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

Number 56, April 2006

(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.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Wakefield Library and Information Service for being awarded the "Jodi Award for Excellence with Low Budgets" for their website, "Speaking Volumes"[1] – this website was designed to allow readers to write content.

As the MLA press release says, "Blind and partially-sighted site users chat about books and audio book readers. The judges said the site was enjoyable, stimulating and easy-to-use. A partnership with public libraries throughout Yorkshire and Humberside, Speaking Volumes is an exemplary regional resource for reader development."

Did you see …?

The Vital Link

The latest e-letter[2] from The Vital Link has just been produced. It includes, for example:

- Updates to the online toolkit[3]
- Further information about the Reading for Pleasure Campaign
- An update on World Book Day Quick Reads[4].

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[1] See: www.speakingvolumesonline.org.uk.
[2] *Vital Link eletter* 8, March 2006. To sign up for this, please contact: resources@readingagency.org.uk.
[3] See: www.vitallink.org.uk.
[4] See: www.quickreads.org.uk.

SWMLAC Annual Forum 2006: "Connecting to Communities"

The 2006 SWMLAC Annual Forum was held on 31 January, and speakers included David Lammy MP; Kate Oakley on "Public Value & the Public Realm"; and Paul Leivers on "Culture & Regeneration: a Rural Perspective". The papers have just been published on the SWMLAC website[5].

CILIP *Update*

Just in case you haven't seen this, the March issue[6] contains a couple of interesting articles:

- Sally Middleton "Why social inclusion is beyond its sell-by date" which argues that we need to move beyond box-ticking to real community involvement (pp36-37)
- John Pateman "Social exclusion to community cohesion" which describes the shifting social and political agenda for libraries (pp41-43)[7]

Public Library Journal

The latest issue[8] has a number of items of interest, including:

- June Turner "Reaching new reading audiences" which looks at Essex Libraries' promotion of reading (including "Quick Reads"), pp2-4
- Pearl Valentine "Making the Vital Link", pp7-10
- Sarah Wilkie "New rules of engagement" which looks at community engagement, pp14-16
- John Vincent "Looking forwards" which looks at some future challenges around social exclusion, community cohesion and libraries, pp11-12.

Living well in later life …

You've no doubt seen press coverage[9] of this influential new report[10] which reviews progress against the National Service Framework for Older People.

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[5] See: http://www.swmlac.org.uk/docs/swmlac-forum-2006-final-report.pdf.

[6] *Update* 5 (3) March 2006.

[7] There is also a correction to this article in *Update* 5 (4) April 2006, p9, which includes the acknowledgement, omitted in error from the article, that it was based on work by The Network.

[8] *Public Library Journal* 21 (1), Spring 2006.

[9] For example, the Healthcare Commission's press release at: http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/NewsAndEvents/PressReleases/PressReleaseDetail/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4024502&chk=%2Btyxwc; Jeremy Laurance "How the NHS has betrayed the elderly", *The Independent* 27 March 2006, p2.

[10] *Living well in later life: a review of progress against the National Service Framework for Older People*. Healthcare Commission, 2006. (ISBN: 1-84562-081-X). Available to download as a pdf (2.3 Mb) from: http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/assetRoot/04/02/46/42/04024642.pdf.

The report highlights that, whilst there have been some major advances, there are also large gaps in provision. The three areas which it identifies for further action are:

- Tackling discrimination through ageist attitudes and an increased awareness of other diversity issues.
- Ensuring all of the standards in the NSF are met including further guidance on the next steps in implementing the NSF from the Department of Health due to be published in April 2006.
- Strengthening working in partnership between all the agencies that provide services for older people to ensure that they work together to improve the experiences of older people who use services.

Interestingly, the report does identify, on a number of occasions, the benefits that older people gain from using libraries, eg:

> "The surveys of older people showed that libraries were well used as a source of information by older people. In some areas libraries provided a tailored service for people with disabilities. For example the library service was reported as very good for people with a visual impairment. In some communities a talking books service was available and highly valued. Older people also appreciated being able to renew books from home." [p69]

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

"Connecting Communities Plus"

The Home Office has just announced[11] the first recipients of grants from the "Connecting Communities Plus" programme – the eleven organisations will be working in partnership with the Home Office to deliver the aims of *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society*, the Government's strategy on race equality and community cohesion.

