



The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 389, 15 December 2023

Events

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

Cost of living crisis/poverty – Other Agencies

“Cost-of-living crisis could have long-term impact on children’s mental health, therapists warn”

<https://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/article/cost-of-living-crisis-could-have-long-term-impact-on-children-s-mental-health-therapists-warn>

(Source: Children & Young People Now *Update*, 4 Dec 2023)

Brief report of a recent roundtable discussion:

“At a roundtable discussion on the impact of the crisis on children and young people, hosted by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), therapists spoke of the ‘heartbreaking consequences’ on children due to worrying about their parent’s financial situations, attending school hungry, and their basic needs not being met.”

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

“Supporting new public libraries projects”

<https://www.gov.scot/news/supporting-new-public-libraries-projects/>

(Source: *Public Libraries News*, 3 Dec 2023)

“A group of eight innovative new library projects designed to enrich communities across Scotland will be brought to life through a share of £106,868 support received through the Public Library Improvement Fund (PLIF).”

Interesting initiatives, including, for example:

- Falkirk: “This project aims to work with partners, and identified groups (traveller community, refugees and asylum seekers and care-experienced individuals) to identify barriers to library use and develop strategies that will enable effective use of services. The project will then develop library services that meet their specific needs of identified groups.”
- “High Life Highland’s sensory project aims to engage with and improve the health and wellbeing of hard-to-reach groups including those with autism, dementia, physical impairment, and those who are socially isolated.”

- Orkney/Shetland “Making a Noise in the North”: “This project concentrates on improving the reading experience for users with additional needs, such as visually impaired and dyslexic customers. Also key to the project is promotion of library services and staff development.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Child poverty in the midst of wealth

Full report: <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/media/3291/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-18-Child-Poverty-Amidst-Wealth-2023.pdf>

Executive summary:

<https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/media/3301/file/UNICEF-Innocenti-Report-Card-18-Child-Poverty-Amidst-Wealth-Exec-Summary-2023.pdf>

(Source: *Left Foot Forward*, 6 Dec 2023)

New from UNICEF:

“Report Card 18 presents current levels and historic trends of child poverty (monetary and multi-dimensional) in 43 OECD/EU countries; projections of future trends in view of current crises; a detailed analysis of policy responses to child poverty in each country; and practical policy recommendations for tackling child poverty.” [Taken from: <https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/reports/report-card-18-child-poverty-amidst-wealth#report>]

Key findings include:

- “Slovenia, Poland and Latvia at the top of the ranking.
- The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Türkiye and Colombia are at the bottom of the ranking [...]
- In the United Kingdom, child poverty increased by about 20 per cent.” [Full report, p2]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

“Rural communities are being left behind because of poor digital infrastructure, research shows”

https://theconversation.com/rural-communities-are-being-left-behind-because-of-poor-digital-infrastructure-research-shows-218062?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%207%202023%20-%202817128522&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%207%202023%20-%202817128522+CID_3bc1fee31b58378a07599da240c2655f&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Rural%20communities%20are%20being%20left%20behind%20because%20of%20poor%20digital%20infrastructure%20research%20shows

(Source: *The Conversation*, 7 Dec 2023)

“In an era where businesses and households depend on the internet for everything from marketing to banking and shopping, the lack of adequate digital access can be a significant hurdle. And our recent research shows that many homes and businesses in the UK are being left stranded in the digital age.

Our two studies focused on a rural county in Wales, Ceredigion, where the lack of reliable digital infrastructure worsened the impacts of the pandemic on families and businesses. Poor digital accessibility and connectivity exacerbated the stress levels of families who were already having to juggle home schooling and working from home.

Similarly, businesses had to struggle with issues around internet provision, availability of effective digital infrastructure and digital proficiency while working and running businesses from home.”

Two Nations: the state of poverty in the UK – an interim report on the state of the nation

https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CSJ-Two_Nations.pdf

(Source: *Left Foot Forward*, 11 Dec 2023)

“20 years after the Centre for Social Justice’s (CSJ) seminal report, *Breakdown Britain*, when it first shone a light into the darkest corners of the UK, the CSJ have established the Social Justice Commission. Our task was to first conduct an unflinching enquiry into what life is like for those struggling the most in the UK today, and then consider a way forward to address the root causes of poverty. *Two Nations* is the first stage of that process, a report into the State of the Nation.

As Commissioners of that investigation, we have sought to ensure that no voice is left unheard so that no person’s potential may be left unrealised. We have hosted five landmark “Big Listen” events across the UK, hearing from over 250 frontline charities, social enterprises, and local organisations, working with people in the toughest situations in the country. We spoke to dozens more in meetings and lived experience roundtables to understand the biggest challenges they saw in the fight against poverty. And we have polled over 6,000 people, more than half of whom were from the poorest communities in the UK, to ensure their voices are heard and their lives understood.

What we have found is a deeply divided society – what we have called ‘two nations’.

