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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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The Riots, August 2011 – update

Government response to the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel's final report

DCLG have just published the Government response¹ to the Panel's final report².

The response reiterates the Government position ("The criminality of the rioters shocked the country and cannot be tolerated. The police and courts took commendably swift action in bringing the perpetrators to justice on behalf of the vast majority of law abiding citizens who want to see justice delivered." [p30]), and highlights some of the actions taken since, such as the work on city regeneration and to tackle youth unemployment.

It also provides some rather bland assurances, eg "We are strengthening police integrity ... We are also making sure that the organisations we ask to police the police are equipped to do the job." [p29] – some of which have already been overtaken by events.

However, it is also important for its re-stating of the Government's commitment to social justice:

"... we will continue to work to strengthen and support communities and tackle social disadvantage. Through our programme of action on reducing crime and reoffending, supporting families, improving the education of our young people and tackling unemployment we are helping to build stronger, more resilient places." [p30]

¹ *Government response to the Riots, Communities and Victims Panel's final report*. DCLG, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (132.86 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211617/Govt_Response_to_the_Riots_-_Final_Report.pdf.

² *After the riots: the final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel*. The Riots Communities and Victims Panel, 2012. Available to download as a pdf (4840 kb) from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Riots-Panel-Final-Report1.pdf>.

Did you see ...?

Feliciter

The April 2013 issue³ focuses on “Beyond books”, and it includes:

- Kathleen Williams “Beyond books: outreach at Winnipeg Public Library” [pp19-22]
- The Manitoba Library Association Prison Libraries and Reintegration Committee “Books behind and beyond bars” [pp23-25]:

“In May 2012, Kirsten Wurmman gave a presentation entitled Books Behind Bars at the Manitoba Libraries Conference.

This presentation, and her leadership, resulted in about a dozen Winnipeg-based librarians and library technicians forming the Manitoba Library Association Prison Libraries and Reintegration Committee (MLA-PLC). By December of 2012, this tenacious group of volunteers had fashioned a book collection, created an Open Library for inmates at the Winnipeg Remand Centre (WRC), generated a weekly book deposit to all units of the WRC and had begun to engage in efforts to help former inmates of various institutions reintegrate into the community. And this is only the beginning ...”

- Melissa Wawrzkievicz “Librarians need to stick their noses into something else”, which argues the case for the “embedded librarian”, deeply involved in her/his community [pp26-27]

The June 2013⁴ issue focuses on the theme of “Supporting changing demographics”, and includes the following useful articles:

- Cate Carlyle “Practicalities: serving English as a Second Language library users” [pp18-20]
- Alison Blackburn “Serving older adults” [pp21-23]
- Heather Wray “Protecting the rights of the most vulnerable by creating a culture of inclusion” [pp26-27]

Finally, the August 2013 issue⁵ includes:

- Els Kushner “‘Go out there and fail’: a personal account of community-led work with the early years” [pp8-10]⁶

³ *Feliciter*, 59 (2), April 2013. Available to download as a pdf (6110 kb) from: http://www.cla.ca/feliciter/2013/2/Feliciter2_Vol_59-WEB.pdf.

⁴ *Feliciter*, 59 (3), June 2013. Available to download as a pdf (3700 kb) from: http://www.cla.ca/feliciter/2013/3/Feliciter3Vol_59_FINAL.pdf.

⁵ *Feliciter*, 59 (4), August 2013 – see: <http://www.cla.ca/feliciter/2013/4/#p=8>.

⁶ Thanks to Ken Williment for sending me these links.

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

“Engaging the Elusive Non-User”

This is an interesting write-up^{7, 8} of a session held at the ALA 2013 Conference.

“Among the commonsensical, yet often overlooked, points made by Fletcher and Singer [Donna Fletcher and Paula Singer, the workshop leaders] is that non-users cannot effectively be reached by focus groups, surveys on the library website, or other such mechanisms that may be useful for capturing the opinions of active library patrons. To reach this other group, libraries must go where they already are: malls, daycare centers, coffee shops, commuter rail stations, houses of worship, farmer’s markets, senior programs, etc.”

