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New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England

Burns Owens Partnership

Burns Owens Partnership

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
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London SW1H 9AA

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Executive summary

Overall conclusions and recommendations

This review of research into the social impact of museums, libraries and archives shows that there are three major weaknesses in the current evidence base. The:

- lack of any substantial longitudinal, comparative data on social impact
- absence of an agreed model for describing social impact
- comparative lack of research into social impact related to cultural diversity and health/mental health.

Our consultation has highlighted a 'knowledge and understanding' gap between those professionals developing programmes which have social impacts, and those policymakers responsible for developing the rationale for government investment.

To address these weaknesses we recommend:

- greater inclusion of the museums, libraries and archives sector in the government's social research surveys in order to generate more robust data
- development of a social impact model – in parallel with the existing Generic Learning Outcomes, contained within MLA's 'Inspiring Learning for All' framework
- fast-track research programmes in the areas of cultural diversity and mental health.

To bridge the knowledge and understanding gap we recommend a high profile Social Policy Research Network, consisting of sector professionals, Whitehall policymakers and academics, with a brief to advance the sector's research agenda and to take the message to all parts of government.

Findings

In the six areas we were asked to examine, our main findings are as follows.

A 'meta review' of the evidence on the community areas

- The evidence base for social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion is better established than in cultural diversity, health and regeneration.
- The strongest evidence of social impacts relates to individuals' personal development or the acquisition of so-called 'life skills', specifically through libraries' role in information provision and museums and archives' role in terms of cultural awareness.

- The evidence for these social impacts overlaps strongly with that for 'learning impacts'.
- There is much less evidence for group-level social impacts.
- This is due to a number of factors, both pragmatic – a lack of work on neighbourhood effects in general, and a commissioning approach to research that often focuses purely on the effects of specific government programmes – and fundamental: the problem of 'aggregation' in social science and different approaches to defining 'community'.
- The research that does exist on communities and culture is largely from the US, and predominantly focuses on the arts/culture rather than the museums, libraries and archives domains. It suggests that neighbourhood effects are as important as individual characteristics in determining cultural participation.
- The main reason that the evidence base suggests, as to why cultural participation is beneficial and something to be encouraged, is that it builds social capital.
- However, social capital is not all 'good' and there are both theoretical and empirical criticisms of the validity of the concept, in particular, the degree to which social capital can be differentiated from other forms of capital, principally economic.

Social exclusion

- Social exclusion is not a settled term. In policy from the Social Exclusion Unit, the government rarely affords the museums, libraries and archives sector a role in tackling social exclusion.
- Against this background, the literature suggests that the sector often focuses on social inclusion, though many museums, galleries and libraries have interpreted this to be synonymous with cultural inclusion, by seeking simply to widen access (which is not the same as tackling social exclusion).
- More specifically, evidence points to a very patchy picture of good practice with regard to social inclusion across the libraries domain.
- Some commentators have argued that there is another impetus for museums and galleries to address issues of social inclusion – beyond merely responding to the agenda of the government of the day – and this is their historic remit to 'democratise' culture.
- Even if it is accepted that the museums, libraries and archives sector's main impacts are related to social inclusion, it is necessary to ask, what is it that individuals are being included into? The notion that it might be 'cultural entitlement' (as a preparation for citizenship) is one that is currently gaining ground.

Neighbourhood renewal

- The government views the museums, libraries and archives sector's contribution to neighbourhood renewal as a combination of social inclusion and the regenerative aspects of their role as neighbourhood institutions.
- However, much of the literature suggests that the role played by libraries and archives in community-level regeneration is often overlooked, even where

(as with many local authority archives) there is evidence of longstanding activity in this area.

- This may well be because of a lack of explicitly stated policies in this area across the sector.
- There has, though, been a recent focus on new public library buildings and the contribution that they can make to neighbourhood renewal.
- But there is still very little actual evidence that focuses specifically on museums, libraries and archives within the context of deprived communities, as opposed to their role as 'flagship' cultural institutions, in which the focus tends to be more narrowly economic.
- It may be that this is an important gap in the evidence base as US work on the arts suggests that smaller, community-based initiatives can have as big an effect as large scale projects, without acting as a spur to gentrification.
- However, there remain limitations to this literature: principally, how building connections between people in poor areas brings them closer to power, wealth and expertise; and once again, how 'included' individuals become transformed into 'renewed neighbourhoods'.

Community cohesion

- Community cohesion is a more vague and contested notion than the other elements of the 'community areas'.
- In the UK, government policy has become very influenced by the riots of 2001 in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. This has led to a shift in emphasis within community cohesion towards how to balance a recognition of diversity, with the desire to develop common, shared values.
- The literature gives very little clear evidence of the impact of museums, libraries and archives activities on community cohesion as explicitly stated, but there is evidence that museums, libraries and archives have a role to play in relation to its constituent components (eg intercultural understanding and overcoming social isolation).
- In particular, intercultural understanding seems key, though it is contested as to whether museums, libraries and archives merely act to 'legitimise' particular (dominant) cultures/heritages, or that they also can help to express 'hidden histories'.
- However, both of these approaches in the literature take it for granted that the museums, libraries and archives sector has social impacts in these matters, merely disagreeing as to what sort of impact they have and upon whom.

Civil renewal

- Civil renewal is seen by government as a way of promoting 'active citizenship', which encompasses all citizens who are actively contributing to the 'common good'.
- The museums, libraries and archives sector is linked to civil renewal firstly through the specific role that archives play as purveyors of fact that supports informed democracy; as well as through the opportunities for cultural participation provided by the sector – as research has established a

link between participation (of all forms) and civic activism, with the socially active most likely to be politically active.

- However, while there is a relatively large literature on participation, there is relatively little that separates out culture in particular (certainly not in the UK at least).
- Although it may simply reflect a shortcoming of the literature, there is little evidence at present to suggest that there is anything unique about cultural participation and its role in civil renewal, as opposed to other forms of community participation.
- Once again, the theory about how (cultural) participation is linked to active citizenship is that it builds social capital.
- But this remains a very under researched area in the UK, particularly when compared with some other countries, such as Canada, where cultural participation is routinely treated as an aspect of wider 'community health'.

Cultural diversity

- Though cultural diversity is widely understood to refer to diversity based on race and ethnicity, across the museums, libraries and archives sector it is also interpreted more broadly, to include factors such as faith, disability and sexual orientation.
- This lack of a consistent working definition makes aggregation and comparison of extant data and research problematic.
- An assessment of the literature is further complicated by the fact that diversity is both an objective in its own right, and a means to an end in achieving broader social policy goals, such as community cohesion and social inclusion.
- Relatedly, the evidence base on cultural diversity in England is limited, uneven and fragmented, though it is strongest with regard to museums.
- Much of the material on cultural diversity and museums, libraries and archives focuses not on an investigation of social impact, but on issues internal to the sector itself, such as workforce development and collections and interpretation policies.
- These indicators are nevertheless relevant to the evidence base as organisational change within museums, libraries and archives is widely identified to be both a key contributor towards, and a fundamental component of, advancing the aims of cultural diversity.

Collections and programmes

- The literature reports that, in order to engage with diverse groups, it is necessary for their history and experiences to be reflected in museums, libraries and archives' collections and programming.
- However, evidence suggests that many institutions are not involved in these activities and do not plan to be in the immediate future.
- The literature also highlights that collections alone will not be enough – it requires sensitive interpretation and the presence of a diverse workforce which reflects the ethnic make-up of society.

