

# 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 ...?

### *Information Professional*

The latest issue<sup>1</sup> includes:

- “Official launch for UK’s Libraries Alliance” [“News”] [p5], which was launched to mark the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Public Libraries Act. As described on their website<sup>2</sup>, they are:

“[...] a partnership of library bodies working to strengthen and champion libraries of all kinds.

We are committed to building the skills of library professionals, raising the public profile of libraries, campaigning for better policy-making around libraries, and improving collaboration across the library sector.”

- “National public library strategy – where things stand” [“News feature”] [pp12-13], which reports on the latest announcement from the Government, made as part of their National Year of Reading funding boost<sup>3</sup>:

“[...] the Government intends to publish a new strategy for public libraries later this year to restore their position at the heart of communities and their pivotal role in improving the lives of working people. This will highlight how libraries support this government’s Plan for Change ambitions to provide opportunities for all and will encourage cross-government action to ensure public libraries are fit for the future.”

- John Vincent “Libraries of Sanctuary” [“In depth” column] [pp20-23], which looks at where the idea of Libraries of Sanctuary developed from; the steps involved in becoming one; the necessary “human touch” involved; forging connections and creating a real, active welcome; and how all this fits into public libraries’ central role.
- Gary Horrocks “Drowning in slop” [“Insight” column] [p29], which argues that “Developing the skills set required to detect fraud and fakery has never been more important.”
- Carol Webb and Alice Leggatt “Censorship and the librarian” [“In depth” column] [p38-40], which looks at some of the pressures that school librarians face – and they recommend:
  - Union membership

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<sup>1</sup> *Information Professional*, Apr/May 2026, digital-only.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://librariesalliance.org.uk/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Public libraries set to benefit from cash boost to support National Year of Reading”, DCMS press release, 2 Mar 2026, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-libraries-set-to-benefit-from-cash-boost-to-support-national-year-of-reading>.

- Contacting CILIP and/or the CILIP School Libraries Group
- Ensuring that there is a robust collection policy, drawn up in conjunction with the school leadership team.

The article also calls for everyone to support Banned Books Week, 4-10 Oct 2026<sup>4</sup>.

- Eilish Purton “Book banning mirrors US playbook”<sup>5</sup> [LGBTQ+ “Insight” column] [p43], which follows on from the previous article and focuses on the content of many of the books:

“I’m sure you’ve seen the news coverage around The Lowry Academy’s specious ‘safeguarding’ measures that had the school’s management leveraging an AI-generated list of 200 titles of books to be banned. This came after management directed the school’s librarian to conduct an audit and remove ‘inappropriate’ books, without any kind of clear definition.

It’s troubling that the librarian’s qualified opinion was overridden by something an agreeable AI model put together in response to a reactionary input. Unsurprisingly, many of the 200 titles were ‘queer’ books.”

The article concludes:

“The new AI ‘mechanisms’ that are increasingly relied upon in professional settings, provide a laissez-faire way for those at the top to legitimise structures that marginalise queer individuals. Our qualified, conscientious, and compassionate librarians should lead the conversation on user needs. The Lowry Academy’s mistake has shown us just how wrong the inevitably AI-sourced alternative can go.”

- Kirsten MacQuarrie interviewed Kathleen Riach “Let’s talk: Feminist librarianship” [“In depth” column] [pp44-46], which looks briefly at the forthcoming ISO on menstruation, menstrual health and menopause in the workplace and highlights the new book<sup>6</sup> edited by Kirsten.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://bannedbooksweek.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> The article is also available at: <https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/news.asp?id=728340>.

<sup>6</sup> Kirsten MacQuarrie (ed). *Feminist librarianship: principles, practices and provocations*. Facet Publishing, 2026. Further info at: <https://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/page/detail/feminist-librarianship/?k=9781783308033>.

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

### ***Empowering collections***

In 2019, the MA published this report<sup>7</sup> (which was assessed in our Newsletter<sup>8</sup>). A reassessment of this piece of work has just been published<sup>9</sup>.

