

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

Number 233, July 2020

(Formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

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.

---

## Contents List

### Did you see ...?

- *ARC Magazine* – page 2
- *Black & Asian Heritage Mix' Newsletter* – page 2

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

- *Getting in and getting on: class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries* – page 4

### Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

- *Taking stock: race equality in Scotland* – page 6
- *Digital inclusion: bridging divides* – page 13

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 16

---

## Did you see ...?

### **ARC Magazine**

The Aug 2020 issue<sup>1</sup> focuses on Community Archives, and includes:

- Alan Butler “Making ‘The Rainbow Connection’ and creating a sense of LGBT heritage in the South West”, [pp23-25] which outlines this new development:

“The Rainbow Connection project builds upon this idea [of intergenerational discussions] whilst also acknowledging that the handing down of this heritage does not often occur through generational lines in the same manner as other identity characteristics often do. A younger generation does not automatically come into contact with or learn details of its LGBT+ heritage without direct intervention. This project seeks to challenge this with the development of an intergenerational educational framework and resources that can encourage empowerment and the building of identity among LGBT+ groups of varying ages.

The project has been developed around an understanding of the ways in which adolescents come to acknowledge their developing sexualities and gender identities by defining as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer through a process of coming out, be that solely to themselves or to a wider audience. In doing so, young people tend to set themselves apart from their families and carers as despite many cultural and legal changes in the last few years, the majority of parents still tend to be heterosexual and cisgender.” [p24]

The prime aim of the project is to:

“The successful completion of the Rainbow Connection pilot will create learning and workshop materials which can continue to be used for public engagement and, perhaps most significantly, it will enable the testing of a more direct way of activating archives to directly impact young LGBT lives through mentoring and conversations.” [p25]

### **Black & Asian Heritage Mix’ Newsletter**

*Black Europe Resources* is a regular “Blog on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic issues”, produced by Thushari Perera (who also posts on Twitter<sup>2</sup>) – it includes this *Newsletter*, plus a range of other useful resources<sup>3</sup>.

The Sept 2020 issue of the *Newsletter*<sup>4</sup> includes particularly:

---

<sup>1</sup> *ARC Magazine*, 372, Aug 2020.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://twitter.com/blackeresources>.

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://blackeuropesources.com/>.

- A link to an article by Thushari Perera, “The National Trust and Black Lives Matter: Too Little, Too Late?”<sup>5</sup>, which starts with the ‘controversy’ over the NT’s work on racism, discrimination, slavery and decolonisation (eg the “Colonial Countryside” project which is a child-led writing/history project looking at African-Caribbean and Indian connections to the countryside<sup>6</sup>); goes on to point out that recent research “[...] found that at least a third of the charity’s 300 houses and gardens are linked to exploitation or contain objects taken from overseas”; but then argues that, so far, the NT website has little coverage of these important issues.
- The announcement of the launch of the *BAMER Archive Newsletter*<sup>7</sup>. Issue 1 (July 2020)<sup>8</sup> includes links to:
  - Arike Oke “Document! Black Lives Matter”, which outlines how Black Cultural Archives are “[...] creating a new archive collection to capture the historic activism of 2020.”<sup>9</sup>
  - “COVID-19 Collecting @aiucentre #AllStoriesAreImportant” from the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Centre<sup>10</sup>: “The COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. To ensure this is captured for future researchers, educators and commentators and that our collective national history represents all our communities, we have launched a campaign to collect stories from Greater Manchester’s Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.”
  - Barnardo’s “Oral History Project: Capturing and sharing the incredible experiences of the Windrush Generation”<sup>11</sup>
  - Julia Armstrong “Sheffield Archives reveal history of city links to slavery and fight to abolish it”, a short piece in *The Star*<sup>12</sup>, which reports on recent work by Sheffield Libraries and Archives,

---

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://blackeuropesources.com/2020/09/01/black-asian-heritage-mix-newsletter-september-2020/>.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://blackeuropesources.com/2020/08/27/the-national-trust-and-black-lives-matter-too-little-too-late/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Colonial Countryside is a child-led writing and history project in partnership with Peepal Tree Press and the National Trust. The project assembles authors, historians and primary pupils to explore country houses’ Caribbean and East India Company connections. It commissions, resources and publishes new writing.” See: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/english/creativewriting/centre/colonial-countryside-project/about-the-project>.

