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.

Contents List

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Did you see …?

Library & Information Update

In the December issue[1], there is a couple of articles of particular interest:

- An "Opinion" piece by Carolynn Rankin, looking at the shortage of evidence for the role that public libraries play in, for example, leisure or the educational support for lifelong learning, and urging practitioners to "develop a strategy for getting evidence-based messages about libraries beyond the echo-chamber." [p34]
- Anne Harding "Supporting children and young people with special educational needs" [pp47-49]

Prison Libraries Journal

The latest issue[2] includes a number of interesting short pieces:

- A summary of the 2010 Annual Conference, which gives a taste of the different talks and workshops [pp5-9]
- David Kendall and Genevieve Clarke "Six Book Challenge 2011 in prisons and YOIs" [pp14-15]
- Chris Querée "Reading groups in HMP Bristol" [pp24-26]
- Biddy Fisher "Community focus and good professional work make for a good service" [pp27-30].

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Removing barriers to literacy

This new report[3] from Ofsted contains the results of a survey, the aim of which was:

> "… to illustrate effective approaches that might help others to improve their practice in literacy. Inspectors visited providers of childcare, education and post-16 learning. The providers were selected because previous inspection evidence and data on achievement and attainment showed that they were particularly successful in enabling children and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds to make better than average progress and to achieve good standards of literacy." [p1]

To carry out this survey:

> "Between June 2008 and February 2010, inspectors visited 45 early years registered providers, 37 secondary and 61 primary schools, 21

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[1] *Library & Information Update*, December 2010.

[2] *Prison Libraries Journal*, 18 (2), 2010. For further information, see: http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/prison/publications/pages/default.aspx.

[3] *Removing barriers to literacy*. Ofsted, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (494.71 kb) or Word document (980.50 kb) from: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/Removing-barriers-to-literacy.

colleges, 16 independent training providers, eight local authority providers of adult and community learning, and education provision in one prison and one young offender institution. They were selected because previous inspections and current data indicated strengths in their provision, and in the case of schools, particularly for those who were eligible for free school meals. The survey focused mainly on the following groups: pupils eligible for free school meals; looked after children (children in public care); and White British boys from low-income households. In the second year, the focus of the survey shifted, in all the schools selected for visits, to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals who were reaching at least average levels of attainment nationally in English. The intention was to identify good practice in supporting these learners. In the main, the providers visited served areas of high socio-economic disadvantage and yet achieved outcomes in English that were at or above the levels expected nationally …

In raising the attainment of learners in literacy who are most at risk of not gaining the skills they need for successful lives, the factors identified from visits on this survey included:

- teachers with high expectations for pupils' achievements in literacy
- an emphasis on speaking and listening skills from an early age
- a rigorous, sequential approach to developing speaking and listening and teaching reading, writing and spelling through systematic phonics
- sharp assessment of progress in order to determine the most appropriate programme or support
- carefully planned provision to meet individual needs
- rigorous monitoring of the impact of provision
- high-quality pastoral care to support learning in literacy
- highly effective use of time, staff and resources." [pp4-5]

The providers made it clear that there were no "eureka moments", rather it was "what one school described as 'painstaking adjustments' to what they did when their monitoring provided evidence of weaknesses and 'stuck with what worked'." [p5]

Despite this, "the providers had seldom succeeded completely in narrowing the attainment gap for all groups of pupils. Inspectors did not find any examples of either primary or secondary schools focusing specifically on engaging the families of White working class pupils, despite the fact that this group of pupils is consistently among the worst-performing. Even the providers that were judged to be outstanding acknowledged that 'there is still more to do'." [p5]

The report highlights key findings, many of which emphasise the importance of putting literacy at the core of the curriculum – and ensuring that teaching staff had received training in literacy teaching.

