

Children and Young People Briefing Note September 06

This is a briefing note from MLA North West and Renaissance NW which seeks to draw attention to key findings of a research report which reviews museum, library and archive activity with children and young people. It provides an overview of current policies for Children and Young People and their relationship to the museum, library and archive sector. It also summarises the key issues in order to generate discussion around future development.

Introduction

In December 2005, the Burns Owen Partnership (BOP) was contracted to undertake a “Review of Museums, Libraries and Archives Activity with Children and Young People” by MLA North West (MLA NW), MLA and Renaissance North West. The literature review sets out the main strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the evidence base against current policy for children and young people.

The Literature Review identifies a need for the museum, libraries and archives sector to engage more fully with the main service providers for children and young people in terms of establishing better contacts, relationships and partnerships. It suggests that through a combination of improving evidence and engagement that the sector will be in a position to help shape policy and become a more active and supported partner for children and young people.

The full report can be accessed at www.mlanorthwest.org.uk

Changing Policy Contexts for Children and Young People

The policy environment related to children and young people in England is currently going through the biggest change in a generation. At the heart of this is the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework and allied Youth Matters (YM) agenda. ECM and YM will be delivered by Childrens’ Trusts, multi-agency bodies consisting of a range of core (statutory) and wider (discretionary) partners.

This trend towards increasing multi agency working in improving public services and tackling disadvantage represents both an opportunity and a threat for museums, libraries and archives.

Every Child Matters- An Overview

The ECM Framework focuses on five key outcomes for children and young people:

1. *Be healthy*
2. *Stay safe*
3. *Enjoy and achieve*
4. *Making a positive contribution*
5. *Achieve economic wellbeing*

There is a duty placed on each local authority to develop a single Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) which will deliver these 5 outcomes.

Local authorities are encouraged to work with a wide group of partners including voluntary and community organisations, youth organisations, schools, health sector and other service providers to deliver the (CYPP).

The Literature Review found evidence that the museum, library and archive sector are able to contribute significantly to ECM and the wider policy landscape.

However, it states that it is easier to make a stronger case for how the sector makes a holistic contribution to improving the life chances for children and young people, rather than how it contributes to the five separate ECM outcomes.

Where evidence was mapped directly onto the ECM outcomes it was found that evidence of activity is far stronger for the *Enjoy and Achieve* and *Make a Positive Contribution* outcomes.

The full ECM report can be accessed at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications

Youth Matters – An Overview

Youth Matters is the allied framework to ECM for young people. Although not yet a legislative duty, it currently exists as a statutory duty of sorts. It can be summarised by the mission statement “Something to do, somewhere to go and someone to talk to”.

Places to go and things to do: YM requires local authorities to provide a strong local offer of “places to go and things to do” for young people. The menu of positive activities will be delivered in partnerships between local authorities and other providers. The local offer should be driven by the needs and views of young people.

Information advice and guidance: Proposals for reforming information, advice and guidance (IAG) for services for 11-19 year olds are also included in YM. Responsibility for commissioning IAG will be devolved from Connexions to local authorities, working through Childrens’ Trusts, schools and colleges, and to develop quality standards for IAG.

Volunteering: YM includes proposals for greater participation by young people through ensuring volunteering opportunities are available locally. The YM proposals also include a commitment to exploring formal recognition for young peoples’ volunteering.

Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Fund: £115 million has been committed over the next two years to two new ring fenced funds designed to give young people purchasing power and a say in the design and delivery of services and activities for young people. £500,000 will be available for each local authority for young people to bid for.

For museums, libraries and archives, Youth Matters presents a number of potential opportunities, particularly around the provision of “places to go and things to do” and opportunities for volunteering.

The report suggests that the sector better understands its “local offer” for YM re “Things to do and places to go” and gets involved in discussions with Local Authorities and Childrens’ Trusts about how the sectors offer can be part of local plans for YM.

The full report *Youth Matters: Next Steps* can be accessed at www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth

Relevant DFES Policies- An Overview

In addition to ECM/YM policies, there are a number of DfES specific policies which have immediate relevance for the activities that the museums, libraries and archives sector:

1. *Early years and family learning*
2. *Extended Schools*
3. *Personalised Learning*

These 3 areas highlight common concern for a broader, more differentiated learning experience than that traditionally provided within the classroom environment.

