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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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The Riots, August 2011 – update

NatCen/Cabinet Office report

The Cabinet Office have just published a report¹ prepared by NatCen² based on what young people themselves had to say about the riots, and which examines the motivations of young people involved (you may have seen some of the headline findings reported by the media).

What is particularly interesting is the analysis of why young people took part (reasons include: something exciting to do; the opportunity to get free stuff; a chance to get back at police), and the factors that facilitated or inhibited involvement, including personal factors (including: a criminal history; experience of the police; attitudes towards those with power and authority; jobs, prospects and aspirations).

Three issues of considerable significance were found to be: having a stake in the local area; youth provision (“Young people felt that they were a particular target for cuts in government spending with youth services cuts and the ending of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMA)” [p7]; poverty and materialism.

NCVO report

This new report³:

“... brings together thoughts and examples from across the sector in response to the riots. It is part of the voluntary and community sector’s contribution to the post-riots debate: it does not attempt to be an exhaustive account of the full range of causes nor the potential solutions.” [p3]

¹ Gareth Morrell *et al.* *August riots in England: understanding the involvement of young people*. Cabinet Office, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1350 kb) from: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20August%20Riots%20in%20England%20\(pdf,%201mb\).pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20August%20Riots%20in%20England%20(pdf,%201mb).pdf).

² NatCen is the National Centre for Social Research, <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/>.

³ James Allen, Charlotte Stiffins and Karl Wilding. *After the riots: evidence from the Voluntary and Community Sector on the causes of the 2011 riots and next steps for policy and practice*. NCVO, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (909.48 kb) from: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sites/default/files/AftertheRiotsfinal.pdf>.

As well as reflecting on the causes of the riots, the report also brings together brief case studies of VCS organisations' responses. It has a number of key recommendations, grouped under the following:

- Government and public sector
 - Framing the debate: language and the use of evidence (eg concerns about the use of terms such as “feral youths” and “Broken Britain”)
 - Addressing youth unemployment
 - The Government’s deficit reduction programme (“NCVO would reiterate our calls for spending cuts, where absolutely necessary, to be introduced sensitively and strategically with the impact of cuts mitigated as far as possible.” [p19])
 - Trigger factors: relationships with the police
 - Voluntary and Community Sector
 - Recommendations to the media (including ensuring that stories are reported fully and accurately).
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Did you see ...?

Museums Journal

The October issue⁴ includes, as always, a number of interesting articles, eg:

- Sharon Heal “Little England is getting left behind” (Editorial), a very brief recap of the developments in national museums policies across Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales [p4]
- David Anderson “Museums should be campaigning for cultural rights for all” (“Comment” column) which argues for an active role by museums – “Public institutions have a duty to work actively to eliminate inequality of participation. They must also give citizens the opportunity to influence strategies and outcomes.” [p17]
- Odin Biddulph “Overcoming the fear of tackling sensitive issues” (“Comment” column), a very brief look at the background to the exhibition on the history of Broadwater Farm at the Bruce Castle Museum⁵ [p19]

Runnymede Bulletin

The latest issue⁶ has some important, thoughtful articles, including:

- George Mpanga “Rioting youth: can we point the finger at the parents?” which looks at issues around responsibility [p8]
- Dunstan Creavalle “Obstacles to fatherhood: UK” which looks at the reality around the absence of Black fathers [p10]

⁴ *Museums Journal*, October 2011. Further information from: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal>.

⁵ Mentioned in the summary of responses to the riots, *The Network Newsletter*, 124, August 2011, p7.

⁶ *Runnymede Bulletin*, 367, Autumn 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1520 kb) from: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/bulletin/pdfs/367-BulletinAutumn11w.pdf>.

“Although there are high numbers of black women bringing up children without the father’s regular participation, it should be noted that there are often obstacles that prevent black men from fulfilling their complete role as fathers. Whilst broken relationships affect all communities, in the black community particularly, this can lead to unique economic challenges for black men simply because statistically, black men have a greater chance of being unemployed. This might go some way in explaining some of the cases of the absenteeism of black fathers.”

