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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.

Contents List

Network news

- Network response to Sieghart Review – page 2
- Equality Awards – page 2

Did you see ...?

- *CILIP Update* – page 3
- *ARC Magazine* – page 4
- *Among Equals* – page 4
- *National Trust Magazine* – page 4

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

- *Culture and poverty ...* – page 5
- *Cultural participation for children and young people experiencing poverty ...* – page 8
- *Transforming children's lives: an anti-poverty resource pack* – page 10
- *Extending our reach: reducing homelessness through library engagement* – page 11

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

- *Looking forward to later life* – page 12
- *Balancing caring and earning for British Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali people* – page 13
- *How you can help us ...* – page 14

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

- “How the Public Library Is a Refuge for the Restless Mind” – page 15

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

- *An evaluation of a literature-based intervention for people with chronic pain* – page 16

Disability issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

- *What PIP means for local authorities* – page 17

Abbreviations and acronyms – page 18

Network news

Network response to the Sieghart Review

We submitted a response¹ to the Review, particularly highlighting the work that libraries contribute to social justice, and also arguing that:

“We believe that all the evidence required to make an assessment of the state of public library provision across the UK already exists (and query therefore why another Review has been deemed necessary); however, given that there is one, then the Review needs to grapple with the very serious issues that face public libraries today, including funding and other resources; geographical spread; purpose; governance – at the moment, it feels as though libraries are a sort of “pass the parcel” with no one taking real responsibility for them, and this needs to be sorted out urgently, for example:

- Should they remain in local authority control?
- If they do, how do we ensure that each local authority really provides a comprehensive and efficient service?
- Can we reintroduce some form of Standards and monitoring?
- What is the role of DCMS? And the Arts Council?”

Equality Awards

John Vincent was presented with a joint Special Diversity Award (along with Shiraz Durrani) by CILIP’s Community, Diversity and Equality Group:

¹ *Independent Review of Public Libraries: a consultation. Response from “The Network – tackling social exclusion ...”* The Network, 2014. See: http://www.seapn.org.uk/site_content_files/files/independent_review_of_public_libraries.docx.

“Annie Mauger, CILIP CEO presented Special Diversity Awards to Shiraz Durrani and John Vincent at the AGM of the Community, Diversity and Equality Group on Wednesday 12th February at Ridgmount Street.

The awards recognize ‘outstanding achievement in the promotion of diversity’ and ‘commitment to the advancement of diversity within a library or information setting’.

Annie said, ‘We are really proud of the work that Shiraz and John have done over many years to ensure that CILIP members have a better understanding of some of the issues that challenge us as professionals to adhere to our core values. They remind us how to strive for equality of access, to support diversity, combat ignorance through good information professionals doing their job and to demonstrate that an informed community is almost always a just one. I am delighted for them both and for the great role model they bring to the profession in their passion and dedication to our values’.”²

Did you see ...?

CILIP Update

The April issue³ includes:

- “Enterprising schemes show how communities are being supported”, which briefly describes the work of the Carnegie UK Trust’s “Enterprising Libraries” scheme⁴ [p12]
- “National card scheme launched” – “All primary school children in Wales are to be provided with free library cards in an initiative designed to boost literacy.” [p13] (In fact, the scheme is “starting with children aged 8/9 in six local authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Powys, Swansea, Flintshire and Gwynedd.”⁵)
- Chrys Mellor “How to face a dragon and win”, which outlines how North Yorkshire County Council’s apprentices took part in a “Dragons Den”-type project to bid for funding for “an activity, marketing or service that would encourage young people to use the library ...” [pp44-45]

² Taken from: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/community-diversity-and-equality-group/awards/diversity-award/diversity-award-2014>.

³ *CILIP Update*, April 2014. Further information at: <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/membership/membership-benefits/monthly-magazine-journals-and-ebulletins/cilip-update-magazine>.

