

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.

Contents List

Did you see ...?

- *Museums Journal* – page 2
- *ARC Magazine* – page 2

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

- “Our Museum” – page 3
- *A review of the social impacts of culture and sport* – page 5

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *Needs and characteristics of young adults in custody ...* - page 9

Health & Wellbeing issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- “Making Every Contact Count” – page 10

Disability issues – Other Agencies

- “How to make sure learners with vision impairment are socially included” – page 12

LGBTQ issues – Other Agencies

- *Prejudice and pride ...* - page 13

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

- *The North East of England’s Case for Culture* – page 14

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 16

Did you see ...?

Museums Journal

The July/August issue¹ includes a number of interesting articles including:

- Nicola Sullivan “Adapting in an era of change”, which reports on the current financial position and at ways that museums are becoming resilient. The article also includes a box with a short piece by Moira Sinclair (Director of PHF), “Museums are not doing enough to show social impact”, which draws on DCMS-led research² that argues that “Museums are lagging behind other sectors when it comes to demonstrating how their work has a social impact” [pp12-13]
- Simon Stephens “On the waterfront”, an interview with Steph Mastoris about the 10th anniversary of the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea – the article stresses the “access for all agenda” [pp32-35].

ARC Magazine

The August issue³ focuses on education and learning, and includes, for example:

- Glynn Kelso “Cabinets of curiosity: an imaginative approach to community learning”, which looks at some of the work that PRONI is doing with excluded communities [pp11-12]
- Sara Kinsey, Daniel Lancaster and Rachael Porter “Our past, their future”, which looks briefly at work that HSBC Archives is undertaking with a group of young people who are usually taught outside the classroom [pp21-22]
- Katrina Legg and Kim Collis “Sandfields – a community built on steel”, which, funded by the Welsh Government’s “Changing Cultures” programme, is “addressing issues around child poverty and inequalities in access to culture” [pp26-29].

¹ *Museums Journal*, Jul/Aug 2015.

² Peter Taylor *et al.* *A review of the social impacts of culture and sport*. DCMS (CASE Programme), 2015. Available to download as a pdf (1740 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416279/A_review_of_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf. See below for further information.

³ *ARC Magazine*, Aug 2015.

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

“Our Museum”

This new website⁴:

“[...] shares learning, thinking and case studies mostly from *Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners*, a Paul Hamlyn Foundation programme to facilitate a process of organisational change within museums and galleries committed to active partnership with their communities. The site is aimed at museums, galleries, community groups and organisations, and funding bodies wanting to understand how to embed participatory practice.”⁵

Between 2012-2015, the “Our Museum” programme worked with:

- Hackney Museum
- Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives
- The Lightbox, Woking
- The National Museum of Wales
- Belfast Exposed
- Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums
- Glasgow Museums.

They also worked with:

- Ryedale Folk Museum, between January 2012 and June 2014
- Museum of East Anglian Life, between January 2012 and February 2015.⁶

Just to recap, the work was intended to have the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1: rooted in local needs
Museums and galleries understand their role within their localities: they are effectively informed of, and respond to, the range of their communities’ needs and values, and are aware of and initiate opportunities for partnerships with communities and other sectors to meet local needs.
- Outcome 2: community agency
Communities are sustainably at the core of all the values, strategies, structures and work of museums and galleries: actively and regularly participating and collaborating in dialogue and decision-making about the work of the museum/gallery.
- Outcome 3: capability-building

⁴ See: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/?welcome=1>.

⁵ Taken from: abridged press release, 6 Jul 2015.

⁶ Taken from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/about/>.

Museums and galleries play an effective role in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity: preparing and helping people to be engaged in their communities, to articulate their voices, to find employment or volunteering opportunities in the heritage sector and elsewhere; and supporting staff to learn how to work with communities.