<sup>7</sup> This newsletter will cover archives issues relating to Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee people.

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://blackeuropesources.com/2020/07/14/bamer-archive-newsletter-july-2020/>.

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://blackculturalarchives.org/blog/2020/6/8/document-black-lives-matter>.

<sup>10</sup> See: <http://www.racearchive.org.uk/covid-19/>.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/oral-history-project>.

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://www.thestar.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/sheffield-archives-reveal-history-city-links-slavery-and-fight-abolish-it-2881786>.

outlined in their blogpost, “Sheffield and the Slave Trade”<sup>13</sup> (which, in turn, has a link to their research guide<sup>14</sup>

---

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

### ***Getting in and getting on: class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries***

This new report<sup>15</sup> from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) looks at class and social mobility:

“Prior to the pandemic, there were growing concerns that the opportunities created in this vibrant part of the economy were ‘out of reach’ for many. This paper represents the first phase of the PEC’s Policy Review Series on Class in the Creative Industries.

Echoing wider research, we find widespread and persistent class imbalances. Those from privileged backgrounds are more than twice as likely to land a job in a creative occupation. They dominate key creative roles in the sector, shaping what goes on stage, page and screen. They are also more likely to experience greater autonomy and control over their work, to have supervisory responsibility and to progress into managerial positions.

We also find that class interacts with other factors – such as gender, ethnicity, disability and skill levels – to create ‘double disadvantage’. The intersection of class and skills has a particularly pronounced impact on the likelihood of landing a creative job, where those from a privileged background who are qualified to degree-level or above are 5.5 times as likely to secure a creative role than those of working-class background who are only skilled to GCSE-level.” [Full report, p2]

---

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://shefflibraries.blogspot.com/2020/06/sheffield-and-slave-trade.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Sources for the Study of Sheffield, the Slave Trade and the Anti-Slave Trade Movement*. Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2018, <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/content/dam/sheffield/docs/libraries-and-archives/archives-and-local-studies/research/research-guide-to-slavery-and-abolition.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Carey, Rebecca Florisson, Dave O'Brien and Neil Lee. *Getting in and getting on: class, participation and job quality in the UK Creative Industries*. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) (Policy Review Series: Class in the Creative industries – Paper No.01), 2020. Full report available to download as a pdf from: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/assets/publications/PEC-report-class-in-the-creative-industries-FINAL.pdf>; Summary: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/assets/images/PEC-report-Class-in-the-creative-industries-summary.pdf>. There is also a supporting blogpost by Heather Carey, “Rebuilding a more inclusive creative economy”, at: <https://www.pec.ac.uk/blog/rebuilding-a-more-inclusive-creative-economy>.

The report looks at definitions of class and sets out the methods it uses to determine class and social mobility. It notes that, despite work to tackle persistent lack of opportunities, the situation is not improving:

“Employers across the sector are prioritising diversity and inclusion within their own businesses; changing recruitment practices, investing in educating their leaders and workers, and working to promote more inclusive workplaces. Industry stakeholders are acting too; to improve the measurement of diversity; establish new standards and conditions; and fund programmes to support those from working-class backgrounds to overcome some of the obstacles (particularly financial) to finding and progressing in work.” [Full report, p23]

As the report concludes:

“All of this work is vital. But the fact we are seeing very little shift in the make-up of the creative workforce suggests our efforts to date are falling short and raises important questions, not least: How can we more accurately and extensively measure class origin alongside other important dimensions of diversity such as gender and ethnicity? Are we fully addressing all of the underlying obstacles that those from working-class background face? Is there scope to enhance the current approach – through better business practices, programmes and policy? Can we improve coherence between different activities in order to prevent people ‘falling through the gaps’ and offer more comprehensive and sustained support that maximises both efficiency and impact?

In the context of the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on already marginalised groups, it is more important than ever to consider how we can evolve and enhance our approach so that we are able to shift the dial on diversity in a significant and sustained way. This will be vital if we are to rebuild a genuinely more open and inclusive creative economy that creates opportunities for all, maximises talent, and enables all workers to thrive, irrespective of their socio-economic background; to show leadership as an industry on the vital issue of social mobility in the UK.” [Full report, p23]

This is an interesting and important report. However, our sector is mentioned only in passing as “Museums, Galleries and Libraries”, with the following stats:

<b>Class origin</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Privileged	-	-	61%	48%	-	-
Intermediate	-	-	19%	29%	-	-
Working-class	-	-	20%	23%	-	-
Weighted base	-	-	57	51	-	-

It would have been useful to have had a bit more detail – and to be included in recommendations.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Source: Museums Association email updates, 28 Aug 2020.

## Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***Taking stock: race equality in Scotland***

Published in May 2020, this new report<sup>17</sup> from Runnymede continues work from 2016:

“In 2016, we published *Scotland and Race Equality: Directions in Policy and Identity* [18], which drew together leading researchers and policy actors to understand and evaluate recent developments in race equality in Scotland. This follow-up report builds on the earlier publication but also draws on evidence presented at the conference event ‘Tackling Scotland’s Racism Problem’ held on 10 May 2019. The conference was focused on policy solutions and brought together practitioners, activists and politicians. This report includes contributions from MSPs (members of the Scottish Parliament), stakeholders and researchers, and is presented as a further and necessary check on how Scotland’s race equality agenda is developing and where it may be headed in the years to come.” [p6]

The introduction, “Taking Stock”, by Nasar Meer, Smina Akhtar and Neil Davidson raises some key issues, for example:

“It is worth noting that racially motivated hate crime remains the most commonly reported type of hate crime in Scotland [...], and as recent attitude polling has shown, about a third of non-white black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in Scotland report experiences of racial discrimination, and a slightly higher proportion consider racial discrimination to be a widespread issue in Scotland [...]. Interestingly, the same research reports that the majority of respondents who had experienced discrimination did not report it to any kind of authority. This was despite large majorities of the same samples insisting that they would encourage a friend or family member to make a formal complaint if they thought they had experienced discrimination.” [p5]

Chapter 2, “Lessons Learnt about ‘Race’ in Scotland”, by Rowena Arshad looks at some of the assumptions about talking about and dealing with race (eg the “we treat everyone the same” school), and how important it is to move away from the view that race/racism are individual issues, and look instead at “[...] an understanding that race is connected to wider issues of power [...]” [p8].

She argues that there is a lack of knowledge of race issues from those in leadership and policy-making positions, and that this can then lead to a lack of

---

<sup>17</sup> Nasar Meer, Smina Akhtar and Neil Davidson (eds). *Taking stock: race equality in Scotland*. Runnymede Trust (“Runnymede Perspectives”), 2020. Available to download as a pdf from:

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/TakingStockRaceEqualityInScotlandJuly2020.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Nasar Meer (ed). *Scotland and race equality: directions in policy and identity*. Runnymede Trust (“Runnymede Perspectives”), 2016. Available to download as a pdf from:

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Scottish%20Equality%20report%20v3.pdf>.

confidence in dealing with race issues. She also has a firm word of caution about the misuse of the term 'intersectionality':

"For example, in the policy world, I have heard the word being used to mean having better representation around the policy table, or about someone having multiple identities. That is not what the word means. Intersectionality is about how axes of oppression intersect, and specifically about how black women's experiences of a range of issues differ from those of white women, as well as how black women experience racism differently to black men [...]" [pp8-9]

Rowena Arshad goes on to ask:

"Why, then, are initiatives to tackle racism or to put in place anti-racist measures largely still kicked into the long grass? This could be for a range of reasons: those who have the seniority to lead for change have had a lack of exposure to diversity; perhaps a lack of grasp of Scotland's own racialised histories; a reluctance to engage in concepts and conversations that might disrupt individual securities; a deep belief in Scotland's egalitarian credentials and that 'treating everyone the same' is sufficient; perhaps simply a refusal to know or care. It could be as basic as an anxiety about getting it wrong and being a labelled a racist. Whatever the reason, the life opportunities of black and minority ethnic people cannot wait for everyone to become aware, so there needs to be proaction from society's leaders to lead the transformation." [p9]

She concludes that:

"The future of Scotland as a progressive, inclusive nation is dependent on key actors such as politicians, policymakers, curriculum writers and societal leaders working together to ensure better representation of black and minority ethnic people at all levels of society. The importance of representation, seeing someone who looks and sounds like you in a leadership position, cannot be understated. Lack of representation is a barrier to stimulating diversity. Finally, too often, race equality is seen as a laudable principle, but as the benefits and outcomes are difficult to measure, it is deprioritised and becomes difficult to fund." [p10]