Audiences and users

- There are a range of barriers identified by the literature that prevent wider Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) participation and attendance in museums, libraries and archives activities.
- However, the evidence also suggests that many of these barriers are shared with some segments of the white population and relate to socio-economic status (ie class), though there remain additional and distinct barriers for BME audiences and users.
- Despite these barriers, survey evidence seems to indicate that attendance and participation among BME groups in the UK has increased significantly during the period under review (1997-2005), though this varies by age and by domain, with archives in particular still attracting few from BME communities.

Workforce development

- Although MLA recognises the need for the sector's workforce to more closely reflect the communities they serve, there is currently no comprehensive, systematic and longitudinal means of tracking diversity in the museums, libraries and archives workforce.
- However, this is currently being addressed by a number of sector-wide labour market initiatives which are underway.
- What evidence there is suggests that people from BME groups are significantly under-represented in the workforce (particularly at senior and board level) and have historically encountered a number of structural barriers to entering the museums, libraries and archives labour market.

Health/mental health

- Health/mental health are increasingly taken by government to be holistic concepts that go beyond direct physical health, to mean a 'complete state of physical, mental and social well being'.
- Despite this, there is no body of literature which specifically examines the effectiveness of museums, libraries and archives activities in health/mental health in England.
- The health agenda is new to most of the sector and the evidence base simply does not yet exist. Even the extent of activity is not yet known, though it is likely to be modest.
- However, many of the issues for the museums, libraries and archives sector and health/mental health are very similar to those in the arts, which has an evidence base of more than 20 years' work in health/mental health.
- The arts and museums, libraries and archives sectors are part of a wider debate about the nature and causes of health: beyond examining how material circumstances affect health (eg the link between income, employment status and mental health), some commentators argue that there are additional social and cultural factors which influence health.

- Arts and health interventions thus consists of two main elements: (i) improving healthcare delivery via arts-based approaches, aimed at direct improvements in physical health (ii) arts-based activities that aim to improve individual/community health by addressing the social determinants of health.

Assessing clinical outcomes

- The evidence base on the clinical outcomes of improving healthcare delivery via arts-based approaches is now relatively well established and does show the effectiveness of interventions in a range of areas.
- It is difficult to apply the same methods to evaluate clinical outcomes for arts-based activities in community settings as (i) it is too difficult to disentangle specific aspects of intervention (ii) projects are too small-scale to suit many of the standard methods of evaluation in health.
- Nevertheless, there are a few instances where community-based arts and mental health projects have successfully applied standard forms of evaluation from the health sector, though sample sizes remain small.

Assessing social outcomes

- Assessing outcomes for arts and health projects that focus on building the social factors that influence health outcomes outside of clinical settings is more difficult.
- Most research has focused on demonstrating the health benefits that accrue to improving the level of social support and connectedness between individual/communities, based on the theory of social capital.
- But the evidence here remains inconclusive and equivocal.
- There is less research on projects that focus on improving individual health outcomes through arts and health/mental health projects, where the activities once again effectively focus on developing 'life skills'.
- While some extant quantitative research has established a link between certain conditions (including mental health) and learning activities, qualitative studies suffer from the lack of a common evaluation framework.

Regeneration and economic development

- There is relatively little work that looks specifically at museums, libraries and archives, and regeneration and economic development.
- However, the museums, libraries and archives sector does feature in the broader literature on the role that cultural institutions and services can play in both regeneration and economic development.
- Much of this considers how iconic buildings, new capital investments and possible increases to cultural tourism can contribute to revitalising depressed economies.
- There is an overlap with Richard Florida's 'Creative Class' theory that emphasises the role that cultural amenities can play in attracting knowledge workers, and, with them, developing faster growing regional economies.
- However, this body of literature is contested in terms of (i) whether the stated effects can actually be empirically demonstrated and (ii) whether the

outcomes are actually desirable.

- In particular, the fashion for iconic buildings has been criticised for the degree to which the benefits 'leak out' of an area and the role that it plays in spurring gentrification.
- The 'creative class' theory has been criticised for under-playing the social sustainability of regions and for valorising and promoting a form of economic development that increases polarisation.
- Commentators have argued that a different approach is required; a more sustainable model of cultural regeneration that results from conscious policymaking that explicitly attempts to avoid the problems of unbalanced growth.
- However, the recent DCMS review of culture and regeneration reports that this is some way off in the UK, as cultural planning is rarely integrated into mainstream economic strategies, and not consistently covered in social policy, quality of life indicators, or within the discourse of the 'knowledge economy'.
- Despite the criticisms of Florida's work, recent work on regional economic development continues to stress the importance of both human and social capital in knowledge-based economic development.
- There is a growing body of material that argues that cultural investments have a particular role to play here, both in developing human and social capital, and in bringing together 'local buzz and global pipelines'.

1 Introduction

1.1 The brief and our approach

In October 2003 MLA's Learning and Access Team commissioned Burns Owens Partnership (BOP) to undertake a review of past and current research into the broad area of social policy. We were asked to assess and evaluate literature from 1997 onward, both from the UK and overseas, covering the following six areas:

- Social inclusion
- Neighbourhood renewal
- Community cohesion
- Cultural Diversity
- Health, particularly mental health
- Regeneration.

In particular, we were asked to assess and report back on the soundness of research methods used in studies, the overall quality of the evidence in each area, and any major gaps or planned activity of which the MLA should be aware.

In addressing the brief, BOP undertook four parallel strands of work:

i. Desk research, including web-based research, to source and analyse the relevant material

ii. Consultation with policymakers in the sector, particularly across MLA and the regional agencies for museums, archives and libraries

iii. Consultation with wider stakeholders, particularly those responsible for research and policy development within the relevant government departments

iv. Close working with the Learning and Access Team's policy advisors in relation to the parallel work being undertaken as part of the 'New Directions in Social Policy' project.

The literature review encompasses approximately 260 individual sources, including around 50 drawn from 'grey literature' – unpublished literature such as some policy statements/responses, project evaluations and non-journal based online content. The project brief specifically asked for grey literature to be considered, though this has had to be balanced with maintaining a focus on assessing evidence (rather than simply activity). Another requirement of the brief was that the research should focus primarily on publicly-accessible institutions[1].

Our initial findings indicated that what might be called the 'community' areas, namely social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and community and civic cohesion, have been extensively covered in the research

[1] This has particular implications for health/mental health where the work of health librarians in supporting clinical practice, while being acknowledged, is not incorporated into our analysis.

literature on the social impacts of museums, libraries and archives. In addition, many of these literature reviews point to the same sort of conclusions.

We have therefore provided what might be called a **'meta review'** of these areas while looking at more primary sources in the fields of health, cultural diversity and regeneration. However, it should also be stressed that there are difficulties with compartmentalising the literature review in the way that we have been requested to as there are many areas of overlap. For instance, health is strongly influenced by social class and by ethnicity; what sometimes appear as issues of race and ethnicity, often turn out to be about class; equitable economic regeneration requires inclusive societies, and so on. But the treatment of these areas in the research literature is sufficiently distinct to make our approach both coherent and practical.

