



ISSN 1475-8202

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

Number 150, October 2013

(Formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

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 ...?

Adults Learning

The Autumn issue¹ includes some useful articles, eg:

- Helen Plant and Sarah Perry “Making a difference: the impact of community learning”² looks at some of the findings and good practice emerging from work supported by the Community Learning Innovation Fund (includes learning for digital inclusion, for example) [pp8-13]
- Sarah Turvey and Jenny Hartley “What books can do behind bars”, which introduces the Prison Reading Group project [pp30-31]³
- Mel Young “Who are the champions? Homeless people, of course”, looking at the role of the Homelessness World Cup [pp40-41]
- Eirwen Malin and Angela Rogers “In a silent way”, which looks at a project in Wales, which got people with dementia and their carers engaged in making art⁴ [pp45-47].

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

State of the Nation 2013: social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain

This is the Commission’s first State of the Nation report⁵ - no doubt you have seen media coverage of aspects of it.

To summarise briefly (and rather starkly), the Commission has found that:

¹ *Adults Learning*, 25 (1), Autumn 2013. Further information from:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning>.

² Available to download as a pdf (195.01 kb) from:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/adults-learning/autumn-2013/AL-Autumn-2013-Vol25-Final-Print-8-13.pdf>.

³ There is further information about this project in: Jenny Hartley and Sarah Turvey. *Prison Reading Groups: what books can do behind bars: report on the work of PRG 1999–2013*. Prison Reading Groups, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (6520 kb) from:

http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/uploadedFiles/Pages_Assets/PDFs_and_Word_Docs/PRG/PRG%20Report%20Prison%20Reading%20Groups%20What%20Books%20Can%20Do%20Behind%20Bars.pdf. Information about this report was included in the *Ebulletin*, 134, 14 August 2013.

⁴ There is further information about some of this work on the Engage website – see:

<http://www.engage.org/older-people-arts-health.aspx>.

⁵ *State of the Nation 2013: social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain*. Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (2620 kb) from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251213/State_of_the_Nation_2013.pdf.

“We conclude that the UK is not on track to meet the statutory goal of ending child poverty by 2020. The best projections we have suggest that the target will be missed by a considerable margin, perhaps by as many as 2 million children in relative poverty. Although we know it is probable that any government would be finding it hard to remain on course in the teeth of the economic issues and the fiscal challenges that Britain faces, we are deeply concerned that a decade or more of reductions in child poverty could be coming to an end. We challenge all political parties to say how they would make progress.

Britain remains a deeply divided country. Disadvantage still strongly shapes life chances. A balanced economic recovery, between different parts of Britain, is not currently within reach.” [p4]

The key recommendations include:

“First, we urge the Government to aim for a balanced recovery to ensure that all parts of the country benefit, with action to reduce living costs and improve earnings.

Second, we urge the Government to set a challenging aim of eliminating long-term (12 month+) youth unemployment and reducing NEETHood below the European average by increasing learning and earning opportunities for young people who should be expected to take up those opportunities or face tougher benefit conditionality.

Third, we urge business leaders and the Government to come together to ensure that half of all firms offer apprenticeships and work experience as part of a new effort to make it easier for ‘the other 50 per cent’ to pursue high quality vocational training.

Fourth, we urge the Government to focus on reducing in-work poverty by looking again at the remit of the Low Pay Commission to enable raising of the minimum wage, paying job agencies for the earnings people receive rather than the number of jobs, and by reallocating Budget 2013 funding for childcare from higher-rate taxpayers to help those on Universal Credit meet more of their childcare costs.

Fifth, we urge employers to accept that the taxpayer alone can no longer bridge the gap between earnings and prices and that they will need to step up to the plate by providing higher minimum levels of pay and better career prospects, enabled by better skills.

Sixth, we urge the Government to ensure a fairer intergenerational share of the fiscal consolidation pain and, over time, reallocate public resources from the old to the young.

Seventh, we urge the Government to create a long-term plan with clear milestones to make early years’ provision universal, affordable and of a sufficiently high quality, and to rebalance a long-held exclusive focus on institutional forms of childcare by doing far more to help parents to parent.