- Chamion Caballero (whom some of you may have seen talking about her research on the George Alagiah TV series about mixed-race families) “Challenging assumptions” which looks at some of the realities of mixed-race families in the UK [p12]
- Kate D’Arcy “Early Years support for Traveller communities” [p14-15]
- Dragica Felja “Obstacles to achievement – Roma parents and education” which reports on various projects aimed at supporting Roma parents and practitioners working with the Roma community [p16]
- Aweys Mohamoud “Somali parents and the education of their children” [p17].

CyMAL Magazine

The latest issue⁷ of the magazine includes a range of interesting news items and short articles, including a Health Update [p10]:

- “Macmillan Cancer and library partnership”, looking at new services to provide health information in branch libraries
- “Refresh of Book Prescription Wales”.

Children & Young People Now

The issue for 23 August⁸ includes a useful article by Emily McCoy (National Literacy Trust), looking at the role that youth workers can play in helping young people who struggle with reading [p26].

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

Heritage counts 2011 – England

This report⁹ is:

⁷ *CyMAL Magazine*, 11, Summer 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1070 kb) from: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/110905cymalmag11en.pdf> (English), or <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/110905cymalmag11cy.pdf> (Welsh).

⁸ *Children & Young People Now*, 23 Aug-5 Sept.

⁹ Historic Environment Forum. *Heritage counts 2011 – England*. English Heritage, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (2320 kb) from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/2011/hc-2011-england.pdf>.

“... the tenth annual survey of the state of England’s historic environment. Each year Heritage Counts explores the role of the historic environment in wider social and economic agendas. This year the theme is the historic environment and Big Society.”¹⁰

It has been:

“... published against the background of the Coalition Government’s Big Society initiative, which aims to increase people’s active engagement in society. This report looks at how the historic environment contributes to the following government objectives:

- Social action – encouraging and enabling people to play a more active part in society.
- Community empowerment – giving local councils and neighbourhoods more power to take decisions and shape their local area.
- Opening up public services – voluntary sector and local groups delivering public services and managing community and public assets.” [p2]

Key findings include:

- The historic environment fosters a vision for an area and helps shapes communities ... eg 46% of members of The Heritage Alliance provide advice and guidance on planning for regional and local groups.
- The historic environment provides the context or means by which local people can take an active role in their local area – turning a place into a community, eg 50% of The Heritage Alliance members offer volunteering opportunities in local communities
- The benefits of involvement in the historic environment are wide-ranging, Nine out of ten (87%) volunteers on Heritage Lottery Fund projects agreed that their skills had improved as a result of taking part in the project; One in three (35%) Heritage Open Day volunteers report an increase in self-esteem and confidence in their abilities after taking part in the event.
- Involvement in the local historic environment is greater among some groups than others. Diversifying and increasing community involvement in the historic environment will benefit local heritage and help strengthen civil society. [taken from p3]

In addition, the research found that:

- “To increase and widen the ongoing involvement of communities in their local historic environment requires changes to the existing offer.
 - The existing offer for involvement in the local historic environment is often limited in its appeal. Even those with an existing interest in the historic environment or a propensity to volunteer are not usually attracted by it.

¹⁰ Taken from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/What-Is-Heritage-Counts/>.

- To support heritage and other local groups in developing stronger and ongoing links to the wider community and widening their appeal, the HEF¹¹ has produced a checklist which groups can use to think about how they can widen membership and encourage more people to take an ongoing active role in the local historic environment.” [p3]

The report also draws on evidence from the latest *Taking Part* survey¹²:

“Historic environment embodies Big Society principles

The historic environment has always been primarily managed by non-government groups and organisations. Private individuals own and maintain the overwhelming majority of heritage assets and undertake a range of activities in relation to the historic environment which contribute to civil society, often without any personal benefit. For example, maintaining rural heritage buildings which have no sustainable use through to opening buildings to the public, sometimes without charge. Civic groups work with local authorities and others to ensure that heritage is taken into account and its value recognised when development takes place. Independent heritage organisations deliver a wide variety of activities including education, advice and guidance to local groups and residents on planning issues, and projects which widen participation in the historic environment. Building Preservation Trusts take on many buildings at risk and undertake major restoration and conservation projects. All organisations involved in the historic environment work to ensure that it contributes effectively to economic growth ...” [p3]

Section 1 is “The historic environment and Big Society”, which looks at:

- The independent heritage sector, which includes case studies (eg the Black Environment Network’s Rainbow Network)
- Civic societies, volunteers and the Big Society, which looks, for example, at the top ten activities that civic societies engage in, and also includes a handful of case studies (eg the Jabberwocks young people’s group, Hale Civic Society)
- Enhancing the effectiveness of the historic environment within Big Society, which looks at some of the challenges facing heritage organisations, and suggested actions to enhance their role in the Big Society, followed by potential solutions to what would get more people involved.