1.2 Context: policy development for the sector and the need for an evidence base

The immediate context for this work is MLA's strategic priorities as expressed in its Operation and Strategic Plan 2004-2007. These priorities are to:

- contribute to community cohesion
- foster and celebrate diversity
- ensure accessibility.

The Learning and Access Team's 'New Directions in Social Policy' flows from these priorities. The current work is part of the strategic planning stage taking place in Year 1. This will be followed in subsequent years by development activity and evaluation.

In broader terms, the MLA is gearing up for negotiations around the next Spending Review in 2006. These negotiations with government are now framed within the context of evidence-based policy where extra spending is considered on the basis of a clear strategy for reform and improvement and demonstration of improved results.

This enthusiasm for evidence-based policy is seen as a hallmark of the current administration, and as part of its apparent commitment to a less ideological age – one more based on 'what works?'. In addition, the need to prove value for money to a sometimes sceptical public, the diminution in the public's desire to simply take professionals at their word, and the greater amount of policy-relevant research that is being undertaken worldwide, have all contributed to the pressure of public agencies to produce evidence for their actions and investments.

As the DCMS' research strategy states (Creight-Tyte and Mundy, 2003), it is clear that, compared to healthcare, evidence across all other social policy areas is seriously underdeveloped. However, DCMS is not persuaded that the cultural areas face unique barriers in the construction of an improved evidence base – simply that there is a need to 'catch up'.

1.3 Acknowledgements

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2 A 'meta-review' of the evidence on the 'community areas'

Summary

- The evidence base for social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion is better established than in cultural diversity, health and regeneration.
- Despite their existence as distinct strands of government policy, these areas (and the evidence relating to them) are often confused and/or taken together.
- The strongest evidence of social impacts relates to individuals' personal development or the acquisition of so-called 'life skills', specifically through libraries' role in information provision and museums and archives' role in terms of cultural awareness.
- The evidence for these social impacts overlaps strongly with that for 'learning impacts'.
- There is much less evidence for group-level social impacts.
- This is due to a number of factors, both pragmatic – a lack of work on neighbourhood effects in general and a commissioning approach to research that often focuses purely on the effects of specific government programmes – and fundamental: the problem of 'aggregation' in social science and different approaches to defining 'community'.
- It is therefore important for researchers to state the methods that are being employed to hypothesise group effects or their approach to defining what constitutes the community, but in practice this happens rarely.
- The research that does exist on communities and culture is largely from the US, and predominantly focuses on the arts/culture rather than the museums, libraries and archives domains. It suggests that neighbourhood effects are as important as individual characteristics in determining cultural participation.
- The main reason that the evidence base suggests, as to why cultural participation is beneficial and something to be encouraged, is that it builds social capital.
- However, social capital is not all 'good' and there are both theoretical and empirical criticisms of the validity of the concept, in particular, the degree to which social capital can be differentiated from other forms of capital, principally economic.

2.1 Introduction

The 'community' areas, namely social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion and civil renewal, have been extensively covered in the research literature on the social impacts of museums, libraries and archives. The evidence base in these areas is considerably better established than in cultural diversity, health or regeneration. Moreover, these areas have been subject to more narrative literature reviews than the other sectors, where the evidence is more likely to be found in single studies.

The aim of this section therefore is to consider the conclusions of the various literature reviews in the community area and to draw out the implications for MLA and other policymakers.

Much of the literature treats social impacts and social inclusion/exclusion together and there is a developing field of work in civil renewal/ community cohesion, primarily drawing on the literature on social capital. Where possible, we shall treat the literature under the three MLA headings:

- Social inclusion
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Community cohesion and related community agendas.

But it is worth stressing that these areas, and the evidence for impacts upon them, are commonly confused or taken together. Indeed, one example of the gulf between policymakers on the one hand, and practitioners on the other, is the degree to which areas like, 'civil renewal' or 'community cohesion' are separate agendas within government departments, with their own teams of people. But to practitioners (and to reviewers) the distinctions are much less clear.

Before turning to specific areas, however, this section considers the conclusions of the literature reviews on the general strengths and weaknesses of the evidence base.

2.2 General conclusions from narrative reviews

2.2.1 Individual impacts

There is widespread agreement (Wavell, *et al* 2002; Research Centre for Museums and Galleries 2000; Dodd and Sandell 2001; Dodd *et al* 2001) that the strongest evidence of impact is found in what might be called 'personal development', in other words, effects on individuals such as:

- acquisition of skills
- exposure to new experiences
- increased confidence or self esteem
- changed or challenged attitudes
- providing support for educational courses, including informal or adult learning.

In addition, libraries in particular have been seen to have a role in individual 'empowerment' via the provision of relevant legal and social information, otherwise inaccessible to most citizens (Coalter, 2001). In this context, the role of libraries as gateways to the internet – and not just to the kit, but to the skills to use it – have been the subject of some attention (Loader and Keeble, 2004; MLA 2004a). While concerns about the digital divide, as manifested by access to the internet itself, has receded – thanks in part to the development of the People's Network and other public initiatives – the realisation that the digital divide is about inequalities in media literacy, confidence, certain sorts of technical ability, and particular kinds of social networks, has grown.

As Loader and Keeble (2004) argue, even well-intentioned (and well-funded) public access programmes have often ended-up benefiting the better off;

while the location of terminals in sites such as libraries, which very excluded people may not feel are part of 'their world', can act as an extra barrier in come cases. The ability of libraries to provide a safe 'third space', where such capacities can be developed by all, is clearly key to their success in developing human capital in this way.

The contribution of museums and archives, as opposed to libraries, is more commonly viewed in terms of raising individual cultural awareness or the understanding of history and culture, and thus of both individual and group identity (Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, 2000; Scott, 2003).

As Wavell *et al* (2002) point out, the evidence for all these social impacts overlaps with that for 'learning' impacts, to the extent where it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. This is even apparent (though unacknowledged) within MLA's own 'Inspiring Learning for All' Generic Learning Outcomes framework. Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) test the view that learning in cultural or other informal settings has a different character to that of learning in formal education and may affect individuals differently, in part because it offers an alternative to the over-measurement of much recent educational practice (Sefton-Green, 2004).

A number of the GLOs are concerned with attitudes and values, such as empathy or tolerance, while others, such as increased motivation, are what might be called 'behavioural' outcomes. The development of these attitudes in individuals could clearly be linked to a range of social outcomes – to the extent that it is possible to argue that the social behaviours that policymakers wish to see (more active citizens, increased tolerance or understanding of others) are in fact linked to their 'learning' outcomes.

2.2.2 Perceptions of impact

Many of the reviews also conclude that there is widespread public and practitioner belief (Newman and McLean, 2004; Dodd *et al*, 2002) that these sectors do contribute to a variety of beneficial social outcomes. As Wavell *et al* comment (2002), in too many cases, evidence for this is drawn from interviews with staff or project workers alone – many of whom feel free to attribute outcomes to members of the public. However, other work that has sought to integrate wider public opinion about the social impact of the museums, libraries and archives domains demonstrates that this perception of positive impacts is also widely held by the public.

For instance, MORI conducted two surveys in 1999 and 2001 of both users and non-users of museums and galleries. The majority of respondents agreed that museums and galleries have an educational role, as well as 'keeping the collective memory alive' (Wavell *et al*, 2001).