- Outcome 4: reflection
Museums and galleries embed reflective practice into their work: internally, with community partners, and across the sector, to ensure ongoing reflection, dialogue and openness to challenge, alternative values and working methods.⁷

Four reports have been published, which “share some of the thinking, learning and outcomes of the programme and provide context for the resources on this website”⁸. These are:

- “Emerging learning”⁹
- *A five-year perspective from a critical friend*¹⁰
- *Whose cake is it anyway?*¹¹
- *Is Revisiting Collections working?*¹²

The website:

[...] currently has over 50 resources (videos, animations and written documents) to use and share and more are being added. It is a sort of ‘travel survival kit’, a guide to help organisations on their change journey to become more participatory. The resources all relate to different aspects of organisational change, and reflect the learning from the *Our Museum* programme that to embed participation successfully requires lots of changes across the whole organisation.

The resources are organised into five categories, each with an animated introduction: [Governance and leadership](#); [Staff professional development](#); [Engaging with community partners](#); [Learning and](#)

⁷ Taken from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/about/>.

⁸ Taken from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/what-is-participation/>.

⁹ Piotr Bienkowski. *Communities and museums as active partners: emerging learning from the Our Museum initiative*. PHF, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (204.39 kb) from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Our-Museum-emerging-learning.pdf>.

¹⁰ Bernadette Lynch. *Our Museum: a five-year perspective from a critical friend*. PHF, 2015. Available to download as a pdf (1001 kb) from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-five-year-perspective-from-a-critical-friend.pdf>.

¹¹ Bernadette Lynch. *Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK*. PHF, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (381.75 kb) from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Whose-cake-is-it-anyway-report.pdf>.

¹² Caroline Reed. *Is Revisiting Collections working?* [Full report] PHF, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1590 kb) from: <http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Is-Revisiting-Collections-working-full-report.pdf>. [Summary report available to download as a pdf (1190 kb) from: http://ourmuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Is-Revisiting-Collections-working_summary.pdf.

[evaluation](#); and [Structures](#). There are also different ways to explore the site, through free searching, or selections, for example for communities, sector organisations and influencers, or sceptics.”¹³, ¹⁴

A review of the social impacts of culture and sport

This report¹⁵ from DCMS was published in March¹⁶.

“Using a systematic review of relevant literature, this research focuses principally on four main types of social impact: (i) improved health, (ii) reduced crime, (iii) increased social capital and (iv) improved education outcomes. In addition, links to subjective wellbeing (SWB) are examined; and a category 'multiple social impacts' reports on literature where more than one social impact is considered.” [p8]

The evidence for the beneficial impacts of sport is very interesting, eg:

“The most convincing evidence concerns health benefits, which prevent or reduce physical and mental health problems and save on health care costs. There are some negative health effects from sports injuries, typically for younger people, but in comparison the positive health benefits from sport are more substantial, population-wide and particularly important to older people.

There is also strong evidence that sports participation improves pro-social behaviour and reduces crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly for young men. This includes evidence of lower levels, for sports participants compared with non-participants, of recidivism, drunk driving, use of illegal drugs, crime and suspensions at school, property crime, shoplifting and juvenile crime. The main exceptions to this positive evidence are an association of sport with increased violence and illegal (NB underage) alcohol consumption.

In terms of the social capital impacts from sport, there is evidence that sport is a type of 'social glue', i.e. contributing 'bonding' capital by increasing social connectedness and a sense of belonging. Positive outcomes in studies include reduced social and ethnic tensions, and more collective action and community involvement through sport,

¹³ Taken from: abridged press release, 6 Jul 2015.

¹⁴ Source: email from Tracy-Ann Smith, Consultant, Our Museum web resource, 14 Jul 2015.

¹⁵ Peter Taylor *et al.* *A review of the social impacts of culture and sport*. DCMS (CASE Programme), 2015. Available to download as a pdf (1740 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416279/A_review_of_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf. Also:

The social benefits of engagement with culture and sport: appendices to think piece. DCMS, 2015. Available to download as a pdf (2780 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416352/Appendices.pdf.

