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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.

Contents List

Did you see ...?

- *Youth Library Review* – page 2
- *Literacy Today* – page 2
- *Books for Keeps* – page 2
- *Museums Journal* – page 2
- *Runnymede Bulletin* – page 3
- *Children and Libraries* – page 3

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *Differences in decline – relative child poverty in Scotland and England 1998-99 to 2008-09* – page 3
- *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011* – page 4

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

- *Broke, not broken: tackling youth poverty and the aspiration gap* – page 6

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

- *Review of the Arts Council's strategic framework* – page 7

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 8

Did you see ...?

Youth Library Review

The latest issue¹ has some very useful and interesting articles, including:

- “RNIB National Library Service” [pp2-4]
- “KidsLibs Trust: Libraries for Living”, outlining the work of the Trust in creating libraries in Kenya [pp5-7]
- “The Edinburgh Reading Champion Project” (the PHF-funded work with looked-after children and young people, which was a finalist in the 2009 CILIP Libraries Change Lives Award [pp8-11]
- Elspeth Pandit – East Lothian’s “Early Years work” with Travellers [pp16-17]

Literacy Today

The latest issue² has a number of useful articles, particularly:

- George Dugdale “Literacy and the Big Society” [pp19-21].

Books for Keeps

The July issue³ has a range of important articles and reviews, as always, including:

- Alan Gibbons “Children’s and young adult fiction and the ‘war on terror’” [pp4-5]
- Rebecca Butler “Children’s novels with disabled characters” (‘Ten of the Best’ series) [pp10-11]

Museums Journal

The latest issue⁴ includes:

- John Holt “Last resort?” which looks at the role that culture is having in helping to regenerate seaside towns [pp29-33]
- “Social work”, an interview with Tony Butler (Museum of East Anglian Life) looking at his work at the Museum and the creation of the Happy Museum project [pp38-41]

¹ *Youth Library Review*, 41, Spring 2011. Available to download as a pdf (5990 kb) from: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/filedownloadslibrary/branch-group-resources/ylr%202011.pdf>.

² *Literacy Today*, 66, 2011. Further information from: www.educationpublishing.com.

³ *Books for Keeps*, 189, July 2011. Available to download from: <http://content.yudu.com/A1t7zm/BfKNo189July2011/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=>.

⁴ *Museums Journal*, July/Aug 2011. Further information from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>.

Runnymede Bulletin

The latest *Bulletin*⁵ focuses particularly on LGBT issues, as well as including news and reviews, for example:

- Julie Gibbs “Seeking sanctuary”, on the plight of gay and lesbian asylum seekers in the UK [p7]
- Bisi Oyekanmi “Black, gay and proud”, outlining the importance of the Black Pride event [pp8-9]
- Philip Dayle “Jamaica? No problem”, a “thoughtful analysis of homophobia in Jamaican culture” [p11]
- “10 key facts about ... race and LGBT” [p15]
- Ajamu “Celebrating a history”, a feature on the *rukus!* Black LGBT archive [p26]
- Rob Berkeley “Connecting our struggles for equality”, “it is crucial that we recognise the importance of addressing homophobia as integral to our efforts to fight racism” [p27]

Plus:

- Nina Kelly “Young, gifted and mixed race”, an interview with three young artists talking about the impact that being mixed-race has on their work [p16-17]
- Paul Mawhinney “Old and carefree? Social care and older ethnic minorities”, which looks at “how the varying needs of older minority ethnic people may impact on the future of social care [pp18-19].

Children and Libraries

The Spring issue⁶ includes an excellent article, “Beyond storytime”, by Tess Prendergast (who leads the Early Years Community Program at the Vancouver (Canada) Public Library), which outlines the outreach approach developed by Vancouver Libraries to reach early years children and their parents/carers.⁷

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Differences in decline – relative child poverty in Scotland and England 1998-99 to 2008-09

⁵ *Runnymede Bulletin*, 366, Summer 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1770 kb) from: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/bulletin/pdfs/366-BulletinSummer11W.pdf>.