⁴ For more information on the scheme, see: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/knowledge---culture/enterprising-libraries>.

⁵ See: <http://welshlibraries.org/index.php?id=8918>.

ARC Magazine

The latest issue⁶ is the “Community Archives and Heritage Special Issue”, and includes, for example:

- Judith Garfield “Little Germany”, a piece on Eastside Community Heritage’s work to remember German residents in East London at the start of WW1 [pp14-16]
- Alan Butler “Pride in Our Past, Plymouth” [pp20-21]
- Joe Mander and Liam Heatherson “Beyond the Point”, an update on their award-winning work [pp21-22]
- Julie Creer “News from around Lancashire”, an update on community archive projects in the county [pp25-27]
- Hannah Ishmael “Return to Brixton: Black Cultural Archives”, which looks briefly at the history of BCA, and celebrates their getting a permanent home in the centre of Brixton [pp31-33]
- Sue O’Brien “Wicked Fish”, a look at a project working with learning disabled people [pp33-34].

Among Equals

The latest issue of *Among Equals*⁷, the biannual update from The Equality Trust, has just been published. It includes:

- Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson “The Spirit Level – five years on” [pp3-4]
- Stewart Lansley “Tackling inequality is an economic imperative” [pp5-6]
- Danny Dorling “Sandcastles in the sky”, which explores how inequality is driving the UK housing crisis [pp7-8]
- Charles Geisler and David Kay “Carpe terra”, which looks at land ownership inequality [pp9-10]
- “The Equality Trust: progress to date”, an update on the Trust’s work [p11].

National Trust Magazine

The Spring issue⁸ has a short piece about Cyril who has recently completed the Trust’s “Passport to Your Future” training course and now volunteers at Ightham Mote (Cyril is partially-sighted, and volunteers with his dog, Frank).

The article also has a note about the course, and there is more about this interesting positive action initiative on the Trust website⁹.

⁶ *ARC Magazine*, 297, May 2014. Further information from: www.archives.org.uk.

⁷ *Among Equals: the Spirit Level anniversary edition*. The Equality Trust, Spring 2014. Available to download as a pdf (869.79 kb) from: <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/civicrm/persist/contribute/file/Among%20Equals%20Spring.pdf>.

⁸ *National Trust Magazine*, Spring 2014, p82.

⁹ See: <http://yourfutureyourhands.org.uk/>.

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

Culture and poverty ...

This major review report¹⁰ has just been published by the Welsh Government.

“The remit for this review was as follows:

“to recommend ways in which cultural and heritage bodies can work more closely together to broaden access to, appreciation of and participation in culture in ways that contribute to reducing poverty.”

Culture in this context was taken to mean not just the arts, but also heritage and the historic environment, including the contribution of museums, libraries and the media.” [p3, italics theirs]

The report begins by focusing briefly on “Poverty and Cultural Exclusion in Wales Today” which “is concerned with the impact of poverty itself, the anti-poverty strategies on the ground as they presently connect with culture, and how they might have greater reach and impact through imaginative, consistent and sustainable partnerships and shared knowledge, tools and training.” [p12] It looks at the obligations that Wales has, particularly its “strong commitment to positive rights” [p13]; and then focuses on the opportunities that engagement with the cultural sector can bring.

Chapter 3 looks at “Widening Access and Breaking Down Social Exclusion”, and includes:

- Breaking the psychological barriers
- Breaking the transport barriers
- Closer connections:

“The key to success is to create many more opportunities and incentives for the cultural organisations to learn from the community experts on the ground. But while there is a great willingness in principle, evidence shows that building contacts on the ground between cultural and community organisations, has proved difficult to do for two overlapping reasons: first, the difficulty that arts agencies have had in identifying who, at the level of the [Communities First] cluster itself, can commission and drive engagement on behalf of the community, and, second,