¹⁶ ... but the first reference to it seems to have been in the July/August *MJ* – please see above.

particularly volunteering. The evidence doesn't just point to positive social capital impacts from sport – for example, two studies identify cases of sports clubs reinforcing social exclusion.

There is considerable evidence of the positive impact of sport and exercise on educational outcomes, although much of this evidence is from the USA.” [p8]

The evidence relating to the arts is also interesting and positive:

“The evidence points to positive associations between participation in arts and health, social capital, crime and education. The evidence of beneficial effects of the arts on health extends to clinical and non-clinical populations, and physical and mental health. A number of studies evidence the health benefits of music, both for the general population and for stroke victims.

Most of the research into the relationship between the arts and crime focuses on the effects of arts programmes for offenders. The evidence in such studies testifies to beneficial effects on intermediate outcomes such as communication skills, teamwork and self concepts, which are important antecedents for a reduced likelihood of re-offending. Evidence of actual reductions in offending as a result of arts participation is much less prevalent.

The best evidenced relationship between arts participation and social impacts relates to social capital, including a number of studies which focus on young people. Studies in general testify that cultural participation can contribute to social relationships, community cohesion, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger. A majority of studies also supports positive links between arts participation and social inclusion, suggesting that cultural participation results in an improved capacity for cultural citizenship, boosting confidence and developing social skills which lead to more effective engagement with the community at large.

Evidence of the relationship between arts participation and education impacts shows positive effects on intermediate outcomes (e.g. self concepts, improved relationships between staff, students and parents) but less evidence links arts participation to final outcomes (NB education attainment).

Several studies report correlations between arts activity and a range of social impact related outcomes, such as attitudinal change, civic engagement, academic performance and professional development.” [p9]

The report has less to say about heritage and museums, libraries and archives [MLA]:

“Heritage and MLA are lagging considerably behind the other sectors in both the quantity and quality of evidence on their social impacts. They are particularly deficient in hard evidence, with many of the studies either

reviewing the potential of these sectors for delivering social impacts, or assessing intermediate rather than final outcomes.” [p9]

In terms of heritage, the report concludes that:

“Two areas of social impact are identified in the review in relation to heritage – social capital and multiple impacts. One study demonstrates that a historic built environment has a significant and positive relationship with social capital for adults. Another study uses a cross section survey to show that participation in Heritage Lottery Fund projects helps to maintain and deepen the skills, knowledge and social networks of volunteers and to increase their sense of belonging to their local communities.

However, most of the studies for this sector lack hard evidence on the development of social impacts through heritage. Much of the limited literature is more an assessment of the potential of heritage to contribute to individual, social or economic impacts, rather than empirical assessments of the scale and nature of such impact creation. The little evidence of social impact creation contained in the literature is largely of a qualitative nature, which makes generalisation problematic.

The systematic literature review discloses no publications for review on the effects of heritage on health, wellbeing, crime, or education as social impacts. However, as is the case with the arts above, the lack of literature may not be entirely due to the lack of research studies. As one expert commentator on this project's steering group suggested, there might be a shortage of literature but there is more literature than this review has revealed. A contributory factor could be, as identified in Chapter 2, that the search strings used to construct the CASE database include broad terms such as 'impact' and 'benefit' but not specific social benefit terms relevant to the current project.

We can only conclude on heritage and social impacts, therefore, by stating that the evidence base is weak in comparison with sport and the arts, but the systematic review process has undoubtedly missed some important references.” [p96]

In relation to MLAs:

“For social capital, education and wellbeing impacts, the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) literature is more aspirational than evidential, with many references identifying the sector's potential for social impacts, and case study professionals' perceptions of such impacts, but few providing empirical analysis of the sector's contribution to social impacts. When evidence is presented, it is typically in the form of qualitative research from case studies, from which generalisation is problematic.

The most obvious way in which MLA promotes social capital is through the use of volunteers. Other elements of social capital are less evident in the literature reviewed, including social inclusion where the contribution

of MLA is mixed, with a potential to engage with social inclusion issues, but also some exclusionary perceptions of MLA. Volunteers are the most tangible manifestation of social capital in museums and galleries.

