

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

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

ARC Magazine

The Dec 2020 issue¹ includes:

- Catherine McHarg “Old and new is good for you: using archive images to inspire intergenerational work”, which looks at Historic England’s “Breaking New Ground” project, using archives to inspire school projects [pp11-14]
- Laura Aguiar and Lynsey Gillespie “Making the future of archives”, which looks at “Making the Future”, a project in Northern Ireland: “[...] a three year programme (2018-2021) aimed at empowering people to use archives and collections to explore the past, have their voices heard and learn new skills.” [pp22-24]
- Vicki Caren “Online memory boxes at Archives+”, which “[...] looks at how Manchester photographic collections and audio clips were brought together to create an intergenerational resource.” [pp27-28]

ARA Today

The Nov 2020 issue included the announcement of the winners of the Community Archives and Heritage Group awards:

- Kent’s Sporting Memories Project², which “[...] looks at projects or activities which show evidence of running activities that have beneficial impacts on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of individuals and communities”. Kent's Sporting Memories was also awarded the overall Winner of the Best Community Archive and Heritage Group of 2020
- Kirklees Local TV Yorkshire “Windrush: The Years After – A Community Legacy on Film”³, which
 - “enabled people in Kirklees to tell their stories in their own words and reflect upon experiences that have national and international significance.
 - created opportunities to research and learn about local African-Caribbean descent heritage and empower others to undertake their own heritage archiving projects
 - promoted recorded interviews and heritage media production as compelling, immediate and accessible ways to create, curate and share memories

¹ ARC Magazine, 376, Dec 2020.

² See: <https://www.kentsport.org/get-active/physical-activity-health/kents-sporting-memories-project/>.

³ See: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/organisation/kirklees-local-tv-kltv-yorkshire-the-years-after>.

- presented historical information using video, banners, timelines, trailers and shorter edited versions to share digitally archived interviews and other materials
- provided researchers, teachers, pupils and parents with downloadable classroom resources and access to digital/paper materials archived at Heritage Quay at the University of Huddersfield”
- Chippenham Museum’s ‘Goldiggers’ project which celebrated “the iconic Chippenham night club, Goldiggers”⁴
- Irish Community Archive Network’s ‘Our Irish Heritage project’⁵: “winner of the Networks of Archives award which seeks to identify a collection of networks that can demonstrate evidence of collaboration and co-operation with a wider range of partner groups, sharing best practice and resources and introducing effective and wide-ranging communication that furthers the aims of the network and all its members”⁶

Black & Asian Heritage Mix’ Newsletter

The Nov/Dec 2020 issue⁷ focuses primarily on films and books, and includes a link to an interesting article⁸ about the making of *Southwark*:

“Set in the 1600s, the series will be written by novelist and screenwriter Catherine Johnson [...]

The story, which was inspired by Miranda Kaufmann’s historical book ‘Black Tudors,’ will combine both factual and fictional characters as well as true events to reflect a different perspective of Tudor England.”

Thushari Perera has also just published issue 3⁹ of *Black and Asian News*, which rounds up recent news stories “[...] relating to Black and Asian communities in the UK and wider Europe.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

What will it really take to level-up?

This is an important new report¹⁰ from CLASS:

⁴ See: <https://www.chippenham.gov.uk/goldiggers-project-wins-community-award>.

⁵ See: <https://www.ouririshheritage.org/>.

⁶ This quote and other info taken from: <https://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/834-2020-community-archives-and-heritage-group-awards.html>.

⁷ See: <https://blackeuroperesources.com/2020/11/25/black-asian-heritage-mix-newsletter-november-december-2020/>.

⁸ See: “BritBox U.K. Developing Black Tudors Drama ‘Southwark,’ Based on Critically Acclaimed Book (EXCLUSIVE)”, <https://variety.com/2020/tv/global/britbox-uk-southwark-black-tudors-drama-miranda-kaufman-book-1234804154/>.

