

# 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 ...?

### **ARC Magazine**

In the Nov/Dec issue<sup>1</sup>, there are the following articles of interest:

- Elizabeth Thompson-MacRae “Can I speak to the account holder? – LPAs, Record Access and me” [pp16-17], which looks at some of the issues faced by someone who holds an LPA [Lasting/Legal Power of Attorney] trying to access information on behalf of the person they are representing. There is also some useful practical advice, eg:

“Provide clear and easy to understand information on organisational websites for customers acting on behalf of an LPA Instruction. This can include a clear point of contact, list of documentation required for proof etc.” [p17]<sup>2</sup>

- Lindsay Loebig “Understanding harmful language statements” [pp18-20]:

“To be more inclusive while maintaining searchability, some archives are creating harmful language statements.

Harmful language statements acknowledge the presence of offensive content in collections that reflect racist, sexist, ableist, xenophobic, homophobic or other forms of biased views and provide a message of understanding to users. They go a step further than a content warning by explaining why harmful language exists in archives.” [p18]

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

### **“Museums Change Lives Awards 2023”**

The winners and nominees<sup>3</sup> were:

#### **Best Museums Change Lives Project**

*Winner:*

- Glasgow Museums, Bangladesh Association Glasgow, and Our Shared Cultural Heritage – Scotland’s Lascar Heritage<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ARC Magazine, 395, Nov/Dec 2023.

<sup>2</sup> CILIP and the CILIP Benevolent Fund are organising a webinar on the topic of LPAs early next year. Look out for further info on the CILIP website at: [https://www.cilip.org.uk/events/event\\_list.asp](https://www.cilip.org.uk/events/event_list.asp).

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlcx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

### *Nominees:*

- Mansfield Museum – Art Power: “Our Art Power project works with vulnerable women within our local communities, to engage them in the arts through our collection. It also enables them to build confidence, to create friendships and to grow.”<sup>5</sup>
- Heritage Doncaster – Creative Recovery: Body Image Through Time: “NHS England data shows a dramatic rise in the number of young people accessing treatment for eating disorders through young people’s mental health services in Doncaster. In 2023 Heritage Doncaster and Doncaster Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) co-designed a creative programme for young people accessing disordered eating services.

Body Image Through Time aimed to boost self-esteem, build confidence, and facilitate group and peer therapeutic discussion by exploring ideas of beauty and body image in the museum’s collection. The programme culminated in working with an artist to express views on bodies through deconstructing and reconstructing clothing. All young people who attended Body Image Through Time self-reported increased confidence and shared they had built connections with other participants, a key indicator of growth in wellbeing.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Best Small Museum Project**

#### *Winner:*

- The Whithorn Trust – Whithorn ReBuild Schools Engagement Project: “Whithorn ReBuild is a skills training initiative for young people, learning rare construction skills”<sup>7</sup>

#### *Nominees:*

- Dylan Thomas Centre and Your Voice Advocacy – Our Museum, Our Voice: “The Dylan Thomas Centre (DTC) worked co-productively with Your Voice Advocacy (YVA) to design and develop an accessible museums qualification. Since 2016 YVA has run its weekly advocacy group from the DTC, led by and for people with learning disabilities. YVA and DTC co-designed course content and created Easy Read learning resources, resulting in the group trialling and completing the course in 2023.”<sup>8, 9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums/lascars-forgotten-seafarers>.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://www.mansfield.gov.uk/museum/homepage/21/art-power>.

<sup>6</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/>.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/whithornrebuild/>.

<sup>8</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlcx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>9</sup> See also: <http://www.dylanthomas.com/> and <https://www.yourvoiceadvocacy.org.uk/>.

