



The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 394, 23 February 2024

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

UK Poverty 2024: the essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK

https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk?utm_campaign=1030939_January%202024&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Joseph%20Rowntree%20Foundation&dm_i=7ADY,M3H7,1R494R,2VWQU,1

(Source: *JRF Newsletter*, Jan 2024)

New report from JRF.

The summary of key findings is listed on the website, and the full report is also available to download. Possibly the most striking finding is:

“More than 1 in 5 people in the UK (22%) were in poverty in 2021/22 – 14.4 million people. This included:

- 8.1 million (or around 2 in 10) working-age adults
- 4.2 million (or nearly 3 in 10) children
- 2.1 million (or around 1 in 6) pensioners.

Poverty rates have returned to around their pre-pandemic levels, as middle-income household incomes rose at the same time as a range of temporary coronavirus-related support was withdrawn.”

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

“The UK government aims to stop publishing stats on homeless people’s deaths – here’s why that’s a problem”

https://theconversation.com/the-uk-government-aims-to-stop-publishing-stats-on-homeless-peoples-deaths-heres-why-thats-a-problem-223879?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2023%202024%20-%202886729308&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2023%202024%20-%202886729308+CID_03349472582131c2fe563a664d5f400f&utm_source=ca

[mpaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=The%20UK%20government%20aims%20to%20stop%20publishing%20stats%20on%20homeless%20peoples%20deaths%20%20heres%20why%20thats%20a%20problem](#)

(Source: *The Conversation*, 23 Feb 2024)

“The UK government is consulting on plans to stop publishing vital statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on deaths of homeless people. This is part of a wider review of mortality statistics including deaths in care homes and winter mortality [...]

The absence of data concerning homeless populations is not a new phenomenon. It underlines the wider invisibility from which unhoused people suffer.

The way people sleeping rough are counted involves less-than-perfect methods. In 2022, 80% of local authorities in England gauged numbers of rough sleepers using an ‘evidence-based estimate meeting’. This involves local agencies (such as charities, outreach teams and homelessness accommodation services) giving an informed estimate of how many people might be sleeping rough on a typical night. Only 20% of local authorities actually counted the people they saw sleeping rough [...]

At a time when evictions are rising and the affordable housebuilding system is set to all but collapse, deaths of homeless people is a critical political issue. The UK government needs to take responsibility for it.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

NASPLY

<https://nasplyproject.eu/>

(Source: email from Simon Wallace, 29 Jan 2024)

“NASPLY is an Erasmus+ project that aims to foster social integration, solidarity and volunteering among young people and young marginalised people, develop their digital, entrepreneurial and life skills and raise their environmental awareness through nature and social permaculture, non-formal education, and social and green entrepreneurship.”

The produce a regular newsletter, the Jan 2024 one is available at:

<https://nasplyproject.eu/news/>.

NASPLY stands for Nature and Social Permaculture Learning for Youth (and is a play on the Maltese word for the loquat, which is 'naspli').

The Prince’s Trust NatWest Youth Index 2024

https://assets.ctfassets.net/gg0roodynp09/1dwzhtDnn0c2fMyH7AGZTC/434c31c34cfd896a735c11261e2c98af/DSN6204_Princes_Trust_Youth_Index_2024.pdf

The latest edition of the important Youth Index has just been published:

“The Index, which measures how young people feel across different aspects of their lives, finds the lowest scoring element when looking at young people’s wellbeing this year is money, which has hit the lowest level recorded since the study began 15 years ago. Happiness in mental health remains the second lowest scoring aspect after money.

The report suggests that poor mental health is having a devastating impact on young people’s education and early careers. One in five young people (21 per cent) said they have missed school or work in the past year due to their mental health and more than a third (35 per cent) worry their mental health will stop them achieving their career goals.

Despite these challenges, one of the more encouraging findings is that more than two thirds of young people (68 per cent) feel determined to achieve their goals in life. The majority see having a job as beneficial to their life and future, not just to realise financial stability, but also to benefit other aspects of their lives, such as their mental health.” [p7]

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

Empathy LAB: “The 2024 Read for Empathy collection is here!”

<https://www.empathylab.uk/RFE-2024>

(Source: email from Empathy Lab, 8 Feb 2024)

Launch of the 2024 collection and supporting resources in readiness for Empathy Day, Thurs 6 June.