The next chapter by Carol Young is "Scottish Public Sector Equality Duties: Making 'Good Practice' Count". As we know, the Public Sector Equality Duties [PSED] are a potentially powerful tool for implementing and monitoring change, and the chapter reports on research:

"The study set out to identify the changes achieved for people with protected characteristics as a result of work done by public bodies to implement the duties during this first four-year cycle." [p11]

However, the results were extremely disappointing:

"Almost no concrete examples of positive change impacting people with protected characteristics were identified [...]" [p11]

This may have been because of weak enforcement, and also because local authorities do not/choose not to understand what is involved; for example:

“[...] the use of inappropriate evidence is common. Staff and service user surveys are often used as a source of evidence on views about discrimination and inequality. In essence, this is a commendable approach which could help to demonstrate progress. However, the information is almost never disaggregated by the protected characteristics of those completing the surveys, meaning that the results are irretrievably skewed in favour of participants who will not face racial discrimination, and therefore will not report it. The experiences of participants from minority ethnic groups impacted by racism are automatically erased by this approach. In some cases, it is clear that the information could be disaggregated, calling into question the motive for failing to do so.” [p12]

The chapter urges the development of good practice in:

- Outcome setting and progress monitoring
- Gathering and using workforce data

and emphasises the growing of:

“Practical and accessible approaches are needed which build understanding of race equality and what this means for organisations.” [p14]

The next chapter, “Race, Equality and Human Rights in Scotland”, by Danny Boyle. It begins by suggesting that:

“A lack of consistency across these duty bearers [ie local authorities and statutory services] on what we understand to be race, equality and human rights obligations results in a lack of substantive progress for all of Scotland’s racial minority communities.” [p15]

and that:

“Race equality policy development, analysis and evaluation in Scotland adopts multiple nouns and pronouns in confusing ways that routinely do not correspond to the scope of protections as codified in international and domestic law. This has a direct impact on the evidence base and data analysis adopted to endorse a policy position or priority [...]

Using undefined terms or interchangeable terms with different meanings to different groups causes confusion, and the struggle for race equality can be too narrowly defined, meaning that there is a potential to exclude some on the basis of colour. For example, this is the case for the multi-generational Irish community in Scotland, who despite facing a history of racialisation in Scotland [...] are considered only within the context of ‘sectarianism’, even though this is a term and focus of analysis rejected by the community itself [...] that has the effect of extinguishing their rights as an ethnic minority community. In addition, Polish men living in

Scotland have alarmingly high rates of suicide in comparison with both Scottish men and men living in Poland [...] Despite this evidence, there remains an incoherence in community recognition and data disaggregation that prevents this national health issue being identified and tackled as a matter of race equality[...]" [p15-16]

The chapter calls for better and more thorough Parliamentary scrutiny, and concludes that:

"The current default position on race equality in Scotland reinforces the notion that ethnic minorities are black/different and Scottish/majority ethnic people are white. The race sector, therefore, is presently bound to a self-fulfilling prophecy of internal and external exclusion, operating within a simultaneously enforced and self-subscribed environment delineated on the basis of block racial classifications. The material effect of this is that some racial minority communities and their lived experiences are sidelined or ignored because they are 'white'. In addition, it is imperative that Scotland's diverse national identities celebrate the equal value of visible minorities who self-identify their black Scottishness/Britishness in this way." [p18]

There needs to be a wider and more strategic understanding of these issues.

The following chapter by Nasar Meer looks at "The Opportunities and Obstacles for a 'Scottish Approach' to Race Equality", which begins with a question:

"Is there a particular character to race equality in Scotland that is different to elsewhere in the UK?" [p19]

It notes that:

"It is striking that prominent reports and commissions concerned with social and constitutional reform in Scotland have made little mention of race equality as distinct from a generic concern with 'fairness'." [p19]

The author identifies that a key issue is that:

"[...] competing agendas jockey for position and key arguments can be fragmented. These are noticeable tendencies when set against the lobbying of other equality groups." [p21]

To resolve this and move forward:

"Policy actors therefore need a greater consensus on the underlying causes if policy change is to be successful and effective, and if a distinctive Scottish approach to race equality is to prevail." [p21]

