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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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Did you see ...?

Museums Journal

The October issue¹ has a number of key articles, including:

- Felicity Heywood “Still pale, male and stale?”, a look at diversity in museum employment [pp30-33]
- Deborah Mulhearn “Teenage kicks”, highlighting good work in attracting teenagers to museums and galleries [pp34-37]

The November issue includes:

- Julie Nightingale “Age concern”, a look at what is being done to address the lack of provision for older people [pp28-31]².

CyMAL

The Winter 2010 issue³ includes lots of interesting articles, especially:

- A very brief piece on the launch of the People’s Collection Wales⁴ [p4]
- Stephen Jeacock “Bringing in the children”, which looks at how Killay Library in Swansea successfully targeted the local community [pp15-17].

ARC Magazine

The November issue⁵ includes:

- The major part of the magazine is made up of reports from this year’s conference, including a longer article by Julie Pedley on their visit to the People’s History Museum⁶, Manchester [pp7-9]
- A structure chart (and who’s who) for the newly-formed Archives and Records Association [p28].

Disability issues – Other Agencies

No health without public mental health

This new Statement⁷ from the Royal College of Psychiatrists has had considerable media coverage – its message is stark:

¹ *Museums Journal*, October 2010.

² *Museums Journal*, November 2010. This article is available for MA members to download from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>.

³ *CyMAL*, Winter 2010, issue 10. Available to download as a pdf (1110 kb) from: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/101115cymalmagazine10en.pdf>.

⁴ See: <http://www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk/Home>.

⁵ *ARC Magazine*, 255, November 2010.

⁶ See: <http://www.phm.org.uk/>.

“Mental health is a public health issue. Mental illness is the largest single source of burden of disease in the UK. No other health condition matches mental illness in the combined extent of prevalence, persistence and breadth of impact.¹ Mental illness is consistently associated with deprivation, low income, unemployment, poor education, poorer physical health and increased health-risk behaviour. Mental illness has not only a human and social cost, but also an economic one, with wider costs in England amounting to £105 billion a year ...

Most mental illness begins before adulthood and often continues through life. Improving mental health early in life will reduce inequalities, improve physical health, reduce health-risk behaviour and increase life expectancy, economic productivity, social functioning and quality of life. The benefits of protecting and promoting mental health are felt across generations and accrue over many years. Promotion and prevention is also important in adulthood and older years, with people in later life having specific mental health needs. Effective population mental health strategies will improve well-being, resilience to mental illness and other adversity, including physical illness. Targeted strategies will also prevent future inequalities and reduce existing inequalities.” [p7]

The Statement puts mental health into context:

“In 2004, 22.8% of the total burden of disease in the UK was attributable to mental disorder (including self-inflicted injury), compared with 16.2% for cardiovascular disease and 15.9% for cancer, as measured by Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) ...” [p11]

(There is a note explaining that: “DALYs are a measure of the total length of time over which a specific illness is disabling to an individual over the course of their lifespan. One DALY can be thought of as one lost year of ‘healthy’ life.” [p11])

It also highlights the dire position in the UK:

“Half of all lifetime cases of diagnosable mental illness begin by age 14 ... and three-quarters of lifetime mental illness arise by mid-twenties. However, 60–70% of children and adolescents who experience clinically significant mental health problems have not been offered evidence-based interventions at the earliest opportunity for maximal lifetime benefits ... Furthermore, in a UNICEF survey in 2007 the UK ranked at the bottom on children’s well-being compared with North America and 18 European countries ... and ranked 24th out of 29 European countries in another survey in 2009.” [p11]

There is a mass of valuable statistics and other information gathered here – for example:

⁷ *No health without public mental health: the case for action*. Royal College of Psychiatrists (Position Statement PS4/2010), 2010. Available to download as a pdf (1023.05 kb) from: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/Position%20Statement%204%20website.pdf>.