¹⁰ *Culture and poverty: harnessing the power of the arts, culture and heritage to promote social justice in Wales – a report with recommendations by Baroness Kay Andrews OBE for the Welsh Government.* Welsh Government, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (988.36 kb) from: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/drah/publications/140313-culture-and-poverty-en.pdf>.

mutually, the sporadic and scattered nature of the cultural ‘offer’ itself.” [p20]

The report is illustrated with case studies, including, for example:

- The Egypt Centre, Swansea: “The Egypt Centre is a small, Accredited museum of Egyptian antiquities run by Swansea University. The museum encourages social mobility through an active programme of widening participation, an ethos which permeates all that the museum does and is built into its Forward Plan.” [p18]
- Caerphilly Library Service: a comprehensive modernisation programme, plus: “Caerphilly County Borough Council and key partners including Communities 2.0 and Get Caerphilly Online have been proactive in providing digital skills for citizens, pioneering the Digital Fridays initiative at several of the Borough’s main Library venues, including Bargoed. Residents can access digital skill support at these events and assistance with Universal Job Match and wider job seeking activity.” [p30]
- Denbighshire Libraries: “Literacy at the Heart of Education and community” [p40]
- CLOCH: “CLOCH is a partnership project, led by Glamorgan Archives, bringing together libraries, archives and museums across South Wales to offer placements and work experience in the heritage sector.” [p56]

Chapter 4 looks at “Going Local: Increasing Engagement at Community Level”, which includes:

- Anchoring Culture in Community
- Libraries of the Future
- Making More use of Local Cultural Partners
- Taking Culture into the Heart of the Community
- Sharing Knowledge and Skills
- Partnership on the Ground.

Chapter 5 is about “Driving Ambition and Driving Up Standards: Culture and Learning”, and includes:

- Early Years and Child Development: Families without Skills
- Reading: A Priority for All
- Summer Schemes and out of School Learning
- Cultural Provision within the Curriculum
- Inspiring the Whole School.

Chapter 6 is about “The Power of Place: The Place for Skills”, including:

- The Power of Place: Cynefin and Community
- Cynefin Communities: The Heritage of Any and Every Place
- The Place for Skills: Culture and Heritage Together
- Transforming Places

- Local Leadership and Priorities

This chapter takes as its theme:

“Each of us is shaped by the place in which we live, and each generation reshapes that place in its own image. Wales is rich in both monumental and ‘ordinary’ heritage and our community values both. The challenge is to ensure that there is both the capacity to care for that heritage for the future and to maximise the training and job opportunities that are found in the cultural and heritage sector and the creative industries.” [p48]

The final chapter, “A Single Conversation: Making Things Happen”, which focuses on “Closing the Gaps”:

“It has become clear, in the course of this enquiry that the difficulty of making sustainable partnerships at local level which would expand access to and participation in culture, is symptomatic of a greater failure of connection. Many of the key recommendations of this report are, therefore, designed to address the gaps which are evident:

- between cultural, social and economic policy at national and local level;
- between cultural organisations themselves, the knowledge they hold and the work they do; and
- between schools, cultural and community organisations on the ground.

The result is, currently, that knowledge, resources, and practice are not shared enough, that resources are distributed unevenly, and opportunities are missed to capitalise on what the cultural sector can bring to improve and extend the reach of other policies to lift learning and life chances for children and adults. On all sides, respondents have called for more coherent and sustainable long term programmes, strategies and partnerships and the spirit and the means to sustain them.” [p63]

The report makes 33 recommendations, covering all these different areas, which give a very strong sense of the direction of future travel. Highly recommended.

One tiny criticism – it is a pity that other previous work has, presumably, not been consulted or acknowledged, for example the ground-breaking research carried out by Diana Grimwood-Jones, published in 2003¹¹.

This report links very closely to the following two items.

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¹¹ Diana Grimwood-Jones. *Mapping social inclusion in publicly-funded libraries in Wales: a final report submitted to LISC (Wales)*. Welsh Assembly Government, 2003.