Australian work using a Delphi panel of both professionals and the public (Scott, 2003), found strong support for statements that museums build opportunities for education and learning and that they contribute to social cohesion through 'reflecting shared collective values'. The research also reported similar support for the contribution of museums to economic development.

Indeed, in some cases it seems that the public are perhaps more persuaded of these positive social impacts than the professionals. For instance, the same Australian research found that the statement 'museums continue to be hegemonic institutions that re-enforce the values of a powerful sector of society', received an agree/strongly agree rating of almost 70% among professionals, and similarly, less than 45% of professionals 'agreed or strongly agreed' that 'engagement in museums results in mental health benefits'.

2.2.3 Valuing individual impacts

As Linley and Usherwood (1998) point out in their review of libraries in Newcastle and Somerset, many of the views, particularly of non-users suggest that the existence of libraries (or museums and archives) have a 'contingency' value above and beyond their use value. These 'non-use' values include option values ("I want to know something will still be there if I choose to visit it in the future"); existence values ("I'm glad it is there"); bequest values (stewardship for future generations) and identity values (it represents a symbolic link to history or religion), this latter being particularly important in the case of museums' collections and archives.

The usual method for measuring non-use values where existing market information is lacking contingent valuation surveys, which measure people's hypothetical willingness to pay (WTP) for a non-market good. Detailed knowledge of the actual costs of supplying such goods is usually required to undertake contingent valuation studies (in order to derive a range of values for people's willingness to pay and benchmark these against the current costs of provision). For this reason, contingent valuation studies in the cultural sector usually focus on individual institutions or services (Pung *et al*, 2004).

In the UK, the majority of such studies focus on the heritage of particular built environments and, in general, they find that people attribute a significantly positive value to the conservation or restoration of cultural assets. Of more relevance is a recent evaluation of the British Library (British Library, 2004; Pung *et al*, 2004) which found that non-users of the Library indicate that they are willing to pay in tax, on average, more than twice what the Library currently receives in public investment. Recent work for the BBC (Davies, 2004) also reveals a similar 'consumer surplus' in terms of what people indicate they are willing to pay for BBC services, compared with what public monies the corporation currently receives.

Though they can clearly be useful in arriving at some measures of value, very few commentators advise relying solely on contingent valuation methodology (CVM) to shape policy. Alternative methods such as 'hedonic' pricing (inferring the value of a non-market good from market data eg establishing the value of open spaces from surrounding house price data) or travel costs methods (how much will people pay or how far will they travel to visit something?) can also be used, but all have their limitations.

Others criticise such studies for imposing a purely consumer-led view on what are, after all, public goods. As Cass Sunstein (2002) has argued:

> government should not be taken as a maximising machine, with the goal of aggregating preferences in accordance with the market model.

The educative function of culture, it can be argued, helps shape our preferences and tastes, and thus should not just cater to *existing* tastes.

Finally, while public perceptions, where they have been sought, appear to be generally favourable – there is a counter narrative of exclusion and elitism. As Belfiore (2002), points outs, 'museums are hardly the neutral spaces that the DCMS document makes them out to be', and some have argued that they are in fact 'institutionalised exclusion' (Sandell, 1998). Even libraries, which are sometimes seen as closer to their communities, are, as Kevin Harris (1998) points out,

> not community based – that is to say, they seldom give any sense of community ownership, community management or accountability.

2.2.4 Community impacts

As well as the outcomes on individuals, most reviews conclude that there is the potential for social impacts on groups and communities, such as:

- improved social cohesion through the libraries' (in particular) role as a safe, equitable and non-market social space (Goulding, 2004)
- community empowerment via increased individual awareness of rights and benefits
- improved cohesion through a greater understanding and sense of identity.

However, most reviewers conclude that the evidence for group-level impacts is less compelling than that for individual impacts.

In part, this is because, as Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) point out, there is relatively little British research which looks at what are called 'neighbourhood effects'. That is, the independent effects or particular social or economic behaviours which arise from living in a particular neighbourhood. Much of the research on neighbourhood effects has been conducted in the US, and some British researchers are reluctant to take part in research on the neighbourhood effects of deprived neighbourhoods, seeing it as part of the discredited 'underclass approach'. Even where this has been overcome, government research often looks at the effects of particular programmes, rather than examining the longer term processes which shape neighbourhoods.

An even more deep-seated problem is one common across social science research, known as the 'problem of aggregation'. This refers to the difficulty inherent in linking micro-level effects on individuals to the more macro-level of the community. A good description of this is contained in Guetzkow (2002), which discusses the issue of the social impact of the arts in general – but the findings of which are equally

relevant to the museums, libraries and archives sector. Guetzkow argues that it is axiomatic that, other things being equal, the more widespread or intense the participation of individuals in a particular cultural activity is, the greater the impact will be on the whole community.

However, he also makes it clear that the mechanisms by which individual effects are translated into community-level effects, or even how researchers hypothesise they may be translated, are problematic and contested. Several approaches to this have been tried including:

- simply adding up the percentage of individuals in a population that are affected by something (more being better)
- looking for the threshold or 'tipping point' whereby individual effects become community effects
- looking at the type of networks that people form via cultural activities (ie does it increase their 'linking' social capital?)
- or looking at how a few key individuals or community leaders are affected and how this feeds into a general climate of opinion.

Another issue is the need for clarity about what constitutes the 'community' in any particular case. Researchers tend to approach this in three general ways: either by geography (specific neighbourhoods or areas) or by group membership (eg ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class), or by shared interests (eg football fans, genealogists). One distinction between research on neighbourhood renewal and that on social inclusion, is that the former tends to look at geography and the latter at group membership.

The important thing is that researchers state what method they are using to hypothesise group effects or what their assumptions are about what constitutes the community; but in practice this happens infrequently (Oakley, 2004).

2.2.5 The role of neighbourhoods and participation

Research has been conducted on group or community-level effects of cultural participation, much of it in North America, notably the Social Impact of the Arts (SIAP) project at the University of Pennsylvania, and the work of the Urban Institute in Washington DC. Again the research is focused on the 'arts', rather than the museums, libraries and archives sector specifically.

We would argue that this broader research is relevant to the museums, libraries and archives domains, with one note of caution. Much of this work distinguishes between participation in cultural events (putting on a play, festival or community arts event) and attendance. However, it may be that these distinctions are stronger and more relevant in performing arts (acting in a play is very different to sitting in the audience), than in the museums, libraries and archives domains. While visiting a library to borrow a book is not as participatory as joining a library-based reading group, the distinction is perhaps less clear. Despite this, we would argue that the literature on

participation across the arts is likely to be relevant to a study of the museums, libraries and archives sector. It is, however, worth noting that not enough of the UK research on the museums, libraries and archives sector appears to distinguish clearly between the effects one might derive from participating, and those one might derive from attendance.

As Mark Stern and Susan Siefert note (Stern and Siefert, 2000), even in a society as individualistic as the US, in recent years social researchers have devoted increasing attention to the context – communities and networks – in which individuals live. The study of public participation in cultural activities, they argue, is one area that can benefit from research into social context. In other words, rather than just looking at why individuals participate in cultural activities (as visitor surveys do), there is a need to understand the role of contextual variables such as the amount of cultural opportunities, or the peer pressures that encourage or discourage participation.

