



The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 368, 24 January 2023

Events

Events have been added to the Courses & Events pages on The Network website – see: <http://www.seapn.org.uk/courses>.

Black Lives Matter/Anti-racism

“Edinburgh schools awarded grant to support anti-racism library project”
<https://nen.press/2023/01/07/edinburgh-schools-awarded-grant-to-support-anti-racism-library-project/>

(Source: Twitter, from @SLICCEO, 9 Jan 2023)

“Edinburgh’s school libraries have been awarded funding for a progressive anti-racism project, as part of the 2022/23 School Library Improvement Fund (SLIF).

Administered by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), on behalf of the Scottish Government, the Fund supports creative and innovative projects within the school library sector in Scotland.”

“Prince Harry is wrong: unconscious bias is not different to racism”
https://theconversation.com/prince-harry-is-wrong-unconscious-bias-is-not-different-to-racism-198103?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2024%202023%20-%202523725338&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2024%202023%20-%202523725338+CID_8a0750155f9397d60a3821737c5ce9fe&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Prince%20Harry%20is%20wrong%20unconscious%20bias%20is%20not%20different%20to%20racism

(Source: *The Conversation*, 24 Jan 2023)

I didn’t think I’d be mentioning *Spare*!! However, this is a very important article that highlights the need to move beyond ‘unconscious bias’ to looking at the effects of institutional racism:

“Unconscious bias is useful as a tool for helping people who think racism is irrelevant to them – that is, people who hold power in a racist society – to understand that their biases are the product of institutional racism. But suggesting that unconscious bias is somehow less harmful than racism posits the latter as something only to be overcome at the individual level. The institutions that made racism possible, and, crucially, the people on the sharp end of its effects, remain invisible.”

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

“Why you should involve people with lived experience in your heritage project”

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/stories/why-you-should-involve-people-lived-experience-your-heritage-project>

(Source: *Heritage Update*, 484, 12 Jan 2023)

Terrific short case study:

“The Foyle Valley Railway and Transport Museum’s status as an inclusive visitor attraction is thanks in large part to its work with people with learning disabilities.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Submission to UN Committee on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights

https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Just-Fair-Report-to-CESCR-PSWG-Jan-2023.pdf?mc_cid=dc80a72c31&mc_eid=17c19d737e

(Source: email from Just Fair, 16 Jan 2023)

On 16 Jan, Just Fair announced:

“Just Fair launches a report to the United Nations as the first in a series of opportunities to hold the UK and Welsh Governments to account on their obligations under international law. Our essential rights to food, housing, social security, work, health, and education – are not being respected, protected, or fulfilled. The report is part of lead up to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights’ (UNCESCR) review of the UK, which will assess what is being done well, pinpoint where the UK is falling behind, and identify who is responsible and where things could improve.

In addition, they also published this “companion guide” which summaries the key points from the report:

Setting the scene – economic, social, and cultural rights in the UK: a companion guide

https://justfair.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Just-Fair-CESCR-Companion-Guide-Jan-2023.pdf?mc_cid=dc80a72c31&mc_eid=17c19d737e

This guide is a really useful intro to the state of human rights in the UK, looking in some detail at each of the rights, eg:

“The right to work & rights at work

- everyone has a right to work and to choose where to work.

People have the right to just and favourable conditions at work meaning fair wages, safe & healthy conditions, and rest & leisure time. People also have the right to join and form trade unions to fight for fair pay and good working conditions.” [p6]

Access denied: accessing council services without the internet

http://theageactionalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ageuk_london_mtdg_foi_final.pdf

(Source: *Later Life AGEnda*, 19 Jan 2023)

New report from Age UK London.

“There is an assumption that the COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst for many non-internet users getting online. While this is true for some, there are many older Londoners who do not use the internet at all, either out of choice or because it’s inaccessible or unaffordable to them. Research by Age UK London in 2021 showed that there are more than 200,000 Londoners over the age of 75 who do not use the internet at all. This is a cause for concern for those who do not use digital technology and as a result can feel they are being left behind or excluded from society. [p3]

Findings include:

“Of the 33 London local authorities we sent a Freedom of Information request to:

- Four did not reply, 29 did
- Five, or 17% of respondents, do not offer any offline access to the services we named
- Eight, or 25%, do not offer offline access to Blue Badge applications
- Nine, or 31% of respondents, do not offer offline access to council tax reductions or housing benefit

Of the 29 local authorities that did respond, 17% do not offer either a way to access the services offline, or any support. Several councils said it was possible to apply offline using a paper form but the first step in this process was downloading an application form from their website requiring access to a printer too.

