

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.

Two newsletters this month!

As noted in number 50, there is so much to report this month that the Newsletter has been split into two, with issue number 50 published earlier in November, and number 51 now.

Did you see ...?

Basic Skills

The latest issue¹ of *Basic Skills*, the magazine from the Basic Skills Agency [BSA], has a number of interesting articles, including:

- A personal criticism of top-down target-setting, "Are targets a good thing?", by Alan Wells, Director of the BSA (pp2-3)
- "Engaging the disengaged: getting to young people", an outline of the work of The National Centre for Citizenship and the Law at the Galleries of Justice, Nottingham (pp14-15)
- Jenny Stevens "Something to shout about", an enthusiastic assessment of the Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets (pp17-19)
- Jenny Stevens "A sporting chance: Thurrock schools initiative", an outline of the successful scheme pairing year 10 mentors with year 2 reluctant readers to develop sports and reading activities (pp24-26)
- Gemma Lynch "Engaging the disengaged: working with homeless families in Dublin" (pp35-36)

¹ *Basic Skills* Autumn 2005.

Adults Learning

The latest issue² has lots of interesting material, including:

- A series of articles which look at diversity (as a response to Trevor Phillips's "Sleepwalking to segregation" speech) by:
 - Stella Dadzie (pp8-9)
 - Heidi Safia Mirza (p10)
 - Chris Chivers (p11)
 - John Grayson (pp11-12)
 - Alyson Malach (p12)
 - Plus – in the "Commentary" spot, an article by Chris Duke, "None of our business?", which argues that taking a neutral stance over issues such as global poverty is a luxury which adult educators can no longer afford (p7)
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Festival of Muslim Cultures

2006 will see the start of this major Festival – some museums and galleries are already getting involved.

Further information at: www.muslimcultures.org/index2.php?option=home.

"Communities need Museums, Libraries and Archives ..."

The August newsletter³ included a piece on the launch of the MLA statement which showed the role that museums, libraries and archives can play in developing successful Local Area Agreements⁴.

There is now a new section⁵, highlighting the role that archives can play, and including a case study of the Chelsea FC/Westminster Archives "Education through Football" project⁶

National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion

The EC has published updates on the National Action Plans of the member states⁷ – including that for the UK⁸.

² *Adults Learning* 17 (3) November 2005.

³ *The Network Newsletter ...* 47, August 2005, p2.

⁴ Available at: www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/983051.

⁵ Available at: www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=1162613.

⁶ Available at: www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/1162618.

⁷ Available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/naps_en.htm.

The report identifies the following as the key challenges for the UK Government:

- An ageing society which means an older workforce, more pensioners and the need to encourage more people to save for retirement;
- Excluded groups missing out on the benefits of economic growth, such as ethnic minorities, disabled people and people in disadvantaged areas;
- Improving Public Services. Rising expectations mean people demand greater control over their lifestyles and expect better services including access to those services through the use of new technology. However, the most disadvantaged currently use public services less than others and benefit from them least when they do use them.

[taken from p32]

The report also identifies four key priorities and related actions over the next few years:

- Providing greater opportunities for people to work, choosing to work longer and save more (this includes providing support for people with low skills, helping all adults gain the functional skills of literacy, language and numeracy and to develop wider employability skills with more opportunities for progression to higher level qualifications)
- Supporting families and children (this includes implementing “Every Child Matters – Change for Children”)
- Security and dignity in retirement
- Regenerating deprived neighbourhoods.

The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy

Northern Ireland has recently developed a new strategy on poverty and social exclusion based on in-depth analysis and wide consultation. The strategy targets effort and resources from existing departmental programmes on people and areas in greatest social need. By targeting objective need and focussing on promoting social inclusion of vulnerable groups, this strategy retains key priorities of the existing programme (New Targeting Social Need⁹ [New TSN]), but with a new priority addressing financial hardship added.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy includes the following specific changes:

- A clear strategic objective to improve the income and living conditions of the most disadvantaged and measure progress towards this objective against specific targets with a new priority focus on financial inclusion in tackling problems of financial hardship and indebtedness

⁸ *United Kingdom National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003-2005: implementation report.* 2005. Available as a pdf at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2005/uk_en.pdf.

