



ISSN 1475-8202

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Number 96, April 2009

(formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

Contents List

Network email lists – page 2

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

- *Encompass toolkit – page 2*

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *Equality issues in Wales: a research review – page 3*
- *What works in enabling cross-community interactions? – page 4*

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *The learning revolution – page 6*
- *Capturing the impact of libraries – page 8*

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 10

Network email lists

These are the current elists that we have – if you (or colleagues) would like to be added to any, just let me know!

- This monthly Newsletter
- Ebulletin – published regularly between Newsletters, and includes brief entries with web-links (succeeded the Welcome To Your Library Digest, and still includes material about migration issues)
- The Network - the general list for sharing information and good practice
- Looked-after children
- LGBT
- Older People
- Travellers.

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

Encompass toolkit

CILIP have just published this toolkit¹ as one part of its Encompass Programme.

“The Toolkit has been adapted from the Diversify Toolkit published by the Museums Association as part of its Diversify project. It is a standalone document providing guidance to those LIS employers considering positive action of any type as a means to attract members of under-represented minority ethnic groups into their library workforce. As such it is complementary to the other parts of the Encompass programme and is not dependant on employers signing up to either the Positive Action Trainee Scheme or the Paraprofessional Career Development Scheme.”²

The toolkit begins by setting the programme into context, and this is followed by sections on:

- The legalities (eg the RRA 1976), which shows clearly what is permissible (and what isn't)
- Preparing your organisation, which includes the need for and role of champions; the role of the trainees' supervisor; budgeting; briefing and preparing other staff; evaluation

¹ *Encompass toolkit: Practical guidance and advice for employers in the Library & Information Sector on introducing positive action schemes*. CILIP, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (1070 kb) from: http://www.cilip.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/2E1D3F79-569A-446C-898C-C17744755492/0/encompass_toolkit_270109.pdf.

² Taken from: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/qualificationschartership/encompass/toolkit>.

- Implementation, including looking at goals for trainee placements; identifying learning and development needs
- Recruitment to a positive action trainee scheme, including job spec and description; application form; interviewing process
- How to draw up partnership agreements (with other bodies)
- Key elements for trainee contracts
- Exit strategies (ie how to prepare the trainee for the end of their training)
- Linking the traineeship to the CILIP Qualifications Framework and library studies courses
- Guidance on answering complaints
- Useful contacts.

The toolkit also has a range of sample forms and documents, such as application forms, contracts, evaluation forms.

This is an immensely practical guide to taking positive action in terms of developing a training scheme, and should provide the spur for libraries to now take forward this important work.

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Equality issues in Wales: a research review

Just published by the EHRC, this review³ “forms one of a series of research reviews set up to inform the Commission’s research and policy agenda for 2008–9 and beyond.” [p1] It focuses mainly on material published between 2000-2008.

It includes chapters on:

- The current position of equality in Wales, in terms of its demography and governance
- Poverty and social exclusion in Wales, looking at income poverty but also at a wide variety of aspects of social exclusion including fuel poverty, transport and access to justice
- Employment and the labour market
- Health and social care
- Education and learning
- Housing
- Participation in public and political life.

The review report concludes:

³ Victoria Winckler (ed). *Equality issues in Wales: a research review*. EHRC, 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84206-089-6). Available to download as a pdf (869 kb) from: <http://edit.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Documents/Equality%20issues%20in%20Wales%20-%20a%20research%20review.pdf>.

“There can be no doubt that Wales in 2008 is now very diverse, with much more variation in the ethnicity, age, health and disability, sexual orientation and religion of its population than even half a century ago. Moreover, all the forecasts of future trends suggest that that diversity will increase further over coming decades.

The governance of Wales is increasingly different to that of other parts of the UK, and as part of this, Wales is also developing a distinctive equalities agenda of its own as well as being covered by UK equality legislation. Whilst Wales’s institutions have had a headline commitment to equality, mainstreaming that commitment has, however, proved to be much more difficult and on many key indicators progress towards equality leaves much to be desired.” [p17]

This is a key current ‘snapshot’ of equalities in Wales – recommended.