In short, the state of our nation is unwell, with the deep systemic problems facing those at the bottom of society in danger of becoming entrenched. We have taken evidence from hard-pressed communities across the nation and the message is the same; for too many Britain is broken and the gap between the haves and have-nots is in danger of becoming a chasm.” [p8]

NB Fuller assessment to appear in *The Network Newsletter*.

Who decides? Influence and inequality in British democracy

<https://www.ippr.org/files/2023-12/who-decides-dec-23.pdf>

(Source: email from The Equality Trust, Dec 2023)

New report from IPPR, which has had some media coverage already:

“If there is one thing that unites people in this country, it is their disdain for Westminster. People have generally had enough of paying for the mistakes of politicians. This deeply held sentiment will not be resolved by a new set of policymakers without new relations of power.

This report looks at how power and influence are distributed unequally across our society. It argues that the next wave of democratic reform should be guided by the principle of political equality. If people are to once again be authors of their own lives, to once again feel secure, they must sense they have influence in the collective decision-making endeavour that is democracy.” [Taken from: <https://www.ippr.org/publications/who-decides>]

NB Fuller assessment to appear in *The Network Newsletter*.

Diversity in books and other materials for children & young people
Reflecting realities – survey of ethnic representation within UK children’s literature 2022

<https://clpe.org.uk/research/clpe-reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-childrens-literature-1>

(Source: CILIP YLG *Newsletter*, Dec 2023)

“This is the sixth Reflecting Realities report for books published in 2022 (focused on diversity and inclusion in children's books)

The annual CLPE survey, which is funded by Arts Council England, launched in 2017 with the key focus of determining the extent and quality of ethnic minority characters featured within Picturebooks, Fiction and Non-Fiction for ages 3–11 published in the UK. The publication of this year's survey was also supported through a kind donation from Inclusive Books for Children.

The report shows a sustained upward trend in the volume of inclusive and representative literature published for children in the UK.

Key findings include:

- 30% of the children’s titles published in 2022 featured racially minoritised characters, up from 4% in the first report in 2017.
- For the first year in its history the report shows a decrease in the presence of racially minoritised characters in picturebooks and non-fiction.
- This report welcomes and highlights the breadth of genres representing racially minoritised characters.” [Taken from:

<https://clpe.org.uk/research/clpe-reflecting-realities-survey-ethnic-representation-within-uk-childrens-literature-1>]

Migration issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

“ONS revises last year’s net migration figure up to 745,000 but estimates that it fell to just over 670,000 in most recent figures”

<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/press/ons-revises-last-years-net-migration-figure-up-to-745000-but-estimates-that-it-fell-to-just-over-670000-in-most-recent-figures/>

Very useful summary of/commentary on the latest figures.

This gives more of a context to the recent stats, as some media have conflated all the new arrivals into one figure – which makes it appear as though they are all coming here for the same purpose – and there has also been a dangerous conflation with the (wrongly used) term, “illegal immigration”.

There has been some useful media discussion, for example:

“Laura Kuenssberg: Questions politicians can’t seem to answer on immigration”

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67530919>

This includes:

“It’s fascinating to crunch those numbers. Nearly a million people from outside the EU came to live in the UK last year (the overall net migration number is lower because that’s the difference between those who arrive and those who depart). There were about a quarter of a million Indians, the next biggest group were Nigerian, then Chinese, Pakistani, then Ukrainian, according to the ONS.

The most common reason was to come to study at our universities and colleges (nearly four in 10), but around a third came to work, with a particularly staggering increase in the numbers coming to work in health and social care.”

This makes it very clear that many of those arriving are coming here for work or study. The potential impact of limiting the numbers is explored in:

“Without more immigrants elderly people will suffer”

<https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/news/home-affairs/without-more-immigrants-elderly-people-will-suffer/>

(Source: *Later Life AGenda*, 27 Nov 2023)

“‘Many care homes wouldn’t be here without foreign workers:’ fears over Tories’ plans to limit immigration”

https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/25/care-homes-foreign-workers-tories-plans-limit-immigration?mc_cid=21fd128adc&mc_eid=7d8713d645

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 27 Nov 2023)

The Government is in the throes of trying to reduce the number of people arriving – presumably for work or study – by, for example, introducing new salary requirements for those arriving. The likely problems with this are captured in:

“Just the rich can do it’: our research shows how immigration income requirements devastate families”

https://theconversation.com/just-the-rich-can-do-it-our-research-shows-how-immigration-income-requirements-devastate-families-219246?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%206%202023%20-%202815328506&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20December%206%202023%20-%202815328506+CID_0ed40d598d28cc1f874cdb787e52b131&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Just%20the%20rich%20can%20do%20it%20our%20research%20shows%20how%20immigration%20income%20requirements%20devastate%20families

“The government has announced a host of new restrictions aimed at cutting net migration to the UK. Headline announcements include increasing the salary requirements for skilled foreign workers from £26,200 to £38,700, and banning health and care workers from bringing family dependants to the UK.