⁹ See: www.newtsni.gov.uk.

- A clear strategic framework with three high level priorities – Building Capacity, Increasing Employment Opportunities and Dealing with financial hardship
- A Minister-level forum to tackle poverty through an inter-departmental, cross-sectoral approach
- The creation of a Regional Action Plan, the format for which will be consistent with the UK’s National Action Plan
- The establishment of a working group to look at issues affecting lone parents.

The Scottish Executive’s “Closing the Opportunity Gap”

The report says that the Scottish Executive will implement its “Closing the Opportunity Gap”^{10, 11} approach for tackling poverty and disadvantage and is currently preparing its Employability Framework, to be launched in autumn 2005.

The Welsh Assembly

The Welsh Assembly will continue to focus on four key areas:

- Helping more people into jobs
- Improving health
- Developing strong and safe communities
- Creating better jobs and skills.¹²

Inclusion through innovation ...

As you will probably have seen by now, the SEU’s report¹³ on tackling social exclusion via ICT has been published.

Its key proposal is that:

“... we should realise the opportunity to make excluded groups the major beneficiaries of e-government, and avoid creating a ‘digital underclass’.”

However, the report stresses that this does not mean simply “connecting everyone to the Internet.” Instead, it suggests using a range of ‘new

¹⁰ See: www.scotland.gov.uk/closingtheopportunitygap.

¹¹ There is also further information about “Closing the Opportunity Gap” in Newsletter 48, September 2005, pp7-9.

¹² See: www.wales.gov.uk/themessocialdeprivation/content/keydocs-e.htm.

¹³ *Inclusion through innovation: tackling social exclusion through new technologies – a Social Exclusion Unit final report*. ODPM, 2005 (ISBN: 1-85112-813-1). Available to download as a pdf from the SEU website (www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=583), either in separate sections, or as a whole document (2386 KB).

technology' (including telephones, particularly mobile phones, community ICT access, advisers, and intermediaries).

The report goes on to state that ICT can be used to address social exclusion in three main ways:

- Through strategic planning and evaluating services we can target services and develop efficient, tailored local plans to improve delivery.
- Joining up services around the needs of the person is of particular value to people who simultaneously are clients of several agencies.
- Personal development and active inclusion in employment, social groups, and community participation can all be helped by technology. For example, telecare technology can be used to help older or disabled people to maintain their independence and quality of life in their own homes and communities.

It also stresses that the engagement of excluded groups through the service delivery programme is also vital, not just in the design of services, but also through their active participation in e-government. Therefore, this report proposes actions to engage excluded citizens in the design of services to meet their needs.

The report also identifies barriers which appear to be preventing progress. For example, evidence suggests that 'innovations' to tackle social exclusion are seldom evaluated, often marginalised, and have low visibility. Few people know about the successful projects already delivering [see below]. A focal point is needed to bring together good practice and initiatives worthy of wider roll out.

The report's key recommendations are:

- The establishment of an independent unit to consolidate and promote evidence of effective work, and to raise the political profile of the opportunities there are
- To take forward, across Government, action to develop more detailed and effective guidance and support for information sharing about excluded groups
- Development of further ways of defining and agreeing roles and responsibilities
- Finally, access to ICT remains a critical issue, and the report proposes actions to expand public access to institutions used by excluded groups such as hostels for homeless people and community centres in deprived areas and highlights successful community development approaches to ICT engagement.

Sadly, whilst libraries are mentioned, it seems mostly to be in relation to barriers, for example:

- Many of those interviewed had no awareness of libraries' provision

- There was a perception that users had to pay to use computers in libraries
 - There was dissatisfaction about the time-limits placed on usage
 - The report also thought that people who were put off using libraries because of institutional barriers would not necessarily want to use them just because they had ICT available.
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eGovernment: reaching socially excluded groups?

