

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

Number 35, August 2004

(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.

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>.

Did you see ...?

"I showed them the future and they ignored it"

In the latest issue¹ of *Management today*, there is a timely piece by Martin Hayward, a former head of the Henley Centre, about some of the "surprises" that have hit the UK recently (eg that bank customers prefer to talk to human beings face-to-face in a branch) that were, in fact, entirely predictable. He then goes on to offer a brief analysis of why this is happening – the reasons are structural (eg not being organised in a way that allows speedy response to change); ineptitudinal (huge volumes of data that "lead to paralysis and obfuscation"); and cynical (eg working in a culture where you are rewarded handsomely, even if you fail).

Culture at the heart of regeneration

In June, DCMS published this consultation document², seeking views on the ways forward for ensuring that culture is firmly embedded in regeneration from the beginning, and focusing particularly on:

- Building partnerships
- Supporting delivery
- Strengthening evidence.

The consultation period ends on 15 October 2004.

Further information from George Cutts at DCMS, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH. Tel: 020 7211 6537; email: regeneration@culture.gsi.gov.uk.

¹ Martin Hayward "I showed them the future and they ignored it" *Management today* September 2004, pp68-69.

² *Culture at the heart of regeneration*. DCMS, 2004.

Something to shout about!

The Improvement and Development Agency [IDeA] has just published a document³ highlighting the role that cultural services – sport, arts, libraries, heritage and museums – play in contributing to the 'Shared Priorities'.

Organised under the 'Shared Priorities' headings (creating safer and stronger communities; improving the quality of life for older people, children, young people and families at risk; meeting local transport needs; promoting healthier communities; promoting the economic vitality of localities; raising educational standards; and transforming the local environment), it includes a brief case study of each project, with approximate costings, performance indicators used to evaluate the project, and contact details.

This is a very important advocacy tool, as well as providing invaluable information about some 60 projects.

Living with severe aphasia

This recent publication⁴ highlights the social exclusion experienced by many people who have had a stroke, following impairment of communication.

Mental health and social exclusion

Following the review of this document in last month's newsletter⁵, I have received three emails with some very helpful comments.

Marcus Weisen and Rebecca Linley at MLA both mailed to say that MLA did respond to the consultation, and included in this several case studies, as well as highlighting the contribution of a number of the regional agencies for museums, libraries, and archives.

Guy Kilminster from Rotherham mailed to say that they ran a project a couple of years ago, which was evaluated and written up⁶, and which clearly demonstrated that the arts can be a preventative tool and have significant benefits for participants.

DCMS Public Libraries Seminar 21 June 2004

I was invited to attend this Seminar. Some notes have already appeared in *Update*, and this is intended to be a brief summary of key points only⁷.

³ *Something to shout about! Cultural connections – cultural services and better public service delivery*. IDeA, 2004 (ISBN: 0-7488-9226-5). Copies available from ec logistics, PO Box 364, Hayes, Middx UB3 1US. Tel: 020 8867 3298; fax: 020 8867 3215; email: idea@eclogistics.co.uk. Price: 1-9 copies £15 per copy (+ p&p); 10+ copies £10 per copy (+ p&p).

⁴ Susie Parr *et al.* *Living with severe aphasia: the experience of communication impairment after stroke*. Pavilion Publishing, 2004. £15.95 (ISBN: 1-84196-126-4).

⁵ Newsletter no.34, pp2-4.

⁶ "Can the arts be a preventative tool?" *Journal of Mental Health Promotion* 2 (1), March 2003.

The Seminar was opened by **Andrew McIntosh** (Minister for Media and Heritage) – who chaired the Seminar for the whole day – who stressed his “huge ambitions for libraries”.

Chris Batt (CE, MLA) confirmed that “the tide has turned” and that there is now a national commitment to improvement. There was still a need to focus on transformation of public libraries, which involved:

- Creating a vision and identity – a shared mechanism for strategic marketing, not just promotion
- Leadership
- Sharing good practice
- Using standards and measuring impact.

Bill McNaught (Chair, Advisory Council on Libraries) spelled out some of the challenges facing public libraries:

- Funding
- Purpose and vision
- Leadership
- Performance management
- Further efficiency savings
- How well do we fit into the local government context?
- How well do we take on stakeholders’ and colleagues’ views?

David Curtis (Director, Education, Culture & Social Care, The Audit Commission) agreed that there had been improvements, but also stressed the needs for further work, including:

- Value for money
- Engaging non-users
- How far are libraries contributing to the broader local government agenda?
- And wider issues, eg *Every child matters*, older people, regeneration?
- Do we know enough about how people’s experience of using libraries links to other experiences, eg transport, childcare, education?

The Audit Commission is going to be placing heavier reliance on self-assessment, peer assessment, assessments involving the Regional Agencies, and performance management in the future. We need to focus on outcomes and impact.

