

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

Number 299, January 2026

(Formerly published as *Public Libraries & Social Exclusion Action Planning Network Newsletter*, issue 1, May 1999 – issue 29, September 2001)

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 latest issue¹ includes:

- Eilish McLaughlin “Tenderness and Rage” [LGBTQ+ column] [pp24-25], which reports on the CILIP LGBTQ+ Network Committee’s first ‘hangout’ which took place at the Wellcome Collection and had an opportunity to visit the exhibition, “Tenderness and Rage: Stories of HIV and Care”²
- Janet Peden “Restoring Mosul Library” [“In Depth” column] [pp34-36], which looks at “an international partnership project to support capacity building for library staff at the University of Mosul”
- Lesley Pitman “Libraries under attack, how can we best support colleagues overseas?” [“In Depth” column] [pp44-45], which looks at ILIG (and CILIP’s) role in international librarianship; the article also includes a list of existing organisations which it’s worth supporting, including: Book Aid International³; Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online⁴; Fighting Erasure: Digitizing Gaza’s Genocide and the War on Lebanon^{5, 6}; Blue Shield International⁷; and the Endangered Archives Programme^{8, 9}
- “Lessons from America”, a Q&A with Jamie LaRue by Viv Hill [“In Depth” column] [pp46-47], which looks at some of the key censorship (and self-censorship) issues facing libraries at the moment¹⁰.

Museums Journal

The latest issue¹¹ includes:

¹ *Information Professional*, Jun/Jul 2026, digital edition.

² The exhibition is on until 30 May 2027: “‘Tenderness and Rage’ explores HIV and AIDS through stories of protest and care, from the height of the UK’s AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s to global experiences of HIV today.”

<https://wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/tenderness-and-rage>.

³ See: <https://bookaid.org/>.

⁴ See: <https://www.sucho.org/>.

⁵ See: <https://www.archiveslab.org/projects/fighting-erasure>.

⁶ CILIP’s CDEG hosted a webinar in 2025, which was part of the “Fighting Erasure” programme – see: <https://seapn.org.uk/archives-fighting-erasure/>.

⁷ See: <https://theblueshield.org/>.

⁸ See: <https://endangeredarchives.flexigrant.com/>.

⁹ This was developed from a session at the CILIP Members’ Fest 2026, “Libraries under attack: how can we best support colleagues overseas?”, run on 4 Mar 2026. The recording was not available on the CILIP website at the time of writing.

¹⁰ This was developed from a session at the CILIP Members’ Fest 2026, “Censorship: What Librarians are experiencing in the US & UK”, run on 3 Mar 2026. The recording was not available on the CILIP website at the time of writing.

¹¹ *Museums Journal*, Jul/Aug 2026.

- Simon Stephens, Editorial “Supporting young people” [p3], which highlights the Milburn Report^{12, 13} and outlines some examples of museums’ work with young people
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Digital detox” [“Analysis” column] [pp4-5], an interesting look at how museums are currently reacting to the tech giants, particularly those that have deleted their X accounts
- Rebecca Atkinson “It ain’t working” [“Analysis” column] [p10], which looks at the staff shortages in museums
- Simon Tansley “Working life” [“People” column] [p12], which looks at the background to the “Echoes from the Dock” project:

“Bow Street Museum of Crime and Justice have been awarded £118,428 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver *Echoes from the Dock*, a major new project exploring the LGBTQ+ community’s relationship with criminal justice, from Oscar Wilde’s appearance at Bow Street in 1895 to today.”¹⁴

- Sue Shave “Jewish museums and staff need support” [“Comment” column] [p14], which looks briefly at some of the security issues around running Jewish museums (and other organisations)¹⁵
- Veronica Simpson “Taking action on the climate” [pp18-25], which looks at how museums are carrying out work to tackle the climate crisis; the development of ecological art; and how “Museums and galleries are seeking to become an integral part of local ecosystems”.

The School Librarian

The latest issue¹⁶ includes:

- Gareth Conyard “Reading between the lines” [p18], which introduces the DfE White Paper¹⁷. This is an interesting summary (although may be superseded by the new Government), highlighting the proposed new statutory assessment of reading fluency and comprehension for Year 8 students.

¹² *Young people and work: interim report*. DWP, 2026,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/young-people-and-work-interim-report/young-people-and-work-interim-report>.

¹³ Noted in *Ebulletin*, 436, 2 Jun 2026, <https://seapn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Networkebulletin-no-436.pdf>, pp1-2.

¹⁴ Taken from: <https://bowstreetmuseum.org.uk/echoes-from-the-dock/>.

