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

Number 73, June 2007

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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.

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Did you see …?

"Class divide hits learning by age of three"

You may have seen press coverage[1] of this new report[2] which, as the National Youth Agency comments, shows that "a child's start in life is still determined by the class, education, marital status and ethnic background of the parents."[3]

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

Working with adults with learning disabilities

In response to a recent request for information about services provided by libraries, Sarah Taggart (Learning Officer, Southampton City Libraries) mailed some information about the innovative work she is leading:

> I run a seven week course called The Library Licence Course here at Southampton Central Library. This course was designed for us by Suzy Roberts from the Adult and Community Learning Service at Southampton City Council. We wanted to make libraries more accessible for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We cater for up to six learners on each course. The learners are supported by two members of staff: one from Adult and Community Learning and me. The course is offered five times throughout the year.
>
> The Library Licence Course covers everything the learners need to know in order to be able to use the library confidently. Each learner has different needs, strengths and barriers to accessing the library: so we tailor the course accordingly. Generally it includes: finding your way around the library, using your local library, using the Enquiry Desk,

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[1] For example, John Carvel "Class divide hits learning by age of three", *The Guardian* 11 June 2007, http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2100041,00.html.

[2] Kirstine Hansen <u>and</u> Heather Joshi (eds). *Millennium Cohort Study – second survey: a user's guide to initial findings*. Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (1.48 Mb) from: http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Society/documents/2007/06/11/MCS2.pdf.

[3] Source: National Youth Agency eYPU, 157, 13 June 2007.

Issue Desk & Return Desk, all aspects of borrowing, logging on to the computers, reading/listening to a variety of books. Activities include quizzes, discussions, games and practical tasks such as finding a subject area/book/CD and, of course reading. There are simple homework tasks. At the end of the course participants are awarded their Library Licence Certificate.

As the ultimate aim of the course is to enable people to use the library, we follow the course with a Drop-in facility. All learners who have completed the course are invited to attend the weekly Drop-in which enables them to use the skills they have acquired, continue to meet with the friends that they have made and practise their independence skills. A member of staff runs the Drop-in and there are different activities planned for each week.

The Library Licence Course has been so successful that from September we will be offering a Library Licence Course for people for whom English is a second language too.

I also run a Reading Group for adults with learning disabilities. This started with one Library Licence student who wanted to join a group. We now have 7 members and meet monthly.

"West Green BEAT"

Black school children from Tottenham launched a major new archive on 21 June 2007.[4] The media project, called West Green BEAT, is based at Park View Academy in Haringey and was supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund. West Green BEAT involved over 40 young African-Caribbean and African pupils who have explored their family histories as well as black heroes in history. The result is an exhibition of 15 panels and a website. The children filmed interviews of elders in the black community. The complete digital interviews recorded have been archived and will be placed in the London Metropolitan Archives who are a partner in the project. Training took place in the West Green Learning Resource Centre and was run by local film production group Migrant Media.

Black Experience Archive Trust (BEAT) aims to document the testimonies and experiences of Black people who migrated to the U.K during the 20th century. Black people have contributed immeasurably to Britain's national heritage, have helped to transform industry and have been at the forefront of struggles in the workplace. Black people have also been responsible for maintaining local communities in health care, social services and other areas. Black struggles for justice have helped transform the judicial system to the benefit of the whole of society. The aim of BEAT is to record interviews with people who have been involved in all these areas. BEAT offers a home to this experience,

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[4] Further info from: tel: 07770 432 439; email: blackarchive@mac.com.

in the form of a digital data bank, and ensures that future generations will be able to reflect and review their history.[5]

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

MLA London Skilled for Health Project

MLA London is piloting a Skilled for Health project in libraries across five London boroughs. The 12-month pilot is part of MLA London's Libraries for Learning programme and is co-funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Department of Health (DH).

Skilled for Health is a government initiative which aims to improve the skills of adults who struggle with literacy, language or numeracy, using health issues as the motivator for learning. People with poor skills for life often find many everyday activities extremely challenging, and tend to be at a higher risk of suffering ill-health. For example, they may not feel confident explaining their symptoms to the doctor, or have trouble finding their way to the surgery on time. They may struggle to understand their medication or to work out how many tablets they need to take. Poor understanding of a healthy diet and lifestyle can also have a negative impact on their children's health.

Following a first wave of national pilot projects, the government has produced a set of Skilled for Health learning materials covering a wide range of topics including healthy eating, physical activity, mental well-being and accessing NHS services. Tutors can choose to mix and match the materials to suit their learners' needs and interests. The materials can be ordered free of charge from the DfES (tel: 0845 60 222 60) or downloaded from http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/embeddedlearning/skilled_health/contents_list.cfm.

MLA London's project aims to reach a cross-section of learners from disadvantaged communities in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking & Dagenham, Islington and Ealing.

The project has the following aims:

- To test the effectiveness of libraries as a setting for delivering Skilled for Health learning sessions;
- To test the effectiveness of the Skilled for Health materials.

MLA London aims to do this by:

- Visiting community groups to find out which health and skills issues are of concern to them;

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[5] Source: press release.

- Ensuring that Skilled for Health sessions are tailored to learners' needs:
- Fostering partnerships between literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) tutors, health practitioners and library staff;
- Facilitating learning sessions in libraries in the five boroughs;
- Investigating the potential for running similar sessions in museums.

For further information, please contact Ann Wolfe, Skilled for Health Development Worker, MLA London (ann.wolfe@mlalondon.org.uk) or Margaret Siudek, Skills for Life Manager, MLA London (margaret.siudek@mlalondon.org.uk).

