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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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Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Tackling race inequality: a statement on race

This statement¹ by the Government assesses progress towards racial equality, taking as its starting point the Macpherson Report of 1999 and the effect that this has had on race issues.

The document argues that there has been “substantial progress across a variety of measures” [p8], including in education, employment and the criminal justice system.

“As well as tackling racism and promoting race equality, we have also made important strides towards promoting equality for all: in strengthening rights for gay people, disabled people, and older people and on the grounds of religion and belief.” [p8]

It then goes on to highlight some key areas where “we need to take a fresh look at the ways in which we promote race equality” [p9], including:

- Recognition of the importance of community cohesion
- “The second trend has been the changing pattern of migration over the past 10 years: including all migrants, whether legal, illegal, asylum seekers or refugees.” [p10]
- Thirdly is the recognition “that we all have increasingly complex identities. Our race, faith, social class, gender, and any number of other factors come together to create our unique identities.” [p10]
- Renewed recognition of the importance of class, including:
 - “...socio-economic status and poverty affect people’s chances in life regardless of race or ethnic background. These cannot easily be untangled.” [p10]
 - The growing Black and Asian middle class
 - “... for some groups, it is not only class, nor only race, but the interaction between the two – combined with the influence of other factors – which leads to a much more complex and subtle overall picture. We see this most clearly in education ...” [p10]

“These trends make the challenges we face much more complex but that does not mean that we should reduce our efforts to tackle racism and promote race equality. Rather, we must recognise that we will not succeed in addressing racism without tackling all forms of prejudice and discrimination. So we must redouble our efforts to promote greater equality for all and combine that with efforts to target the specific

¹ *Tackling race inequality: a statement on race*. Communities and Local Government, 2009 (ISBN: 978-1-4098-2168-7). Available to download as a pdf (1918 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1432344.pdf>.

problems faced by particular communities. We cannot choose to do either/or – we have to do both.

... That means a much broader approach. It means tackling social exclusion, child poverty, poor housing. It means investment in education and skills, creating job opportunities. It means tackling poverty and raising family incomes. This is not a job for one public service or one government department but for us all.

... There is also an important point about ensuring that our efforts to promote equality, to achieve fair outcomes for everyone, are in themselves fair and seen to be fair. We have to avoid the perception that some groups are singled out for special treatment. When we target help at one group, we cannot allow others to be left behind or to feel disconnected, otherwise there is a risk that our efforts will be exploited by those who would distort them to drive people apart. The over-riding message must be that regardless of class, race, beliefs or anything else: in every community, in every corner of the country – we are on people's side. No favours. No privileges. No special interest groups. Just fairness." [p12]

This statement then goes on to work through the following three areas:

- Enforcing the strong legal framework
- Ensuring that work on race equality is an important feature of every government department and that all public services continue to play their part in tackling race inequalities (this includes brief outlines of commitments made and action taken by Government departments, including DCMS)
- Targeted work to address support particular groups to overcome specific challenges, where needed.

In concluding, the statement outlines where it has been drawn from (consultations since the publication of *Improving opportunity, strengthening society*²) – it “sets out the framework and rationale for tackling race inequality over the next few years.” [p39]

“This statement sets out how we will build on the remarkable achievements of the past ten years. We have a strong legal framework to tackle racism and promote equality, especially with the Equality Bill close to becoming law. So the emphasis in this strategy is on enforcing those laws, particularly through the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and through effective inspection of public services. We stress the commitment across government departments to promoting race equality. And we make clear that we will continue to

² *Improving opportunity, strengthening society: the Government's strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion*. Home Office, 2005. Available to download as a pdf (728 kb) from:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/152393.pdf>.

promote targeted approaches to address the specific obstacles and barriers which hold particular groups back – such as the very successful REACH programme for black boys and young men.” [from the Foreword by John Denham, p5]

This is an important scene-setting document that highlights key areas for improvement and development.³

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

The state of happiness ...

This key new report⁴:

“... brings together four years of groundbreaking work based on in-depth pilots – from teaching resilience to children in schools to promoting neighbourliness – with three councils in very different areas of the country: Manchester, Hertfordshire and South Tyneside.”⁵

It “describes the state of play in academic and practical knowledge about wellbeing, including the experience of the Local Wellbeing Project in the UK, one of the few programmes explicitly focused on influencing wellbeing across a range of policy fields.” [p11]

“The Local Wellbeing Project focused on five strands – 11 to 13 year olds; apprenticeships; parenting; neighbourhoods and older people – and two underpinning themes – measurement and environmental sustainability. These strands developed out of discussions with the local government partners to pinpoint where they felt that they had greatest traction on wellbeing, and which chimed with political and strategic priorities in their areas.” [p89]

The project investigated a number of major themes (such as community development, crime, healthcare) and recognised that:

“On all of these there is emerging evidence about what works: what directly increases wellbeing, and how improved wellbeing can help deliver other priority outcomes. But the policy practice to promote

³ You can keep up with the developments and initiatives via the Be Utd social networking site, <http://www.be-utd.org/>.