Almost a third of the local authorities who responded told us that they do not offer a way to apply for council tax reductions or housing benefit offline. A quarter told us they do not offer offline support to apply for a Blue Badge.” [p5]

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

Mental health crisis

Author Caroline Aldridge got in touch with me to pass on the details of these two important books that she has written/co-written:

He died waiting: learning the lessons – a bereaved mother's view of mental health services

<https://www.learningsocialworker.com/product-page/book-he-died-waiting-by-caroline-aldridge>

“Caroline's eldest son, Tim, had bipolar disorder. The mental health services he encountered were chaotic, inaccessible, and unsafe. Tim never seemed to be the right kind of ill to get the help he needed. Like many other people with mental illness, he joined an endless waiting list. He died waiting for an appointment.

Caroline was thrust into the incomprehensible and brutal procedures that follow an 'unexpected death'. The collision of her professional and personal life led to consequences beyond anything she could have imagined. She encountered a cruel, system-wide, culture of denial and defensiveness.

Nevertheless, this is a positive narrative about the power of integrity, relationships, compassion, and love. Tim's story illustrates the impact of the current crisis in mental health services and the empty rhetoric of commitments to 'learn lessons' when things go wrong. Caroline's book is a plea, for policymakers, organisations, professionals, and the public, to exercise decency, challenge unsafe or unkind practice, support people in distress, and push for improved services.”

They died waiting: the crisis in mental health – stories of loss and stories of hope

<https://www.learningsocialworker.com/product-page/book-they-died-waiting-by-caroline-aldrige-and-emma-corlett>

“Rising demand, coupled with shrinking resources, has led to a crisis in mental health services. With services threadbare and increasing unmet need, some people have paid the ultimate price.

This stunningly beautiful book is a collection of lived experience accounts, by bereaved relatives, service-users, carers, practitioners, and activists.”

Migration issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations: Libraries of Sanctuary

“Coventry Libraries receive Library of Sanctuary Award”

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/news/article/4525/coventry-libraries-receive-library-of-sanctuary-award>

(Source: *Public Libraries News*, 22 Jan 2023)

Great news!

“The city had adopted a One Coventry model as a way of working which describes how libraries work and collaborate with partners and communities to ensure that residents get the very best that the city can offer. The Libraries of Sanctuary award reemphasises this commitment to people in Coventry.”

Migration issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Gender based violence: the needs of migrant women

<https://senedd.wales/media/zh5helfw/cr-ld15422-e.pdf>

(Source: MEMO [Minority Ethnic Matters Overview], 765, 31 Oct 2022)

Report from the Welsh Parliament Equality and Social Justice Committee:

“Violence against women and girls disproportionately affects migrant women. They can face multiple forms of abuse including domestic violence, sexual violence, ‘honour-based’ violence, forced marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and trafficking.

Background

1. On 14 March 2022 the Equality and Social Justice Committee (the Committee) held a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders in order to inform its approach to work on gender-based violence and abuse [...] Migrant women were highlighted as a key neglected group, whose needs are not being properly met.
2. The Committee established this inquiry to consider the specific barriers faced by migrant women when trying to access services and what the Welsh Government could do to ensure migrant women are able to access services which are fully resourced to deal with a range of cultural norms and practices.” [p8]

Homes for Ukraine: beyond six months

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9709/CBP-9709.pdf>

(Source: MEMO [Minority Ethnic Matters Overview], 775, 23 Jan 2023)

HOC Library “Research Briefing”:

“As the initial six-month hosting period of the Homes for Ukraine scheme comes to an end for many guests and hosts, they must consider what comes next.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme (formally known as the Ukraine Sponsorship scheme) allows individuals in the UK to sponsor a named Ukrainian national or family to come to live in the UK with them, providing they have suitable accommodation to offer. Under the scheme, launched in March 2022, UK-based sponsors commit to providing accommodation for at least six months after the arrival of their Ukrainian guests.” [p1]

This report considers the various options available, noting the dangers of homelessness.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has issued a range of guidance, including:

- “When you have sponsored for 6 months: Homes for Ukraine”, information about next steps when you have sponsored a guest for 6 months, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/when-you-have-sponsored-for-6-months-homes-for-ukraine>
- “Ending your hosting arrangements, and helping your guest with their next steps: Homes for Ukraine”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ending-your-hosting-arrangements-and-helping-your-guest-with-their-next-steps-homes-for-ukraine>
- “Finding a new host (rematching): Homes for Ukraine”, “If your guests are not ready to leave sponsorship and move into their own alternative accommodation, but you can no longer accommodate them, they may want to find a new host”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/finding-a-new-host-rematching-homes-for-ukraine>
- “If you're worried about a guest or their children: Homes for Ukraine”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/if-youre-worried-about-a-guest-or-their-children-homes-for-ukraine>
- “Sponsors of children travelling to, or staying in the UK without their parent or legal guardian: Homes for Ukraine”, What to do if you are asked to look after your guest's child or children unexpectedly. This could include if your guest needs to leave the country, or travel separately, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sponsors-of-children-travelling-to-or-staying-in-the-uk-without-their-parent-or-legal-guardian-homes-for-ukraine>
- “Meet your guests and help them settle in: Homes for Ukraine”, “Information about how to make your guests feel more comfortable in their new home, set expectations about how to live together and communicate with your guests”, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meet-your-guests-and-help-them-settle-in-homes-for-ukraine>.

