



The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 395, 11 March 2024

Events

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

Black Lives Matter/Anti-racism

Justice denied: reforming the Windrush Compensation Scheme

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/equality-and-human-rights/id205516-windrush-compensation-report_final.pdf

(Source: *Later Life AGEnda*, 1 Mar 2024)

New report from Age UK:

“In recent years, the experiences of many older people from the Windrush Generation are clear for all to see. Too many have received shameful treatment that has had a devastating impact on them and their families. What makes this scandal even worse is that rather than righting the wrongs, the Windrush Compensation Scheme has itself become a cause of further distress.” [Foreword, p3]

Cost of living crisis/poverty – Other Agencies

“Heating and Meeting – Lessons in Social Innovation from the Warm Welcome Campaign”

<https://www.warmwelcome.uk/blog/heating-and-meeting-lessons>

(Source: Community Libraries Network *Newsletter*, Mar 2024)

Useful roundup of lessons learned:

“Now in the middle of our second winter, the Warm Welcome Campaign has been reflecting on what we have learned so far and where the Campaign might be heading in 2024 and beyond.”

These include:

- Prioritising inclusion
- Investing in learning and being prepared to pivot
- Connecting the work happening locally, regionally and nationally
- Thereby creating sustainable social infrastructure.

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

“Jeremy Hunt, here’s all the ways your Spring Budget can start to fix our broken country – Libraries: increase funding and put money into language development”

<https://www.bigissue.com/news/politics/jeremy-hunt-spring-budget-broken-britain-policies/>

(Source: *Public Libraries News*, 10 Mar 2024)

Brief response to the Budget from *Big Issue*:

“Libraries are so much more than places to get books for free. They provide internet access – crucial for those claiming benefits – and in some cases act as warm spaces where community members can avoid the freezing cold. They generate £3.4 billion a year in value but are being neglected. Hard-up councils have reduced library spending by almost half since 2009/10.

Libraries are often an easy target for cuts, but save the taxpayer money by improving literacy, wellbeing, employment and digital inclusion, says Isobel Hunter, chief executive of Libraries Connected. Hunter would like to see core funding increased in the spring budget.

‘Beyond core funding, we would love to see a package of support for early speech and language development. When public libraries work together with children, parents, early years settings, schools and health services they can have a transformative impact on children’s lives,’ she says.”

“How are libraries delivering digital inclusion?”

https://www.digitalunite.com/news-and-views/how-are-libraries-delivering-digital-inclusion?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=superheroes_super_skills_and_super_offers&utm_term=2024-03-11

(Source: *Digital Unite Newsletter*, Mar 2024)

Just in case you haven’t seen this brief outline of libraries’ role in digital inclusion. It concludes:

“It’s clear that libraries are most definitely ‘superheroes’ of digital inclusion, with a unique potential to reach both those most in-need and hardest-to-reach when it comes to digital skills. And funding, staffing and time-permitting when it works, it works brilliantly. But it also feels like there could be much more support – and when that’s in place, it has the capacity to make a much bigger difference.”

“New Funding to Uncover and Celebrate Working Class Heritage”

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/everyday-heritage-grant-programme-new-funding/>

(Source: *Heritage Update*, 512, 22 Feb 2024)

“The untold stories of a bacon factory in Wiltshire, a Grade II listed former rhubarb farm in Leeds’ ‘Rhubarb Triangle’, and the tradition of pigeon racing in North Yorkshire are among 56 new projects that Historic England will be funding across the next 2 years to celebrate working class histories through its Everyday Heritage Grant programme.

Historic England received over 380 applications and has chosen to fund 56 community-led projects that will explore diverse stories of people and places at the heart of English history. The total amount of funding awarded by Historic England will be £875,000, ranging from £6,800 to £25,000 per individual project.”

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

Prison education: a review of the evidence

https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/clinks_el_prison-education_V2.pdf

(Source: email from Prisoners’ Education Trust, 29 Feb 2024)

“This evidence review looks at:

- The educational needs of people in prison
- The current state of prison education
- The evidence base for the effectiveness of prison education
- Critical success factors for high quality prison education.” [p3]

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies

“More children than ever need mental health care as figures show nearly half a million are awaiting treatment”

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/children-mental-health-autism-nhs-b2482324.html>

(Source: Cultural Learning Alliance *Newsletter*, Feb 2024)

According to the Cultural Learning Alliance:

“The Independent’s analysis of NHS data has found that:

- A total of 289,047 children have been approved for treatment under mental health services but are still waiting to have their first appointment
- 11 areas in England recorded under-18s waiting more than four years to be seen
- There has been a huge increase in the number of young people aged eight to 25 who probably have a mental health disorder – an increase from 12.5% in 2017 to 20% in 2023

These statistics reflect the great pressures on our young people at present, but also the pressure on services to meet the needs of young people.” [Taken from the Newsletter]

Learning Disability issues – Other Agencies

Beyond Words Book Clubs

<https://booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bciab>

(Source: email from Aisha Affejee, Kent, 8 Mar 2024)

“This World Book Day, pioneering visual literacy charity Beyond Words is launching their ambitious new Book Club in a Box project, aiming to create 300 new Book Clubs for people with learning disabilities by 2026. The Book Club in a Box is a free pack of books and materials that will enable people, charities and organisations to kickstart a Book Club in their local area.

