

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.

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Did you see ...?

Schools etc

The latest issue¹ has a couple of really interesting pieces:

- An interview with Shahla White, Principal of the Rustam Iranian School in north London [p7]
- A “conversation” with Dr Sarah Aitken, Consultant Lead in Communities and Families at the National Public Health Service for Wales, in which she starts to look at ‘deeper’ levels of poverty, such as “access to services poverty” and “participation poverty” (“For example ... you could have a swimming pool on your doorstep, but without the entrance fee, you don’t have access to swimming.”) [p8]

Museum Practice

The Summer issue² includes a number of interesting articles, especially:

- Marcus Weisen “Learning curve”, looking at consultation with people with learning difficulties [pp42-45]
- The “Working Knowledge” section which looks at fundraising [pp49-67].

Public Library Journal

The latest issue³ includes a number of interesting articles, including:

- Stewart Parsons “Live and loud in Lancashire”, rock and pop gigs in public libraries [pp2-4]
- Liz Brewster “Medicine for the soul”, the development of bibliotherapy in public libraries [pp5-7, 11]
- Tom Palmer “Reading the game”, ways of using sport to encourage boys’ reading [pp8-11]
- Helen Carpenter “People, places and relationships”, exploring the role of public libraries in multicultural relationships [pp12-15]
- Eileen Hyder “Play it by ear”, findings of research into reading groups for visually-impaired people [pp16-18]

¹ *Schools etc*, 9, June 2008. Further information from: www.continyou.org.uk.

² *Museum Practice*, Summer 2008. Further information from: www.museumsassociation.org/mp.

³ *Public Library Journal*, 23 (2) Summer 2008.

- Nikki Bi “From Mecca to the Midlands”, outlining a successful grassroots writing project for Muslim communities [pp19-21]
 - John Vincent “Do we have values for what we do?”, looking at the values public libraries need to tackle social exclusion and develop community engagement successfully [pp24-26].
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National Year of Reading

Fiona O’Brien, Assistant Director, NYR writes:

The National Year of Reading is now in its second month and national promotions and activities are focussing attention on what's happening locally. In the professionals' zone of the National Year of Reading website wikireadia, a peer-created guide to good practice for the reading and literacy sector has been launched, and we welcome articles of any length describing your work and in particular with under-served audiences.

Register on the homepage www.nationalyearofreading.org.uk to join the NYR email list and receive the monthly newsletter and at the same time have access to contribute to wikireadia
http://www.yearofreading.org.uk/wikireadia/index.php?title=Main_Page

Guidance to help you create wiki articles can be found here:
http://www.yearofreading.org.uk/fileadmin/user_uploads/Documents/Wikireadia_guidance.doc

Our ambition is that by bringing together work around reading and literacy that is already taking place in the MLA as well as in formal learning setting we can create a resource for people to support reading and literacy as well as showcase the depth and breadth of existing practice. We believe there is much good but under-recognised work going on and plan to use wikireadia to advocate the importance of reading and literacy across a range of policy areas.

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Young runaways action plan

DCSF have just published the Government’s action plan⁴.

⁴ *Young runaways action plan*. DCSF, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (1004 kb) from:
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/runaways/downloads/YoungRunawaysActionPlan.pdf>.

It starts by outlining the context (some 100,000 young people under the age of 16 run away from home or care each year across the UK⁵) and the risks to young people of running away:

- 1 in 6 young runaways sleep rough
- 1 in 12 young runaways are hurt or harmed while they are away [taken from p7].

The report then outlines the safeguards that need to be put in place, especially in terms of addressing the causes of running away (which can be described as “push factors”, eg problems at home, bullying, and “pull factors”, such as running to be near friends or family, grooming for sexual exploitation or trafficking).

There is particular emphasis on the need for multi-agency responses to young people who run away, especially relating to their need for information (eg location of emergency accommodation), and this is where MLAs may well play a vital role.

Ending child poverty: everybody's business

This is the first of a couple of recent Government reports⁶ which have had huge media coverage.

It begins by looking at the characteristics of childhood (and family) poverty, and this chapter is a timely reminder of the effects that poverty is having on some 2.8 million children and young people. The report identifies the following as families at particular risk of poverty:

- “Children in workless families, where the risk of poverty remains high, at 58 per cent, which is considerably above the average of 22 per cent ...
- Children in couple families where one adult works part-time ... have a 44 per cent risk of poverty;
- More than a third of all ethnic minority families live in poverty;
- Children in families with one or more disabled adults face a high risk of poverty at 31 per cent;
- Children in families with 4 or more children have a 40 per cent risk of poverty; and
- Children who live in Inner London have a high risk of poverty at 35 per cent.” [p13]

⁵ According to the Children's Society, see: <http://www.childrens-society.org/ppc/brand/?&sourcecode=STbrand>.

