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

Number 121, May 2011

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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

Did you see …?

Adults Learning

The March[1] and April[2] issues include some good background articles on the Big Society and its importance for adult learning, eg:

- Alastair Thomson "Big Society, big deal?" which looks at the challenges for adult educators [March, pp8-9)
- John Low "Build the Big Society on what we know works" [March, pp10-11]
- Brian Hall "Public libraries and the Big Society", in which the President of CILIP argues that "Volunteers already enrich the public library service but the full value of their contribution is reliant on the presence of skilled and knowledgeable staff working within the direction of a professionally managed service" [March p13]
- Richard Kemp "The Big Society? It's here already", which looks at the localism agenda [March, p14]
- Peter Davies "What does the Big Society mean for us?", which looks at the need for providers to work hard to demonstrate the wider benefits of adult learning [April, pp16-17].

Museums Journal

The April issue[3] includes a number of interesting articles, including:

- Paul Fraser Webb "Tell your own story before others do it for you", a "Comment" piece which urges museums to build their advocacy and profile [p17]
- "Digital roundtable", a record of the discussion at a roundtable organised as part of the HLF consultation on its future strategy, which looked at what sorts of digital offers museums are making – and whether these are meeting people's needs [pp28-33]
- Simon Stephens "City challenge", background to the development of Cardiff Story, and how this new museum developed links across the community [pp35-37]

CILIP *Update*

The March issue[4] includes an interesting piece on "The Big Book Share: 10 years on …" by Tricia Kings and Gill Lewis, which looks at the development of this key reading link between prisoners and their children [pp40-42].

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[1] *Adults Learning*, 22 (7) March 2011. For further information, see: http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning/adults-learning-back-issues.
[2] *Adults Learning*, 22 (8) April 2011. For further information, see: http://www.niace.org.uk/publications/adults-learning/adults-learning-back-issues.
[3] *Museums Journal*, April 2011. For further information, see: http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal.
[4] CILIP *Update*, March 2011. For further information, see: http://www.cilip.org.uk/publications/update-magazine/Pages/default.aspx.

Runnymede Bulletin

The delayed Spring 2011 issue[5] has just been published online. It includes a range of important and interesting articles (and also book reviews), including:

- Gabriela Quevedo "'Bogus' asylum seekers and other nonsense", which asks "asks what anti-racist organisations can do to counter the media's negative stereotyping" [pp4-5]
- Clive Hopwood "Escaping with words", the work of the Writers in prison Network [p6]
- Ali Rattansi "From multiculturalism to 'interculturalism'", which argues that we need to find a new way of thinking about cultural difference [pp8-9]
- Kerrie Proulx "Fighting the odds", which looks at the barriers facing Bangladeshi young people [pp10-11]
- Kamaljeet Gill "Will fairness equal equality?", which looks at what "ordinary people" think of the Big Society [p14]
- "10 key facts about … race and the arts" [p15].

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Local authorities improving life chances …

The NLT has just published this report[6] of their Partners in Literacy project. As Jonathan Douglas says in the Foreword:

> "This report explains how it worked and provides invaluable research to drive the development of a new approach to support literacy standards which will work with the new public service context with a focus on improving the home learning environment." [p2]

In terms of background to this project:

> "In 2008, we undertook a review of research into the role of families and the home environment in developing a child's literacy skills. The following key findings shaped our partnership with local authorities [in the Partners in Literacy project]:
>
> **Families:** parental involvement is a more powerful force for academic success than other family background variables.
>
> **Early years:** the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects.

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[5] *Runnymede Bulletin*, 365, Spring 2011. Available to download as a pdf (1490 kb) from: http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/bulletin/pdfs/FirstEditionWeb.pdf.
[6] Emily McCoy. *Local authorities improving life chances: a review of a new approach to raising literacy levels.* NLT, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (830.85 kb) from: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/9314/Final_report.pdf.

The home: parents have the greatest influence on the achievement of young people by supporting learning in the home rather than in school.

Role models: even at age16 parental interest in a child's reading is the single greatest predictor of achievement.

Disadvantage: rates of low literacy are highest in disadvantaged communities and low literacy is a barrier to social mobility." [p3 – emphases theirs]

In addition, earlier work had highlighted the importance of effective partnership practice in engaging vulnerable families in literacy support.

