

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.

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Did you see ...?

MLA's briefing sheets for the Comprehensive Spending Review

Just in case you haven't seen these, MLA has produced seven briefing sheets¹ which highlight 'headline' information about:

- Archives
- Learning
- Libraries
- London 2012
- MLA Partnership
- Renaissance
- Sustainable Communities.

They include information about our role in community engagement/social justice, and the one on sustainable communities emphasises:

¹ Available to download as individual pdfs from:
[http://www.mla.gov.uk/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=73&Document/@id=26046&Section\[@stateld_eq_left_hand_root\]/@id=4386](http://www.mla.gov.uk/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=73&Document/@id=26046&Section[@stateld_eq_left_hand_root]/@id=4386). All seven sheets are available to download together (1.55 Mb) from:
http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//C/csr_briefing_all_11133.pdf.

- Working via Local Area Agreements
- Promoting community cohesion
- Promoting well-being
- Improving educational and economic prospects.

Comprehensive Spending Review

And, just in case you're not sure what the CSR involves:

“The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review will take a long-term look at the future of public services, identifying what investments and reforms are needed to equip the UK to meet the challenges and opportunities of the decade ahead. As part of this the Government is assessing five key long-term trends that will have far-reaching implications for government, society and Britain's role in the world:

- demographic and socio-economic change, with rapid increases in the old age dependency ratio on the horizon and rising consumer expectations of public services;
- the intensification of cross-border economic competition, with new opportunities for growth as the balance of international economic activity shifts towards rapidly growing emerging markets such as China and India;
- the rapid pace of innovation and technological diffusion, which will continue to transform the way people live and open up new ways of delivering public services;
- continued global uncertainty and poverty, with ongoing threats of international terrorism and conflict, and the continued imperative to tackle global poverty; and
- increasing pressures on our natural resources and global climate, requiring action by governments, businesses and individuals to maintain prosperity and improve environmental care.”²

The Edge

The latest issue of *The Edge*³ has a number of interesting articles and brief reports, including:

- Sarah Womack “So who do we think we are?”, an introduction to the “Identities and Social Action Research Programme”⁴ which is looking at the impact of, for example, class, race and gender on how we construct our identity in the 21st century (and includes a thread looking at what it is like to build an identity in situations of social exclusion), [pp7, 9]

² Taken from: <http://csr07.treasury.gov.uk/change/>.

³ *The Edge* is produced 3 times p.a. by the ESRC and highlights current research. The latest issue is no.24, Spring 2007.

⁴ See: <http://www.identities.org.uk/>.

- Robert Pigott “Lifting the veil on religion and identity”, an introduction to the “Religion and Society Research Programme”⁵ [pp16, 18-19]
- Pamela Readhead “Looking for a touch of sporting class”, a look at some of the work being undertaken by the ESRC Centre on Socio-Cultural Change⁶, which includes research into how we choose sporting and cultural preferences (based on a number of factors, including class, race and gender) [pp20, 22]
- “Young people – please don’t let them be misunderstood”, a series of articles about young people, their media image and the reality, drawn from work coming out of the “Pathways into and out of crime: risk, resilience and diversity” programme⁷ [pp26-30]

“Partnership for Patients”

IDEA has just published⁸ a case study of “P4P” (the project created by Health Link, the LLDA and London Health Libraries) to help support people in their choice of hospital, by using public librarians as navigators to help people access and understand information.

“Reading, the Healthy Option”

Just in case you haven’t seen this (or were not able to attend), the papers from the conference which was held in April are now available on the Evidence Base website⁹.

Community cohesion case studies

The IDEA website has just published¹⁰ some more case studies, including working with Traveller & Gypsy communities, and developing provision for migrant workers.

In case you haven’t already seen this, IDEA has also published a case study¹¹ about the Crayford Community Archive Project in Bexley, which helped Bexley’s library service engage with local people and build on an interest in local history.

Taking part

The results of the latest national survey of take-up of culture, leisure and sport have just been published¹².

⁵ See: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/apply/research/sfi/ahrcsi/religion_society.asp.