- Turner’s House Trust – Art & Heritage: Wellbeing at Turner’s House: “[...] engages with people receiving mental health support to promote mental and physical wellbeing, alleviate loneliness, encourage creativity and build confidence. An estimated 20,000 people in the Richmond borough have a common mental health problem, and Turner’s House works in partnership with Richmond Mind to offer creative workshops inspired by Turner, his themes, and contemporary artists.”<sup>10</sup>

## **Decolonising Museums Award**

### *Winner:*

- Wilberforce House Museum – Changing Perspectives in Hull<sup>11</sup>: “Since 2021, the Wilberforce House Museum, in partnership with the Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull, has developed a creative approach to deliver a new community engagement strategy that engaged underrepresented communities in temporary and permanent exhibitions development. Tackling power and privilege, the museum collaborated with people from Africa, or those of African-American, Caribbean or African descent, to embed decolonisation into its working practice.”<sup>12</sup>

### *Nominees:*

- Judges’ Lodgings Museum – Facing the Past: Black Lancastrians at Judges’ Lodgings Museum: “Judges’ Lodgings Museum worked in collaboration with Lancaster Black History Group, three primary schools, the Institute for Black Atlantic Research and Lancaster University to reveal the slavery links in the museum’s collections to all visitors.”<sup>13</sup>
- National Museums NI – Global Voices Local Choices: “Bringing diverse cultures and perspectives into Northern Ireland’s local and national museums.”<sup>14</sup>

## **Radical Changemaker Award**

### *Winner:*

- Zeynep Kuşsan – London Transport Museum (previously Museum of London): “Zeynep conceived and curated the exhibition ‘Harry Kane: I want to play football’, which embodies the Museums Change Lives theme of enhancing health and wellbeing, while also inspiring engagement across new audiences. The display was inspired by the momentum around England reaching the final of the delayed Euro 2020

<sup>10</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.hullmuseums.co.uk/wilberforce-house-museum/adults-communities-wilberforce>.

<sup>12</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>13</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <https://www.nationalmuseumsni.org/global-voices-local-choices-project>.

championship – a moment of hope during the ongoing pandemic, especially for young fans coming out of lockdown. With her personal dedication, Zeynep was able to negotiate a loan of Kane’s personal collections which had never before been on public display.”<sup>15</sup>

*Nominees:*

- Jill Iredale – Bradford District Museums and Galleries: “Jill is delivering powerful, impactful and collaborative social projects in her new role as a community curator for Bradford Museums and Galleries. One recent collaboration is Don’t Give Up [<sup>16</sup>] – a fully co-curated exhibition with Windrush Generations. The project engaged young people from the Caribbean community to spend time with and talk to the first generation elders who settled in Bradford. It resulted in a powerful and personal exhibition at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery in Manningham, where many of the community settled and still live. Elders shared their histories, many for the first time, and over 20,000 people visited the exhibition.

This entirely collaborative way of working has informed the other projects Jill is working on, including the co-development of a new gallery space designed to support young people with their mental health. Jill is also working with groups of refugees and asylum seekers, who are supported by the Anchor project, to develop long-term and trusting relationships. There is no planned outcome or agenda, and Jill’s whole practice is one where the community leads the way.”<sup>17</sup>

- Katherine McAlpine – Brunel Museum: “Katherine’s focus on fair pay and tackling climate change at the Brunel Museum is both enhancing health and wellbeing and creating a better place to live and work for staff. Fair wages are key to a happy and healthy workforce, which in turn affects the visitor experience, so Katherine committed to becoming a Living Wage employer and in September 2022, against the backdrop of rising prices, Brunel Museum increased wages in line. In April 2023, she successfully lobbied the board to increase the employer pension contribution from 3% to 5%.

Katherine also put climate justice and climate action front and centre, writing and launching the museum’s sustainability strategy and making the Brunel Museum the first museum to sign up to the pioneering climate perks scheme. She has created a place of inspiring engagement, debate and reflection through the Climate Conversations programme, and the conversations about sustainable travel will be embedded in the next phase of the museum. The museum was also a ‘cool space’ for the local community over the summer, offering a place of respite and reflection.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://bradfordmuseums.org/events/windrush-stories-dont-give-up/>.