“In 2025 we undertook a research project to revisit the report and update the recommendations to ensure that they meet the needs of the sector and society today.” [p3]

This new report sets out three strategic aims for collections:

- Empowering
- Relevant
- Dynamic

and outlines the main ways in which this will happen:

“To make these aims a reality, museums, funders and sector bodies need to work collectively to:

- maintain and build upon democratised and decolonial approaches to collections work
- ensure that collections deliver public benefit and that the public understand what that benefit is
- improve cross sector working and collaboration between museums and communities to enable better sharing of collections.” [p4]

The new report then makes nine recommendations (with more detail of how these should be implemented):

1. A democratised approach to collections and displays
2. Diversify the workforce involved with collections
3. A proactive approach to decolonisation
4. Greater transparency in collections practice
5. A considered approach to using digital with museum collections
6. Using collections to create social impact, embed knowledge and build legacy
7. Support partnerships and knowledge sharing
8. Improve funding and peer support for the rationalisation of museum collections

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<sup>7</sup> *Empowering collections*. Museums Association, 2019, [https://archive-media.museumsassociation.org/MS1681-Empowering-collections\\_v8.pdf](https://archive-media.museumsassociation.org/MS1681-Empowering-collections_v8.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> See: *The Network Newsletter*, 217, Mar 2019, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Newsletter-NS-217.pdf>, pp3-5.

<sup>9</sup> *Empowering collections*. Museums Association, 2026, <https://media.museumsassociation.org/app/uploads/2026/06/17090457/MA-Empowering-Collections-Report-2026.pdf>.

## 9. Explore shared storage solutions.

As before, each recommendation is accompanied by an interesting case study, so this report very much points to future directions.

Recommended.<sup>10</sup>

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

### ***Roadmap for social inclusion 2026-2030***

As noted in a recent Ebulletin<sup>11</sup>, the Government of Ireland (Rialtas na hÉireann) has just published its Roadmap<sup>12</sup>; as the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, says in his Foreword:

“This new Roadmap builds on previous strategies, including Ireland’s first National Anti-Poverty Strategy, launched in 1997 – the very first such strategy in Europe. I am proud that Ireland has a long history not only of working to improve life for everyone who lives here, but also of playing a leadership role among our EU partners. I am determined that we will continue to show that leadership as we reduce overall poverty and child poverty to among the lowest levels in Europe by 2030.” [p5]

The Roadmap begins by setting out its “Overall Ambition”:

“To reduce consistent poverty to 2% or less by the end of 2030, reduce income inequality, and make Ireland one of the most socially inclusive countries in the European Union.” [p10]

and three “High-Level Objectives”:

1. “Reduce poverty and inequality levels – with a particular focus on children, lone parent families, older people, disabled people and marginalised communities.
2. Embed social inclusion, connection and community resilience as key objectives across all state policies and through fostering and supporting community and voluntary activity.
3. Foster inclusive growth, supporting labour market participation and employment while ensuring adequate social protection and safety nets.” [p10]

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Museums Association email updates, 19 Jun 2026.

<sup>11</sup> *Network Newsletter – Ebulletin*, 436, 2 Jun 2026, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Networkebulletin-no-436.pdf>, pp2-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Roadmap for social inclusion 2026-2030*. Government of Ireland, 2026, [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/5d2f5151/20260526\\_26.05.25\\_Department\\_of\\_Social\\_Protection\\_-\\_Roadmap\\_for\\_Social\\_Inclusion\\_2026-2030.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/5d2f5151/20260526_26.05.25_Department_of_Social_Protection_-_Roadmap_for_Social_Inclusion_2026-2030.pdf).

In exploring the case for social inclusion, the report makes some important points – which are frequently missing from other discussions of the importance of inclusion:

“[...] welfare or ‘wellbeing’ cannot be assessed using a single monetary metric or by referencing a fixed or ‘absolute’ income level deemed adequate to prevent destitution. Instead, a person’s sense of their own well-being is informed by how their income, employment, housing, health, education and recreation opportunities, to name just a few, evolve over time and compare to those of other people in their wider community. In other words, even if everyone in society becomes richer in real terms (after adjusting for price changes), the risk of poverty and sense of social exclusion can still increase if the gap between the ‘less’ and ‘better’ well-off increases.