Migration issues – Other Agencies

“Ukraine: the risk of ‘refugee fatigue’”

<https://www.socialeurope.eu/ukraine-the-risk-of-refugee-fatigue>

(Source: email from Social Europe, 10 Jan 2023)

Important reminder:

“Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, European countries have made tremendous efforts to support refugees. They are hosting an estimated 7.9 million people who have fled the conflict. A total of 4.7 million have registered under the European Union’s temporary-protection directive, which allows refugees to live, work, study and gain access to the full range of benefits in their host countries. Alongside this, many EU citizens have welcomed Ukrainians into their homes.

Yet as the conflict shows no sign of ending, governments prepare for a long war and Europeans struggle with soaring prices, refugee fatigue is beginning to set in [...].”

“Operation Warm Welcome cools: over 9,000 Afghans still in temporary accommodation”

https://freemovement.org.uk/operation-warm-welcome-cools-over-9000-afghans-still-in-temporary-accommodation/?mc_cid=60be8a352b&mc_eid=7d8713d645

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 16 Jan 2023)

“The fall of Kabul in August 2021 prompted an emergency evacuation of around 15,000 people eligible for repatriation or relocation in the UK. Within weeks, amid intense criticism of the UK government’s mishandling of the situation and leadership failures surrounding the Afghanistan evacuation, Operation Warm Welcome was launched, to ensure support for Afghan arrivals to rebuild their lives in the UK. More than a year after the fall of Kabul, over 9,000 Afghans remain in temporary bridging accommodation.”

“Urgent call for Rishi Sunak to fulfil promise to reunite Afghan families”

<https://scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/urgent-call-for-rishi-sunak-to-fulfil-promise-to-reunite-afghan-families/>

(Source: *MEMO [Minority Ethnic Matters Overview]*, 775, 23 Jan 2023)

New from the Scottish Refugee Council:

“We have written to the prime minister, alongside over 100 charities and activists, urging him to follow through on his commitment to resettle the families of Afghans who have arrived in the UK.

It has been a year since the government launched the Afghan resettlement scheme, known as ACRS. It came with a pledge to help the family members of those who have arrived in the UK, but so far there is still no procedure in place for this.

Today’s letter highlights serious concerns about the safety of families who have been separated, women, girls and those from vulnerable religious and ethnic communities who have been left in Afghanistan.

Women in Afghanistan are currently subject to oppressive laws, including being banned from attending high school or university, practicing their professions and are subject to arbitrary arrest.

“Is it time for the UK to change its stance on asylum seekers working?”

https://freemovement.org.uk/is-it-time-for-the-uk-to-change-its-stance-on-asylum-seekers-working/?mc_cid=c7e787babf&mc_eid=7d8713d645

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 23 Jan 2023)

Interesting article arguing for a change in policy. It includes:

“No right to work for asylum seekers is a lose-lose situation. The individual is expected to wait for significant periods of time, with no job or purpose in society, before being granted asylum. Where they are offered work, the study mentioned above found that irregular migrant workers are often treated worse than national and regular migrant workers. Worse treatment included a lack of holiday, sick and maternity pay, being paid less than the national minimum wage, and being subject to abusive and threatening behaviour. Whether an asylum seeker is waiting in solitude for their asylum claim to be processed, or they take up illegal employment, it is no surprise that many feel ostracized and struggle to integrate into society (both before and after their refugee status is granted).

The UK’s approach to asylum seekers working is a particularly absolutist one. In Canada, asylum seekers have the right to work from the moment they file their asylum claim. They are simply required to apply for a work permit, and then for a social insurance number. Both of these applications can be made without a fee.”

Broader issues – Other Agencies

“Dolly Parton is giving free books to children in Scotland, in case you need a reason to smile today”

https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/01/23/dolly-parton-free-books-children-scotland/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=myspinknews&pnespid=rbJ.DilFKfMCgODdpjKIDpeLvBO1X4VwceKuyuR1s0RmmZiA.fqBH_a0a3dLb9ciV_t6pVZfQ

(Source: *PinkNews*, 23 Jan 2023)

Update on the Imagination Library scheme which has teamed up with the Wheatley Foundation:

“The foundation, which is part of Scottish housing organisation The Wheatley Group, is dedicated to helping ‘thousands of people every year within communities across central and southern Scotland,’ and was set up in 2016 with ‘the aim of supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people’.

Today on National Reading Day (23 January), the Wheatley Foundation announced that a total of 1,293 young children have signed up to the scheme, with 25,206 books delivered since 2018 [...]

The books are available to tenants of Wheatley Homes in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dumfries and Galloway.”