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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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Network news – European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010

We have been given permission to use the logo – see above! – for the Year, having been approved as a formal partner in the Year¹.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Understanding and changing public attitudes: a review of existing evidence from public information and communication campaigns

This important research report² was published in July.

Funded by a group of organisations interested in issues surrounding asylum and immigration, including Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, City Parochial Foundation, Barrow Cadbury and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the research was carried out by the Centre for Migration Policy Research, Swansea University.

“The aim of this report is to assist those working in the refugee sector (and beyond) to better understand the dynamics of the current situation. In turn it aims to ensure that resources are directed towards those activities which are likely to be most effective in positively affecting attitudes towards asylum issues given what is already known ...” [p1]

Importantly, the research also places concerns about immigration and asylum in a broader context:

“Moreover there is some evidence that attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees may actually be a reflection of broader concerns (at the local, regional or national level) about the changing ethnic and cultural composition of societies, together with broader processes of social and community change and the ability (or otherwise) of government to deliver services (particularly social housing, healthcare and education). If, as this evidence suggests, asylum is effectively a ‘touchstone’ issue, then this may have significant implications for the extent to which ‘single issue’ messages or campaigns around asylum and/or the rights and needs of asylum seekers are able to affect attitudinal change.” [p1]

¹ For further information about EY2010, see: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/european-year-2010/>.

² Heaven Crawley. *Understanding and changing public attitudes: a review of existing evidence from public information and communication campaigns*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (393 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/news.asp?id=532&year=2009&pageno=3>.

The report goes on to look at:

- Why attitudes matter
- What do we know about attitudes to asylum?
- Do other factors influence attitudes to asylum?
- What is a 'campaign'?
- How do campaigns lead to attitudinal change?
- What kinds of messages are most likely to work?
- How effective have campaigns in other areas been? Includes: Public health campaigns; Campaigns around mental health and the stigma of mental illness; Anti-poverty campaigns; Campaigns to promote equality and diversity
- Implications for campaigning work on asylum.

The research concludes that the following are key principles for successful campaigning work:

- "A clear theory of change;
- Sensitivity to the political and policy context;
- Clear and agreed aims and objectives;
- Strong and explicit messages that reframe the terms of the debate;
- The involvement of those directly affected by the campaign;
- A range of mass communication and interpersonal communication channels;
- Strategies targeted at particular groups in society; and
- A commitment to research and evaluation." [p21]

Clearly, these issues apply to campaigning work more generally, and the report gathers together current evidence to draw some really useful conclusions. Along the way, the evidence also calls into question many practices that people assume are beneficial, eg:

"[Research into anti-racism advertising] suggests that people in two minds about their attitudes towards ethnic minority groups (i.e. showing ambivalence) become *more unfavourable* when exposed to anti-racism advertising or arguments. Because people in this group both like and dislike a particular ethnic group at the same time, they will carefully scrutinise messages that support a positive attitude toward that group, perhaps because they hope to reduce the conflict and tension in their attitudes. Ironically, however, this process leads to more negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities where the material these people read contains weak arguments in favour of the group or critical of it. The 'backfire effects' occur both in conscious and non-conscious feelings towards people from ethnic minorities." [p17 – emphasis theirs]

Highly recommended.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

New Horizons ...

In July 2009, the Government published the New Horizons consultation document³ which identified “four key guiding values:

- equality and justice
- reaching our full potential
- being in control of our lives
- valuing relationships.” [p9]

This follow-up report⁴:

- “summarises the feedback received during the consultation
- identifies the key areas for action to improve mental health
- sets out the next steps to further strengthen mental health services
- sets out what is already happening across government to improve mental health and well-being
- sets out commitments from the Department of Health and other departments across government to improve mental health
- describes system levers available to practitioners, commissioners and others locally and nationally to achieve progress.” [p10]

One of its key features is the emphasis it puts on recognising just what impact mental illness has, for example:

“Impact of mental illness

- At any one time, just over 20% of working-age women and 17% of working-age men are affected by depression or anxiety; approximately 5% of men and 3% of women can be assessed as having a personality disorder and over 0.4% have a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia or bipolar affective disorders.
- Half of those with common mental health problems are limited by their condition and around a fifth are disabled by it.
- Mental illness accounted for more disability adjusted life years lost per year than any other health condition in the UK and the figures for 2004 show that 20% of the total burden of disease

³ *New Horizons: towards a shared vision for mental health – consultation.*

Department of Health, 2009. Available to download from:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/consultations/liveconsultations/dh_103144. (There was an alert to this in *The Network Ebulletin*, 20, 15 April 2009. See: http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/networkbulletin_next_no.20.doc.)

⁴ *New Horizons: a shared vision for mental health.* Department of Health, 2009.

Available to download as a pdf (1342 kb) from:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/document/digitalasset/dh_109708.pdf.

was attributable to mental illness (including suicide), compared with 16.2% for cardiovascular diseases and 15.6% for cancer. No other condition exceeded 10%.