Cultural participation for children and young people experiencing poverty ...

“In October 2013, 34 participants from a wide range of professional backgrounds across the UK attended a research seminar at National Museum Cardiff to explore the theme of cultural participation for children and young people experiencing poverty.” [p4]

This report¹² “provides an overview of the issues, talking points and suggestions for future action that emerged during the day.” [p4]

It begins by setting the context, in terms of the potential role of the cultural sector in lessening the negative effects of poverty, in Wales more specifically, and the work that the National Museum is developing.

It then summarises the key discussions, before detailing themes and discussions.

The key discussion points include:

1. Defining objectives

This was seen as important as:

“If the cultural and heritage sectors want to make a credible claim for the role they have to play in relation to anti-poverty initiatives, they need to set realistic objectives. Over-ambitious claims will only damage credibility. As one participant noted, it is unlikely that cultural participation can *eliminate* poverty; but it *can* help to lessen some of its negative effects like social exclusion, stress, or poor educational attainment.” [p11, emphasis theirs]

2. Change from the inside out

Suggestions included:

- Embedding the principles of co-production: “Children and young people should be given a place on decision-making panels, and should be directly involved in the design and delivery of projects and displays.” [p12]
- Developing listening skills

¹² *Cultural participation for children and young people experiencing poverty: Research seminar report, National Museum Cardiff, 4 October 2013.* Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (639.00 kb) from: http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/media/31210/cultural_participation_research_seminar_report.pdf.

- Challenging existing preconceptions of children and young people: "...children and young people are often described as passive victims of poverty and disadvantage; when in fact they have much to offer as active participants in the search for solutions." [p13]
- Questioning evaluation: "Too often evaluations are driven by the needs of the institution rather than its visitors. A desire to prove worth or celebrate success sometimes over-rides serious attempts to find out whether a project had any real impact on those involved. Greater integrity, honesty and a more rigorous form of questioning is essential if evaluations are to be meaningful." [p14]
- Re-assessing the nature of projects: "Many participants noted that one-off projects have limited long-term impact." [p14]

3. Family learning

4. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration

5. Working with communities

"Many participants felt that too often children and young people are considered in isolation from their wider communities, and that this needs to change. 'Community' in this sense is not always geographical. It can also be cultural, or used to denote a group of people who share similar interests. The cultural and heritage sectors could benefit from putting more effort into understanding these communities, and developing and sustaining relationships with them." [p17]

6. Transforming spaces

"Cultural, arts and heritage sites could do more to make existing spaces more accessible and welcoming to a wider range of visitors. It was also suggested that they could explore the potential for more creative and multifaceted use of space." [p18]

The report then considers actions and ways forward. These include:

1. "To establish a code of ethics or set of principles for cultural participation in relation to child poverty

This code of ethics should:

- demonstrate and define best practice;
- indicate how service providers across all sectors including local authorities, charities, funders, housing associations, health boards, universities and researchers, as well as cultural and heritage institutions, can work collaboratively towards establishing and supporting participatory practice as a key feature of the wider anti-poverty agenda;

- be practical, easily measurable, and clearly differentiated from other participation principles already in existence;
- be developed co-productively;
- be responsive to different regional and national contexts.

It was suggested that these principles could be developed in Wales initially, and rolled out to the rest of the UK in time.” [p19]

2. To establish a steering group to drive forward this agenda in Wales
3. To open out the discussion with funding bodies
4. To strengthen the evidence base by supporting in-depth collaborative research.

Transforming children’s lives: an anti-poverty resource pack

Also just published is a resource pack¹³ to help take forward some of the actions.

This includes “The Child Poverty Context” (which widens out the thinking about poverty to include income poverty, participation poverty, and service poverty), and outlines the Welsh Government’s Action Planning on Tackling Poverty. It includes a brief resume of which groups are most likely to be at risk of poverty, and looks at the effects poverty has on their lives.

