

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.

Did you see ...?

Recruitment: Diversity

The recent "Education & Careers" supplement to *The Independent*¹ includes a two-page feature on diversity in recruitment, starting with a brief summary of the legal position (following complaints to the CRE and EOC about some 'positive discrimination' advertising), and including comments from Dave Simmonds, Director of Inclusion, and Jonathan Baldrey, Chief Executive of the diversity recruitment agency, Talent – this latter is particularly interesting, for example:

"Far too many customer-service employers use written application forms ... and ignoring key factors such as listening skills, empathy and commitment."

Growing together

The latest issue of *The Organic Way* (OK, you may not see this!) has an article² about the "Growing Together" research which has looked at horticulture as therapy and as a means of promoting social inclusion – further information about this research is available at:

¹ *The Independent* 2 March 2006 "Education & Careers" supplement, pp18-19. Includes: Kate Hilpern "When a positive is a negative", and the comment columns by Dave Simmonds and Jonathan Baldrey.

² Judith Husbands "Growing Together" *The Organic Way* 182 Winter 2005, pp42-43. *The Organic Way* is the journal of "Garden Organic", the Henry Doubleday Research Association – see: www.gardenorganic.org.uk.

www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/growingtogether, as well as details of the two published reports³.

“Poverty, poor people, and our priorities”

You may not see this one either, but the Winter issue of *RUSC*⁴ [see note] includes a guest article by John Gehner, which looks at library provision and attitudes to poverty in the US and the UK. It mentions the work of The Network and also cites *Information for Social Change* – John Gehner is in the process of a series of email interviews with John Pateman and John Vincent about tackling social exclusion in the UK.

Tackling social exclusion – Libraries, Museums and Archives

Knowledge for life ...

This is a new document⁵ from MLA, which shows some of the ways in which we are contributing to the Skills Strategy.

Starting by placing this work within the LSC context, the report then gives examples of work being undertaken by MLAs in:

- Widening participation
- Skills for Life
- Family programmes
- Working together (with the voluntary and community sector)
- Employment skills and workforce development.

It finishes by summarising the key programmes mentioned in the document (eg “The Archives Task Force”) and listing the regional contacts.

³ Jo Sempik, Jo Aldridge and Saul Becker. *Growing together: a practice guide to promoting social inclusion through gardening and horticulture*. The Policy Press, 2005. £17.99 (ISBN: 1-86134-726-X); and: Jo Sempik, Jo Aldridge and Saul Becker. *Health, well-being and social inclusion: therapeutic horticulture in the UK*. The Policy Press, 2005. £17.99 (ISBN: 1-86134-725-1).

⁴ John Gehner “Poverty, poor people, and our priorities” *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 45 (2) Winter 2005, pp117-121. *Reference & User Services Quarterly* is the official journal of the Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association – see:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusapubs/rusq/referenceuser.htm>.

⁵ *Knowledge for life: how museums, libraries and archives contribute to the Skills Strategy*. MLA, 2005 (ISBN: 1-903743-90-7). Available to download as a pdf (443 Kb) from: http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//K/Knowledge_for_Life_8848.pdf.

Tackling social exclusion – Government and Government Agencies

“Improving Services, Improving Lives”

Just to recap, “Improving Services, Improving Lives” is the name of the SEU’s work programme, and consists of five projects – the overall objective is “to make public services more effective for disadvantaged people, in order to improve their life chances.” The starting point for this programme was the report, *Breaking the cycle*⁶, which identified the need for public services to work harder for those with greatest needs.

The five projects are:

- Disadvantaged adults – a project to make mainstream public services more effective for three broad disadvantaged groups: people with low levels of literacy; disabled people and people with long-term health conditions; and people from certain ethnic minority groups
- Inclusion through innovation – a project to explore how ICT can help to address the needs of disadvantaged groups (report published⁷)
- Young adults with troubled lives – a project to improve services for young adults, particularly those facing problems such as homelessness, mental health issues, and substance misuse (report published⁸)
- Excluded older people – a project tackling isolation and social exclusion among older people (report published⁹)
- Disadvantaged people who move frequently – a project to improve service delivery for people who experience a high degree of instability

⁶ *Breaking the cycle: taking stock of progress and priorities for the future – a report by the Social Exclusion Unit*. ODPM, 2004. See The Network Newsletter 34, September 2004 pp2-4 for a review of this.

