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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](http://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

### *Reading the riots*

*The Guardian* and LSE interviewed 270 people who were involved in the riots. The full report<sup>1</sup> is available online, and there is also a useful, brief summary<sup>2</sup>.

The most significant finding was:

“Widespread anger and frustration at the way police engage with communities was a significant cause of the summer riots in every major city where disorder took place, the biggest study into their cause has found.

Hundreds of interviews with people who took part in the disturbances which spread across England in August revealed deep-seated and sometimes visceral antipathy towards police.”

The research also found some other interesting background, eg:

- “Many rioters conceded that their involvement in looting was simply down to opportunism, saying that a perceived suspension of normal rules presented them with an opportunity to acquire goods and luxury items they could not ordinarily afford. They often described the riots as a chance to obtain “free stuff” or sought to justify the theft.”
- “Despite David Cameron saying gangs were “at the heart” of the disturbances, evidence shows they temporarily suspended hostilities. The effective four-day truce – which many said was unprecedented –

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<sup>1</sup> *Reading the Riots: Investigating England's summer of disorder*. The Guardian/LSE, 2011. Available to read online at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2011/dec/14/reading-the-riots-investigating-england-s-summer-of-disorder-full-report>.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Lewis, Tim Newburn, Matthew Taylor and James Ball. “Rioters say anger with police fuelled summer unrest”, *The Guardian*, 5 Dec 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/05/anger-police-fuelled-riots-study>.

applied to towns and cities across England. However, on the whole, the research found gang members played only a marginal role in the riots.”

### ***Behind the riots ...***

Meanwhile, The Children’s Society have just published the results<sup>3</sup> of a survey of 13- to 17-year-olds, in which the responses were also “compared with a representative sample of adults providing the first statistically robust cross-generational report on public perceptions of the causes and possible consequences of the riots.” [p1]

The majority of those interviewed said that poverty was the key factor. The key findings included:

- “Overall most adults and children believed the main reason that children and young people became involved in the riots was to get goods and possessions they could not afford to buy.
- Both adults and children stated several reasons why children and young people became involved in the riots.
- The majority of both adults and children (51% and 56% respectively) believed that the government should be doing more to support young people since the riots.
- The majority of adults and children felt that adults will look at children and young people more negatively because of the recent riots.
- One in seven children and young people thought they had fewer prospects for their immediate future following the riots
- 17 year olds were most likely to cite government cuts as a reason for the riots, and also were most likely to say more government support was needed following the riots (67%).” [p2]

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## **Did you see ...?**

### ***Adults Learning***

The latest issue<sup>4</sup> has a number of interesting articles, including:

- Margaret Sharp “Colleges at the heart of local communities” which looks at the role that colleges play (and gives a useful outline of how other services could link in) [pp8-11]<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Behind the riots: findings of a survey into children’s and adults’ views of the 2011 English riots*. The Children’s Society, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (265.56 kb) from:

[http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/the\\_childrens\\_society\\_riots\\_report.pdf](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/the_childrens_society_riots_report.pdf) (you are requested to register on-site before downloading).

<sup>4</sup> *Adults Learning*, 23 (2), Winter 2011. See: <http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning>.

<sup>5</sup> Available to download as a pdf (117 kb) from: <http://www.niace.org.uk/documents/adults-learning/vol23-num2/Adults-Learning-vol23-issue2-winter-LR-Sample.pdf>.

- Alex Meikle “Only connect” which looks at a model for greater integration of social care programmes and learning [pp22-23]
- Gert Biesta “We need better democracy, not better citizens”, and interesting, long article which argues that putting the emphasis on citizen education may be wrong: we need to think about strengthening democratic opportunities and processes instead [pp26-33]
- Richard Goss “Getting the message across” looks at some of the positive benefits of prison education and what ex-offenders can bring into the workplace [pp42-43].

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

### *Whose cake is it anyway?*

“In 2009, Paul Hamlyn Foundation commissioned Dr. Bernadette Lynch ... to work with a study group of 12 museums and their community partners across the UK, to gauge the real nature and effectiveness of the engagement practices of museums and galleries.” [p2]

This report<sup>6</sup> sets out a summary of the findings from this important research. The key messages are:

- There are inherent problems with project funding, eg initiative ‘overload’, and pressure to achieve results, at the expense of embedding work that had been developed.