What works in enabling cross-community interactions?

This new report⁴ by The National Community Forum for CLG:

“...briefly reviews the evidence for the current state of community interaction within England, together with theoretical approaches such as ‘contact theory’ which can inform activities that bring individuals and groups together. Building on this basis, the report then draws on the extensive expertise of 28 practitioners from across the country selected because of their diverse grassroots experience of bringing different individuals and groups together.” [p5]

The research highlights four principles crucial for enabling interaction (and which underpin the Forum’s recommendations). These principles are:

- Principles 1 and 2: “Spaces, activities and networks need to be created which enable interaction to take place, building on people’s diverse layers of identities. However, the way that these spaces, activities and networks are designed is crucial to their potential success, highlighting the need for an improved understanding of the processes which promote interaction.” [p6]
- Principle 3: “Those who are involved in promoting these activities from within particular communities can often face substantial opposition and a high personal cost for their involvement, so they need valuing, supporting, training and sustaining.” [p7]

⁴ Andrew Orton. *What works in enabling cross-community interactions? Perspectives on good policy and practice*. CLG, 2009 (ISBN-13: 978-1-4098-1221-0). Available to download as a pdf (429 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1165960.pdf>.

- Principle 4: “The wider social, political and funding context can have a profound impact on these activities, highlighting the importance of creating a conducive context which supports these interactions, tackles inequalities, and encourages their sustainability.” [p7]

The recommendations which emerge from this are of great significance to us, for example:

“Recommendation 1

That practitioners in community and statutory organisations work to create spaces where people can meet in low-key ways, based on aspects of their identities and interests which they hold in common, but which leave them space to explore difference in other respects.

Recommendation 2

That practitioners in community and statutory organisations identify contact points which link groups and play a discerning proactive role in bringing these together, encouraging wider connections between groups without undermining existing connections because they are ‘not representative enough’.

Recommendation 3

That DCLG and other research funding bodies consider funding additional research and resources which focus specifically on the skills and processes that practitioners and organisations can use to bring individuals and groups together successfully, to verify, develop and publicise these findings further.

Recommendation 4

That statutory agencies in particular provide services and spaces when and where people need them, not just when and where they are convenient to provide. This may mean taking sensible risks with small emerging groups, as well as training core staff and enabling them to use their time to actively promote interaction ...” [p6]

The report concludes:

“Ultimately, these findings highlight how developing improved interactions is a long term, educational and relational process; ie it is an art which requires committed practitioners who are able to draw individuals and groups together to find commonalities and explore differences, whilst managing their own identity and role in the process. Nevertheless, there is much that wider organisations and policy-makers can do to promote, support or inhibit this work, both directly and in contributing towards the environment in which it takes place. The National Community Forum believes that this is where organisations and policymakers at local and national levels need to model the positive interaction that they wish to see happen within local communities, by working on these issues together.” [p8]

There is much here that we can draw on in thinking through how to play a part in creating these ‘cross-community interactions’ (even if the research has not yet recognised the role that MLAs play in this).

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

The learning revolution

DIUS have just published this long-awaited White Paper⁵.

It recognises the value that people place on informal learning and the growth that is currently taking place:

“The boom in book clubs, on-line research and blogging, together with the continuing popularity of museums, public lectures and adult education classes ...” [p3]

In order for the ‘revolution’ to take place, the Paper identifies the need for Government to work with partners to:

- “Build a culture which values informal adult learning in all its forms, with a wide range of organisations promoting it.
- Support people to drive their own learning, in particular by making it easier for people who want to start ‘self-organised’ groups.
- Link up the learning provided by the public, private and third sectors to broaden choice and clarify the opportunities for learners.
- Make better use of technology to support learning and inform people about what’s on offer.
- Ensure there is a wide choice of high-quality learning opportunities for everyone.
- Increase access to informal learning for disadvantaged groups.
- Recognise the leadership role of local authorities in securing a broad range of opportunities for people across the country.” [pp4-5]