“Maternal death rates in the UK have increased to levels not seen for almost 20 years – experts explain why”

https://theconversation.com/maternal-death-rates-in-the-uk-have-increased-to-levels-not-seen-for-almost-20-years-experts-explain-why-221351?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2015%202024%20-%202879029221&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2015%202024%20-%202879029221+CID_980a2bf6f8241ed234e2f5bd6ebee11a&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Maternal%20death%20rates%20in%20the%20UK%20have%20increased%20to%20levels%20not%20seen%20for%20almost%2020%20years%20%20experts%20explain%20why

(Source: *The Conversation*, 15 Feb 2024)

Important article:

“Recent data from the UK show that death rates during pregnancy and the period shortly after are reaching levels not seen in the country for almost 20 years. It is important to understand why this is happening and what needs to be done to stop this worrying trend.”

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

“Sensational Museum project seeks pilot museums to develop new access tools”

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/02/sensational-museum-project-seeks-pilot-museums-to-develop-new-access-tools/#msdynttrid=wseXjIOz6G8Kyz7NVKEF3zE0aY76CAT5XrGjmJqB4mo>

(Source: Museums Association email updates, 9 Feb 2024)

“The Sensational Museum project is seeking a range of museums across the UK to help pilot and develop multisensory processes and tools that better serve both disabled and non-disabled visitors.

Launched last year, the £1m research project is exploring how access and inclusion can be transformed by putting disability at the centre of museum practice. The goal of the scheme is to challenge the hierarchical split between museum provision for disabled and non-disabled people, and create a museum that ‘works for everyone’.”

Further info on the project and how to apply at:

<https://sensationalmuseum.org/2024/01/31/applications-open/>.

Migration issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

“Changes to legal migration rules for family and work visas in 2024”

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9920/>

(Source: *Heritage Update*, 511, 9 Feb 2024)

The HOC Library has just published this “Research Briefing” which outlines immigration changes announced in December 2023, including to the minimum income to sponsor a spouse/partner visa.

“House of Commons Written Answers: Other Immigration and Asylum – Immigration Controls”

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-02-01/12688>

(Source: *MEMO [Minority Ethnic Matters Overview]*, 821, 19 Feb 2024)

This written answer sets out the current Government position:

“The Government remains completely committed to reducing levels of legal migration. Our points-based immigration system allows us to control who comes to the UK to work, study and visit. In May 2023, we took decisive action to tackle the substantial rise in the number of students bringing dependants to the UK. These reforms have now been implemented.

On 4 December, the Home Secretary announced a new package of measures to further reduce legal net migration. These include: limitations on family dependants being brought in by care workers and senior care workers; increasing the salary threshold for the Skilled Worker route;

commissioning the Migration Advisory Committee to review the Shortage Occupation List and raising the minimum income requirement progressively over the next few years.

This package of measures, taken together with the measures the Government announced in May 2023 to restrict the number of overseas students able to bring dependants, means that around 300,000 people who were eligible to come to the UK last year would not be able to do so in future. We keep all our immigration policies under review to ensure they best serve the UK and reflect the public's priorities, including filling skills gaps and growing the economy."

"Ukraine visa schemes to be extended by 18 months"

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-68329715>

(Source: MEMO [*Minority Ethnic Matters Overview*], 821, 19 Feb 2024)

Just announced:

"Ukrainians who came to the UK following the Russian invasion will be able to apply for 18-month extensions to their visas, the government has announced."

However, according to *Free Movement*:

"This process will require an application, and that process will only open early next year. In the meantime, people will continue to face problems renting properties or finding jobs due to the short term nature of their leave, and this will only worsen as the expiry date for their current grant of leave approaches." [Taken from: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 19 Feb 2024]

Migration issues – Other Agencies

Supporting unaccompanied children who arrive in the UK and are at risk of going missing (Good Practice Guidance)

<https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Missing-unaccompanied-children-good-practice-guidance-1.pdf>

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 12 Feb 2024)

Useful background information, looking at why young people go missing, and some of the support that may be available.

"'Migrants and refugees' versus 'migrants, including refugees'"

<https://migrantsrights.org.uk/projects/wordsmatter/migrants-and-refugees-versus-migrants-including-refugees/>

(Source: Migrants Rights Network *Newsletter*, Feb 2024)

Useful post in their "Words Matter" series.

"The term migrant is a general umbrella term, which encompasses refugees, asylum seekers, international students, migrant workers, undocumented migrants and many other migrant groups. Refugees are migrants: they are a subgroup of migrants with protection needs and

rights. Placing an ‘and’ in between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees’ incorrectly implies that refugees are not a subgroup of migrants, and also begins to reinforce divisive narratives.”