⁶ See: www.cresc.ac.uk/.

⁷ See: <http://www.pcrd.group.shef.ac.uk/>.

⁸ See: <http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6245083>.

⁹ See: <http://www.ebase.uce.ac.uk/events/healthy-option-programme.html>.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6149722>.

¹¹ See: <http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6033864>.

¹² Rebecca Aust and Lisa Vine. *Taking part: the national survey of culture, leisure and sport: annual report 2005/2006*. DCMS, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (3.66 Mb) from: http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/T/Taking_Part_11721.pdf.

It shows that, whilst over nine out of ten adults had engaged in at least one form of cultural or sporting opportunity during the past twelve months, usage is still greater by some parts of the population, eg for museums and galleries:

“Adults from higher managerial and professional occupations had significantly higher rates of attendance than all other groups.” [p32]

However, there were also some surprises, eg for libraries:

“Adults aged 16-24 and 25-44 had significantly higher rates of attendance than all other age groups.” [p40]

“Adults from White ethnic backgrounds had significantly lower rates of attendance than all of the remaining ethnic groups, except for those from Mixed ethnic backgrounds.” [p41]

Pioneering one-stop archives service

The North East has become the first region in the country to bring together the information held by all of its archives in one place. MLA North East has launched a website¹³ which allows anyone who logs on to work with an experienced member of archives staff.

The resource was created as part of MLA North East's Digital Services for the Cultural Sector (DiSCS) project (formerly the Virtual Digitisation Centre)^{14, 15}.

Consultation through creativity

Staffordshire Arts & Museums Service have just produced this toolkit¹⁶ for using arts – in all its forms – as a vehicle for consulting people: as the published excerpt¹⁷ states:

“Arts-based consultation can succeed in obtaining information from groups where traditional consultation methods fail”.¹⁸

See also the DCMS web pages at:

http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Press_notices/archive_2007/dcms055_07.htm.

¹³ See: www.archivesnortheast.com.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.mlanortheast.org.uk/nemlac/page.php3?p=375&fp=9#fou>.

¹⁵ Source: MLA North East News eBulletin 169, 14 May 2007.

¹⁶ *Consultation through creativity*. Staffordshire Arts & Museums Service, 2007.

Further information from:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/leisure/museumandgalleries/artsprojects/projects/toolkit>.

¹⁷ See: <http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F555651C-5EF6-4654-887C-CD1312DEF98/50358/Introduction.pdf>.

¹⁸ Source: MLA West Midlands E Alert, May 2007.

“Start talking”

The latest issues of *Catalyst* magazine¹⁹ has a very interesting and challenging article by Laura Smith²⁰, questioning why the UK’s growing mixed-race population is still being ignored. As she says:

“In Lewisham, south London, for example, 11% of school-age children are mixed race, while in Nottingham the figure is 8% ...

Yet public discourse on race, ethnicity and identity continues to work on the assumption that everyone can be divided into ‘traditional’ racial or ethnic groups. And the position of some is to deny that ‘mixed race’ exists at all ...”

Tackling social exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Part 3 of the Equality Act 2006 – outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation

As you will have seen, this new legislation came into force on 30 April.

DCLG have issued a guidance document²¹, as well as a quick, web-based guide²² which outlines the main points.

Commission for Rural Communities submission to COIC

The Commission for Rural Communities has just published its submission²³ to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion – it is brief, but includes a useful overview of the distribution of migrant workers, as well as summaries of issues facing Travellers and BME communities.

¹⁹ *Catalyst* is produced by the Commission for Racial Equality.

²⁰ Laura Smith “Start talking”, *Catalyst* 9, 15 May 2007 – see: <http://www.catalystmagazine.org/default.aspx.locid-0hgnew0ui&RefLocID=0hg01b001006001.Lang-EN.htm>.

²¹ *Guidance on new measures to outlaw discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services: Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007*. DCLG, 2007. Available to download as a pdf (282 Kb) from:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/103/GuidanceonnewmeasurestooutlawdiscriminationonthegroundsofsexualorientationPart3t_id1510103.pdf.