Eighth, we urge schools to adopt a dual-mandate of raising the bar on standards and closing the gap on attainment with more help for low attainers from average income families as well as low-income children to succeed in making it to the top, not just getting off the bottom.

Ninth, we urge the Government to better resource careers advice and provide extra incentives for teachers to teach in the worst schools, with colleges in the future being paid by the results they achieve for their students in the labour market and not the numbers they recruit.

Tenth, we urge the professions to open their doors to a wider pool of talent by ending unpaid internships and recruiting more widely. We urge top universities to do the same by using contextual data and foundation degrees.” [pp7-8]

Are there areas of our own work which might be tailored to support some of these objectives?⁶

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Too young to fail ...

Save the Children has just produced this important report⁷ which looks at the long-lasting effects of the “achievement gap”:

“... what [the achievement] gap means is that, by the time they are seven, nearly 80% of the difference in GCSE results between rich and poor children has already been determined.”[p v]

This report highlights the importance of the development of key skills, particularly literacy; although there have been improvements to the number of seven year olds who can read and write at the expected level, nevertheless:

“... even continuing to make this level of progress between now and 2020 could leave approximately 480,000 seven-year-olds, of whom 180,000 are low-income pupils, behind in reading.” [p v]

New research carried out for this report shows that:

“... for those children who fall behind at seven, their chances are even worse:

⁶ Source: NCB *Policy & Parliamentary Information Digest*, 18 Oct 2013.

⁷ *Too young to fail: giving all children a fair start in life*. Save the Children, 2013.

Available to download as a pdf (1450 kb) from:

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Too_Young_to_Fail_0.pdf.

- Fewer than one in six children from low-income families who have fallen behind by the age of seven will go on to achieve five good GCSEs, including English and maths.
- Better-off children who are behind are more likely to go on to achieve well – but even they only have a one in four chance of getting five good GCSEs, including English and maths.
- If a child from a poor family is already behind with their reading at the age of seven, they have just over a one in five chance of going on to achieve a C in English at GCSE.” [p v]

Save the Children argue that:

“Through no fault of their own, children as young as seven are on course for poorer life chances before they have even started. This unfairness is unnecessary and preventable.” [p v]

The report looks at critical areas, including:

- Describing the current challenges and summarising the effects of this “achievement gap”
- Outlining the lifelong impact on children and families
- The importance of tackling poverty at home
- Preschool provision and support for parents
- Making a “fair chance for all” a national priority.

Finally, the report recommends key actions for the Government, including:

- “publish an annual report on progress in creating fair chances for all young children
- as an immediate priority, focus additions to the Pupil Premium on five- to seven-year-olds – a new ‘fair chances premium’ at the age that matters most
- in the long term, front-load spending in primary school – in particular, the early years of primary school.” [p20]

One key message coming through is the importance of continuing to focus on preschool learning (and parental support), with the addition of raising the need to increase support for children aged 5-7.⁸

Poverty and ethnicity in Wales

This new report⁹ from JRF “explores the relationship between poverty, place and ethnicity in Wales.”

⁸ Source: National Literacy Trust *Literacy News and Resources*, Oct 2013.

⁹ Duncan Holtom, Ian Bottrill and Jack Watkins. *Poverty and ethnicity in Wales*. JRF, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (874 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-wales-full.pdf>. A summary (212 kb) is also available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-wales-summary.pdf>.

