

# 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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## Introduction

As most pdfs now download in a format that doesn't have their file size readily available, I have stopped putting this in the footnotes – it used to say “Available to download as a pdf ( kb) from ...”, but will now omit the kb.

However, if anyone would like to continue to have the file size included, just let me know ([john@nadder.org.uk](mailto:john@nadder.org.uk)).

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## Did you see ...?

### *Information Professional*

The September 2018 issue includes:

- “Tech solutions for partially sighted users”, which briefly reports on Glasgow Libraries’ Digi-PALS scheme<sup>1</sup>, where volunteers work with library users to introduce them to accessible technology [p5]
- “Literacy bus celebrates Middlesbrough Reads”, which looks at the work of the National Literacy Trust Hub in Middlesbrough<sup>2</sup> [p11]
- “Diverse books for your library”, a brief notice of the list of books<sup>3</sup> published by CILIP as part of the Diversity Review [p12]
- “Hard-to-reach groups catered for by libraries”, a brief report of the publication of John Vincent’s report<sup>4</sup> to Arts Council England [p12].

### *Museums Journal*

The October 2018 issue includes a lot of interesting items:

- “Museums have a role in tackling loneliness” (Editorial), which highlights positive work in this area:

“There are very few of us who have not experienced loneliness at some points in our lives. If museums can play a bigger role in addressing the issue, the impact could be huge.” [p4]

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<sup>1</sup> There is more about this at: <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/learning-opportunities/digi-pals>.

<sup>2</sup> For more info, see: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/communities/middlesbrough/>.

<sup>3</sup> The list is available at: [https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/diverse\\_books](https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/diverse_books).

<sup>4</sup> John Vincent. *Libraries welcome everyone: six stories of diversity and inclusion from libraries in England*. Arts Council England, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE\\_Libraries\\_welcome\\_everyone\\_report\\_July18.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/ACE_Libraries_welcome_everyone_report_July18.pdf).

- “Accessibility info berated”, a brief report on the latest VocalEyes audit<sup>5</sup> which found that many access issues were still not being addressed [p5 – and see also the assessment on p15]
- Rob Sharp “Crunch time for Fusion as programme nears end”, which looks at the final stages of the Welsh Government programme<sup>6</sup> [p11]
- E-J Scott “Where can trans people call home in history?” (“Comment” column), which celebrates the Museum of Transology exhibition<sup>7</sup>, but also looks at the importance of pop-up work getting a permanent home [p14]
- Amber Alferoff “Reach out to your local community”, which outlines the MA’s “Partnerships with Purpose” project<sup>8</sup> [p15]
- “Voxpop: are museum websites engaging for disabled visitors?”, in which four people (including Matthew Cock, CE of VocalEyes and one of the authors of their report) comment on what positive initiatives have been developed – but also on how much more needs to be done [p15]
- Rob Sharp “Free radicals”, which finds that “[...] museums across the country are doing their bit to promote the acts of radicalism and protest that have influenced local and national politics”. [pp20-25] It mentions, for example:
  - “Rising Voices: Lisburn at Easter 1916”, an exhibition staged in 2016 by the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum<sup>9</sup>
  - The National Trust’s “Challenging Histories” programme<sup>10</sup>
  - The Linen Hall Library in Belfast’s “Divided Society” project<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *State of museum access 2018*. VocalEyes, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://vocaleyeyes.co.uk/state-of-museum-access-2018/>.

<sup>6</sup> Further information at: <https://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/tackling-poverty-through-culture/?lang=en>.

<sup>7</sup> This is exhibiting at Brighton Museum until April 2019 – see: <https://brightonmuseums.org.uk/brighton/exhibitions-displays/the-museum-of-transology/>.

<sup>8</sup> “The Museums Association (MA) is launching Partnerships with Purpose: Connecting museums with third sector organisations, a pilot scheme funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation that aims to stimulate partnerships that build social value. The pilot project will see the MA produce four networking events for museums, community groups and third sector organisations. The events will be spread across the UK to test the efficacy of this approach to increase participation in museums and assess the potential for a national programme.” [Taken from: Patrick Steel “MA lunches pilot scheme to connect museums with third sector”, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/news/04072018-ma-launches-pilot-scheme-to-connect-museums-with-third-sector>]

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.lisburnmuseum.com/events/rising-voices-lisburn-easter-1916/>.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/how-we-are-challenging-our-history>.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.dividedsociety.org/>.