²² See: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1510339>.

²³ *Views on the interim statement by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion*. Commission for Rural Communities, 2007. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/files/integration%20and%20cohesion.pdf>.

Tackling social exclusion – Other Agencies

The cost of exclusion ...

This new report²⁴ from The Prince's Trust spells out just how costly it is to have young people out-of-work (and getting into crime).

- “The percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds classified as unemployed in 2005 was nine per cent, 8.6 per cent, 10.1 per cent and 6.3 per cent in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. But in each country and English region the percentage of young people classified as ‘not in education, training or employment’ (or NEET) is around **twice as high**.
- Almost **a fifth** of young people in England, Scotland and Wales are not in education, training or employment. OECD data shows that the UK compares very poorly to other countries in this respect.”
- The productivity loss to the economy as a result of youth unemployment is estimated at **£10 million** every day; and this is without taking into account people who are classified as ‘inactive’ for other reasons.
- There is also a substantial cost to the exchequer of youth unemployment and inactivity: it costs the state about **£20 million** per week in Job-Seeker’s Allowance.
- The personal cost of not being in education, training or employment goes beyond foregone earnings in the longer term: youth unemployment has been estimated as imposing a wage scar on individuals of between **8 and 15 per cent**.” [emphasis theirs] [p8]

In terms of educational underachievement:

- There has been little change since the mid-1990s in the percentage of young people aged 16-24 with no qualifications. In 2005, these figures stood at 12.6 per cent, 12 per cent, 8.3 per cent and 19.9 per cent in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The percentage of young people with low-level or no qualifications in the UK compares very unfavourably to France (for all age ranges) and Germany (for the age range 25-28 and older categories).” [p9]

The report recommends that:

“... more investment is needed to help young people in the UK’s deprived communities who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). It argues that helping young people gain the key skills

²⁴ *The cost of exclusion: counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK*. The Prince’s Trust, 2007. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/main%20site%20v2/downloads/Cost%20of%20Exclusion%20apr07.pdf>.

to find work represents value for money given the measurable costs of social exclusion.”²⁵, ²⁶

“Access to advice denied: young people failed by civil justice system”

Similar issues are raised by new research from Youth Action²⁷, which

“indicates that a routine denial of young people’s right to the same access to legal advice enjoyed by most adults is hampering government attempts to tackle youth crime, disadvantage, ill-health and social exclusion.” [website]

Research and seminar papers looking at access by young people to advice (with specific emphasis on legal advice) have just been published²⁸.

Poverty and ethnicity in the UK

This new report²⁹ from the JRF is a literature review which summarises the findings of poverty and ethnicity research since 1991.

Key findings include:

- “There are stark differences in poverty rates according to ethnic group. Risks of poverty are highest for Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black Africans, but are also above average for Caribbean, Indian and Chinese people. Muslims face much higher poverty risks than other religious groups ...
- The differences in poverty rates are found across poverty measures (income poverty, material deprivation) and across sub-populations (older people, children). The high rates of child poverty in some groups are of particular concern, both for their present welfare and their future opportunities. Over half of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African children are growing up in poverty ...”

²⁵ Taken from: <http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/Main%20Site%20v2/headline%20news/whats%20in%20your%20region/CoE%20cost%20of%20exclusion.asp>.

²⁶ Source: National Youth Agency Electronic Youth Policy Update 148, 11 April 2007.

²⁷ “Youth Access is the national membership organisation for young people’s information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS).” [website].

²⁸ See: <http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/news/access-to-advice-denied.cfm>.

²⁹ Lucinda Platt. *Poverty and ethnicity in the UK*. The Policy Press, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-1-86134-989-7). Available to download as a pdf (776 Kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2006-ethnicity-poverty-UK.pdf>.

Incidentally, you may also be interested in looking at: Alison Park, Miranda Phillips and Chloe Robinson. *Attitudes to poverty: findings from the British Social Attitudes survey*. JRF, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-1-85935-558-9). Available to download as a pdf (0.11 Mb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1999-poverty-attitudes-survey.pdf>.