- “10% of children and young people have a clinically recognised mental disorder: of 5- to 16-year-olds, 6% have conduct disorder ... 18% subthreshold conduct disorder ... and 4% an emotional disorder ...
- 17.6% of adults in England have at least one common mental disorder and a similar proportion has symptoms which do not fulfil full diagnostic criteria for common mental disorder ...” [p12]

The Statement also highlights the needs of particularly vulnerable groups – many of whom are also our targets – for example:

“Risk factors disproportionately affect the mental health of people from higher-risk and marginalised groups. Those at higher risk include looked-after children, children who experienced abuse, Black and minority ethnic individuals ... those with intellectual disability and homeless people. Prisoners have a twenty-fold higher risk of psychosis ... with 63% of male remand prisoners having antisocial personality disorder ... compared with 0.3% of the general population ... Such groups are also at a higher risk of stigma and discrimination. Targeted intervention for groups at higher risk of mental illness can prevent a widening of inequalities in comparison with the general population.” [p13]

Having looked at the impacts of poor mental health, the Statement then goes on to identify interventions which have robust evidence for their effectiveness.

These can be grouped as:

- “interventions to improve parental health
- pre-school and early education interventions
- school-based mental health promotion and mental illness prevention
- prevention of violence and abuse
- prevention of suicide
- early intervention for mental illness
- alcohol, smoking and substance abuse reduction and prevention
- promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours
- promoting healthy workplaces
- prevention of mental illness and promotion of well-being in older years
- addressing social inequalities
- enhancing social cohesion
- housing interventions
- reduced stigma and discrimination
- positive mental health and recovery from mental illness.” [p24]

I have listed them all, as there are areas here where we are also making interventions (and this could help to provide the ‘vehicle’ for the cultural sector to make more of its case).

This is a major report, and one on which we can build ...

Recommended.

“The Big Society”

Building a stronger civil society ...

Subtitled “A strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises”, this report⁸ sets out the Government vision for the role of the voluntary and community sector:

“Our vision is for the sector, as a resilient and independent partner, to play an even more influential role in shaping a stronger sense of society and improving people’s lives.

The reforms set out in the Coalition Government’s Programme for Government and the Spending Review, which will be published next week, represent a real opportunity for the voluntary and community sector across the three core components of the Big Society policy agenda:

1. Empowering communities: giving local councils and neighbourhoods more power to take decisions and shape their area.
2. Opening up public services: the Government’s public service reforms will enable charities, social enterprises, private companies and employee-owned co-operatives to compete to offer people high quality services;
3. Promoting social action: encouraging and enabling people from all walks of life to play a more active part in society, and promoting more volunteering and philanthropy.” [p3]

The document has two main sections (and is accompanied by a separate consultation document⁹). The two sections are:

1. “... sets out the scale and nature of the opportunities being made available to civil society organisations as part of the Government’s wider reform agenda, through empowering communities, opening up public services and promoting social action.”
2. “Section two spells out some of the practical measures that the Government is taking to support the sector to realise these opportunities in the immediate future and over the longer term.” [p5]

The document concludes:

We are very aware of the risks associated with cuts in public expenditure at this time. Citizens, communities and civil society providers all need to

⁸ *Building a stronger civil society: a strategy for voluntary and community groups, charities and social enterprises*. Office for Civil Society, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (174 kb) from: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/426261/building-stronger-civil-society.pdf>.

⁹ *Supporting a stronger civil society*. Office for Civil Society, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (254 kb) from: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/support-stronger-civil-society1.pdf>.

play a part in reducing the deficit, and no single sector can be immune to reductions in public spending. The Government recognises that the opportunities arising from the reforms described in the first section will take time to develop, and that the sector will need support to develop into a position where it can benefit from these.

This strategy document gives a sense of direction; sets out some specific actions; and signals our desire to work closely with the sector to maximise the opportunity and minimise the risk.” [p12]

The consultation period runs until **6 January 2011**.

Abbreviations and acronyms

UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund

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