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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

Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities

This major new piece of work¹ has just been published by C4EO as:

¹ *Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities*. C4EO, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (778 kb) from:

“A practice guide to the challenges and opportunities in supporting children, families and communities through early intervention, based on effective local, national and international practice.” [p1]

It defines “early intervention” as:

“intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person’s life”. [p4]

In drawing together existing evidence and good practice, the report shows that early intervention does work. At the same time, it states that:

“A clear need has been identified for more research into the effectiveness and the relative cost-effectiveness of early intervention strategies, but several characteristics emerge as common to a number of the successful examples described. These are reflected in five ‘golden threads’ ... Where possible, these golden threads need to be taken together, when they constitute a coherent strategy for systemic change.

Five golden threads

- The best start in life
- Language for life
- Engaging parents
- Smarter working, better services
- Knowledge is power.” [p5]

The report argues for far greater public awareness of these “threads”, and, taking each one in turn, it identifies the key learning – and what should be done to develop good practice.

The report has a 10-point plan of action:

1. “There is a need for more public information about the crucial importance of the early stages of child development. Official publications and pronouncements should emphasise far more directly how simple changes in how parents relate to their young children can bring permanent benefits.
2. There should be a major effort to increase breastfeeding rates, promoting the benefits to the baby, which go on into later life; emphasising the positive aspects for mothers, and countering negative perceptions.
3. Parents’ and professionals’ awareness of the importance of language skills needs to be more actively promoted. The forthcoming National Year

http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/earlyintervention/files/early_intervention_grasping_the_nettle_full_report.pdf?dm_i=7SL,9M0N,12Q3JN,PNQ1,1. There is also an executive summary (121 kb) at:

http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/earlyintervention/files/early_intervention_grasping_the_nettle_executive_summary.pdf?dm_i=7SL,9M0N,12Q3JN,PNQ1,1.

- of Speech, Language and Communication should be made a key focus, upon which further progress can be built. Existing health checks at age two should include a specific emphasis on language development, to detect early signs of possible delay.
4. Workforce development plans need to ensure that everyone working with children and families, especially disadvantaged groups, receive adequate training on language development, engaging and working with parents, and the value and uses of research and data (particularly to analyse need, for early identification).
 5. Opportunities should be explored to make best use of skilled, but scarce, specialist staff (notably speech and language therapists) through training and support for other practitioners to ensure early identification of potential difficulties, offering more widespread and sustained support in meeting needs.
 6. Opportunities should be created to promote the use of trained peer support (including local parents) working alongside professionals – to convey positive influences from their own experience and encourage local families' full use of advice and practical help from local services and agencies.
 7. Positive parenting should be publicly celebrated, alongside recognition that most parents need some support at some time. Systematic support should be encouraged nationally, but with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged. Parents should be engaged as early and as positively as possible, ideally before their babies are born, with helpful information from the outset about the importance of their role, and the local services available.
 8. Further progress is needed to ensure that in every local area there is a continuum of support for the many families whose needs vary over time, with children's centres and schools at its heart. Children's centres should be strongly encouraged to develop effective outreach strategies to draw in isolated and 'hard to reach' families.
 9. In order to consolidate use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), rapid progress should be made in making it the standard mechanism for conducting assessments and accessing additional support for both children and families.
 10. Intervention programmes should be aligned to whole system change and have a clear purpose, be informed by a comprehensive evidence base and analysis of local needs, and include baseline data to enable evaluation of impact at key stages." [pp12-13]

There is a lot of material here that we can draw on – and, maybe, advise C4EO upon, as, yet again, they seem to have paid very little attention to the role of reading (or, indeed, of libraries, museums, archives and the cultural sector).

Despite this caveat, a very important document, with masses of valuable evidence for us to use.

How fair is Britain?

The EHRC has just published its first Triennial Review:

“With the assent of the Equality Act in 2006, Section 12 of the Act endowed the newly-formed Equality and Human Rights Commission with a responsibility to monitor the progress that society makes towards becoming one that is more equal, where every individual has the opportunity to achieve their potential, and where people treat each other with dignity and respect. This progress must be reported on every 3 years.”²

Probably the best starting-point is the new webpage³ on the EHRC website, which has links to:

- The background to the review - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/background-to-the-review/>
- Online summary - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/online-summary/>
- Significant challenges - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/online-summary/significant-challenges/>
- Case studies - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/case-studies/>
- The full report [see below] – [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/full-report-and-evidence-downloads/#How fair is Britain Equality Human Rights and Good Relations in 2010 The First Triennial Review](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/full-report-and-evidence-downloads/#How_fair_is_Britain_Equality_Human_Rights_and_Good_Relations_in_2010_The_First_Triennial_Review)
- Executive summary - http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/triennial_review/tr_execsumm.pdf
- Supporting evidence - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/full-report-and-evidence-downloads/call-for-evidence/>
- Research reports - <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/full-report-and-evidence-downloads/research-reports/>.