Stern and Siefert's own research suggests that neighbourhood effects are in many cases as strong as individual characteristics in determining who will participate in cultural activities. Just as individual prosperity influences participation, individuals who live in more prosperous neighbourhoods are also more likely to attend cultural events, regardless of their own individual economic status. In addition, the researchers found that respondents who lived in areas with more cultural institutions, were also more likely to participate in cultural activities. Interestingly, they also found that people living in neighbourhoods that are more diverse (economically and ethnically), have higher rates of cultural participation than those in more homogenous urban neighbourhoods.

From these findings, they conclude that cultural participation 'needs to be seen as a form of collective behaviour', and that we cannot just rely on data about individuals to tell us what we want to know. They argue for an 'ecological' view of the role of cultural activities within communities – considering a variety of agents and their links with one another – rather than an organisational perspective, which is more likely to focus on specific organisations or events. Many UK reviewers, however (Coalter, 2001), point out the difficulty in doing this when funding for evaluation is so often linked to specific projects.

2.2.6 Building social capital

The question which studies of participation (or access) often provokes is, what is the effect of participation on other aspects of life? If more people go to museums, libraries, and archives or participate in other cultural activities, what good does it do them?

As we have noted above, there is evidence that these activities have 'educational' impacts on individuals, where education is meant broadly

as skills for life, rather than just for the workplace. But the answer to what does participation do for communities, is harder, though a growing body of evidence suggest that the answer is – it builds social capital.

For instance, Jeanotte (2003) argues that those who participate in cultural activities are more likely to volunteer in other capacities (volunteering is often used as a proxy measure of social capital). This finding is supported by Bourdeau (1998), who argues that this remains solid even after controlling for socio-economic and demographic factors such as gender, income and education. Other researchers suggest that participation in cultural events has more influence than other kinds of participatory activities when it comes to developing other elements of social capital, such as trust and tolerance (Stole and Rochon, 1998).

More recent work (Aldrige and Halpern, 2002) has sought to distinguish between:

- 'bonding' social capital, which cements groups of like-minded individuals (and can often be destructive, as in criminal gangs);
- 'bridging' social capital (weaker links across more diverse groups); and
- 'linking' social capital (links between groups with different levels of power or social status).

Those who argue that cultural participation is beneficial, usually have bridging or linking social capital in mind.

2.2.7 The limits to social capital

Having said this, as many commentators have pointed out (Edwards and Foley, 1998; DeFilippis, 2001), social capital is not all 'good' – it has only recently acquired its purely beneficial overtones, following the work of Robert Putnam (Putnam, 2000). Early accounts of social capital discusses it as a more neutral resource that could facilitate all manner of collaborative behaviours – from local conservation volunteers to the Sicilian Mafia.

In addition, growth in the collective stock of social capital at the level of a neighbourhood can be consistent with the exclusion of particular individuals or groups, as when communities 'band together' against those they perceive to be undesirable. Travellers and refugee groups have sometimes suffered from this type of 'enhanced' social capital on the part of the majority population within a given area.

More fundamentally, there are arguments as to what extent it is possible to separate social capital from other forms of capital, principally economic capital. These criticisms are both theoretical, often following on from the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984), and empirical in nature – for instance, see Section 5 below for the difficulties of finding evidence for links between social capital and health.

The American criminologist Robert Sampson (2004), has argued that where social capital becomes a 'useful' resource (as opposed to something that is available to criminal gangs as well as community associations), it is what is known as 'collective efficacy'. To move from the resource of social capital to efficacy requires shared expectations or something that a community wants to achieve. The key point, he argues, is that networks have to be activated in order to be meaningful.

As James DeFilippis (2001) argues, 'communities are outcomes, not actors', and they are outcomes of a 'complex set of power-laden relationships, both internally…and externally'. Making things happen therefore requires agency, and the agents may be external (or at least externally funded) – including public services such as libraries or schools, cultural institutions such as museums or community and voluntary organisations. These can help create and sustain the positive expectations of collective effort that can activate social networks, particularly if they bring in external knowledge, wealth or expertise.

3 The 'community' areas

3.1 Social Exclusion

Summary

- Social exclusion is not a settled term. In policy from the Social Exclusion Unit, the government rarely affords the museums, libraries and archives sector a role in tackling social exclusion.
- Against this background, the literature suggests that the sector often focuses on social *inclusion*, though many museums, galleries and libraries have interpreted this to be synonymous with cultural inclusion, by seeking simply to widen access (which is not the same as tackling social exclusion).
- More specifically, evidence points to a very patchy picture of good practice with regard to social inclusion across the libraries domain.
- Some commentators have argued that there is another impetus for museums and galleries to address issues of social inclusion – beyond merely responding to the agenda of the government of the day – and this is their historic remit to 'democratise' culture.
- Even if it accepted that the museums, libraries and archives sector's main impacts are related to social inclusion, it is necessary to ask what is it that individuals are being included into? The notion that it is 'cultural entitlement' (as a preparation for citizenship) is one that is currently gaining ground.

3.1.1 What is social exclusion?

Although it is perhaps the most widely used term in the literature on the social impacts of the museums, libraries and archives domains, the term social exclusion is far from settled. The standard Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) definition is 'a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown'.

A broader definition, that can include other groups which may not fall into this category, such as lesbians and gay men or refugees and asylum seekers, is:

> the process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any of the political, social, cultural or economic systems, which determine the social integration of a person in society. (Vincent, 2004)

In addition, the SEU has investigated the needs of various specific groups over time, including: truants and young people excluded from school; rough sleepers; young runaways; and looked after children and young people.

In her review of evidence on the arts and social exclusion for the Arts Council, Helen Jermyn (2001) noted that, 'the term social exclusion is commonly used in the arts sector, but not with consistency'. An audit of archives' policies on social exclusion (Norgrove, 2001) found that the majority of those which had a definition of social exclusion used the main SEU one, but that less than half of the archives surveyed had any working definition. Newman and McLean (2004) have recently argued that social exclusion policy itself, 'lacks coherence across the various elements of the British Government'. More worryingly, they point out that policy documents on social exclusion produced by the SEU, rarely accord much of a role for the museums, libraries and archives sector in tackling social exclusion.

3.1.2 Evidence on social exclusion

One response to this, and that taken by much of the literature on the museums, libraries and archives sector, is to focus instead on inclusion; the ability of museums, libraries and archives to:

- reduce social isolation
- develop skills and confidence which allow people to participate in mainstream society
- support learning
- contribute to a positive sense of identity.

All of which, it is argued, can affect the processes by which one sort of disadvantage leads to exclusion.

Indeed, Dodd and Sandell (2002) argue that many museums and galleries 'have interpreted their role in social inclusion as synonymous with cultural inclusion, by seeking to widen access to their services'. According to Norgrove (2001) this stress on access as a means of combating exclusion also holds true for archives, though in her survey findings, 'outreach' services are under-developed, with just over a quarter regularly providing information about their holdings in areas or communities at risk of exclusion, and less than ten per cent providing events aimed at children or ethnic minorities.

This notion, across the museums, libraries and archives sector, that access and audience development equate to social inclusion, is both widespread and misconceived, argue Newman and McLean (2004) among others. While broadening audiences, either ethnically or socio-economically may be a good thing, 'it is not a measure of success in terms of having an impact upon social exclusion', they argue, 'which would require the lives of visitors and participants in initiatives to be changed in some way'.