Health issues – Other Agencies

Social determinants of health: the solid facts

This is not a new publication[6], but contains important background information for us.

> "Even in the most affluent countries, people who are less well off have substantially shorter life expectancies and more illnesses than the rich. Not only are these differences in health an important social injustice, they have also drawn scientific attention to some of the most powerful determinants of health standards in modern societies. They have led in particular to a growing understanding of the remarkable sensitivity of health to the social environment and to what have become known as the social determinants of health.
>
> This publication outlines the most important parts of this new knowledge as it relates to areas of public policy." [p7]

Contents include:

- The "social gradient" ("Poor social and economic circumstances affect health throughout life. People further down the social ladder usually run at least twice the risk of serious illness and premature death as those near the top. Nor are the effects confined to the poor: the social gradient in health runs right across society, so that even among middle-class office workers, lower ranking staff suffer much more disease and earlier death than higher ranking staff." [p10])
- Stress
- Early life
- Social exclusion

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[6] Richard Wilkinson and Michael Marmot (eds). *Social determinants of health: the solid facts*. 2nd edition. World Health Organisation, 2003 (ISBN-10: 92-890-1371-0). Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.euro.who.int/document/e81384.pdf.

- Work
- Unemployment
- Social support
- Addiction
- Food
- Transport.[7]

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Consulting young people: a review of the literature

This useful new piece of work[8] from Creative Partnerships[9]

> "… introduces readers to the field of consultation work with young people. It is not a comprehensive review of all published literature … but it indicates some relevant references, broad schools of thought, major conceptual issues and practical approaches, as a guide for those who are interested in this area." [p6]

Mapping the touring landscape …

The Touring Exhibitions Group[10] has just published their report on current exhibition touring activity in the UK, the executive summary[11] of which is now available.

Amongst other issues, the research looked at ways in which touring contributes to social engagement; the summary report identifies:

> "…measures to maximise the potential of touring exhibitions to develop audiences and improve access to collections and call for a more unified collaborative approach by funders and stakeholders to strengthen the touring infrastructure for arts and heritage."[12]

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[7] Thanks to Brian Ashley for drawing this to my attention.

[8] Sara Bragg. *Consulting young people: a review of the literature – a report for Creative Partnerships.* Creative Partnerships, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-0-7287-1335-2). Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.creative-partnerships.com/content/gdocs/cyp.pdf.

[9] Further information about Creative Partnerships from: http://www.creative-partnerships.com/aboutcp/.

[10] See: http://teg.org.uk/index.php?id=2.

[11] *Mapping the touring landscape: a research report into the state of the exhibition touring sector.* Touring Exhibitions Group, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (1 Mb) from: http://teg.org.uk/docs/TEGfinalreport.pdf.

[12] Taken from the press release, see: http://teg.org.uk/docs/TEGpressrelease(1).doc.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

All our futures …

This new report[13] aims to provide "a coherent and current picture of older people and their contribution to Scottish society, both now and in the future" [p1].

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Young people and British identity

Just as discussions grow about the possibility of establishing some sort of 'British day', the Camelot Foundation[14] has published this research[15] (carried out by the Foundation and Ipsos MORI).

It throws into question the notion of 'Britishness':

> "The research uncovers a fundamental lack of emotional resonance amongst young people with the concept of Britishness which is seen as a static attribute that cannot be changed or re-configured. The findings suggest strongly that current notions of Britishness go against the 'project of being young' and the state of flux that comes with adolescence.
>
> Spontaneous associations with Britishness amongst young people include the Queen, tea and crumpets, and Big Ben etc, which are rather "old world" versions and do not reflect a contemporary Britain or social reality. For many young people Britain represents an old, hierarchical, traditional, political discourse that does not fit with the fresh, inventive, messy and often chaotic world of a teenager. Furthermore, many young people in this research do not know the geo-political story of Great Britain or the United Kingdom." [p13]

It also illustrates the differences between young people growing up in England and those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

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[13] *All our futures: planning for a Scotland with an ageing population – the evidence base.* Scottish Executive, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-0-7559-5254-0). Available to download as a pdf (2.55 Mb) from:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/170155/0047517.pdf.
[14] See: http://www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/default.asp.
[15] *Young people and British identity: research study conducted for the Camelot Foundation by Ipsos MORI.* Camelot Foundation, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (7.25 Mb) from: http://www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/docs/frypbi.pdf. The executive summary is also available as a separate download (1.49 Mb) from: http://www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/docs/Exec_Sum.pdf.

"In Wales, Scotland and for Catholic participants in Northern Ireland they see the English as arrogant, superior and aggressive." [p14]

The Camelot Foundation summarises the issues for some young people as:

"This report highlights an issue for young black and Asian people, who were more likely to recognise the practical benefits of British Citizenship, such as good education, employment opportunities, strong economy and good public services. While at the same time they also felt that they were denied the right to be 'British' as a result of experiencing racism and discrimination from the indigenous white community."[16]

The report concludes that there is an urgent need to alter communications with young people, including:

"Engaging young people in a debate about multiculturalism and reducing fear and prejudice (often inherited from media and adults), through educational initiatives that go beyond mandatory Citizenship lessons in school to more creative activities that harnesses their interest in other cultures and examining their own cultures." [p135]

There could be a strong role here for MLAs to engage young people in just such a debate.[17]

Abbreviations and acronyms

MLAs = museums, libraries and archives

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[16] Taken from: http://www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/ypbi.asp.
[17] Source: *YoungMinds Magazine* May/June 2007.