This is a major and massive report, running to some 700 pages! The following information is taken from the Executive Summary⁴.

The report’s ‘headlines’ are:

“On many objective measures, Britain is a far more diverse society than it was a generation ago. Nearly 1 in 10 British children is growing up in a Mixed Race household. Society’s age structure is changing, with a

² Taken from: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/background-to-the-review/>.

³ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/>.

⁴ *How fair is Britain? The first Triennial Review executive summary*. EHRC, 2010.

Available to download as a pdf (301.68 kb) from:

http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/triennial_review/tr_execsumm.pdf.

growing proportion of the population aged over 50. Meanwhile, some minority groups who were once more or less invisible – for example, transgender people – have become more confident about expressing their identity in the public sphere.

At the same time as society has grown more diverse in objective terms, subjective attitudes have begun to change. In many ways, Britons are becoming more tolerant of difference and more welcoming of diversity.” [p4]

It identifies some major developments:

“Some forms of discrimination have diminished, and some of the disparities in achievements between different groups have narrowed:

- Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils have begun to catch up with the average performance at GCSE.
- The gender pay gap has narrowed considerably since the Equal Pay Act 1970 came into force in 1975.
- The criminal justice system now recognises different forms of hate crime and has begun to provide more appropriate support to people who experience it.” [p4]

However, at the same time:

“Particular groups, including Gypsies and Travellers and some types of migrants, are still likely to encounter negative attitudes. Although mainstream attitudes towards other groups may have improved, many people experience instances of prejudice. And some groups of people are on average much more likely than others to fare badly in education, in work, and in public life. In other words, there is a gap between what we think society should be, and what it actually is; between ideal and reality, between our aspirations and our attainments.

To make matters worse, the current economic and social crises threaten to widen some equality gaps that might have closed in better times. And finally, without corrective action longer term trends, such as technological and demographic changes are likely to entrench new forms of inequality.” [p5]

The Review analyses data on:

- Life
- Security
- Health
- Education
- Employment
- Standard of living
- Care and support
- Power and voice

for people who share common characteristics in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender status.

“Where appropriate, the Review also takes into account the impact of socio-economic background, or class.” [p6]

For each area (Life, etc), the Review draws out significant findings and headline data, eg:

“Significant findings

The experience of school life can be traumatic for some. The new phenomenon of cyberbullying is joining homophobic bullying as a serious issue. It appears that those who are bullied are more likely to be outside of education, employment or training at 16 years of age.

Headline data

- Cyberbullying is now estimated to affect around a third of secondary age young people.
- Two-thirds of lesbian, gay and bisexual students in Britain and four-fifths of disabled young people in England report being bullied. Almost a quarter (23%) of young people questioned who practiced any religion in England reported being bullied because of their faith ...” [p22]

Finally, the Review identifies data gaps, and then goes on to set out 15 challenges:

- Close the differences in health and life expectancy between the highest and the lowest socio-economic groups
- Close the infant mortality gap between ethnic groups
- Close the performance gap in education between boys and girls.
- Reduce the level of ethnic and gender segregation in education.
- Close the qualifications gap for disabled people.
- Reduce the disparities in educational performance by socio-economic background.
- Close the gender pay gap faster and further
- Close the ethnic and religious employment and pay gaps faster and further.
- Close the employment gap for people with disabilities
- Reduce incidence of hate crimes on all protected grounds and increase conviction rate.
- Reduce incidence of homophobic, transphobic, disability-related and religiously motivated bullying in schools and workplaces.
- Raise the rate of rape convictions further.
- Reduce the rate of repeat domestic violence offences

- Reduce the rise of the need for and cost of informal care, and to increase autonomy, choice and control for both carers and those who receive care.
- Close the ‘power gap’ in public bodies on all protected grounds.⁵

This is an immensely important report, giving us lots of information that we can use in arguing for and targeting our services.

Highly recommended.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Scotland 2010

The latest report⁶ from the New Policy Institute (and published by JRF) has just been published.

The headline key points are:

- “By the first half of 2010, unemployment in Scotland had surpassed that in England, having been markedly lower at the start of the recession. Measured by employment, the recession had a bigger impact on men than women and caused a shift in employment from full- to part-time.
- The child poverty rate in Scotland rose during the recession, whereas it fell in England. Although this reverses the pattern of recent years, the rate in Scotland is still lower.
- Over the last decade, the fall in poverty among working-age adults with dependent children has been cancelled out by a rise in poverty among working-age adults without dependent children, both in and out of work.
- At the end of 2009, 18.2% of the working-age population was receiving an out-of-work benefit, up from 16.8% two years earlier. This rise has led to a slight increase in the degree of area-based inequality within Scotland.
- Gaps in the Scottish Government’s anti-poverty programme concern:
 - standard of provision for essential services for low-income and other disadvantaged households;
 - whether there is sufficient focus on education outcomes for poor and other disadvantaged children and adults;
 - living standards of workless adults; and
 - the means to escape in-work poverty.
- In some cases, these are matters over which the Scottish Government has little direct control. The challenge is how to exercise influence both

⁵ List taken from: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/triennial-review/online-summary/significant-challenges/>.