⁷ *Inclusion through innovation: tackling social exclusion through new technologies – a Social Exclusion Unit Final Report*. ODPM, 2005 (ISBN: 1 -85112 -813 -1). Available to download as a pdf from the SEU website (www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=583), either in separate sections or as a whole document (2386 KB). See The Network Newsletter 51, November 2005 pp4-6 for a review of this.

⁸ *Transitions: young adults with complex needs: a Social Exclusion Unit report*. ODPM, 2005 £12.00 (ISBN: 1-85112-811-5). Further information from: <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/page.asp?id=563>, where the report can also be downloaded as a pdf (893 Kb). See The Network Newsletter 53, January 2006, pp6-7 for a review of this.

⁹ *A sure start to later life: ending inequalities for older people – a Social Exclusion Unit Final Report*. ODPM, 2006 (ISBN: 1-85112-812-3). Available to download as a pdf (1618 Kb) from: <http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=797>. To be reviewed in a future Newsletter.

in their housing circumstances.

In October 2005, the SEU published an interim report¹⁰ which drew particularly on the “Disadvantaged Adults” project, but which also develops themes relevant to the work programme as a whole.

This report begins by setting the work in the wider context, including:

- Delivery of services
- Public service reform
- Equality
- Sustainable communities.

It then looks at the key characteristics of the three groups of disadvantaged adults, and then presents evidence which compares them with the general service user population, in terms of access to key public services, positive outcomes from using services, and perceptions of and satisfaction with services. Amongst its conclusions are:

- People in the three groups “are less likely to be aware of public services – including those being delivered in new and innovative ways”
- “The three groups are less likely to use some ‘discretionary’ public services ...” [p39]

The report then goes on to look at the six themes that have emerged strongly from the research – these are also illustrated with small case studies:

- Information and communication
- Interactions with frontline staff
- Building personal capacity
- Joining up
- The role of the voluntary and community sector
- Levers and incentives.

Some of the key issues in each of these themes are as follows:

Information and communication

- “People are only able to make use of mainstream services if they know about them and think that they are ‘for them’.
- Communicating effectively with disadvantaged groups in a consistent way is a major challenge for all the mainstream services we looked at.
- Information from services can be hard to find and difficult to understand; it may be unavailable, inaccessible or

¹⁰ *Improving services, improving lives: evidence and key themes – a Social Exclusion Unit Interim Report*. ODPM, 2005 £15.00 (ISBN: 1-85112-810-7). Available to download as a pdf (1338.311 Kb) from: <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/publications.asp?did=752>.

inappropriately marketed.

- This affects disadvantaged people's ability and willingness both to take up their rights to services and to fulfill responsibilities associated with them. Having the right information is also an essential precondition of user empowerment and choice.
- Improving the way that services provide information to and communicate with disadvantaged groups could help to make them more efficient ...
- The general principles that underpin good practice include:
 - getting the basics right – making information easier to understand so that everyone using public services benefits;
- understanding customers – involving people and working with partners to get effective and efficient results; and
- using new technologies and outreach – either to complement or to provide an alternative to text-based products.” [p40]

Interactions with frontline staff

- “Everyone using public services – and everyone involved in delivering them – has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Interactions between disadvantaged people and frontline staff are crucial to how successful services are in meeting people's needs.
- Issues relating to the awareness, skills and attitudes of staff can mean that the needs of disadvantaged people are not always met.
- Staff are not always representative of the client base they serve, which can affect service delivery.
- Staff face constraints that can make it harder for them to deliver an effective service to disadvantaged people.
- Inflexible entitlement criteria and service processes can contribute to frustrating experiences for people from disadvantaged groups.
- The physical environment in which public services are delivered affects both service users and frontline staff.
- Leadership within organisations can play a vital role by making a commitment to delivering effectively to disadvantaged people ...” [p57]

Building personal capacity

- People's personal capacity – i.e. confidence, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, knowledge and networks – has an impact on their experience of services.
- Personal capacity can affect how comfortable people feel in accessing services, how well they feel able to express themselves, and how they may be perceived by service providers.