¹⁵ See: https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2026/08/jewish-museums-and-staff-need-support/#msdynmkt_trackingcontext=75d7446f-38aa-406c-ba30-ffc9596b0200.

¹⁶ *The School Librarian*, 74 (2), Summer 2026..

¹⁷ *Every child achieving and thriving* DfE, 2026, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/every-child-achieving-and-thriving/every-child-achieving-and-thriving-html-version>.

- Julie Broadbent “Pupil Power: transforming cultural capital and confidence through reading clubs” [pp20-21], which looks at the Reading Pioneers clubs that the author set up, involving students in their development and running
- Anna Tylor “Dignity in action” [pp24-25], in which the Chair of RNIB outlines the major importance of championing accessible formats and the role of RNIB Bookshare¹⁸

Books for Keeps

The latest issue¹⁹ includes:

- Paul Gravett “Queer as comics: a guide to the new exhibition” [pp8-9], which introduces a new exhibition at the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration²⁰
- Rebecca Gediking “Continuing the Story: A Summer with the GLL Literary Foundation” [p15]
- Darren Chetty and Karen Sands-O’Connor “Beyond the Secret Garden: Reading Gender” [pp16-17], an interesting, brief look at gender roles and stereotypes
- “Letterbox Library Recommends: We Are Family: Beyond Queer Parents” [p20], the first in a new column in which “Letterbox Library recommends books that celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion.”
- Nicholas Tucker “‘You Did Us Proud’: Children’s Hour Remembered” [pp22-23], which brought back some memories!!

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

“Libraries Connected Awards 2026: Winners and Runners-up”

Just in case you haven’t seen the full list²¹:

¹⁸ “RNIB Bookshare supports learners with a print disability to access the curriculum. We enable learners who cannot read standard print, including those with dyslexia or who are blind or partially sighted, to read the same books, at the same time as their peers, giving them the same educational opportunities and putting them, for the first time on a par with their peers, creating an inclusive environment in education.” Taken from: <https://www.rnibbookshare.org/about>.

¹⁹ *Books for Keeps*, 279, July 2026, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/BfK-279-July-2026.pdf>.

²⁰ See: <https://qbcentre.org.uk/>.

²¹ Taken from: <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/libraries-connected-awards-2026-winners-and-runners>.

Children's Promise Category

James Fisher and Zachary Wells (Kent Libraries) – Winner
Built a powerful partnership with youth football teams, bringing reading and library services into sporting audiences.

Emily Maycock (Medway Libraries) – Runner-up
Founded the Medway Reading Network, bringing together librarians and teachers to strengthen reading, improve wellbeing, and expand opportunities for children and young people.

Culture and Creativity Category

Michelle Shine and Keshia Stewart (Stockport Libraries) – Winner
Delivered a flagship mosaic project combining community storytelling, sustainability and public art to create a lasting expression of local identity.

Mark George and Rebecca Rudall (Tower Hamlets Libraries) – Runner-up
Led the development of Writeidea, an inclusive literary festival offering free, high-quality creative opportunities for diverse communities.

Health and Wellbeing Category

Charlotte Higham (Bolton Libraries) – Winner
Introduced an interactive Rainbow Table to support people living with dementia through engaging, wellbeing-focused activities.

Anna Putek (Manchester Libraries) – Runner-up
Created inclusive craft groups and city-wide initiatives that reduce isolation and strengthen community connections.

Information and Digital Category

Engagement and Access Team (Blackpool Libraries) – Winner
Developed "Explore Tech, Expand Worlds", giving young people hands-on experience creating immersive digital content and building new skills.

Melanie Weeks (Vale of Glamorgan Libraries) – Runner-up
Led a pioneering digitisation project that safeguards local heritage and ensures long-term access to historical collections.

Share the Vision Promise Category

Sarah Jones (Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure) – Winner
Championed accessibility through live audio description and inclusive cultural programming for blind and visually impaired users.

Thomas Williams (Manchester Libraries) – Runner-up
Developed a self-guided audio trail enhancing access to Manchester Central Library for visually impaired visitors.

Reading Category

Caroline Hall (Bolton Libraries) – Winner
Strengthened early years literacy through high-quality storytelling and staff training.

Victoria Little (South Tyneside Libraries) – Runner-up
Introduced an innovative rewards scheme to encourage reading and library engagement.

Special Awards

Ian Anstice BEM – President's Special Achievement Award
Recognised for outstanding contribution to the library sector through Public Libraries News.

Kate Mosse CBE – Public Library Champion
Honoured for exceptional advocacy for reading, literacy and public libraries.

