

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Information Professional

The April-May issue includes:

- “Virus response highlights digital divide”, which focuses on the work of 100% Digital Leeds¹ [p12]
- “Responding in a time of crisis”, in which Nick Poole (CILIP CE), Amy Staniforth (CILIP Cymru Relationship Manager), Gerardine Blee (CILIP Ireland Relationship Manager), and Sean McNamara (Head of CILIPS) look at how CILIP and libraries more widely have responded [pp14-17]
- Yvonne Morris “Everyday activism in the face of COVID-19” [“Changing lives” column], which highlights some of the ways the sector is responding [p21]
- Bruce Leeke, interviewed by Rob Mackinlay “How different models are taking the strain: Suffolk Libraries”, looks at how the Suffolk mutual model allowed a swift reaction to the pandemic – including, for example, moving towards a greater digital offer, thereby reaching new audiences [pp38-39]
- Isobel Hunter interviewed by Rob Mackinlay “Libraries Connected in a time of crisis”, which outlines the current work of Libraries Connected, and includes some examples of library services’ revised offers, eg Kingston Libraries’ digital offer; Kirklees Libraries’ work to support the most vulnerable people in their communities [pp42-43]
- Elizabeth Hutchinson “Why the Great School Libraries campaign is important for all of us”, which outlines the work of the campaign^{2, 3}
- Heena Karavadra “Read at Leicester: building a representative leisure reading collection”, which looks at how the “Read at Leicester” reading campaign has moved to invite students to recommend titles as part of their drive to diversify collections [pp46-49]
- Rabeea Arif “Helping public libraries build international bridges”, which looks at the “Working Internationally for Libraries” project. One example is Oldham Libraries which are aiming to connect with a library service in

¹ See: <https://digitalinclusionleeds.com/>.

² See: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/>.

³ “Great School Libraries is a three year evidence-based campaign to bring back libraries and access to librarians in every school in the UK. Our guiding principle is a firm belief that every child deserves a great school library.

The campaign launched in September 2018 and will run until the summer of 2021.”
[Taken from: <https://www.greatschoolibraries.org.uk/about>].

Germany that is also offering provision for migrant communities⁴ [pp52-53]

IFLA Library Services to Multicultural Populations Section's newsletter

The June 2020 issue⁵ includes:

- Theresa Byrd “ECHO for Refugees Wins the 2019 Multiculturalism in Libraries Award” [pp1,3-4], which reports that the Library Services to Multicultural Populations Section agreed to initiate a “Multiculturalism in Libraries Now Award, 2018-2022,” which recognises best practices and innovation in multicultural library services, and goes on to announce that ECHO was the first winner. It also has a brief outline of ECHO’s work:

“The ECHO library on wheels program is a completely volunteer organization. It provides library services to refugees in Greece with some normalcy in life and the staff treat camp residence with respect [...]

The collection consists of a variety of books, including textbooks, children’s books, and English resources for those learning English as a second language. The ECHO volunteers collect books in a variety of languages: Farsi, Arabic, Turkish, Kurmanji, French, English, German, Greek and Urdu. Moreover, they print and distribute basic language resources from mother tongue languages into English and Greek. As stated in the IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto, ECHO workers believe it is important to give people access to literature in their mother tongue language to remind them of home, for community building and for survival. An essential service that staff administers is the translations of key vocabulary, including medical language and phrases to express basic needs. ECHO delivers access to online University courses through Coursera and refugees have taken advantage of this program. In addition, they assist refugees with job application processes and provide users in the camps with WiFi.” [p3]⁶

⁴ See: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/workinginternationally>.

⁵ Available to download as a pdf from: https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/library-services-to-multicultural-populations/newsletters/ifla_newsletter_june_2020_-_4.pdf.

⁶ Source: ASCEL *Update*, 30 Jun 2020.