- People in the three groups are often less confident and have less effective interpersonal skills. They may also be isolated or lack support ...
- The general principles that underpin good practice include:
 - services which build and maintain confidence;
 - programmes which develop confidence, skills and knowledge;
 - adult learning;
 - peer support; and
 - advocacy.” [p75]

Joining up

- “The need for services to work in a more joined-up manner is well-recognised.
- Disadvantaged people are more likely to have multiple needs and to rely on several services. When services do not work together it creates significant problems for them.
- Joining up of services can take place on several levels, from joint over-arching strategies to joined-up services as experienced by individuals and staff at the front line. Joining up at one level does not necessarily mean that joining up occurs at others.
- Service providers recognise the benefits of joining up, but experience particular barriers around information sharing, organisational differences and resources.
- Failure to join up is costly and inefficient. Better joining up could unlock resources that are currently wasted.
- There are examples of good practice, but we need to understand why these are not more widespread.
- The general principles that underpin good practice include:
 - integrated strategies;
 - integrated planning;
 - better data sharing;
 - better signposting and referrals; and
 - co-location and one-stop shops.” [p92]

The role of the voluntary and community sector

- “The statutory sector and voluntary and community sector (VCS) are already working together to improve the delivery of public services to disadvantaged groups.
- The VCS has particular strengths in terms of delivering public services to disadvantaged groups, including: a strong focus on the needs of service users; knowledge and expertise to meet complex personal needs; the ability to be flexible; the capacity to build service users’ trust; and the experience and independence to innovate ...
- The Government and statutory providers could improve the way they work with the VCS by:

- addressing specific problems relating to funding and contracting;
- building the capacity of VCS organisations;
- raising staff awareness of VCS provision; and
- helping the VCS to provide robust evidence that its approaches are effective for disadvantaged groups.” [p107]

Levers and incentives

- “Funding regimes, targets and other aspects of performance management (‘levers and incentives’) are fundamental in influencing how service providers behave, including in their delivery of services to disadvantaged people.
- Inflexible service design can be a barrier to delivering effectively to the three groups, who may need support which is more intensive, longer-term or addresses multiple needs.
- Short-term and/or unstable funding, as well as the lack of funding for ‘non-core’ activities, can make it harder for service providers to develop more effective services for disadvantaged people.
- Targets can incentivise ‘creaming’ of those most likely to cross a threshold. They rarely incentivise soft outcomes or distance travelled, which are particularly important for people from disadvantaged groups, and they can have other perverse effects.
- Involving users has a key role to play in driving better performance and making services more responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups.” [p121]

After this, the report looks briefly at “Next Steps” [p135], including inviting comments on/additions to the report. This is followed by a series of appendices:

- Acknowledgements
- Evidence for key services – health
- Evidence for key services – employment services and benefits
- Evidence for key services – education training
- Evidence for key services – housing
- Disadvantaged people in rural areas.

There are also three “Snapshots” – additional themes that have emerged during the research:

- Thinking and behaviour [p91] – a useful reminder of the difference in thinking and behaviour between people who lead chaotic lives and have multiple disadvantages and many service-providers
- Lessons from the private sector [pp119-120] – including effective marketing; the commercial customer experience (which includes the Idea Stores); and working in partnership

- The case for prevention [p134] which looks, for example, at the early identification of ‘symptoms’.