“The report is based upon qualitative research with 27 families from five different ethnic groups – Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Polish, Somali and white British/Welsh – living in four distinct places: Cardiff, the South Wales valleys, Carmarthenshire and Rhyl ... [and it] documents the families’ experiences of life on a low income in Wales” [p1]

It comes to some important conclusions:

“The study finds a strong association between poverty and ethnicity, but little evidence that ethnicity is the cause of poverty. Five factors – place; human capital; social capital; entitlements; and attitudes, thinking and choices – were particularly powerful in explaining differences in the levels and experiences of poverty across the five ethnic groups. To a lesser degree, they also explained differences in levels and experiences of poverty for members of each ethnic group, such as those between men and women and young people and adults.” [p7]

The findings about the influence of ethnicity show some stark contrasts:

“Although members of all five ethnic groups were in poverty, there were important differences in their experiences and outcomes:

- The Polish families were generally the most driven, work-focused and resilient. They were the most likely to be in work and also appeared to be most able to cope with challenges. Nevertheless, they often felt isolated and were limited to ‘poor work’ with low pay and few prospects for progression, making it difficult for them to escape from poverty.
- The Pakistani families were generally coping. They had the strongest support networks and tended to live in places that were felt to be safe and inclusive and which met their day-to-day needs. However, few were working and there was a sense that security and stability were being prioritised over strategies for escaping poverty, such as searching for work.
- Many of the Bangladeshi families were struggling and few could see how they might escape from poverty. Although men were often working, they were restricted to poor and part-time work. Women wanted to work but felt unable to do so, primarily because of their limited English language skills. Despite living in places that were felt to be safe and inclusive and which met their day-to-day needs, many were very dissatisfied with their housing. Family-based support networks were typically centred on the husband’s family, which limited their value to women.
- There were stark divides in the experiences of Somali families in the study. The experiences of men and women were very different. Some men were angry at the racism that they felt held them back and stopped them finding work or ‘good’ work, despite living so close to centres of power and wealth. In contrast, women were often more focused on bringing up children and the difficulties of finding employment were less keenly felt. The experiences and levels of poverty of those who had come to the UK as asylum seekers were also generally very different from

those who had migrated under less traumatic circumstances or who had been born in the UK. The initial experiences of many of those who had come as asylum seekers had often been very difficult, although there were improvements when they secured legal status and their entitlements were extended.

- The white British/Welsh families were generally struggling; they often felt very vulnerable, sometimes defeated. Those in work considered themselves limited to poor work, and it was felt that poor physical and mental health severely compromised the employment prospects of many who were out of work. This left them heavily dependent on their entitlements. Their social networks were also often fractured. Their consequent social exclusion, isolation and vulnerability contributed to feelings of depression and powerlessness.” [pp6-7]

The recommendations in relation to social and human capital also include valuable pointers for us:

“On developing human capital

- Sustain increased investment in early years provision.
- Ensure a stronger focus on evaluating the progress made by different ethnic groups in school.
- Review English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision to consider how it could be improved.

On strengthening social capital

- Ensure investment in public spaces, arts and cultural activities strengthens social capital.
- Support schools’ community focus to help develop social capital.” [p8]

Finally, there is a recommendation for local authorities, which points up one of the key areas for improvement:

“Local authorities should ensure that equalities indicators enable progress in reducing inequalities between ethnic groups to be measured and inform action to help reduce inequalities.” [p57]

Making the links: poverty, ethnicity and social networks

JRF has also just published this research report¹⁰ which “explores the relationship between poverty, ethnicity and social networks, and the extent to

¹⁰ Angus McCabe *et al.* *Making the links: poverty, ethnicity and social networks*. JRF, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (314.94 kb) from:

http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-social-networks-full_0.pdf.

There is also a summary available (229.09 kb) from:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-social-networks-summary.pdf>.

which networks can mitigate against, or help people to move on from, poverty.” [p3]

“The report:

- explores the ways in which ethnicity, gender and class play important roles in shaping people’s networks;
- illustrates how it can be hard for people in, or at the margins of, poverty to establish ‘bridging’ links with others who can create opportunities and advantage;
- emphasises the role of voluntary, community and faith organisations in supporting people to make connections that help them address poverty;
- suggests ways in which agencies can support people to use and extend their networks to help them move out of poverty.” [p1]

The report’s recommendations include some pointers for our own work:

