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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 ...?

Adults Learning

The latest issue¹ has a number of very interesting articles, including:

- Carol Taylor “It’s too high a price”, a “Commentary” piece on the impact of spending cuts on poorer families [p7]²
- Jane Thompson “Women, education and the big, bad society”, which looks at the risk that the achievements of the women’s movement of the 1970s and 1980s are being forgotten [pp8-11]
- Sue Southwood “Taking the fear out of maths”, looking at the need to change attitudes towards numeracy and maths teaching [pp14-15]
- Patricia Sullivan “Why investing in ESOL makes sense”, an article urging that funding of ESOL continues [pp24-25]
- Lauren Smith “Resources of hope”, assessing the impact of cuts to public libraries [pp26-27]
- Mary Hamilton “I’m fascinated but I don’t have the confidence”, a look at what engages older learners with ICT [pp28-31].

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Including migrant populations in Joint Strategic Needs Assessment: a guide

This Guide^{3, 4} has been written to assist those writing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) as part of the process of commissioning.

It begins with a very helpful brief snapshot of “who are migrants” that includes a one-page table listing the different ‘types’ of migrant (backed up by a more detailed set of definitions in one of the appendices). This introductory section also suggests specific groups that it might be worth researching in more depth:

- “Polish workers and families.
- People from Central or sub-Saharan Africa with high rates of HIV.
- Undocumented Chinese men or women working in restaurants.
- Refused asylum-seekers living in Section 4 accommodation.
- Students from Asian countries studying at the local university.
- Slovakian Roma.

¹ *Adults Learning*, 22 (6) February 2011. Further information from: <http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning>.

² Also available to download as a pdf (66 kb) from: <http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/AL-commentary-Feb11.pdf>.

³ Nigel Rose *et al.* *Including migrant populations in Joint Strategic Needs Assessment: a guide*. Local Government Improvement and Development, 2011. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/26070159>.

⁴ Thanks to Bill Bolloten for alerting me to this.

- Torture survivors.
- Young separated refugees without recourse to public funds.
- People coming to join family already resident in the UK.” [p6]

The Guide then goes on to argue the case for including migrants in any assessment of a local community:

- “It is about social justice and is an essential part of addressing health inequalities.
- It is a key component in generating community cohesion.
- It is integral to the economic wellbeing of our society.
- It is about continuing to address the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society and enabling their full participation.” [p8]

The Guide then moves on to a ‘How to’ section which includes six stages:

1. Focusing – ie moving from a broad idea (eg “Migrant workers”) to a more specific focus (eg “Migrant workers in a specific industry”)
2. Information collection [see below]
3. Mapping
4. Interviewing and case studies
5. Storing and disseminating information
6. Creating conclusions and building momentum for change.

The second section, Information collection, includes a really useful set of pointers:

“In finding out about migrants’ lives, building networks and identifying case studies, the following are rich sources of information.

- Refugee and migrant community organisations.
- Drop-ins and specialist projects.
- Advice agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureaux.
- Networks such as City of Sanctuary.
- Churches, mosques and other faith-based organisations.
- Employment agencies and employers of migrants
- Staff on the front-line in statutory agencies (GPs, midwives, health visitors, community development workers).
- Tenants’ Associations.
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

Some of these organisations may be able to arrange meetings between you and migrant groups and individuals.” [p14]

The third section includes some brief case study examples (mostly from the health field, but useful to us as examples).

Finally, the appendices also include:

- Using routine data on migrants [pp34-37]
- Starting contacts [p38]

- Resource list [pp39-43].

This is a very useful checklist – highly recommended.

The English Indices of Deprivation 2010

CLG have just published this report⁵ which updates the English Indices of Deprivation 2007 – “The English Indices of Deprivation measures relative levels of deprivation in small areas of England called Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)” [p1].