The next speaker was **Tessa Jowell** (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport). She stressed that this was a critical moment for libraries – she had hope and optimism, but thought that there were challenges around non-users and young people. Why are 2/3 of the population not using libraries?

⁷ Originally, the Seminar was going to operate “Chatham House Rules”, but, as the press were there, this has now been changed. I am grateful therefore to Peter Beauchamp and Les Pedrick at DCMS and Alison Bramley for SCL for allowing me access to the notes taken on the day, which I have used to add to my own.

Issues that we need to address include:

- What can we learn and apply from broader work carried out on non-use of services?
- Libraries have something of a domineering image: how can we move to be more welcoming and engaging?
- The person on the front desk needs to become more welcoming, rather than guarding the service
- We need to consult in new ways to form and reform the offer
- We need to deliver services that are timely and relevant, and that are more personal – the Government's aim is to make all services more personal, and libraries are an ideal test-bed
- Libraries could become a central focal point for communities
- The huge variation in standards of service
- Are people rating libraries as they really are now, or based on nostalgia for childhood library usage?
- Should we open 24/7?
- Modern libraries are shaped from the bottom up
- Do we need to replicate Idea Stores?

Martin Molloy (Director of Cultural & Community Services, Derbyshire) outlined some of the reasons why Derbyshire had improved (partnerships, searching out funding to deliver new services, staff empowerment and commitment, etc) and then stressed that the key factor was keeping hold of the big picture, and not bean-counting.

Part of the libraries big picture is about freedom – and he suggested that the recent improvements to public libraries were a “few more steps down the road to freedom”.

Tim Coates (Consultant) told us that he was gaining support from library users and librarians: there are huge pockets of excess and unnecessary costs in all the libraries he has dealt with – these are not being picked up, because the audit practices used are out-of-date. He felt that the library world is too closed and too connected to the needs of professional librarians, not the public. The People's Network had led to higher costs per visit, and management problems have not gone away.

In response, **Yinnon Ezra** (Director of Recreation & Heritage, Hampshire) spoke about the way that Hampshire is transforming its service, turning libraries into “Discovery Centres”, a single facility with one reception and one integrated team, dealing with whatever people want.

The morning ended with brief break-out groups (I was in one on “How can libraries be more efficient?”); the reports-back from the groups can be summarised as:

- Joined-up learning – informal learning needs to be recognised and branded as valuable in its own right
- Digital Age – libraries are leaders in this field, and library staff are ICT intermediaries. Free access is crucial
- Social value – libraries are recognised at a local level, but need central government recognition from ODPM and DfES for delivering on strategic agendas

- Efficiency – the public value of libraries needs to be balanced with efficiency measures.

After lunch, the afternoon session began with **Miranda McKearney** (Director, The Reading Agency) talking about the role of partnerships and national initiatives. She talked particularly about the powerful role that the Summer Reading Challenge plays, and announced the start of a renewed partnership with the BBC, linking to their learning campaigns.

Oonagh Aitken (Regional Associate, IDeA) outlined the workings and aims of peer review. IDeA are piloting peer reviews at the moment, and, following learning from the pilots and any improvements to the methodology, will roll out peer reviews over the next 2 years. Those authorities that have been reviewed as part of the pilots will become mentors.

Bob McKee (CE, CILIP) outlined some key workforce issues (pay, recruitment, leadership, skills, composition and culture of the workforce), stressed the need for cultural change in libraries, and then highlighted key developments, including work at CILIP to change the qualification framework; and the work being led by MLA on workforce development.

Secondly, Bob talked about the need to improve the delivery system, which currently is fragmented and disjointed. Libraries need to connect to national and local agendas, and how these dovetail with regional agendas.

John Dolan (Birmingham) stood in at the last moment for Lin Homer (CE). He focused on a couple of areas:

- Children and young people:
 - Have diverse cultures and lifestyles
 - Increasing commercialism
 - We need to invest in the future
 - We need to look at formal and self-managed learning
 - Also need to look at the needs of the whole family.
- Learning, culture and the economy:
 - Link with creative industries
 - Build on the People's Network
 - Look at the facilities we provide
 - Help to develop flourishing neighbourhoods

What was needed to deliver all this?

- Cross-Government leadership
- No more questions – but answers!
- Local authority ownership of these issues
- We need to show the impact we have
- Assured partnerships
- National promotion of libraries' role
- Workforce diversity and development
- A passion for service-delivery.

Finally, **Alexi Marmot** (Alexi Marmot Associates) talked about the design and layout of future libraries, and **Gill Finney** (Director Strategic Marketing and Communications, British Library) talked about marketing – and very powerfully argued just how poor public libraries are at marketing and image!

There was then a brief discussion, and, finally, Andrew McIntosh closed the Seminar by stressing the need to look at poor-performing libraries, using the Audit Commission inspection process to identify these, and then using peer reviews to assist them to improve. He announced some £2m to be used in this process.