In the same workshop, Elizabeth Stearns (Assistant Director, Community Services) and Carmen Patlan (Community Engagement & Outreach Manager), both from Waukegan Public Library, Illinois talked about:

“The Promotoras Ambassador Program [which] is something Stearns “stole” from healthcare, where it is a best practice, she said. Waukegan’s goal was to reach out to the area’s large Latino population – even larger, according to the local school district, than census figures had captured. The first step was to recruit a Latino person who was already respected and trusted in the community. Stearns found Patlan working in a local church. And, Patlan said, she accepted a \$13,000 pay cut to work at the library because she felt it was important to help her community.”

They then recruited volunteers from among Latino users of the library, asking them how the library had changed their lives – these volunteers promote the library service in the community.

When new users come in to a library, an ‘ambassador’ meets them and walks them through navigating the library’s system. In addition:

“A ladder of programs are built to help users progress from one stage of English language learning to the next. (The programs were so popular they developed a waiting list, and the library had to build two more program rooms.) Since the program began, Waukegan has attracted 2,900 new Latino cardholders, and some 64 percent of them use the library’s services “continuously,” according to Patlan.”⁹

⁷ Meredith Schwartz “Engaging the Elusive Non-User”, *Library Journal*, 1 July 2013. Available to download from: <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/07/marketing/engaging-the-elusive-non-user-ala-annual-2013/>.

⁸ Thanks to John Pateman for forwarding this link to me.

⁹ There is further information about the award-winning Promotoras Ambassador Program at: <http://www.waukeganpl.org/news/waukegan-public-library-selected-american-dream-library> and http://www.imls.gov/news/2013_medals_waukegan_public_library.aspx.

2013 top innovators

The Urban Library Council has just published this brief guide^{10, 11} to their top innovators:

“The 2013 Urban Libraries Council Top Innovators continue to model the leadership and impact of high-performing public libraries. From a mobile App that gives parents easy access to information about early childhood literacy skills to bringing public health nurses into libraries to help patrons with behavioral challenges to supporting first responders during a massive wildfire, public libraries are continuing to broaden and deepen their roles as vital community resources.

A panel of expert judges selected this year’s Top Innovators and Honorable Mentions in 10 categories based on the strength of their innovation, results achieved and capacity to be replicated. The categories are: Learning; Civic and Community Engagement; Collections; Customer Experience; Economic and Workforce Development; Health, Wellness and Safety; Operations; Organizational Change and Strategic Management; Positioning the Library; and Sustainability. In addition, for the first time, ULC is honoring three libraries for their leadership in helping their communities respond to natural and human-made crises.”
[p2]

Amongst those included are:

- Los Angeles Public Library: “Your Path to Citizenship Starts at the Los Angeles Public Library”
- Calgary Public Library: “Grow a Reader Early Literacy App”
- Pima County Public Library: “Library Nurses Program” (“An increase in the presence of people in and around the library with behavioral health concerns and traumatic episodes prompted the Pima County Public Library to create a partnership with the County Health Department to provide on-site intervention services. The primary goals of the Library Nurses Program are to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all patrons and staff and minimize the number of 911 calls for non-medical emergencies at library branches. Five nurses rotate among library branches for a total of 40 hours per week. The lead nurse focuses primarily on the downtown library, gently approaching patrons in need to let them know he is available. Some patrons, knowing his schedule, seek him out.” [p8])
- San Francisco Public Library: “Community Impact through Renewed Engagement”.

¹⁰ 2013 top innovators. Urban Library Council, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1200 kb) from:

http://www.urbanlibraries.org/filebin/pdfs/2013_Top_Innovators_Brochure_Full.pdf.

¹¹ Source: Gary Price “Innovative Public Libraries: Urban Libraries Council Announces 2013 Top Innovators”, *Library Journal*, 10 July 2013. Available to download from:

<http://www.infodocket.com/2013/07/10/innovative-public-libraries-urban-libraries-council-announces-2013-top-innovators/>.

The three libraries that were honoured for their emergency work were:

- Johnson County Library: “A Conversation about Sandy Hook” (“On January 10, 2013, the Johnson County Public Library hosted 94 community members for a conversation about the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.” [p13])
- Poudre River Public Library District: “Libraries as First Responders” (“Library staff worked hand-in-hand with first responder agencies, serving as an information hub that provided up-to-date and reliable information throughout the crisis [a massive wild-fire]”. [p13])
- Queens Library, New York: “Queens Library Response to Hurricane Sandy”.

