

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

Number 31, April 2004

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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.

For a general overview of work to tackle social exclusion, see the CILIP Community Services Group site at <http://www.cilip.org.uk/groups/csg/si/index.html>.

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## Happy Birthday!

This is our 60<sup>th</sup> newsletter – which means that The Network is 5 years old this month!

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## Did you see ...?

### “Mainstreaming Equality”

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> of the LGIU's *Briefing* includes a very brief piece about the Equalities Standard, focussing on some of the issues about mainstreaming:

“Equal opportunity in employment is a familiar concept for local government but in service delivery there is sometimes resistance to an approach that views community needs through an equality lens. Managers often feel that their service is provided fairly and equally and these principles are at the heart of their professional practice. However, the notion of fairness and equality that they embrace is often locked into a ‘one-size-fits-all’ view of local services ...”

### “The same old diversity”

On a similar theme, in his regular column<sup>2</sup> in *Management Today*, Richard Reeves looks at the changing terms for this area of work (equal opportunities, diversity, inclusiveness) and concludes with a really punchy statement:

“The real challenge is not to have lots of black, female and gay profit-obsessed, Starbucks-sipping workaholics, alongside the male Wasp profit-

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Speeden “Mainstreaming Equality” *Briefing* 170, March 2004, p14.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Reeves “The same old diversity” *Management Today* April 2004, p29.

obsessed, Starbucks-sipping workaholics; it is to embrace diverse worldviews, philosophies of life and work, mental architectures and value systems. Otherwise diversity will be all surface and no depth.”

### ***Community Librarian***

The latest issue of *Community Librarian* includes, amongst other things a report<sup>3</sup> of the Conference, “The Black British History Experience – the role of Museums, Archives and Libraries” (which also includes a list of 6 useful resources), and an interesting article<sup>4</sup> about the redefinition of a rural community library in Leicestershire.

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### ***A manifesto for museums ...***

Just in case you haven't yet seen this, the *Manifesto*<sup>5</sup> has just been published. It argues a strong case for funding, although, disappointingly, does not really focus on the role that museums clearly play in tackling social exclusion (although it does mention a number of key developments, such as NEMLAC's MaxCard scheme).

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### **Access Technology Primer**

The National Library for the Blind, with funding from The Health Foundation, has recently launched their Access Technology Primer which is free to all users.

The ATP is a short course in access technologies for those involved in training visually impaired users, as well as those who would like to gain further understanding about working with access technology and supporting those who use it.

The course is a short introduction to a variety of technologies via a series of short tutorials.

The ATP is available at: <http://atp.nlb-online.org>.

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### **Revealweb**

Reveal, the database of materials in alternative formats, has been renamed Revealweb.

The database has details of some 100,000 items that are available from organisations such as the National Library for the Blind, Royal National Institute of the Blind, Calibre, and many more.

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<sup>3</sup> Damien McManus. “The Black British History Experience – the role of Museums, Archives and Libraries”, *Community Librarian* 31, Winter 2004, pp12-14.

<sup>4</sup> Nigel Thomas and Andy Cooke. The Fleckney Centre: bringing services to rural communities. *Community Librarian* 31, Winter 2004, pp24-26.

<sup>5</sup> *A manifesto for museums: building outstanding museums for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. National Museums Directors' Conference, 2004. Available at: [www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/manifesto\\_for\\_museums.html](http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/manifesto_for_museums.html).

Further information is available at: [www.revealweb.org.uk](http://www.revealweb.org.uk).

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## **Reading Africa – Africa’s 100 Best Books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The Southern Africa Book Development Education Trust (SABDET) has recently launched Reading Africa.

Further information about Africa’s Best Books can be found at: [www.africanbookscollective.com](http://www.africanbookscollective.com), and information about SABDET is at: <http://homepages.poptel.org.uk/sabdet/>.<sup>6</sup>

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### ***All our children belong ...***

Parents for Inclusion have just produced this report<sup>7</sup>, looking at the experiences of Black and ethnic minority parents of disabled children.

