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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The Riots, August 2011 – update

Urban disorder and gangs: a critique and a warning

This new report[1] in the Runnymede "Perspectives" series by Simon Hallsworth (London Metropolitan University) and David Brotherton (John Jay College, New York) looks at the responses to the riots, and argues that an approach similar to that taken in the US will not work – and may well be storing up more problems for the future.

As Rob Berkeley says in the Foreword:

> "For social policy researchers, the riots should have been humbling and led to revisiting some of the assumptions we had been making about our society. Instead, we've also had confirmed for us the challenge in our current political climate of making policy decisions based on evidence. Instead of an approach which sought to gather and understand the evidence, we had a near immediate rush to off-the-shelf theorizing. The riots, it seems, have been all things to all people and have only served to confirm existing views rather than being an opportunity for reflection. This rush has led to a number of myths about the events of the summer; rioters were all 'criminal, pure and simple', these riots were nothing to do with racial injustice, criminal gangs were key players, young people are out of control, family structures in our cities are not providing the necessary moral framework, black culture is pathological, etc." [p2]

The report looks at the background (eg the succession of 'moral panics' there have been around young people, especially since the 1960s) and considers the evidence, concluding that:

> "Leaving aside the rather obvious fact that the UK is not the US, which raises significant doubts as to how well programmes developed there will run successfully here; what we will see are programmes that will not work to reduce gangs but which no doubt work well to criminalize many young people and their parent communities. Mirroring the US, our prison population will invariably rise even further than its current inflated state, creating new generations of young people who will find it literally impossible to find gainful work when they leave. Social tensions will deepen and reinforce the deep sense of injustice that is already present. Anger and resentment will not disappear because criminalization reinforces these tendencies further. And so a tinderbox will be created that will make future disorder more as opposed to less likely …" [p17]

Finally:

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[1] Simon Hallsworth and David Brotherton. *Urban disorder and gangs: a critique and a warning*. Runnymede Trust ("Perspectives" series), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (792.7 kb) from:
http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/UrbanDisorderandGangs-2011.pdf.

> "Maybe now is precisely the time for a campaign directed at mobilizing youth. Only this time round it means investing in them and their communities; not law enforcement agencies and a new gang suppression industry." [p18]

Did you see …?

Children & Young People Now

The issue for 1-14 November[2] includes a report of the first National Youth Agency Hear by Right Awards – as the article says: "Many of the first Hear by Right Award winners are from museums and galleries from across the country." [p32]

Winners include: Geffrye Museum; Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton & Hove; Bradford Museums and Galleries; Harris Museum and Gallery; Leeds City Museum (and there is a brief write-up of their work on p33); London Transport Museum; Middlesbrough Museum; Museum of London; and Museums Sheffield.

Museums Journal

The November issue includes an interesting article[3] (the first of two) by Maurice Davies, this one looking at "how museums and galleries are rethinking their purpose and their priorities."

Drawing on what Maurice Davies describes as "a hunger to have a greater impact", it includes some positive examples of engagement and of prioritising (in Sally MacDonald's words "We need better ways of recording depth of engagement so that we aren't always talking about attendance numbers.")

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Social Exclusion Task Force

The following exchange was reported in Hansard[4]:

> "**Michael Dugher:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment his Department has made of the effect of the closure of the

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[2] *Children & Young People Now*, 1-14 November 2011. This information is also available at: http://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/1101542/NYA-Update-Hear-Right-Award/?DCMP=ILC-SEARCH.

[3] "Great expectations", *Museums Journal*, November 2011, pp29-31, 33.

[4] House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 22 November 2011: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm111122/text/111122w0004.htm#1111232001197.

Social Exclusion Task Force on the Government's ability to tackle social exclusion. [81933]

Mr Hurd: No formal assessment of the impact of the closure of the Social Exclusion Task Force has been made.
However fairness is central to this Government's agenda and the important work initiated by the Social Exclusion Task Force is being taken forward across Government Departments.

The Social Justice Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith) and composed of Ministers from across relevant Government Departments, is focused on co-ordinating policy on poverty, equality and social justice.

Furthermore, this year we have published a cross-government social mobility strategy and announced the new Troubled Families Unit in the Department for Communities and Local Government to better address the needs of the 120,000 most disadvantaged families."