Section 2 is an overview of the historic environment in 2011. This is a really useful brief round-up of proposed or actual legislative changes (eg localism, planning consent); the funding landscape; participation in heritage; tourism and heritage; and education.

¹¹ The HEF is “a cross-sectoral committee, bringing together chief executives and policy officers from public and non-government heritage bodies to co-ordinate initiatives, such as *Heritage Counts*, and to strengthen advocacy work and communications.” [p2]

¹² See: http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/research_and_statistics/4828.aspx.

Section 3 looks at Indicators:

“In this report, we have highlighted the key changes or findings for 2010/11 as compared to previous years and in particular the baseline year of 2002 when *Heritage Counts* first recorded this data. These findings are reported under the three sections:

- Understanding the assets – data on the extent of historic environment assets
- Caring and sharing – data on the condition of assets and resources, including funding available to manage them
- Using and benefiting – data on the social, economic and environmental benefits derived from active use of the historic environment.” [p24]

Community involvement in heritage

In parallel, English Heritage has published a summary¹³ of the main findings from the research, and has published a checklist¹⁴ for local community groups which:

“... can be used by groups to work through the issues they face in attracting new participants and come up with solutions which work for them in their local area.

This could be thinking about the type of activities you offer including putting on more family events or identifying partner organisations which can help you deliver a particular project. Most of all it is about getting out there and asking people to take part.”¹⁵

The purpose of the checklist is:

- “... to help local groups to build a wider pool of volunteers who sustain their involvement over the long-term, beyond one campaign or issue
- By helping you understand how your target audience think and feel about local campaigning and getting involved you will be able to craft your approach to have greater appeal to a wider pool of people”. [p8]

Finally, English Heritage have announced:

“We will be running a series of events in early 2012 which will go through the checklist. Aimed at groups involved in local heritage or historic environment issues, they will be a great way to meet other groups like

¹³ Historic Environment Forum. *Heritage counts 2011*. English Heritage, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (57 kb) from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/2011/increasing-community-involvement-heritage-summary.pdf>.

¹⁴ Historic Environment Forum. *Health check for local groups*. English Heritage, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (228.73 kb) from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/2011/health-check-local-groups.pdf>.

¹⁵ Taken from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/local-checklist/>.

yours and swap notes. The sessions will be free of charge. If you would like to register your interest please email hc2011@english-heritage.org.uk.”¹⁶

To sum up (from an English Heritage press release):

“Heritage organisations are positive about their future role within the Big Society. An overwhelming majority of The Heritage Alliance members (89%) said the Big Society is relevant to their organisation, with more than eight in ten (82%) expecting to maintain or increase the number of projects which help deliver the government objectives related to it.

Despite all the good work being carried out up and down the country, more can be done to strengthen the role of the historic environment in civil society. Research shows that there are many barriers to ongoing community involvement in heritage; bureaucracy, poor communication and uncertainty over a group’s aims all have an effect.”¹⁷

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations

This is an important new piece of research¹⁸ by JRF, which seeks to challenge a common misunderstanding.

“Low aspirations among young people and their families in disadvantaged areas are often seen as explaining their educational and work outcomes. This study challenges that view. It demonstrates that barriers to achievement vary significantly among deprived areas as different factors combine to shape ambitions, and shows that the difficulty for many young people is in knowing how to fulfil their aspirations.”
[Summary, p1]

The research was carried in three areas, in London, Nottingham and Glasgow.

“Working within secondary schools, 490 students aged around 13 were individually interviewed in 2007–08, with 288 of the same students interviewed again in 2010 at around age 15. These interviews were supplemented by focus groups with young people and further interviews with parents, teachers and community representatives.” [Full report, p6]

¹⁶ Taken from: <http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/local-checklist/>.