⁶ *Ending child poverty: everybody's business*. HM Treasury, 2008 (ISBN-13: 978-1-84532-425-4). Available to download as a pdf (1310 Kb) from: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/3/F/bud08_childpoverty_1310.pdf.

Chapter 3 then looks at the case for action, pulling together evidence of the impact on later life of childhood poverty; and Chapter 4 looks at Government investment and progress so far.

Chapter 5 looks at “Going forward: towards a contract out of poverty”. This is summarised as follows:

“The Government’s vision for the next decade is a situation where everyone plays their role in tackling child poverty. The Government, communities, local authorities, service providers, employers and families should all play their part in a ‘contract out of poverty’. This is a pledge that all parts of society will do their bit to tackle this blight on children, communities and future prosperity. The Government believes that only through working in partnership can child poverty be eradicated:

- the Government is committed to putting child poverty at centre stage: making the public case for ending child poverty, modernising the tax and benefits system and setting a national policy framework in which everyone can play their part;
- front line workers involved in the delivery of public services need to ensure their work benefits children from poor backgrounds and closes the gap in outcomes between children from low income families;
- the devolved administrations, regional institutions and local authorities have a critical role in helping to eradicate child poverty by leading local action and developing joined up local strategies which integrate children’s services and economic regeneration;
- third sector organisations, such as community organisations, social enterprises, charities and faith groups, should be key partners in planning and delivery at all levels. These groups can make a valuable contribution, particularly in supporting the most hard-to-reach groups and raising aspirations;
- employers must play a part in helping parents to enter and progress in work, balance work and family life and develop skills; business organisations and trade unions can support them in this role; and
- in return families must play their role in making the most of the opportunities available to them to find work and support their children’s development.” [p56]

This is followed by the outline of the Government’s proposed ‘next steps’⁷; all of this gives clear directions about policy and service priorities for public services, the private sector and third sector organisations.

⁷ Practical next steps, in terms of additional funding, have also been announced – see: <http://nds.coi.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=371596&NewsAreaID=2>.

UK Children's Commissioners' Report

As noted in the last ebulletin⁸, this is the second major report on children and young people. The Children's Commissioners' report⁹ to the UN summarises what's good and bad about being a child in England, Scotland and Wales; for Northern Ireland, the report outlines key issues.

The report makes a considerable number of recommendations, and concludes:

"In the UK today, the gap between rich and poor is increasing, along with associated disparities in the well-being of children and respect for their rights." [p35]

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Community engagement and community cohesion

This important new research study¹⁰ from JRF argues that "Government policies for community engagement have been high profile, as have community cohesion agendas – but these have been developed in parallel"¹¹ and explores ways of bringing them together.

The key findings from the study¹² are:

- "The views of new arrivals, as well as those of established communities, need to be heard and resources allocated with visible fairness. New communities are keen to get involved and to have their views heard ...
- The research identified challenges about who speaks for whom when new communities are represented. Informal networks can provide valuable ways for local authorities to communicate with new communities, but traditional leaders do not necessarily represent the voices of women or younger people ...
- New communities are diverse themselves. But despite this diversity, new arrivals experience a number of common barriers, such as lack of information, difficulties in the use of English, lack of time, or barriers to

⁸ *The Network Newsletter – ebulletin*, 4, 8 July – see:

http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/newsletter_digest_next.doc.

⁹ *UK Children's Commissioners' report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*. Children's Commissioners, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (1070 Kb) from: <http://www.11million.org.uk/resource/31f7xsa2qigfc3l9t808qfsi.pdf>.

¹⁰ Geraldine Blake *et al.* *Community engagement and community cohesion*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008. (ISBN-13: 978-1-85935-660-9). Available to download as a pdf (285 Kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2227-governance-community-engagement.pdf>.

¹¹ Taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/2240.asp>.

¹² Also taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/2240.asp>.

recognition, making it more difficult for them to get involved or be heard

...

- These barriers are exacerbated by the growing fluidity and fragmentation of governance structures. This complexity poses problems enough for established communities who are already used to navigating their way around. For new arrivals the shifting landscape of service provision and governance is even more bewildering, making community engagement correspondingly more problematic ...
- The most appropriate way of engaging new communities, who may be dispersed across local authority areas, is not necessarily at the neighbourhood level. In addition, some of their concerns, such as jobs and language skills, may not be managed at neighbourhood level. Community engagement structures are needed at other levels too ...
- Concerns about racism and prejudice were identified as barriers affecting engagement in structures of governance. However, more positively the research has identified a range of examples of promising practices addressing these challenges, involving new communities as part of wider strategies to promote cohesion. Community development support emerged as an important factor here ...”