“Hostile environment policies linked to prolonged distress in people with Black Caribbean ancestry”

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2024/feb/hostile-environment-policies-linked-prolonged-distress-people-black-caribbean-ancestry>

(Source: *MEMO [Minority Ethnic Matters Overview]*, 821, 19 Feb 2024)

New research results:

“Psychological distress increased among people with Black Caribbean heritage in the UK, relative to the White population, following the 2014 Immigration Act and the Windrush scandal, finds a new study led by UCL researchers.”

The article summarises the research paper (with a link to the full report at:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(23\)00412-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(23)00412-1/fulltext)).

“Morecambe Bay cockling tragedy: 20 years on, remembering the victims and their impact on modern slavery law”

https://theconversation.com/morecambe-bay-cockling-tragedy-20-years-on-remembering-the-victims-and-their-impact-on-modern-slavery-law-222631?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%206%202024%20-%202870329126&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%206%202024%20-%202870329126+CID_c2214f96b62a701a55acbda85a1aac13&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Morecambe%20Bay%20cockling%20tragedy%2020%20years%20on%20remembering%20the%20victims%20and%20their%20impact%20on%20modern%20slavery%20law

(Source: *The Conversation*, 6 Feb 2024)

Important article, setting this tragedy in context – and looking at its impact on modern slavery law.

“Crime and security in far-right discourse”

<https://www.socialeurope.eu/crime-and-security-in-far-right-discourse>

(Source: *Social Europe Newsletter*, 23 Feb 2024)

Important article:

“Protests in Ireland against the housing of single male asylum-seekers highlight the role played by security in far-right discourse [...]

“We urgently need to examine how nativist parties construct migrants as racialised ‘Others’ who are dangerous to the White national body, including narratives of migrants as a sexual threat. What emotions are at play and how do we best construct counter-narratives? Perhaps most important of all, how do these tropes enter the ‘mainstream’?”

LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“Meet The Superhero Librarians Fighting For Their Queer Communities”

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/book-bans-librarians-supporting-queer-kids_n_65c4f1bfe4b0fb721d6014ac

(Source: *Public Libraries News*, 11 Feb 2024)

Just in case you haven't seen this terrific article, subtitled “Book bans are an unfortunate reality. But these librarians are devoted to supporting and protecting queer kids who just want to read.”

“African Rainbow Family – Reading List”

<https://book28.weebly.com/news/african-rainbow-family-reading-list>

(Source: email from Book28 to lgbtq@jiscmail.ac.uk, 22 Jan 2024)

“Book28 teamed up with African Rainbow Family on a queer African reading list. This post features twelve books available on our shelves which centre the many varied experiences of being black and LGBTQIA+, whose writers offer all sorts of perspectives.”

The reading list is at:

https://book28.weebly.com/uploads/7/1/1/2/71123811/african_rainbow_family.pdf

LGBTQ+ issues – Other Agencies

“‘Queering’ migration: LGBTQ+ History Month”

<https://migrantsrights.org.uk/2024/02/02/queering-migration-lgbtqhm/>

(Source: *Migrants Rights Network Newsletter*, Feb 2024)

Interesting and thought-provoking post:

“Queering migration is about unpicking and defying mainstream discourse on migration, a crucial part of which is understanding the link between decolonisation, queer liberation and migration. Decolonisation is about dismantling colonial structures – whether that is borders, or violence towards racialised and/or queer people.”

“Queer pasts and global futures”

<https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/news/queer-pasts-and-global-futures/>

(Source: email from Rainbow Migration, 12Feb 2024)

Fascinating article for Rainbow Migration by Arya Jeipea Karijo, a trans author in Kenya:

“In her article, Arya explores the historical acceptance of queerness in various African societies before strict colonial-era laws criminalised same-sex relations or declared trans people to be ‘unnatural’. Many of these laws and societal attitudes persist today and make queer existence a struggle.” [Taken from email]

“The Reading Agency’s February booklist – LGBT+ History Month”

https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/7164/?mc_cid=ad0d9b2008&mc_eid=3fa1d39831

(Source: The Reading Agency *Reading Round-Up*, 23 Feb 2024)

“Our booklist this month is for librarians and teachers to help them celebrate stories with strong LGBTQ+ representation or that are by LGBTQ+ creators.”