Museums Change Lives Scotland

The MA has launched a “[...] new series of Museums Change Lives case studies from across Scotland, [in which] we share how museums of all kinds are making an impact and creating positive, lasting change.”²²

The case studies are categorised as:

- Enhancing health and wellbeing
- Creating better and more equitable places to live and work
- Inspiring engagement, debate and reflection.

Enhancing health and wellbeing

- The People's Mobile Archive, Timespan: “An outreach programme tackling rural isolation, health inequalities and cultural exclusion in East Sutherland”
- Wellbeing at the Museum, OnFife: “OnFife's Wellbeing at the Museum project delivered creative sessions to people experiencing symptoms of anxiety and social isolation”
- Working Together, Scottish Maritime Museum: “The activity has included family wellbeing sessions, creative activities inspired by the museum's

²² Taken from: https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-change-lives/in-the-nations/scotland/#msdynmkt_trackingcontext=1fc8acbf-37ad-45c1-8283-9969e63b0300. They have also produced a pdf version of the case studies, see: https://media-library.museumsassociation.org/app/uploads/2026/07/15104511/HS581-%E2%80%93-MA-Scottish-MCL-2026_04.pdf.

collection, participatory artist-led workshops, community exhibitions, and new volunteering pathways.”

Creating better and more equitable places to live and work

- Oceans – Wellbeing – Youth project, Stromness Museum: “Stromness Museum partnered with the West Mainland Youth Achievement Group and other local youth groups on a project exploring the connections between ocean health, climate action, and young people’s wellbeing”
- Intercultural Youth Group, Glasgow Museums: “Established in October 2024, it’s a creative community space for young people (aged 18-26) from minority ethnic groups in Glasgow. The group have met fortnightly at the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA).”
- The museum as a community hub, The Devil’s Porridge Museum: “With the challenges for people to travel to other areas, the museum has found an identity as a community hub. They offer a fortnightly lunch club for older people at risk of social isolation, with a hot meal, a chat, bingo, functional fitness activities, followed by a talk, craft, or music session. They also run after-school clubs and youth clubs every week which are free to attend.”

Inspiring engagement, debate and reflection

- We Make Museums, Glasgow Women’s Library: “A three-year project, supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, brought together 17 women with lived experiences of complex inequalities and trauma to work collaboratively with the team at Glasgow Women’s Library (GWL) and wider community to shape new approaches to collecting and commissioning art works for museum collections.”
- Sewing Hope, National Museum of Scotland²³: “The project demonstrated the value of bringing together artists, scientists and museums to create meaningful public engagement with climate change. Families returned months later to see their work displayed in the museum, highlighting the strong sense of ownership and pride created through participation. The quilts continue to have a legacy across Scotland, including a planned display of the West Highland Museum quilt at a local hospital.”
- Rainbow Illuminations: Building a Queer Art Trail, Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums: “Over the past year, [Aberdeen Archives, Gallery & Museums have] been working closely with Four Pillars – Aberdeen’s local LGBT+ support charity and drop-in centre – to co-create Rainbow Illuminations, a queer art trail that starts a conversation about reinterpreting our permanent displays through the lens of LGBTQIA+ lived experience.”

²³ See also: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/our-impact/community-and-access/projects/climate-change-for-all>.

“June 2026 Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund awardees”

This is the list²⁴ of the grantees of the most recent round of the Esmée Fairbairn Communities and Collections Fund²⁵.

“The fund supports projects using museum collections to improve inclusion and equitable working with community partners.”

The grantees are:

Bradford District Museums & Galleries and Summat Creative, £89,121 for “Re:View”, a project to identify disability histories and improve the representation of disabled people within the museum collections.

Kendal Museum, Cumbria Development Education Centre and the Nandi-Kendal Association, £100,000 to work with the Nandi-Kendal Association to collaboratively explore connected histories and shared heritage.

The People’s Palace and West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC), £100,000 to enhance the People’s Palace collection through community co-production to share new voices and provide a platform to explore difficult stories.

Pitt Rivers Museum, In-Spire Sounds, African Families in the UK (AFiUK) and Oxford Sudanese Supplementary School (OSSS), £99,315 for “Curate Your Future”, a programme to use global music collections to build confidence, skills and cultural pathways for underserved young people.

The Wallich and Amgueddfa Cymru, £99,536 for “Unhoused: A History of Homelessness”, a project to use trauma-informed co-production to co-create Wales’s first collection on homelessness.

Ulster Folk Museum (NMNI) and Nerve Centre, £98,463 for the ‘We are Here’ engagement project which seeks to nurture understanding, dialogue and mutual respect between different communities in Northern Ireland and test new ways of sharing authority over collections at the Ulster Folk Museum.²⁶

²⁴ Taken from: https://www.museumsassociation.org/funding/efccf/june-2026-awardees/#msdynmkt_trackingcontext=75d7446f-38aa-406c-ba30-ffc9596b0200.