Evidence on the effects of MLA on education impacts from the systematic review can only be described as weak and with mixed results.

The literature on the relationship between MLA and wellbeing revealed by the systematic review is confined to one advocacy study for museums, and two positive studies of a particular form of therapy using books and poetry – bibliotherapy.

The systematic literature review disclosed no publications for review on the effects of MLA on health or crime.” [p100]

The point made in relation to heritage about the search strings used does highlight a major gap in this work. The strings (listed in Appendix 3) are mostly broader, social policy terms (eg social capital, regeneration, wellbeing) and do not include any specific, user-related search-terms (such as looked-after young people, migrants, literacy, dementia) – use of some people-related terminology would, I think, have brought a far wider range of sources of evidence.

I also wondered why, although now dated, other sources had not been included, particularly *Taking part*¹⁷ for archives and *Open to all?*¹⁸ for public libraries – there is certainly some evidence of social impact in both.

Finally, a lot of evidence was produced via “Inspiring Learning for All” and the Generic Learning and Generic Social Outcomes¹⁹ and could have added to this study.

All that said, however, the conclusion about MLAs is probably, sadly, still true:

“There is a general lack of evidence regarding MLA's social impacts, despite a general professional awareness of the need for such evidence and a common perception that social impacts are generated by the sector.” [p105]

This report is important, and needs much wider discussion – for example, can we make an urgent start on collecting evidence of our impact?

¹⁷ *Taking part: an audit of social inclusion work in archives*. The National Council on Archives, 2001. Available to download as a pdf (1850 kb) from:

<http://www.archives.org.uk/images/documents/takingpart.pdf>.

¹⁸ Dave Muddiman *et al.* *Open to all? The public library and social exclusion*. Vol 1: Overview and conclusions. Resource (Library and Information Commission Research Report 84), 2000. Available to download as a pdf (839.6 kb) from:

<http://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/OtA-volume-1-final-version-Sept-211.pdf>.

¹⁹ See, for example:

http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/generic/social/section9_casestudies.html.

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

Needs and characteristics of young adults in custody ...

This new report²⁰:

“[...] summarises the needs and characteristics of young adults (18–20 years old) on reception to custody. Data for this report come from Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR), a longitudinal cohort study of 1,435 adult prisoners sentenced to between one month and four years in prison in 2005 and 2006, and the Police National Computer (PNC). The report compares the characteristics and needs of young adults in custody with prisoners aged 21 years and over.” [p1]

Key findings include:

“Young adult SPCR respondents in custody shared a number of needs and background characteristics with SPCR prisoners aged 21 and over, with all ages reporting high levels of need in terms of employment, education and substance misuse. However there were a number of differences, which included:

- Young adults were more likely than older prisoners to report issues with schooling, with large proportions reporting having regularly played truant (72% compared with 57%) and having been temporarily excluded (80%) or permanently expelled (58%) from school (80% compared with 61% and 58% compared with 40%, respectively).
- Young adults who reported being unemployed in the four weeks before custody were more likely to report that they were looking for work or training during this time (62%) compared with older prisoners (35%). Young adults were also more likely to state that having a job when released would stop them from re-offending (81% compared with 66% of older prisoners).
- Fewer young adults reported needing help finding a place to live when released (23% compared with 39% of older prisoners).
- Young adults entering custody were less likely than prisoners aged 21 and over to report needing help with a medical problem (10% compared to 20%) and less likely to be assessed as suffering from both anxiety and depression (15% compared with 27%).
- Compared with older prisoners, young adults were less likely to report needing help with a drug problem (15% compared with 33%). Young adults were less likely than older prisoners to report having used a Class A drug in the four weeks before custody

²⁰ Kim Williams. *Needs and characteristics of young adults in custody: results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) survey*. Ministry of Justice (“Analytical Summary”), 2015. Available to download as a pdf (444.14 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/449586/Young-adults-in-custody.pdf.