The organisations are:

- Operation Black Vote – civic participation
- Windsor Fellowship – BME education
- 1990 Trust – civic participation
- Theos Hodos Ltd (National Black Boys Can Do) – BME education
- Black Training & Enterprise Group – BME training of leaders in education
- Runnymede Trust – research/ policy/ think tank
- REU – health

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[11] See: http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/race-equality-community-cohesion.

- The Monitoring Group – race hatred/ extremism
- Path National UK – employment
- Black Health Agency – health
- Housing Association Charitable Trust – housing, refugees/new migrants.

A further £10.5m will be awarded shortly in project grants to approximately 70 organisations working across the English Government Office regions. The awards, of up to £100,000 per annum, will be for outcome-based projects at regional, local and neighbourhood level to reduce inequalities and improve community cohesion in line with the national strategy.

Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society was launched in January 2005. Just for background information, a cross-Government Public Service Agreement [PSA] target was agreed as part of the 2004 Spending Review. The PSA set out a wide range of goals, including:

- Reducing perceptions of racial discrimination by key institutions and in the labour market;
- Building community cohesion in communities identified as high risk;
- Increasing the employment rate of ethnic minorities, taking account of the economic cycle;
- Promoting ethnic diversity in the workplace; and
- Monitoring and publishing data on racial inequalities in areas such as educational attainment, health inequalities, housing and the criminal justice system.[12]

Political and Social Exclusion

A new report[13] shows serious differences in levels of political knowledge, interest and activism between different social groups. Worryingly, at the same time, it also suggests that creating more opportunities for direct participation will not bridge this gap.

As the press release[14] states:

"[The report] points to an utterly disengaged minority, made up mainly of people from lower social economic groups, who know little about politics and care even less:

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[12] See, for example: http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Improving_Opportunity,_Strengthe?version=1.
[13] *An audit of political engagement 3: research report, March 2006*. Electoral Commission/Hansard Society, 2006 (ISBN: 1-904363-78-4). Available to download as a pdf (878 Kb) from: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Auditofpoliticalengagement3-fullreport_20006-14653__E__N__S__W__.pdf.
[14] http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media-centre/newsreleasereviews.cfm/news/525.

- 14% of the UK population are not at all interested in politics
- 17% do not want to have a say in how the country is run
- 12% would not be willing to do anything to influence or protest against a decision by a local or national government body."

The press release also includes the following statement from Sam Younger, Chair of the Electoral Commission:

"This latest audit demonstrates that social and political exclusion are inextricably linked. Those of us in the political community need to adopt an approach which can demonstrate that politics and political processes can be used by everyone, from every background, to tackle the issues which affect their lives."

Getting advice to vulnerable people

The DCA has just published a report[15] which:

"… aims to develop a strategy for helping people to resolve their problems and disputes more effectively. In doing this it:

- develops a better understanding of the economic and social arguments for the Government's provision of civil legal aid and support for other advice services;
- examines the Government's current arrangements, policies and programmes for providing independent advice;
- develops recommendations for making the system more accessible, effective and efficient; and
- takes a joined-up strategic approach to driving improvements in public services through feedback from advice services and tribunals." [p4]

The report shows that:

"For more vulnerable people, advice can be effective in helping them to resolve their problems and disputes. However, its current provision is targeted at treating specific issues in isolation. It is hard to access, and the referral mechanisms between providers are often inefficient. This means that, particularly for vulnerable people, advice can be hard to reach …" [p1]

and it goes on to show that:

"These difficulties stem from the uncoordinated and fragmented way in which both central and local Government fund and commission advice services … Any effective strategy for this area needs to ensure that:

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[15] *Getting earlier, better advice to vulnerable people*. DCA, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (1 Mb) from: http://www.dca.gov.uk/laid/betteradvice.pdf.

