The Network Newsletter – Ebulletin 431, 27 January 2026

Events

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

Riots – Background info/explainers

In racism's echo chamber: the government and criminal justice system's response to the summer 2024 riots

Report: https://irr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/In-racisms-echo-chamber-Final.pdf

Press Release: https://irr.org.uk/article/policy-and-prosecutorial-responses-to-the-summer-2024-riots-risk-fuelling-a-cycle-of-racist-violence/?ml_sub=2927866526335767900&ml_sub_hash=a3m3&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=inside_racism_s_echo_chamber_new_irr_report&utm_term=2026-01-24

(Source: *IRR News*, 22 Jan 2026)

Important report from the IRR:

> "A unique study published today by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) finds that policy and prosecutorial responses to the Summer 2024 riots that followed the brutal killings of three little girls at a dance class in Southport, downplayed the level of anti-immigration racism and Islamophobia in favour of a narrative that focussed on 'mindless thuggery. The IRR warns that the obfuscation of the causes and consequences of the riots, now risks legitimising further far-right mobilisation and vigilante violence." [Taken from Press Release]

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

Reading for rehabilitation: a thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

https://cdn.websitebuilder.service.justice.gov.uk/uploads/sites/19/2026/01/Reading-for-rehabilitation-web-2026.pdf

(Source: email from Prison Library Connect, 14 Jan 2026)

Important new report:

> "This report highlights some very positive findings from jails in which committed governors and other leaders had worked together to create a strong reading culture in the prison. It shows that even in the most challenging places, such as Chelmsford and Ranby, leaders could transform the reading offer for the prisoners in their care. Most importantly at these jails, and at other outstanding examples such as Hatfield, Rye Hill and Frankland, leaders had promoted the importance of reading as an essential component of rehabilitation." [p3]

As well as emphasising the importance of reading, the report also stresses the importance of the prison library:

> "In the most impressive prisons we visited, the library played a central role in creating, developing and sustaining a culture of reading. In our survey, we compared the experience of prisoners who could access the library at least once a week or more with those who could not. The findings showed a staggering difference, with the perceptions of those with better library access significantly more positive across almost the full breadth of our prisoner survey. Those who said there was a wide enough range of library materials for their tastes and ability were also much more positive about many aspects of prison life. The library is a vital resource and can have a marked impact across all elements of day-to-day life in prison." [p23]

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies
"Community services are squeezed, but vital in supporting older people to age well"
https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/community-services-are-squeezed-supporting-older-people
(Source: *Later Life AGEnda*, 15 Jan 2026)

> "Community services are on the decline as local authorities try to square the circle of lower core funding, rising costs and higher demand.
>
> [This post] highlights how this is impacting older people's engagement with their communities and what can be done about it."

Mentions public libraries.

Community cohesion – Other Agencies
"Identifying the building blocks of community cohesion"
https://www.thinknpc.org/blog/community-cohesion-2-2/
(Source: New Philanthropy Capital *Weekly Update*, 26 Jan 2026)
New Philanthropy Capital are working with This Day to map how community cohesion develops:

> "Across the UK, a rich civic landscape is already alive. Look closely and you'll find a diverse mix community businesses, cultural groups, youth organisations, co-ops, social lenders and community land trusts in neighbourhoods across the nations.
>
> These organisations rarely describe their work as 'building cohesive communities.' Yet through diverse, often separately funded activities, they lay the foundations for cohesion. They help people grow agency, open up economic opportunity, and create spaces where social connection can happen. This work is happening in far more places than we tend to notice.

Recent work we undertook with This Day to map the field of community cohesion suggests the potential for a much broader, more dynamic approach to learning and investment-one that starts from the strengths already embedded in local places."

Through their mapping work, they started by:

"Treating cohesion as an ecosystem, rather than a narrow social outcome, opens up a richer picture of where community strengths live."

This shows that, whilst a lot of work remains invisible:

"[…] there is a great deal that *is* visible and strategic. This approach surfaces what available datasets can show: embedded, sometimes under-recognised organisations that grow trust, widen opportunity, and enable agency. And they are far more widespread than we might assume." [emphasis theirs]

and this in turn throws up questions about how to work with these organisations, rather than imposing an external structure on them.

New Philanthropy Capital is "The social impact think tank and consultancy" (https://www.thinknpc.org/)

"This Day is a charitable foundation helping young people access opportunities to thrive" (https://www.this.day/)

Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – Other Agencies
Resisting the rule of the rich: protecting freedom from billionaire power
Full report: https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2026-01/EN%20-%20Resisting%20the%20Rule%20of%20the%20Rich_0.pdf
Executive summary: https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2026-01/EN%20-%20Resisting%20the%20Rule%20of%20the%20Rich.pdf
(Source: email from The Equality Trust, Jan 2026)
Important new report from Oxfam. The central point is highlighted in this *Guardian* article:

"The world saw a record number of billionaires created last year, with a collective wealth of $18.3tn (£13.7tn), while global efforts stalled in the fight against poverty and hunger." [Taken from: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/jan/19/brazen-political-influence-rich-laid-bare-wealth-billionaires-inequality-poverty-instability-oxfam]

Health & Wellbeing issues – Other Agencies
"Evidence for link between digital technology use and teenage mental health problems is weak, our large study suggests"

https://theconversation.com/evidence-for-link-between-digital-technology-use-and-teenage-mental-health-problems-is-weak-our-large-study-suggests-273386?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2015%202026%20-%203643037205&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2015%202026%20-%203643037205+CID_80ac673a580e717537f34a909bdd3904&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Evidence%20for%20link%20between%20digital%20technology%20use%20and%20teenage%20mental%20health%20problems%20is%20weak%20our%20large%20study%20suggests