This broader appreciation that a person’s sense of poverty/exclusion is relative rather than absolute is particularly important for developed economies such as Ireland. The challenge of ‘poverty’/‘exclusion’ is not solved simply by becoming ever wealthier, what matters is how that wealth is distributed among people and how it is used to deliver services to the benefit of community/society.” [p13]

Rather than going through all the assessments in detail, I thought it would be helpful to highlight a few ‘headlines’:

- There is welcome progress overall ...
- ... but: “Children, Disabled People, Lone Parents and the Unemployed are doing less well” [p18]
- “Performance is better for older people, but they remain vulnerable to poverty from relatively small income changes” [p20]
- “Our changing demography also presents significant challenges” [p21]. This identifies:

“Ireland is one of the most rapidly ageing Member States in the EU with the old age dependency ratio set to more than double between 2022 and 2070 [...]

We are also seeing significant shifts in the ethnic composition of our population – from being a largely mono-ethnic country in the years up to 2000 we have seen a large increase in migration. Migration is welcome in that it has been a key enabler of economic and employment growth and also helps to mitigate the challenge of population aging.

Rising ethnic diversity, especially in urban areas, highlights a need for targeted integration supports and inclusive policy development. Diversity enriches communities, strengthens the workforce, and fosters innovation, while also presenting opportunities for greater

inclusion and understanding. It is important to ensure that negative narratives around immigration are not exploited to the detriment of building social cohesion and more inclusive communities for both existing and new residents.” [p21]

The rest of the report sets out the ways in which these themes will be developed and monitored, including some “Ambitions” (which are developed into detailed action plans):

- “Ensure that all people have their essential needs met, including adequate and good quality food, secure housing, energy and healthcare” [p45]
- “Reduce consistent poverty for children (aged 0 to 17) to 3% or less by the end of 2030 and ensure that all families with children can participate fully in society” [p51]
- “To ensure that everyone who can work is given the opportunity of quality and fairly paid employment and to support workers on low income with targeted supports” [p57]
- “To support older people to live and age with dignity and fulfilment and to experience social inclusion, by providing them with the supports they need, and ensuring they have the income and services to achieve this” [p63]
- “To improve the social inclusion of disabled people and reduce poverty rates by delivering improved services and improving employment outcomes” [p67]
- “To support communities to improve social inclusion through improved resources and services” [p71]

This is an important report, setting out plans for creating greater inclusion and the steps required to get there ... and the steps are there to be monitored. Wistfully, I am wishing that we had some similar plans here in the UK ...

Recommended.

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## Migration issues – Other Agencies

### “Belfast unrest shows the power of social media as far-right views on immigration enter the mainstream”

This article<sup>13</sup> appeared in *The Conversation* recently and makes some very important points.

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Reilly “Belfast unrest shows the power of social media as far-right views on immigration enter the mainstream”, *The Conversation*, 10 Jun 2026, <https://theconversation.com/belfast-unrest-shows-the-power-of-social-media-as-far-right-views-on-immigration-enter-the-mainstream->



I think there is also a strong role for us in helping counter misinformation and presenting positive stories and information – in this case about new arrivals – to help develop social cohesion.

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**And finally ...**

### ***Libraries and care-experienced children and young people: a practical guide***



I hope a bit of self-promotion here is OK!

My new book<sup>15</sup> is going to be published next month; as the description on the Facet Publishing website<sup>16</sup> states:

“Drawing on the personal experience of library staff and young people, this essential guide provides guidance on how libraries can best support children and young people in care.

Exploring practices that have proved beneficial and effective, and explaining why, this book gives readers the necessary tools to develop good practice in their own library to support vulnerable young people.

Chapters include:

- The support libraries have provided in the past;
- An overview of the social policy background;
- How libraries are responding today;
- The barriers faced by care-experienced children and young people;
- Case studies that draw on the experience of individuals abroad.

This practical guide is a vital resource for librarians seeking to better understand and support children and young people in care.”

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<sup>15</sup> John Vincent. *Libraries and care-experienced children and young people: a practical guide*. Facet Publishing, Jul 2026.

<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.facetpublishing.com/page/detail/libraries-and-care-experienced-children-and-young-people/?k=9781783306428>.

## Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals

DCMS = Department for Culture, Media and Sport

EU = European Union

ISO = International Organisation for Standardisation<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “ISO, the International Organization for Standardization, brings global experts together to agree on the best way of doing things – for anything from making a product to managing a process. As one of the oldest non-governmental international organizations, ISO has enabled trade and cooperation between people and companies all over the world since 1946. The International Standards published by ISO serve to make lives easier, safer and better.” Taken from: <https://www.iso.org/about>.