- The People’s History Museum’s exhibition, “Represent: voices 100 years on”<sup>12</sup>
- “Homeless History Newcastle”<sup>13</sup>.
- Deborah Mulhearn “Captive audiences” [pp26-31]:
 

“Shedding light on hidden histories has been a growing trend in recent years as museums attempt to tell new stories in their displays. Opening former prisons – extreme examples of worlds that are hidden from most people – presents rich opportunities for museums to tackle issues such as crime, punishment and justice through displays, exhibitions, events and learning programmes.”
- Eleanor Mills “Winds of change”, in which she talks to Paul Reid (Director of the Black Cultural Archives) about “activism, history and how to make change happen.”<sup>14</sup> [pp32-35]

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

### ***Interrogating institutional practices in equity, diversity, and inclusion ...***

A previous survey<sup>15</sup> of museum staff in 2015:

“[...] found that the staff composition of museums in the United States is not remotely representative of the country’s population.” [p2]

In response to this:

“[...] museum directors, curators, conservators, professional organizations, and foundations have come forward to confront the challenge and launch programs that seek to address its many dimensions.” [p2]

This report<sup>16</sup> from Ithaca S+R<sup>17</sup> looks at eight case studies<sup>18</sup> to see how these issues are being tackled, and makes recommendations for organisational change. The recommendations include:

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://phm.org.uk/exhibitions/represent-voices-100-years-on/>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://homelesshistorynewcastle.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the BCA, see: <https://blackculturalarchives.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> “Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey”, see: <https://mellon.org/programs/arts-and-cultural-heritage/art-history-conservation-museums/demographic-survey/>.

<sup>16</sup> Liam Sweeney and Roger Schonfeld. *Interrogating institutional practices in equity, diversity, and inclusion: lessons and recommendations from case studies in eight art museums*. Ithaca S+R, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: [http://www.sr.ithaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Museum\\_Diversity\\_Capstone\\_Report\\_09202018.pdf](http://www.sr.ithaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Museum_Diversity_Capstone_Report_09202018.pdf).

## Organisational change

- Develop diverse applicant pools by broadening job requirements. Look for job candidates with non-traditional backgrounds who will bring valuable skills and new networks to the museum. Prepare the museum to be a welcoming place for these employees.
- Develop strong mentoring programmes
- Pay all interns
- Set targets for board member diversity and develop strategies to expand beyond familiar networks
- Structure regular opportunities to listen to employees, individually and in groups, on issues of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Create a venue for sharing ideas across departments and levels of seniority
- Identify instances where important institutional knowledge is siloed and create opportunities for distributing this knowledge through intra-institutional collaborations and partnerships

## Connecting with communities

- Understand who your museum serves and who it does not. Evaluate how different audiences view and use the museum
- Develop systematic pathways that can lead to museum employment, beginning with youth development programs that draw from communities proximate to the museum
- Consider the symbolic message that architecture and design send to historically underrepresented groups. Utilize evaluation tools to determine how best to connect architecture and the public
- Engage with controversies
- Partner with organisations that serve different communities in order to diversify the audience

## Evolving mission: collections and visitors

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<sup>17</sup> "Ithaka S+R provides research and strategic guidance to help the academic and cultural communities serve the public good and navigate economic, demographic, and technological change. Ithaka S+R is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that works to advance and preserve knowledge and to improve teaching and learning through the use of digital technologies. Artstor, JSTOR, and Portico are also part of ITHAKA." [p1]

<sup>18</sup> The case studies are available at: <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/landing/case-studies-in-museum-diversity/>.

- Hire educators from the communities the museum is trying to engage. Create opportunities for educators to bring their expertise to bear on the atmosphere and accessibility of the museum’s galleries and programmes [Taken from pp6-14]

The report concludes:

“If museums fail to diversify staff and programming to tell and display the full range of American stories, art museums will increasingly find themselves in the unsustainable position of presenting culture from a conspicuously narrow frame of reference. They are at growing risk of reinforcing a culturally exclusionary narrative that has long underpinned social and economic inequities in the United States [...]