The study concludes that:

- “Employment policies need to tackle discrimination and support job retention and progression.
- Income maintenance policies need a greater focus on take-up of benefits among those eligible.
- Analysis of income at the household level could effectively inform and monitor policy on minority ethnic groups' poverty risks.
- Analysis of the different and complex routes into poverty for different ethnic groups is needed, and research into whether the experience of poverty means different things to different groups.”³⁰

Cultural diversity in Britain: a toolkit for cross-cultural co-operation

This study³¹ explores ways of unlocking the potential of cities' cultural diversity and identifies practical strategies to encourage intercultural exchange between different groups.

The research found, amongst other things, that in “comparison to many other countries, the general policy discourse around cultural diversity in the UK treats it as a problem to be solved, rather than an opportunity to be grasped.”

The key implications for policy are:

- *National government:* Take a cross-departmental approach to community cohesion, include the achievement of intercultural engagement as a key target, adopt a strategy for productive diversity and devolve more powers and responsibilities to allow local government to act authoritatively on these matters.
- *Local government:* Ensure wellbeing not only through protecting citizens from discrimination and harassment but also by making the most of the resources and the potential available in a diverse community, in particular through work with intercultural innovators. One approach could be to take advantage of Local Area Agreements and other discretionary regimes to pilot new projects to encourage intercultural innovation and ensure that more investment is made in gathering and interpreting knowledge to inform local decision-making. Grant regimes could favour projects which encourage mixing ahead of those which enshrine separation.
- *Other sectors:* Professional associations, those working in education, planning and regeneration, the voluntary and faith sector, and business and economic development agencies should all consider their

³⁰ Quotations from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/2059.asp>.

³¹ Phil Wood, Charles Landry and Jude Bloomfield. *Cultural diversity in Britain: a toolkit for cross-cultural co-operation*. JRF, 2006 (ISBN-13: 978-1-85935-525-1; ISBN-10: 1-85935-525-0). Available to download as a pdf (328 Kb) from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1922-cultural-diversity-Britain.pdf>.

professional practice from within a diversity perspective and adapt accordingly.”³²

Disability issues – Other Agencies

Missing out?

The National Autistic Society has just published a report³³ looking at the issues facing BME families with an autistic child; as the report says:

“Children with autism from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities experience discrimination on two fronts – their disability and their ethnicity. This isolates them from the education system that should provide opportunities for success. Some excellent practice exists but sadly this is still an exception. The neglect of BME families by researchers, professionals and service providers is unacceptable and must be addressed with urgency.” [p4]³⁴

Information is power

On 25 April 2007, RNIB launched a series of leaflets called *Information is power*³⁵. They cover the high street, health services, local government, schools, television and public libraries.

The leaflets look at a number of key areas that show how society can empower blind and partially sighted people and each leaflet identifies five priorities for action.

Five ways libraries can make things better are listed as:

- Carry a wide range of unabridged audio and large print titles, and supplement the selection through inter-library lending from the public and voluntary sectors.
- Ensure a Disability Equality Scheme is in place that properly recognises the needs of blind and partially sighted people.
- Ensure catalogues, reference materials and computers and other equipment is accessible to all users and that staff are trained to provide necessary support.

³² Quotations taken from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/1950.asp>.

³³ Clare Corbett and Prithvi Perepa. *Missing out? Autism, education and ethnicity: the reality for families today*. National Autistic Society, 2007 (ISBN-10: 1-905722-27-3; ISBN-13: 978-1-905722-27-3). Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.autism.org.uk/content/1/c6/01/32/43/Missing%20out%20report.pdf>.

³⁴ Source: Community Care news alert.

³⁵ The leaflets are available to download from: http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/publicwebsite/public_infopower.hcsp.

- Buy a large print version if only one copy of a book is affordable.
- Staff should be trained in disability awareness issues and able to offer assistance when it is required.³⁶

Deafness Matters

Hilary Wheelton (Senior Librarian, Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council) has sent in the following information:

“Oxfordshire Deaf Children's Society have teamed up with a local specialist film maker to create a DVD recording team building-activities with a group of young people aged between 14 and 20. Each young person talks about how deafness has affected them and their families, with the positive and happy atmosphere of the film emphasising the degree of normality that each of them has achieved.”

