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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 ...?

Literacy Today

The latest issue¹ has a wide range of interesting articles and news round-ups, including:

- Tom Wilson “Improving literacy and numeracy in the workplace”, a look at the success of union-led learning activities [p13]
- Christina Clark “Young people’s reading and home resources: findings from our national survey”, reporting the results of research into how the types of resources young people have at home support literacy and relate to reading enjoyment, attitudes and behaviour [pp28-30].

Professional Manager

The latest issue² has a very useful summary of some “hidden” disabilities, including dyslexia and Asperger’s:

- Sandi Mann “Taking a broader view of disability”, pp36-38.

Library + Information Gazette

The latest issue³ has an interesting article about an intergenerational project in Herefordshire Libraries, involving teenagers and older people:

- Emma Stevens “Teenagers in the picture” [p10].

Adults Learning

The June issue⁴ focuses on older learners, and has an interesting article by Natasha Innocent (MLA):

- “Learning to manage change in the third age”, which looks at what museums, libraries and archives can do to support people in the third age manage the transition from fulltime work to a mix of work, caring, volunteering, etc [pp10-11].

¹ *Literacy Today* 63, June 2010. Further information from:

<http://www.educationpublishing.com/>.

² *Professional Manager* 19 (4) July 2010. Further information from:

<http://www.managers.org.uk/practical-support/information-services/professional-manager-magazine>.

³ *Library + Information Gazette* 1-14 July 2010. Available electronically at:

<http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/Launch.aspx?referral=other&refresh=Li71p20T0sW4&PBID=67e16ede-f815-4e79-bad3-8ee3a5af29c2&skip=>.

⁴ *Adults Learning* 21 (10) June 2010. Further information at:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning>.

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

Leading questions

This important new report⁵ from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation evaluates the learning from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund⁶.

It outlines the background to the Foundation's involvement in public libraries; summarises the range of different activities that the funded projects undertook; and then looks at "achievements, challenges and lessons". These are grouped under key themes:

- Changing lives
- Understanding needs
- Improving access and welcome
- Project design and management
- Partnership development
- Sustainability.

The report then lists a number of important conclusions, eg:

"There is evidence to show that learning from projects is being transferred into core practice and services, particularly around reading and learning. This includes incorporating social inclusion measures into appropriate strategies and plans.

There are also some signs of greater emphasis being placed on a participative approach and enabling new users to influence library service planning and delivery, but it is too soon to say whether this will lead to more profound change. The degree to which this has happened varies considerably from one local authority to another, as does the extent to which community engagement has been understood and practiced.

However, relevant changes still have a largely internal focus. External partners have been very positive about the relationships they have formed with library services as a result of some Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects. Nonetheless, additional development work is still needed to enable public libraries to influence policy and be seen automatically as a natural partner in external environments, such as in Local Strategic Partnerships, or implementing Local Area Agreements.

⁵ Helen Carpenter. *Leading questions: learning from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund*. PHF, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (267 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/news.asp?id=1088>.

⁶ John Vincent was a member of the RLCF Panel, and also commented on draft versions of the report.

Project work must be keyed into achieving a lasting transformation of public library services and the next step is to achieve that change.”
[p17]

The report then lists key issues around learning from delivery of projects and wider impact, including, for example:

- “Evidence from project work shows that most new ideas have come from staff working at or near the front line, as well as from working across sectors and boundaries, with communities and partners with different backgrounds and skills.
- Long-term success is contingent on vision, effective ownership and planning, and real motivation and proactive commitment at all levels to: work creatively and collaboratively; be open to learning; exchange good practice; and move away from a service-led model.
- Flexibility is required. What is relevant and appropriate in one location may not be right in another, and public libraries need to be in a position to make decisions based on evidence about their local population.
- Local authorities have tended overall to be hierarchical and risk-averse, with structures that militate against innovation and create departmental silos. Public libraries are not immune from this and it poses a challenge for the sector.
- Bold change may be viewed as too risky by local authorities. They may be content to see a library service coasting when that service is perceived as a small part of council business, if it is not currently failing in relation to national indicators and satisfaction levels, and if the perception of what would be gained from the changes is seen as limited ...
- A more profound systemic transformation is needed than what a project can achieve alone, but that transformation needs to draw on learning from innovative project and partnership work. Catalysts and leaders are needed to nurture new ways of working ...” [p18]

And:

- “The lack of articulation of a clear, shared vision and purpose within the sector is reflected in a lack of understanding and recognition in the external policy environment of the wider role and value of public libraries.
- Strong leadership and direction is needed within government to generate a renewed sense of impetus and purpose, and to drive improvement. There are already national strategies and policy frameworks in place that can help place public library work into context.
- Opportunities should be taken to draw together good practice and have a clearer model of what libraries should offer at a national level.
- Advocating for and positioning public libraries across central and local government is essential to opening up opportunities and resources for strategic long-term partnership working – for example in relation to citizenship and integration.