While there is no panacea to make the field more diverse and representative of national and local populations, these case studies suggest that museum leaders and their teams are energetically pursuing new approaches to enhancing the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion both within the museum walls and among the communities they seek to engage.” [p17]

This is an interesting set of evidence about the importance of engaging with communities and undertaking organisational change, but, to be frank, it does not really shed any new light on the topic – it also does not relate any of this to the current economic climate. However, well worth a quick read.<sup>19</sup>

## Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***What does success look like for arts in criminal justice settings?***

This important paper<sup>20</sup> has just been published by the NCJAA.

“This paper highlights the findings from discussions that took place at a series of roundtables organised by the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance (NCJAA) and commissioned by Arts Council England in 2017. The roundtables considered the question ‘What does success look like for arts in criminal justice settings?’ It has been adapted from an internal paper produced for Arts Council England by NCJAA to support and inform their thinking on advocacy, investment and support for arts in criminal justice. This paper highlights the main themes from the roundtable discussions.” [p1]

<sup>19</sup> Source: *LJXpress – Library Journal*, 16 Oct 2018.

<sup>20</sup> *What does success look like for arts in criminal justice settings?* National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: [https://www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Success-in-Arts-in-Criminal-Justice\\_Sept2018.pdf](https://www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Success-in-Arts-in-Criminal-Justice_Sept2018.pdf).

The report draws together the criminal justice system context; why arts matter in this context; and highlights key evidence to support the arts in criminal justice, for example:

- “Current leading evidence from academia and the MoJ indicates that the arts support the process of desistance from crime [...]
- Arts in criminal justice settings improve safety and wellbeing in prisons and play a role in building safer communities [...]" [p3]

The roundtable discussions centred round three key areas:

- “Normalising the value of cultural activities for people in the criminal justice system
- Creating excellence for arts in criminal justice settings
- Developing cultural pathways through the prison gate so all those in the criminal justice system can access arts and culture" [p4]

Each of these then identified key messages and practical next steps.

Finally, the report identifies what success would look like:

“Success for arts in criminal justice would mean:

- Equality of access to high quality arts in all criminal justice settings
- Arts in criminal justice has public and political support
- Arts and culture are embedded across education, health, rehabilitation, restorative justice and resettlement in criminal justice settings
- Arts produced in criminal justice settings is valued and visible within the mainstream arts sector
- Creative excellence and good practice is defined and implemented
- Dynamic pathways into art, design and culture are utilised by people in the criminal justice system (from audience members to employment in the creative industries)
- We have a sustainable, flourishing specialist arts in criminal justice sector" [p11]

and prioritised the following next steps:

1. “A cross government strategy and communications plan developed and owned by the MoJ and the DCMS that would provide reassurance to the public about risks and benefits of arts in criminal justice.
2. Further research to understand how and why artistic practice supports the process of desistance and to further understand the cultural value of this work.
3. A mechanism to map current provision, geographically and across art forms, in order to highlight areas of good practice and target areas that need investment.

4. Defining and communicating excellence in the field of arts in criminal justice to adequately provide training and development opportunities for artists, arts organisations and criminal justice practitioners.
5. Disseminating learning from the Youth Justice Sector in relation to upscaling and demonstrating effectiveness.
6. Investment in local partnerships that enable cultural pathways for people to continue to engage in arts and cultural activities both in and on their release from prison. This includes work being done to support partnerships between specialist arts organisations working in criminal justice and mainstream arts organisations.
7. Removing barriers to employment in the creative industries by ‘banning the box’ and developing opportunities to meet aspirations through apprenticeships and other specialist schemes.” [p11]

This is a valuable report, in that it highlights work that needs to be done to make arts work more effective in criminal justice settings (however, it does not include reading and literature).

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### ***I am connected: new approaches to supporting people in later life online***

This key report<sup>21</sup> was published by Good Things Foundation on 31 May.

“For almost a year from spring 2017, Good Things Foundation carried out research for the Centre For Ageing Better, to try and understand the underlying reasons for older people’s digital behaviour.” [p4]

As the report suggests:

“National survey data shows that most older non-users cite a lack of interest to explain their behaviour. This position is not necessarily straightforward: lack of interest may obscure an underlying lack of confidence, or arise from misinformation about the risks and benefits of the internet. But in other cases, lack of interest may be a reasonable and well-informed choice.