The key findings from the research are that:

- “Over 5 million people lived in the most deprived areas in England in 2008 and 38 per cent of them were income deprived
- Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Manchester, Knowsley, the City of Kingston-upon Hull, Hackney and Tower Hamlets are the local authorities with the highest proportion of LSOAs amongst the most deprived in England.
- 98 per cent of the most deprived LSOAs are in urban areas but there are also pockets of deprivation across rural areas
- 56 per cent of Local Authorities contain at least one LSOA amongst the 10% most deprived in England
- 88 per cent of the LSOAs that are the most deprived in 2010 were also amongst the most deprived in 2007.” [p1]

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Severe child poverty: nationally and locally

This major new report⁶ from Save the Children shows that “1.6million children across the UK live in severe poverty and that 29 local authorities in Great Britain have more than one in five children living in severe poverty.”

The ten local authority areas with the highest estimates of severe child poverty are:

1. Manchester 27% (proportion of children in severe poverty)
2. Tower Hamlets 27%
3. Newham 25%
4. Leicester 24%

⁵ *The English Indices of Deprivation*. DCLG, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (403kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1871208.pdf>. Also available as separate Excel reports are the various “domain” reports, eg crime; children and older people; local authority summaries – see: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/indices2010>.

⁶ *Severe child poverty: nationally and locally*. Save the Children (Briefing), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (110.7 kb) from: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/assets/images/Severe_Child_Poverty_Nationally_And_Locally_February2011.pdf.

5. Westminster 24%
6. Nottingham 23%
7. Liverpool 23%
8. Birmingham 23%
9. Blackpool 22%
10. Hackney 22%

[taken from p3]

The report makes a number of recommendations (“In the run up to the budget in March, we’re calling on the government to agree a plan on severe child poverty”⁷), including:

- “a focus by government on severe poverty” [p6]
- “A severe child poverty plan” [p6] that includes:
 - Local labour markets – “It is vital that the government ensures that jobs created as the economy recovers are available to people in areas of high severe poverty and unemployment.” [p6]
 - Removing barriers to employment
 - Improving the financial support available to families in desperate need.

Engaging homeless people, Black and minority ethnic and other priority groups in Skills for Life

This new research report⁸ examines how adults identified as priority groups in the Skills for Life strategy are engaging in learning with regards to improving their language, literacy and numeracy skills.

The report begins with a scene-setting introduction and overview, looking, for example, at social disadvantage and basic skills; supporting disadvantaged families; reaching “hard-to-reach” learners; learning in the workplace; reaching disengaged young people; working with offenders (and young offenders); homeless people; BME learners; learners with learning disabilities/difficulties; the learning environment; persistence and progression.

It then goes on to look at the needs of homeless people, and includes:

- What is homelessness?
- Reasons for becoming homeless
- Provision for homeless people
- Homelessness and national policy
- Routes through homelessness
- The place of education
- Case studies and examples of effective practice
- Barriers to education for homeless people

⁷ Taken from: http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_14969.htm.

⁸ Anna Reisenberger *et al.* *Engaging homeless people, Black and minority ethnic and other priority groups in Skills for Life*. National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (1651 kb) from: http://www.nrdc.org.uk/publications_details.asp?ID=182#.

- Skills for Life and homelessness.

Similarly, the report then goes on to look at working with BME communities, and includes:

- Who are BME groups? (This includes a small section on Gypsies and Travellers)
- Background and policy context
- Existing data – Black and Minority Ethnic groups, learning, skills and employment
- The impact of Skills for Life on Black and Minority Ethnic groups
- Obstacles to participation and achievement
- Key success factors in meeting the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic groups
- Case studies of effective practice.

The overall conclusions are useful for us:

- “Skills for Life is having an impact on adults with the lowest skill levels and many appear to be using basic skills to progress to other courses.
- Improving literacy and numeracy of adults with the poorest skills has a positive impact on their children’s performance as well as being associated with improvements in their own social and economic situation.
- Community-based provision is more likely to engage hard-to-reach groups who can feel marginalised by traditional college environments.
- Workplace training can reach learners untouched by other provision, including men and older learners.
- Courses which personalise provision and contextualise content to individual learners’ lives are more successful with all priority groups.
- Black and Minority Ethnic learners are well represented in Skills for Life provision but in general experience lower success rates; effective provision is more sensitive to cultural differences and individual circumstances.
- Provision which is responsive to the location, timing and support needs of different priority learners is likely to be more effective.
- Flexible courses which allow learners to drop in and out as they deal with challenges in their personal lives are more likely to retain them in the long run.
- Peer support and key mentors or supportive key workers in the community have an important role in sustaining motivation and helping people make the transition to more formal learning.
- Learners are keen to gain recognition for their achievements if accreditation is appropriate to their goals and introduced in a non-threatening way.” [pp103-104]