⁶ Tess Prendergast “Beyond storytime: children’s librarians collaborating in communities”, *Children and Libraries*, Spring 2011, pp20-26, 40. *Children and Libraries* is the official journal of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, see:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/compubs/childrenlib/index.cfm>.

⁷ Thanks to Ken Williment for forwarding a copy of this article.

This new report⁸ looks at differing trends in child poverty:

“Between 1998-99 and 2008-09 child poverty declined across the UK but fell more in Scotland than in England. This report summarises the results of an investigation into these differing trends and the extent to which this difference can be attributed to government policy.”

The report concludes:

- “The fall in child poverty in England and Scotland is likely to be due to households’ increased access to work and the corresponding fall in unemployment.
- Social change is likely to have assisted this trend as the number of families caring for two or more children, who have a higher risk of poverty, has declined.
- However, the increasing numbers of families from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK, who are more likely to live in relative poverty than similar White families may have prevented a further reduction.
- UK Government policy is likely to have contributed to reducing child poverty. Tax credits reforms extended eligibility and strengthened the association between receipt and reduced poverty risk.
- The UK and Scottish government strategies to increase access to education, (negatively associated with the odds of living in poverty) are likely to have contributed to the reduction in child poverty before housing costs.” [p1]

In addition:

- “The factors which are likely to have had the biggest impact in the faster reduction of relative child poverty in Scotland are the faster fall in unemployment, increased access to income from self-employment and the slower rate of increase in the proportion of families from ethnic minority backgrounds. These are shown to have a strong association with relative poverty for families with children both before and after housing costs.” [p1]

Useful background research as childhood poverty continues to be a major issue.

Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has recently published this latest update⁹ to the 2005 report¹⁰.

⁸ Eleanor Barham. *Differences in decline – relative child poverty in Scotland and England 1998-99 to 2008-09*. Scottish Government (Research Findings 8/2011), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (143.49 kb) from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/353763/0119211.pdf>.

It begins by setting the scene:

- “Nearly 400,000 working-age adults, 200,000 children and 100,000 pensioners in Wales are in poverty as measured by low income after housing costs have been deducted. One-third of these adults are either disabled themselves or have a disabled partner. One-quarter of these children live with at least one disabled adult.
- Half the children in poverty belong to working families.
- Half the improvement in the child poverty rate between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s has been lost in the last five years.” [p1]

However:

- “The qualification level of 25- to 44-year-olds is substantially higher than it was ten years ago, with nearly four in ten now having a qualification above Level 3.” [p1]

At the same time:

- “The Welsh Government’s new child poverty target requires the rate to fall four times as fast over the next ten years as it has over the last ten.
- The higher level of parental employment necessary to approach the target requires reductions in the number of both workless and partworking families. Full-working (where all adults have a full-time job or, in couple families, where one has a full-time job and the other a part-time one) will become the norm.
- If this is not to be at expense of the quality of family life, key services, from child and health care to transport, may need to be altered to help families cope. This requires concerted efforts from the Welsh Government on policies relating to employment, skills and childcare, and from the UK Government on matters relating to taxes and benefits.” [p1]

The report then goes on to look at the figures in more depth, and “how far higher employment might take Wales towards its goal – and what its wider implications might be.” [p1]

It concludes that:

“The Welsh child poverty target is extremely ambitious. While increased employment has a big part to play in moving towards it, it cannot achieve this target on its own. A commitment to eradication requires policy to be directed at reducing the number of part-working families as well as the number of workless ones. ‘Full-working’, which is not the norm at the moment, will need to become so.” [p6]

⁹ *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011*. JRF (“Findings”), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (300 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-Wales-summary.pdf>.

¹⁰ Peter Kenway *et al.* *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2005*. JRF, 2005. Available to download as a pdf (2600 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1859353967.pdf>.