More issues in relation to ICT have been raised in this new report¹⁴ from the Improvement and Development Agency [IDeA].

As it states in the executive summary:

“eGovernment strategies rarely consider the needs of people who have become socially excluded, and social inclusion strategies rarely consider the role of ICT. Probably because it is still early days in the development of eGovernment and so the impacts of digital technology initiatives are frequently unclear, there has been a strategic impasse.

This stalemate can be overcome in two ways. Firstly, local government needs to better understand the opportunities that ICT provides to enhance social inclusion. These can be achieved by:

- Making better use of information and data, including customer intelligence, to understand the distribution and magnitude of social exclusion problems and to use this knowledge to underpin social inclusion strategies.
- Greater legal clarity in, and promotion of the benefits of, information sharing between public organisations.
- Making better use of information to target local authority initiatives and to provide personalised services.

Secondly, the eGovernment agenda must place a higher priority on the needs of socially excluded people. Central government policy and local priorities and goals influence local authorities' strategies. Action is required to ensure that:

- Social inclusion is a priority in the future development of the eGovernment agenda.
- Central government develops clearer objectives to support and guide the use of technology to enhance social inclusion.

¹⁴ *eGovernment: reaching socially excluded groups?* IDeA, 2005. Available to download as pdfs in two parts (670 Kb and 663 Kb) from: www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=1074872. A free print copy is available from: ihelp@idea.gov.uk.

- Goals for eGovernment emphasise the provision of better quality services for socially excluded users as well as increased efficiency for local government service providers.”

The report stresses the need for mainstreaming; for using the technology and enhancing service delivery to reach socially excluded people; and for learning by sharing what works¹⁵.

Local Directgov programme

Related to the above items, and just in case you haven't seen this, 18 local authorities and four regional pilots have been invited to work with the Local Directgov Programme¹⁶ to trial and test the technical solutions and the process of linking their authority website to Directgov, ahead of the full roll-out next year.

These pilots will provide a wide cross-section of local authorities from different regions and with varying levels of IT capability.

The pilot local authorities are: London Borough of Brent, Bridgnorth District Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, Colchester District Council, Durham City Council, Essex County Council, Havant District Council, London Borough of Kingston, Lichfield District Council, Mid-Sussex District Council, Salford MBC, South Buckinghamshire District Council, Surrey Portal (surreyonline.info), Teignbridge District Council, Wansbeck District Council, Warwick District Council, West Norfolk District Council, the London Portal (yourlondon.gov.uk) and Wirral MBC.

Migration ...

The RSA¹⁷ Migration Commission has just published a major report¹⁸ which looks very critically at current migration policy and practice.

In the summary report (p3), they state:

“The Commission believes that the present system of managed migration:

¹⁵ There is also a summary of key points from this report in CILIP *Update* 4 (11) November 2005, p4.

¹⁶ Information taken from the *Local Directgov Newsletter*, October 2005, available at: www.localgov.gov.uk/images/LDG%20Newsletter%20Nov2005_357.pdf.

¹⁷ The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

¹⁸ *Migration: a welcome opportunity – a new way forward by the RSA Migration Commission*. RSA, 2005. Available to download as pdfs from: <http://www.migrationcommission.org/publications.htm>. Summary report 437 Kb, full report 1.3 Mb, plus separate annexes.

- a. does not meet the economic requirements of Britain
 - b. imposes intolerable levels of abuse on many migrant workers
 - c. contradicts the declared purpose of the British aid policy in seeking to assist the reduction of poverty in developing countries.”¹⁹
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Supporting refugees in London ...

The London Asylum Seekers Consortium has just published a report²⁰ setting out some good practice and pointing in directions that a strategy might take.