⁹ See: <https://blackeuroperesources.com/2020/12/03/black-asian-news-issue-3-december-2020/>.

“[...] Inequality in the UK has gone from bad to worse. The economic gap between UK regions is the starkest of any comparable developed nation but this is not where our inequality problem starts or ends [...] Whether it be inequalities between groups, between regions, within regions, in wealth or in who has power and who doesn't, the conclusion is the same – the UK is one of the most unequal rich countries in the world. And these inequalities are deadly.” [p7]

The report looks in some depth at:

- Levelling up takes genuine devolution
- The crisis facing workers today
- Wages and levelling up
- Levelling up in public transport
- Levelling up Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- The road to health equality
- Education spending: Levelling down the working classes?
- Financing the New Economy and Society
- Levelling up without the EU Structural Funds

From these nine chapters, the report draws together a series of key findings, and then makes a number of recommendations. The key findings include:

- ‘Levelling up’ does not exist in any meaningful sense in terms of policy, resource or outcome
- ‘Levelling up’ defined purely in terms of regional inequality lacks credibility
- The Conservatives have been levelling down the UK for the past decade:

“After decades of deindustrialisation and a financial crisis which hit those outside London and the South East most, austerity made things much worse still. The most deprived local authorities have borne the brunt of austerity since 2010, which has widened social and spatial inequalities.” [p11]
- The Covid-19 pandemic has levelled the UK down further
- Current funding being made available is a drop in the ocean, and risks leaving the UK lagging behind other EU nations
- This isn't the first attempt at ‘levelling up’:

“Whether it be various regeneration attempts under the Blair and Brown governments, or Osborne's ‘Northern Powerhouse’ – spatially targeted policy designed to alleviate inequalities is

¹⁰ *What will it really take to level-up?* CLASS, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: http://classonline.org.uk/docs/Report_LevelUp_231120_0145.pdf.

nothing new. However, very little seems to have been learnt from past failed attempts – especially in terms of the scale of change needed, the requirement to address the economic foundations of the UK, and the need to take an intersectional approach.” [p14]

- We need structural change in our economy
- There is too much power concentrated in Westminster
- There is money to tackle the UK’s inequality problem.

The report makes a number of recommendations, including:

- The government needs to stop treating inequality as a campaign slogan
- We need to eradicate poverty
- We need more redistribution
- We need to go big – for example:

“Rather than £12 billion to fund a ‘10-point green plan’ of which only £3 billion is new money, the government needs to invest in line with need, akin to the approach post-World War II. To reach carbon targets spending on the climate emergency each year needs to increase to 2% of GDP in the short term, ramping up to 5% to deliver change at pace. We can start now with a minimum £100 billion green stimulus programme funded directly by government borrowing alongside a new National Investment Bank, backed up by a network of Regional Development Banks, to provide £250 billion of lending for enterprise, infrastructure and innovation over ten years, e.g. expanding and electrifying our public transport systems and retrofitting our energy-inefficient homes.” [p18]

- A green and care-led recovery, with a new industrial strategy
- A National Recovery Council
- Tackle low pay and job insecurity
- The introduction of a National Education Service
- We need more devolution
- Adopt community wealth building across the whole city region
- A Race Equality Act:

“We need a Race Equality Act, as recommended by Baroness Doreen Lawrence [...¹¹] This would enshrine a commitment to eliminating racial disparities, not merely monitoring them.” [p22]

- Give every citizen a say in their work places, in their communities and in policy

This report raises a lot of important issues, recommended.¹²

Destitution in the UK 2020

This new report¹³ is the third in the “Destitution in the UK” series.

“This report examines the scale and nature of destitution in the UK, updating similar studies undertaken in 2015 and 2017. It is based on in-depth case studies on destitution in 18 locations, including a user survey of 113 crisis services and in-depth interviews with 70 destitute respondents.