- Champions at every level in and outside the sector are vital, as are constructive critical friends in positions of authority with no direct connection to library service delivery. They can challenge and support, refresh debate about the future, provide different perspectives and stimulate new ideas and ways of thinking.
- Partnerships need to be part of a long-term phased approach to change management, for example to enable cross-sector learning and skills-sharing and opportunities for funding to test and develop new ways of working ...” [p19]

This report includes some important learning, drawn from a wealth of experience of some 60 pieces of work. Recommended.

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

State of the countryside update: children and educational services

This new report⁷ from the Commission for Rural Communities “aims to extend and develop our understanding of the statistical picture of children and young people in rural England.” [p6]

Key findings include:

- “Population estimates for England 2008 show that approximately 2.2 million children live in rural areas and just over 10 million children live in urban areas.
- In 2008 33,250 more children aged 0-14 migrated to rural districts than left. However for the age group 15-19, 30,810 migrated out of rural districts rather than into them.
- Children living in the most rural districts (Rural 80) have the lowest level of well-being on the housing domain within the Child Well-being Index.
- When housing costs are taken into account approximately 500,000 children in rural communities in England live in households affected by poverty.” [p5]

It includes brief statistical data to support these findings, and then goes on to a “discussion” [pp21-25] which begins by stating that:

“Many people find it difficult to accept that poverty and disadvantage can exist in, sometimes, beautiful surroundings. In producing this report

⁷ *State of the countryside update: children and educational services*. Commission for Rural Communities, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (2770 kb) from: http://ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/CRC%20WEB43%20SOTC%20Update_TAGGED180310.pdf.

we begin to set some context and understanding of place and circumstance for the child in the countryside together with challenging some perceptions of rural life for children and young people; the report also highlights the need for equitable access to services for all children whether they live in an urban or rural area.” [p21]

It goes on to say:

“Many people believe there is very little child poverty in England today. Figures 6 and 7 show that this is not the case with approximately 500,000 children (after housing costs) living in poverty in rural areas in 2007/08. This is a quarter of all children living in rural England.” [p22]

The report concludes:

“In producing this update we have identified the need for policy makers and service deliverers to consider the following areas to enable equitable access to services and to work towards making rural England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up:

- **Rural premium** – the cost of delivering services is frequently higher in rural areas. The effects of sparsity need to be taken into account and allowed for in costs of delivery of services. Models that work in urban areas do not always replicate in rural areas and there is an increasing need to look at alternative, cost effective ways of delivering services in rural areas.
- **Rural proofing** – service providers need to take account of and report explicitly on the rural dimension of their client groups’ needs and how services will meet those needs.
- **Data** – there should not be over-reliance on aggregate statistics that show area concentrations of deprivation. Rural poverty and disadvantage exists, but is scattered and hard to identify through conventional data sets. It is important to ensure that strategies are developed that can capture those suffering deprivation, wherever they live, and to target services appropriately.
- **Pilots** – where pilots are carried out for schemes, these should take place in rural areas, as well as urban, to identify any difficulties in their application and test whether any adjustments are needed early in the life of new initiatives.
- **Extended services** – many rural schools and Children’s Centres, particularly those in villages without other community buildings, often provide a base for a wide range of community activities. Through the extended services agenda rural schools can help ensure that rural communities, including children and young people, have equitable access to a broad range of services.
- **School closures** – local authorities should prevent large scale rural school closures by devising creative and innovative solutions to ensure the future viability of rural schools. For

These are useful reminders of areas we ought to consider when developing services in rural settings.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Racial violence: the buried issue

This is an important new piece of work⁸ from the Institute of Race Relations.

It begins by challenging the idea that racial violence is a thing of the past:

“Our research shows the hideous fact that since Stephen Lawrence’s death in April 1993, eighty-nine people have lost their lives to racial violence – an average of five per year.” [p3]

This is followed by a brief summary of changes to the legislation, and then the report begins to identify those people most at risk:

- Young people: “... almost half the victims were 30 or under.” [p6]
- Certain trades: “Taxi drivers, takeaway workers, shop workers – many of whom work alone and at night – are at particular risk to attacks which result in death.” [p6]
- Refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and overseas students
- Muslims.

In terms of the geography of the attacks:

“By far the majority of attacks (82.42 per cent) take place in England. Almost 10 per cent take place in Scotland, 5.1 per cent in Northern Ireland and 2.8 in Wales. (But it is worth noting that ethnic minorities, as self-describing in the 2001 Census represented 13 per cent of the total population in England, 4 per cent in Wales and 2 per cent in Scotland.)” [p11]

“What has emerged is that the map of violence has changed quite dramatically since studies were first done of such violence in the 1970s ... It is no longer poor, deprived areas of London like Southall, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Newham, which witnessed many of the racial attacks and racist murders a generation or two ago, that are now so prone to serious attacks. Not only are BME communities now more established there but also a whole history of struggle against racism has strengthened

⁸ Harmit Athwal, Jenny Bourne and Rebecca Wood. *Racial violence: the buried issue*. IRR, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (300 kb) from: http://www.irr.org.uk/pdf2/IRR_Briefing_No.6.pdf.

those communities. These communities are, for want of a better way of describing them, now more at ease with their diversity ...

