuals to make the most of their talents, we will consider legislating to make clear that tackling socio-economic disadvantage and narrowing gaps in outcomes for people from different backgrounds is a core function of key public services.” [p10]

### ***Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility***

At the same time, this report<sup>11</sup> from the Commission chaired by Martin Narey (Chief Executive of Barnardo’s) has been published, again with considerable media attention!

It concluded:

“Britain is a society of persistent inequality. The life-chances of children in Britain today remain heavily dependent on the circumstances of their birth. As we set out in the themed chapters of this report, children born to poorer families have less favourable outcomes across every sphere of life. Inequality creates barriers to upward mobility. These barriers impede progress at all stages: from before birth into the early years, through primary and secondary school and into the adult labour market. They are revealed in the measurable gaps in educational attainment, in differential employment opportunities and in health inequalities.” [p4]

It focuses its attention on six key areas: child poverty, early years, education, employment, health and communities (and makes some strong points about the value of reading).

### **What does social mobility mean for literacy?**

You might also like to read the National Literacy Trust’s January “Viewpoint”<sup>12</sup> (from Jonathan Douglas), which asks:

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<sup>11</sup> *Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility*. Commission on Social Mobility, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (817 kb) from: <http://www.socialmobilitycommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/social-mobility-report-final.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> See: [http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/About/NLTperspective.html?dm\\_i=503786012#january](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/About/NLTperspective.html?dm_i=503786012#january).

“But is the current conversation about social mobility just policy window-dressing or could it support us in our approach to promoting social justice through literacy?”

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## Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***Bridging community divides ...***

This new report<sup>13</sup> summarises research into community bridge-building.

“In an increasingly diverse Britain the UK government sees a pressing need to support and encourage what it has called ‘community cohesion’. Many public policies are focused on getting people involved and promoting better community relationships across faith and ethnic divides.

Activities taking place within local areas have the greatest potential to make a real difference to how people feel about members of other faith and ethnic groups. Yet we know little about the practical challenges facing grassroots bridge building projects.

So our study was intended to increase understanding about the difference that bridge building activities can make and what happens in local bridge building projects. What are the challenges they face and how can their good experiences be shared?

The study therefore focused on local organisations and projects which have a vision to build links and bridges between people from different faith groups, from different ethnic groups or from different countries of origin. We looked at the activities they are running, how they are managed and how they are funded.” [p4]

The report looks at:

- Impact of grassroots bridge building
- Activities – the groups surveyed used social activities; education activities and citizenship programmes; dialogue and conflict prevention
- Characteristics of successful activities: being rooted in the community; having inspirational leaders; clear bridge-building vision and values; creating and using networks; willingness to take risks; investing time and energy
- Organisation – looks at common approaches across the organisations surveyed, including, for example, involving volunteers
- Funding

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret Harris and Patricia Young. *Bridging community divides: the impact of grassroots bridge building activities*. Institute for Voluntary Action Research, 2009 (ISBN 978-0-9561725-0-1). Available to download as a pdf (268.87 kb) from: [http://www.ivar.org.uk/documents/ivar\\_bbreport.pdf](http://www.ivar.org.uk/documents/ivar_bbreport.pdf).

- Challenges – including people who are resistant to bridge-building activities; cultural and religious barriers; lack of political support
- Key messages.

The key message for practitioners is:

“Most study participants said that the most important thing practitioners can do is to listen to the community and approach bridge building activities with an open mind. This allows bridge building activities to be rooted in their communities and respond to their needs.” [p18]

This is a useful reminder of the importance of community bridge-building – and some of the issues that need to be tackled for it to be effective.<sup>14</sup>

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## Disability issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### ***Rethinking disability representation in museums and galleries***

The RCMG (University of Leicester)<sup>15</sup> has just published their report<sup>16</sup> of this important piece of work.

“Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums and Galleries (RDR) was a large scale, experimental project which developed new approaches to the interpretation of disability and the representation of disabled people’s lives and experiences in museums and galleries in the UK. It aimed to develop politically aware approaches to interpretation drawing on the social model of disability. Working with nine partner museums the project resulted in exhibitions, displays and educational programmes which offered to visitors, and to society more broadly, alternative (non-prejudiced) ways of thinking about disability.

The nine projects were:

- Talking about... Disability and Art, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
- Life Beyond the Label, Colchester Castle Museum
- Lives in Motion, Glasgow Museum of Transport
- Conflict and Disability, Imperial War Museum London
- I stand corrected?, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery

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<sup>14</sup> Source: National Youth Agency eYPU, 240, 4 February 2009.