(31% compared with 45%). A smaller proportion of young adults than older prisoners linked their offending behaviour with drugs (25% compared with 46%). On the other hand, a larger proportion of young adults compared with older prisoners linked their offending behaviour with alcohol use (42% compared with 30%) and stated that not drinking too much alcohol would be important in stopping them from re-offending in the future (47% compared with 32%).” [p1]

This is a useful background guide when planning provision for young offenders.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

“Making Every Contact Count”

I originally came across this initiative in relation to training being organised for library staff in Southend:

“Training from Southend Adult Community College has been arranged for frontline Library staff and volunteers. Essentially the training is a public health information session, contextualised for our local community. It is an excellent fit with the Universal Health Offer and libraries' commitment to provide public health information, promotion, signposting and referrals.

Previous participants have left the sessions with increased knowledge about signposting locally and increased confidence in talking to customers about health. Eight training sessions have been organised [...]”^{21, 22}

Simon Wallace put me in touch with Jessica Russell (Community Outreach, Southend Adult Community College), and Jessica has provided the links and other information for this piece.

The LGA has produced a small collection²³ of case-studies of MECC in action, as well as setting the scene via the Foreword which is written by Councillor Izzi Seccombe:

“Making every contact count (MECC) is an approach to improving health and reducing health inequalities developed by the NHS and local government.

²¹ Southend *Lowdown: culture edition*, 7 Aug 2015.

²² Source: email from Simon Wallace.

²³ *Making every contact count: taking every opportunity to improve health and wellbeing – report*. LGA, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (263.28 kb) from:

<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/5854661/Making+every+contact+count+-+taking+every+opportunity+to+improve+health+and+wellbeing/c23149f0-e2d9-4967-b45c-fc69c86b5424>

Every contact with a customer should be seen as an opportunity to encourage healthier lifestyle choices. But tackling sensitive issues such as weight loss, smoking cessation or alcohol abuse requires expertise, confidence and knowledge in order to deliver the message effectively.

Making every contact count including behaviour change interventions, can lead to improvements in people's health and well-being, reduce avoidable premature mortality linked to poor lifestyle choices, reduce health wellbeing and help people better manage long term conditions.” [p8]

In the South Tyneside case-study, library staff are mentioned:

“Library staff will also be under going the training in the coming year with a view to them playing a key role in promoting Change for Life work and running awareness-raising campaigns, such as the local stop smoking week.” [p12]

As well as the LGA report, there is also the MECC website²⁴ which has two main areas:

- MECC in action, which includes advice, resources, background information and case studies
- Training & Resources, which includes training materials, e-learning courses, and personal assessment tools, as well as brief information on lifestyle (affordable warmth, alcohol, and smoking cessation).

Finally, the NHS have produced a practical implementation guide²⁵:

“Sections 1 – 5 are aimed at both strategic and operational roles and give a good understanding of:

- what MECC involves
- the evidence and policy for MECC
- some of the potential barriers to
- implementing MECC
- the core components and implementation
- approach to MECC
- the benefits of MECC
- your role and responsibility in MECC.

Section 6 and 7 are primarily aimed at those who have a role for implementing MECC within their organisation. These sections explain how to embed MECC and give practical tools and resources to support that process.” [p5]

²⁴ See: <http://www.makeeverycontactcount.co.uk/index.html>.

²⁵ Elaine Varley and Maureen Murfin. *An implementation guide and toolkit for making every contact count: using every opportunity to achieve health and wellbeing*. NHS, no date [c2014]. Available to download as a pdf (416.73 kb) from: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/mecc-guid-booklet.pdf>.

Jessica particularly recommended that we look at the diagram on p10 of the Implementation guide. This sets out a summary of the 'Behaviour Change Pathway' which involves four stages:

1. The MECC: "Promote the benefits of healthy living. Ask an individual about their lifestyle, if they want to make a change and respond with appropriate action"
2. "Identify the focus of a change by supporting an individual to review their lifestyle"
3. "Increase motivation and clarify the support needed"
4. "One-to-one support using SMART goals or specialist support"
[Quotations from p10]

Jessica suggests that library staff will be working at Stage 1.