“Many of the staff members talked about feeling ‘stuck’ (a word frequently repeated), unable to escape the merry-go-round of projects that were not having the long-term local impact desired.” [p6]

- Whilst there were examples of excellent practice, some community partners questioned the commitment to long-term and sustainable relationships and some felt that they were being ‘used’, and that the kind of community engagement taking place was actually “empowerment-lite”.
- Some smaller museums and galleries were more successfully embedded in their local communities – could this model actually work with big organisations?

“The study concluded that the ‘ways of working’ in these smaller organisations had definite potential to be applied within larger museum or gallery services. With support, these examples have

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<sup>6</sup> Bernadette Lynch. *Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (381.83 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1417>.

the capacity to help redefine good practice and could play an important mentoring role for others.” [p7]

- Positively, “there were elements of exciting, new, creative thinking across all 12 organisations.” [p7]
- However:

“... for the majority of these museums and galleries, now facing cuts to outreach departments or scrambling for new sources of short-term funding to support public engagement and participation, the time is ripe for a root and branch review of the purpose and fundamental goal of this work. The majority of the organisations in the study have welcomed this honest debate. They share a desire for change and are ready and willing to embark on the formation of new plans to embed the work across the organisation, while renegotiating the organisation’s contribution to local community development.” [p8]

The report’s recommendations then follow on from this approach:

“Echoing the majority of opinion, the study therefore proposes the end of a dependency on centralised short-term project funding. It suggests a new way of understanding engagement and participation as central to the work of museums and galleries within their locality. Focusing on embedding local collaboration and developing individual capability for participation rather than ‘empowerment-lite’, the work becomes firmly situated in the organisation’s locality and developed with the help of new, long-term community partnerships as ‘critical friends’. Thus, a process of real change can only be set in motion through participation, both as the means and long-term purpose of the work. By shifting the concept of public engagement to focus on capability development through the active participation of local communities, it becomes clear that this active participation must be central to helping the organisation bring about change, with local people taking responsibility for their museum or gallery, and gaining valuable experience of active citizenship in the process. The ‘critical friends’ relationship characteristic of the study, between museum and gallery professionals and between organisations and their local community partners, thus becomes central to organisational change in museums and galleries.” [p8]

In many ways, this research builds upon some of the Foundation’s other evaluation and research reports<sup>7</sup> (although these aren’t cited here), and pulls

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<sup>7</sup> For example:

Helen Carpenter. *Leading questions: learning from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (191.36 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=762>.

Jane Thompson. *Paul Hamlyn Foundation evaluation resource pack*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (2350 kb) from: <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1325>.

together some important thinking about the real role that the cultural sector can play in communities, whilst looking critically at the project-funding dependency culture.

Recommended.

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## **Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government**

### ***Race, religion and equalities: a report on the 2009–10 Citizenship Survey***

This report<sup>8</sup> presents findings from the 2009-10 Citizenship Survey, the sixth in a series of surveys carried out previously in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007-08, and 2008-09. However, the Survey has now been discontinued, so these are the last findings.

Key findings include:

- “The proportion of people who identified their religion as Christian fell steadily between 2005 and 2009-10. This was associated with a corresponding increase in the proportion of people that did not identify with any religion ...
- The proportion of people who felt that racial prejudice had been increasing in the previous five years fell between 2007-08 and 2009-10 from 56 per cent to 47 per cent, mirroring the trend for views on religious prejudice ...
- Experiences of harassment were considerably higher among all ethnic minority groups compared with White people, and higher among key minority religious groups than among Christians.
- Where harassment had been experienced, the nature of this was predominantly verbal as opposed to physical, and people mainly reported that it was their skin colour rather than their ethnic origin or religion that was the incitement for the attack.
- Perceptions of racial discrimination by key public service organisations (such as social housing departments and the police) ranged from 4 per cent to 22 per cent. These levels fell overall and across most of the organisations considered between 2008-09 and 2009-10. The overall decline continued a downward trend observed since 2003.
- Members of ethnic minority groups however – particularly those who were Black African, Black Caribbean or mixed race – were considerably more likely than White people to feel that they would be discriminated against in favour of other races by public services ...” [pp6-7]

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<sup>8</sup> *Race, religion and equalities: a report on the 2009–10 Citizenship Survey*. DCLG, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (449.66 kb) from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/2056245.pdf>.

## Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

### ***Are you saying I'm racist? An evaluation of work to tackle racist violence in three areas of London***

This report<sup>9</sup> is an evaluation of three pieces of work in London, published to:

“... provide some practical advice about how to go about undertaking more in-depth work on tackling racist violence, whilst also generating a debate about new ways to address the problem. Unless a new approach is taken we can expect to stay in the present malaise of racial conflict which blights many communities and remains unchanged.” [p4]

The research took as its starting point that:

“The emergence of the English Defence League, and signs that inter-ethnic violence between minority groups may be increasing, both underline that this is an issue that continues to need to be addressed, especially through work with young people.