Further information about Parents for Inclusion is available from:

Parents for Inclusion, Unit 2, 70 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL  
Tel: 020 7735 7735  
E-mail: [info@parentsforinclusion.org](mailto:info@parentsforinclusion.org)  
Website: [www.parentsforinclusion.org](http://www.parentsforinclusion.org).

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### **“Books on the Edge”**

Blackburn with Darwen Library Service has recently been awarded funding by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for a 2-year project targeting homeless and vulnerable young people. An outreach worker is being recruited to work with agencies already operating with the target group in the Borough.

The aim of the project is to engage with vulnerable young people, involve them in reader-centred activities and help arrest the cycle of poor literacy skills by promoting reading as a fun pastime.

Library staff will work in partnership with THOMAS, a drug rehabilitation organisation, Nightsafe, a charity that works with homeless young people, and Blackburn with Darwen Foyer who provide accommodation and training, to encourage and enthuse young people to read by building lasting relationships and involving them in reading activities at a level that is relevant to them.

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<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Hilary Plews (Enfield’s “Welcome to Your Library Officer) for letting me know about this.

<sup>7</sup> Annette Broomfield. *All our children belong: exploring the experience of black and minority ethnic parents of disabled children*. Parents for Inclusion, 2004. Available as a pdf (600k) at: [www.parentsforinclusion.org](http://www.parentsforinclusion.org).

While the emphasis will be on reading for leisure, we will also be able to signpost young people to advice and guidance agencies if required.

Existing barriers to library membership will also be removed wherever possible. A long-term benefit of the project will be the creation of collections of resources ( books, magazines etc) at 6 centres used by our partner agencies which will be chosen by the young people themselves.

For more information on “Books on the Edge”, contact Geraldine Wilson on 01254 587236 or email [Geraldine.wilson@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:Geraldine.wilson@blackburn.gov.uk).

Geraldine Wilson

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## Beacon Councils Round 6 themes

The themes for Round 6, applications for which are due this summer, are:

- Affordable Housing
- Asset Management
- Effective Environmental Health
- Getting Closer to Communities
- Healthy Communities
- Integrated Children's Services
- Promoting Racial Equality
- Supporting Carers
- Supporting New Business
- Sustainable Energy.

Further information is available at: [www.odpm.gov.uk/beaconscouncils](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/beaconscouncils).

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## Asylum-seekers

Wigan MBC have produced a very useful “myth-buster” and local information guide; it's at: [www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/council/asylum/asylumseekers.htm](http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/council/asylum/asylumseekers.htm)<sup>8</sup>.

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## *A tale of eight cities*

The ODPM has just published a report<sup>9</sup> showing some of the successes there have been in reinvigorating “core city” centres (Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield), and also highlighting work still to be done.

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<sup>8</sup> Thanks to Helen Pollock, Camden's “Welcome to Your Library” Officer, for letting me know about this.

<sup>9</sup> *Making it happen: urban renaissance and prosperity in the core cities – a tale of eight cities*. ODPM, 2004. Available as a pdf (307k) at: [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk).

Unfortunately, as far as I can see, no library archives or museum initiative is included, although the report does refer to “cultural” initiatives (these are primarily in the built environment).

### ***Juveniles in custody***

The Home Office have just produced a report<sup>10</sup>, based on surveys of young people under the age of 18, who were held in custody, during the period November 2001-March 2003.

The report shows up considerable differences in provision between different prisons, and also highlights two key issues:

- 83% of boys and 65% of girls had previously been excluded from school
- 37% of boys and 43% of girls had previously spent time in a care or foster home or both.

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### ***Children and citizenship***

A small study<sup>11</sup>, complementary to the National Evaluation of the “On Track” project, has just been published.

269 children and young people aged between 7-15 took part in this study which looked at their understanding of the three elements of citizenship (as defined by the then DfEE in 1998):

- Social and moral responsibility
- Community involvement
- Political literacy.

Of particular interest to us are the findings around activities; as the executive summary says:

“The biggest complaint by children, particularly about the school environment, was that they are not listened to. Few of the children felt that they had any real say at school ... many of the children were sceptical of these [school participatory] schemes where they thought that their involvement was tokenistic.”