<sup>15</sup> See: <http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/research/rcmg.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Jocelyn Dodd, Richard Sandell, Debbie Jolly and Ceri Jones (editors). *Rethinking disability representation in museums and galleries*. RCMG, 2008 (ISBN: 978-1-898489-46-7). The report is available to download as a pdf or in Word from: <http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/research/pub1129.html>, as is the DVD. Hard copies are also available – contact Ceri Jones ([cj36@le.ac.uk](mailto:cj36@le.ac.uk)) for more information.

- Behind the shadow of Merrick, Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum
- Daniel Lambert: an 'exalted and convivial mind', Stamford Museum
- One in Four, Tyne and Wear Museums
- A Whitby Fisherman's Life: 'Stumper' Dryden through the lens of Frank Meadows Sutcliffe, Whitby Museum."<sup>17</sup>

The report begins by outlining the social model of disability; then, after a scene-setting introduction, it goes on to include:

- Perspectives on disability representation
  - "Shaping representation: the role of disabled people"
  - "Why does representation matter?"
  - "Advancing museum practice"
- Museum experiments, which describes what the nine projects did, together with lots of photos of the resulting work
- Reflections on practice, in which the nine projects consider the impact on their museums/galleries, their visitors, and their own practice
- Visitor responses, a fascinating glimpse of people's 'take' on this work
- Getting started, a brief flowchart to follow if you want to develop similar practice
- It also includes a DVD of the film, "Behind the Shadow of Merrick", made as part of the project work by David Hevey for the Royal London Hospital Archives and Museum.

The report is immensely readable, and gives you a real insight into the work that the nine project teams put into their work – it demonstrates how, with some re-viewing of objects, we can completely alter perspectives, and can bring to the fore people who, in the past, to borrow the title of the pilot work that led to this, were "buried in the footnotes".

Highly recommended.

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## **Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations**

### ***Culture and learning: a new agenda for advocacy and action***

This report<sup>18</sup> has just been published online with the intention of sparking even further consultation.

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<sup>17</sup> Taken from: <http://www.le.ac.uk/museumstudies/research/pub1129.html>.

It is the outcome of a series of consultation seminars held in five cultural venues across England, and of interviews with groups of teachers from different parts of the country, plus written responses to a Demos Consultation Paper<sup>19</sup>.

“The consultation has clearly revealed a shared belief that cultural learning has the potential to transform people’s lives, and that realising this potential will require changing the way in which cultural learning is valued and practised in schools and other learning organisations. The process has further emphasised that embedding culture and learning into the governance structures of cultural organisations is a crucial part of such a transformation.

The consultation shows that, while there is undoubtedly much good practice already in place, there is a strong need to explore and promote ways in which cultural organisations, schools, colleges and other learning settings can work together successfully to develop consistently high-quality cultural learning experiences, in sustainable ways.” [p3]

It makes ten recommendations, focusing on:

- Central government
- Local and regional partnerships
- Schools
- Cultural organisations
- Inclusion – “Educational and cultural organisations should strive to include those children, young people and adults who do not have access to cultural learning opportunities that may give them enjoyment and self-fulfilment, provide new skills, feed their talents, and open up new prospects for personal and career development.” [p7]
- Training and professional development (primarily for teachers)
- Funding
- Sharing and evaluating
- Working together.

“This report is being published online in December 2008 – not as an end point, but rather as a starting point for further work in 2009 by providing a platform for future discussion, collaboration and action. In early 2009, the Culture and Learning Consortium and Steering Group will publish a print

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<sup>18</sup> Rogers, Rick *et al.* *Culture and learning: a new agenda for advocacy and action – feedback and recommendations from a public consultation by the Culture and Learning Consortium.* Culture & Learning Consortium, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (580.02 kb) from: <http://www.cultureandlearning.org.uk/CD%20Culture%20&%20Learning%20Online%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> John Holden. *Culture and learning: towards a new agenda.* Demos (Consultation Paper), 2008. Available to download as a pdf (564.72 kb) from: <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/C&LFinal26Feb08.pdf>.

version of this report; they will then convene a symposium involving key stakeholders in cultural learning to review the recommendations in the report and discuss ways of taking them forward.” [p42]

This is an important paper (and debate) – recommended.<sup>20</sup>

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

DCLG = Department of Communities and Local Government

RCMG = Research Centre for Museums and Galleries

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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:

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<sup>20</sup> Source: Jane Sillis “A Culture and Learning Alliance would boost collaboration between education and culture”, *Museums Journal* “Comment” column, February 2009, p17.