- No other health condition matches mental ill health in the combined extent of prevalence, persistence and breadth of impact.
- Mental illness begins early; 10% of children have a diagnosable mental health condition and 50% of lifetime mental illness is present by the age of 14.” [p12]

There is to be a fuller report of the results of the consultation published in January 2010; this report outlines key findings under the headings:

- Everybody’s business
- Public mental health
- Schools
- Work
- Families, carers, friends and informal networks
- Access to quality services
- Access, equality and complex needs
- Involvement and empowerment
- A more effective system
- Stigma and discrimination.

The report then goes on to outline cross-Government action to tackle these issues, for example outlining research that could be undertaken:

“What are effective interventions in the broad span of areas of intervention?”

- Primary, secondary and tertiary prevention
- Mental health of the employed and unemployed
- Violence and abuse
- Financial capability and debt and mental health
- Housing
- The mental health of socially excluded groups
- Community, social engagement, social capital
- Physical and mental health
- Personalisation
- Non-discriminatory services for older people
- Acute care
- Primary care (for example: What are the best models of improving the primary care–secondary care interface for those with serious mental illness?)
- Psychological therapies (CBT and other)
- Pharmacological treatments including reducing side effects.” [p31]

What the report particularly emphasises is taking action across the life-course, eg:

- “early identification and treatment of mental health problems in children and parents.” [p37]
- The transition from adolescence to adulthood
- Better mental health and well-being in adulthood (including for socially excluded adults, people at risk of suicide, and people in the Armed Forces)
- Older people.

The report goes on to develop themes raised in the consultation document:

“... aligning key levers to deliver change. These are:

- the prioritisation of mental health nationally and locally across government and all sectors
- a clear strategy supported by a broad consensus
- local and national leadership
- evidence-based service models and approaches
- effective and resourced commissioning, both multi-agency and specialist
- information, monitoring and regulation and high-quality outcome measures
- a skilled workforce.” [p74]

Although there’s no mention of MLAs – and no specific actions for DCMS to take – nevertheless, this is a major framework for developing health and wellbeing.

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

Report of the MLA London Skilled for Health Grants Programme 2009: a toolkit for library services and partners

MLA London have just produced this toolkit⁵, based on the cross-London “Skilled for Health” work that has been undertaken.⁶

“This report describes the outcomes and lessons learned from the MLA London *Skilled for Health* Grants Programme in 2009. The programme

⁵ *Report of the MLA London Skilled for Health Grants Programme 2009: a toolkit for library services and partners*. MLA London, 2009. Available to download as a pdf (804.24 kb) from:

http://www.mlalondon.org.uk/uploads/documents/MLAL_Report_of_SfH_Grants_Programme_FINAL.pdf.

⁶ Thanks to Ann Wolfe (MLA London) for alerting me to this.

gave London library services the opportunity to develop partnerships with a range of local agencies including adult education colleges, health providers and community groups in order to engage learners with Skills for Life needs. 15 London library services took part, running informal *Skilled for Health* courses in health awareness with embedded literacy, language and numeracy support.” [p3]

“The 15 participating library services were successful in engaging learners with a variety of different needs, including those from disadvantaged and hard to reach communities. Learners engaged include:

- Young parents with ESOL needs or low literacy levels
- Learners from areas of high deprivation
- Homeless service users
- Learners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, refugees and asylum-seekers
- Hospital staff working in low paid jobs
- Vulnerable older people
- People with learning disabilities.” [p3]

The toolkit sets out the background to “Skilled for Health” work, then outlines the key benefits from the programme, including benefits for the learners:

- “Better knowledge of how to keep themselves and their families healthy and how to access health services
- Opportunity to discuss health issues in a friendly relaxed environment
- Embedded support for literacy, language, numeracy and IT skills
- Enjoyment of classes and activities
- Increased confidence
- Informal library environment is welcoming and reassuring
- Use of free library resources
- Chance to make new friends and meet people from other cultures
- Aspirations to continue learning” [p10]

and benefits for library services:

- “Develops contribution to health, adult skills and social inclusion agendas
- Strengthens existing local partnerships and develops new ones
- Opportunity to access hard to reach communities, increase library membership and promote library services and materials to new audiences
- Enthusiasm and enjoyment of library staff; opportunity for professional development and increased job satisfaction.” [p10]

The section on “Lessons learned” is also very useful, including, for example, brief hints on partnership working and planning; project management and staffing; engagement of learners; and resources and activities.

Finally, there is a set of case studies, showing what happened in practice.

This is an important guide which we can draw on to develop our own work in the health, literacy and learning fields.

Recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CBT = Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

DCMS = Department for Culture, Media and Sport

ESOL = English for Speakers of Other Languages

EY2020 = European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010

MLA London = Museums, Libraries and Archives London

MLAs = museums, libraries and archives

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

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