Others, notably Muddiman *et al* (2000), argue that in contrast to the Library and Information Commission claims that libraries were, 'the essence of inclusion', they have adopted only weak, voluntary and 'take it or leave it', attitudes to inclusion. It also argues that by continually stressing 'access', we suggest that only certain groups are producers of culture. Instead, Muddiman *et al* argue that the aim of an

inclusive cultural policy should not just be to ensure that these groups have access to the dominant culture, but to see people as co-producers of a variety of cultural values and expressions.

Muddiman *et al* go on to argue that the standard approach on the part of some library services has led to:

- a continuing under-utilisation of public libraries by working class people and other excluded social groups
- a lack of knowledge in the public library world about the needs and views of excluded 'non users'
- the development in many public libraries of organisational, cultural and environmental barriers which effectively exclude many disadvantaged people.

In future, Muddiman *et al* argue, if public libraries are to seriously address social exclusion, they need to become much more 'proactive, interventionist and educative institutions'. This could mean, on one hand, 'mainstreaming' provision for socially excluded groups and communities, and on the other, the targeting of excluded social groups and communities. Addressing Harris' point above, they also argue for the development of community-based approaches to library provision, which incorporate consultation and partnership with local communities.

Other commentators, however (eg Dodd and Sandell, 2001), argue that the impetus for museums and galleries to address social inclusion, comes from a desire for the 'democratisation' of culture, not just an extension of 'access'. They argue that far from being a recent, instrumental, response to government policy – as critics have argued (Belfiore, 2002) – such moves in fact build on decades of development in, for example, social history.

The issue of social exclusion/inclusion will always beg the question of what is it that one is being included into? When talking about culture (as opposed to say, decent housing), it is necessary to have this debate and not allow access to become synonymous with inclusion (Newman and MacLean, 2004). This is not to say that cultural inclusion does not have a wider role in social inclusion; it seems likely that it does. The notion of a cultural entitlement as preparation for citizenship (rather than just employment), is one that is currently gaining ground, particularly in Scotland (Cultural Commission, 2004) and may give some indication of where the debate on culture and social exclusion is going.

3.2 Neighbourhood Renewal

Summary

- The government views the museums, libraries and archives sector's contribution to neighbourhood renewal as a combination of social inclusion and the regenerative aspects of their role as neighbourhood institutions.
- However, much of the literature suggests that the role played by libraries and archives in community-level regeneration is often overlooked, even where (as with many local authority archives) there is evidence of longstanding activity in this area.
- This may well be because of a lack of explicitly stated policies in this area across the sector.
- There has, though, been a recent focus on new public library buildings and the contribution that they can make to neighbourhood renewal.
- But there is still very little actual evidence that focuses specifically on museums, libraries and archives within the context of deprived communities, as opposed to their role as 'flagship' cultural institutions, in which the focus tends to be more narrowly economic.
- It may be that this is an important gap in the evidence base as US work on the arts suggests that smaller, community-based initiatives can have as big an effect as large scale projects, without acting as a spur to gentrification.
- However, there remain limitations to this literature: principally, how building connections between people in poor areas brings them closer to power, wealth and expertise; and once again, how 'included' individuals become transformed into 'renewed neighbourhoods'.

3.2.1 What is neighbourhood renewal?

Neighbourhood Renewal is a set of area-based initiatives, designed to narrow the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country, on a range of a measures that includes housing, crime, employment, education and health. The government's vision is that 'within 10 to 20 years no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live' (NRU, 2001).

Given increasing inequality in the UK, many of these 'gaps' may be difficult to close and the notion of simply 'renewing' particular neighbourhoods has been criticised for ignoring the wider structural context of poverty and deprivation. But the government is persuaded that 'local environmental issues' (NRU, 2001) are crucial to tackling social exclusion and quality of life issues, not just in those neighbourhoods selected for NRU focus, but also in wider society.

The government's National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, published in 2000, grew out of work on both social exclusion and regeneration – some of it dating back decades. It established four key principles, which it claimed were essential for successful neighbourhood renewal:

- revive the economy

- revive and empower the community
- improve key public services
- promote leadership and joint working

Later that year, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) was set up to spearhead that work in the context of specific neighbourhoods.

Criticisms of the neighbourhood renewal approach have centred around:

- the involvement or non-involvement of local people (Foley and Martin, 2000)
- 'projectitis', which results in local organisations being run-off their feet trying to keep many funding programmes and initiatives going at the same time
- the balance between the need for long-term structural investments and short-term, area-focused funding (Carley and Kirk, 1998).

3.2.2 Evidence on neighbourhood renewal

As Parker *et al* (2002), make clear, the government sees the role of the museums, libraries and archives sector in neighbourhood renewal as a combination of their impact on social inclusion, together with the regenerative aspects of their role as neighbourhood institutions. This latter element, whether it is providing a safe space for community groups to meet, providing business information to local start-ups or legal information to community activities, is at the heart of their role in area-based initiatives.

It is, in some ways, where the social meets the economic. But the complex mixture of social and economic factors that contribute to neighbourhood renewal is not reflected in much of the advocacy material that has been developed by the sector, which fails to make the connection between the two, thus weakening the argument. In other words, 'regeneration' arguments often focus purely on direct (or implied indirect) economic benefits; while social arguments simply become about exclusion.

In the case of libraries in particular, much of the literature argues (eg Parker *et al*, 2002) that their role in community-level regeneration is overlooked. In some cases, according to Harris (1998), this is characteristic of library staff themselves, as well as across the wider community. Similarly, Norgrove (2001) found that 'neighbourhood renewal', as a term, was not mentioned specifically by any of the respondents to her survey, even though many local authority-run archives were involved in long term community regeneration projects.

Muddiman *et al* (2000), questioned the notion that neighbourhood renewal was a goal widely shared among library authorities and argued that in fact, only one third have any specific strategies for disadvantaged neighbourhoods and that even where authorities claimed high levels of 'community involvement' on the part of their staff – there was no evidence that this was targeted at the

disadvantaged or excluded. At the time of Muddiman *et al*'s survey, this held true even for ICT strategies, though there is likely to have been some change in this area since the commitments in the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, to provide internet access in public libraries, has been met through the development of the People's Network[2].

More recent work (Bryson *et al*, 2003) has argued that despite this lack of formal acknowledgement, the building of new public libraries in particular contributes positively towards neighbourhood renewal. Appropriate planning, including extensive public consultation (including on matters of design) – placing libraries together with other social spaces, such as cafés – together with high quality marketing, can all contribute, the authors argue to, 'facilitate the connections between people and resources that can help to ameliorate the breakdown in society'.

While Bryson *et al*, looked at a new library in the Stratford area of London, among other case studies, there is very little material at all that looks at the role of museums or archives, specifically within the context of deprived neighbourhoods. There have been studies of culture-led regeneration such as the Baltic in Gateshead or Tate Modern and Peckham Library in South London. While it is true that these examples encompass communities which are deprived, these examples of large-scale regeneration projects are different in kind, ambition and effects to the finer-grained, more local initiatives that drive neighbourhood renewal (and they are therefore considered more fully in the Regeneration and Economic Development section of this report).