In addition:

"Virtual headteachers … found it difficult to gain accurate data on the progress of pupils who were looked after. Assessment information was

often missing because looked after children were moved frequently. There was often a gap before a pupil's new school or local authority received information." [p7]

Whilst this report is focused particularly on schools, nevertheless its findings and recommendations should have an impact on our work too, if we are to provide effective literacy support to young people.[4]

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Good conversations: successful communities, better services – positioning paper

This paper[5] from ippr north looks at "good conversations":

> "'Good conversations' is a shorthand term we are using for the good, equal and constructive dialogue that can exist between professionals and communities. Good conversations are based on community engagement and empowerment that is focused and purposeful and results in practical improvements, more efficient services and more targeted and effective resource application." [p1]

and investigates whether the time for this kind of engagement has come and gone:

> "… as the UK moves into an era of budget restraint policymakers are asking themselves whether the time for good conversations has come, or if they are a luxury we can no longer afford.
>
> Good conversations are often presented as a moral imperative, but if they are to survive the cuts the case for them needs to be made in a different way: their implications for vibrant communities and effective and efficient public services needs to be made. The business case is required." [p1]

The report suggests that the business case remains "variable", but that three key areas can be identified:

1. Good conversations strengthen communities, build trust and social capital
2. Good conversations can result in more effective public services
3. Good conversations can result in more efficient public services. [taken from pp1-2]

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[4] George Dugdale has written a good piece on this report for the National Literacy Trust blog, see: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/blog/2956_removing_barriers_to_literacy.

[5] *Good conversations: successful communities, better services – positioning paper*. ippr north/Social Regeneration Consultants, 2010. Available to download as a pdf (3100 kb) from: http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=786.

The report then goes on to argue that:

> "A wide range of techniques are used in the UK and abroad to hold good conversations. Which techniques are appropriate will vary according to the context, how empowered the target community is, and what a local authority or its partners are trying to achieve. But good conversations are not usually a cheap option, and cutting corners will undermine their effectiveness." [p2]

It notes ten core principles that should be adhered to if "good conversations" are to be genuine:

1. "Adopting best practice
2. Building community trust and capacity
3. Honesty, transparency and realism from service providers and support agencies
4. Being inclusive – engaging with people who are rarely heard as well as those who are always heard
5. Avoiding jargon – presenting written information in plain English
6. Being flexible – adapting techniques and approaches to local circumstances
7. Recognising community differences
8. Keeping everyone well-informed, with regular communication and feedback
9. Respecting local knowledge and particularly community and neighbourhood histories
10. Resourcing the process properly" [p2]

The report concludes that:

> "… there is concern about the prospects for good conversations given the public spending context. While the local authority 'duty to involve' and the 'Big Society' agenda should protect some activities linked to good conversations, the non-statutory nature of most community engagement and empowerment work raises concerns about the sustainability of some of this activity. It is imperative that cuts are made with long term improvement in mind, not just quick cashable savings. To really reap the benefits of good conversations, local authorities and their partners must be convinced of their value." [p17]

Nevertheless, the outlook may be positive:

> "The current agenda of localism, and alongside it the Big Society, create an opportunity for local authorities and their partners to build on the positive outcomes of initiatives like Total Place, to redesign service delivery and their relationships with citizens and communities based on the foundation of good conversations." [p17]

This is a timely, brief reminder of the importance of proper engagement – with the bonus of identifying the ten core principles. Recommended.

Passing the baton: inter-generational conceptions of race and racism in Birmingham

This new report[6] is part of the Runnymede programme, Generation 3.0 ("young people three generations on from the major wave of postwar migration typified by those who disembarked from the SS Empire Windrush in 1948" p3).