<sup>17</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

<sup>18</sup> Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/awards-2023/#msdynttrid=Se7lp-5lymYVTjk1LvEtawjeglzLlCx4ra9CCgoXuMk>.

## ***Museums changing lives in Northern Ireland***

This report<sup>19</sup> from the MA:

“[...] captures how museums have responded to those challenges [of Brexit, Covid, cost-of-living crisis] and supported and continued to connect with their communities. The findings show that a majority of museums in Northern Ireland are undertaking at least one type of social impact work and making a positive difference to people’s lives.” [p4]

The report begins with ‘headline’ findings, for example:

“A majority of museums in Northern Ireland are undertaking at least one type of social impact work. Our survey found that 70% or more of respondents are engaged in work related to health and wellbeing, placemaking and acting as a space for engagement, reflection and debate.” [p8]

It then briefly sets the context before starting to look at specific areas of work – with case studies.

These include:

- Health and wellbeing, with a case study of Florence Court House, National Trust: Collections Care and Conservation Volunteer Programme, 2022-23
- Placemaking:

“In the context of a post-conflict society, respondents reported that their organisations play a significant role in economic and cultural regeneration and have contributed to transforming perceptions of Northern Ireland and to the success of the tourism industry.

Beyond these benefits, museums also have a significant impact on overcoming division and forging local pride and identity.

Respondents reported that museum activity had helped to reclaim public spaces affected by antisocial behaviour and uplift areas of social deprivation. A number described how regular museum work, such as local history and reminiscence programmes, is a natural fit for creating a sense of community and shared identity.” [p18]

There are case studies of: “Veteran Life Untold Stories: The People Behind the Uniform exhibition”, Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum<sup>20</sup>;

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<sup>19</sup> *Museums changing lives in Northern Ireland*. Museums Association, 2023, [https://media.museumsassociation.org/app/uploads/2023/09/25152721/HS392-MA-Northern-Ireland-Report\\_05.pdf](https://media.museumsassociation.org/app/uploads/2023/09/25152721/HS392-MA-Northern-Ireland-Report_05.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example: <https://www.lisburnmuseum.com/events/veteran-life-untold-stories-by-the-people-behind-the-uniform/>.

and the “Shared History Outreach Project”, Museum of Free Derry, 2019-present

- Acting as a space for engagement, reflection and debate, with a case study of LGBTQ+ history at the Northern Ireland War Memorial, 2022-present.
- Addressing the legacy of colonial collections, with a case study of “Global Voices Local Choices”:

“Global Voice Local Choices is a collaborative project between National Museums NI, Northern Ireland Museums Council, and the African Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland, and is funded by the Museums Association Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Collections Fund. The organisations have a common interest in addressing colonial legacies by bringing diverse cultures and perspectives into local and national museums across Northern Ireland. Diaspora communities and people of colour get to make choices about world cultures collections and how they are interpreted, challenging collectors’ narrow perspectives.” [p25]

The report then looks at how many people museums are engaging with via this type of work; how the work is supported within organisations (with the implications of funding noted); outlines the main challenges to developing the work; and what support is required for the work to continue and to develop.

Finally, there are some recommendations:

- “Museums should dedicate adequate resource from core budgets to social impact work to allow initiatives to be sustained and developed.
- Museums should recruit permanent staff for social impact work to allow partnerships and relationships to be sustained and developed, and to prevent the loss of knowledge when a staff member leaves.” [p41]

It’s good to see the range of initiatives taking place, plus strong recommendations for the future.

Recommended.<sup>21</sup>

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

### **“All In”**

“All In”<sup>22</sup> was launched in Nov:

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<sup>21</sup> Source: Museums Association email updates, 26 Sep 2023.

<sup>22</sup> See: <https://allin.online/>.



“All In is a new UK arts access scheme for D/deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people.

Creative and cultural experiences should be accessible to all. By removing barriers, organisations across the UK can welcome more people with access requirements through their doors. Together, we will work towards a sector which says, ‘everyone’s welcome’.”