The user survey was conducted in autumn 2019, and captured the scale of destitution in the UK before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK in early 2020” [Full report, p2]

In terms of their definitions:

“People are destitute if:

EITHER:

(a) They have lacked two or more of the following six essential items over the past month, because they cannot afford them:

- shelter (they have slept rough for one or more nights)
- food (they have had fewer than two meals a day for two or more days)
- heating their home (they have been unable to heat their home for five or more days)

¹¹ This refers to: *An avoidable crisis: the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities – a review by Baroness Doreen Lawrence*. The Labour Party, 2020. Available as a web version:

https://www.lawrencereview.co.uk/?utm_source=bsd&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LawrenceReview&source=20201027_LawrenceReview&subsource=bsd_email, and to download as a pdf: https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5f5bdc0f30fe4b120448a029/5f973b076be4cad5045fad3_An%20Avoidable%20Crisis.pdf. Assessed in *The Network Newsletter*, 235, Sep 2020, pp4-6.

¹² Source: email from CLASS, 23 Nov 2020.

¹³ Suzanne Fitzpatrick *et al.* *Destitution in the UK 2020*. JRF, 2020. Full report and “Findings” both available to download as pdfs from: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk-2020>.

- lighting their home (they have been unable to light their home for five or more days)
- clothing and footwear (appropriate for the weather)
- basic toiletries (such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste and a toothbrush).

To check that the reason for going without these essential items was that they could not afford them, we: asked respondents if this was the reason; checked that their income was below the standard relative poverty line (that is, 60% of median income – after housing costs – for the relevant household size); and checked that they had no or negligible savings.

OR:

(b) Their income is so extremely low that they are unable to purchase these essentials for themselves.” [Full report, p7]

Key findings from the research are:

- “In this research, we estimated that more than a million households were destitute in the UK at some point in 2019, with these households containing 2.4 million people, of whom 550,000 were children. On this basis, the number of households experiencing destitution in the UK had increased by 35% since 2017, and the number of people and children experiencing destitution had increased by 54% and 52% respectively. These estimates focus exclusively on people in touch with crisis services whose circumstances fitted a strict definition of destitution endorsed by the general public.” [Full report, p2]
- “Single people remained at the highest risk of destitution in 2019, but families living in destitution, especially lone mothers, had become more common. Young people under the age of 25 were highly over-represented within the destitute population, while destitution continued to be extremely rare for the over-65s.” [Full report, p2]
- “Three-quarters (72%) of people experiencing destitution were born in the UK. However, people who had migrated to the UK faced disproportionate risks of destitution and had less access to cash and in-kind forms of support than UK nationals living in destitution.” [Full report, p2]
- “Many service users identified as living in destitution reported limiting health conditions or disabilities (54%). A fifth (19%) had complex support needs associated with interacting challenges such as homelessness, drug and/or alcohol problems, domestic violence, or involvement in begging or the criminal justice system.” [Full report, p2]
- There are strengths and weaknesses in the social security system
- “Problem debt and arrears on bills were an extremely common issue affecting destitute households, especially those who were UK-born. These were largely debts owed to the DWP, local authorities and utility

companies, and they mainly pre-dated the COVID-19 crisis rather than being triggered by it.” [Full report, p3]

- “Only 14% of service users experiencing destitution were in paid work when surveyed in autumn 2019. Interviewees experiencing ‘in-work destitution’ tended to be in precarious forms of employment with uncertain incomes.” [Full report, p3]
- The importance of appropriate, affordable housing
- “Support received from food banks rose by 8 percentage points between 2017 and 2019, and far outstripped destitute households’ access to in-kind support from statutory local welfare assistance.” [Full report, p4]
- “The closure of libraries, which the COVID-19 pandemic brought about, had a negative impact on interviewees who had migrated to the UK and those with complex needs, who frequently used them to access the internet, for company and for warmth.” [Full report, p4]
- “Most parents interviewed reported that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on their children, as they missed friends, family, school and, for some, specialist support. The closure of playgrounds and sometimes parks was another key problem, given that most of these families lacked gardens.” [Full report, p4]
- “Several participants flagged the additional costs of having school-aged children at home all day, with spending on food, electricity and mobile phone data all reported to increase during lockdown. Set against this, some families and other destitute households were spending less on transport.” [Full report, p4]
- “Having limited access to the internet, while living alone and being required to stay indoors almost all of the time, placed immense psychological strain on single people with experience of destitution.