“The most common complaint from children about their neighbourhood was in relation to how they spend their time: younger children wanted safe, clean places to play, and older children wanted more facilities and things to do.”

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<sup>10</sup> *Juveniles in custody: a unique insight into the perceptions of young people held in Prison Service custody in England and Wales*. Home Office, 2004. Available as a pdf (264k) at: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/juvenilesincustodyreport.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/juvenilesincustodyreport.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Jean Hine. *Children and citizenship*. Home Office (Online Report 0804), 2004. Available as a pdf (304k) at: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr0804.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr0804.pdf).

Also, interestingly:

“The children and young people showed an interest in and knowledge of political issues. Much of it was tinged with cynicism about national and local politics.”

Related to this report, and looking in more depth at some of the issues facing deprived communities (particularly issues around crime), is the accompanying *Understanding and engaging deprived communities*<sup>12</sup>. (Although this report sounds as though it might be just what we’re looking for, it really is more of a reflection on existing research into crime and deprivation.)

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## ***Transforming outcomes for children and families***

The LGA has just published a document<sup>13</sup> which looks at how the proposals from the Laming Report (*Every child matters*) can be translated into reality.

The report has been produced by an Inter-Agency Group (which includes the LGA, Barnardos, National Children’s Bureau, NSPCC, etc), and focuses on four guiding principles:

- Partnership
- Leadership
- Managing change
- Learning and evaluation.

It concludes with some case studies of “what works”, which include Hertfordshire, Croydon, Cambridgeshire, Nottinghamshire, Portsmouth, Essex, Sheffield and Brighton & Hove.

Sadly, although there are library services particularly that are becoming part of these new joined-up approaches to working with children, none is mentioned in this report.

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## **SEMLAC “Project Hero” conference days –**

*for all those interested in working creatively with excluded audiences*

The Laser Foundation have funded two training days so that learning facilitators in libraries, museums and YOIs can share and find out more about working creatively with young offenders with basic skills needs.

At both days, there will be a series of practical workshops centred on the toolkit produced by “Project Hero” (SEMLAC). “Project Hero” used graphic novels from

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<sup>12</sup> Margaret Camina. *Understanding and engaging deprived communities*. Home Office (Online Report 0704), 2004. Available as a pdf (781k) at: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr0704.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr0704.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> *From vision to reality: transforming outcomes for children and families*. Local Government Association, 2004 (ISBN: 1-84049-374-7).

Reading Libraries and artefacts from Reading Museum to produce two creative courses with the Education and Learning and Skills Units at Reading YOI.

The workshops will include: creating a reader development group around graphic novels; working with members of the comic industry; and using artefacts to enhance literacy skills. Roger Sabin, author of *Adult Comics: an introduction*, and lecturer on graphic novels at Central St. Martin's, will be the keynote speaker.

Dates and Venues: 14 June 2004, The Museum of Reading; 16 July 2004, Chatham Dockyard, Kent

Contact details: If you are interested in coming to one of these days, please contact Joy McAlpine Black, SEMLAC Access and Learning Advisor at [joym@semlac.org.uk](mailto:joym@semlac.org.uk) or on 07818 417635.<sup>14</sup>

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## ***Tackling social exclusion: taking stock and looking to the future – emerging findings***

The Government's consultation document<sup>15</sup> was published in March 2004, with a very short timescale for responses (18 April). I have responded on behalf of The Network, as follows:

### **“Introduction**

I am pleased to be able to respond to this important discussion paper on behalf of The Network (although I have to say that the deadline for receipt of responses does seem to be quite tight).

“The Network – tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries” has some 110 organisational members (mostly local authorities), produces a monthly newsletter, and runs courses and conferences. My perspective, therefore, is from the museums, archives and libraries [MAL] domains.