But what was significant was that ethnic minorities in a whole host of cities, towns and areas, not traditionally associated with such violence, now appear to be experiencing it. These are areas which have traditionally been very white and are not affluent.” [pp11-12]

The report concludes:

“There has been hostility and resentment, particularly in poorer areas where the competition over scarce resources has been at its keenest. Too often, politicians have responded to fears and insecurities by failing to act responsibly, or even fanning the flames of prejudice. The ‘Dutch auction’ amongst political parties about who can be hardest on asylum, the endless and simplistic denunciations of ‘illegal immigrants’, all play a part in creating a climate where asylum seekers and migrants are harassed, and where new refugee communities find it hard to put down roots and gain acceptance. Islamophobia, too, has become more socially acceptable and much of the rhetoric around the ‘war on terror’ has served to legitimise a crude anti-Muslim racism.

Unfortunately, having contributed to popular racism and hostility, the political parties only wake up to the social and human cost when the BNP makes inroads into their electoral base. And that they do so in ways that actually pander to the anti-foreigner sentiment of the BNP is a matter of great regret. What our research clearly demonstrates is that there are direct, and often violent, repercussions from such misguided policies.

If you are an asylum seeker or a migrant worker or a foreign student, dispersed throughout the UK, or if you are a British Muslim, or could be mistaken for a Muslim, and maybe work in a trade where you are isolated and vulnerable, if you are from a settled BME community seeking to move into a more affluent, and traditionally white, area, there is a real and terrifying daily risk of becoming a victim to racial violence.” [p17]

Unlocking the potential of young people in Knowsley

This new report⁹ from 4Children:

“... brought together a group of academics, policy analysts, media representatives and creative thinkers to develop new perspectives in

⁹ Knowsley Young People’s Commission. *Unlocking the potential of young people in Knowsley*. 4Children 2010. Available to download as a pdf (1690 kb) from: http://www.4children.org.uk/uploads/information/1KYPC_Report_FINAL_web.pdf. (Source eYPU 311, 14 July).

the complex area of public policy for young people in Knowsley. The Commission was commissioned by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council and delivered by 4Children.” [p4]

Key considerations included:

- “The views of young people – at the centre of all our thinking throughout
- The impact of families and friends as role models and mentors and the impact of strong intergenerational ties
- The role of professionals and their attitude to young people ...” [p4]

The Commission wanted to explore and understand the realities of life for young people growing up in Knowsley:

“Dramatic changes in the economic fortune of the borough led to the disappearance of the industry based jobs that could once have been taken for granted. The move to a service based economy demands a new set of skills and qualifications that few have been able to keep up with. The high level of worklessness and underemployment that have resulted casts its long shadow in every aspect of young people’s lives – from underachievement in education, to unemployment, involvement in risky behaviour and health concerns.

These changes also inform a dominant narrative that we often heard from the older generations, and in some cases professionals in the borough – a narrative of decline, failure and pessimism for the future. This narrative contrasts markedly with the views of young people themselves, but has a pervasive influence on all aspects of young people’s lives. From the way that services are designed and delivered to the expectations and aspirations of young people themselves. These factors have a powerful and often negative effect on young people at a time of crucial development in their lives when long lasting attitudes and capabilities are formed – limiting options and chances in life forever.” [p7]

The report therefore sets seven challenges:

1. To build the aspiration and resilience of young people in Knowsley to raise expectations and help young people realise their dreams ...
2. To broaden the horizons of young people in Knowsley to open up opportunities and options for their future
3. To support young people to become agents of their own change
4. To ensure that parents are able to offer positive support to young people
5. To harness the entrepreneurial skills of young people in Knowsley

6. To change the perception of young people and communities in Knowsley by showing new measures of success and achievement
7. For those who work with young people in Knowsley to be among the best in the country and for Knowsley to become a leader of national and international practice.

These challenges are then developed throughout the report, and are listed, together with recommendations on pp49-55, plus additional “key challenges”.

Whilst the cultural sector is not mentioned specifically, there are recommendations where we could play a strong role, for example:

- “6. That a pool of mentors and advocates are recruited to support every young person not in education, employment or training (NEET).
7. That schools explore a range of evidence based approaches to learning that are able to respond to the needs and demands of more challenging young people in Knowsley.
8. To offer facilities and support for those young people whose parents do not support their education, through Saturday schools, homework clubs and mentors.” [p49]

Whilst obviously focusing on one local authority area, this valuable report is widely applicable, and has some good recommendations and interesting analysis. There is to be a conference in Knowsley in the autumn to assess how far the recommendations have been implemented – this is a model that other areas may well follow.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BME = Black and minority ethnic

BNP = British National Party

MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

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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