For interviewees with complex needs, mental health challenges generally pre-dated lockdown, but had increased in intensity during the crisis.

The loss of face-to-face contact with health and other services often hit those with drug and/or alcohol problems especially hard, as they felt much less benefit from online or telephone-based support.” [Full report, p4]

Library closures have had a notable impact, for example:

“I don’t have a computer in the house, in the flat. I don’t have, of course, internet. All my life is on the mobile phone ... at the very start of the COVID thing, the library was open for a limited time ... That’s been a couple of weeks, bam ... closed totally.”
Man, aged over 45, EEA migrant [Full report, p44]

“As with the migrants we interviewed, the closure of libraries had had a negative impact on a substantial number of interviewees with complex needs who were homeless or vulnerably housed:

‘I used to always be in the library because library’s one of my favourite place. I’m always on the internet looking up positive things; things that are a good influence that I can learn from ... it’s like that’s been taken away from me as well. It’s really depressing.’
Man, aged 25–45

With libraries closed, it was clear that some interviewees were paying for internet access at home with a considerable portion of their (very limited) incomes:

‘... from the £78 they pay us a week ... £26 to buy internet every month.’
Woman, aged under 25, asylum seeker” [Full report, p52]

“The impacts of library closures and of living in highly marginal, crowded and inadequate forms of accommodation are two key themes to emerge from this chapter.” [Full report, p54]

“The closure of libraries had a negative impact on a substantial number of both migrant interviewees and those with complex needs, who used them to access the internet, for company and for warmth.” [Full report, p59]

This is an important study – recommended.¹⁴

Diversity in books and other materials for children & young people

Seeing yourself in what you read: diversity and children and young people’s reading in 2020

The National Literacy Trust have just published the results¹⁵ of their Annual Literacy Survey; this year, it included questions exploring

“[...] the extent to which children and young people see themselves represented in what they read or hear and what is important to them in terms of diversity.” [p1]

Key findings include:

¹⁴ Source: JRF *Weekly round-up*, 11 Dec 2020.

¹⁵ Emily Best, Christina Clark and Irene Picton. *Seeing yourself in what you read: diversity and children and young people’s reading in 2020*. National Literacy Trust, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/Diversity_and_children_and_young_people_reading_in_2020.pdf.

- “32.7% of children and young people aged 9 to 18 say that they don’t see themselves in what they read, and 39.8% would like more books with characters who are similar to them.
- More children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds than White backgrounds say that they don’t see themselves in what they read (40% vs. 30.5%). This is particularly true for children and young people from Black ethnic backgrounds.
- More children and young people who receive free school meals compared with those who don’t say that they don’t see themselves in what they read (37.3% vs. 31.9%).
- Twice as many children aged 9 to 11 compared with their peers aged 14+ say that they don’t see themselves in what they read.
- The issue of representation was particularly salient for children and young people who describe their gender not as a boy or girl, with 44.3% of these children and young people saying that they struggle to see themselves in what they read compared with 32.7% of boys and 32.5% of girls.” [p1]

Some of these areas have been explored previously, but this is, as far as the authors know, the first time that young people’s own voices have been heard – and the following is particularly telling:

“Our research suggests that 1.5% of children and young people describe their gender as different to boy or girl [...] While we don’t know how this compares to other figures, we know that Stonewall estimates the number among the general population to be around 1% [16]. Our research has found that those children and young people who identify their gender as ‘other’ are more likely than those who identify as male or female to struggle to find themselves represented in the books they read [...]” [p5]