Current approaches, however, do not seem to be proving effective. Focusing on tackling the problem primarily through responding to incidents once they have occurred is too limited an approach. ‘Zero tolerance’ as a response to racism in work with young people (e.g. by teachers excluding pupils for such behaviour from school) fails to address the underlying causes of their attitudes and behaviour. There is little reason to believe that reactive and repressive responses will bring about the necessary change: a more proactive response that draws out the problem and confronts it with the aim of prevention is needed.” [p5]

The findings are stark, and include:

“... The potential for involvement in racist violence, albeit usually in a casual rather than organised manner, was seen by projects as present for most young people in their areas, and not just for the small number who might hold extreme views.

- Most young people explicitly condemned racism, but at the same time would articulate negative attitudes and stereotypes relating to specific groups.
- The racist attitudes and stereotypes articulated by young people needed to be understood in relation to class, territorial, gender and other factors, as well as in relation to family, community and media influences.

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<sup>9</sup> Robin Oakley, Sarah Isal and Aine Woods. *Are you saying I'm racist? An evaluation of work to tackle racist violence in three areas of London*. Trust for London, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (456 kb) from: [http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/PVR\\_Full%20Report.pdf](http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/PVR_Full%20Report.pdf). There is also a Summary available (276 kb) from: [http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/PVR\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/PVR_Summary.pdf).

- Most young people in all three areas had strong territorial attachments and were often unconfident or fearful as regards travelling outside their immediate local area.” [p6]

The recommendations suggest a multi-agency approach – and one in which our sector can play a strong role, for example being involved in providing safe spaces and the information that young people need to tackle these issues:

“Engaging with young people to address sensitive issues such as racism required commitment, skill, patience, sensitivity, and the building up of a relationship of trust over a period of time.

- Exploring issues initially around identity more generally with young people provided a more effective way into discussions on racism, by contrast with a narrow, direct approach.
- ‘Safe spaces’ needed to be created to enable ‘dangerous conversations’ (i.e. on sensitive issues that are likely to arouse strong feelings).
- Taking young people out of their immediate areas, and providing structured opportunities for them to engage with young people from other areas and social groups, provided valuable opportunities for learning.
- Engaging with young people in sporting, musical and other kinds of activities of interest to them provided a favourable context in which addressing issues around racism and identity could take place.” [p6]

In addition:

“... Local authorities, youth agencies and schools all need to take responsibility for such work.

- Denial, or ‘zero tolerance’ alone, are not the solutions: the problem needs to be opened up, debated and addressed.
- Youth workers and teachers need skills, tools and confidence to tackle the issues effectively.
- Addressing racism and identity issues should be an integral part of youth and school curricula.
- Peer educators can also play a powerful role in influencing racial attitudes and behaviour among young people.” [p6]<sup>10</sup>

## The Big Society

### ***The Big Society***

The Public Administration Select Committee has just published its report<sup>11</sup> on the Big Society.

<sup>10</sup> Source: IRR *Weekly Digest*, 20 January.

<sup>11</sup> House of Commons. Public Administration Select Committee. *The Big Society*. 17<sup>th</sup> report of Session 2010-2012. The Stationery Office, 2011. Available to download in

The Summary includes:

“Our inquiry has focused on the commitment to commission a greater proportion of public services from the charitable sector, drawing on the immense resources of skill, knowledge and innovation to be found in charities and community groups ...

There is little clear understanding of the Big Society project among the public, and there is confusion over the Government's proposals to reform public services. In particular, the ambition to open up public services to new providers has prompted concerns about the role of private companies which have not thus far been adequately addressed by Ministers. We have recommended greater clarity on the roles of charitable, private and public providers of public services. We also press the Government to outline how crucial issues of accountability in terms of quality and regulatory powers will be managed in the Big Society project, and in particular accountability for public expenditure.