Runnymede conducted focus groups with people across Birmingham; key issues were:

- "No participant expressed approval of racism or discrimination;
- All expressed the desire that people in Birmingham should be able to live together peaceably;
- Nonetheless, racism caused significant concerns in Birmingham." [p3]

Amongst the findings were:

- "Young people in Birmingham have a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of how race and racism could determine their life chances and place in society …" [p3]
- "Young people's concept of identity was shaped by the super diverse environment in which they grew up." [p3]
- "Young people's perception of community relations were also defined by super diversity. While opinions differed, most offered an image of a rough acceptance of the various communities amongst their peers.
- They argued that communal tensions tended to be more problematic amongst older generations.
- Older participants also provided a tenser image of community relations. Members of the Asian and African-Caribbean communities referred to specific causes of disagreement between them, though discussion of the white population was notably absent." [p4]

The conclusions are particularly important:

- "The report challenges the idea that young people are unmotivated or politically apathetic.
- Young people display frustration that they do not see many avenues that they can follow in order to effect change.
- Older generations hold valuable experience and knowledge but there is often a disconnect between them and the younger generations of activists.
- What is required is a set of neutral forums and spaces where younger and older people can meet and exchange ideas, knowledge and experience.

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[6] Kamaljeet Gill <u>and</u> Kjartan Sveinsson. *Passing the baton: inter-generational conceptions of race and racism in Birmingham*. Runnymede, 2011 [ISBN: 978-1-906732-72-1 (online); 978-1-906732-73-8 (print)]. Available to download as a pdf (528.55 kb) from:
http://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/158/32.html?utm_source=The+Runnymede+Trust&utm_campaign=5661f5deb7-February2011&utm_medium=email (you'll just need to register on the site to access the report).

- This would reconnect the different generations, meaning that Generation 3.0 would benefit from a greater wealth of wisdom in tackling racism.
- This is not a solution to racism *per se*; however it is a blueprint for the generation of such solutions." [p4]

– and show some areas where we could get further involved, especially in providing the "set of neutral forums and spaces". Recommended.

Broader issues – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

"A guide to developing a local outcomes framework for culture and sport"

Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA) have just published this web-based guide.

As they say on the home-page:

> "Culture and sport, perhaps now more than ever before, must demonstrate the contribution the sector makes to better outcomes for individuals, communities and places.
>
> This web resource provides guidance for councils and their partners on how to create a local outcomes framework for culture and sport. This will help you measure and evidence the difference your service makes and its contribution to local priorities. It will also help you make the case for continued investment of public money."[7]

The guide is split up into a number of sections:

- "What's this guide for?" which briefly introduces who the guide is aimed at; how to use it; and why it has been developed[8]
- "How will a local outcomes framework help me?"
  "A local outcomes framework will help you show clearly the links between culture and sport activities and the achievement of better outcomes in your area.
  This guide includes example outcomes frameworks that suggest how culture and sport activities may contribute to better outcomes for:
    o children and young people
    o the economy
    o the environment
    o health and wellbeing
    o older people
    o safer communities
    o strong communities.

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[7] Taken from: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21649171.
[8] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21649527.

A further example gives suggestions of how culture and sport activities may contribute to better outcomes across a number of policy themes.[9]

- "What should my framework include?" which has practical ideas to build the outcomes framework, including: developing an "outcomes triangle" to show the impact of your work at different levels; using a logic model ("The logic model illustrates the main links between service activities and local outcomes. It shows understanding of the benefits of culture and sport to individuals, communities and places, and how these in turn contribute to the achievement of intermediate and overarching strategic outcomes); building an evidence list.[10]
- "How do I create my own framework?"[11]
- "How have others developed theirs?" which includes case studies, eg Lancashire County Council have developed an outcomes framework for the contribution of libraries to the theme of children and young people; Cumbria County Council have developed an outcomes framework for the contribution of the arts to health, while Derbyshire have developed an outcomes framework for the contribution of culture and sport to health and wellbeing.[12]
- Some more examples[13]
- Data tools and sources – "This section signposts you to:
  o sources of data that may help populate your performance indicators and evidence lists
  o guidance on how to collect robust data on the contribution of culture and sport to non cultural and sporting outcomes."[14]
- Finally, there is "Showing the difference culture and sport makes: animated video"[15]

This will be a very useful guide for services creating and developing outcomes frameworks – recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

HMP = Her Majesty's Prison
YOI = Young Offenders Institution

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[9] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21650691.
[10] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21651176.
[11] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21652857.
[12] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=24829359.
[13] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21658135.
[14] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=21661503.
[15] See: http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=25396584.