One of the clearest findings of our research is that older people with good social resources and little need for health and public services are able to live – and thrive – without access to the internet. It is derogatory and unhelpful to describe them as facing ‘motivational barriers’, and to assume that they could be persuaded to go online if only the right

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<sup>21</sup> James Richardson. *I am connected: new approaches to supporting people in later life online*. Good Things Foundation, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: [https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/cfab\\_report\\_v4.pdf](https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/research-publications/cfab_report_v4.pdf).

message or incentive can be found: digital is a means to an end, and older people can and do achieve these ends in other ways.

We also found that a rejection of the internet was not incompatible with accessing online deals and information through family members.” [pp4-5]

The report makes a very clear distinction between this and true digital exclusion:

“Policymakers and practitioners need to recognise the difference between this unproblematic non-use of the internet and true digital exclusion: non-use which accompanies and exacerbates other forms of social exclusion and disadvantage. When major life changes such as bereavement, retirement and redundancy impact older people’s wellbeing and social resources, the internet can change from an optional extra into a vital lifeline.” [p5]

The research findings include, for example, people’s education, employment history and life course; “Ageing and Cognitive Impairment: Perceptions and Realities”; family influences; the lack of perceived value and personal relevance; issues around misunderstanding the internet; and the effects of peer- and age-related issues.

The next major section looks at “Approaches to Engaging & Supporting Older People”, as well as starting to define the ‘Typology of Digital’. This includes sources of low self-efficacy and perceived value; and then investigates four different types of non-use:

- The Engaged
- The Disheartened
- The Uninterested
- The Transitional

To start to solve some of the issues, the report sets out ways to connect older people to digital learning (particularly effective ways of getting the word out and marketing); using social prescription methods:

- “Social prescription – especially the community signposting model – is an effective way to engage older people who could benefit from digital as a result of poor physical or mental health, or transitional circumstances.
- Community signposting requires good infrastructure and strong local partnerships in order to work well. Existing success stories should be used as the model for scaled delivery.
- Prescriptions work best if they are made to socially inclusive activities with an immediate appeal, in which digital support can be embedded as appropriate.” [p41]

In addition, older jobseekers may continue to require support.

Word-of-mouth is a significant method for spreading the word about digital inclusion and digital skills-building.

The report then goes on to look at “Delivering Digital Inclusion to Older People”; to make this effective, it recommends:

- Making learning relevant
- Finding the right level of flexibility and correct pace
- Finding the right language
- The tutor-learner relationship: “[...] informal and open-ended provision in a community setting puts personal relevance and confidence to the fore; it is more likely to engage older learners in the first place, more likely to sustain their interest, and more likely to meet their needs [...]” [p45]
- Building on the ‘Power of Smartphones’.

Finally, the report stresses the importance of peer-to-peer digital inclusion:

“Peer-to-peer digital inclusion has unique advantages for older people: based within existing communities, such support is more likely to be sustainable and self-supporting; peers are likely to be known and trusted, and seeing ‘people like me’ succeed with digital is a valuable source of self-efficacy [...]” [p47]

However, peer-to-peer inclusion needs particular conditions:

- Understanding communities, identifying individuals.
- Working with, not for: “We observed a stark difference between activity which was organised – with good intentions – from outside a community of older people and without their input, and activity which either closely involved them in planning and delivery, or was completely self-organised. User-led and co-created activities are more engaging, more sustainable, and more relevant to the lives of the older people who will benefit from them; peer-to-peer digital inclusion cannot be effectively embedded without the guidance of those who will deliver and benefit from it.” [p47]
- Rebuilding social bonds: “If older people have become isolated – for example following retirement or bereavement – the first step towards sustainable digital inclusion delivery is not putting digital devices in their hands, but organising social activities that help (re)create the strong social bonds that make peer-to-peer digital inclusion possible.” [p47]
- Provide ongoing support.

Finally, the report looks briefly at the future:

- “Tomorrow’s digital exclusion” suggests that the impact of socio-economic disadvantage is going to become greater, with the ‘digital divide’ pronounced amongst older people
- “Tomorrow’s older age” argues that, with greater life expectancy and later retirement, there will be a need for continuing digital skills training:

“People may find themselves needing to retrain in their fifties, and with two decades of work ahead of them; static careers with a

skillset learned ‘on the job’ will become a thing of the past [...]”  
[p50]

This is an important report, with a lot for those of us providing digital services and support to think through to ensure that we really are meeting current and future needs.<sup>22</sup>

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

### ***A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change***

This important strategy<sup>23</sup> was launched in October 2018:

“Loneliness and social connections are deeply personal. Government recognises that everyone feels lonely from time to time. But when people are always lonely they are likely to suffer significant ill health and other negative consequences. This strategy focuses on preventing people from feeling lonely all or most of the time.