In its section on “Community cohesion”, it states:

“Social exclusion can arise from many different causes ranging from nonacceptance of minority groups, poverty, discrimination, personal perception. RCOs [Refugee Community Organisations] have reported that refugees are often the target of race hate campaigns and racially motivated incidents, due to media portrayal, ignorance and divisions within communities. Consequently, this has led to refugees feeling victimised, ostracized and isolated within their community. The role of the media can influence citizens’ perceptions of refugees, causing misunderstanding and ignorance. Work to promote community cohesion is even more relevant since 7 July 2005, the impact of which has seen an increase in race and faith hate crime, and refugee communities are affected by this ...”

In working towards a strategy, it suggests (amongst other things):

- Ensure community cohesion is maintained within communities
 - Tackle issues of racism and tension
 - Raise awareness of cultural diversity in primary and secondary schools
 - Encourage group operations amongst refugee groups and public services in promoting social inclusion
 - Build on knowledge of refugees experiences of exclusion
 - Build on existing practice in the promotion of social inclusion.
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Introduction to the NHS

Published by the Department of Health, this fact sheet has been written to explain the role of UK health services to newly-arrived individuals seeking asylum.

¹⁹ Thanks to Helen Carpenter for alerting me to this and the following two items.

²⁰ *Supporting refugees in London: towards a strategy for refugee integration 2005/2006*. London Asylum Seekers Consortium, 2005. Available as a pdf from: www.westminster.gov.uk/communityandliving/ethniccommunities/asylumseekers/publications/upload/LASCV4FINAL.pdf.

It covers issues such as the role of GPs, their function as gatekeepers to the health services, how to register and how to access emergency services.

The leaflet is available in some 40 languages, downloadable as pdfs from:

www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4122587&chk=w2Q1ZY.

Youth Involvement

Young people from disadvantaged communities are being trained by the Renewal Academy to be advisers on local decisions affecting them under a new Government scheme.

The pilot project, aimed at giving youngsters aged 15 to 20 years old the skills to become involved in local decision making, has been launched by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in four areas – East Brighton, East Manchester, West Middlesbrough and Hull.

Each location has selected between four and six young people to take part in the project. The young advisors will be given the task with showing community leaders and local decision-makers how to engage other young people in community life, regeneration and renewal²¹.

Children's Services/Children Act 2004

By now, you will probably have seen the round-up of recent developments (particularly in relation to the placing of library services in local authority structures) by John Pateman²² in *Update*.

More recently, NFER have set up a JISCMail list and are developing web-based resources²³ to support people working in education, childcare, social work, sociology, social and public policy, youth justice and crime, healthcare, and youth support services²⁴.

To join the list, go to:

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LIS-CHILDRENS-SERVICES.html.

²¹ Further information at: www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/case.asp?id=1618.

²² John Pateman "The Children's Act – what it means for public services" CILIP *Update* 4 (9) September 2005, pp32-33.

²³ See: www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer-information-sites/childrens-services-discussion-list-for-librarians-and-information-professionals.cfm.

²⁴ Thanks to the CILIP Youth Libraries Group JISCMail list for alerting me to this.

Learning at work ...

The Learning and Skills Development Agency have just published a report²⁵ looking at the barriers to learning at work, and identifying the 'triggers' that facilitate learning taking place.²⁶

YouGov Survey for the Learning & Skills Council

The LSC have just published²⁷ the results of a survey of young people in England to explore the reasons for their dropping out of education or training at 16.

The reasons given were:

1. Wanted to earn money (54 per cent)
 2. Fed up with school and teachers (34 per cent)
 3. Couldn't afford to stay on (26 per cent)
 4. Parents would not support me staying in education (21 per cent)
 5. Friends were leaving school (15 per cent)
 6. Had decided on a career which didn't need further education (15 per cent)
 7. Didn't do well in exams (14 per cent)
 8. Delayed further education to a later date (7 per cent)
 9. Wanted to leave home (5 per cent)
 10. Was having a baby (1 per cent).
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²⁵ Peter Bates, Will Hunt and Jim Hillage. *Learning at work: strategies for widening adult participation in learning below Level 2 via the workplace*. LSDA, 2005. The report is available from: Information Services, LSDA, Regent Arcade House, 19-25 Argyll Street, London W1F 7LS. Tel: 0207 297 9123. Email: enquiries@LSDA.org.uk. Or it can be downloaded from the website at www.lsda.org.uk/publications.

