

# 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](http://www.seapn.org.uk) and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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## Did you see ...?

### MLA North East – “Communities and Local Government”

Just in case you haven't yet seen this, MLA NE have produced a useful web summary<sup>1</sup> (with links) of the contribution by MLAs in the region to communities and to local government.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.mlanortheast.org.uk/nemlac/page.php3?503#pub1>.

## National Year of Reading

### National Year of Reading and the Library Membership campaign

The national membership campaign launched under the auspices of the National Year of Reading has really caught the imagination of not only the English public library sector but also of the national trade press.

Performance has been particularly impressive with the initial target of 350,00 new members being smashed in under two months and the revised figure of 500,000 being achieved in less than three months.

Although this performance is undoubtedly impressive in terms of sheer numbers, it does raise the question as to how successful library services are in recruiting new members specifically amongst the key target audiences for NYR which represent some of the traditionally hard to reach/engage communities.

As NYR is sponsored and funded by the Department of Children's Schools and Families, it is understandable that the Department's key audiences are children and young people and their parents or carers. DCSF also recognise the need to engage with adult learners if the government is to achieve its objectives in upskilling the nation's workforce so that Britain can compete effectively in the global economic market.

The DCSF has further identified certain sub-groups within children and young people who are causing particular concern in terms of educational achievement and attainment, determined by an analysis of performance at KS2, 3 and GCSE.

These specific target audiences are:

- White working class boys (defined by an entitlement to free school meals)
- Bangladeshi and Pakistan children and young people of both genders
- Eastern European new arrivals
- Looked after children
- Children with a print disability either through visual impairment or dyslexia.

An analysis of the membership figures to date show that, perhaps not surprisingly, the split between adult and children/young people is roughly two-thirds adults and one third children. In crude terms we are reaching more of our generic audience than our target ones. We know from our own experience and from the spring round of regional NYR meetings for local authority coordinators that services are working really well with specific groups, albeit understandingly perhaps with very small numbers which are hidden and overwhelmed by the larger generic successes. We all know that there is some

sterling work going on out there. But - where libraries as a sector struggle is in articulating and evidencing the impact that libraries and reading interventions have on the life chances of those at risk from social disadvantage.

So phase 2 of the membership campaign will be looking specifically at how libraries engage with those target audiences. Although obviously we will still recruit, welcome and value our new mainstream members (and have agreed a new target of 1 million joiners during NYR), activity in the autumn is an ideal time for library services to showcase the many and diverse reading offers they deliver to their communities—whether those communities be geographical, cultural, faith-based or additional needs.

A central point of the autumn campaign will be *Do something different in libraries* fortnight starting on October 18<sup>th</sup> when libraries will be challenged to showcase the work they do with their particular target communities and to deliver and evidence measurable impact in recruiting new members. NYR will provide national and regional media and PR support to the most innovative and creative.

But just showcasing the work and getting column inches or broadcast time in national and regional media is not the only objective of the exercise. Services will be able to contribute the learning from their particular activity and projects – successes and mistakes – to a countrywide resource bank of working with hard to engage audiences for the benefit of the sector as whole.

So please let me know of any work you are doing with these particular audiences. Through my monthly NYR newsletters and WikiREADia, the online community of good practice on the NYR website ([www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)) we can share learning and experience across the country.

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## Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***Immigration and social cohesion in the UK***

This important new research<sup>2</sup> from JRF:

“... set out to improve our understanding of the relationship between new immigration and social cohesion by exploring the rhythms and

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Hickman, Helen Crowley and Nick Mai, *et al. Immigration and social cohesion in the UK: the rhythms and realities of everyday life*. JRF, 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-1-85935-659-3). Available to download as a pdf (770 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2230-deprivation-cohesion-immigration.pdf>.

realities of everyday life of both the long-term settled and new arrival residents.” [p viii]

The research looked at six sites in the UK – Leicester; Downham (Lewisham); Kilburn; Peterborough (and Thetford); Dungannon; and Glasgow.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the research found that:

“to ensure the cohesion of the social fabric of society it is necessary to address both relational and structural issues. We need to consider how people relate to each other as well as addressing fundamental issues of deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination.” [p ix]

The key structural issues the researchers identified are:

- Family, especially the changing relationship between family life and work
- Education
- Work – which the research identifies “can be an obstacle to social cohesion and not, as is often assumed, an agent of integration. For example, the effective segregation of new immigrant workers in agriculture and food processing plants – through low wages, long hours, shift work, tied accommodation – can circumscribe their participation both at work and beyond.” [p xi]
- Housing
- Deprivation.