In the fine print is a doubling of the minimum income requirement (MIR) for family visas to £38,700. This means that many British citizens will be unable to bring their non-British spouse or partner to the UK. If implemented, it will cause the separation of thousands of couples and of children and parents.”

“Irregular migration to the UK, year ending September 2023”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-september-2023/irregular-migration-to-the-uk-year-ending-september-2023#:~:text=In%20the%20year%20ending%20September,in%20July%20to%20September%202022>.

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 4 Dec 2023)

This is a useful summary of who is arriving in small boats (and is not the picture created by some of the media):

“In the year ending September 2023, a quarter of small boat arrivals were Afghans (8,994) and over the last 2 years (October 2021 to September 2023) Afghans were the most common nationality amongst small boat arrivals, as shown in Figure 4.

Albanians made up a substantial proportion of small boat arrivals in July to September (Q3) 2022. However, since then the number of Albanian small boat arrivals has declined, with 2,048 arrivals in the year ending

September 2023, compared to 12,024 arrivals in the year ending September 2022 (an 83% decrease).

Iranians have been the most commonly detected nationality over the last 5 years, since January 2018, making up 19% of all small boat arrivals. Whilst they were no longer the top nationality in the year ending September 2023, as they were in 2018 to 2021, they were the second highest detected nationality. Iraqi and Syrian nationals have also regularly been detected arriving by small boat and they ranked third and sixth respectively for the year ending September 2023.

Other notable nationalities arriving by small boat in the year ending September 2023 are Turkish (2,909) and Eritrean (2,890) nationals, who ranked fourth and fifth respectively for the year and accounted for 8% of small boat arrivals each. However, they were the second and third most common nationalities in the latest 6 months (April to September 2023). Arrivals of Turkish nationals were almost 4 times higher compared to the year ending September 2022 (749).”

Migration issues – Other Agencies

Surviving in poverty: a report documenting life on asylum support

<https://asylummatters.org/app/uploads/2023/12/Asylum-Matters-Surviving-in-Poverty-Report-A4-SINGLES-Dec-2023.pdf>

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 11 Dec 2023)

“In 2020 Asylum Matters published research which uncovered the challenges people face living on asylum support. Three years on and in the midst of an unprecedented increase in the cost of living, we wanted to get a fresh insight into people’s experiences. We surveyed over 300 people currently living on asylum support. In this report, we hear the everyday struggles to even buy the basics like food and how the cost of living crisis is having a devastating impact.” [p2]

LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

Our identities under arrest: a global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions

https://ilga.org/downloads/Our_Identities_Under_Arrest_2023.pdf

(Source: Peter Tatchell Foundation *Weekly*, #279, 7 Dec 2023)

Second edition (Nov 2023) of this important ILGA report. It’s a huge undertaking – poss the best summary is:

“Since 2021, five countries have decriminalised same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults. Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Singapore, and Mauritius have all taken steps toward equality for our communities. In Guyana, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Namibia and elsewhere, we have seen steps at varying levels of the State which give us hope that the third edition of this report will contain fewer entries, not more.

But it is perhaps unwise to think in these terms. Any apparent trends in one direction can unexpectedly change course. In 2023 Uganda adopted aggressive new legislation, the negative impact of which is already being felt across the region. Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal have made attempts to also aggravate their existing legislation, while Niger, Mali, Iraq and Indonesia have experienced increased efforts to formally criminalise our communities where no law existed before. Experience thus tells us that the path to equality is rarely a straight line.” [p11]

“Two-thirds of LGBTQ+ Brits avoid holding hands with their partners over safety fears”

<https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/12/04/lgbtq-uk-holding-hands-safety-fear-hate-crime/>

(Source: Peter Tatchell Foundation *Weekly*, #279, 7 Dec 2023)

“Research has shown that a clear majority of British LGBTQ+ people have avoided holding hands with their partners in public in the last year, out of fear of a negative reaction [...]

This finding comes amid rising LGBTQ+ hate crime rates across the UK and follows a number of high profile hate crime incidents, including a lesbian couple being harassed on the London Underground, Drag Race UK star Pixie Polite being threatened with a ‘whisky bottle stabbing’ and the attack on two men outside the Two Brewers in Clapham”

Broader issues – Other Agencies

This must be the place: a new vision for community wealth and power

<https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Building-community-wealth-and-power-FINAL.pdf>

(Source: email from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, 23 Nov 2023)

“Weighing up the options when it comes to the stewardship and development of our local economies is extremely challenging for local government. With a growing number of councils now facing bankruptcy, local government continues to be hampered by inadequate funding settlements which in turn affects its capacity and ability to long term plan.

Nevertheless, progressive frontiers continue to advance and in this paper we further develop the argument for local action through the lens of community wealth building: where the wealth that exists, and is created, flows to the people and communities who need this the most, rather than trickling out to those who can best help themselves.” [p5]

The paper concludes with recommendations for local partners and for central government. The former are useful for us to consider, so I’ll include more on this in the next Newsletter.

NB Fuller assessment to appear in *The Network Newsletter*.