²⁶ With thanks to the Guidance Council's Weekly Political Intelligence Service for this and the following item.

²⁷ See: www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Media/PressReleases/pr327-cash-lures-kids.htm.

Camden Libraries Refugee Work Placement Project

This is a two-year project 2004-2006, funded by Camden's Regeneration Section, in partnership with Refugee Access Into Sustainable Employment [RAISE], financed largely through the European Social Fund's EQUAL programme²⁸.

Helen Pollock, whose contact details appear below, has day-to-day responsibility for the management of this project and is happy to liaise with any library authorities interested in offering refugees work experience.

Outline/Targets: Camden Libraries are offering up to 12 placements in each year to refugees of 15 hours a week, with each placement lasting 12 weeks. The placements offer customer-service skills and library work experience. Refugees follow a daily routine and have to balance work and home life. The scheme should help the refugee to build self-esteem, to develop an understanding of workplace rules and regulations that may differ vastly from those in their country of origin, and work on skills appropriate to any employer. At the end of the placement the refugee has an evidenced statement of achievement and a reference that they can show a future employer. While on the placement and for as long as they wish they can access basic skills and language learning help and attend supported computer sessions in library learning centres.

To participate in the programme, applicants must have Home Office permission to work, reasonably good spoken and written English (Entry Level 3) and some basic IT skills. Having fulfilled these criteria, placement for work experience follows.

Progress to date: Thus far, 10 refugees have completed their placements and three are currently on work experience. They have come from Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Uganda.

Following the placement, a materials engineering graduate emailed:

"I have a good news. You remember I have mention to you that I had an interview on last week Friday guess what ! I have passed the interview and I got a job! From this coming Friday, I will be working as a trainee surveyor getting £65 a day till I finish the training and then I will see how it goes on."

Two others are now sessional staff in libraries, and another has become a patient advocate at St Bartholomew's Hospital. Six others were referred to an employment service, Camden Working (Camden Working is a project funded by the London Borough of Camden and the London Development Agency, designed to tackle the high levels of unemployment in the borough).

²⁸ For further information, see:

www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/business/regeneration-and-partnership/camden-in-europe/raise-refugees-access-into-sustainable-employment.en.

Assessment/Impacts: The local line manager takes part in an evaluation of the support they had, and their placement had, for the duration of the work experience. The refugee on placement has two appraisal meetings with a mentor a few weeks into and a few weeks before completion of the placement. The refugee and mentor review progress in learning up to six generic skills (including problem-solving and self-development). The refugee also keeps a training log.

At the conclusion of their work experience refugees are referred to employment agencies, job brokerage or for educational courses.

This project has informed the European Framework for Work Experience 2005 Brighton Conference in June 2005 and a Transnational (Camden UK, Denmark and Holland) EQUAL Funded project for refugee work experience.

It has also led to the development of a one-day a week, 24-week “Working in Public Services” course with an adult education provider, designed specifically for refugees.

Other outcomes have been refugee placements, encouraging their communities to join and use libraries. This is valuable as many Somali parents coming from a society with strong oral tradition but low literacy do not readily grasp the need for them or their children to become literate so libraries are often perceived as only being for students and academics. Refugees, as part of their learning, have been contributing to the National Archive’s “Moving Here” website and talking to primary school children, some of whom are also refugees, about their experiences and adapting to change. This is helping to break down barriers and dispel racist attitudes rooted in ignorance. Not easily measurable results but extremely valuable in terms of community cohesion and health.

Challenges: To date, we have not encountered hostility among sections of the general population to this initiative, though it remains a possibility. There are possible difficulties posed by language and cultural barriers on occasion, but the most significant challenges will probably relate to the continuing support needs in the context of a new workplace for those refugees who obtain employment after a work placement.

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