To build the culture of learning, the White Paper states:

“Although there is a rich tapestry of informal adult learning, more can be done to help some adults overcome the barriers they face. We need to help these adults navigate through the choices on offer to identify and access the learning opportunities they want. We will need to build a strong and diverse coalition of organisations to promote learning and point adults to new opportunities. This will help unlock choice, connect learning and develop awareness of the benefits informal learning can

⁵ *The learning revolution*. Cm 7555. DIUS, 2009 (ISBN: 9780101755528). Available to download as a pdf from:
http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/engaging_learners/informal_adult_learning/~/_media/public/L/learning_revolution.

bring. We will do this with the help of four initiatives: an Informal Adult Learning Pledge; a Festival of Learning; an Open Space Movement and a Transformation Fund.” [p5]

The ‘Open Space’ Movement is particularly important to us:

“We want a broad choice of learning options to be available, including traditional classes, activities in museums, libraries and other settings, as well as opportunities to learn online. Self-organised learning is an important part of the mix. Many people are already doing this. We want to empower more people to organise themselves to learn, with opportunities designed by communities for communities. But we know that starting a group can be difficult: it can be particularly hard to find low cost space locally, and people need more expertise and tips on how to build a successful learning group.

... We want to sow the seeds of an ‘open space’ movement where organisations throw open their facilities for informal learning at low or no cost. DIUS, DCSF, CLG, DH, and DCMS will work together with partners to open up spaces for informal learning in schools, colleges, libraries, community centres and healthy living centres, whether this learning is provided by the public, voluntary or self-organised sector. We will also develop a toolkit on how to set up, support and maintain a self-organised group.” [p6]

The Paper also focuses on increasing access to informal adult learning (including learning at work):

“We will establish a national support package for Community Learning Champions to help them reach out to new learners, prioritising the most deprived areas. We will also take targeted action nationally and through our local partners to improve informal learning for older people and for families, and to increase informal learning in the workplace.” [p6]

There is also an emphasis on increasing access to learning via technology, eg via a web portal.

To ensure that the recommendations are implemented, the Government will be setting up a National Advisory Group⁶ and continuing to commit funding to this area of work (ring-fencing £210m for informal adult learning, as well as funding for wider innovation).

Broadly welcomed, eg by NIACE⁷, this key report will have considerable impact on the work of our sector – MLA have also welcomed it, and have

⁶ According to the MLA News Bulletin 3 April, this has become the Adult Learners Board, and is co-chaired by Roy Clare, Chief Executive of the MLA and Alan Tuckett, Chief Executive NIACE.

⁷ See: <http://www.niace.org.uk/niace-welcomes-dius-strategy-for-informal-learning>.

“... set itself a target of encouraging 3,000 individual museums, libraries and archives to sign up to the active promotion of informal adult learning by March 2010.”⁸

Capturing the impact of libraries

This report⁹ by BOP Consulting for DCMS is part of the support for the current Modernisation Review. The report includes:

- A brief overview of “The current library offer”
- An analysis of stakeholders’ interests
- The overall rationale for capturing libraries’ impact (which BOP see as, primarily, via the wider effects of learning and social capital formation – by which they mean “establishing networks and relationships, and/or facilitating links to resources” [p20])
- A review of libraries’ role and impact in particular areas:
 - Children and young people
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Stronger and safer communities
 - Local economy
 - Environmental sustainability
- A very brief look at other attempts to measure libraries’ value
- Conclusions, including a logic model for capturing the impact of public libraries
- Recommendations.

This is a very important report, and deserves wide readership and application. It comes to some powerful conclusions, including:

“The literature review shows that public libraries in England are now involved in the delivery of a wide ranging menu of services, activities and resources.