The report also uses a terrific quote which really sums up the issue:

“We worry that kids who are struggling with issues of racism, gender identification, violence, physical abuse, verbal abuse, or religious persecution may not have access to books that can provide images of other kids who are in similar circumstances to their own. In other words, those students who are most vulnerable have the least chance of reading books that could be helpful in dealing with difficult issues that are present in their lives.”¹⁷

Important research, recommended.¹⁸

¹⁶ See: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain>.

¹⁷ Christine Leland, Mitzi Lewison and Jerome C Harste. *Teaching children's literature: it's critical!* Routledge, 2013, p179.

¹⁸ Source: email from National Literacy Trust, 8 Dec 2020.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

Women and children's creative health handbook: wellbeing by design

This important new handbook¹⁹ has just been published. It was commissioned by Jo Ward for The Improving Me Programme²⁰.

As the Preface declares:

“There are three main messages to be taken away from this handbook:

Firstly, if we are serious about reducing health inequalities we need to acknowledge that a social gradient persists in preterm birth risk and in children’s access to positive early experiences. Child health is everyone’s responsibility. We need to give every child the best start in life [...]

Secondly, we need to understand why life expectancy at birth for England’s poorest women has fallen. Furthermore [...] we need to critically examine in tandem significant differences in maternal mortality rates. Why are black women five times more likely to die as a result of complications in their pregnancy than white women? There is a clear need to better utilise the evidence we have and understand what it is telling us. Namely, we urgently need to explore the complexity of these inequalities and to address them, also considering what the implications are for policy and practice.

Thirdly, creativity, the arts and culture have a significant role in addressing unfair and avoidable differences in health. The evidence base on the value of such cultural interventions and the opportunity this presents is vast but largely untapped. This needs to change. Therefore benefits accruing from adoption of health policy that embraces non-clinical interventions are manifest.” [p5]

Having identified and emphasised the need for intervention in early years, the handbook looks at the enormous impact of health inequalities:

“It is quite staggering that those born in the wealthiest areas of England live up to 20 years longer on average than those in the country’s poorest areas in the North of England [...] Early childhood is a critical period in determining life chances. Children who start off well inevitably have firmer foundations on which future developments build. This is why it is

¹⁹ Katey Warran and Jo Ward. *Women and children's creative health handbook: wellbeing by design*. Improving Me, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://www.improvingme.org.uk/media/1151/womenandchildrenscreativehealthhandbook.pdf>.

²⁰ Improving Me “[...] are a partnership of 27 NHS organisations across Cheshire and Merseyside aiming to improve the experience of women and children.” [Taken from: <https://www.improvingme.org.uk/about-us/>].

so important to ensure that all children have the best possible start in life.” [p9]

The handbook then highlights the available evidence that shows the impact of the arts (drawing primarily on the work published by the WHO²¹):

“However, despite this burgeoning evidence base, the implementation of arts interventions in the UK is limited [...]” [p9]

To help remedy this situation:

“This is where this resource comes in. Drawing together the key evidence on the role of the arts in supporting the health and wellbeing of mothers, babies, young people and children, we highlight the key reasons that investment in a creative health agenda is necessary to respond to major health challenges and rising inequalities.

The resource is divided into three sections:

- pregnancy, labour and birth;
- newborn and early years; and
- children and young people.

We underline the burden of the challenges across these life junctures, as well as highlighting the cost to individuals and society, and then outline what contribution the arts and culture can make.