The conclusion that follows on from this – that key services may need to be altered – could well have an impact on our sector too.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Broke, not broken: tackling youth poverty and the aspiration gap

This is important new research¹¹ from The Prince's Trust:

“This report investigates the impact of youth poverty on young people's aspirations and self-belief.”

Based on a sample of 2,311 16- to 24 year-olds who took part in an online poll conducted by YouGov, this survey:

“... reveals a clear gap in the aspirations of the UK's richest and poorest young people. Young people growing up in poverty are significantly less likely to believe their life and career goals are achievable.” [p8]

For example, taken from the summary of key findings:

- “More than one in four young people growing up in poverty (26 per cent) believe that ‘few’ or ‘none’ of their career goals are achievable, compared to just seven per cent of those from wealthy families
- One in four young people from poor homes (26 per cent) feel that ‘people like them don't succeed in life’ ...
- One in ten young people from the UK's poorest families (10 per cent) did not have their own bed when they were growing up
- More than one in ten (13 per cent) admit that their school uniform was rarely washed
- More than a quarter (29 per cent) had “few” or “no” books in their home
- One in three (34 per cent) were “rarely” or “never” read to by their parents
- More than a quarter (28 per cent) had no access to a computer
- Almost one in three (30 per cent) did not have access to the internet ...
- More than one in four young people from the UK's poorest families (28 per cent) have been bullied about their clothes, whilst almost one in ten (nine per cent) have faced bullying about their home” [p8]

The report is illustrated with case studies and more detailed background to the headline findings. In addition, it is aiming to raise the profile of the Trust's work in this area:

¹¹ *Broke, not broken: tackling youth poverty and the aspiration gap*. The Prince's Trust, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (3340 kb) from: http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/PovertyReport_170511.pdf.

“We are now calling on the Government and businesses to work even more closely with charities to improve social mobility and raise aspirations.” [p31]

Given the key findings, it is clear that our sector has a large part to play in supporting these young people.

Recommended.

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

Review of the Arts Council’s strategic framework

This is the Review¹² carried out by Estelle Morris on behalf of the Arts Council, which aims to stimulate a debate about the role of museums and libraries within the Arts Council’s expanding portfolio; as Alan Davey (the CE of the Arts Council) says in his introduction:

“This work and the debate that it engenders will help inform the drafting of a companion document to *Achieving great art for everyone*, which will be published in the autumn. This document will set out the Arts Council’s strategic goals for libraries and museums for the next 10 years.” [p iv]

Recognising that museums and libraries do not fit easily into the existing policy framework¹³, Estelle Morris suggests ways in which the existing five goals (from *Achieving great art ...*) could be widened, and also recommends a new, overarching goal – this is summed up as:

“The overarching goal of the arts and culture sector must be to realise its potential as an essential part of a civil and civilised society.” [p8]

It goes on to stress the importance of the sector’s working together (ie as arts and culture), yet also each part recognising the importance of its own, specific role (eg “Museums tell the stories that underpin our different and shared identities in a world where a lack of understanding can have such serious consequences ... Libraries are democratic treasures of human thought, imagination and aspiration ...” [p9]). It also stresses the importance of reaching out to those who are not yet engage with arts and culture.

There is a good starting point for thinking about and discussing further the links across the cultural sector, using the ‘blobs’ on pp10-1, which highlight “What

¹² Estelle Morris. *Review of the Arts Council’s strategic framework*. Arts Council England, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (333 kb) from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/14072011-what-do-you-think-aces-goals-for-museums-should-be>.

¹³ *Achieving great art for everyone: a strategic framework for the arts*. Arts Council England, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (165.97 kb) from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=358516>.

unites the arts, museums and libraries?"; "Some key differences"; and "Opportunities".

This is an important Review, especially if it can get beyond some 'traditional' thinking about museums and libraries – that they are about collections first and foremost. What this review does is focus on some of the other key roles – albeit in a rather 'arty' way and without mentioning social justice once!

Abbreviations and acronyms

LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people

RNIB = Royal National Institute of Blind People

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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