Further information about the DVD and how to obtain it from:

<http://www.erikastevenson.co.uk/deafnessmatters.htm>.

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

A new public libraries performance management framework

MLA has just produced a revised version³⁷ of the new framework for final consultation.

In chapter 2 “the context and the challenge ahead”, it very helpfully sketches in the background, including the relationship with LAAs, a brief outline of the Comprehensive Area Assessment³⁸, and an outline of the types of targets that the new local targets (to be agreed as part of the LAA) will include:

- Revised floor targets³⁹
- Non-negotiable targets
- Negotiable targets
- Local stretch targets.

³⁶ Thanks to Deb Ryan at RNIB for this.

³⁷ *A new public libraries performance management framework*. MLA, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-1-905867-18-9). Available to download as a pdf (399 Kb) from: http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/N/New_Libraries_Performance_Management_Framework_v2_11266.pdf.

³⁸ For further information, see: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=6243436>.

³⁹ Floor Targets: “Minimum standards set by the government for improvements in deprived areas, covering five areas: unemployment, crime, education, health and the environment.” [taken from: <http://vcsjargonbuster.wikispaces.com/F>].

The consultation paper then goes on to highlight areas which are still being developed; these include:

- Demonstrating the contribution of local libraries to community outcomes
- Development and evaluation of virtual services and virtual visits to libraries
- Community engagement (although “This framework does not propose any measures for ‘community engagement’ and DCMS/MLA are considering whether further work is needed to investigate whether creating such measures might be possible.” [p10])
- Qualitative assessment (and the potential for a ‘Green Flag’-type scheme for public libraries).

The document then summarises feedback from the previous rounds of consultation, and then outlines the approach taken by the new framework, which is portrayed as three cogs, one with library inputs, leading to one with community and personal wellbeing, leading to the third with community outcomes. The new performance management framework focuses on the middle cog, looking at:

- Access
- Resources
- Quality
- Efficiency
- Range of services.

The rest of the document then sets out the proposed new indicators, with questions on each – responses are invited, to be in by 4 July 2007⁴⁰.

Localism, governance and the public realm

MLA has also recently published this paper⁴¹ by Kevin Harris, which “is primarily concerned with the ‘local cultural sector,’ specifically public museums, libraries and archives services operating at local level.” [p1]

The paper “explores both the potential contribution of the sector to the ‘new localism’ agenda (in particular neighbourhood governance); and the potential impact of that agenda on the sector.” [p1]

⁴⁰ Please send your comments to: libraries.performance@MLA.gov.uk; or Andy Birleson, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Victoria House, Southampton Row, London WC1B 4EA – by 4 July 2007.

⁴¹ Kevin Harris. *Localism, governance and the public realm: issues for the local cultural sector*. MLA, 2007 (ISBN-13: 978-1-905867-17-2). Available to download as a pdf (224 Kb) from: http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/L/localism_governance_public_realm_11107.pdf.

The paper includes a very useful outline of the current context in which we are operating (civil renewal, community cohesion, localism, community engagement, etc), and then goes on to explore changes in democracy (“Democracy’s make-over” [p9]), particularly those heralded by the recent White Paper⁴².

The starting point for Kevin Harris’s paper was a series of interviews with practitioners, and a number of issues has been drawn from these, grouped under two headings, governance structures and connections that practitioners may/may not have with residents and groups.

Finally, the paper suggests two models for MLAs – a stable model and a dynamic model (which would be the appropriate response to what Kevin calls an “engaged democracy”).

The paper concludes:

“The moment is there for the sector to take a lead in developing a vision of the public realm in which people recognise the civic, contribute to it and value it; in which residents organise and participate in local events and associate around such events; where they have places over which they feel a sense of ownership and to which they can go. The case must be made for a public realm in which people feel informed, respected, able to influence the local processes that affect their lives, and supported in celebrating their sense of community.”
[p29]

This asks a number of key, pertinent questions, and the dynamic model of provision is one which MLAs need to aspire to – recommended.