⁶ Anushree Parekh, Peter Kenway and Tom MacInnes. *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Scotland 2010*. JRF, 2010 (ISBN: 9781859357569). Available to download as a pdf (250 kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/?attach_external_tab&17874944&3&0&0&0. The summary is available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/mopse-scotland-2010>.

upward to the UK Government and downwards to employers and service providers in Scotland.”⁷

The report also assesses Scotland’s progress on its anti-poverty programme. Again, headline findings are:

“The recession and its aftermath have already had a big effect on some measures, turning what had previously been stories of slow but steady progress into ones marked by regression. The main ones that are now worse than a decade ago are:

- the proportion of the working-age population who are unemployed;
- the unemployment rate among adults aged under 25;
- the proportion of people in the retail and wholesale sector who are low paid; and
- the poverty rate for workless adults without dependent children.

Several indicators show no real change on the level a decade ago. These include:

- a lack of access to job-related training among those who lack qualifications;
- the proportion of babies with a low birth-weight;
- household overcrowding; and
- the proportion dissatisfied with their council services.”

Interestingly, the report also compares progress in Scotland with that in England:

“Poorer outcomes than England

While the uncertain basis for some of these comparisons rules out a definitive conclusion, they are enough to pose the question as to why Scotland might be doing worse. They include:

- the proportion of working-age people dependent on out-of-work benefits;
- the rates of premature death among both men and women, not just in the most deprived areas of Scotland but also on average;
- the difference in infant mortality rates between social classes 1–4 and 5–8 (as compared with the rest of Great Britain);
- fuel poverty;
- the proportion of 16- to 19-year-olds not in education, employment or training;
- households without a current bank account; and
- the level of dissatisfaction with council services.”

This report gives lots of valuable background information, and suggests areas that could be targeted. For many of us, one major area of concern will be the level of dissatisfaction with Council services ...

Recommended.

⁷ Taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/mopse-scotland-2010>.

“The Big Society”

Investing in social growth: can the Big Society be more than a slogan?

In this new report⁸ from the Young Foundation, the authors:

“... suggest both how the idea of the Big Society could become more rigorous, and how it could be translated into a practical programme for government, both national and local. We also focus on a concept that is more precise, and potentially more radical, than the Big Society: the idea of social wealth and social growth ... Economic growth is a familiar concept, measurable in terms of GDP. Social growth complements economic growth – and refers to growth in the quantity and quality of social relationships, trust and support.” [p3]

The report introduces a ten point programme for social growth (illustrated with examples and proposals):

1. Give new rights for society and individuals to act (eg the right for communities to take over unused land and buildings)
2. Develop new tools to help people organise for themselves (eg via time-banks; e-networks)
3. Develop new finance for social impact (eg new financing models such as Social Impact Bonds)
4. Support (the right) social enterprises to scale
5. Open up public services to society (eg “Public services should be seen as a part of society, not an alternative to it. GPs, primary schools and libraries can, and do, play a crucial part in community life. Likewise, residents play a significant role in the delivery of public services. For example, half a million people volunteer in the NHS and nearly as many are school governors in state schools. But most public servants still find it hard to collaborate with civil society. This will need to change as they struggle to make cuts of between 20% and 50% over the next few years and rely on people for the delivery of services even more. In the last five years we have piloted a range of different ways for public services to become more open, and to amplify ideas coming from the community rather than forcing them to fit into the public sector’s rules and structures.” [p17]. Ideas include: Social Entrepreneurs in Residence; Social Innovation Camps – intensive weekenders with web designers and volunteers)
6. Promote a sense of belonging and community empowerment (eg getting people to govern their own neighbourhoods)

⁸ *Investing in social growth: can the Big Society be more than a slogan?* The Young Foundation, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (468.88 kb) from: http://www.youngfoundation.org/files/images/YF_Bigsociety_Screen_2_.pdf.

7. Grow a new generation of local leaders
8. “The economy needs to be part of the Big Society” – “The dramatic failure of some parts of the economy has highlighted the relative strength and resilience of those parts of the economy which are more rooted in society.” [p23]
9. Think and learn globally
10. “Measure social growth and make the key indicators part of the national conversation”. This identifies three main priorities for the UK:
 - To make sense of what is happening in localities, to map their needs but also their strengths and capacities
 - To find ways of assessing innovative projects and social enterprises
 - To change the nature of the national debate by introducing a very few measures of social growth and ensuring that they are reported upon as economic measures are.

The report concludes with clear warnings of the risks, especially that, in the current economic climate, people may not embrace social growth, so “[a] serious, hard-headed programme to support social growth will be needed even more than in the boom years.” [p28]

Important background reading, and valuable for interpreting and making sense of “The Big Society”.

Abbreviations and acronyms

C4EO = Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services

EHRC = Equality and Human Rights Commission

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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