Are other cultural sector staff taking part in this training? If there are, I can pull together examples of the training undertaken, and include these in a future Newsletter.

Disability issues – Other Agencies

"How to make sure learners with vision impairment are socially included"

This new post²⁶ on the RNIB website includes these valuable top tips on social inclusion for children with a visual impairment:

1. "Allow peers time with each other so that they can learn about each other and feel comfortable asking questions.
2. Enable the child to make independent choices, making sure that support staff know when to step back.
3. Make sure adaptations around the educational setting are appropriate for the child's independence.
4. Take time to explain reasons for choices and to respond to questions and answers.
5. Encourage peer friendships so that the child isn't dependent on adult help all day."²⁷

²⁶ Claire Thompson. "How to make sure learners with vision impairment are socially included", posted on RNIB website, 27 Jul 2015. See: http://www.rnib.org.uk/how-make-sure-learners-vision-impairment-are-socially-included?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Insight%20August%202015&utm_campaign=How%20to%20make%20sure%20learners%20with%20vision%20impairment%20and%20additional%20needs%20are%20socially%20included.

²⁷ Source: RNIB *Insight enews*, Aug 2015.

LGBTQ issues – Other Agencies

Prejudice and pride ...

This wide-ranging book²⁸ contains ‘stories’ selected by LGBT Youth North West.

“It is one of the outputs of a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project in the UK. The project was initiated by LGBT Youth North West, based in Manchester, and partnered with a number of organisations including Schools OUT UK.” [p13]

It was:

“[...] a participatory oral history project, where young people in youth groups were trained in oral histories then interviewed older LGBT activists, teachers, youth workers, and people who had used LGBT services.” [p14]

The contents are as follows:

- Chapter 1 gives a very brief history of the LGBT movement in the UK, particularly in Manchester, from 1967-2015.
- Chapter 2, “This is how we got here”, looks at the background to the project, the training the young people were engaged with, and how the interviewing developed.
- Chapter 3 looks at government policies and their effects on LGBT lives, as well as the medicalisation of LGBT lives.
- Chapter 4 (by Tony Fenwick from Schools OUT) looks at the effects of Section 28, and he also wrote Chapter 5 which looks at education and LGBT young people.
- Chapter 6, “Trials and Tribulations ...”, looks at the collaborations – but also the issues – between LGBT people.
- Chapter 7 tells the story of the building of the Manchester LGBT Centre; and Chapter 8 focuses on youth work with young LGBT people. Chapter 9 looks at “women’s work and activism, activism among lesbian and bisexual [...] young women and how feminism has been interwoven with all of the above.” [p144]
- Chapter 10 looks at “outness” – coming out, being outed by others, whether or not you need to come out in 2015. Chapter 11 looks at the alliances between LGBT people and other movements.

²⁸ Cliodhna Devlin (ed). *Prejudice and pride: LGBT activist stories from Manchester and beyond*. HammerOn Press, 2015. (ISBN-13: 978-0-9564507-8-4). Further info at: <http://hammeronpress.net/shop/paperback/prejudice-and-pride/>. “HammerOn Press are a small, yet steadily growing, grassroots publishing label based in Bristol, UK.” [Taken from: <http://hammeronpress.net/sample-page/about-hammeron/>].

- The final chapter is a planning-your-own-way-ahead.

The book is packed with oral history testimony, some of it gathered at the Schools OUT anniversary conference²⁹.

The intention is that the book can be read by individuals, but can also form part of a youth group activity, particularly where young people are starting to explore their sexuality and activism.

This title deserves a wide readership³⁰ – recommended.

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

The North East of England's Case for Culture

The NE region's vision³¹ for culture for the next 15 years was launched at Durham Castle on 29 July.

