

# 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](http://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 ...?

### ***Museums Journal***

The Mar/Apr issue includes:

- Simon Stephens “Rhetoric won’t level things up” (Editorial), which looks critically at the new White Paper, especially the lack of new money to drive change [p3]
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “The bigger picture”, which looks at the current consultation by Museums Galleries Scotland on a new strategy to be launched in 2023 [pp4-5]
- Simon Stephens “Back to the future”, which looks at current repatriation initiatives, especially those being taken by smaller museums [pp8-9]
- Rebecca Morris-Buck “Cultural venues have a role to play in raising awareness of domestic abuse” (“Comment” column), which outlines the setting up of a network to take forward ideas<sup>1</sup> [p12]
- Iain Watson “Supporting the north’s cultural sector will help level up society”, which looks at how recommendations and findings from two recent reports<sup>2</sup> can be put into action to make a real difference [p13]
- Sharon Heal “It’s not enough to pay lip-service to being anti-racist” (Policy column), which looks briefly at how important it is that we all engage with anti-racist practice (and also introduces the MA’s new Museums Essentials course on anti-racism to be made available later in March) [p15]
- Toby Louch and Julie Nightingale “Museums need you” (“In practice” column, as part of this issue’s “Careers Guide 2022”), which looks at the changing role of museums with particular reference to social justice [pp54-55]
- This theme is continued by the same authors in “For future reference”, which looks at knowledge and skills that will be in demand in the future, including digital; wellbeing; decolonisation; climate crisis; social justice; disability rights [p57].

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## Black Lives Matter

### ***The impact of Covid-19 and BLM on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers***

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<sup>1</sup> “We are inviting colleagues across the sector to join us. Sign up at [bit.ly/DAMuseums](https://bit.ly/DAMuseums)” [p12]

<sup>2</sup> *The Case for Culture: what northern culture needs to rebuild, rebalance and recover*. Northern Culture All Party Parliamentary Group, 2022, <https://northernculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/NCAPPG-The-Case-for-Culture-Report.pdf>.

Marcus Johns *et al.* *The state of the north 2020/21: power up, level up, rise up*. IPPR, 2020, <https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-12/state-of-the-north-2020-21-dec-20.pdf>.

This new report<sup>3</sup>:

“[...] draws on survey and interview data from Black, Asian and ethnically diverse [4] aspiring and current workers in the cultural and creative sector collected through the Creative Access network, specifically: 720 responses to our survey and 42 individual interviews.” [p5]

In terms of a brief synopsis of this important report, it's probably helpful to focus on the conclusions:

“Covid-19 negatively impacted ethnically diverse workers in CCI's [5] by reducing financial and job security. Lockdowns and social restrictions disrupted employment and led to a considerable migration, both within CCI's and also – most worryingly – out of the sector [...]

This job insecurity was one of the major factors contributing to a significant reduction in mental health. Racism continues to be part of the experience of ethnically diverse workers in CCI's, though how it is acknowledged or challenged (if at all) makes this a complex issue for ethnically diverse workers to negotiate. There is much work to be done to reduce racism in the sector and this burden should not fall on ethnically diverse workers.

The Black Lives Matters protests highlighted the lack of diversity and racial discrimination across the creative and cultural industry. We note the welcome increase in awareness of these issues from employers, and some signs that employers are attempting to reduce discrimination. It is too early to know whether these intentions are having a positive effect.

Diversity schemes are one option for addressing the lack of diversity in the sector, though there are still questions about their long-term efficacy. Targeted support services, such as those provided by Creative Access, had a protective effect against the negative impacts of the pandemic. Creative Access members who took advantage of multiple support services, including mentorships, masterclasses and CV development experienced more success in finding suitable employment than members who only used the job boards.