“Enriching communities: how archives, libraries and museums can work with asylum seekers and refugees”

I attended this conference organised by ALM London on 14 July 2004.

The conference is going to be written up, and notes will appear on the ALM London Website shortly⁸, but here are some key points from the excellent day.

The first speaker was **Deng Yai** (Refugee Council) who managed to mix fact, passion, emotion and anger into the opening session. Deng outlined some of the background to people becoming refugees, and then concentrated on the major issues asylum-seekers face in trying to enter the UK. Once they have been granted leave-to-stay – in itself a tortuous process – most will become unemployed or under-employed, thus being at risk of social exclusion. What’s needed is a well-informed debate about asylum in order for the UK (and elsewhere) to address the real issues and deal with their aftermath.

Deng recommended that we:

- Raise the awareness of staff about the real needs of refugees and asylum-seekers
- Establish systems to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers receive current information about services
- Encourage refugees and asylum-seekers to access museums, archives and libraries
- Ensure that we are providing high-quality services to meet their needs
- Develop access to IT skills.

As Deng concluded:

“I believe we are duty bound to combat social exclusion; it is a moral imperative.”

Heaven Crawley (AMRE Consulting) concentrated on attitudes to refugees and asylum-seekers, exposing some of the myths, and highlighted some areas of weakness in the opposition to asylum, where she thought we could make progress:

⁸ Some of the speakers’ papers are already available at:
<http://www.lmal.org.uk/news/index.cfm?ArticleID=536&NavigationID=5#top>.

- Methodological issues (many of the opinion polls have been constructed in such a way that an assumption is made that people are negative about asylum)
- Younger people are supportive of refugees' rights and the UK's responsibility
- People have different views of asylum based on their socio-economic and demographic status
- Many people base their views on a general anxiety, media coverage and lack of alternative sources of information.

She saw a role for us in:

- Information dissemination
- Exhibitions
- Spaces for public discussion and debate.

Jon Newman (Lambeth) looked at “Archives as a source of community enrichment”, showcasing the role that one archives service has taken in researching and presenting material on the theme of “Journeys and Migration”.

Darryl McIntyre (Museum of London) outlined the “London Museum Hub Refugee Project” which he hoped would lead to a greater pooling of good practice, advances in work between communities and museums, and an evaluation framework to assess the impact.

Nela Milic (RAM – Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Media Project) spoke very briefly and movingly of the upheavals in her life that had led her to flee to the UK. She is a user of museums and libraries, and they have formed part of her coming to grips with a new country. She urged the need for:

- Mentoring to assist people in positions like hers
- Constant need for research into what newly arrived communities need and want.

In the final session before lunch, **Michael Bell** (Michael Bell Associates) looked at “Good practice in refugee integration”. After briefly looking at some of the needs of refugees and asylum-seekers, he identified some roles for libraries and museums:

- Information provision
- Orientation – how does the system work, and how can we promote access?
- Community participation and cohesion – supporting refugee community development and supporting integration
- Being welcoming.

He then went through basic stages of “Making it work”: making plans, making it public and making it easy, making friends, making it better, and making it last.

The first speaker after lunch was **Helen Carpenter** (Project Coordinator, “Welcome to Your Library”). She gave the background to the setting up of the five projects, and then highlighted the major developments:

- Inclusion of a libraries page on the multikulti Website
- Joining procedures simplified
- Staff training
- Storytelling and library events
- Visits to the library and taster sessions
- Stock and resource development.

She felt that the project had started to place museums, archives and libraries in the bigger agenda, but much more work on this is required. We need to work in the central and local government context, involving our users at every stage⁹.

This was followed by **Adrian Whittle** and **Sarah Henderson** (Newham) talking about the way in which WTYL had been developed in their authority. Their “reality check” is particularly useful:

- Need to be flexible
- Impossible to get the whole picture – one’s knowledge is constantly growing
- Be aware of conflicting needs
- The work is labour-intensive
- Miracles don’t happen overnight!
- The one-size-fits-all approach will not work
- The importance of staff commitment at all levels.

Kate Hinds (The Big Lottery Fund¹⁰) then outlined the role of the new fund – the combination of the Community Fund and NOF, which came into being on 1 June. They do not fund museums, archives or libraries, but do fund refugee community organisations, so they would possibly be eligible in a partnership bid.

Finally, there was a brief plenary session where **Sarah Reynolds** (Salisbury WORLD¹¹), **Helen Carpenter**, **Richard Stanton** (GLA) spoke about Salisbury WORLD, PHF and PHF funding, the role of the GLA, and there were brief questions from the floor.

An excellent and stimulating day – let’s see lots of developments built on this firm foundation.

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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⁹ Helen’s final report on the WTYL project, plus the report of the independent assessors, are available at: www.ilda.org.uk/cms/contentpage/wtyl.

¹⁰ For further information, see: www.nof.org.uk/default.aspx?tc=656&tct=1

¹¹ For further information, see: www.salisburyworld.org.uk.