- advice is people-focussed – dealing with the many problems and disputes that individuals may face, rather than dealing with each problem in isolation;
- advice is right first time – so that wherever people go to get advice, they are able to access the advice they need to resolve their problems and disputes; and
- we learn from our mistakes – people's needs for advice are a detailed indication of where services fail to deliver." [p1]

Families with children in Britain …

The DWP has just published a report[16] which presents analysis of the Families and Children Study[17].

The main findings include the following:

- "Lone parent families, who account for around a quarter of families with dependent children, were consistently worse off than couple families. For example, one-fifth of lone parent families working 16 or more hours per week were in the bottom income quintile compared to one-tenth (12 per cent) of couple families where one parent worked these hours.
- Lone parents were twice as likely to describe their health as 'not good' compared with mothers in couple families. Mothers who lived in families where no one worked were more likely to describe their health as 'not good' than mothers living in families where at least one parent worked …
- Deprivation was associated with worklessness such that one-quarter of lone parent families working less than 16 hours per week could not afford 11 or more items compared to four per cent of lone parents working 16 hours or more per week …"[18]

Faith communities

The ODPM has just published an interesting research paper[19] which looks at the situation of the "emerging" faith communities (primarily Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs) in the UK.

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[16] Nick Lyon, Matt Barnes and Daniel Sweiry. *Families with children in Britain: findings from the 2004 Families and Children Survey (FACS)*. DWP (Research Report no.340), 2006 (ISBN: 1-84123-995-X). Available to download as a pdf (921 Kb) from: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rports2005-2006/rrep340.pdf.

[17] This study began in 1999, with a representative sample of all lone parents and low/moderate-income couple families. From 2001 a representative sample of lone parents and all couple families with dependent children were interviewed. The study follows the same families from one year to the next. (Information from the DWP press release at: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2006/apr/060406.asp).

[18] Also taken from the DWP press release at: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2006/apr/060406.asp).

[19] *Review of the evidence base on faith communities: review*. ODPM, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (2.2 Kb) at: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/321/ReviewoftheEvidenceBaseonFaithCommunities_id1165321.pdf.

After an introduction, giving useful background information, the review then goes on to look at:

- Disadvantage and social cohesion
- Faith communities and planning
- Housing
- Regional and local governance and public services
- Implications for the ODPM's areas of work.

The paper also includes an extensive bibliography.

Tackling poverty

The DWP have just published a summary of progress in tackling poverty[20], which also highlights how much there is still to do.

As the document states:

> "Our approach will be to build on our strategy of:
> - targeted support for those who need it most;
> - work for those who can;
> - breaking the cycle of deprivation; and
> - delivering high-quality public services.
>
> This is a long-term approach to deliver long-term change. Not just to tackle child poverty – but to offer every individual and every generation the opportunity and support to raise, and fulfil, their aspirations. As the table opposite shows, we are already making a difference. This report shows we are now intent on going further." [p6]

Healthier Communities Shared Priority

The IDeA has just published a summary article[21], outlining the key findings from the twelve pathfinder case studies – these are the 12 local authorities (Camden, Croydon, Gateshead, Islington, Kirklees, Manchester, Nottingham City, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Wansbeck District Council, West Wiltshire District Council, and Wolverhampton) that have been exploring ways of developing this Shared Priority.

The strongest message in the summary is that health should not be seen as someone else's job – all agencies have a role in promoting healthier communities.

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[20] *Making a difference: tackling poverty – a progress report*. DWP, 2006 (ISBN: 1-84388-994-3). Available to download as a pdf (640 Kb) at: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2006/poverty/tackling-poverty.pdf.
[21] Available to download as a pdf (174 Kb) from: http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/4485678.