Problems of racial discrimination and a lack of diversity existed across the creative and cultural industry before the pandemic, and Covid-19 created a moment of crisis which was felt especially sharply by ethnically

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<sup>3</sup> Roaa Ali, Stephanie Guirand, Bridget Byrne, Anamik Saha and Harry Taylor. *The impact of Covid-19 and BLM on Black, Asian and ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers*. Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity/Creative Access, 2022, [https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/212029276/Impact\\_of\\_covid\\_and\\_blm\\_on\\_ethnically\\_diverse\\_creatives\\_and\\_cultural\\_workers\\_report.pdf](https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/212029276/Impact_of_covid_and_blm_on_ethnically_diverse_creatives_and_cultural_workers_report.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “In light of recent criticisms of the use of the term ‘BAME’ to describe people understood as racial and ethnic minorities, we use the term ‘Black, Asian and ethnically diverse’ as the collective term to refer to those groups, which we shorthand to ‘ethnically diverse’ for the purpose of this report. Where possible we refer to specific groups.” [p24]

<sup>5</sup> Creative and Cultural Industries.

diverse workers. To go beyond reactive BLM support statements and create long-term change will require significant effort and investment.” [p23]

The research came up with a number of key recommendations, including, for example:

- “[...] it is imperative that organisations, unions and campaigners create supported networks especially for ethnically diverse creatives and cultural workers. Similarly, access to free mentoring schemes for people from ethnically diverse backgrounds in the sector should be provided, when possible, to both support professional development and build networks.” [p7]
- “The responsibility for highlighting and dealing with racism should not be put on the few ethnically diverse individuals in the institution. Anonymous complaint systems should be put in place, overseen by a nominated individual trained in covert and overt racist behaviour.” [p7]
- “Diversity strategies are so far failing to address issues of inequality in CCIs. Organisations need to focus on sustaining progress and retention beyond short-term entry-level opportunities. Mid-senior career Positive Action should be considered and implemented.” [p7]
- “Organisations should adopt a diversity and inclusion charter. Charters should include clear definitions of both covert and overt racism, guidelines to protect workers from discrimination and accountability measures.” [p7]
- “A key to improving the sector’s diversity is ensuring people from ethnically diverse backgrounds thrive and progress into leadership. As well as data collected by government or sector bodies, individual organisations should generate data not just on employment and retention but also promotion.” [p7]
- “Creative companies and cultural organisations should be mandated to adopt employment targets (both for entry and senior levels) reflecting the regional and age profile of the Black, Asian and ethnically diverse population.” [p8]
- “A standardised template for Diversity and Inclusion charter for cultural organisations (similar to sustainability commitments) should be created with the expectation that each organisation has one.” [p8]

A useful, thought-provoking report which needs to be acted upon.<sup>6</sup>

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### ***Inclusive Britain ...***

The Commission on Racial Disparity published its report<sup>7</sup> (referred to as the Sewell Report) on 31 Mar 2021<sup>8</sup>. It met with considerable criticism, particularly

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<sup>6</sup> Source: *The Black & Asian Heritage Mix’ Newsletter*, Apr 2022.

<sup>7</sup> *Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: the report*. Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/974507/20210331\\_-\\_CRED\\_Report\\_-\\_FINAL\\_-\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf).

for its assertion that race (and racism) is of less significance than class, family or geography, for example.

A year later, in Mar 2022, the Government published its response<sup>9</sup> to the Commission report, and places it now within its Levelling Up agenda.

The response groups its comments under three headings, “Trust and Fairness”, “Opportunity and Agency”, and “Inclusion”. There have been cautious welcomes from many organisations, but also concerns that this response report does not really go far enough. As a good example, in terms of “agency” it says:

“Second, to promote equality of opportunity and encourage aspiration by nurturing agency – showing the path to success and removing personal and structural barriers which block the way. While the government has a clear role in dismantling practical barriers that some groups face, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is the agency, resilience and mutual support of and among individuals, families and communities that ultimately drives success and achievement.” [p9]

There is an acknowledgement that racism exists, but, in the words of Race On The Agenda [ROTA]:

“[...] it goes out of its way to note that inequality in society should not be ‘seen solely through the prism of ethnic minority disadvantage’. No one has ever argued that race should be the only lens that disadvantage should be viewed from. Additionally, Inclusive Britain states that White people from deprived backgrounds ‘continue to be left behind by society’.”<sup>10</sup>

The response report includes

“Our detailed plan of action comes with specific recommendations and accountability measures. This Action Plan [...] provides a template for the rest of the public sector – as well as businesses, charities, or individuals, to work towards achieving a society which is truly equal.