A key part of the study was to identify what are described as “promising practices”:

“The research identified a range of approaches that would enable newer community members to be heard, whilst promoting strategies for community cohesion and social solidarity. These include:

- welcome packs providing information about where and how to access services and how to express users’ concerns;
- outreach work to engage with new arrivals, including outreach work with informal leaders and networks;
- community development support, from both statutory and voluntary sector anchor agencies, including support to enable new groups to constitute themselves formally and so gain increased recognition;
- ways of challenging negative stereotypes, used most effectively when part of wider strategies to promote increased understanding between communities;
- shared events, including community festivals, sports events, outings and welcome events as part of wider strategies to promote community cohesion.”¹³

There is a lot here that can inform and influence our current practice – recommended.

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

Local Area Agreements and the historic environment

¹³ Taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/2240.asp>.

English Heritage have just published this brief summary (with case studies) of ways in which the historic environment can contribute to the development of LAAs.

As the guidance states:

“There is no specific historic environment indicator; however, this guidance outlines where the strongest connections exist between the historic environment and particular LAA targets ...” [p2]

The document then outlines what the historic environment can contribute to each of the LAA targets, and the case studies illustrate these.

This is a very useful guide to placing the work of the historic environment within the LAA framework – recommended.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Think research ...

The Social Exclusion Task Force, together with Barnardo's, Research in Practice and NFER, has:

“... developed a user friendly tool to assist commissioners and service providers to **select** and **monitor** evidence based services for vulnerable people. There is a wealth of data on ‘what-works’ – both from the research community, local authorities and service providers – yet this remains largely untapped.”¹⁴ [emphasis theirs]

The main part of the tool is a guidance document¹⁵, the key elements of which are:

- How to use research evidence in service planning and selection
- How to gather research evidence to monitor and evaluate your service.

This immensely practical document is supported by other information, including:

- Glossary of research terms¹⁶

¹⁴ Taken from:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research.aspx.

¹⁵ *Think research: using research evidence to inform service development for vulnerable groups*. Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008. Available to download as a pdf (423 Kb) from:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/think_research%20pdf.ashx.

- Building research capacity (eg accessing and assessing research, understanding statistics, user involvement, etc)¹⁷
- Appraising research evidence¹⁸
- Searching databases – basic guidance¹⁹
- Ethical guidance²⁰
- Case studies²¹.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Public services at the crossroads

This report²² from ippr looks at a progressive agenda for public services (focusing particularly on health and social care, schools and children’s services, and police and community safety).

Of particular interest to us is, firstly, what the authors see public services being for – “What progressive ends ... might public services serve?” [p20]

- Social justice: drawing on writings in ippr’s book about social justice²³, the report identifies four principles:
 - Equal citizenship
 - The social minimum – “All citizens must have access to resources that adequately meet their essential needs ...” [p20]
 - Equality of opportunity
 - Fair distribution.

In addition:

¹⁶ Available to download as a pdf (53 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/1_glossary%20pdf.ashx.

¹⁷ Available to download as a pdf (53 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/2_building_research_capacity%20pdf.ashx.

¹⁸ Available to download as a pdf (71 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/3_appraising_research_evidence%20pdf.ashx.

¹⁹ Available to download as a pdf (37 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/4_searching_databases%20pdf.ashx.

²⁰ Available to download as a pdf (27 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/5_ethical_guidelines%20pdf.ashx.

²¹ Available to download as a pdf (51 Kb) from:
http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/~media/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/think_research/6_case_studies%20pdf.ashx.

²² Richard Brooks (ed). *Public services at the crossroads*. ippr, 2007.

²³ Nick Pearce and Will Paxton (eds). *Social justice: building a fairer Britain*. ippr, 2005.

- Sustainability
- Democracy

- Based on reciprocity between citizens

- Emphasis on procedural fairness

- Democratically accountable.

The second area of interest is the report's assessment of "a new set of roles for public service professionals who are involved in the co-production of public services" [p67]. These are as:

- Experts
- Authorities in making difficult decisions
- Mediators
- Advocates of service users
- Supporters
- Advisers
- Social entrepreneurs.

Abbreviations and acronyms

DCSF = Department for Children, Schools and Families
ippr = Institute for Public Policy Research
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
MLAs = museums, libraries and archives
NFER = National Foundation for Educational Research

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