- “Mentoring could be powerful in promoting positive use of networks for gaining work, setting up businesses and progressing to better jobs. There would be value in piloting peer mentoring within the workplace and for those finding a return to work problematic.
- Employer action is required to address the negative ‘grace and favour’ aspects of networks in recruitment and promotion. Organisations should routinely review the extent to which informal workplace networks discriminate in access to employment and progression in the workplace.
- As online access increasingly becomes the default for service provision, the need to promote digital fluency becomes more urgent. Social media clinics, with an emphasis on network awareness, could be developed and linked to digital champions in Job Centre Plus.
- The networks of service users were recognised as under-used resources in identifying training and employment opportunities, but there was no systematic agency practice. Standardised ‘toolkits’ could be developed for employment support agencies. Toolkits should enable people to map their networks, help build strategies for extending and using networks, and provide signposting to agencies that can assist in developing ‘bridging’ capital.
- ESOL classes are critical for people from migrant and refugee communities seeking employment. They provide important spaces for cross-cultural networking that can lead to helpful inter-ethnic friendships and increased confidence in language and literacy.
- Voluntary, community and faith organisations offer vital advice and services, and inform signposting and networking within and between ethnic groups. These resources need to be protected and recognised. The principles of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 should be incorporated into public service commissioning procedures, with contractors required to demonstrate added social value through access to community networks.

- High quality volunteering helps develop links beyond family and community: its importance needs to be recognised, as does the diversity of motivations for taking up unpaid work in the community.”¹¹

London’s Poverty Profile 2013

This new report¹² is the fourth in the series, each taking a different topic – the topic for this one is welfare reform.

“It is an independent report that presents evidence from official government data sources. The scope of this report is not limited to low income; it looks at the role of inequality, housing, work, education and health. Each of these are independently important but also are closely linked to poverty.

The analysis looks at a range of indicators for London, how they have changed over time, how this compares to the rest of England and how it varies within London itself.” [p6]

Key findings include:

- In the three years to 2011–12, 2.1 million people in London were in poverty. This 28% poverty rate is seven percentage points higher than the rest of England. Incomes in London are more unequally spread than in any other region. It contains 16% of the poorest decile of people nationally and 17% in the richest decile.
- Over the ten years to 2011–12, the number people in in-work poverty increased by 440,000. In the same period the number of pensioners in poverty fell by 110,000 and the number of children in workless families in poverty fell by 170,000. Now 57% of adults and children in poverty are in working families.
- 375,000 people were unemployed in London in 2012, up more than 40% since 2007. 190,000 people worked part-time but wanted a full-time job in 2012, nearly double the level in 2007. In 2012, 25% of economically active young adults in London were unemployed. This compares with 20% for young adults in the rest of England and is around three times the rate for all economically active working-age adults in London.
- 26% of London households received housing benefit in 2012, a higher proportion and one that has grown faster than the average for England. Average housing benefit values are also much higher in London at £134 per week compared to £92 per week for England. As a result, changes to

¹¹ Taken from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/making-links-poverty-ethnicity-social-networks?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Weekly+publications+and+blogs+wb+21st+October+2013&utm_content=Weekly+publications+and+blogs+wb+21st+October+2013+CID_298ff7bd020d9c513a96fac6e8a6f44b&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Publication%20Making%20the%20links%20poverty%20ethnicity%20and%20social%20networks.

¹² Hannah Aldridge, *et al.* *London’s Poverty Profile 2013*. Trust for London/New Policy Institute, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (8300 kb) from: http://npi.org.uk/files/3313/8150/0123/Final_full_report.pdf.

housing benefit will have had a wider and deeper impact in London. High housing costs in London and national caps to benefit will make large parts of London unaffordable to low-income households.