This came together:

"In 2009, the National Literacy Trust received funding from the then Department for Children, Schools and Families. The funding was to develop a new and strategic approach to improving literacy levels through partnerships with local authorities." [p3]

The DCSF funding was for nine local authority pilot projects, and this report explores how these nine pieces of work developed, and what key themes emerged, including the importance of:

- "**A framework:** for assessing need and developing strategic planning for literacy.
- **Capacity to develop the approach:** a lead officer to support the development of partnerships.
- **Senior commitment:** when a literacy strategy is not just championed at a strategic level but is owned and driven by it.
- **Partnership with the National Literacy Trust:** in a survey sent out to the local authority network in February 2011, 100 per cent of respondents said they would recommend working with the National Literacy Trust to improve literacy levels.
- **Evidence:** engagement of partners and senior managers relied on strong evidence of need and of the impact of a partnership approach.
- **Evaluation:** partners need to be equals in planning, data collection and evaluation and this could be supported with strong senior engagement." [p4]

The report is organised into six main chapters, covering:

- The challenge: building literate homes, which sets the context
- The approach to increasing parental involvement in literacy in the home
- Developing a new local approach to literacy, looking at the partnerships that were built up at a local level
- Evidence of impact
- Critical success factors [which are outlined above]
- Sustaining and developing the approach.

The report contains a mass of useful, very brief case studies, and these, together with the evaluation of the project as a whole, provide an important platform on which to build and develop "a new and sustainable approach to improving literacy levels." [p4]

In addition, the NLT has been building a media campaign around the publication of the report, and Emily McCoy has written a blog entry, "The time is now: get literacy on the agenda of your child poverty partnership"[7], which argues that tackling literacy could well be a major route into tackling childhood poverty.[8]

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Communication & engagement toolkit

The Evelyn Oldfield Unit has just produced this new toolkit[9] which is aimed at "supporting RCOs to better connect with their beneficiaries" [p7].

It begins by defining their use of 'community engagement':

- "Creating a connection that allows the flow of information between you and your community - to let people know what you are doing and what you can offer;
- Building your understanding of what is happening in your community – helping you to have an up-to-date knowledge of the needs of your community and how you can support them;
- Encouraging your community to be involved in the decision-making of your organisation – to create a sense of the community having a genuine stake in your organisation;
- In addition, we are interested in the question - 'are RCOs reaching out to those who most need support in their communities?' If you feel that your group does, then this is good news, but we have come across a number of groups who see the same people time and time again, and have difficulties(in terms of limited resources) connecting to the most vulnerable in their community. This toolkit will help you to reach out to those termed 'hard to reach' and simultaneously help you to build on your existing communication channels." [p4]

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[7] See:
http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/blog/3540_the_time_is_now_get_literacy_on_the_agenda_of_your_child_poverty_partnership.
[8] Thanks to Emily McCoy for alerting me to this.
[9] *Communication & engagement toolkit.* Evelyn Oldfield Unit, 2011. Available to download as a pdf from:
http://www.evelynoldfield.co.uk/files/publications/EOU%20Engagement%20and%20Communication%20Toolkit.pdf. (This has also been published as a scribd document at: http://www.scribd.com/doc/53248812/EOU-Engagement-and-Communication-Toolkit, but this is hard to use – thanks to Bill Bolloten for finding the pdf link.)

It includes a useful glossary; and this is followed by sections (which include links to documents; listings of weblinks – that don't link, but can be cut-and-pasted into your own browser; hints, tips and suggestions for developing good practice) on:

- Research and mapping
- Tools for engagement (including writing engagingly; translation; engaging volunteers; events planning)
- Digital media/social networking
- Removing barriers (including using the "Two Ticks" symbol; being inclusive and reaching out to everyone; web accessibility; making presentations more accessible)
- Human resources (including 'Professional support for free'; volunteer centres; the Leonardo and Grundtvig Programmes.

This is a very useful guide – for us, as well as RCOs. Recommended.

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Shining the light: 10 keys to becoming a trans positive organisation

This new toolkit[10] has been produced as part of the Shine @ Galop project, one of the key aims of which is:

> "Increasing accessibility and improving services to trans people from a range of LGBT organisations including Galop, by providing trans targeted services and having a fuller understanding of the issues."[11]

It is aimed primarily at LGBT organisations, but, as it states in the Introduction:

> "Although this toolkit has been written with LGBT organisations in mind, we think much of this information will be relevant to other organisations and service providers too. Please feel free to use it and adapt it to suit your needs." [p2]

The 10 keys identified are:

1. Full integration at every level: "Trans people are more than just clients. Fully inclusive organisations have trans people involved at all levels, from trustees through to volunteers … Don't rely on one trans person to act as the 'lead' on trans issues…" [p71]

2. Reach out and engage a broad range of trans people

3. Create a welcoming environment

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[10] Benjamin Gooch. *Shining the light: 10 keys to becoming a trans positive organisation.* Galop, no date (2011). Available to download as a pdf (1150 kb) from: http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/final-shine-report-low-res.pdf.
[11] For further information about Shine, see: http://www.galop.org.uk/projects/shine-galop/shine-galop/#more-126.