Brief reports of all the pathfinders are available to download from: http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=77237.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

Poverty in Britain

The Policy Press have recently published the analysis[22] of the most comprehensive survey of poverty and social exclusion ever to be undertaken in Britain: The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey[23]. The original report[24] was published in 2000.[25]

Poverty (continued)

The JRF has just published[26] the results of research carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, that shows that, whilst income poverty has fallen, spending poverty has risen:

- "spending poverty rose from 20% to 22% between 1996/97 and 2002/03 – up by 12% – compared with a *fall* in income poverty, from 25% to 22% (down by 12%);
- child poverty rates measured using expenditure rose by 11% between 1996/97 and 2002/03, but fell by 15% when measured using income;
- pensioner poverty has remained roughly unchanged measured on spending, but has fallen rapidly measured on income."[27]

The report argues that spending poverty more truly reflects the long-term differences in society.

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[22] Christina Pantazis, David Gordon and Ruth Levitas. *Poverty and social exclusion in Britain: the millennium survey*. The Policy Press (Studies in Poverty, Inequality and Social Exclusion), 2006 £19.99 (pbk) (ISBN pbk: 1861343736). Further information from: https://www.policypress.org.uk/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=10043&products_id=422.

[23] The Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey of Britain was undertaken by the Office for National Statistics in 1999 as a follow-up survey of a sample of respondents to the 1998/99 General Household Survey.

[24] David Gordon *et al. Poverty and social exclusion in Britain*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000 (ISBN: 1-85935-059-3). Available to download as a pdf (450 Kb) from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/185935128X.pdf. Noted in The Network *Newsletter* 18, October 2000, p4.

[25] Thanks to *Adults Learning* 17 (7), March 2006, p5 for this.

[26] Mike Brewer, Alissa Goodman and Andrew Leicester. *Household spending in Britain: what can it teach us about poverty?* The Policy Press, 2006 £12.95 (ISBN: 1-86134-854-1).

[27] Taken from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0196.asp.

Childhood poverty – ALG

The Association of London Government has just produced a report[28] which sets out what needs to be done to eradicate childhood poverty in London.

As it states:

> "According to the latest figures some 656,000 children are living in poverty – 41 per cent of all children in the capital. The situation is particularly bad in Inner London: here the child poverty rate is 51 per cent. In Outer London the rate is lower at 34 per cent, but rising. Overall, children living the capital face nearly twice the risk of living in poverty as those living elsewhere in the country; the national rate is 28 per cent." [p2]

The report focuses on four key areas:

- Increasing employment
- Improving education and childcare
- Improving housing
- Reducing financial exclusion.

In addition, as well as a more general "What next?", it looks at two specific challenges:

- Supporting vulnerable children
- Ensuring every child matters.

Childhood poverty – LGA

The Local Government Association has also just produced a discussion paper[29] which looks at what need to be done to eradicate child poverty (and includes a number of case studies of good practice), plus what still needs to happen ("Bridging the gap – how local government could do more"), again with some case studies of work that is beginning. [30]

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[28] *Closing the gap: combating the causes of child poverty in London*. ALG, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (415 Kb) from: http://www.alg.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/692/child%20poverty%20report-for%20the%20web.pdf.

[29] *Local government and child poverty: making a shared commitment a shared reality – discussion paper from the LGA*. LGA, 2006 (ISBN: 1-84049-511-1). Available to download as a pdf from: http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/Publication/localgovtandchildpoverty.pdf.

[30] Thanks to NFER's *ontheweb*, March 2006 for alerting me to both these items on child poverty.

Broader issues – Government and Government Agencies

Beacon Scheme – Round 8

Just in case you haven't seen this, the ODPM has just confirmed the themes for Round 8 of the Beacon programme[31]:

- Delivering cleaner air
- Electoral Services
- Emergency planning
- Healthy schools
- Increasing voluntary and community sector service delivery
- Neighbourhood and community champions: the role of elected members
- Preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour
- Promoting financial inclusion and tackling over-indebtedness
- Promoting sustainable communities through the planning process
- School improvement.