The Social Justice Cabinet Committee seems very quiet so far! Its members are:

- "Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Chair) (The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP)
- Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Deputy Chair) (The Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP)
- Secretary of State for the Home Department, and Minister for Women and Equalities (The Rt Hon Theresa May MP)
- Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP)
- Minister without Portfolio (The Rt Hon Baroness Warsi)
- Minister for Cabinet Office, Paymaster General (The Rt Hon Francis Maude MP)
- Minister of State – Cabinet Office (The Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP)
- Minister of State for Children and Families (Sarah Teather MP)
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State – Minister for Equalities (Lynne Featherstone MP)
- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health (Anne Milton MP)

Terms of Reference

- To consider issues relating to poverty, equality and social justice."[5]

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[5] Taken from: *Cabinet Committee system*. Cabinet Office, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (166.65 kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/cabinet-committees-system.pdf.

The National Unit for Troubled Families "is charged with fulfilling the Prime Minister's goal to transform the lives of 120,000 troubled families by 2015"[6] and will be headed by Louise Casey.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

"The lives of the other four fifths"

This is the third Equality Trust *Research digest*[7]. Building on the work in *The spirit level*[8], it shows the distribution of some of the harmful impacts of inequality within the UK population:

> "In each case, as Wilkinson and Pickett argue, richer groups and poorer groups are affected. However, as you will see in the following pages, poorer groups in society suffer disproportionately from poor physical and mental health, worse material conditions, and lower educational qualifications. I also show that there is a pattern to these distributions, with women generally earning less than men, and people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin being mainly in the lower earning segments of society." [p2]

To do this, it divides society in the UK into fifths, and, for each quintile, plots the effects of various areas of disadvantage.

Key findings include:

- "Social gradients: incremental increases in income correspond to incremental improvements in outcomes.
- Distribution: households in the richest quintile earn almost 15 times more than those in the poorest quintile. Tax and benefits reduce this difference to just over 4 times more.
- Perceptions: people tend to misperceive which income group they are in.
- Health: richer groups have a lower risk of mental illness. Poorer groups have higher prevalence of obesity and eat less fruit and fewer vegetables.
- Possessions: as groups get richer they have more and bigger cars. Better off groups also have more household insurance than their poorer counterparts.
- Education: as parents become more professional, their children have more academic qualifications.
- Gender: when individuals' rather than household incomes are compared, women are disproportionately found in poorer income groups whereas there are more men in richer groups.

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[6] See: http://www.childrensworkforcematters.org.uk/node/1244.
[7] Anna Barford. "The lives of the other four fifths", *Equality Trust Research Digest*, 2011, no.3.
[8] Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. *The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better.* Allen Lane, 2009.

- Social mobility: over a 10-year period very few people moved between the top and bottom income quintiles." [p1]

The report also makes some important points in its conclusion:

- "Whilst the differences between the richest and poorest are the most extreme, it is worth remembering that those who are just outside the poorest group are not faring a lot better than the very poorest, and those just below the very rich do not do as well, even though they are affluent. Current political discourse argues that we should focus policy efforts on the very poorest members of society, yet politicians should be cautious of not accidentally overlooking the difficulties experienced by those who are only doing slightly better than the poorest and most vulnerable in society." [pp13-14]

- "Another important observation is that the social gradient of negative outcomes accumulating as you go down the income scale exists for a diverse range of variables. This short report has shown how, for mental health, physical health, possessions, security, and education, increments in income correspond with incrementally better outcomes. The causes of this are only partly to do with capacity to pay for certain goods and services, but more importantly related to the stigma and stress associated with not being able to afford those things considered to be normal within UK society, and the stress of low social status itself. One self-evident solution to this unjust pattern would be a more equitable distribution of wealth amongst the population. This would be likely not only to prevent poorer groups suffering disproportionately, but would likely reduce the overall prevalence of these problems in all income quintiles." [p14]

This is another very important and useful pulling-together of the evidence about the effects of inequality, and it may well help to support bids for funding and resources if we can show how our services are targeting some of these areas.