Broader issues – Other Agencies

Birchfield Library Community Consultation Project

Between August 2006 and March 2007, Birmingham Libraries carried out a community consultation project around the design of a new library and ways in which local people would want to use it, and the report⁴³ of the Birchfield Library Project has just been published.

⁴² Department for Communities and Local Government. *Strong and prosperous communities: the Local Government White Paper*. Vol 1: Cm 6939-I; Vol 2: Cm 6939-II. The Stationery Office, 2006. Volume 1:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/98/StrongandProsperousCommunitiestheLocalGovernmentWhitePaperVol1_id1504098.pdf.

Volume 2:

http://www.communities.gov.uk/pub/99/StrongandProsperousCommunitiestheLocalGovernmentWhitePaperVol2_id1504099.pdf.

⁴³ *Birchfield Library Community Consultation Project August 2006 to March 2007*. Birmingham City Council/Laser Foundation, 2007. Available to download as a pdf

“The project was in three phases. Phase One began with a partnership with the city’s Youth Service. Nine young people aged 16-18 from the community were temporarily employed to train as young researchers and be briefed about opportunities available from modern library services. They then planned a short series of consultation activities with local people ...

For Phase Two a project worker was seconded to undertake a networking and outreach programme to engage a broad range of local groups in the area and assess the best ways of raising awareness about library services and collect views and ideas to influence the design of the new library ...

Three further activities emerged for Phase Three. An independent organisation was commissioned to promote and hold a debate event about libraries and the importance of reading and information. First Class Youth Direct specialise in engaging with young people in the inner city, mainly from minority ethnic and deprived backgrounds. They produced an engaging evening of entertainment and discussion, which informed young people of the importance of acquiring knowledge and the role of the library in supporting them. It created a ‘buzz’ and managed to address the stereotypes and misconceptions, which some young people have about libraries. Young people were able to express their views on why or why not they used a library. As a result of the event five volunteered to meet with the architects and contribute their views and vision for the new library.” [pp3-4]

In addition:

“Connecting Histories, a heritage and archives project, created a 4-week programme to enable people to have their say in the building of the new Birchfield Library through thinking about their heritage and identity, and their sense of place and belonging. It enabled participants to develop an understanding of the archives and other heritage and culture-related resources within the city and bring their ideas together in the context of the new library. The work will inspire further activity and lead to the development of images and resources for display. The work contributed to the important role that libraries play in promoting community cohesion.” [p4]

The Project showed how a range of techniques can be used to engage with and consult communities, and forged some strong relationships with young people in the Birchfield area of the city.

from:

http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/Media/Final%20report%2016%20March%20pdf.pdf?MEDIA_ID=181594&FILENAME=Final%20report%2016%20March%20pdf.pdf

Inspiring our ambitions ...

This new publication⁴⁴ includes a series of essays by local government leaders (including, for example, Derrick Anderson, CE of Lambeth Council; Irene Lucas, CE of South Tyneside Council; and Rodney Green, CE of Leicester City Council) which look at the role of culture in place-shaping and community cohesion, the impact of culture on communities, and, in “A cultural entitlement for Scotland” [pp37-38], how national government in Scotland is legislating to position cultural activity at the heart of local authority activity.

And finally ...

IDeA has just published a guide⁴⁵ to writing in Plain English, which includes a guide to understanding the importance of plain English and tests to gauge your plain English ability!

Abbreviations and acronyms

A new voluntary & community sector jargon-buster wiki has been set up by ladder4learning – see: <http://vcsjargonbuster.wikispaces.com/>⁴⁶.

