

# 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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## Did you see ...?

### **ARC Magazine**

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- Alan Butler (“Opening Lines” column) introduces the work of the Community Archives and Heritage Group and their awards<sup>2</sup> [pp5-6]
  - “Community Archives & Heritage Group Award winners announced” [p26] [see below]
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## Black Lives Matter

### **Supporting decolonisation in museums**

The MA has recently produced this important new guidance<sup>3</sup>.

“This document is intended as a prompt for thinking, discussion and action on decolonising. It offers tools for those who want to improve their practice through decolonial thinking and suggests initial steps for those who are committed to this work, but don’t know where to start. It also aims to give strength and support to those already doing this work.” [p5]

It starts by setting out ‘decolonising principles’:

“Decolonising museums is an ethical commitment. Here we outline principles to support decolonising practice [...] These principles apply to everyone working in and with museums, at all levels.” [p5]

The principles include:

- Challenge neutrality: “Museums are not neutral and never have been.” [p7]
- Acknowledge power and privilege
- Build relationships
- Value all forms of knowledge and expertise equally
- Be brave
- Be accountable
- Do the work
- Take care
- Be creative
- Aim for justice.

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<sup>1</sup> ARC Magazine, 384, Jan/Feb 2022.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/category/awards>.

<sup>3</sup> Supporting decolonisation in museums. MA, 2021, <https://ma-production.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com/app/uploads/2021/11/07135807/Supporting-decolonisation-in-museums-final-version.pdf>.

The next section looks at 'beginning the journey'. This starts with a vision of what the Decolonising Museum is:

- “a genuinely open and inclusive space
- a safe and comfortable space
- a place where all the senses are engaged
- a place to which everyone can bring their whole selves
- a place where people are encouraged to share their experiences and their creativity
- a place where everyone’s stories can be told” [p9]

and then sets out questions to ask to get the process started, as well as outlining what decolonising actions might include (welcoming people, for example).

The next section looks at 'museums as spaces and places' which, as well as looking at how to provide spaces for different kinds of experience, also touches on museum names and statues.

Section 5 looks at good practice in collaborating (with a couple of case studies).

Section 6 looks at collections, again with useful brief case studies of good practice. This also includes an important short piece by Tehmina Goskar, “BAME: A decolonial perspective”, which looks at terminology and argues strongly that:

“The indiscriminate use of this term is inaccurate and obliterates cultural experiences and understanding. How can the majority diversity of most of the planet be reduced to four letters? It is othering, pejorative and polarising, and perpetuates white-centredness.” [p22]

This section also looks briefly at issues around repatriation of objects.

Section 7 looks at the museum workforce:

“Decolonising the workforce is about who museums work with and how people are valued and supported to thrive. It involves changing ways of working, being critical of structures and gaining buy-in from the whole workforce for decolonising practice.” [p30]

It includes leadership and organisational change; recruitment and selection; and workforce wellbeing.

Section 8 looks at 'public messaging', talking about your decolonising practice and sharing what you are doing – for example:

- “Publish a policy that outlines why the museum is taking a decolonising approach and the planned actions.
- Consider what language is appropriate when communicating this work publicly. In some cases, it may be counterproductive or difficult to use terms like 'decolonisation' and alternative language may be more suitable to describe the work.” [p34]

Section 9 looks at the role for sector support organisations, funders and policy-makers; and, finally, Section 10 briefly sets out how the guidance was developed and who was involved.

This is a really useful, practical guide to this important area of work (which sometimes seems to me to become rather over-academic).

Highly recommended.<sup>4</sup>

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### **“History on trial’: Sector reacts to Colston verdict”**

The MA has published a long article<sup>5</sup> in response to the verdict in the trial of the “Colston Four”, quoting David Olusoga and the International Slavery Museum saying that “it was history that was placed at the centre of this trial”.

The article also quotes Errol Francis (CEO of Culture&):

“As for the future of the Colston monument itself, the current display of the effigy in a supine position at Bristol’s M Shed museum is a great start to its reinterpretation.