Beyond Words Book Clubs are a safe space for people with learning disabilities to make friends, have fun and talk about the issues that affect their lives. They use Books Beyond Words, a series of word-free, age-appropriate picture stories that explore a huge range of topics, from relationships and building community to trauma and mental & physical health. By reading what they see in the pictures as a group, members build a story prompted by the images and informed by the their experiences and feelings.” [Taken from Press Release, Mar 2024]

Migration issues – Other Agencies

“No such thing as justice here”: the criminalisation of people arriving to the UK on small boats

Summary: https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/SUMMARY_No%20such%20thing%20as%20justice%20here_for%20publication.pdf

Full report: https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/No%20such%20thing%20as%20justice%20here_for%20publication.pdf

(Source: *Free Movement Refugee and Asylum Update*, 28 Feb 2024)

This new report gives some background and then looks at what happens to people arrested for entering the UK via ‘small boats’. It particularly highlights the effect on young people (“age disputed children”):

“Research by refugee support organisations has highlighted significant flaws in the Home Office’s age assessment processes in Dover, resulting in children being aged as adults, and treated as such.

One consequence of this is that children with ongoing age disputes have been charged as adults with the offences of ‘illegal arrival’ and ‘facilitation’ for their alleged role in steering dinghies across the Channel.

Humans for Rights Network has identified 15 age-disputed children who were wrongly treated as adults and charged with these new offences, with 14 spending time in adult prison. This is very likely to be an undercount.

The Home Office fails to collect data on how many people with ongoing age disputes are convicted. These young people have all claimed asylum, and several claim (or have been found to be) survivors of torture

and/or trafficking. The majority are Sudanese or South Sudanese, who have travelled to the UK via Libya.

Throughout the entirety of the criminal process, the burden remains with the child at every stage to dispute their 'given' age and reassert that they are under 18." [Summary, p3]

The mental health of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Mental%20health%20of%20asylum%20seekers%20-%20report%20-%20February%202024.pdf>

(Source: *Free Movement Weekly Newsletter*, 26 Feb 2024)

New report from the Mental Health Foundation:

"This report presents evidence on the economic, social, and cultural circumstances which asylum seekers and refugees who seek sanctuary in the UK can face, and how these experiences can harm their mental health and even lead to suicidal feelings and actions." [p9]

"The UK government, devolved administrations, and local authorities have the power – and the responsibility – to address these social determinants of poor mental health, both directly and through supporting the third sector. This report sets out how they can work together to create a society that respects the dignity of asylum seekers and refugees and provide the building blocks that underpin good mental health." [p12]

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

"Public Libraries at Risk Monitor"

<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/libraries-at-risk>

New interactive map from CILIP:

"The Libraries at Risk Monitor provides a resource for the sector and beyond to keep track of proposed budget changes in local authorities that will impact libraries across England, Northern Ireland, and Wales."

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

The state of local government finance in England 2024: a report by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)

<https://lgiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/State-of-Local-Government-Finance-in-England-2024.pdf>

Just in case you haven't seen this report (which has had quite a bit of media coverage):

"This report, the 11th annual state of local government finance survey in England, tells a story that is at once both familiar and distinctive. It is a familiar story of councils struggling to deliver essential services with inadequate funding, pulling all of the levers available to them to make

ends meet, increasing numbers of councils falling into effective bankruptcy, and residents paying more to get less.

But this year, there is a difference. The balance has tipped. It is no longer possible to ignore or misunderstand the problems local government faces, they are undeniable. Up to now, reactions to bankruptcy have rightly scrutinised the individual councils' finances. Poor governance and risky investments have certainly played a part.

However this report, for the first time, demonstrates how widespread councils' desperate funding situation is. That there is a structural funding issue is now impossible to deny." [p4]

Broader issues – Other Agencies

“The word ‘populism’ is a gift to the far right – four reasons why we should stop using it”

https://theconversation.com/the-word-populism-is-a-gift-to-the-far-right-four-reasons-why-we-should-stop-using-it-224488?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%202891929368&utm_content=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-%202891929368+CID_b54c9075cf5790027aad1dcf5bca0d30&utm_source=campaign_monitor_europe&utm_term=The%20word%20populism%20is%20a%20gift%20to%20the%20far%20right%20%20four%20reasons%20why%20we%20should%20stop%20using%20it

(Source: *The Conversation*, 29 Feb 2024)

Interesting article about the use of language:

“From the storming of the US Capitol on the January 6 2021, to the similar uprising in Brazil in 2023, far-right politicians are infringing on democratic ideals across the world. If we are serious about meeting the challenge they pose, we must stop treating them as legitimate, democratic actors and instead see them as the threat they really are.

A very big part of this effort is also quite a simple step. We must stop referring to far-right politics as ‘populist’.”