We will report back to Parliament in 12 months’ time on the progress we have made in delivering these actions.” [p12]

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<sup>8</sup> There was an initial assessment in *Network Newsletter*, 241, Mar 2021, <https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-241.pdf>, pp3-15. This was followed by further comments in *Network Newsletter*, 242, Apr 2021, <https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-242.pdf>, pp2-3; and 244, Jun 2021, <https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-244.pdf>, p5.

<sup>9</sup> *Inclusive Britain: the government’s response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities* [CP 625]. HM Government, 2022, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1061421/Inclusive-Britain-government-response-to-the-Commission-on-Race-and-Ethnic-Disparities.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1061421/Inclusive-Britain-government-response-to-the-Commission-on-Race-and-Ethnic-Disparities.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> “ROTA’s Statement on the Government’s Inclusive Britain Action Plan”, ROTA, 21 Mar 2022, <https://www.rota.org.uk/content/rota-statement-government%E2%80%99s-inclusive-britain-action-plan>.

There are undoubtedly some useful, practical recommendations – here are just two examples:

“Action 35: The DfE will take action to improve the quality of education outside mainstream schools. These proposals are part of the forthcoming schools white paper and the SEND review and measures will be announced in 2022 to deliver significantly improved outcomes for children and young people at risk of being excluded from school or who are in Alternative Provision.” [p69]

“Action 70: To support employers and industry sectors to create opportunity for groups that are underrepresented in their workforce, the Government Equalities Office will create new updated guidance on positive action by December 2022.” [p95]

However, this also needs to be set within the current context, for example evidence of the continuing hostile environment (and the lack of resolution of the ‘Windrush scandal’), so a close watch needs to be kept on these recommendations to make sure they do not just disappear or become watered down.

Unfortunately, much of the media’s focus has been on the recommendation about the term “BAME”: it is important that this awkward umbrella term is being dropped<sup>11</sup>, but as Action for Race Equality say:

“Terminology should not be used as a distraction to divert attention away from taking effective action and delivering positive change for Black and Asian communities.”<sup>12</sup>

Important background reading.

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

### ***An ethical framework for collaborating with communities: guidance from a collaboration between Open House at Kettle’s Yard, University of Cambridge and the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester***

This guidance<sup>13</sup> has been created drawing from the experience gained working on the “Open House” project.

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<sup>11</sup> “Action 5: To communicate more effectively on racial issues and to avoid lumping together different ethnic minority groups, the government has stopped using the term ‘BAME’ in its own communications and will encourage other public sector bodies to do the same.” [p31]

<sup>12</sup> Action for Race Equality “Where do we stand with Inclusive Britain?”, 21 Mar 2022, <https://www.actionforraceequality.org.uk/where-do-we-stand-with-inclusive-britain/report/>.

<sup>13</sup> *An ethical framework for collaborating with communities: guidance from a collaboration between Open House at Kettle’s Yard, University of Cambridge and the*

“Taking place between 2014 and 2021, Open House has established a number of distinctive characteristics in the form of ambitious and innovative engagement models that have developed and evolved through working collaboratively with artists and communities at a hyperlocal level.

The evaluative research looks back at the entirety of the programme, in order to understand its impact, value and significance; the difference it has made to all stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the research considers how the values and methodologies of Open House might inform and shape future practice across Kettle’s Yard [...]”<sup>14</sup>

To help take the project forward and build on the learning:

“An ethical framework for collaborating with communities [...] was co-produced as a result of this collaboration, which offers new ethical insights and presents ways in which museums and galleries can become more useful to, and more used by, local communities.”<sup>15</sup>

The framework compares “The Traditional museum” with “The Useful museum”, and this contrast is a really valuable starting point. Just to give a couple of examples, the Traditional museum works via participation and outreach, whereas the Useful museum works via collaboration.

Of particular interest is:

“The Traditional Museum often works on one-off, short-term projects, where little trust is built with communities.”