It may seem that the arts can only ever ameliorate the symptoms of disadvantage and inequity. What is important to recognise is the personal and community agency that such approaches promote which can and do impact positively on societal change and growth.” [p9]

The handbook has a range of case studies, including Live Music Now; BookTrust and Bookstart; and Leicestershire Libraries “Bumps to Bookworms”:

“Leicestershire County Council Libraries developed a partnership with family centre workers to support mums in their third trimester with babies and toddlers (0-5). They developed a family programme with sessions that track a child’s development, beginning with a focus on a baby’s first encounter with books. Sessions support parents to consider the importance of books in a child’s development and explore impact that early and continued sharing of words and books makes to a child’s long-term success. Sally White, Library Outreach explains, ‘by introducing reading, rhymes, books and library use to embed reading, books and library lending with parents, the project develops parent’s confidence in

²¹ Daisy Fancourt and Saoirse Finn. *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. WHO (Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report 67), 2019. Available to download as a pdf from: https://www.artshealthresources.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-WHO-scoping-review_Fancourt.pdf.

using books and rhymes as the child grows, and ensures they understand the importance and relevance of what they do.” [p15]

It finishes with a glossary and a list of references for further reading.

In the words of Kate Pickett²² (who endorses the handbook):

It is vital that we understand and intervene on the ways in which income inequality intersects with gender inequality, creating social gradients in women’s health, capabilities and capacities that in turn create inequalities in child wellbeing. Interventions that encompass creativity and the arts and are a fantastic approach – enriching families’ lives and culture and respecting their dignity. A brilliant handbook.” [p2]

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

“Contested heritage”

Further to the coverage of this in the two previous issues of the *Newsletter*²³, the MA has just published a short article²⁴ reporting the outgoing Chair of the Charity Commission’s comments which included:

“There’s more than one way to help those in need, but if you want to improve lives and strengthen communities through charity, you need to leave party politics and the culture wars out of it... all can campaign in support of the causes they exist to fight for (or against) – as long as they don’t stray into party politics by doing so.”

The article includes a statement from the MA:

“Sharon Heal, the director of the Museums Association (MA), said: ‘The MA is clear that matters of curatorial and editorial judgement should not be subject to interference from outside bodies. Our Code of Ethics for Museums [25] states that all those who work in and with museums should “ensure editorial integrity in programming and interpretation” and “resist attempts to influence interpretation or content by particular interest groups, including lenders, donors and funders”.

²² Professor of Epidemiology, University of York, and co-author (with Richard Wilkinson) of *The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better*. Allen Lane, 2009.

²³ *Network Newsletter*, 234, Aug 2020, pp5-7; and 236, Oct 2020, p16.

²⁴ Geraldine Kendall Adams “Charity Commission chair intervenes in ‘culture war’ debate”, 30 Nov 2020, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/11/charity-commission-chair-intervenes-in-culture-war-debate/?utm_campaign=1853298_30112020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,13Q0I,27LU0M,48VPF,1.

²⁵ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/ethics/code-of-ethics/>.

Many museums and heritage organisations are working closely with their communities to deepen and broaden our understanding of collections and buildings and that includes revealing and interpreting sensitive and troubling aspects of Britain’s past. Museums can provide the context needed in order for us all to explore and understand the past and its impact on society today.”

The MA also published a news-story²⁶ about the National Trust’s coming under fire from MPs for its report on colonialism²⁷, which included Chartwell among 93 properties listed, which have direct and indirect connections to slavery and empire at sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Abbreviations and acronyms

DWP = Department for Work and Pensions
EEA = European Economic Area
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
MA = Museums Association
WHO = World Health Organisation

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

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²⁶ Geraldine Kendall Adams “National Trust gets caught in culture war crossfire”, 13 Nov 2020, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/analysis/2020/11/national-trust-gets-caught-in-culture-war-crossfire/?utm_campaign=1843746_13112020&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,13IN6,27LU0M,47YM9,1.

²⁷ Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas and Emma Slocombe (eds). *Interim report on the connections between colonialism and properties now in the care of the National Trust, including links with historic slavery*. National Trust, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/colonialism-and-historic-slavery-report.pdf>.