¹⁷ See: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/news/heritage-counts-2011/>.

¹⁸ Ralf St Clair, Keith Kintrea and Muir Houston. *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*. JRF, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (917 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-education-attitudes-full.pdf>. The “Findings” summary (132.49 kb) is available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/young-people-education-attitudes-summary.pdf>.

The findings include:

- “Young people’s aspirations towards education and jobs are high. Most aspire to go to university, and young people aspire to professional and managerial jobs in far greater numbers than the proportions of those jobs in the labour market. There was little evidence of fatalism in the face of depressed labour markets or that not working was seen as an acceptable outcome.
- Young people’s aspirations are not predominantly unrealistic. At 13 many had ideal occupations drawn from sport or celebrity but this had waned by the age of 15. It is certainly not the case that large numbers of young people are wedded to the idea of being pop stars or premiership football strikers.
- Our data reinforces the insight that places with a shared status of deprivation can be quite different in their social make-up and the way that this plays out in the life experiences of residents. Generalisations about the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that surround aspirations in disadvantaged communities are not helpful, and should be avoided.
- There is likely to be a wide variety of patterns of aspirational formation across the UK ...
- Factors affecting aspirations, whether from school, place or family, tend to be consistent and reinforcing, pushing young people towards or away from the fulfilment of high aspirations. In Nottingham and London, they emerged at the school level because the school was so strongly rooted in the community. The more economically diverse school in Glasgow showed these patterns at a smaller scale, but the overall consistency of factors was striking across all three settings.” [Full report, p7]

This is really useful in helping to combat stereotypes of young people and give greater insight into what barriers there are to their progress.

The report then goes on to look at “six fundamental insights” [Full report, p7]:

- Aspirations are high but uneven – “The finding that aspirations differ significantly between places suggests there is a need to identify and work in a focused manner with those families and communities where aspirations are weaker or poorly defined.” [Full report, p7]
- Place matters – “It is not correct to characterise deprived neighbourhoods as places where aspirations are always low. Policies need to recognise that aspirations may be influenced by social class, culture and history or people’s direct experience of the place they live in. Like other studies, this research reinforces the evidence that White young working-class people are among the least aspirational. Aspirations are strongly influenced by place ...” [Full report, p8]
- Higher aspirations are not enough – “... they also need to be able to navigate the paths to their goals.” [Full report, p8]
- Aspirations are complex and require informed support – “This requires better career advice and more access to work experience. There is a need for continual support at every stage of young people’s development, and there have to be mechanisms to ensure that young

people who do not take advantage of opportunities at traditional school age are not marginalised for life.” [Full report, p8]

- Individual aspirations are influenced by multiple mutually reinforcing factors
- Parents are important – “Parents and families play a key role; there is clear alignment between what the parents say they want for the young people and what the young people aspire to themselves. For policy, supporting aspirations then means working with parents as well as young people, particularly where parents face disadvantages themselves.” [Full report, p9]

These insights can help shape the ways in which we decide to work with young people and their families.

Literacy and child poverty

On 11 October, the National Literacy Trust held a one-day conference, “Breaking the cycle: aspirations, literacy and the home”¹⁹.

Frank Field MP opened the conference, and his speech included the following:

“To not consider literacy in planning to combat child poverty is to miss a trick.

Without parents supporting their child’s early language development inter-generational cycles of exclusion will only continue. Without literacy skills, poorer children are unable to close the gap in educational outcomes between them and their more well-off peers. Without literacy skills, access to training and employment is limited and family incomes falter. Perhaps most crucially, without literacy skills people feel disempowered and excluded from society, reducing expectations of a better life.

I urge all local authorities to make literacy a priority in their approaches to address child poverty and to use the resources provided by the National Literacy Trust to help them in this mission.”²⁰

Emily McCoy’s blog for the NLT goes on to say:

“If there is to be no national measure on life chances (as per the recommendation from the Independent Review into Child Poverty and Life Chances) then the onus is ever more on local authorities and their partners to learn from each other what is effective practice.

¹⁹ There is a brief report of the conference at:
<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/communities/conference>.

²⁰ Taken from:
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/blog/3993_can_we_address_poverty_by_focusing_on_literacy_frank_field_mp_thinks_so.