Three overarching goals guide government’s work on loneliness. The first is a commitment to play our part in improving the evidence base so we better understand what causes loneliness, its impacts and what works to tackle it [...]

The second goal is to embed loneliness as a consideration across government policy, recognising the wide range of factors that can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and support people’s social wellbeing and resilience [...]

The third goal is to build a national conversation on loneliness, to raise awareness of its impacts and to help tackle stigma.” [p7]

After the introduction and foreword, the strategy opens with three brief case studies to illustrate how loneliness might affect any of us.

The Executive Summary includes a powerful graphic that illustrates “certain life events” that may make us feel more lonely (bullying, leaving care, moving jobs, bereavement, etc) [pp8-9].

This is followed by a section that outlines the background to, purpose of, and principles behind this strategy.

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<sup>22</sup> Source: *Good Things Foundation News*, Jun 2018.

<sup>23</sup> *A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change*. DDCMS, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748212/6.4882\\_DCMS\\_Loneliness\\_Strategy\\_web.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748212/6.4882_DCMS_Loneliness_Strategy_web.pdf).

Chapter 1 looks at evidence and insights. This includes some work on definitions – the paper uses:

“a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want” [p18]<sup>24</sup>

Chapter 2 looks at “Organisations that support and enable people’s relationships”:

“People working in public services, the voluntary sector and other organisations often see firsthand [sic] the impact of loneliness [...]

Many of the staff working for these organisations already go above and beyond to ensure people are supported, but it can be difficult for them to know how best to help. Individuals might need a little extra support to find community activities that they would like to participate in, or practical help on issues such as dealing with debt or housing problems [...]

Our ambition is that over time all public services and organisations will seize opportunities to promote social connections, and connect those who are experiencing loneliness to the support or services they require. By doing so, we can improve the social relationships of people across the country, and help people to lead healthier and happier lives.” [p24]

A key theme running through the strategy is social prescribing, and there is a brief description here, followed by statement of intentions:

- “By 2023, government will support all local health and care systems to implement social prescribing connector schemes across the whole country, supporting government’s aim to have a universal national offer available in GP practices [...]
- Publishing a best practice guide to social prescribing later this year [...]
- Launching an online social prescribing platform for commissioners and practitioners later this year, which includes templates and resources, and facilitates regional communities of practice.
- Piloting new accredited learning programmes for social prescribing link workers in early 2019.
- Establishing regional social prescribing steering groups later this year [...]

Also, NHS England will “[...] take steps to improve the evidence base on social prescribing. It will do this by: Publishing a Common Outcomes Framework for social prescribing in 2018/19.” [p27]

This chapter then goes on to look at some of the specific areas where support will be developed, including:

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<sup>24</sup> This definition is drawn from: Daniel Perlman and Letitia Anne Peplau “Toward a social psychology of loneliness” in Robin Gilmour and Steve Duck (eds). *Personal relationships: 3. relationships in disorder*. Academic Press, 1981, pp31-56.

- A “[...] review of best practice to find young carers and improve their access to necessary support.” [p29]
- Tackling loneliness among disabled people and those with a long-term health condition.

In terms of accessing information about groups and other support available:

“The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, in collaboration with the LGA, digital experts, local authorities, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the voluntary sector, will launch pilots to explore how better use of data can help make it easier for people to find local activities, services and support.” [p33]

In terms of spreading good practice and encouraging knowledge-sharing on tackling loneliness, the strategy acknowledges that:

“Local authorities are in a unique position to consider loneliness in the context of local priorities and needs. Fantastic work is already taking place across the country and we are committed to helping to share this in order to inspire others. There are established frameworks available to local authorities and public bodies looking to address loneliness including Promising Approaches, published by the Campaign to End Loneliness and Age UK.” [p33]

To develop this (amongst other actions):

“The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work with the LGA and the National Association of Local Councils to explore an effective means of sharing learning and good practice.” [p33]

Chapter 3 looks at the “Community infrastructure that empowers social connections” and:

“[...] sets out how government will work with local authorities, the voluntary sector, transport providers, and digital and social media companies to:

- unlock the potential of underutilised community space, by encouraging schools to open up, and also by providing funding for communities to use space in creative ways.
- create a transport network that supports people’s social connections and helps people be connected to their community, by working with the sector to highlight the importance of accessible and inclusive transport.
- place community at the heart of the design of housing developments and planning, by embedding it in planning and design frameworks and by researching how community-led housing could reduce loneliness.
- maximise the power of digital tools to connect people, particularly concentrating on digital inclusion for older and disabled adults, and addressing loneliness in the forthcoming white paper on internet safety.” [p36]

Chapter 4 is about how to build a culture that supports connected communities. This will include:

- Building a national conversation to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around loneliness
- Supporting grassroots opportunities to strengthen local social relationships and community ties.

The strategy recognises that:

“Engagement with the arts museums, and creative practice can help people become more connected [...]

In recognition of this:

- The Arts Council, supported by the organisations it funds, will work with public health providers to provide arts and cultural programmes as part of the planned expansion of social prescribing. Arts Council England has strong partnerships, sector support organisations and regional networks to achieve this. For example, Arts Council England funds the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance to support and develop cultural practitioners wishing to engage with health and wellbeing. This also raises the profile of the work within the wider cultural community.
- Government will work with the Arts Council to promote the role that arts and culture can play in addressing loneliness through its programmes. The Arts Council will identify and promote examples of best practice in reducing social isolation through using existing arts and cultural assets to create easily accessible spaces.
- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will work with Arts Council England to utilise the new loneliness measure across relevant projects and programmes, improving our understanding of how the arts and culture build social connections and protect against loneliness. This will apply to programmes already underway and will have an impact on programmes that will be funded in the future.

In recognition of the role that libraries can play:

- The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport will run masterclasses on evaluation and measuring the impact of library services in reducing loneliness, with reference to the new loneliness measure, to improve our understanding of the important role that libraries play in preventing individuals from feeling lonely.
- The 2018 Libraries Week will include loneliness as part of its wellbeing theme to help raise awareness.” [pp54-55]

This chapter also includes sections looking at tackling youth loneliness, and ways of reducing loneliness for refugees and asylum-seekers.

Chapter 5 looks at ‘next steps’ which primarily involves building the evidence base (including Norfolk County Council’s ‘In Good Company’ campaign and the role of the Library Service); and taking forward the cross-government approach in conjunction with the Loneliness Action Group:

“The Loneliness Action Group, led by the British Red Cross and Co-op partnership, was set up in early 2018. It is a group of senior representatives from over 40 national organisations committed to playing their part in tackling loneliness.” [p61]

Finally, the strategy highlights some of the insights gained in drafting the paper; and takes a first look at measures for success.

This is an important strategy paper which, potentially, has a huge impact on our sector. There is, of course, an enormous amount that can be done to build on what we are already undertaking – although this is only partially recognised. As Nick Poole (CILIP CEO) commented:

“While we welcome action on loneliness and social isolation, our view is that it is essential that Government action on this should make use of our national network of public libraries.”<sup>25</sup>

In addition, perhaps inevitably, the strategy does not focus on the considerable additional resources that are required for this to be a success, nor on some issues that the Government itself is already causing or exacerbating, for example the plight of many asylum-seekers:

“It seems bizarre that the government should take pity on a group whose lonely plight it is perpetuating. Last year, the *Guardian* reported [<sup>26</sup>] that Britain has the lowest rate of asylum approval among big European countries (28% versus an average of 65%); the BBC that ‘procedural error and poor decision-making’ [<sup>27</sup>] at the Home Office kept one asylum application on hold for 1,001 days – a period so long as to sound almost biblical [...]

The loneliness strategy exemplifies a textbook government tactic of offering superficial solutions to problems whose root causes it prefers not to address. Coffee mornings and English classes, creches and counsellors are all well and good, but if government actually wants to reduce loneliness and cohere communities, it needs to revise its Immigration Rules and reunite refugee families.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Taken from “Weekly update from the CILIP CEO (w/c 15.10.2018).”

<sup>26</sup> See: Kate Lyons *et al* “Britain is one of worst places in western Europe for asylum seekers”, *The Guardian* (“The new arrivals” series), 1 Mar 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/01/britain-one-of-worst-places-western-europe-asylum-seekers>.