“The Useful Museum builds long-term, ongoing, and sustainable partnerships with communities based on mutual trust and respect. Allowing time to develop relationships enables a more nuanced understanding of communities and partners, and lets a more equitable process emerge [...] Partnerships are built over years, rather than months in the Useful Museum. Ongoing commitments aim to make meaningful, real world differences that matter to communities.” [p4]

This is an interesting and challenging way of reassessing how we work – and not just in museums.

Recommended.<sup>16</sup>

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*Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester.* RCMG/Kettle’s Yard, 2021, <https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/open-house>.

<sup>14</sup> Taken from: <https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/open-house>.

<sup>15</sup> Taken from: <https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/open-house>.

<sup>16</sup> Source: *Research Centre for Museums and Galleries Newsletter*, 2, Mar 2022.

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

### ***Levelling up the United Kingdom [continued]***

In a recent blogpost<sup>17</sup>, Equally Ours has welcomed the White Paper, but also says:

“The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated long-standing structural and systemic inequality in the UK. It has shown how inequalities in employment, in housing, in health – in all aspects of our lives – lead to lost potential and, ultimately, to lost lives.

Discrimination and disadvantage combine and reinforce each other. During the pandemic this has placed some groups at higher risk of Covid-19 and its wider, long term, social and economic impacts.

The White Paper is right to focus on the most disadvantaged places. But it’s not only where they live that holds people back. Many people in these places face discrimination and additional barriers, and have fewer opportunities, because of their sex, race, disability, age or other protected characteristics – over and above the economic disadvantage they and other people in these places experience.

Unless and until we address the root causes of discrimination and structural inequality, too many people won’t be able to share in our nation’s success.”<sup>18</sup>

Carole Willis (CE of NFER) has recently published an article<sup>19</sup> which argues that:

“One of [the key factors that is missing in areas where there are problems around poverty, poor health and lack of opportunities] is human capital, acquired through education and training. This is key to everything the White Paper sets out to achieve.

With that in mind it is absolutely vital we do not view levelling up through a lens of squaring up the amounts of hard cash provided to schools, but in terms of levelling up outcomes - the attainment and prospects of children.

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<sup>17</sup> Belinda Pratten “Levelling up: investing in people as well as places”, Equally Ours, 23 Feb 2022, [https://www.equallyours.org.uk/levelling-up-investing-in-people-as-well-as-places/?utm\\_source=Equally+Ours+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=b7dbcaa891-Newsletter+February+2+2022&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_104ed5022f-b7dbcaa891-58965893](https://www.equallyours.org.uk/levelling-up-investing-in-people-as-well-as-places/?utm_source=Equally+Ours+Newsletter&utm_campaign=b7dbcaa891-Newsletter+February+2+2022&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_104ed5022f-b7dbcaa891-58965893).

<sup>18</sup> Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 24 Feb 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Carole Willis “Serious risk ‘levelling up’ will make lives of disadvantaged children even tougher”, NFER, 25 Mar 2022, [https://nfer.ac.uk/news-events/press-releases/serious-risk-levelling-up-will-make-lives-of-disadvantaged-children-even-tougher/?utm\\_campaign=1116579\\_NFER%20Direct%20April%202022&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=National%20Foundation%20For%20Educational%20Research&dm\\_i=4R3K,NXK3,10J6KZ,2X2JZ,1](https://nfer.ac.uk/news-events/press-releases/serious-risk-levelling-up-will-make-lives-of-disadvantaged-children-even-tougher/?utm_campaign=1116579_NFER%20Direct%20April%202022&utm_medium=email&utm_source=National%20Foundation%20For%20Educational%20Research&dm_i=4R3K,NXK3,10J6KZ,2X2JZ,1).



The government should not make the mistake of assuming that levelling up means every school should get the same level of funding – in fact doing so could widen, not narrow, the ‘disadvantage’ gap between children.”<sup>20</sup>

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

### Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued]

In the previous issue<sup>21</sup> of the *Newsletter*, we looked at the recent spate of bannings (or attempted bans) – these are continuing in the US.

According to a recent press article<sup>22</sup>:

“Tonja Johnson, executive director for the Madison County Library System, was told by the mayor that he wouldn’t issue the payment as the libraries had books that ‘went against his Christian beliefs’. But Johnson stood firm and said the LGBTQ+ inclusive materials ‘reflect the diversity of our community’.