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The triple dividend: thriving lives, costing less, contributing more

This is the first report[9] of the Community Links Early Action Task Force:

> "We've drawn together a Task Force of experts who share our concern and asked ourselves: 'How do we build a society that prevents problems from occurring rather than one that, as now, copes with the consequences?'" [Summary, p1]

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[9] *The triple dividend: thriving lives, costing less, contributing more – the first report of the Early Action Task Force.* Community Links, 2011. Full report available to download as a pdf (1340 kb) from: http://www.community-links.org/uploads/documents/Triple_Dividend.pdf; 4-page summary Available to download as a pdf (179.1 kb) from: http://www.community-links.org/uploads/editor/Report%20Summary%20print(1).pdf.

The Task Force is arguing that:

> "… early action should be a fundamental principle shaping the way in which both government and civil society spend their resources and judge their success. Investing wisely and early in social wellbeing yields a triple dividend – thriving lives, costing less, contributing more."[10]

'Enabling services' and 'prompt interventions' would change the way that UK society deals with core issues, a move away from 'prevention' and ' avoiding the worst'.

The report recommends five key actions:

- "Recognise what works …
- Develop the business case: The high level economic case is not the same as the practical business case for specific interventions. Here evidence is patchy and contested. Data collected for different funders has used different processes and indicators undermining the validity of comparisons and conclusions. We propose development of a 'common core' in monitoring and evaluation.
- Service the bureaucratic plumbing: Spending rules, organisational and departmental silos and a distorted translation of ministerial intentions are blocking progress. We identify 12 barriers and put forward a range of practical, structural improvements and a process for steady but incremental transition.
- Shift attitudes and culture: Often, we've found, it isn't primarily rules or resources that get in the way. It's attitudes and culture, customs and practice. This must be understood and challenged.
- Encourage alliances and leadership: Becoming a society that is ready for anything is about more than public service reform and it is also about less. More, because it must engage us all across the sectors. We need powerful alliances and we suggest a process for developing them. Less, because most of the change that we seek is achievable without legislation. We need leadership that will challenge convention."
  [Summary, p2]

The report then goes on to make some specific recommendations, primarily to Government – it will be reporting again in May 2012, when the Task Force will reassess progress.

Finally, Community Links want this to be the start of a conversation, and welcome comments and questions to: David.Robinson@Community-Links.org.

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[10] Taken from: http://www.community-links.org/earlyaction/the-triple-dividend/?dm_i=4A0,M5S3,FQO88,1SM7U,1.

Community cohesion: the views of white working-class communities

This new report[11] from JRF looks at White working-class people's views of community cohesion and the impact of social change.

It argues that, since 2001 particularly, community cohesion has been a high priority for Government, yet very little of the work undertaken has involved White working-class communities.

Key findings from this research include:

- White working-class residents are not being heard
- People in the three areas studied (Aston in Birmingham, Somers Town in London, and Canley in Coventry) were disconnected from politics and from policy-making
- Issues around fairness and equity: "White working-class residents did not feel they have been treated fairly by government. The sense of unfairness was most acute in terms of access and allocation of social housing." [p7]
- Need to understand the complexities of class and race
- Most residents of the three study areas had not come across the term 'community cohesion' – it therefore needs to be reconfigured: "The key priority for community cohesion policy was to ensure that grassroots issues are debated and discussed." [pp7-8]

This is important new research which, as much as anything, challenges assumptions that everyone understands and is engaged with public/social policy.

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Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2011

This is the latest annual report[12] on the state of poverty and social exclusion in the UK, from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the New Policy Institute.

The key findings are:

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[11] Harris Beider. *Community cohesion: the views of white working-class communities*. JRF, 2011. Full report available to download as a pdf (425.75 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/working-class-community-cohesion-full.pdf. 4-page summary ("Findings") available to download as a pdf (129.95 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/working-class-community-cohesion-summary.pdf.
[12] Hannah Aldridge, Anushree Parekh, Tom MacInnes and Peter Kenway. *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2011*. JRF, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1030 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-assessment-full.pdf. Summary (299.44 kb) available at: http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/MOPSE-2011-summary.pdf.