²⁵ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/funding/efccf/>.

²⁶ Source: email from the MA, 4 Aug 2026.

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Other Agencies

A generation apart? Youth politics, alienation and democratic renewal in Britain

This important paper²⁷ has just been published by IPPR.

As it states in its Summary:

“Public debate about young people and politics is loud, contested – and largely wrong. Drawing on new analysis of British Election Study data and participatory workshops with young people from across Britain, this report challenges three dominant narratives:

- the radicalising young male cohort
- the hyper-polarised young electorate
- youth apathy.

None survives contact with the data.” [p6]

The Summary continues:

“The gender gap is real, but a leftward shift among young women is primarily driving this, rather than any rightward drift among young men. And on almost every issue we examined, the divide between young people and older cohorts dwarfs the gender gap entirely.

More striking than what divides young men and young women is what they share: genuine political concern alongside a profound loss of confidence that the system can act on it.” [p6]

and:

“The crisis in British youth democracy, in other words, is one of alienation, not some strange combination of extremism and apathy. Speaking with young people from across the UK, we find that this is rooted in:

- the erosion of community infrastructure
- a lack of confidence and democratic knowledge
- a pervasive sense among young people that British institutions are simply not designed for them.

These burdens are not evenly shared: class compounds every dimension of the problem, with young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds facing all the same barriers as their peers, and then some.” [p6]

²⁷ Chris Bick, Pascale Frazer-Carroll and Jasmine Jinadu. *A generation apart? Youth politics, alienation and democratic renewal in Britain*. IPPR, 2026, https://ippr-org.files.svdcdn.com/production/Downloads/A_generation_apart-June_26.pdf?dm=1781771278.

To rebuild trust and engagement, the report argues that we need to build “a new political compact with young people”, based on:

- “Rebuild the community infrastructure where civic life takes root.
- Develop the knowledge, habits and access that democratic participation requires.
- Give young people genuine power, not tokenism.” [p6]

These three “pillars” involve:

Rebuild the community infrastructure where civic life takes root

- “Reverse more than a decade of disinvestment in youth services through sustained revenue funding [...]” [p7]
- Embed youth provision within the Pride in Place programme

Develop the knowledge, habits and access that democratic participation requires

- “Give citizenship education the status it deserves, by:
 - reconceiving its content around a firm grounding in how democracy works
 - funding training for teachers at both the primary and secondary levels
 - introducing a mandatory community engagement component requiring young people to spend time in local democratic and civic life.” [p7]
- Break down barriers to democratic participation, eg by “legislating to enable remote and hybrid council meetings” [p7]

Give young people genuine power, not tokenism

- “Establish a youth interest committee in the House of Lords to scrutinise all primary legislation for its impact on young people, with membership drawn from both sitting peers and young people nominated through schools. This will create a direct link between democratic education and real political power.” [p7]

As the report concludes:

“None of this requires reinventing British democracy from scratch. It requires taking seriously the idea that a democracy that persistently excludes a generation is diminishing itself.” [p29]

Recommended.

Care-experienced children & young people – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Libraries and care-experienced children and young people ...

Just in case you haven't seen this, my book²⁸ was published on 16 July – there are further details here²⁹:

“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.”

Contents include:

Chapter 1: Definitions and Scope of the Book

Chapter 2: A Brief Introduction to the Social Policy Background

Chapter 3: What Have Libraries Provided in the Past?

Chapter 4: Barriers in Library Services to Care-Experienced Children

Chapter 5: How are Libraries responding today?

Chapter 6: What Can We learn from Elsewhere?

Conclusions – and What More Can We Do?

Appendix 1: More Information About the Care System

Appendix 2: 'Right to Read' and Other PHF-supported initiatives

²⁸ John Vincent. *Libraries and care-experienced children and young people: a practical guide*. Facet Publishing, 2026. [NB charged-for publication].

²⁹ Taken from the Facet Publishing webpage, <https://www.facetpublishing.com/page/detail/libraries-and-care-experienced-children-and-young-people/?k=9781783306428>.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CDEG = Community, Diversity and Equality Group of CILIP
CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
DfE = Department for Education
DWP = Department for Work and Pensions
GLL = Greenwich Leisure Limited
ILIG = the International Library and Information Group of CILIP
IPPR = Institute for Public Policy Research
MA = Museums Association
PHF = Paul Hamlyn Foundation
RNIB = Royal National Institute of Blind People

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January 2026 (published Aug 2026)