Our conference shared how some local areas are striving to increase life chances by tackling inter-generational low literacy and poor home learning environments.

Government, locally and nationally, seems to accept that poverty is enabled, extended and embedded through low achievement, low aspiration and low opportunity across generations. Literacy has a vital role to play in addressing all three.

So, the question remains how can poverty be tackled without an explicit focus on literacy?

We want to work with local authorities to address low literacy as part of their work to combat poverty. Please contact us for more information.”

In addition, the conference was supported by the publication of a Research Review²¹, the summary of which concludes:

“Current government policy sees entrenched poverty as resting on low achievement, low aspiration and lack of employment. Literacy has a vital role to play in addressing all of these. Research shows that literacy skills do not just enable educational attainment; they underpin strong family relationships, better health choices and an individual's capacity (and confidence) to gain employment.

Socio-economic background and many other factors may be outside the control of an individual. However, what matters is that for many addressing literacy skills is a key first step in beginning to address and overcome other related factors that lock individuals into a cycle of disadvantage. Parents' involvement in their own literacy skills and their understanding of the hugely important role they play in developing their children's education and outcomes are crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty.” [p1]

The Review then goes on to look briefly at the evidence for:

- Literacy, poverty and employment
- Literacy, parenting and the home
- The importance of aspiration and the role of parents and communities.

This useful brief Review concludes:

“We hope that this short paper provides evidence for local authorities, and others, to consider low literacy in their strategies to reduce child poverty and that it provides a framework for how family engagement is a cornerstone for any attempts to raise literacy levels.” [p6]

²¹ *Literacy: a route to addressing child poverty?* National Literacy Trust (Research Review), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (115.81 kb) from: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0001/1032/Literacy_Child_Poverty_2011.pdf.

Disability issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

eBook services in public libraries – survey findings highlight accessibility issues for blind and partially sighted people

(Thanks to Megan Gilks, RNIB National Library Service, for contributing this article.)

The popularity of ebooks and ebook readers has soared over the past year with many more people opting to download and read books on hand-held devices, computers or mobile phones. A growing number of blind and partially sighted people want to be part of this reading revolution too and for them, ebooks offer not only a different way of reading but far greater access to books than they have ever had before.

eBooks have the power to give people with sight problems or other print impairments access to the same book, at the same time as everyone else. Books in electronic format are inherently more accessible than print, as they have the potential to allow the user to adapt the content to suit their individual needs. However, it is essential that ebooks and ebook readers are accessible if their full potential for blind and partially sighted people is to be realised. This includes the provision of accessible ebook services in public libraries.

Over 50 of the 206 library authorities in the UK now provide ebooks for download (audio and/or text) and the number is steadily growing. In October 2010, RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) issued guidelines and advice to all UK public libraries about ways of ensuring that ebook services are accessible. This summer, RNIB followed up that work with a survey carried out by blind and partially sighted volunteers.

RNIB National Library Service wanted to build up a picture of what library ebook services are available across the UK and how easy or difficult it is for someone with sight loss to register and use them. What testers discovered is a useful indication of the difficulties encountered by people with sight loss when trying to access ebooks from the local library.

Results summary

A full report of the key findings from the survey is available to download at www.readingsight.org.uk but, in summary, the main issues reported by readers were:

- Difficulty logging on via council websites using access technology such as screen readers and magnification software. Web pages were often cumbersome and poorly designed.
- Locating the ebook catalogue and then selecting titles to download. Navigating to the catalogue was tricky for many people and searching for books was difficult at first but became easier with practice and familiarity with layout etc.

- The lack of a library PC equipped with access technology. Several people had to join at home rather than try in the library where support would have been available from a member of staff.
- Staff assistance was essential for most people at the start, even for experienced computer users. The general feeling was that it would have been impossible or extremely difficult for people to manage on their own. Most library staff were helpful and supportive.

Sample comments:

"I tried hard for more than an hour. I couldn't do it. I'm a reasonably experienced computer user, and I could not reach the Library online service or the e-book catalogue of titles to borrow."

"I tried to browse the available ebooks, only to discover that the website is not very accessible as each book is shown as a picture of the front cover."