Black Lives Matter

Race and racism in English secondary schools

This is a major new report⁷ from Runnymede, which:

“[...] explores the nature of racism in secondary schools and is organised around four key issues: the teacher workforce; curricula; police; and school policies.”⁸

The report opens with:

“Despite widespread denials of the ongoing significance of race, racism continues to underpin key socio-political events and to shape lives in profound ways. From the racisms that have surfaced in popular and political discourses on Brexit, to the racisms manifest in the government’s ‘hostile environment’ policy and the racially uneven impact of the coronavirus pandemic, it should be increasingly difficult to deny that racism is an enduring and fundamental problem for our times.” [p3]

It starts with a very brief exploration of previous exposés of racism in education, and then introduces the present study:

“[...] this report explores the nature of race and racism in contemporary secondary schools. It draws upon data from interviews with 24 secondary school teachers, from across Greater Manchester, in order to show that issues of race and racism continue to be a defining feature of our schooling system.” [p3]

It then considers each of the key issues.

Teacher diversity and role models

The report highlights the lack of diversity within the teaching profession, and the need to recruit more BAME teachers. However, it also has a number of important caveats:

- Whilst it is important that students do have BAME role models, the report also argues that: “[...] a focus on providing ‘role models’ risks slipping into stereotypes about the low aspirations of, and lack of role models for, students from BME backgrounds. Without a wider critique of how schools produce racial inequality, such interventions can feed ‘cultural deficit’ explanations that place the blame on already marginalised communities.” [p5]

⁷ Remi Joseph-Salisbury. *Race and racism in English secondary schools*. Runnymede (“Runnymede Perspectives”), 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/Runnymede%20Secondary%20Schools%20report%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁸ Taken from: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects-and-publications/education/racism-in-secondary-schools.html>.

- There is a need to reflect diversity in senior management in schools too.
- “[...] ensuring a more diverse teaching force (incomplete as this intervention is) not only has the potential to benefit BME students, but should be of benefit to white students.” [p5]
- The fourth point is particularly important:

“Fourthly, notwithstanding the importance of the above point, it is vital that hiring more BME staff is not seen as a panacea for solving all of the issues of deep-seated institutional racism in our schools. There is a danger that such ideas place the burden on individual BME people, while absolving white staff of their duty. It is vital that anti-racism is seen as the job of everybody. The reality is, and will continue to be, that the overwhelming majority of staff in UK schools are white. As such, it is imperative that they are a part of the solution.” [p7]
- Not all BAME teachers will necessarily be committed to anti-racism:

“While racial diversification is important, therefore, it is perhaps more urgent that the teaching force is *racially literate* and holds a commitment to anti-racism.” [p7, emphasis theirs]

The need for more racial literacy among teachers

Following on from the last point, the report argues that ‘racial literacy’ is critical:

“In the context of schooling, ‘racial literacy’ refers to the capacity of teachers to understand the ways in which race and racism work in society. It also involves having the language, skills and confidence to utilise that knowledge in teacher practice [...] Focusing on racial literacy means that issues pertaining to race and racism become the responsibility of *all* teachers.” [p7, emphasis theirs]

and goes on to conclude that:

“To increase the capacity of schools to meaningfully tackle racism, racially literate teachers should look to move beyond colour-blind approaches to racism. This should include moving away from the language of diversity, inclusion and equality, as concepts that are detached from racism. Racially literate teachers should place the concepts of anti-racism and institutional racism at the centre of their understandings. Alongside these concepts [...] white teachers should look to engage with concepts of whiteness, white privilege and white complicity, in an attempt to reflect upon their own positions in a society that advantages white people. While, again, some teachers were proactive in engaging in this kind of reflection, this was in no way the norm and does not seem to be actively encouraged at a school level.” [p9]

Curricula

This section makes some extremely important points about what is currently taught – and what is not – and looks at the way that Black History Month is treated in many schools (often the only instance where BAME issues are raised):

“Under a reorientation of values, schools would begin to move beyond the (important) racial diversification of school curricula, towards the implementation of an anti-racist curriculum. This means moving beyond representation [...] and the pitfalls of tokenism, to thinking about how schools can be proactive in tackling racism. In this sense, schools can and should contribute to the development of a more racially literate society. That is, the racially literate teachers referred to in the preceding section would work to cultivate a generation of racially literate students and, in turn, a racially literate – and anti-racist – society.