### **Questions for discussion**

#### **Tackling causes of social exclusion**

1. There is a risk in looking at who are the most vulnerable groups, in that we could be in danger of reinventing the old ‘hierarchy of oppression’. In addition, there are groups (such as lesbians and gay men, for example) who would not be identified in many circumstances – and may, indeed, be invisible – but whose needs may well be as high as others. Therefore, it is not as simple as asking “Who are the most vulnerable groups ...”, but more a case of looking at the specific local needs and setting. To continue

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<sup>14</sup> Thanks to David Kendal for this item.

<sup>15</sup> Social Exclusion Unit. *Tackling social exclusion: taking stock and looking to the future – emerging findings*. ODPM, 2004.

with the same example, a gay man in London might be vulnerable, but is not nearly as vulnerable as he is likely to be in, say, rural Lincolnshire.

Care also needs to be taken to ensure that we do not end up with competition between vulnerable groups for a limited 'pot'.

As I'm sure you are aware, there has been some excellent work carried out on identifying hard-to-reach communities and individuals (eg as part of the Home Office "On Track" programme) – and the reasons for their being hard-to-reach – and this could well inform this work too.

It is vital that this section reminds us that social exclusion is the 'combination of linked problems' and therefore is complex to deal with (otherwise, there is a continuing danger that people will think that any project with a community group equates with tackling social exclusion – it may or it may not!).

I think this section also needs to focus on the big underlying themes – community cohesion, racism and class – and examine how these relate to the causes of social exclusion.

### Hardest to reach

2. In addition to the points made in response to Q1, I thought that the "On Track" analysis of who is hardest-to-reach was very helpful:

- Minority groups
- Those slipping through the net
- The service-resistant.

The last two groups in this list are particularly hard-to-reach. Could the Government support a range of experimental projects/pieces of work, and then develop good practice?

There are also groups that do not really receive much attention at all, but who are extremely vulnerable, eg prostitutes, people with addictions.

I think that policy and delivery could be made more effective by:

- Experimenting
- More effective targeting of resources
- Developing better links between service-deliverers
- Mainstreaming
- Investigating innovative ways of funding good/experimental work
- Pushing outreach as a key means of delivering service.

At the same time, there needs to be more focus on those local authorities that are not keen to experiment and get involved in these areas of work.



### Life chances

3. The focus on prevention and early intervention do seem to me to be the most effective starting points, especially the early years work. However, it is vital that we get it right, this time, and every effort needs to be made to ensure that Sure Start, for example, really delivers differences in people's lives.

However, there are also issues about those who are currently excluded, but who are missed in this prioritising – we cannot just abandon them, so there needs to be some focused way of ensuring that they too are assisted/given the tools to get out of this cycle.

### Mainstreaming

4. This section seems to me to be about mainstreaming in the sense of funding being delivered via mainstream budgets routes; this is important, and needs to continue.

However, there also needs to be a focus on mainstreaming in the sense of 'bending the spend', where local authorities' core budgets are re-prioritised to focus on tackling social exclusion. This, though, brings its own problems: limited funds, in the case of some MAL; how to prioritise; tensions between different service-users (and the need to attract and serve non-users); the political (and Political) issues involved; the need to look at possible rewards for 'bending the spend' successfully.

Via the CPA/BV routes, are there incentives that could be offered?

5. The work that has been outlined in (4) above needs to be adopted as mainstream policy. In addition, targeting, prioritising and localising need to be put in place.

### Successful policy and delivery

6. It is vital that the current priorities, and focus on these, continue. Given that tackling social exclusion is a very long-term programme, the Government needs to ensure that this focus continues and does not get sidetracked/diluted by other issues.

However, at the same time, policies and processes must be reviewed constantly to ensure that they are changing to meet the changing circumstances of vulnerable people. As the situation improves, so the focus also needs to shift.

It is critical that the Government does not decide that social exclusion has been tackled, and switch its gaze elsewhere.

7. Policies (and practices) must work well together if they are to be successful.

Just as one example, there are some extremely good pieces of work drawing together Social Services, Health, Education and MAL to start to meet the needs of looked-after young people.

However, there are also issues with MAL clearly not yet being regarded as important players in service delivery, both at local and national level. Clearly, there are issues for MAL with this, especially if they have not adopted policies and practices that truly meet the needs of socially excluded people; but there may also be a lack of understanding of the role and purpose of MAL at Government level.