This has clear resonance with much of the education work undertaken within the cultural sector and places the culture sector in the position to offer and advocate its models of good practice in the above three areas.

Development of Integrated Service Provision

At the core of the new agenda for children and young people's services is a belief that **partnership working** is the key to addressing complex, multi dimensional problems such as social exclusion and area –based deprivation. This has resulted in central government placing an increasing responsibility on local authorities to lead in delivering a range of services through partnership working. This emphasis on local partnerships and **integrated service provision** between local authorities and other service providers such as voluntary and community agencies underpins ECM and YM policies.

This is a major opportunity for museums, libraries and archives to become involved in developing integrated service provision for one of their major constituencies: children and young people.

The main threat is that across the sector and across the cultural sector more broadly, there is actually relatively little engagement with the decision making processes/infrastructure that supports the development of services for children and young people e.g. Strategic Partnership Children and Young Peoples Boards.

Improving Museum, Library and Archive Engagement with Local and Regional Partners

The move towards multi agency working that is exemplified in the ECM, YM and other government policies means that there is a major opportunity for the museums, libraries and archives sector to become more involved in joint working for the delivery of services and activities for children and young people. However, museums, libraries and archives are not “core partners” in Childrens' Trusts and therefore their engagement must be **proactive**, as it will not happen as a matter of due course.

Improving the Evidence Base

Improving and articulating the evidence base will help the museum, library and archive sector make a stronger case for it to become more integrated into service provision for children and young people.

The Literature Review identified a growing volume of evidence from evaluation and research on the social and education impacts of museums, libraries and archives, however it also uncovered some serious limitations and gaps in that evidence base. In particular: very little longitudinal research; a lack of baselines to measure change; little research that analyses in detail the specific nature of the learning that takes place in museum, library and archive contexts.

The Literature Review recommends that the sector seeks to address methodological issues (described above) and also improves its understanding of its impact against the following priority areas: Early Years, Family Learning, Curriculum Support, Recreation and Participation, Non-cognitive skills. The limitations in the evidence base need to be coordinated and supported in the main at national and regional level.

Developing an “Offer” from the Museum, Library and Archive Sector

The Literature Review recommends the sector improves its engagement with other public sector and voluntary partners by firstly understanding and clarifying “the offer” that museums, libraries and archives provide for children and young people.

The report proposes a model of “the offer” which has been developed from research evidence about the sector and its links to policies about children and young people. The offer is intended to help the sector distil and articulate the range of activities and the kinds of outcomes that it can offer children and young people, in a language and with reference to a policy environment that other public sector partners can identify with.

The components of the offer are:

- **Language acquisition and the ability to learn**
This refers to the impact the sector has on children’s language acquisition, but also wider learning attributes such as attention, concentration, social interaction in groups etc. This is particularly relevant to the sector’s early years work.
- **Literacy development**
This refers to the sector’s role in supporting literacy development through curriculum and non curricular activities as well as family learning work.
- **Curriculum support**
This relates to the sector’s work with schools including its impact on pupil attainment.
- **Recreation**
The sector’s strength here is in relation to providing positive enjoyable experiences for children and young people. The connection between how enjoyable activities are and the resulting learning that takes place is significant.
- **Participation**
The sector has a strong track record of involving people in the design of services and spaces. The sector also provides safe and trusted settings for volunteering opportunities.

In addition there are two further components that cut across the first five components:

- **Non cognitive skills**
This relates to the sectors impact on “non-cognitive” or “life skills” (e.g. self confidence, self awareness, decision making capabilities).
- **Personalised learning**
This relates to the type of learning that the sector supports, which is user centred, with a choice of learning styles and settings.

Joint working with partners across the cultural sector

The Literature Review involved consultation with a number of external stakeholders for children and young people such as Government Office North West and Directors of Children’s Trusts. A coordinated approach between the museum, library and archive sector and other cultural partners such as arts bodies to the delivery of services for children and young people is perceived as valuable by regional stakeholders.

The report recommended that joint working and joint advocacy between cultural partners would help the cultural sector better position itself with Children’s Trusts.

Further Information

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