In the next chapter, Kaveri Qureshi, Nasar Meer and Sarah Hill consider "Different but Similar? BAME Groups and the Impacts of Covid-19 in Scotland". The chapter begins with a question:

“It is more than 20 years since health was entirely devolved to Scotland, and even before that, public health policy in this area had pursued a distinctive trajectory. The question this raises for us is whether this divergence is also reflected in race, ethnicity and health outcomes, and specifically whether the BAME disproportionality so widely catalogued in England is also manifest in Scotland.” [p22]

Data so far suggest that the proportion of ethnic minority patients amongst those seriously ill with COVID-19 appears to be no higher than in the general population. However:

“There needs to be vigilance and monitoring of Covid-19 cases and deaths by ethnicity because these unequal vulnerabilities to Covid-19 by deprivation categories will disproportionately implicate ethnic minorities in Scotland. While higher numbers of some of the major ethnic minority groups (e.g. Pakistani, Indian, Chinese) live in less socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances in Scotland compared with the rest of the UK, [...] overall, ethnic minorities remain more likely to be in poverty than the majority white population, [...] and this is particularly true of those members of ethnic minority groups who are new migrants.” [p22]

In conclusion, the authors recommend that:

“[...] the government will need to think concretely about the inequalities broadly experienced by ethnic minority groups, both in the short run of Covid-19 control efforts but also, crucially, in the medium and long term, with the likely recession ahead.” [p24]

In the particularly interesting chapter, “Conversations about Racism and Whiteness Are Missing within Education in Scotland”, Khadija Mohammed writes about:

“This contribution does three things: firstly, it provides a brief critique of the Scottish education policy context; secondly, it shares my lived experience as an educator in Scotland; and thirdly, it shares the journey that led to the formation of the Scottish Association of Minority Ethnic Educators (SAMEE) and the National BME Leadership and Mentoring Programme.” [p25]

In “Addressing the Absences in Teaching Scotland’s Slavery Past”, Stephen Mullen begins by challenging the generally accepted view that Scots had limited involvement with the Transatlantic slave trade:

“[...] while Scots were under-represented in the eighteenth-century transatlantic slave trade, they were disproportionately over-represented in Caribbean slave-ownership and as overseers, planters and merchants across the British West Indies and North America more broadly.” [p29]

However:

“The recent transformation in the historiography, however, has not been matched with civic recognition.” [p29]

The author outlines some of the major re-thinking and new knowledge about the slave trade, and concludes:

“[...] improvements in the broader education on Scotland’s slavery past – via historians, museum professionals and schoolteachers – should ensure that there are no more celebratory Merchant Cities in future.” [p31]

The ‘Merchant Cities’ reference is to Glasgow’s calling one of its historic quarters this:

“The term therefore was a nod to eighteenth-century colonial grandeur, and serves to glorify merchants and their transatlantic activities.” [p29]

In the next chapter, “An Agenda for Change”, Anas Sarwar begins by reflecting on his own experiences of racism and Islamophobia, and then places this within the:

“[...] global rise in nationalism, in the politics of ‘us versus them’, the othering of whole communities, and the principles of division and disunity being the new normal. A world where it feels like unity and compromise are now seen as dirty words.” [p33]

He calls for three ‘meaningful outcomes’:

- “[...] we must recognise that we can no longer afford to pick and choose. There isn’t a hierarchy of prejudice. An injustice against one is an injustice against all. We must speak out and challenge all forms of prejudice, no matter who it is against and who it is by.” [p33]
- “Secondly, this must be viewed as a mainstream issue, not an afterthought or a tick-box exercise. We must recognise that we are talking about not just isolated incidents but the impact on life experiences, life chances and life outcomes. If we are to create a healthy, happy and prosperous nation then we must create a society where all are able to achieve their full potential regardless of their gender, race, religion, class or sexuality.” [p33]
- “Thirdly, we must not just see a change in policy – we need a fundamental change in culture at every level.” [p33]

In “Diverse but Marginalised”, Fulton MacGregor bemoans the fact that people are still discriminated against on the basis of their race:

“Despite good progress, there is still a huge amount of work to be done to rid ourselves completely of racism, particularly casual racism [...]” [p36]

He concludes by calling on politicians to play a stronger role:

“As members of Parliament, we must use our privilege as the voice of our constituents in towns, villages, cities and communities in Scotland to champion our nation as an international leader in challenging racial discrimination and progressing racial equality.” [p37]

In her chapter, “Choose Hope Not Hate: Scottish Green Party Policy and Action on Race Equality”, Gillian Wilson outlines Green Party policies and calls for more engagement with these.