Mark Stern's work in Philadelphia (Stern and Siefert, 2000), which is on the 'arts' in general, argues that smaller, community-based arts groups can have just as dramatic an effect on a neighbourhood as major arts institutions, without the harmful effects of gentrification. He points to Jane Jacobs' distinction between 'cataclysmic money' (often for new developments), and 'gradual money' and argues that the latter can make all the difference – stimulating renewal, 'not through direct economic impact, but by building the social connections between people'.

However, DeFilippis (2001) argues that this type of approach sees social capital as divorced from economic capital – thus the argument loses its power to benefit deprived neighbourhoods. That is, simply increasing the connections between people in a poorer neighbourhood will not make those people any better off – unless those connections bring them closer to power, wealth or expertise.

Finally, as a focus for social impact, neighbourhood renewal suffers from the difficulty (discussed in the Introduction) of being able to link effects on individuals to the wider community. Parker *et al* (2002), interviewed a range of museums, libraries and archives sector workers involved in projects on social inclusion and neighbourhood

[2] There are now more than 4,000 public libraries across the UK offering free or low cost broadband internet access and other services. See http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/pn/fastfacts.asp.

renewal. While almost 90% of them felt their projects had an effect on individuals; only a third felt they had an impact on the community as a whole.

The authors argue that this suggests that projects in the museums, libraries and archives sector are targeted more at social inclusion, which they claim is about individuals, rather than at neighbourhood renewal. It may, however, point to wider confusion about the means and methods by which 'included' individuals become 'renewed neighbourhoods'.

3.3 Community Cohesion

Summary

- Community cohesion is a more vague and contested notion than the other elements of the 'community areas'.
- In the UK, government policy has become very influenced by the riots of 2001 in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley. This has led to a shift in emphasis within community cohesion towards how to balance a recognition of diversity with the desire to develop common, shared values.
- The literature gives very little clear evidence of the impact of museums, libraries and archives activities on community cohesion as explicitly stated, but there is evidence that museums, libraries and archives have a role to play in relation to its constituent components (eg intercultural understanding and overcoming social isolation).
- In particular, intercultural understanding seems key, though it is contested as to whether museums, libraries and archives merely act to 'legitimise' particular (dominant) cultures/heritages, or that they also can help to express 'hidden histories'.
- However, both of these approaches in the literature take it for granted that the MLA sector has social impacts in these matters, but disagree as to what sort of impact and upon whom.

3.3.1 What is community cohesion?

Although government documents provide us with relatively clear definitions of social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal – the notion of community cohesion is a more vague and indeed, contested one. The terms social and community cohesion are often used interchangeably; for simplicity's sake we will use the term community cohesion here. We were also tasked with looking at the evidence on 'related community agendas', namely civil renewal.

The aims of the Community Cohesion Unit within the Home Office are defined as promoting communities where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities

- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

When considering this definition, it needs to be borne in mind that many policy statements on community cohesion follow the 2001 riots in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford. Previous understandings of community cohesion (particularly in the UK) emphasised shared norms, values and understandings, rather than a more dynamic understanding of how different values, norms and understandings can co-operate and can be harnessed.

Indeed, the UK understanding of the term has often been contrasted with that which exists in say, Canada, where it is clear that 'diversity is understood as a strength'. As one participant in a Canadian study (Canadian Department of Justice, 2003) said, 'being unsure about what is a Canadian, is a good thing. It leaves more space to be who we are'. This may be in contrast to some of the more 'settled' notions of identity, found in European countries.

The need to recognise 'difference' within a shared framework, and where the burden of emphasis should lie between diversity on the one hand, and common values on the other, is at the heart of the debate about community cohesion.

However, some commentators retain a suspicion of the entire notion (eg Burnett 2004), seeing it as an abdication of the state's responsibility towards its citizens and an instance of 'blame the victim', policymaking. As Burnett (2004) puts it:

> in the refusal to accept that government policies led to the uprising/riots; community cohesion represents an attempt at self-vindication.

Others emphasise that community cohesion depends in some ways on 'closing gaps' whether it is in income or asset inequality, or in the words of the Home Office's own aspiration for schools (Home Office, 2004), 'the attainment and achievement gap'. The difficulty with this aspect of cohesion is the tension it reveals between government economic and social policy. With Britain having, 'entered the 21st century with a higher level of income inequality than at any time since World War II', (Jackson and Segal, 2004), the prospects for 'similar life opportunities' for all citizens, look bleak.

Given the contentious nature of this area, John Vincent (2004), cautions that museums, libraries and archives need to ensure that in promoting 'cohesion' they are not at the same time, 'alienating parts of our communities'.

3.3.2 Evidence on community cohesion

Given the vague and somewhat contested nature of the term, 'community cohesion', it is unsurprising that the literature gives very little clear evidence of the impact on it of the museums, libraries and archives domains. Coalter (2001), in particular argues that it is the inclusiveness of libraries, which enables them to contribute to social cohesion. But the examples he gives to support this are all taken from Matarasso (1998), and tend to capture outputs (number of referrals to the Housebound Library service, for example), rather than outcomes (eg improved literacy, reduced isolation).

If we break the notion down, into its component parts, however, then the literature does suggest that libraries, archives and museums have a role in:

- overcoming social isolation (for groups as well as individuals)
- intercultural understanding
- acting as safe places for meetings.

The notion of intercultural understanding or identity issues are key to what we might practically mean by community cohesion – and this is where most commentators (Linley and Usherwood, 1998; Coalter, 2001; Harris, 1998) see the museums, libraries and archives sector as having an impact.

Carole Scott's work in Australia (Scott, 2003) suggests that both professionals and the public agree that museums contribute to social cohesion, both by making, 'people feel they belong to a common heritage', and making them aware of other heritages, (notably that of indigenous Australians), thereby acting as an agent of reconciliation.

The perception of the role of museums, in particular, as playing a role in 'legitimising' particular cultures or heritages is, in part, demonstrated by their often complex roles in rows over the Parthenon Marbles; the campaign established to return to Lindisfarne Gospels to North East England, or the importance attached to particular collections in various conflict arenas, including the former Yugoslavia or Iraq.

In addition, the role of museums and archives in particular in expressing 'hidden histories' (that of women, the working class, ethnic minorities and so on), is seen to reinforce notions of identity. Some argue that in the case of museums, collections are so likely to simply represent dominant tastes and prejudices, that this is a harder case to make, compared to say the comprehensiveness of the archive record. Bowden (2002), however, argues that the failure to make explicit, or even acknowledge the partial nature of archived material, under-estimates, 'what is left out – and why'. The legitimate, the literate, and in some cases, the propertied, obviously dominate.

The argument between those who see museums, archives and libraries as (broadly) democratising cultural spaces, as opposed to those who see them as reinforcing elitism – is not however, an argument about social impact. Both take it for granted that an impact is being made – the question is, what sort of impact and upon whom?

In contrast, those who argue that current government policy (on museums for example) leads to,

> a conflict between the pressure to include the exclude … and their specific responsibilities for the conservation, interpretation and presentation of artistic collection
> (Belfiore, 2002).

seem to suggest that the desire for social impacts is new – rather than recognising that social impacts happen anyway and the issue is therefore, what sort of social impacts do we wish to have?