- "In the year to 2009/10, the child poverty rate fell to 29%, the second fall in two years. Child poverty fell by around one-seventh under the previous Labour Government.
- The poverty rate for working-age adults without dependent children rose both in 2009/10 and over the last decade. It now stands at 20%.
- The pensioner poverty rate, at 16%, is now around half the rate it was in 1997.
- By mid-2011, six million people were unemployed, lacking but wanting work or working part-time because no full time job was available. Though no higher than the previous year, this was 2 million higher than in 2004.
- On a range of education indicators at ages 11, 16 and 19, more pupils are reaching expected standards than in previous years, continuing long-term positive trends. Although closing slowly, the gaps between attainment levels of those on free school meals and other children are smaller than in previous years.
- The proportion of households in fuel poverty has risen significantly in the last few years. Almost all households in the bottom tenth by income are in fuel poverty, as are half of households in the second bottom tenth.
- Changes to the tax credit system mean that an additional 1.4m working households on low incomes now face marginal effective tax rates of over 70%.
- The number of households accepted as homeless in England rose in 2010/11 for the first time since 2003/04 and now stands at 65,000. The number of court orders for mortgage repossessions in England and Wales rose to 21,000 in the first half of 2011, the first significant rise for three years."[13]

It concludes that:

> "… in two key respects, the Coalition is repeating Labour's mistakes with adverse consequences both for people experiencing poverty and for the climate of political and public opinion that makes action on poverty possible." [p4]

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

An evaluation of a recently implemented Books on Prescription scheme, identifying areas for development to meet the needs of users and library staff

Rebecca Furness has kindly sent a summary of her research, which is attached as an Appendix.

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[13] Taken from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-2011?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Weekly+publication+summary+-+wc+28+November+2011&utm_content=Weekly+publication+summary+-+wc+28+November+2011+CID_18c548a601f356e0d248c0d6d8ba8e03&utm_source=Email+marketing+software&utm_term=Monitoring+poverty+and+social+exclusion+2011.

Abbreviations and acronyms

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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An evaluation of a recently implemented Books on Prescription scheme, identifying areas for development to meet the needs of users and library staff.

Rebecca Furness MSc
November 2011

As part of the requirements for the Masters in Information and Library Management, at Northumbria University, I researched an operational Books on Prescription scheme and made recommendations which could benefit other library authorities. In my opinion Books on Prescription schemes are an extremely valuable resource, with the potential to enable vast numbers of people to lead more fulfilling lives. An explanation of Books on Prescription schemes and a summary of the research I completed follows.

What are Books on Prescription schemes?
Books on Prescription schemes are increasingly becoming a standard aspect of library services in many library authorities across the UK. The scheme was first introduced in Cardiff in 2003, by Professor Neil Frude. Professor Frude, a clinical psychologist, wanted to address the huge demand for treatment for mild to moderate mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and panic (Frude, 2009 and 2005). However, the demand for talking therapies continues to far outweigh the supply of trained therapists. Statistics show that one in six of the general UK population are suffering from such problems at any one time (Hicks, 2009). Typically pharmacological treatments, such as anti-depressants, are prescribed by GPs (Ball and Boseley, 2011) where a quality self-help guide could be equally effective in helping a patient to self-manage their problems. Furthermore, anti-depressants are very expensive and they do not address the root cause of problems. In 2005 the NHS in England spent £338 million on anti-depressant prescriptions (Hairon, 2006, cited in Bird, 2006, p.5).

Together with a panel of mental health practitioners, Frude drew up a list of approximately 25 self-help books of excellent quality covering a range of problems. Many of the books are structured using cognitive behavioural therapy techniques (CBT); the same techniques used in talking therapies. The fact that these titles have been recommended by UK mental health professionals is very important to help patients identify titles they can trust; any Amazon search is certain to provide an overwhelming number of titles of variable quality. By issuing patients with a book prescription and signposting them to the public library to borrow the recommended item, GPs and mental health practitioners have another treatment option at their disposal. The scheme has already demonstrated that it can deliver highly effective treatment to large numbers of people at very low cost. In 2005 the Books on Prescription scheme was rolled-out across Wales with a standard booklist. From 2005 onwards the scheme has been progressively introduced in library authorities across the UK.

A summary of the methodology and findings of my research
My research was a triangulated case study focusing on the delivery of a recently implemented Book on Prescription scheme in a particular library authority. The

research aimed to evaluate the Books on Prescription scheme from the perspective of users and library staff.

The research comprised three phases:

Phase 1: Desk research
Three neighbouring library authorities were included in this phase of the research, in addition to the case study library authority. All library authorities included in the desk research were within a 40 mile radius of the case study authority. The desk research scrutinised:
- The book lists of the four library authorities
- The availability of website information
- The eligibility for users to access the schemes

The mean number of books in the schemes was 30, and the range was 3. Further scrutiny revealed that only 9 titles were common to all four library authorities.