BME = Black and minority ethnic
COIC = Commission on Integration and Cohesion
DCLG = Department for Communities and Local Government
ESRC = Economic and Social Research Council
IDeA = the Improvement and Development Agency
JRF = Joseph Rowntree Foundation
LLDA = London Libraries Development Agency
MLA = Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MLAs = museums, libraries and archives
RNIB = Royal National Institute of the Blind

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⁴⁴ Derrick Anderson and Martyn Allison (eds). *Inspiring our ambitions through sport, art, culture and place*. Solace Foundation Imprint/IDeA, 2007. Available to download as a pdf from: <http://www.sfi.uk.com/pdf/SFI%20-%20Inspiring%20our%20ambitions%20through%20sport,%20art,%20culture%20and%20place.pdf>.

⁴⁵ See: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=1536729>.

⁴⁶ Source: MLA North East News eBulletin 165, 16 April 2007.

Southend Borough Libraries Community and Diversity Team Report – August 2006

Discovery Tours at Southend Central Library

“The visit was excellent.”

“It was very kind of you to explain how the library works, we learned a lot”.

“The service users enjoyed it, they also now feel happier to use the library.”

(Feedback from customers on recent Discovery Tours)

From April 2005 - March 2006, the Community and Diversity (C&D) Team, assisted by Central Library colleagues, delivered free library “Discovery Tours” to over one hundred individuals, community groups and library partners.

This brief summary gives reasons why such tours have proved to be one way of effectively re-introducing libraries to a range of socially excluded groups and the people that support or work with them.

Discovery Tours are something the C&D Team routinely offers to any group, individual or potential library partner.

Tours are free, pre-booked in advance and often take place following a visit or talk by staff away from the library building. Refreshments and instant membership is offered to anyone visiting on the day.

Tours are made a positive experience, unhurried and structured appropriately to suit each client group. A feedback form and free post reply are given out after each tour.

Staff delivering tours welcome individuals and focus on particular interests of all the group. Brief guidelines have also been produced to assist colleagues supporting the tours.

Annual targets for Discovery Tours appear in the Library Strategy for 2006-09. Details of the tours are given in the Table 1 at the end of this report.

Benefits to customers / Library Service

- ✓ Tours can help to remove the “fear factor”- this is very real for some customers, with perhaps their last experience of using a library being a negative one.
- ✓ Tours allow staff to gently challenge the stereotype about libraries- often individuals hold a view that “they have nothing to offer me” / “are not for us”.

- ✓ People who do not visit a library are unaware of how services and resources have changed, particularly in the range of AV material, free Internet, Teen Zone, Bookstart, Quick Reads, Get On, etc
- ✓ Staff can focus on how libraries are relevant to their interests, hobbies or studies.
- ✓ Visits help reinforce the message that libraries are simple, easy to use and for everyone. Tours show people unused to library buildings how they “work” and where and who to ask for help etc.
- ✓ Usually the same member of staff meets the group at the library. This helps build on the established rapport and reduces customer anxiety. Visiting as an invited group enables some people to feel less self-conscious or nervous in a large busy library.
- ✓ Following the positive experience of a group tour, some individuals have felt confident enough to re-visit and use the library on their own.
- ✓ Tours can be the first step to building “trust” and partnership links between library staff and individuals, partners or groups.
- ✓ Tours provide staff development opportunities, enabling colleagues to put into practice customer-care skills learnt on courses delivered by partners e.g. Visual Impairment and Mental Health charities, local Adult Community Colleges etc.
- ✓ Tours enable libraries to receive direct feedback and comments on stock, services, building layout, guiding and staff etc.

Table 1. Summary of Discovery Tour groups and numbers.

Audience Type	Number*
Students with Learning Disabilities; Skills for Life Students and Tutors ESOL Students and Tutors	37
Visually Impaired People; Resource Centre Volunteers (sighted/ visually impaired)	11
People with Learning Disabilities; Centre Support Staff	22
Homeless Centre staff	2
New Postgraduate students (mainly from China / India etc)	3
Visually Impaired People and volunteers	10
Black and Minority Ethnic people	1
People with Multiple Disabilities; Day Centre support staff	6
People with Mental Health Issues; Students with Learning Disabilities;	16

Project and teaching staff	
Probation staff working with Young Offenders	1
People with Mental Health Issues; Mental Health organisation support staff	5
* April 2005 – March 2006	Total 114