Finally, in Appendix 1, “Self-Reported Discrimination in Scotland, 2015–2019”, Nasar Meer:

“[...] provides an overview of three cross-sectional surveys of more than 502 black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in Scotland undertaken at two-year intervals (2015, 2017 and 2019). Since they first commenced, these have been among the first quantitative surveys of their kind to focus exclusively on BAME experiences of discrimination in Scotland [...]” [p41]

The key findings are shocking:

- “In each survey year, around one-third of the aggregated sample agreed with the statement ‘I have experienced discrimination in Scotland in the last two years’ (31% in 2015, 34% in 2019 and 32% in 2017 [...]).
- This, however, varied among different groups. For example, in 2015 nearly 45% of respondents with self-reported Black African Caribbean heritage agreed with the statement that they had ‘experienced discrimination in Scotland’. This rose to 50% in 2017 and dropped back to 37% in 2019. It compares with 29% in 2015 for respondents with Asian heritage, 30% in 2017 and 34% in 2019. Mixed heritage respondents displayed the lowest level of agreement: 23% in 2015, 32% in 2017 and 22% in 2019 [...]
- When asked a similar (less personalised) question, higher numbers agreed with the statement ‘Other people would perceive discrimination to be a problem in Scotland’. As many as 42% in 2015, 43% in 2017 and 43% in 2019 agreed with this statement.
- Of those who reported experiencing discrimination, more than four-fifths (89% in 2019, 83% in 2017 and 82% in 2015) felt that this was due to their real or perceived ethnicity, and a greater number in 2019 than in previous years felt that it was also due to their real or perceived religion (66%, compared with 43% in 2017 and 42% in 2015 [...]).” [p41]

This is an important report, with a lot of information, recommendations and ideas that we ought to help pursue. Recommended.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Source: email from the Runnymede Trust, 31 Jul 2020.

## ***Digital inclusion: bridging divides***

This new report<sup>20</sup> from Cumberland Lodge<sup>21</sup>:

“[...] provides an overview of the UK’s approach to digital inclusion, to date, and highlights some of the many challenges, as well as opportunities for building on this work. It demonstrates how efforts to tackle digital exclusion should be conceptualised around issues of digital access, motivation, knowledge and skills.” [p2]

It helpfully looks in more detail at what is meant by the ‘digital divide’, and recognises that there is a number of levels, for example:

- “‘First-level digital divide’ – whether people have access to a computer or the internet [...]
- ‘Second-level digital divide’ – the various reasons why people access and use digital technologies differently [...] including socio-economic, demographic, physical, cultural and psychological factors [...]

There is also an ‘emerging digital differentiation approach’, which specifically conceptualises the digital divide as both dynamic and recurrent: just as one gap closes, another one might open.” [p10]

It comes up with a series of important recommendations (which are quoted in some detail here):

1. “Develop a society-wide commitment to a future digital society and further digital innovation

A detailed and thorough policy approach, underpinned by significant investment, will help to address significant gaps in digital skills attainment and provision.

2. Adopt a ‘co-design’ process to integrating technologies into everyday routines, taking into consideration user differences

---

<sup>20</sup> Farah Elahi. *Digital inclusion: bridging divides*. Cumberland Lodge, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from:

[https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cumberland\\_lodge\\_digital\\_inclusion\\_-\\_bridging\\_divides\\_august\\_2020\\_for\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/sites/default/files/cumberland_lodge_digital_inclusion_-_bridging_divides_august_2020_for_web_0.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> “Cumberland Lodge was founded in 1947, in the aftermath of the Second World War, to make a valuable difference in the world. The way we deliver our programme has evolved to meet the changing needs of the 21st century, but progress towards more peaceful, open and inclusive societies remains at the heart of our work and vision.