It then has a section on addressing barriers that children and young people may face in accessing the arts (eg expense, lack of information). There is a range of case studies to illustrate how this work can be developed, eg “Amgueddfa Cymru’s Bling project – Combining Arts and Museums to provide New Opportunities for Young People”.

This is followed by the action toolkit which is split into the following sections:

- Targeting Efforts: designed to help you reach who you want to work with
- Working with Schools: Estyn advice on working with disadvantaged learners; what can Arts, Culture and Heritage organisations offer; and working with families
- Partnerships: Establishing effective partnership working
- Enabling young people’s voices: including tips on setting up a youth forum
- Working with Welsh language audiences
- Evaluation: is the cultural sector paying sufficient attention to evaluation and where should efforts be directed?

¹³ *Transforming children’s lives: an anti-poverty resource pack to support arts, cultural and heritage organisations as they create pathways to cultural participation.* Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum Wales, no date [2014]. Available to download as a pdf (622.00 kb) from: http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/media/31207/transforming_childrens_lives_resourcepack_en.pdf.

- Advocating for the arts: telling people why the arts can help tackle child poverty
- Funding.

This is a very important and useful practical guide – recommended.

Extending our reach: reducing homelessness through library engagement

This new, practical guide¹⁴ from the ALA “is designed to help librarians and library staff create meaningful library services for people who are experiencing homelessness.” [p1]

It includes a clear statement of the ways in which library services for people experiencing homelessness may be limited or denied, including:

- “Library card or access policies requiring a permanent address
- Prohibitive fines, fees or other penalties or the perception that services incur fees
- Staff who are not trained in service to people who are poor or homeless or who are made uncomfortable by prejudices against people who are poor or homeless
- Limited promotion at the community centers and organizations (food banks, shelters, after-school programs) that serve people experiencing homelessness
- Limited access to the library building by either lack of transportation or service hours
- Lack of programs or resources that address people’s experiences or current situations” [p2]

and goes on to outline key service provision, including “programming” (running courses or events); “reference” (ie signposting); library services to young people in transition; and developing partnerships.

This is a helpful starting point, although it oddly does not include anything on outreach or community-based work (both of which would lead to much greater contact with homeless people), although the section on partnerships implies this. Similarly, it would have been helpful to have included something about why young people might be thrown out of their homes – and the other issues that they face, which will inevitably have an impact on the library’s relationship with them.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Extending our reach: reducing homelessness through library engagement*. ALA, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (563.94 kb) from: http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/olos/toolkits/poorhomeless_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁵ Source: email from Kathleen McCook via “a-librarian-at-every-table” mailing list.

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Looking forward to later life

The Early Action Task Force¹⁶ has just produced this report¹⁷.

The Task Force's starting point is:

“Government's approach is piecemeal and uncoordinated, driven by only the clearest looming liabilities (for example on pensions) or in response to crises (such as in social care). By reacting once problems have developed and badly managing crisis situations governments can incur great cost for little impact.

If, instead, public services, businesses, civil society and all of us as individuals were *ready*, both to take advantage of the opportunities and to successfully navigate the challenges of later life, we would experience a triple dividend – increased wellbeing, reduced costs, and increased contribution. This requires a new vision for later life. We propose some ideas that help illustrate what it might look like.” [p5, emphasis theirs]

The overarching aim should be for increasing wellbeing:

- “Feeling in control, happy, secure, at home, valued by others and that life has a purpose.
- Having sufficient income not to be excluded from society.
- Staying healthy, mentally and physically, or living as well as possible with health conditions
- Being connected to others via a range of personal relationships, interactions and meaningful participation.

Despite attitudes to the contrary it is not inevitable that the contributors to wellbeing – social connectedness, contribution, a decent income, secure housing, mobility, the absence of discrimination – will decline as we age.” [p5]

The report recognises the role that museums and libraries play in, for example, supporting people who are feeling lonely.