I hope the display is permanent and will be joined in the future by other objects that acknowledge Bristol’s pivotal role in the shameful holocaust of transatlantic slavery.”<sup>6</sup>

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

### **“Museums Change Lives Awards 2021”**

The winners and nominees<sup>7</sup> were:

#### **Best Small Museum Project**

*Winner:*

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Museum Association update, 9 Nov 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rudling “History on trial’: Sector reacts to Colston verdict”, 7 Jan 2022, [https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2022/01/history-on-trial-sector-reacts-to-colston-verdict/?utm\\_campaign=2071832\\_07012022&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Museum%20Association&dm\\_i=2VBX,18EMW,27LU0M,4SDVN,1](https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2022/01/history-on-trial-sector-reacts-to-colston-verdict/?utm_campaign=2071832_07012022&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museum%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,18EMW,27LU0M,4SDVN,1).

<sup>6</sup> Source: Museum Association update, 7 Jan 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Source: [https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2021/?utm\\_campaign=2037901\\_09112021&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Museum%20Association&dm\\_i=2VBX,17OGD,27LU0M,4PA3R,1](https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2021/?utm_campaign=2037901_09112021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museum%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,17OGD,27LU0M,4PA3R,1).

- The Scottish Crannog Centre – Apprenticeship Scheme: They Might Be Giants<sup>8</sup>

*Nominees:*

- The Peace Museum – Peace Out<sup>9</sup>
- The Stirling Smith – 20 Great Paintings<sup>10</sup>

### **Best Museums Change Lives Project**

*Winner:*

- National Justice Museum – Make It Yours: Workshops in an Envelope<sup>11</sup>

*Nominees:*

- Wakefield Museums and Castles (Wakefield MDC Cultural Services) – A World of Good<sup>12</sup>
- Barnsley Museum – Feels Like Home<sup>13</sup>

### **Digital Engagement Award**

*Winner:*

- The Mixed Museum – Brown Babies<sup>14</sup>

*Nominees:*

- V&A Dundee – Work in Progress<sup>15</sup>
- The Jewish Museum London – Virtual Classrooms<sup>16</sup>

### **Radical Changemaker Award**

*Winner:*

- Sam Bowen – SEND In Museums<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/pilot-apprenticeship-scheme-the-scottish-crannog-centre/>.

<sup>9</sup> See: <https://www.peaceoutexhibition.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.smithartgalleryandmuseum.co.uk/>.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.nationaljusticemuseum.org.uk/museum/events/free-family-friday-creative-workshops>.

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://wakefieldmuseumsandlibraries.blogspot.com/p/a-world-of-good.html>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhADReYU1hk>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://mixedmuseum.org.uk/brown-babies/>.

<sup>15</sup> See: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee/info/work-in-progress>.

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/virtual-classrooms/>.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example: <https://southeastmuseums.org/special-schools-and-museum-toolkit/>.

*Nominees:*

- Victoria Ryves – Heritage Doncaster<sup>18</sup>
  - Anna Smalley – Tullie House Museum<sup>19</sup>
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## **Community Archives & Heritage Group Award winners**

The 2021 Awards winners are:

- Gathering & Preserving Heritage Award winner:  
Leavesden Hospitals History Association<sup>20</sup>
  - Community Engagement Award winner:  
Clements Hall Local History Group, York<sup>21</sup>
  - Contribution to Wellbeing Award:  
Age Cymru Dyfed – West Wales Veterans Archive<sup>22</sup>
  - Overall winner of the Best Community Archive and Heritage Group of 2021:  
Leavesden Hospitals History Association
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## **Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies**

### ***Jump starting integration supporting communities to reconnect and thrive***

This important new research report<sup>23</sup> was published in Dec 2021.