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

“Social Policy in a Cold Climate”

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Nuffield Foundation (with London-specific analysis funded by the Trust for London) are funding this major piece of research which runs from October 2011 to May 2015.¹²

“[It is] designed to examine the effects of the major economic and political changes in the UK since 2007, particularly their impact on the distribution of wealth, poverty, income inequality and spatial difference. The full programme of analysis will include policies and spending decisions from the last period of the Labour government (2007-2010), including the beginning of the financial crisis, as well as those made by the Coalition government since May 2010.” [p3]

The first set of papers has just been published (Working Paper 1¹³ was published earlier this year).

These include:

- *Labour’s social policy record: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010* (the summary report)¹⁴
- *Winners and losers in the crisis ...*¹⁵
- *Labour’s record on health*¹⁶

¹² Source: NCB *Policy & Parliamentary Information Digest*, 5 July 2013).

¹³ Alex Fenton. *Small-area measures of income poverty*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 1), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (507.82 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP01.pdf>.

¹⁴ Ruth Lupton *et al.* *Labour’s social policy record: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010*. CASE/LSE (Research Report 1), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (4130 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/RR01.pdf>.

¹⁵ John Hills *et al.* *Winners and losers in the crisis: the changing anatomy of economic inequality in the UK 2007-2010*. CASE/LSE (Research Report 2), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (3520 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/RR02.pdf>.

- *Labour's record on education ...*¹⁷
- *Labour's record on the under fives ...*¹⁸
- *Labour's record on cash transfers, poverty, inequality and the lifecycle ...*¹⁹
- *Labour's record on neighbourhood renewal in England ...*²⁰

To summarise the analysis so far (taken from the summary report, *Labour's social policy record: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010*):

“As a baseline, this paper looks at what Labour did, at what cost, and with what impact on people's lives.

- Labour set out **an ambitious agenda** to raise outcomes overall, narrow socio-economic gaps and modernise public services.
- Public spending went up by 60 per cent and from 39.5 to 47.4 per cent of GDP. This was a large rise but the UK started from a low point. Until the crisis hit after 2008, spending levels were unexceptional by historic UK and international standards.
- **The extra spending went mainly on services.** Health and education both increased as a proportion of all public spending. There were new hospitals, schools, equipment and ICT, 48,000 extra FTE equivalent teachers, 3500 new children's centres, more doctors and nurses, and many new programmes aimed at neighbourhood renewal.
- Nearly all the extra cash Labour spent on benefits went on **children and pensioners**. Benefits for working age people unrelated to having children fell as a proportion of GDP.
- **Access and quality in public services improved.** Waiting times for health services fell. Pupil-teacher ratios improved. Young children had greater access to early years education. Poor neighbourhoods had better facilities and less crime and vacant housing.
- **Outcomes improved and gaps closed** on virtually all the socioeconomic indicators Labour targeted, such as poverty for children and pensioners and school attainment. **However**

¹⁶ Polly Vizard and Polina Obolenskaya. *Labour's record on health (1997-2010)*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 2), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (2670 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP02.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ruth Lupton and Polina Obolenskaya. *Labour's record on education: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 3), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1640 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP03.pdf>.

¹⁸ Kitty Stewart. *Labour's record on the under fives: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 4), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (4160 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP04.pdf>.

¹⁹ John Hills. *Labour's record on cash transfers, poverty, inequality and the lifecycle 1997-2010*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 5), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (766.5kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP05.pdf>.

²⁰ Ruth Lupton, Alex Fenton and Amanda Fitzgerald. *Labour's record on neighbourhood renewal in England: policy, spending and outcomes 1997-2010*. CASE/LSE (Working Paper 6), 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1480 kb) from: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/WP06.pdf>.

- gaps remained large.** In health some indicators improved although efforts to tackle health inequalities had mixed results.
- On some key things Labour did not explicitly target, there was no progress. Poverty for working age people without children rose. There was **no real change in levels of income inequality**. Wage inequalities grew and disparities in regional economic performance persisted.