The report has nine broad recommendations, plus highlighting the implications for government (which, I think, can also be applied to us):

- Planning and working for the longer term
- Better integration of provision

¹⁶ “The Early Action Task Force is a group of leaders from across the sectors committed to building a society that prevents problems from occurring rather than one that, as now, struggles with the consequences. The Task Force is led by Community Links” [p2].

¹⁷ Will Horwitz. *Looking forward to later life: taking an early action approach to our ageing society*. Community Links, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (891.37 kb) from: http://www.community-links.org/uploads/documents/LATER_LIFE_web.pdf.

- Provision of more services locally
- Being “[M]ore positive and more ambitious: ... New aims, new institutions, new structures, new attitudes to age, and a new ambition.” [p46]

Balancing caring and earning for British Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali people

This new report¹⁸ from JRF looked at “low-income Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali people regarding their experiences and preferences in balancing work and care.” [p1]

Key points are:

- “Discrimination is a key barrier preventing low-income ethnic minority people from balancing work and care. Good practice on reducing discrimination must be strengthened and expanded across public and private sector employers.
- Many Pakistani and Somali families are unaware of free childcare provision. Central and local government must better inform these communities of the availability and benefits of childcare.
- Benefit changes are likely to make it more difficult for low-income ethnic minorities to balance work and care. For example, 40 per cent of those affected by the benefit cap are ethnic minorities; if they move away from family they will lose a major source of childcare and caring support.
- There are not generic attitudes towards ‘caring’ within or across ethnic groups. Black Caribbean parents are most likely to take up formal childcare, but have concerns about formal care for older relatives. Somali and Pakistani parents were concerned about the cultural appropriateness of formal childcare, but did not feel the same about support for disabled children.
- As with the wider population, caring responsibilities were predominantly taken up by women. Gendered expectations remain a barrier to women’s labour market participation.
- Increased demand for caring suggests there may be more jobs in future. There could be more targeted recruitment of and support for ethnic minority childminders and carers.
- Ethnic minorities are more likely to use informal caring, but policy does not adequately support this. Formal caring policy should also respond better to cultural needs of different groups to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Omar Khan, Christina Victor and Akile Ahmet. *Balancing caring and earning for British Caribbean, Pakistani and Somali people*. JRF, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (900 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/care-income-ethnicity-full.pdf>. Summary report available to download as a pdf (227.50 kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/care-income-ethnicity-summary.pdf>.

¹⁹ Taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/caring-and-earning-among-low-income-caribbean-pakistani-and-somali-people>.

The recommendations are grouped under four themes – of particular interest is Theme 2 Information and Advice, particularly Recommendations 5 and 11:

“Better information is needed on childcare options. Too many ethnic minority parents are not aware of free provision in particular, and there should be a push by local authorities and perhaps health providers to inform parents of the 15 free hours of early education for 2- to 4-year-olds.” [p67]

“Ethnic minorities need greater awareness and knowledge of Carer’s Allowance, as it is not well understood generally, and is likely to have poor uptake among those ethnic minorities entitled to it. There should also be further work to ensure older ethnic minority people are receiving any qualifying disability benefits to which they are entitled.” [p69]

How you can help us ...

LGBT Youth North West have just published this research report²⁰ (which was launched at the recent Schools OUT 40th anniversary conference in Manchester).

“This research was identified as necessary for a number of reasons. Staff members within LGBT Youth North West observed high numbers of young people disclosing experiences, both positive and negative, of coming out, or talking about their gender, sexuality and identity, and the response from significant adults in their lives. The staff at LGBT Youth North West also noted the number of parents, carers, and adults who support young people, including teachers, who are involved with LGBT Youth North West training, requesting help in supporting LGBT young people.” [p3]

Supported by Children in Need, LGBT Youth North West carried out the research:

“128 LGBT people aged 15 – 19 in the North West region were surveyed for the study. The teenagers were asked to discuss their relationships with significant adults in their lives, such as teachers, parents, other family members and care workers. For each relationship, the young people were asked to discuss how comfortable they would feel discussing issues around their gender, sexuality, identity, sexual health and mental health.