The research singled out the following as the most important policy implications:

- “Projects addressing the needs of new arrivals can become a new and visible opportunity for enhanced support for long-term residents, so that the arrival of new groups is seen as bringing to rather than taking from local communities.
- Tackling the long-seated problems, inequalities and discriminations ‘in place’, is essential for social cohesion for all; the ways in which different strategies of intervention across a range of policy areas – unemployment, lack of public and leisure facilities, low educational achievement, family breakdown – interrelate, needs to be reassessed.
- Initiatives of social intervention, including regeneration, need to be long-term and enable local people to establish meaningful interpersonal relations with the spaces and staff delivering support.” [p xii]

The report includes some valuable information, eg the outline of the Somali communities (pp25-31), transnational families (pp31-35); the in-depth investigations of education, work and housing issues, with interviews and case studies.

This is a major piece of research (some 214 pages of report alone!), but includes some particularly important findings – and the three policy implications noted above could all have an impact on our work.

Recommended.

### ***Immigration and inclusion in South Wales***

JRF have also just published this research report<sup>3</sup> which:

“explores the impact of new migration on established communities in south-east Wales, in particular on the issues of community, integration and cohesion.” [summary page]

The research found:

- “There was no evidence that community tensions are an inevitable consequence of new immigration.
- Minority ethnic groups were not any more ‘segregated’ than receiving middleclass and working-class communities, nor were they any less well integrated than white working-class communities on council estates.
- While middle-class (particularly but not only white) migration is largely invisible; migration (particularly involving visible or language difference) into deprived working-class communities is not. The ability of new migrants to work is viewed favourably by settled populations and assists the integration process, but the experience of the workplace is neither always positive nor cohesive.
- Significant class differences existed within and across the communities and areas we researched and affected the ways in which integration and community cohesion were experienced in everyday life.
- In all the services discussed with research participants, members of minority groups reported experiences of discrimination, offensive cultural ignorance or racism. The kind of racism and discrimination described may be in part class- as well as poverty-related.
- Social mobility was restricted by the deprived conditions and the poverty in which new migrants often found themselves and they seemed to struggle to integrate into environments that they perceived as a threat to their cultural values and lifestyles. Settled working-class communities in similarly deprived areas shared the struggle to integrate and also perceived difference as a threat to their community values and lifestyle.
- The appearance of integration and cohesion in what seem to be successful communities can hide groups who are isolated, exploited or

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<sup>3</sup> Terry Threadgold *et al.* *Immigration and inclusion in South Wales*. JRF, 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-1-85935-645-6, English PDF). Available to download as a pdf (320 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2290-wales-migration-cohesion.pdf>. Also available to download in Welsh (*Mewnfudo a chynhwysiant yn Ne Cymru*) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/ebooks/2210-wales-migration-cohesion.pdf>.

vulnerable. Generational tensions of different kinds exist across all the groups and geographical areas we studied. This can be the result of new forms of family and community leading to the isolation of the elderly, or of different access to, and levels of, integration.

- Migrant groups in particular believed that their ability to integrate and become part of a cohesive community was constantly damaged by media-fuelled stereotypes.” [pp vii-viii]

Key conclusions from the research were:

- “There is a real need to avoid the common-sense, and now institutionalised, tendency to link together race equality, community cohesion and issues of community safety and extremism, and a related need to explore cohesion issues across settled and new communities, groups and areas.
- Politicians as well as those at local council level and in other service provision contexts must be trained to understand and deliver on new policy directions in order to produce better public understanding and the kind of mutual respect and trust talked of by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007). There are many examples of good practice which could be used as models, especially in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and schooling contexts.
- Social class in particular remains hugely under-researched as a factor affecting processes of both integration and cohesion, and needs to be more central in developing and implementing policy in this area.” [p viii]

The report also includes useful summaries of the different ‘new’ communities in South Wales.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

MLAs = museums, libraries and archives

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