“This Case for Culture is a cohesive statement backed by the region's artists and creative practitioners, arts and heritage organisations; the business and private sector; all five universities and the further education sector as well as all twelve local authorities. It sets out a framework and powerful case for further investment from key partners [...]” [p3]

The full report begins by outlining the aims of the vision statement (plus its five aspirations – more on these below); how the vision has been put together; and the importance and (non-economic) value of culture.

It then introduces the five aspirations through to 2030:

1. Participation and reach – spreading the benefits of arts and heritage further to make sure everyone benefits
2. Children and young people – ensuring we continue to innovate and broaden access to culture for children and young people, for all the benefits this brings to future generations.

This includes:

“By 2030, we are committed to ensuring that every young person in the region has regular access to a cultural experience as part of

²⁹ John Vincent attended this conference and was interviewed as part of the project.

³⁰ Although it's published by a tiny press, my copy arrived very quickly via Waterstones.

³¹ *The North East of England's Case for Culture*. Case for Culture, 2015. Available to download as a pdf (5110 kb) from: <http://www.case4culture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/longer-document.pdf>. There is a summary (2320 kb) available from: <http://www.case4culture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Summary.pdf>.

their education at primary and at secondary level. We are also keen to work with partners on the creation of a Cultural Curriculum.” [p9]

3. Talent and progression – ensuring we attract and retain the very best cultural and creative talent, and provide routes for career progression to grow a more skilled and diverse workforce
4. Economic value – harnessing our potential to support economic growth and job creation, and attract more visitors to our region
5. Distinctiveness and innovation – creating a vibrant and distinctive region with an excellent quality of life – the right conditions for innovation and inward investment.

The report then goes on to look at how progress can be made through collaborative working; and, finally, at funding commitments. Partner organisations are already making commitments, and, in addition:

- “Secure the future of the North East Culture Partnership, with a move towards a formally established organisation, to give us the structure through which we can continue to coordinate our work and achieve our aspirations.
- Work with central government and national bodies such as Arts Council England, Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund, our local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and other partners to ensure the voice of our culture partnership is heard – on areas such as legislation, policy, practice and funding. We are in discussion with our key stakeholders and funders to establish mutually understood priorities for investment, enabling them to make good use of the local intelligence available via the North East Culture Partnership.
- Increase investment into culture in the region. We have estimated that there is already around £100M of investment from partners including local authorities, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, secured for new projects in the region over the next five years. We want to work with partners, including both Local Enterprise Partnerships in our region, other national bodies and European funding streams, to at least treble this figure to ensure we can deliver the ambitions of the Case for Culture.
- Encourage everyone working in the cultural sector to use the Case for Culture to make a case for investment in their plans and ambitions, to help achieve our five aspirations.” [p14]

Finally:

“The publication of Case for Culture is only the start. Initiated and driven by the cultural sector, it is perhaps best seen as a ‘springboard’ – inspiring and galvanising action and encouraging everyone with an interest in culture to collaborate, cooperate and work together.” [p14]

The Summary report includes some key points that are also worth highlighting here regarding Aspiration 1:

“There are still gaps in our provision and places that require further investment. Collectively, we will explore how we can proactively support areas where engagement is low, extending our reach to people who are still not benefiting. We will capitalise on the very latest innovations in digital technologies to reach out and engage with new audiences.

Our region has an ageing population and we will ensure that age is not a barrier to creating or accessing cultural experiences. We also recognise the opportunity that exists to build on the excellence of our sporting heritage and the powerful links that can be made with our digital and creative industries to help extend our reach in future. Libraries and museums have an important role to play, acting as a vital resource at the heart of many of our communities – and we have ambitious future plans to develop our offer.” [p4]

This is a very positive development (somewhat reminiscent of the regional plans prepared by MLA³²) – it will interesting to see how well this all comes together, and also whether similar plans emerge elsewhere.³³

Abbreviations and acronyms

DCMS = Department for Culture, Media & Sport
LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*
PHF = Paul Hamlyn Foundation
PRONI = Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RNIB = Royal National Institute of Blind People

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³² The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

³³ Source: Museums North East *e-bulletin*, 11 Aug 2015.