In “About All In”, they say that:

“All In believes creativity and culture should be accessible to everyone.

That’s why we are developing a UK-wide access scheme led by Arts Council England in partnership with Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council of Wales, Creative Scotland, and the British Film Institute (BFI).

We are committed to improving the experience of D/deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent people when attending creative and cultural events. As a disabled-led team, we bring lived experience as well as industry knowledge of access and inclusion to each stage of development.”<sup>23</sup>

In the section, “All In for the sector”:

“We want to help theatres, museums, libraries, and other creative and cultural organisations improve access, welcome new visitors, and increase overall attendance. Many organisations across the UK are working hard to improve access but we believe that together, we can do even more [...]

That’s why we’re talking to organisations of all shapes and sizes to make sure our scheme recognises good practice. It’s important our scheme works with existing access schemes and ticketing systems.

We plan to:

- Introduce the first UK-wide accessibility standards for the whole creative and cultural sector.
- Offer training, resources, and support to increase staff confidence and help organisations meet these standards.
- Create a single digital system that allows people with access requirements to create a profile that they can securely share with you through your organisation’s All In account.
- Connect creative and cultural organisations with suppliers that can help you improve your access provisions.
- Provide insight and data to give you a better understanding of your audience’s access needs.”<sup>24</sup>

There is also a short section on how they are planning to work with people with access requirements.

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<sup>23</sup> Taken from: <https://allin.online/about-all-in/>.

<sup>24</sup> Taken from: <https://allin.online/all-in-for-the-sector/>.



The scheme will be piloted next year, and there is a form on the website to express your interest.

The website has a short directory of support organisations, with an invitation for more to join<sup>25</sup>.

Finally, there is a page<sup>26</sup> on accessibility to the website, which also seeks feedback on how accessible users find it.

This is a really useful resource, well worth following its progress.<sup>27</sup>

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

### Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued] and Protests against Drag Queen Storytimes

#### “Pink pledges to give out banned books at Florida gigs”

An interesting way of getting round the banning of books with LGBTQ+ themes:

“As if she wasn’t already one of the most iconic celebrity allies, Pink has pledged to give away 2,000 copies of the most frequently banned books to fans at her upcoming Florida gigs.

In an act of protest against Florida lawmakers’ attempts to stifle free speech and LGBTQ+ stories, Pink has teamed up with non-profit organisation PEN America to give away thousands of books that have been banned by the southern state.

Among the books that Pink has decided to hand out are titles like *The Family Book* by Todd Parr [<sup>28</sup>], *The Hill We Climb* by Amanda Gorman [<sup>29</sup>], and a book from the *Girls Who Code* series [<sup>30</sup>], founded by Reshma Saujani.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See: <https://allin.online/all-in-for-the-sector/support-organisations/>.

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://allin.online/access/>.

<sup>27</sup> Source: Arts Council update, 9 Nov 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Little, Brown, 2010: “*The Family Book* celebrates the love we feel for our families and all the different varieties they come in. Whether you have two moms or two dads, a big family or a small family, a clean family or a messy one, Todd Parr assures readers that no matter what kind of family you have, every family is special in its own unique way.”, <https://www.littlebrown.co.uk/titles/todd-parr/the-family-book/9780316070409/>.

<sup>29</sup> See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Hill\\_We\\_Climb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hill_We_Climb).

<sup>30</sup> Penguin Random House – see:

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/series/GWC/girls-who-code/>.

<sup>31</sup> Ali Condon “Pink pledges to give out banned books at Florida gigs”, *PinkNews*, 14 Nov 2023, [https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/11/14/pink-banned-books-florida/?utm\\_source=piano&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid](https://www.thepinknews.com/2023/11/14/pink-banned-books-florida/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnespid)

## Abbreviations and acronyms

LPA = Legal/Lasting Power of Attorney

MA = Museums Association

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