Libraries are mentioned several times during the report, eg services to people with visual impairments [p53]; outreach provision [p54]; as a source of information and for signposting [p103]; Tower Hamlets’s Idea Stores [p119]; and the role of mobile libraries [p151]. However, museums and archives are not mentioned.

This report is a key step in understanding where the work to tackle social exclusion at Government level has reached – highly recommended.

From segregation to inclusion ...

The DOH has just issued four new pieces of guidance, including this document¹¹ – as the DOH website states:

“This guidance is designed to assist commissioners of mental health services in the refocusing of day services for working-age adults with mental health problems into community resources that promote social inclusion and promote the role of work and gaining skills in line with current policy and legislation.”¹²

Amongst the key principles for refocusing day services, the report lists, for example, promoting recovery and reducing social isolation – but also mentions improving cross-sector working, including with libraries (p6).

In launching the new guidance documents, Rosie Winterton MP said:

“People who suffer from mental health problems remain one of the most excluded groups in society. Tackling inequalities and providing opportunities is a key objective for the government and these guidance documents will be a tool to help commissioners of mental health services provide better quality care so that people who have suffered from such problems are integrated more successfully.”

The other guidance covers: vocational services (a framework to provide services enabling people with mental health problems to gain employment);

¹¹ National Inclusion Programme. *From segregation to inclusion: Commissioning guidance on day services for people with mental health problems*. DOH, 2006.

Available to download as a pdf (237 Kb) from:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/13/10/68/04131068.pdf>. The National Inclusion Programme is part of the National Institute for Mental Health in England (which is itself part of the Care Services Improvement Partnership).

¹² From:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidanceArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4131061&chk=WszvKz.

direct payments in lieu of mental health services; and women's-only day services¹³.

Community Engagement

- “Organisational commitment and culture change ...
- Mainstreaming – community engagement has to be part of core work, not confined to specialist teams or one-off programmes.
- Sharing power with communities – engagement is not something to be done ‘to’ communities; they must participate in planning and choosing approaches and feel equal ownership of the process.
- Tailoring and local flexibility – there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach; decision-making needs to be devolved to neighbourhoods ...
- Performance management – key performance indicators need to reward effective community engagement, at both national and local levels.
- Training and capacity building ...
- Confidence and trust ...
- Communication – partnerships must involve two-way dialogue and good quality information and feedback; ... value community input.
- Partnership working ...
- Resources – these are likely to be required for training and capacity building but may be generated through reallocation, from partners, or by greater use of auxiliaries and volunteers.” [p vi]

Sound like a new guide for MLAs? This is actually taken from a review of the literature¹⁴ relating to community engagement and policing – it includes some interesting parallels!

Self care

The DOH have just published a new guide¹⁵ to developing good practice in providing for people with long-term health conditions to encourage ‘self care’.

In the chapter, “Information – more informed patients are more empowered people” [p25ff], the report sets out proposals for greater access to information; the key actions to be taken are:

- “Find out, through new and established mechanisms, what information

¹³ Further information about the other guidance can be found at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/PressReleases/PressReleasesNotices/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4131013&chk=ZCVqlj.

¹⁴ Andy Myhill. *Community engagement in policing: lessons from the literature*. Home Office, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (818 Kb) from: http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/community-policing/Community_engagement_lit_rev.pdf?view=Binary.

¹⁵ *Supporting people with long term conditions to self care – a guide to developing local strategies and good practice*. DOH, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (2 Mb) from: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/13/08/68/04130868.pdf>.

- and support people with long term conditions want.
- What formats and languages do they need?
 - Review the information you already provide for patients and carers, and decide what you need in the future: people need access to good-quality and comprehensive information they can understand, as and when they want it.
 - Make sure that health and social care professionals know about other community contacts, associations and websites.
 - Get involved with patient organisations and groups to understand the best way to provide information and services.
 - Make good use of Local Strategic Partnerships to help with the sharing and distribution of information.”

There’s surely a big role for MLAs in here!