An anti-racist curriculum would involve showing how the history of modernity is shaped by racism, coloniality and white supremacy [...] So, while diversity might stop at the inclusion of BME people, anti-racism would urge learners to look at the socio-political context of BME people in relation to white people. Learners would engage not only with histories of Hitler and Nazism, but also with histories of slavery and colonialism.”
[p12]

Police in schools

Interviewees expressed concerns about the increasing presence of police in schools:

“Teachers emphasised that schools should be places of learning and development, where young people feel comfortable. For many students, schools offer a place of sanctuary. In contrast, several teachers warned, a police presence had the potential to disrupt such an environment, particularly for already marginalised students.” [p14]

This section concludes:

“While some participants felt that police officers could play a positive role if they engaged in youth work, counselling or teaching, as several respondents argued, it would surely be better for schools to hire professionally trained youth workers, counsellors and teachers.” [p16]

School policies

The report makes some strong recommendations:

- “Schools should have strong and clear antiracist policies that provide guidance on how to respond to interpersonal student racisms, but that also set out how the school plans to centre an institutional commitment to anti-racism.

- All existing policies should be reviewed, through consultation with anti-racist organisations, in order to identify and tackle any implicit or normalised racisms. Specifically, and by way of example, school hair policies should not racially discriminate against black students.
- Policies that focus specifically on the attainment of white working-class students should not come at the expense of BME students.

In order to be effective, any anti-racist commitment to change in school must be multifaceted and must recognise the interconnections between teachers, their curriculum, the presence of police and school policies.” [p21]

This is a very important report which, although obviously focusing on schools, nevertheless can be applied elsewhere. It also sets its recommendations in a wider economic and political context:

“To improve England’s schools, there is a lot that needs to be done. While the recommendations that follow are not exhaustive, they would represent a significant step in the right direction. For these changes to be successful, however, they will need to occur alongside some fundamental changes pertaining to the workload of teachers, and to the metrics culture of UK education. Teachers in this study explained how educational cuts and heavy workloads were causing great harm to education in schools. This harm, it was argued, too often saw the sidelining of issues related to social justice generally, and race and racism specifically. The following recommendations, therefore, should be situated alongside a call to increase teacher numbers, reduce teacher workloads and reverse cuts in education. Such changes would provide the conditions in which we can seriously call for significant anti-racist change in education.” [p20]

Recommended.⁹

The ‘hostile environment’

By now, we should be in a position where people have heard of this – and even come to some understanding of what it has involved. However, this isn’t always the case, so here is a brief round-up of some key issues¹⁰.

As Liberty¹¹ describes it:

⁹ Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 2 Jul 2020.

¹⁰ The need to write this piece has been becoming more urgent, and a catalyst was the brilliant – but devastating – BBC TV play, *Sitting in limbo*, shown 8 Jun 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/p08g29ff/sitting-in-limbo>.

¹¹ Liberty (ed). *A guide to the hostile environment: the border controls dividing our communities – and how we can bring them down*. Liberty, 2019. Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Hostile-Environment-Guide-%E2%80%93-update-May-2019_0.pdf.

“The hostile environment is a sprawling web of immigration controls embedded in the heart of our public services and communities. The Government requires employers, landlords, private sector workers, NHS staff and other public servants to check a person’s immigration status before they can offer them a job, housing, healthcare or other support. Landlords and employers can face fines and even criminal sanctions if they fail to do so.