Now it would appear that the city of Ridgeland and the Madison County Library System have finally reached an accord, meaning the libraries will officially get their funding after months of back and forth.

The two sides released a joint statement in which they both said libraries should ‘provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues’ [...]

In another recent article<sup>23, 24</sup>:

“Comparing the current climate around book bannings to 9/11, Idaho State Representative Heather Scott introduced a workshop called ‘How

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<sup>20</sup> Source: *NFER Direct*, Apr 2022.

<sup>21</sup> *The Network Newsletter*, 251, Jan 2022, <https://www.seapn.org.uk/uploads/files/Newsletter-NS-251.pdf>, pp5-9.

<sup>22</sup> Maggie Baska “Mayor backs down after LGBTQ+ books row that forced libraries to rely on generous furries”, *PinkNews*, 14 Apr 2022, [https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/04/14/mississippi-library-lgbt-furry-help-funding/?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=suJnFzReLf4U3fLAuDu2T4qH5hi8SsN7POqgzrp4qAZmpbz2DKiczxzs9G7zyqwEFmP81pIBUA](https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/04/14/mississippi-library-lgbt-furry-help-funding/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid=suJnFzReLf4U3fLAuDu2T4qH5hi8SsN7POqgzrp4qAZmpbz2DKiczxzs9G7zyqwEFmP81pIBUA). In a rather po-faced article, Wikipedia describe furries as: “[...] a subculture interested in anthropomorphic animal characters with human personalities and characteristics.” (Taken from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Furry\\_fandom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Furry_fandom).)

<sup>23</sup> Kelly Jensen “‘Libraries are promoting an agenda to destroy families’: Idaho State Rep partners on program to remove books from libraries”, *Book Riot*, 4 May 2022, <https://bookriot.com/heather-scott-book-ban-plans/>.

<sup>24</sup> Source: *Public Libraries News*, 8 May 2022.

to remove inappropriate materials from our schools/libraries' co-sponsored with Amy Henry, founder of Parents for Freedom and Liberty. The event, advertised through the official Idaho state legislature dispatch, called it a way to learn what to do about 'smut in our Idaho libraries.' [...]

In her opening remarks, Scott called for people to band together like they did in post-9/11 America in order to take back libraries. 'The war is also demonstrated by non-gendered bathrooms, drag queen storytime, use of hormone blockers, and boys with ear piercings and painted fingernails,' she said, mentioning that after abortion, the rise of 'smut in the library' was the most disturbing thing she's seen in eight years as a legislator."

Idaho have been noteworthy in pursuing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation – an article<sup>25</sup> in *The Advocate* said that:

"Idaho is advancing legislation that could result in jail time and fines for librarians, teachers, museum creators, even college employees for allowing minors to check out materials deemed obscene, including books with LGBTQ+ content — and is likely to make librarians afraid to carry certain books."

The article gives a flavour of the 'debate':

"I would rather my 6-year-old grandson start smoking cigarettes tomorrow than get a view of this stuff one time at the public library or anywhere else,' said Republican Rep. Bruce Skaug, who also is the sponsor of a bill that would impose up to life in prison for health care workers who provide gender-affirming procedures to minors."

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

BLM = Black Lives Matter

NFER = National Foundation for Educational Research

SEND = Special educational needs and disability

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This Newsletter was compiled by John Vincent, and all items are written by him, unless otherwise stated. Please send any comments or items for the next issue to:

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<sup>25</sup> Trudy Ring "Idaho bill would jail librarians, teachers for LGBTQ+ books", *The Advocate*, 8 Mar 2022, [https://www.advocate.com/politics/2022/3/08/idaho-bill-would-jail-librarians-teachers-lgbtg-books?fbclid=IwAR3rG7\\_swlojt9CB-iXIFxzJew803qErUAKSTFI1A9byd9WBabs4pv4vOUE](https://www.advocate.com/politics/2022/3/08/idaho-bill-would-jail-librarians-teachers-lgbtg-books?fbclid=IwAR3rG7_swlojt9CB-iXIFxzJew803qErUAKSTFI1A9byd9WBabs4pv4vOUE).