"Downloading I still find a bit difficult and am nervous about it, but I can do it given time."

Overall, the experience for readers was initially frustrating and daunting, even for proficient users of IT, but with perseverance and help from library staff, most participants thought that ebooks are a potentially useful addition to the range of books they access.

The survey also showed that many libraries do not currently provide ebook services at all due to the high cost, especially in the current financial climate. Other library authorities are keeping a 'watching brief' on ebooks with a view to adopting the most successful model in due course.

Next steps

eBooks undoubtedly offer huge potential to open up the world of books and reading for people who cannot read standard print. RNIB has identified ebooks as an important part of its work and accessible provision in public libraries is just as important as the accessible design of ebook readers and influencing ebook publishing standards.

RNIB National Library Service can offer expert advice and support to libraries to help improve the accessibility of current and future ebook services. We are working with Arts Council England and the Society of Chief Librarians to help ensure that digital services and ebooks are accessible for all. By working together, we can ensure that blind and partially sighted people can take full advantage of the opportunities that ebooks offer by ensuring equal access to ebook services through public libraries.

For further information about RNIB National Library Service and the accessibility of ebooks, please contact Jon Hardisty, Senior Librarian Digital Services, on 0161 355 2084 or email: jon.hardisty@rnib.org.uk.

The Big Society

Open for all? The changing nature of equality under Big Society and Localism

This important new research²² has just been published²³:

“This executive summary presents the core findings of research undertaken between February and October 2011 by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and the Centre for Local Policy Studies (CLPS) at Edge Hill University. Commissioned by Voluntary Sector North West and the North West Infrastructure Partnership (NWIP) the research has sought to undertake a focused review of the equalities impact and socio-economic implications of emerging government notions around localism and big society and policy reforms around welfare, health, and economic growth.” [p ii]

The key findings include:

- The policy reforms have come at a cost: “The policy developments have been developed without sufficient consideration of equalities issues and equalities impact. The Equality Impact Assessments undertaken are patchy, often without sufficient regard to the legislative elements of the Equalities Act 2010.” [p iii]
- New forms of representation are weak and excluding groups, eg BME, disabled and LGBT people
- Cuts are damaging voluntary sector capability to deliver big society
- Welfare reform is having a negative impact on equalities groups: “This research work has found that benefits and services are being reduced in key areas that negatively affect some equalities groups and individuals. Disabled people and women identified themselves as being in the front line for benefit reform and reductions in services. BME and lesbian, gay and bisexual, and trans groups were concerned about specialist services that supported their effective citizenship through advice, information, training and access to the labour market would be lost or reduced.” [p iii]
- The implementation of Government policy is disproportionately harming the most excluded
- The policy changes pose a real threat to the equalities voluntary and community sector.

The report then goes on to look at the five principles within the Open Public Service White Paper, and asks a series of challenging questions – for example, under “Diversity”, “What happens to the equalities focused voluntary and community sector organisations who do not have the capacity, skills, knowledge or experience to bid for and deliver public services?” [p iv]

²² *Open for all? The changing nature of equality under Big Society and Localism*. Voluntary Sector North West, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (284.77 kb) from: <http://www.vsnw.org.uk/files/Final%20Executive%20Summary%20Oct'11.pdf>.

²³ Source: Urban Forum *Policy Round-Up*, Nov 2011.

Finally, the report identifies the need for a new framework to support social justice within localism, and calls for:

- “The Government must recognise that a Social Justice Framework needs to be developed that ensures public services are accountable to all users and taxpayers.
- The Government must develop a more joined up approach to understanding and addressing the impact on equalities groups across all policy areas and Government Departments to ensure fairness in provision.
- The Government must undertake an urgent review of the role of equalities groups in the public service agenda to enable true decentralisation.
- The Government must consider how they can involve equalities focused voluntary and community sector organisations in the process of diversifying service provision.
- The Government must adopt a more consultative approach to service provision which builds in the consideration of people with protected characteristics to ensure everyone has access to the best choice of services for them.” [p v]

Abbreviations and acronyms

BME = Black and minority ethnic

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

NCVO = National Council for Voluntary Organisations

NLT = National Literacy Trust

RNIB = Royal National Institute of Blind People

VCS = Voluntary & Community Sector

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