State of the English cities

The ODPM has recently published the full report[32] (and a summary[33]) of the *State of the English cities* research. This is an independent report by a group of city experts led by Professor Michael Parkinson. It provides a comprehensive audit of urban performance in England and a review of the impact of government policies upon cities. The main themes are: social cohesion; demographics; economic competitiveness and performance; liveability, and governance and the impact of policy.

The report looks at the impact of Government policies, including an assessment of which have had an impact – and which haven't, for example:

> "… urban innovation systems remain much less developed than in France and Germany, where there are more formal, structured, local linkages between central and local Government, educational and financial institutions and firms." [Summary report, p29]

It also draws some conclusions about what's working – or not:

> "… cities that have struggled to improve their education, housing and transport systems have also fallen behind average living standards." [Summary report, p28]

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[31] Further information from:
http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2105.
[32] *State of the English cities*. 2 vols. ODPM, 2006 (ISBN: 1-851128-45-X). Available to download as pdfs (3.3 Mb and 1.6 Mb) from:
http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163940.
[33] *State of the English cities*. ODPM (Urban Research Summary 21), 2006. Available to download as a pdf (581 Kb) from: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163937.

Youth Matters: next steps …

DfES has recently published the response[34] to the "Youth Matters" consultation.

Of particular interest is the emphasis on providing advice and guidance (although, sadly, MLAs are not mentioned) and also the Implementation Plan (pp38-40), which includes the following under equal opportunities:

> "Make available resources to address the needs of young people at particular risk of exclusion, including disabled young people, lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, Black and minority ethnic groups and those in rural areas …"

Local Area Agreements

The ODPM has just published guidance[35] for Round 3 and a "refresh" for Rounds 1-2. This is a very useful introduction to what LAAs involve, and sets out the mandatory outcomes indicators and the full outcomes framework – useful when you want to tie in specific work to a LAA requirement.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Faith as social capital …

The JRF has just produced a report[36] looking at the relationships between faith and social capital. The key findings of the research included:

- "Faith communities contribute substantial and distinctive bridging and linking social capital, but also face internal and external obstacles to development.
- Living close to people of diverse faiths is an increasingly common experience. Faith communities are developing local, regional and national frameworks which connect faiths with each other and with

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[34] *Youth Matters: next steps – something to do, somewhere to go, someone to talk to.* DfES, 2006. Full report available to download as a pdf from: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/3804D7C4B4D206C8325EA1371B3C5F81.pdf. Summary report available to down load as a pdf from: http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/B8670D386E5C5A0B48FAD58EDD548555.pdf.

[35] *Local Area Agreements: guidance for Round 3 and refresh of Rounds 1 and 2.* ODPM, 2006. Available to download as a pdf (437 Kb) from: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/14/LocalAreaAgreementsGuidanceforRoundThreeandRefreshofRoundsOneandTwo_id1165014.pdf.

[36] Robert Furbey *et al. Faith as social capital: connecting or dividing?* The Policy Press, 2006 £12.95 (ISBN: 1-86134-837-1).

secular organisations. However, these frameworks are not always recognised, so their full potential for mutual understanding and community development is not realised …

- Faith communities can facilitate building bridges and making links with others. They can allow new forms of association, engender trust in shared community initiatives, and motivate particular approaches to questions of social justice and need. But power inequalities within faith communities can also inhibit the development of social capital, particularly through the subordination of women and young people.
- Faith communities contribute substantially to social capital through participation in formal governance, though individual organisations vary in capacity and commitment. Faith groups have distinctive priorities, timescales, working styles and challenging agendas, informed and motivated by their beliefs and commitment to particular neighbourhoods.
- Many faith communities also contribute to social capital by participating in the wider public domain. Faith, worship and people's development within faith organisations can foster qualities essential for civic engagement. External networking and action are usually undertaken by a relatively small number of people, but their achievements are often substantial."[37]

Abbreviations and acronyms

ALG = Association of London Government
BME = Black and minority ethnic communities
DCA = Department of Constitutional Affairs
DWP = Department of Work and Pensions
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LGA = Local Government Association
MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MLAs = museums, libraries and archives
ODPM = Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

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[37] Taken from: http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0136.asp.