<sup>27</sup> Polly March “Home Office visa delays ‘inhumane’”, *BBC News*, 3 Oct 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-41096675>.

<sup>28</sup> Rivkah Brown “Preaching to asylum seekers about loneliness takes some nerve”, *The Guardian* (“Opinion”), 17 Oct 2018,

However, given the current awareness of the effects of loneliness, coupled with our growing awareness of the mental health issues faced by children and young people, we do need to look at whatever we can do to develop these areas of work.

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

### ***State of museum access 2018***

In September, VocalEyes, in collaboration with Stagertext<sup>29</sup> and Autism in Museums<sup>30</sup>, published their latest audit<sup>31</sup> of UK museums' websites.

The Introduction outlines the key issues, including:

“Our audit found that around one in five (19%) accredited museums failed to provide any access information online, an improvement on 27% in 2016 [...]

While this does show improvement, overall the amount of detail is poor, as can be seen in the statistics scattered through this report, with the majority of museums providing little more than basic information relevant for people with mobility impairment only, which does not address the access needs of many people.” [p5]

This is followed by three main sections:

Section 2 includes “[...] types of access information a museum should provide on its website, as well as recommending using different formats, while remaining accessible to website users.

In Section 3 we discuss how best to communicate with potential disabled visitors on the museum website, including using welcoming and inclusive language and tone; offering a range of means of contact, and providing information about ticket concessions, staff disability awareness and detailed information about how to get to the museum.

Section 4 covers five audience groups that will together form a large proportion of disabled visitors. Each section covers typical information,

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<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/17/preaching-to-asylum-seekers-about-loneliness-takes-some-nerve>.

<sup>29</sup> “Stagertext is a registered charity which provides captioning and live subtitling services to theatres, museums and other arts venues to make their activities accessible to people who are d/Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.” See: <http://www.stagetext.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> “Autism in Museums is an initiative to raise awareness of accessibility for all in museums.” See: <http://autisminmuseums.com/>.

<sup>31</sup> *State of museum access 2018*. VocalEyes, 2018. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://vocaleyeyes.co.uk/state-of-museum-access-2018/>. A large-print version is also available to download.

resources, facilities and accessible events that a museum can offer for visitors, and if it does, should also detail on their access page.” [p7]

Section 4 gives information and guidance for providing services for:

- Autistic people and people with a learning disability
- Blind and partially sighted people
- D/deaf and hard of hearing people
- People with dementia
- People with mobility impairments.

Each of these includes links to examples of good practice, eg the Natural History Museum’s “Dawnosaurs”<sup>32</sup>; easy-read guides<sup>33</sup>; as well as resources for finding out more and further reading.

Appendix 1 is an “Access showcase” – “[...] A selection of museum access information pages that showcase best practice.” [p35]

Appendix 2 gives guidance on “Setting up an access panel / disability advisory group”.

Finally, there is a list of other organisations that can offer information and support, with their weblinks.

This is an important, immensely practical guide – highly recommended.

In addition, the report introduces the Museum Access Pledge<sup>34</sup>:

“Each museum presents its own unique challenges and barriers to potential visitors, and we appreciate that not all museums will be able to provide all the access facilities, services or resources recommended, and that budgets and staffing capacity vary hugely across venues. However, providing informative and accurate access information online is straightforward to implement and can have a significant impact.

We therefore ask museums to make the following pledge:

1. We will seek to proactively address barriers within our museum for people with disabilities.

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<sup>32</sup> “Dawnosaurs is a free event for children on the autism spectrum to enjoy the Museum with their families and siblings, free from the hustle and bustle of the general public.” See: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/events/dawnosaurs.html>.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example: <https://www.soane.org/sites/default/files/downloads/sir-john-soanes-museum-easy-read-guide.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> See: <https://vocaleyes.co.uk/museum-access-pledge/>.

2. We will encourage people with disabilities to visit our museum by ensuring that detailed access information is provided on our website
3. We will enable potential visitors to decide for themselves whether to visit
4. We will use welcoming and inclusive language to communicate directly with disabled visitors and encourage them to contact us and give feedback on their visit” [p7]

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

DCMS (also DDCMS) = Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

LGA = Local Government Association

MoJ = Ministry of Justice

NCJAA = National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance

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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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