- Around 80,000 London families were estimated to be affected by the under-occupation penalty, losing on average £21 per week in housing benefit from April 2013. An estimated 475,000 families in 22 boroughs faced cuts in council tax benefit cut, with average cuts ranging from £1 to £5 a week.
- In 2009 the Inner East & South stood out as the worst performing sub-region but no longer does so. Levels of deprivation in outer boroughs both east and west, have been increasing. [taken from p7]

However, there are some positives too:

- Education in London continues to improve. Over five years to 2012, the proportion of Inner London 16 year-olds entitled to free school meals who failed to get five 'good' GCSEs came down 20 percentage points (to 47%). The 16 percentage point fall in Outer London (to 55%) was also much better than in the rest of England (a 13 percentage point fall to 67%).
- Premature mortality rates in London for both men and women are down by around a third in 10 years (to 187 and 115 per 100,000), and are now below the England average (of 194 and 125). [also taken from p7]

This is really useful background information for people working in the cultural sector in London – recommended.¹³

Does money affect children's outcomes? A systematic review

JRF have also produced this research review¹⁴:

“This review examines the evidence on the causal impact of household financial resources on children’s wider outcomes. Causation is difficult to establish in social science, but certain techniques allow us to be more confident that what we are observing is indeed the effect of money itself, not simply a reflection of other differences between richer and poorer households. We used a systematic review approach to try to identify all the studies that use randomised controlled trials, natural experiments, and sophisticated econometric techniques on longitudinal data to investigate the causal effect of money. We focused on children’s health, social, behavioural and cognitive outcomes, and on intermediate outcomes such as expenditure on children’s goods, maternal mental health, parenting and the home environment.

¹³ Source: NCB *Policy & Parliamentary Information Digest*, 18 Oct 2013.

¹⁴ Kerris Cooper and Kitty Stewart. *Does money affect children's outcomes? A systematic review*. JRF, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1410 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/money-children-outcomes-full.pdf>.

There is also a summary (290.2) available from:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/money-children-outcomes-summary.pdf>.

Our search strategy initially identified 46,668 studies. Most turned out not to be relevant and many others, while on the right topic, did not use methods which allowed conclusions to be reached regarding causation. Ultimately just 34 studies were judged to meet our full inclusion criteria. The majority of these studies are from the US, with some evidence from the UK, Canada, Norway and Mexico.” [p4]

The review led to the following conclusions:

“... there is strong evidence that household financial resources are important for children’s outcomes and that this relationship is causal. Protecting households from income poverty may not provide a complete solution to poorer children’s worse outcomes, but it should be a central part of government efforts to promote children’s opportunities and life chances.” [p7]

However, very little of this evidence has come from the UK, so JRF have put out a call for further research to attempt to provide UK data.

Family learning works

NIACE have just published the report¹⁵ of their inquiry into family learning in England and Wales.

The key recommendations are:

1. “Family learning should be integral to school strategies to raise children’s attainment and to narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
2. Family learning should be a key element of adult learning and skills strategies to engage those furthest from the labour market and improve employability, especially through family English/language and maths provision.
3. Every child should have the right to be part of a learning family. Many children grow up in families that can support their learning, but some do not. Public bodies should target support to help these families.
4. Key government departments should include family learning in their policies and strategies in order to achieve cross-departmental outcomes.
5. The governments of England and Wales should regularly review the funding for and supply of family learning against potential demand.
6. There should be a joint national forum for family learning in England and Wales to support high-quality and innovative practice, and appropriate policy, advocacy, research and development.” [p11]

¹⁵ *Family learning works: the Inquiry into Family Learning in England and Wales*. NIACE, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1060 kb) from: http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/n/i/niace_family_learning_report_reprint_final.pdf

As the report says:

“This report does not call for a substantial additional investment in family learning, welcome though that would be. Our recommendations focus on low- or no-cost interventions which build on existing work and aim to ensure family learning is planned and co-ordinated to the best advantage of families and communities. We want to see family learning built into the core offer of early years provision and seen as an effective use of school funding, to ensure that the parents and carers of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are offered high-quality family learning opportunities.

In addition, we want to see family learning integrated into strategies to engage those furthest from the labour market and improve employability where, evidence shows, learning can be hugely effective – perhaps more so than any other single intervention. It is far better, we believe, to invest public money in low-cost family learning programmes than to spend it addressing the consequences of our failure to target interventions.” [p11]

Abbreviations and acronyms

JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation

NCB = National Children’s Bureau

NHS = National Health Service

NIACE = National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

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October 2013