“LGBTQ history month: celebrating queer memory in our cities”

https://theconversation.com/lgbtq-history-month-celebrating-queer-memory-in-our-cities-222531?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2022%202024%20-%202885929292&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2022%202024%20-%202885929292+CID_edb68096d1d5a5627fe4ed05a5e3e459&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=LGBTQ%20history%20month%20celebrating%20queer%20memory%20in%20our%20cities

(Source: *The Conversation*, 22 Feb 2024)

Very interesting article:

“Cities are like archives. Through their architecture, street names, monuments, plaques and cultural heritage sites, we learn about what remains of the past. But who is remembered in public spaces, and who is kept forgotten?”

To diversify the histories revealed in these places, there are attempts around the world to give voice to hidden stories. This includes an increasing interest in representing the memory of LGBTQ communities, often absent from the public realm.”

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

“Councils spend 23% less per head on museums than they did 15 years ago”

<https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/02/councils-per-capita-spend-on-museums-fell-23-over-past-15-years/#>

(Source: Museums Association email updates, 9 Feb 2024)

New report from ACE, looking at levels of public investment in museums.

Some findings include:

“Spending on museums and galleries now accounts for a smaller proportion of council budgets, the research found; taken as a percentage of total service expenditure, councils' total expenditure on museums and galleries decreased from 0.21% in 2009-10 to 0.16% in 2022-23.

The report says that cuts have fallen more heavily on more disadvantaged local authorities.

Almost three quarters of local authorities are investing less than £5 per capita in museums and galleries, with the average spend per head standing at £3.11, according to the report.”

As the article says, there are the following “potential actions”:

- “Consider ‘growth funding’ for local authority-reliant museums.
- Review approaches to attract investment from private sources.
- Explore options for services to merge functions or merge completely.
- Develop a new museum workforce action plan focusing on attracting and retaining talent.
- Support the wellbeing of museum service heads and the wider workforce.
- Increase the use of joint appointments or shared regional resources.
- Review local authority management and maintenance arrangements.
- Consider bespoke training for local authority-reliant museums around carbon literacy.
- A cross-government committee to consider the issues facing LA-reliant museums.
- Communicate clearly to local authorities that are funding LA-reliant museums their obligations and liabilities.”

The full report is available to download from:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/research-understand-levels-public-investment-museums>.

“Art is always political”

https://www.thebookseller.com/comment/art-is-always-political?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Morning%20Briefing

(Source: *Public Libraries News*, 18 Feb 2024)

Rather than get caught up in the rush of comments about what was/was not meant exactly by the statement from ACE, I thought I would highlight this terrific “Comment” piece by Pragma Agarwal in *The Bookseller*.

“There are larger questions at stake here as to what the public funds are for if not to fund art that resists the artificial oppressive structures inherent in our society and systems. If not this, then culture can never evolve beyond the limits of our current imaginations. Preventing creatives from challenging dominant norms, questioning, speaking their truth will only result in a monolith ossified culture, stagnant and festering with dissent and paralysed with fear.

Marginalised writers have lived with these fears for so long. Reputational risk is not something to be taken lightly. For anyone who is an ‘other’ it is an anxiety that lies heavy on their shoulders, something that lurks silently at all times intent on pushing them away further into the margins [...] As we face even more cuts to arts funding and public funding becomes even more scarce, creating a culture of fear is counter-productive to encouraging and supporting innovative art [...]

However, within this space of irresolution, new resistance will emerge, new communities of artistic dissent will coalesce. In this way, perhaps ACE has done all of us a favour. It has made us reconsider how we view creativity and art, its purpose, and its place in the world. It has made us even more determined to always speak our truth, to write our truth. One of the most important things art can do is to challenge dominant narratives, to uncover the biases inherent in the hegemonies, and to create alternative less oppressive possibilities.”

For someone who is sometimes made to feel “other”, I think this is vitally important.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

“School absence rates have rocketed – the whole educational experience needs to change”

https://theconversation.com/school-absence-rates-have-rocketed-the-whole-educational-experience-needs-to-change-222187?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2015%202024%20-%202879029221&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20February%2015%202024%20-%202879029221+CID_980a2bf6f8241ed234e2f5bd6ebee11a&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=School%20absence%20rates%20have%20rocketed%20%20the%20whole%20educational%20experience%20needs%20to%20change

(Source: *The Conversation*, 15 Feb 2024)

“More than 140,000 pupils in the UK are absent from school more than 50% of the time: more than double the number from before the pandemic.

Not being in school matters – and not only because pupils miss out on learning. Teachers play an important role monitoring the welfare of their students, and if young people are on the streets rather than at school they are also more at risk of harm and exploitation.”

The article argues that there need to be wholesale changes to schools and what they offer.