In a more favourable climate than the current one, Labour spent a lot and achieved a lot. However there was a long way still to go in relation to its original ambitious vision. We will report in a similar way in 2015 on the Coalition's aims, policies and spending in response to the challenges it faced, and on the outcomes achieved." [p7]

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Community engagement resources

Urban Forum²¹ have recently had an enquiry about setting standards in community engagement, and they have pulled together some useful resources:

- *National Standards for community engagement*²²
- *Core values of public participation*²³
- Case study²⁴ using the IAPP methods.

Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) – Strand 3: Delivery of family services by Children's Centres – research report

This is the latest evaluation report²⁵ of the Children's Centres programme. Overall, the research team found that:

²¹ See: <http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/>.

²² *National Standards for community engagement*. Scottish Community Development Centre, no date (c2007). Available to download as a pdf (523.47 kb) from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/94257/0084550.pdf>.

²³ *Core values of public participation*. International Association for Public Participation, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (35.50 kb) from: <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/CoreValues.pdf>.

²⁴ Allison Hendricks. *Evaluation framework for community engagement based on the United Nations Brisbane Declaration*. International Association for Public Participation, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (80.60 kb) from: <http://www.iap2.org.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/asset/files/40/undecevaluationframeworkforcommunityengagement.pdf>.

²⁵ Jenny Goff *et al.* *Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) – Strand 3: Delivery of family services by Children's Centres – research report*. DfE, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (2130 kb) from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224096/DFE-RR297.pdf.

“Children’s centres were changing in 2012: the original design of a single, ‘stand-alone’ centre ‘within pram-pushing distance’ had evolved into networks and clusters. Despite financial cuts and loss of staff adversely affecting continuity and morale in some centres, few centres in the sample had actually closed; mostly they, and their services, were surviving and changing in times of austerity, and centres continued to strive to improve practice and outcomes for families and children.” [p xxvii]

However, the issue of particular interest to us is the thorny question of what happens to universal services as cuts begin to bite.

“Cuts were found to have affected children’s centres as they have all public services. There was a shift from services consistent with universal provision to services that have a more narrowly targeted and focused approach for the most vulnerable families.” [p xxvii]

According to *Children & Young People Now*²⁶:

“... Kathy Sylva, one of the report’s authors, said the greater focus for targeted support for vulnerable families meant other local children could miss out.

‘This change is probably positive for vulnerable families, but because there is no extra money, some of the universal services, like stay and play, are being cut back because staff are out visiting vulnerable families in their homes,’ said Sylva.”

Lots to think about here – how do we deal with a situation where there are fewer resources? Can we continue with universal service provision, or do we need to prioritise? And do social justice principles – for example, about supporting the most needy/vulnerable – apply?

Local authorities and child poverty: balancing threats and opportunities

This new report²⁷ from CPAG begins by pointing up the problem that local authorities face:

²⁶ Gabriella Jozwiak “Children’s centres target disadvantaged at the expense of universal”, *Children & Young People Now*, 19 July 2013, http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1077803/childrens-centres-target-disadvantaged-expense-universal-services?utm_content=&utm_campaign=190713_Daily&utm_source=Children%20%26%20Young%20People%20Now&utm_medium=adestra_email&utm_term=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cypnow.co.uk%2F%2Fnews%2F1077803%2Fchildrens-centres-target-disadvantaged-expense-universal-services.

²⁷ Rys Farthing. *Local authorities and child poverty: balancing threats and opportunities*. CPAG, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1680 kb) from:

“Between now and 2020, changes to the tax and benefit systems mean that child poverty is projected to increase by around 1 million children nationally.² On top of these million children moving into poverty, households already in poverty face further decreasing incomes, intensifying their experience of poverty.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 commits the government to reduce child poverty and places specific duties on local authorities to work towards ending child poverty ...

Local authorities are, in many ways, stuck between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they are committed to reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty, while on the other they will experience the impact of welfare reforms that are predicted to increase child poverty between now and 2020, with fewer resources than ever.