For over 70 years we have been empowering people, through dialogue and debate, to tackle the causes and effects of social division. We engage people of all ages, background and perspectives, from all over the world, in candid conversations on pressing ethical and societal issues that affect us all. In this way, we challenge ‘silo thinking’ and build interdisciplinary, cross-sector networks with the power to bring about positive change.” [Taken from: <https://www.cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/impact/our-impact>]

The 'co-design' approach means involving people with different kinds of lived experience at every stage of the development of new digital solutions. This multi-perspective process helps to reveal otherwise unforeseen consequences, and to ensure that factors such as age, culture, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic background are considered during the design phase, to boost accessibility and future take-up.

3. Help to reduce digital inequalities by investing in greater digital literacy

It is vital that the development of soft skills – such as social communication and digital literacy – is properly addressed in any approach to tackling digital inequalities. A lack of such skills can have a significant detrimental effect on economic, cultural, social and personal wellbeing.

4. Focus digital innovation policy on 'micro-actions' that are tailored to specific circumstances, rather than pursuing a 'one-size-fits-all' approach

Digital innovation policies should be directed towards the needs and circumstances of specific, digitally excluded communities, to encourage a sense of ownership within affected groups and to render them more effective.

5. Facilitate a 'digital resilience' shift, in education and other provisions, so that parents and teachers are better equipped to support resilience-building amongst young people

'Digital resilience' can be defined as digital competency combined with the social and emotional literacy required to manage online risks. Children and young people should be supported in learning how to manage and curate their 'digital self', securely and effectively, to support resilience-building and prepare them for the future.

6. Investigate opportunities for online voting and harnessing digital technologies to increase political participation

As society becomes increasingly digitalised, there is increasing scope to use digital technology to encourage greater political participation and enhance accessibility, by investigating systems such as online voting.

7. Incorporate verification methods and safeguards into online voting, to enhance security and safety, and to help allay concerns about data protection, fraud and anonymity, whilst maintaining accessibility

The implementation of online voting systems would need to be supported by a range of robust verification methods, including user registration, usernames and passwords, mobile pin codes or the GOV.UK Verify identity assurance system, to help address security concerns amongst potential users.

8. Make arts and culture sector websites and online content more accessible, to help reduce inequalities in access

The arts and culture sector can do more to tackle digital inequalities; for example, by undertaking 'action research', which involves working with representatives from digitally excluded groups, alongside policymakers and practitioners, to enhance digital content and improve accessibility.

9. Focus more attention on improving data transparency, to address concerns about digital rights and privacy

Many people are concerned that companies and organisations will use their data however they want, and this can lead to reluctance to engage with digital services. There is a need for the Government to respond to these privacy concerns by supporting improvements in data transparency, so that people understand how, and for what purpose, their data are collected, and how their digital rights are being protected.

10. Preserve physical access to information, services and resources, whilst continuing to develop accessible digital technologies

Developing appropriate (accessible) technology is important in helping to reduce digital inequalities, but it is only one part of the solution. Whilst continuing to digitalise systems and services, there is still a need for alternative options to be maintained (i.e. face-to-face options or paper-based methods).

11. Create appropriate frameworks for responsible digital governance and e-citizenship

An important aspect of bridging the 'digital divide' is having suitable frameworks in place to support transparency and a shared understanding about digital governance and e-citizenship, between organisations and consumers.

12. Implement both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up', formal and informal interventions, to support greater digital literacy and responsible citizenship

Organisations and local authorities need to target communities that need particular support with development digital skills. Educators should be empowered to teach digital skills and encourage students to explore the opportunities and challenges involved in technological innovation, and think about how they might help shape trajectories of change themselves. The development of digital skills is a lifelong process and should not be limited to formal education settings.

13. Carry out further cross-sector research into the complexities and intersectionality of digital exclusion and inclusion, to help inform effective responses

Definitions of digital inclusion and exclusion need to be clear, concise and consistent, in order to allow for the collation of meaningful comparative data – and to support the design of effective interventions.

More data are required, on the realities of digital exclusion and inclusion – including contextual sociological and cultural factors – if we are to tackle digital inequalities effectively in the UK today.” [pp2-5]

Important report – recommended.<sup>22</sup>

---

## Abbreviations and acronyms

NT = National Trust

---

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:

John Vincent  
Wisteria Cottage  
Nadderwater  
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 01392 256045  
E-mail: [john@nadder.org.uk](mailto:john@nadder.org.uk)

July 2020

---

<sup>22</sup> Source: Digital Unite Newsletter, Aug 2020.