Immigration controls are now embedded in everyday interactions between trusted public sector workers and the people they are supposed to serve: nurses and patients, police and victims of crime and teachers and their pupils. New offences mean undocumented migrants find themselves criminalised for doing what they must to survive – in some cases simply for working or even driving.” [p7]

These measures can have the following effects:

“The hostile environment is by its very nature discriminatory, so it is no surprise that it encourages discriminatory – even racist – behaviour. Preliminary evaluations of some of the measures suggests that BAME and visibly “foreign” people are more likely to be asked for proof of their entitlement to services than white British people. For example, 58 per cent of landlords turned down or ignored an enquiry from a BAME tenant without a passport in a mystery shopping exercise conducted by JCWI to investigate landlord immigration checks. When JCWI took the Government to court over this policy, the judge agreed that the scheme is causing landlords to discriminate where they otherwise would not.

The requirement for people to show ID documents in their interactions with public services also disproportionately affects young people, homeless people and those on lower incomes, who are less likely to have a passport or other form of ID. As the Windrush Scandal showed, it can also cause huge difficulties for people in the UK lawfully but do not have the documents to prove it if their immigration status is called into question.” [p8]

The Liberty guide also looks at the impact on schools; higher education; health; policing; banking; housing; driving; employment; migrant families and social support; rough sleeping – and also the impact of immigration raids.

The Guardian pulled together some of the key background in a major article two years ago¹², and highlighted one of the major initiatives:

“Then there was Operation Vaken. An immigration enforcement campaign in the summer of 2013 that involved billboard vans being branded with the warning ‘go home or face arrest’ hit the streets of London. Immigration enforcement vehicles were branded like police cars. Adverts were placed in eight minority ethnic newspapers, postcards

¹² Jamie Grierson “Hostile environment: anatomy of a policy disaster”, *The Guardian*, 27 Aug 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/27/hostile-environment-anatomy-of-a-policy-disaster>.

appeared in shop windows and leaflets and posters were put up advertising immigration surgeries in buildings used by faith and charity groups.”

The very recent “Wendy Williams Review”¹³ spells out just what the effects of the ‘hostile environment’ have been, for example:

“Part 2 goes on to describe how political pressure to deal with the perceived problem of immigration continued through the 1990s and into the 2000s, leading to the ‘hostile environment’ (later the ‘compliant environment’), a set of measures that evolved under the Labour, Coalition and Conservative Governments. They aimed to make life as difficult as possible for people with no legal status in the UK to encourage them to leave. But they also trapped members of the Windrush generation.” [p9]

“In developing the hostile environment policy an incorrect assumption was made in the impact assessments for the 2013 and 2015 Immigration Bills that those who were in the country without the ability to demonstrate it with specific documents were here unlawfully. When, in 2017, the department did identify that there might be a settled but undocumented population there was little attempt to understand the make-up of this cohort.” [p12]

“In 2012, the then Home Secretary outlined the government’s ‘hostile environment’ policy, a set of measures to make living and working in the UK as difficult as possible for people without leave to remain.” [p37]

Drawing on the findings of this Review, the EHRC is launching a statutory assessment of how the Home Office complied with equality law when developing, implementing and monitoring “hostile environment” immigration measures.

“The full details of the assessment, conducted under section 31 of the Equality Act 2006, outline how the regulator will examine whether and how the Home Office complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in relation to understanding the impact of its policies on the Windrush generation.”¹⁴

As this assessment progresses – and as further evidence of and information about its impact emerges – we shall no doubt return to this topic.

¹³ Wendy Williams. *Windrush lessons learned review: independent review by Wendy Williams* [HC 93]. HMSO, 2020. Available to download as a pdf from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874022/6.5577_HO_Windrush_Lessons_Learned_Review_WEB_v2.pdf.

¹⁴ “Detail of EHRC review of ‘hostile environment’ policies published”, EHRC, 1 Jul 2020, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/news/detail-ehrc-review-%E2%80%98hostile-environment%E2%80%99-policies-published>.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BAME = Black, Asian and minority ethnic

BME = Black and minority ethnic

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

CILIPS = CILIP Scotland

EHRC = Equality and Human Rights Commission

IFLA = International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

JCWI = Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

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