4. Challenge prejudice

5. Challenge prejudice: spotlight on harassment, abuse and sexual violence

6. Acknowledge past mistakes

7. Plan full trans inclusion in projects, services and lobbying work

8. Understand trans experiences

9. Be an effective ally

10. Have fair employment practices.

Key 3, "Create a welcoming environment", is an important one for us, as it deals with common issues such as complaints about the use of toilets and other facilities by trans people, and the "verbal environment": this looks at good practice in using pronouns, which name a trans person may use (the given name or their chosen name), and how to ask appropriate questions (eg "Think about when you really need to know someone's gender in your organisation. Many of the barriers trans people face can be removed by 'de-gendering' the aspects of your work where knowing this information is not necessary or relevant." [p24]

There are also some useful appendices, including sections on trans (and human) rights, and a list of a wide range of resources.

This is a very useful, practical guide – highly recommended.

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums and Archives

Future Libraries Programme: final reports from pilots

"The Future Libraries Programme, formed by a partnership between national and local government, and driven by councils themselves, aims to help the library service during the current challenging financial situation, with an ambition to ensure libraries play a central role for communities in the Big Society."[12]

In March 2011, MLA published the Final Report of the FLP[13] and also this *Final report from pilots*[14].

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[12] Taken from:
http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/the_future_libraries_programme.
[13] *Future Libraries Programme – Final Report to Governance Board*. MLA, 2011.
Available to download as a pdf (104 kb) from:
http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/the_future_libraries_programme/~/media/File
s/pdf/2011/libraries/Future_Libraries_Programme_Final_Report_to_Governance_Board
.ashx.

This report looks at what was undertaken, and what has been learned, from the ten pilot projects. As well as exploring different models of service delivery, some of the pilots also recognised the wider benefits of this work, for example:

- The Greater Manchester pilot: "the feasibility study has recognised how a shared services approach can sustain the contribution that libraries make to: Learning, Reading and literacy … Community cohesion & a sense of place" [p3]
- The Northumberland and Durham pilot looked at both how to deliver better local services and how to combat digital exclusion
- The South West Peninsula project had as one of its aims: "Improving the delivery of service to customers, community engagement, develop co-production and community cohesion" [p64]

MLA are to produce a final report shortly.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Book ownership and its relation to reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment …

This important report[15] from the NLT hit the headlines (eg revealing that one in three children does not own a book of their own).

Based on a survey of 18,141 young people, the survey makes an immensely important set of arguments around reading, book-ownership and literacy:

"Although other factors such as socio-economic status and gender may have a part to play in children and young people's relationship to books and reading, the relationship between book ownership and reading attitudes and abilities is consistently strong. When compared to peers who do not have books of their own, children who own books:
- enjoy reading more
- read more books
- read more frequently
- read for longer lengths of time when they do read
- have more books in the home
- read more of every kind of material not just books
- are more likely to have been bought a book as a present

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[14] *Future Libraries Programme: final report from pilots*. MLA, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (310 kb) from: http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/the_future_libraries_programme/~/media/Files/pdf/2011/libraries/Appendix_2_Future_Libraries_Programme_Final_Reports_from_Pilots_March_2011.ashx.

[15] Christina Clark and Lizzie Poulton. *Book ownership and its relation to reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment: some findings from the National Literacy Trust first annual survey*. NLT, 2011. Available to download as a pdf (214.59 kb) from: http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/9502/Book_ownership_2011.pdf.

- are more likely to have ever visited a library or bookshop
- have more positive attitudes to reading
- find it easier to find books that interest them
- have higher attainment." [p5]

The report also links these findings into their broader context:

"It is not a case of books being irrelevant now technology has superseded printed matter. Children with no books of their own are less likely to be sending emails, reading websites or engaging with their peers through the written word on social networking sites. Children who grow up without books and without positive associations around reading are at a disadvantage in the modern world." [p16]

A very strong argument for us to use around reading, literacy, etc. Recommended.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CILIP = Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
HLF = Heritage Lottery Fund
LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
NLT = National Literacy Trust
RCOs = refugee community organisations

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