“With this research, we set out to understand how the pandemic – which represents a scale of change which before spring 2020 perhaps could not have been imagined – affected people’s experiences of migration and integration in their local area. We spoke with communities living in Cardiff, Oldham, and Sandwell to explore how they understood the pandemic to have affected relationships within their communities, how

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example: <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/news/blog/history-health-and-happiness-doncaster>.

<sup>19</sup> Info about the Museum at: <https://www.tulliehouse.co.uk/>.

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/organisation/leavesden-asylum-hospital-1865-to-1995>.

<sup>21</sup> See: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/organisation/clements-hall-local-history-group>.

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/organisation/age-cymru-dyfed-west-wales-veterans-archive>.

<sup>23</sup> Lucy Mort, Marley Morris and Evelina Grinuite. *Jump starting integration supporting communities to reconnect and thrive*. IPPR, 2021, <https://www.ippr.org/files/2021-12/jump-starting-integration-december-21.pdf>.

they maintained social connection, and what tensions or challenges were emerging locally.” [p3]

It begins with a powerful reminder of the impact of the pandemic:

“[...] it is impossible not to foreground the severity of the loss, isolation, and hardships that people have experienced at the individual and family level.” [p3]

The report then goes on to identify a number of key findings:

- “The pandemic made participants acutely aware of inequalities within and across their local area. Participants recognised that, if they were living in a deprived area, they and their neighbours were more likely to experience financial hardship as a result of the pandemic, or that people living in the centre of disadvantaged towns and in overcrowded housing were more likely to face infection from the virus.” [p3]
- “The pandemic has pressed pause on opportunities and occasion for social contact between migrant and receiving communities – as the spaces in which these groups might meet had closed and the need for social distancing and lockdowns saw more people relying on established family and friend networks.” [p4]
- “In some cases, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing tensions within communities – particularly where participants from the receiving community perceived that some migrant groups had breached lockdown and social distancing rules. Participants from ethnic minority communities also described facing racism and discrimination related to the pandemic and the circulation of conspiracy theories and misinformation.” [p4]
- “People who had originally migrated to the UK faced challenges during the pandemic that were a direct result of or amplified by their immigration status and related inequalities.” [p4]
- “Finally, we also saw an abundant amount of hopefulness from participants as the pandemic afforded people the opportunity to evaluate their lives as they were and reimagine their communities for the future. Some saw that there was an increased sense of togetherness as a result of the pandemic and that informal support networks were a tangible way in which this had played out. Many wanted to take this forward as communities recover from the pandemic – and indeed for some it was vital, as they saw an absence of support from the government.” [p4]

The report then goes on to make three key recommendations:

1. “The government should support communities through investment in social infrastructure that holds communities together. This should include setting out a strategy for delivering a ‘social stimulus’ that revitalises civil society as the UK recovers from the pandemic; bringing forward plans to make a significant long-term investment in social infrastructure as part of the ‘levelling up’ agenda; and incorporating social cohesion and

integration within the priorities of the upcoming Shared Prosperity Fund.”  
[p5]

2. “The government should set out reforms to those areas of the immigration and asylum system which have been shown to be unfit for promoting public health and social cohesion during the pandemic. We recommend that the government facilitates the integration of spontaneous asylum seekers on an equal footing with those who arrive via resettlement routes. We also propose that concessions to lift the NRPF condition are extended to individuals on all forms of temporary leave and that applications for lifting the NRPF condition are streamlined and simplified.” [p5]
3. “Local authorities should adopt the principle of sanctuary in order to create the conditions for integration. This includes challenging immigration policies that would create further destitution, ill health, or other harms within their local communities; committing to joined up working on integration which supports the key role of voluntary and community groups in promoting integration and cohesion; and proactively tackling community tensions where they find them. Finally, we underline that each of these policies should be designed with coproduction at their heart, so that local residents are meaningfully included in key decision-making that affects their community.” [p5]

Recommended.<sup>24</sup>

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

MA = Museums Association

NRPF = No Recourse to Public Funds

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This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

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<sup>24</sup> Source: *IPPR Newsletter*, Dec 2021.