This report aims to outline the impact of welfare reforms on local authorities and explore the options open to local authorities, and their partner organisations, to manage the impact of these reforms.” [p5]

It then goes on to:

- Outline the programme of welfare reform and its impact on household budgets. It also includes an estimate of the average impact for affected claimants.
- Look at some thinking by local authorities and their partner organisations about how they intend to manage the impact of these welfare reforms.
- Discuss some ways to help keep child poverty high on the political agenda locally through child poverty commissions. It also estimates the cost of child poverty locally.
- Outline the recommendations for central government, as proposed by the local authority and partner staff they spoke to.

The report is supported by estimates of the costs generated by child poverty rates in every local authority and constituency in the UK²⁸. For example, according to these tables, Teignbridge (the local authority I live in) has 3369 children living below the relative poverty line, at a cost of £37m.

This is very useful background data to support our work with vulnerable children and their families.

http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-local-authorities-child-pov-0713-amended_0.pdf.

²⁸ *Full UK data for local child poverty costs*. CPAG, 2013. Available to download as an Excel spreadsheet (106.5 kb) from: <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cpag-publishes-cost-child-poverty-every-local-authority-and-constituency>.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Rewiring public services

The LGA has just launched its new campaign in England, “Rewiring Public Services”, “an ambitious programme which we hope will provide much-needed solutions on how public services can be delivered against ever-tightening budgetary constraints.”²⁹

The campaign has been kick-started by the publication of “10 big ideas”³⁰ which have been picked up and discussed by the media. Just in case you haven’t seen the original document, it includes the following (taken from p4 of the document):

- Give people back a meaningful local vote on a wide range of tax and spending decisions, to establish a level of decision-making that allows each place to act as its own local treasury, managing local tax and spend and driving growth.
- Bring local services and decisions together in one place, for each place, for issues ranging from economic development to health and law and order.
- Reduce bureaucracy and remove artificial Whitehall silos by merging six government departments and creating a single England Office. Under this proposal the Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Energy and Climate Change, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and relevant parts of the Home Office would be combined.
- Share money fairly around the UK by scrapping the outdated Barnett formula³¹ and replacing it with needs-based funding.
- Share money fairly around England by taking financial distribution out of the hands of Ministers and replacing it with an agreement across English local government.
- Strengthen the say of local people by reducing Ministers’ powers so that they cannot intervene in local democracy, boundaries and decisions.
- End flawed and bureaucratic tick-box inspections and replace them with a process where genuine consumer champions focus on the service local people receive from schools, hospitals, policing or care homes.
- Boost investment in infrastructure ...

²⁹ Taken from an email from the LGA Community Wellbeing Team, 24 July 2013.

³⁰ *Rewiring public services*. LGA, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (2720 kb) from: http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=bb5e05ab-1418-41e1-bac6-85ecd79da61f&groupId=10171.

³¹ “The Barnett formula is a mechanism used by The Treasury in the United Kingdom to adjust the amounts of public expenditure allocated to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales automatically to reflect changes in spending levels allocated to public services in England, England and Wales or Great Britain, as appropriate.” (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnett_formula).

- A multi-year funding settlement aligned to the end of the next parliament which will enable councils to invest in economic growth and prevention rather than cure.
- Put this settlement beyond future Whitehall revision by giving formal constitutional protection to local democracy.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

The perils of perception

You may have seen media coverage of this fascinating piece of research^{32, 33}:

“A new survey by Ipsos MORI for the Royal Statistical Society and King’s College London shows just how wrong public opinion can be on key social issues such as crime, benefit fraud and immigration.”³⁴

“The research lists ‘top ten’ popular misperceptions:

1. **Teenage pregnancy:** on average, we think teenage pregnancy is 25 times higher than official estimates: we think that 15% of girls under 16 get pregnant each year, when official figures suggest it is around 0.6%.
2. **Crime:** 58% do not believe that crime is falling, when the Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that incidents of crime were 19% lower in 2012 than in 2006/07 and 53% lower than in 1995. 51% think violent crime is rising, when it has fallen from almost 2.5 million incidents in 2006/07 to under 2 million in 2012.
3. **Job-seekers allowance:** 29% of people think we spend more on JSA than pensions, when in fact we spend 15 times more on pensions (£4.9bn vs £74.2bn).
4. **Benefit fraud:** people estimate that 34 times more benefit money is claimed fraudulently than official estimates: the public think that £24 out of every £100 spent on benefits is claimed fraudulently, compared with official estimates of £0.70 per £100.
5. **Foreign aid:** 26% of people think foreign aid is one of the top 2-3 items government spends most money on, when it actually made up 1.1% of expenditure (£7.9bn) in the 2011/12 financial year. More people select this as a top item of expenditure than pensions (which cost nearly ten times as much, £74bn) and education in the UK (£51.5bn).
6. **Religion:** we greatly overestimate the proportion of the population who are Muslims: on average we say 24%, compared with 5% in

³² *The perils of perception*. Ipsos MORI, 2013. The “Topline results” are available at: <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-rss-kings-perils-of-perception-topline.pdf>; and a slideshow presentation by Bobby Duffy from Ipsos MORI is at: <http://www.slideshare.net/IpsosMORI/perils-of-perception-perception-gaps>.

³³ Source: email from Class, 12 July 2013.

³⁴ Taken from: <http://www.rssenews.org.uk/2013/07/rss-commission-new-research-into-public-perceptions-of-statistics/>.

England and Wales. And we underestimate the proportion of Christians: we estimate 34% on average, compared with the actual proportion of 59% in England and Wales.

7. **Immigration and ethnicity:** the public think that 31% of the population are immigrants, when the official figures are 13%. Even estimates that attempt to account for illegal immigration suggest a figure closer to 15%. There are similar misperceptions on ethnicity: the average estimate is that black and Asian people make up 30% of the population, when it is actually 11% (or 14% if we include mixed and other non-white ethnic groups).
8. **Age:** we think the population is much older than it actually is – the average estimate is that 36% of the population are 65+, when only 16% are.
9. **Benefit bill:** people are most likely to think that capping benefits at £26,000 per household will save most money from a list provided (33% pick this option), over twice the level that select raising the pension age to 66 for both men and women or stopping child benefit when someone in the household earns £50k+. In fact, capping household benefits is estimated to save £290m, compared with £5bn for raising the pension age and £1.7bn for stopping child benefit for wealthier households.
10. **Voting:** we underestimate the proportion of people who voted in the last general election – our average guess is 43%, when 65% actually did.”³⁵

In an interesting *Independent* “Voices” blog-piece³⁶, Ally Fogg analyses just why this might be. He suggests that, whilst it is “tempting to attribute this to the straightforward mendacity of politicians and the media”, that is only one part of the problem; in addition, “the public have long since given up on believing a single word spilling from the lips of a politician.”

Also:

“The real issue is not the sin of dishonesty but the sin of omission. News reporters will relay incidents of violent crime or benefit fraud without any attempt at providing context or evaluation of scale, and it is not just the right wing tabloids that are responsible. The liberal and centre-left media will, for example, report frighteningly high numbers of domestic violence incidents without ever mentioning that, horrific though they remain, the numbers fallen by 69 per cent over the past two decades.”

Ally Fogg concludes:

“What is lacking here is not education in statistics, but an education in media studies and political science. Politicians and media figures regularly bemoan the cynicism of the public, and widespread

³⁵ Also from: <http://www.rssnews.org.uk/2013/07/rss-commission-new-research-into-public-perceptions-of-statistics/>.

³⁶ Ally Fogg “Immigration, crime, benefits: Everything you know about the state of the nation is wrong”, *Independent* “Voices” 9 July 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/immigration-crime-benefits-everything-you-know-about-the-state-of-the-nation-is-wrong-8697574.html>.

disengagement from the issues. Today's research is a reminder that the public, in truth, are nowhere near cynical enough. It is public credulity that is the problem, not scepticism. If the political classes truly wish the British public to re-engage with democracy, their first step is obvious. Start telling us the truth, and the whole truth."

Abbreviations and acronyms

CASE = Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion
CPAG = Child Poverty Action Group
DCLG = Department for Communities and Local Government
GDP = gross domestic product
IAPP = International Association for Public Participation
LGA = Local Government Association
LSE = London School of Economics and Political Science
NCB = National Children's Bureau

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