33 of the 128 young people surveyed – 25% – said that they would not feel comfortable talking to any adult about issues which were causing problems for them.”²¹

²⁰ Clíodhna Devlin. *How you can help us: how adults can help lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans youth*. LGBT Youth North West, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (2010 kb) from: <http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/How-You-Can-Help-Us-Full-Report.pdf>.

Two particularly strong themes emerged and are the main focus of the report. These are, firstly, “How you can help us’ – a guide for if someone comes out to you”, which draws on the young people’s experiences to produce a list of ways to help (eg being supportive, listening, asking what you can do to help, etc) and also ways in which coming out was made more difficult (eg telling me it is wrong, criticising me, being negative, etc).

The second theme is to look at the role of ‘significant adults’ in the young people’s lives and to identify the positive things that they can do to support them. These adults include parents, grandparents, carers, siblings, extended family, teachers, youth workers, social workers, sports coaches, religious leaders, doctors, nurses, celebrities – and librarians! There are three terrific quotes about positive librarians, eg “I noticed that my librarian had leaflets in the support section about being gay. I knew then that she was cool with it’.” [p22]

Finally, the report identifies significant periods when young people need support, eg age 11 – moving schools.

A brief, but immensely helpful practical report. Recommended.

Health & Wellbeing issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“How the Public Library Is a Refuge for the Restless Mind”

This is an interesting, brief article²² in the “Shared City” column²³, which picks up on research by Liz Brewster²⁴ at the University of Leicester into library usage in Sheffield by people with mental health needs:

“She interviewed 16 self-selected library users, ages ranging from mid-20s to mid-70s, with a range of mental health challenges. What she found ... was that ‘for many of them, the library is a therapeutic place’.

So much so, in fact, that many of them visited a handful of library branches rather than just one favorite, willing to spend time traveling to access the unique aspects of each. One thing that rang through many of her interviews, Brewster writes, is that tone of the spaces soothed the restless mind. Brewster quotes ‘Julia,’ a 50-something administrator: ‘I

²¹ Taken from: <http://www.lgbtyouthnorthwest.org.uk/>.

²² Nancy Scola “How the public library is a refuge for the restless mind”, “Shared City” column, 1 May 2014, <http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/public-libraries-mental-illness-america>.

²³ This column is produced by Next City: “Next City is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire social, economic and environmental change in cities by creating media and events around the world.” From: <http://nextcity.org/about>.

²⁴ Liz Brewster. “The public library as therapeutic landscape: a qualitative case study”, *Health Place*, 26, Mar 2014, pp94-99 (abstract at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24418525>).

used to go in at lunchtime because it would be busy in town and then you'd walk through the doors and you'd go in whichever bit and just go — quiet.' In other words, part of the attraction of the library is atmospheric. But Brewster's research makes plain that the appeal of the library can be much more complex.

'There was something there worth going to,' said 'Nathan,' mid-50s. And yet, as important a place as it was, there was little of the pressure that other high-value spaces might demand. That libraries have regulars and regular librarians was important. It was nice to be known, said Brewster's subjects, and it was comforting to know that many library staff were aware, and accepting, of their mental challenges ...