There is also uncertainty about how many charities in general, and small and local community groups in particular, are willing and able to deliver public services. Serious concerns about the wider financial health of the charitable sector have prompted several such groups to warn that the Big Society project is being undermined by reductions in grant funding by local authorities. However, this is partly because the Big Society message is not always communicated in simple language.”<sup>12</sup>

The report has a number of conclusions and recommendations<sup>13</sup>, including:

“The substantial change expected to result from the Big Society project, namely the devolution of power to communities and citizens will not occur overnight: if successful, as witnesses suggested, it will take a generation. The Government's Big Society statements have, so far, failed to communicate this point effectively. There is public confusion with the policy agenda, eighteen months into this administration. Confusion also still exists among many service providers. Early examples, such as the Work Programme, have caused the charitable sector to express serious reservations about the implementation of the Government's ambitions in practice.”<sup>14</sup>

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parts from: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-administration-select-committee/publications/>.

<sup>12</sup> Taken from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmpubadm/902/90203.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Available separately at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmpubadm/902/90212.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmpubadm/902/90212.htm>.

## Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

### *Libraries inspire/Llyfrgelloedd yn Ysbrydoli*

CyMAL have produced this “strategic development framework”<sup>15</sup> for the Welsh Government for the period 2012 to 2016, which builds on the previous *Libraries for life* strategy<sup>16</sup>; cooperative working; and sustained funding.

This Framework defines for the first time the core offer of public and educational libraries, which will include:

- “Be open to all members of their communities
- Be free to join
- Lend books for free
- Deliver free access to information
- Provide free use of the Internet and computers
- Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day
- Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication
- Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help
- Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours
- Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources
- Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries
- Maintain a searchable catalogue of Welsh library resources
- Co-operate to create new bilingual digital content about Wales and its people
- Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services
- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.” [p9]

It also identifies seven key “action areas”:

1. Sustainable models of service delivery – “The aim will be to develop new innovative, sustainable and collaborative models of delivery ...” [p9]. Also includes promoting wellbeing.
2. Resources for all – “... libraries need to respond to the increasing demand to be able to access resources online ...” [p9]

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<sup>15</sup> CyMAL. *Libraries inspire: the strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-16*. Welsh Government, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (2350 kb) from: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/111104librariesinspireen.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> CyMAL. *Libraries for life: delivering a modern library service for Wales 2008-11*. Welsh Assembly Government, 2008.

The evaluation of *Libraries for life* is available to download from:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/researchandevaluation/?lang=en>.

3. Space for all, including continuing modernisation of buildings to meet changing needs and to provide flexible spaces
4. Skills for life [see below]
5. Investing in people – staff development
6. Attracting the audience – supporting a coordinated audience development programme across Wales
7. Delivering a quality service – assessment via the Welsh Public Library Standards.

The ‘Skills for life’ part of the Framework focuses particularly on information and digital literacy, and lifelong learning.

This is a strong framework which, backed up with assessment via Standards and funding, should make a very real continuing impact on library services – and lives – in Wales.

Perhaps the only weakness is that the Welsh Government’s advocacy for social justice seems to have disappeared from this strategy – and, indeed, now, from the Welsh Government’s website; it would have been good to have placed this Framework within a firm social justice setting, and identified/reaffirmed more of a proactive social justice role for libraries.

## **Broader issues – Other Agencies**

### ***Localism Act briefing***

Urban Forum have just produced a succinct briefing<sup>17</sup> on the Localism Act (which received Royal Assent on 16 November 2011).

The briefing covers the five key measures in the Act, which are intended to decentralise power:

- Community Rights – including the Right to Challenge (which “allows voluntary and community bodies, parish councils or two or more members of council staff to express an interest in running a local authority run service.” [p2]; the Right to Bid for assets of community value; and the Right to Build (which “allows local people to hold a referendum to approve small local developments (up to 20 houses), without the need to go through the normal requirement for planning permission.” [p3])

<sup>17</sup> Caitlin McMullin. *Localism Act briefing*. Urban Forum (Policy Briefing), 2011. Available to download as a pdf (200.41 kb) from: [http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/files/briefings/2011\\_12\\_localism\\_act\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.urbanforum.org.uk/files/briefings/2011_12_localism_act_briefing.pdf).

- Neighbourhood planning
- Housing – which makes provision for more decisions to be taken at local level
- General power of competence – “The general power of competence gives local authorities the power to do anything not specifically forbidden by law (rather than the current system that allows them only to do things that are specifically allowed by law). This is intended to help councils to work more innovatively together to improve services, decrease costs and make decisions that will benefit their local area. This should come into force in April 2012.” [p3]
- Empowering cities and other local areas – “... councils will be able to return to the committee system, and there will also be referenda held in major cities to decide whether or not to elect a mayor” [p3]; and provision for other local referenda.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

CyMAL = CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales

DCLG = Department for Communities and Local Government

LSE = London School of Economics

NIACE = National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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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:

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