8. This is really important! There is currently still too much of an emphasis on numbers and 'hard' targets (eg in the way that the LSC looks at learners), without the need to celebrate hitting 'soft' outcomes.

For example, I have just completed a short project working with a group of Year 8 boys in Enfield – in terms of numbers, these were low (6), but, in terms of 'soft' outcomes (increased reading skill and interest; increased confidence, for example), the project was a huge success, yet this sort of work – which many people in MAL and other agencies are carrying out every day – may not be recognised because of the concentration on numbers/targets.

9. There seem to me to be some major issues here. Barriers which still need to be taken down include:

- Class (and other) perceptions, especially of MAL
- The "them and us" attitude that many professionals adopt
- Bureaucracy and charges
- People's previous (poor) experience of services
- Lack of real consultation.

10. The suggestions outlined in para 4.3 seem to me to be right. However, the key issue is how far any of these is really locally-owned, and what mechanisms there can be to ensure local ownership.

### Future challenges

11. I think that the risks identified are all important, but also think that the following need to be included:

- Growth areas of the UK (eg the Thames Gateway) and the effects these will have on the economy, skills, etc
- The growth in racism and political parties such as the BNP
- Increases in religious intolerance
- Issues around personal freedoms, particularly in relation to responses to terrorism

- Future EU Directives
- Health issues
- The relationship between schools and lifelong learning (especially the feeling amongst many teenagers that schools are irrelevant).

12. Again, I think that there needs to be a focus on community cohesion and racism.

13. I do not believe that any of the areas looked at so far are not still priorities.

However, I also agree with the renewed focus on hard-to-reach communities and individuals.

The most important priority has to be to ensure that lessons learned and information gathered as a result of work to date are actually disseminated and implemented elsewhere (with local variations) to avoid all this vital work being wasted.

## **Other issues**

- Community cohesion is not, as far as I am aware, mentioned in this document at all. There needs to be strong links between this work on tackling social exclusion and all the work to develop community cohesion. This is particularly important if we take 'community cohesion' to be dealing with the deep, long-term, major 'fault-lines' in society, as I think these need to be dealt with at the same time as – and even before – social exclusion.
- MAL are still seen as being outside all this – and they shouldn't be.
- However, there is a lack of awareness by some MAL staff of what exactly the social exclusion issues for them are, and we need to ensure that the key success factors are in place:
  - Targeted services
  - Mainstreamed services and funding
  - Work in partnership, across local authorities and with the local community
  - Sustainable programmes
  - Trained and supported staff.”

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## **Charges for People's Network services**

At the AGM, we decided that I should write to the Society of Chief Librarians (with the letter copied to DCMS and MLA) regarding the introduction of charges by some library authorities, and this is what I wrote:

“At the AGM of The Network on 26 February, we decided that I should write to you to express our concerns about the increasing introduction of charges for the People's Network [PN].

As we all know, PN is one of the great success stories for public libraries, not only in terms of modernising, but also because PN is attracting to libraries people who may otherwise never use our services – many of whom are (or are potentially) socially excluded. A major ‘plank’ in our promotion of the PN has, quite rightly, been its potential to overcome the ‘digital divide’ between those who cannot afford to have access to the Internet and other facilities at home and those that do.

It is therefore with deep concern that we noted the introduction of charges for PN use in a growing number of local authorities. Whilst I realise that the principle of providing PN free of charge was only ever that – and has not been made enforceable – nevertheless, the spirit of the funding via NOF (and the direction given by the MLA) was surely for this service to be freely available. By introducing charges are we not now putting up enormous barriers to the use of PN, just at a time when it was taking off as a major way of tackling social exclusion? The idea of a short period of free use (eg 30 minutes), followed by a charged-for period, does not really go anywhere to resolving this.

We would like the Society of Chief Librarians to consider this as a matter of urgency, and to seek ways of engaging with the Elected Members in those authorities to ensure that the decision to charge is rescinded.”

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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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