⁴ Nicola Bacon *et al.* *The state of happiness: can public policy shape people's wellbeing and resilience?* The Young Foundation, 2010 (ISBN: 978-1-905551-12-5). Available to download as a pdf (2080 kb) from:

http://www.youngfoundation.org/files/images/wellbeing_happiness_Final_2_.pdf.

⁵ Taken from: <http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/reports/the-state-happiness-new-report>.

wellbeing still lags behind the academic analysis. We still lack solid evidence about what works.” [p14]

The report “recommends prioritising programmes that:

- Teach children resilience in schools - drawing on strong evidence that this improves academic performance and behaviour as well as employability of pupils
- Promote opportunities for neighbours to get to know each other, based on clear evidence that this tends to enhance wellbeing
- Provide support for isolated older people to help them create and maintain social networks, and reduce anxiety and depression
- Shift transport and economic policies to encourage lower commuting times and allow people to spend more time with their families and friends
- Reshape apprenticeships and other programmes for teenagers to strengthen psychological fitness to help young people find and keep work
- Support families so parents are happier and children are less likely to face problems at home and at school
- Promote activities that are simultaneously good for the environment and reducing CO2, and make people feel better about their lives.”⁶

This report gives some real ideas of what could contribute to better wellbeing – and, thinking it through, we could see the role that museums, archives and libraries could play. Recommended.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

“Take Part”

CLG has funded a “Take Part” programme for 2008-2011 to support the use of the “Take Part” approach.

“The Take Part approach uses flexible, community-based learning to develop the capacity of individuals and communities to become more involved in civil and civic life.

Take Part learning is a distinctive and proven approach that enables people to make a difference in their community by focusing on:

- community-based learning to build the skills, confidence and experience needed to tackle local political, social and technical challenges

⁶ Taken from: <http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/reports/the-state-happiness-new-report>.

- an informal, practical approach that gives people an understanding of how power works and how they can learn to influence decisions and policies
- open dialogue and reflection as key learning tools, recognising that change in a community emerges from individuals working together.”⁷

As part of this developmental activity, “Take Part” has launched an online Directory⁸ which:

“... allows users to find information on the resources, guidance and learning opportunities which exist to deliver:

- learning opportunities, within a community context, that build skills and confidence
- community leadership development offering tailored support leading to civic activism and/or lay governance roles
- information about the availability of opportunities for influence and lay governance involvement across the public sector in the locality, and support for greater mobility between such roles
- access to accreditation for citizenship learning and skills development where it is required.”⁹

The searches can be filtered by the “Take Part” strand of work; Topic; and Target audience.

It has enormous potential, but, at this stage, is still very short of content in some areas: for example, a search for ‘all’ strands and ‘all’ topics for LGBTs brought up only two items; a similar search for NEETs revealed only four items.

“Take Part” are requesting help in adding to the resource¹⁰, and, with additional material – and being kept up-to-date – this is going to be extremely useful.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

The spirit level ...

In this major work¹¹, Richard Wilkinson¹² and Kate Pickett argue convincingly that the root-cause of most social, economic and health problems is inequality and the relational issues that this brings.

⁷ Taken from: <http://www.takepart.info/take-part.php>.

⁸ See: <http://www.takepart.info/directory.php>.

⁹ Taken from a publicity email from ICOCO, forwarded by Christine Wright (DWP).

¹⁰ See: <http://www.takepart.info/give-feedback.php>.

They begin by setting the context (“Material success, social failure”), and then go on to look at the effects of inequality in nine key areas (drawing on international research and comparisons):

- Community life and social relations
- Mental health and drug use
- Physical health and life expectancy
- Obesity
- Educational performance
- Teenage births
- Violence
- Imprisonment and punishment
- Social mobility: unequal opportunities.

They conclude by presenting the case for everybody striving, not for economic growth and more material successes, but for greater equality – through which, they argue, humans can also begin to tackle issues around global warming and the earth’s resources.

A fascinating and well-argued book, recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CLG = Communities and Local Government
NEET = Not in Education, Employment or Training
WHO = World Health Organisation

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¹¹ Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. *The spirit level: why more equal societies almost always do better*. Penguin Allen Lane (978-1-846-14039-6).

¹² Richard Wilkinson also co-wrote the key WHO report: Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot (ed.). *Social determinants of health: the solid facts*. 2nd ed. World Health Organisation 2003. Available as a pdf from: <http://www.euro.who.int/DOCUMENT/E81384.PDF>.