In addition, in relation to Black and minority ethnic groups, the report “found that ‘priority groups’ (groups for whom further activity may be necessary to increase participation and achievement in Skills for Life) are:

- Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups (especially, but not exclusively, women);

- To a lesser extent, Black Caribbean and Black African groups;
- Older Black and Minority Ethnic adults (although data relating to this is limited);
- Black and Minority Ethnic adults with English as an additional language;
- Gypsies and Travellers (although data relating to this is limited).” [p104]

The recommendations also include some valuable pointers for us, including:

- “Address the situational, structural and personal barriers of the most marginalised groups, including sufficient financial support for travel and childcare.
- Develop and fund positive action schemes to train people from priority groups to act as mentors and tutors.
- Ensure that voluntary organisations can access funding for educational activities without initial provision being skewed by targets; funding that also adequately covers additional costs which can act as barriers to learners’ participation and continuation on courses ...
- Prioritise family learning as it not only helps the most disadvantaged adults deal with other problems in their lives but also has a positive intergenerational impact on the literacy and numeracy of their children.
- Invest more in community-based provision with first step opportunities at Entry level and Entry to Employment so learners are able to dip out and back into learning when they are ready.
- Invest in strategies for sharing good practice and training on contextualising basic skills as well as embedding language literacy and numeracy in vocational courses ...
- Invest in coordinating support for learners: education, health, social services and third sector agencies, so that policies and priorities do not conflict ...
- Investigate good practice on addressing literacy, language and numeracy for the new priority groups identified in the comprehensive spending review targets such as care leavers, adult offenders under probation supervision, adults with moderate severe or severe learning difficulties and with mental health needs in communities.” [pp104-105]

This is a really useful piece of research which can help focus our own basic skills work. Recommended.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Taking the lead: self-regulation and improvement in local government

This new paper⁹ has just been published by the Local Government Group to introduce a “light touch” approach to self-regulation by local authorities.

⁹ *Taking the lead: self-regulation and improvement in local government*. Local Government Group, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1540 kb) from: <http://www.local.gov.uk/lgv2/aio/1233499>.

“Our campaign to reduce the burden of inspection on councils has been successful. We’ve seen public service agreements (PSAs), comprehensive area assessment (CAA) and burdens such as the use of resources and organisational assessments abolished over the last few months.” [p5]

It announces a number of developments (many of which will fall into place from April 2011), including:

- Local accountability tools: the LGA will work with Councils to help “focus on enhancing the way you are locally accountable to your citizens and communities.” [p9]
- Peer challenge: “We are making an offer to all councils to provide, **free of charge**, a peer challenge over the three year period starting in April 2011.” [p10 – emphasis theirs]
- Peer support
- Knowledge Hub: “a new web-based service that will create a single window to improvement in local government.” [p12]
- Data and transparency: “a place within the Knowledge Hub for individual councils to lodge and access data in an open source environment ...” [p13]
- Leadership support
- Learning and support networks: “We will support networks of officers and councillors at national and sub-national levels, working with other sub-national groupings of councils and the relevant professional associations, to share good practice and to provide timely support. We will prioritise our support to areas that you have said are a priority, including children’s and adult services. We will also seek to make use of these networks to inform the wider policy and lobbying role that the LG Group plays on behalf of the sector.” [p15]

Assuming that local authorities really take up this way of working, then this seven-point plan is going to feature hugely in much of our future work.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BME = Black and minority ethnic

CLG = Communities and Local Government

DCLG = Department of Communities and Local Government

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