This very diversity of provision also, arguably, presents difficulties in demonstrating and communicating the impact of public libraries. In many of the ‘new’ areas of libraries activities – for instance, early years support, adult basic skills provision, health support, information and guidance – libraries are not, and will never be, the lead delivery agency. This means that the interactions that people have with libraries in these areas will generally be less intensive and, correspondingly, have a more mild impact, than other service providers for these activities (e.g. schools, health centres).

⁸ See:

http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press/releases/2009/adult_learning_white_paper.

⁹ *Capturing the impact of libraries: final report*. DCMS, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (515.58 kb) from:

http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Capturing_the_impact_of_libraries.pdf.

It is therefore important that evidence regarding libraries impact should not claim one-to-one causative relationships, but should concentrate instead on showing how libraries can ‘make a contribution towards’/have ‘a bearing on’, a range of socio-economic priorities.”
[pp1-2]

The recommendations include:

“Across all areas public libraries need to improve the comprehensiveness and consistency of basic management information on services and users, to aid:

- performance management and improvement
- demonstrate libraries contribution to short term policy goals (e.g. ECM outcomes), principally at local level, as well as to
- establish the base data for more complex impact analyses such as cost effectiveness/SROI approaches

Without having credible baselines it is not possible to tell a compelling story about the ‘new’ public library, and how the library service can contribute to a wide range of stakeholders’ agendas.

Children and young people, learning

Baselines of activity are particularly urgent with regard to learning activities, and for children and young people. Children have been the focus of much recent investment and activity in the sector and take-up from the public has been strong, in the context of falling usage for other elements of library services and resources.

Stronger communities

Although central and local government have accepted that participation in libraries on its own counts towards the development of more cohesive communities, there is very little comprehensive data on the degree to which people, particularly young people, are involved in the co-design and delivery of library services. This has become a strong agenda right across government, is key to understanding more about what the public expects of a modern library service and, in relation to young people, is a major sector commitment.

Well being and health

This is an agenda that libraries should be able to demonstrate a significant contribution towards, as it is a very close fit with the particular qualities of libraries as institutions and the activities and resources that they provide. However, at present, the evidence is too piecemeal and insufficiently articulated in the emerging language of the field. Relatedly, libraries need to understand more about the

effectiveness of their, now widespread, health support and information activities in helping users to ‘co-produce’ their own health.

General characteristics of baseline data

Baselines of activity need to be national. Although library services are organised locally, policy in all the areas in which libraries have a contribution to make is set nationally to be delivered locally according to (generally) statutory guidance. This means that being identified first as a national partner is key to playing a subsequent role locally.

Wherever possible, baselines should strive to include demographic information. In many cases, a major element of the contribution that libraries appear to make is that they can more easily engage groups that other service providers find hard to reach.

However, this sets up a potential contradiction: in seeking to provide more comprehensive and detailed data on hard to reach users and participants, libraries would risk undermining the main reason that attracts them in the first place (i.e. that few questions are asked or required to participate). This therefore requires careful consideration for how exactly enhancements to baseline data should be collected.” [pp2-3]

Although it is a pity that BOP do not fully recognise the role that libraries play in tackling social exclusion – although there is some coverage of this within the sections on children and young people, etc – and that they insist on describing services to under-fives and other target groups as “new” services, nevertheless this report has some important things to say about public libraries in England. The conclusion about libraries’ needing to redefine their role to show the contribution they make – rather than seeing themselves as the lead agency – is particularly timely. Highly recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CLG = Communities and Local Government
ECM = Every Child Matters
EHRC = Equalities and Human Rights Commission
MLAs = museums, libraries and archives
SROI = Social Return on Investment

This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

John Vincent
Wisteria Cottage
Nadderwater
Exeter EX4 2JQ

Tel/fax: 0845 128 4897
E-mail: john@nadder.org.uk

April 2009