(Source: *The Conversation*, 15 Jan 2026)

Interesting article about a recent research study – and a call to look in more depth at simplistic cause-and-effect narratives:

> "For years, the narrative surrounding teenagers' use of digital technology has been one of alarm.
>
> Time spent scrolling through TikTok or playing video games is widely seen to be driving the current crisis in youth mental health, fuelling rising rates of anxiety and depression.
>
> But our recent study suggests that this simple story of cause and effect is not supported by the evidence.
>
> After following more than 25,000 young people in Greater Manchester over three school years, we found little evidence that self-reported time spent on social media or frequent gaming causes mental health problems in early-to-mid adolescence. Instead, the relationship between digital technology use and teenagers' wellbeing is far more nuanced than simple cause and effect."

The study is at: https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/advance-article/doi/10.1093/pubmed/fdaf150/8371934?login=false.

Neurodivergence issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations
"Case Studies"

https://nlisn.org/case-studies/

(Source: email from Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network discussion list, NLISN@JISCMAIL.AC.UK, 19 Jan 2026)

The Neurodivergent Library and Information Staff Network (NLISN) has just published their first three Case Studies, featuring stories from the Network of the impact on individuals. These are terrific, well worth reading.

Care-experienced children & young people – Other Agencies
ICO "Better Records Together" campaign
https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2025/12/people-trying-to-access-their-own-care-records-are-being-let-down-information-commissioner-warns/
Launch of a new campaign by the Information Commissioner's Office.

"The campaign includes:

- new standards for organisations providing clarity on how to handle requests with care, as well as good practice measures to better support people from the moment they enter the care system.
- clear advice for people requesting their records to help them to navigate the process and access support.
- UK-wide supervision pilot running across 2025/26, monitoring the performance of 19 organisations to drive improvements."

See also: https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/campaigns/better-records-together/ for info about your rights and how to access records – and a video by John Edwards (the Information Commissioner) introducing the campaign at: https://vimeo.com/1143493204, and a video talking about the impact on care-leavers themselves (including Jackie McCartney) at: https://vimeo.com/1144608954.

Migration issues – Other Agencies
"Get Your Facts Straight!"
https://www.migranthelpuk.org/get-your-facts-straight?fbclid=IwY2xjawPdpBhleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETBwTlhja0cyWE9qZkZUNktIc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHv8bndIsj92puSQzgzBbKCpy1mFj9czzAbcWovYqXxVox8SpOAHMhIPqJ2AX_aem_CTxA2uYO1VWrcqZYXTuwJw
(Source: Facebook)
Collection of key facts about immigration, which are frequently misunderstood or denied, produced as a Flipbook.

This would be a useful addition to materials for training, exposing many of the current myths.

"Indifference"
https://migrantsrights.org.uk/projects/wordsmatter/explainers/words-matter-indifference/?utm_content=buffer39fe7&utm_medium=social&utm_source=bufferapp.com&utm_campaign=buffer&link_id=8&can_id=30e439a67211f81f4bbace156600453a&email_referrer=email_3051543&email_subject=jan-newsletter-do-you-want-to-a-challenge-in-2026
(Source: Migrants' Rights Network *Newsletter*, Jan 2026)
In their latest terrific "Words Matter" post, Migrants' Rights Network looks at the role that indifference can play:

"Indifference can be defined as apathy, neutrality, or otherwise as a lack of interest or concern. It then leads to ignorance and disinformation and is exemplified by privilege. Plainly, it is a refusal to get uncomfortable or

'rock the boat', to call out disinformation and harmful ideas, or address root causes and oppressive systems at large. Indifference is the 'easy way out' of having to do critical and reflective work on the world around us. Indifference can be harder to spot, and is more normalised in our society. Based on our observations and research, we have identified main strands of indifference that is widespread in pro-migration spaces:

- The refusal to identify racism and Islamophobia as the primary driving forces behind anti-migrant narratives
- The refusal to identify colonialism, neo-colonialism, and its legacies as drivers behind displacement
- The regurgitation of racist, classist and ableist binaries
- Giving a green light to more racist immigration policies"

Broader issues – Other Agencies

"Governments are rushing to embrace AI. They should think twice"

https://theconversation.com/governments-are-rushing-to-embrace-ai-they-should-think-twice-272455?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2015%202026%20-%203643037205&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20January%2015%202026%20-%203643037205+CID_80ac673a580e717537f34a909bdd3904&utm_source=campaign_monitor_uk&utm_term=Governments%20are%20rushing%20to%20embrace%20AI%20They%20should%20think%20twice

(Source: *The Conversation*, 15 Jan 2026)

Interesting article which sounds a warning note – and helpfully (in my opinion!) concludes:

"So even if, for the sake of argument, AI evolves as promised, becoming more accurate, more robust and more capable, should we really be ceding control over more domains of life to algorithmic coordination in pursuit of order and efficiency?

Technology alone cannot resolve social, economic or moral problems. If it could, children would not go hungry in a world that already produces enough food to feed everyone.

Critics of AI are often dismissed as Luddites. But this is a misreading of history. Luddites, the 19th-century English textile workers who opposed some automated machinery in the mills where they worked, were not opposed to technology per se.

They were simply opposed to its misuse and unreflective deployment and sought a deeper examination of how technology reshapes work, communities and everyday life. Some 200 years later, surely that remains a reasonable demand."