Her research, says Brewster doesn't have implications merely for the study of mental health. Nor even of spaces. Her work, she says, suggests that we need to broaden our minds when we consider the value of public libraries, and the levels of public funding we put to them. She points to a push in the U.K. toward cost-cutting measures that challenge the standing of the library building, like the sharing of services via digitally networked local libraries. 'It's all driven by,' says Brewster, "that libraries are just the books." But they've never been about just that."²⁵

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

An evaluation of a literature-based intervention for people with chronic pain

Network members, The Reader Organisation, have just published their latest research report²⁶ – the research “investigates whether shared reading as a literature-based intervention was beneficial for people with chronic pain when delivered in a clinical setting.”²⁷

“This study investigated whether ‘Get Into Reading’, a literature-based intervention, was beneficial for people with chronic pain when delivered within a clinical setting. The secondary aim was to establish strong inter-disciplinary working relationships and identify good practice through the experience of running the group and participant feedback.” [p10]

The key conclusions are:

²⁵ Thanks to Simon Wallace for alerting me to this.

²⁶ Josie Billington *et al.* *An evaluation of a literature-based intervention for people with chronic pain*. The Reader Organisation, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (1890 kb) from:

<http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/93146/ReadingandChronicPainFinalReport.pdf>.

²⁷ Taken from their blog, <http://thereaderonline.co.uk/2014/04/30/an-evaluation-of-a-literature-based-intervention-for-people-with-chronic-pain/>, which also summarises briefly the research findings.

“The findings from the study have demonstrated that Get into Reading can have a positive impact upon the lives of people with chronic pain. The results constitute the first step in offering people with complex and chronic pain another intervention that may help to alleviate some features of their condition, with minimum risk of side effects. While the preliminary nature of this study must be appreciated, it has highlighted the need for further research into the reported quality of life changes and into the suggested mechanisms by which Get into Reading may influence such improvements.”

Incidentally, TRO have a number of other research reports available, just in case you have missed them:

- *An evaluation of a pilot study of a literature-based intervention with women in prison*²⁸
- *A literature-based intervention for older people living with dementia*²⁹
- *An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being*³⁰

Disability issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

What PIP means for local authorities

The introduction of the PIP (Personal Independence Payment) has been controversial, as we know. However, it's important that we understand what it involves and how it affects disabled people, so this DWP guidance document³¹ is timely and useful (even if some of it is rather jargon-heavy!).

²⁸ Jude Robinson and Josie Billington. *An evaluation of a pilot study of a literature-based intervention with women in prison: short report*. The Reader Organisation, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (1950 kb) from:

http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/73499/CRILS_Short_Report_web.pdf.

²⁹ *A literature-based intervention for older people living with dementia: an evaluation report by the Centre for Research into Reading, Information and Linguistic Systems*. The Reader Organisation, 2013. Available to download as a pdf (762.88 kb) from:

http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/56538/a_literature_based_intervention_for_older_people_living_with_dementia.pdf.

³⁰ Josie Billington et al. *An investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and well-being*. The Reader Organisation, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (1290 kb) from:

http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/72227/Therapeutic_benefits_of_reading_final_report_March_2011.pdf.

³¹ *What PIP means for local authorities*. DWP, 2014. Available to download as a pdf (109.54 kb) from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303691/what-pip-means-for-local-authorities.pdf.

The Welsh version, *Beth mae PIP yn ei olygu i awdurdodau lleol*, is available to download from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/303692/what-pip-means-for-local-authorities-welsh.pdf.

From the key facts:

- “PIP will apply to all new claimants aged 16 to 64 and existing DLA claimants who were aged 16 to 64 on 8 April 2013 or reach age 16 after that date.
- PIP is being introduced in stages over a number of years.
- From 28 October 2013, DWP will invite some people who live in Wales, East Midlands, West Midlands or East Anglia to claim PIP.
- Existing DLA claimants will be asked to claim PIP at some point from October 2013 onwards, but most won't be affected before October 2015.
- Getting DLA is a commonly accepted and broad definition of disability that is used by other benefits and schemes as a way to identify people who need extra support.
- Like DLA, PIP will be the main way of passporting to other disability benefits and services across the DWP and other government departments.” [p5]

Abbreviations and acronyms

ALA = American Library Association
DLA = Disability Living Allowance
DWP = Department for Work and Pensions
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans

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