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

“Faith and the Arts”

“A new website called *Faith and the arts* has been set up by Arts Council England, West Midlands to help bridge gaps between religion and culture which have been reflected in recent high profile events. The site, which can be found at www.faihandthearts.com has been developed as part of a wider package of work around faith and diversity ...

The purpose of *Faith and the Arts* is to provide an overview of faith beliefs and practices for artists and producers. Providing a guide to seven UK faith communities, the website explores the impact of faith on programming, audience development and accessible venues ...

The website will also contain case studies, and aims to provide guidance around the differences between religious practice as determined by schools of faith, and cultural practices which are not determined by religious text. The site also contains a contact directory along with information around how faith relates to venues and funding.”¹⁶

Broader issues – Government and Government Agencies

Local Enterprise Growth Initiative

“The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) is a joint programme between the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Treasury and the

¹⁶ Taken from: the English Heritage New Audiences and Access Network [NAAN] *Newsletter* 7, February 2006.

Department for Trade and Industry. LEGI is a neighbourhood renewal programme that aims to increase entrepreneurial activity in the local population; support the growth and reduce the failure rate of locally-owned businesses; and attract appropriate inward investment and franchising – making use of local labour resources.”¹⁷

The first round of funding for the period 2006/7-2008/9 has just been announced, with funding awarded to bids from:

- Ashfield, Bolsover and Mansfield (joint bid)
- Barking & Dagenham
- Bradford
- Coventry
- Croydon
- Easington, Derwentside, Wear Valley & Sedgefield (joint bid)
- Great Yarmouth
- Hastings
- St Helens
- South Tyneside.

Outreach

The DWP have just published a report¹⁸ which looks at the effectiveness of working via outreach.

Whilst this is mainly about provision of welfare-to-work services, the conclusions are relevant to all of our work – for example:

“Outreach staff need to:

- be enthusiastic, friendly and outgoing;
- have a passion for the job;
- have empathy towards the customer group(s);
- share some characteristics with the customer group, eg age, gender, ethnic group, community background;
- have good communication and organisational skills;
- be flexible and prepared to work out of hours.” [p3]

“In the current policy climate, outreach services certainly seem to have a role in customer engagement, in the ‘local areas’ agenda, and in promoting greater partnership working within local communities. The

¹⁷ Taken from the press release at:

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2085>.

¹⁸ Sara Dewson, Sara Davis and Jo Casebourne. *Maximising the role of outreach in client engagement: a report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions*.

Department for Work and Pensions (Research Report No 326), 2006 (ISBN: 1-84123-975-5). Available to download as a pdf (144 Kb) from:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep326.pdf>.

main conclusions coming from this study are that outreach services can be, and indeed seem to be, effective. More effort is required though to understand more fully, and systematically, who does make use of outreach services and what their outcomes from this type of intervention are. Some robust assessment of the additionality of outreach services and their complementarity [sic] to mainstream provision may then be possible.” [p4]

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Kidscheck

Published by the NSPCC and developed by a group of children and young people, *Kidscheck*¹⁹ is designed to enable children and young people to assess how well their club or activity group is doing in keeping them safe and happy. The toolkit can be used with a variety of age groups.²⁰

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
DOH = Department of Health
LSC = Learning & Skills Council
MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MLAs = museums, libraries and archives
NIACE = National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NSPCC was formerly known as the National Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children
SEU = Social Exclusion Unit

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¹⁹ *Kidscheck*. NSPCC, [no date] – sample copy free with an A4 SAE plus first class stamp; otherwise £2.00 per copy. For further information about Kidscheck, please contact NSPCC Consultancy on 0116 234 7227 or email consultancy@nspcc.org.uk. The toolkit is also available in a bilingual Welsh/English format as *Kidscheck/Prawfplant*.

²⁰ Thanks to *Play Matters* 48, Winter 2005 for alerting me to this. *Play Matters* is the journal of the National Association of Toy and Leisure Libraries – see: www.natll.org.uk.