Significant variations were found in the content of the Books on Prescription lists, both in the mental health conditions covered and the titles of books on a given condition.

Some schemes were only accessible to users on referral from a "prescriber" such as a G.P. or mental health practitioner. Other schemes were open to referred users and also the general public.

The availability of website information varied. Surprisingly some of the clearest, most accessible website information was provided by an authority where the scheme was only accessible to referred users. On the other hand some authorities where the scheme is open to everyone provided either no website information or limited information (e.g. no book list information on the website). This seemed counter-logical.

Two of the four libraries belonged to the same library consortium. Variations in the delivery of the Books on Prescription scheme raised particular challenges in this situation. A lack of consistency in eligibility criteria for users to access the scheme, variation in the content of the book lists and variations in the approach to cataloguing on the share library catalogue resulted in a confusing amount of contradictory information for users and library staff.

Phase 2: Mystery Shopping
This phase focused solely on the case study library authority. The mystery shopper was the author of the research, who posed as a Books on Prescription user and current non-library member, presenting a book prescription at 5 library branches where they were unknown to staff. The mystery shopping exercise was very useful to identify rich details which could affect the accessibility of the scheme to a user. It also provided an insight into the subjective experience of how it felt to present the personal information contained within the book prescription at the library. It also highlighted confidentiality issues and the possibility that the information contained within the prescription could be intercepted by a third party.

Despite extensive literature searches no previous application of mystery shopping to the context of Books on Prescription was found. Furthermore Debbie Hicks, director of research at The Reading Agency, is not aware of any pre-existing research in which mystery shopping techniques have been applied to a Books on Prescription scheme (Hicks, 2011). In this research mystery shopping was found to be a very useful technique to evaluate access to the scheme from a user's perspective. Other library authorities across the UK might consider a similar approach when evaluating their own Books on Prescription schemes.

A methodological weakness was noted concerning researcher bias in the current research. It would be preferable to use multiple mystery shoppers. Furthermore, in the absence of a diagnosed mental health condition, this researcher could not adequately represent the subjective experience of a genuine user of the scheme, who had been referred by a "prescriber". Ethical considerations would prevent genuine users of the scheme being recruited as mystery shoppers. However it is possible that mental health professionals involved in the "prescribing" process could be recruited as mystery shoppers to give valuable feedback (from their knowledge of clients' needs) to improve access to the scheme for users.

Phase 3: Library staff questionnaire
Approximately a third of the staff employed by the case study library authority completed a questionnaire about their experience of delivering the Books on Prescription scheme to users. The information collected from the questionnaire enabled findings from the mystery shopping exercise to be corroborated.

General reflections
Some after-thoughts resulting from my research are generalisable to all Books on Prescription schemes. These are identified below:

Self-issue machines in libraries
The recent installation of self-issue machines in many libraries has the potential to enable users to autonomously access the Books on Prescription scheme. If clear information about schemes is provided on library service websites, including book lists and guidance on where to locate the item in the physical building, it is now possible for a user to identify a book which they think may help them to independently address their mental health problem without the need to reveal any personal information to anyone. If sufficient information is provided on a library service website, a user can enter a library branch, locate a given title from the scheme on a shelf and even issue it, using a machine, without needing assistance from library staff. This level of autonomy could encourage people to address their mental health problems more than ever before.

Promotion
Wider promotion of the existence of Books on Prescription schemes is necessary, and is possible using information plasma screens in GP waiting rooms and libraries, GP and library newsletters, mental health organisations such as Mind and The Mental Health Foundation.

Many missed opportunities to raise awareness of Books on Prescription schemes were noted during the research. One example of such a missed opportunity is an interview with Lord Melvyn Bragg (Bragg, 2011), as outgoing president of Mind, broadcast on BBC Breakfast. Perhaps the lack of standardisation in the current delivery of Books on Prescription schemes across the UK is an obstacle to nation-wide promotion.

Standardisation of schemes nationally
Books on Prescription schemes stand to reach more users by simplifying access to schemes and making them as user-friendly as possible. Standardised book lists, website information and eligibility criteria are likely to enable large-scale promotion of Books on Prescription schemes and benefit users at the point of need.

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