3.4 Civil renewal

Summary

- Civil renewal is seen by government as a way of promoting 'active citizenship', which encompasses all citizens who are actively contributing to the 'common good'.
- The museums, libraries and archives sector is linked to civil renewal firstly through the specific role that archives play as purveyors of fact that supports informed democracy; as well as through the opportunities for cultural participation provided by the sector – as research has established a link between participation (of all forms) and civic activism, with the socially active most likely to be politically active.
- However, while there is a relatively large literature on participation, there is relatively little that separates out culture in particular (certainly not in the UK at least).
- Although it may simply reflect a shortcoming of the literature, there is little evidence at present to suggest that there is anything unique about cultural participation and its role in civil renewal, as opposed to other forms of community participation.
- Once again, the theory about how (cultural) participation is linked to active citizenship is that it builds social capital.
- However, this remains a very under researched area in the UK, particularly when compared with some other countries, such as Canada, where cultural participation is routinely treated as an aspect of wider 'community health'.

3.4.1 What is civil renewal?

Also sponsored by the Home Office, 'civil renewal' is seen by government as a way of promoting 'active citizenship'. Some commentators regard the term as being largely about voting and tackling the decline in some sorts of political participation. The government, though, is keen to stress that its notion of renewal goes further than this and encompasses all 'active citizens who contribute to the common good'.

Culture is linked to civil renewal principally through its participatory dimension, as outlined below. However, the 'factual' element of the museums, libraries and archives sector – as represented

predominantly by archives – plays a specific role in terms of supporting informed democracy. The 2001 National Council on Archives *Taking Part* report provides a number of illustrative examples of this role, including Derbyshire Local Record Office's work in helping ex-coal miners with ill health compensation claims, or London Metropolitan Archives access service for those seeking to know more about their adoption and social services records. Once again, though, the *Taking Part* report shares many of the limitations with work across the sector: it is based predominantly on the views of those working in archives (rather than the users) and it is unclear how representative the case studies are of the sector.

Both civil renewal and active citizenship are part of the current emphasis on citizenship, which as Pattie *et al* (2002) comment is, 'the new black', for political science – and, they might have added, for government also. In Pattie *et al*'s (2002) work on citizenship, they seek to understand how civic engagement of various kinds maps on to other notions such as social capital or participation. Using data derived from the Citizen's Audit – a large survey of citizenship in the UK – plus their own follow-up work, the researchers found a statistically significant relationship between the measure of participation (in general) and civic activism in particular, arguing that it is the socially active who are most likely to be politically active.

3.4.2 Evidence on cultural participation

There is an increasingly large literature on participation and its benefits in the UK (Barnes *et al*, 2002; Pattie *et al*, 2004), but relatively little that touches on culture. The Home Office Citizenship survey in 2001 and 2003 (Munton and Zurawan, 2004), asked about informal and formal volunteering in a variety of organisations, but it is difficult to separate volunteering in cultural organisations from the broader data on 'hobbies, recreation, arts and social clubs'. This should become easier with the introduction of the DCMS study of cultural participation in 2005.

The degree to which cultural participation differs from other forms of participation, is thus highly questionable. It may be that as the Scottish Arts Council found in its evaluation of the Arts and Social Inclusion Scheme (Ruiz, 2004) 'value derived from community participation is obtained almost irrespective of the activity'.

Research in Canada has looked more directly at cultural participation as an aspect of this bigger picture, but as Murray (2003) says, participation covers a wide variety of activities, and 'different policy frameworks call for different approaches to measuring participation'.

3.4.3 Cultural participation as social capital

In Murray's view, a social capital perspective puts the emphasis on the connections one might make via cultural activities. Jeanotte's (2003) analysis of the Canadian General Social Trends survey, suggests that those who participate in cultural activities are more likely to volunteer in other capacities – though this begs the question of

what persuades people to participate in cultural activities in the first place.

Work by the Urban Institute in the US, suggests that the top three reasons for attending cultural events were social, rather than aesthetic or educational. Socialising with or supporting friends, family or community organisations were generally seen as more of a driver to attendance than the desire to learn or even an interest in a specific performers/artist. In their more rigorous and longer term study, Bennett *et al* (1999), also suggest that it is social or human rather than cultural capital that Australians want from their children's education in the arts. In other words, participation or learning about cultural activities is seen as a way of 'getting on', not just about developing particular tastes or interests.

However, Murray's concern about this approach is that it, 'buries the cultural', treating it as a by-product of social capital, whereas she argues that the real question is, 'under what circumstances can cultural capital improve social capital?' (or the converse). As we shall see in the section on Regeneration and Economic Development, the other question is, under what circumstances are cultural and social capital linked to economic capital?

Therefore in addition to the social capital policy paradigm, Murray argues that the other emerging policy debate is around cultural diversity. Here the analytical focus switches from 'activity to mode of address'. From this perspective, what we participate in and how discuss the possibilities are is as important as whether we participate or not, making the focus more explicitly cultural. This issue echoes some of the material discussed in the section below on Cultural Diversity.

From the point of view of the active citizenship debate, therefore, it seems that cultural participation is linked to other forms of participation and that, to put it very crudely, in the government's eyes, 'participation is good'. But who gets to participate and what are the skills or capacities that they need to do so, is not well understood. Ruiz (2004), found that disadvantaged groups in a community are least likely to take part in activities and that there is a positive association between community participation and level of education. It is clear that education has an important role here, but what sort of education is important? As Murray points out, rising educational levels are correlated with rising cultural participation, but not that strongly, so other factors clearly come into play.

This is a hugely under-researched area, particularly in the UK, and unlike Canada, where cultural participation is routinely treated as an aspect of 'community health', studies of active citizenship have so far paid little attention to the role that culture plays. What seems likely however is that 'active citizenship', is another aspect of many of the issues we have discussed in this community section – education, social inclusion and social capital.

4 Cultural Diversity

Summary

- Though cultural diversity is widely understood to refer to diversity based on race and ethnicity, across the MLA sector it is also interpreted more broadly, to include factors such as faith and disability.
- This lack of a consistent working definition makes aggregation and comparison of extant data and research problematic.
- An assessment of the literature is further complicated as diversity is both an objective in its own right, and a means to an end in achieving broader social policy goals, such as community cohesion.
- Relatedly, the evidence base on cultural diversity in England is limited, uneven and fragmented, though it is strongest with regard to museums.
- Much of the material on cultural diversity is not focused on social impact, but on issues internal to the MLA sector itself, such as workforce development and collections and interpretation.
- These indicators are still relevant to the evidence base as organisational change across the sector is widely recognised to be both a key contributor towards, and a fundamental component of, advancing the aims of cultural diversity.

Collections and programmes

- The literature reports that, in order to engage with diverse groups, it is necessary for their history and experiences to be reflected in museums, libraries and archives' collections and programming.
- However, evidence suggests that many institutions are not involved in these activities and do not plan to be in the immediate future.
- The literature also highlights that collections alone will not be enough – it requires sensitive interpretation and the presence of a diverse workforce which reflects the ethnic make-up of society.

Audiences and users

- There are a range of barriers identified by the literature that prevent wider Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) participation and attendance in museums, libraries and archives activities.
- However, the evidence also suggests that many of these barriers are shared with some segments of the white population and relate to socio-economic status, though additional and distinct barriers for BME audiences and users persist.
- Despite these barriers, survey evidence indicates that attendance and participation among BME groups in the UK has increased significantly during the period under review (1997-2005), though this varies by age and by domain, with archives in particular still attracting few from BME communities.

Workforce development

- The MLA recognises the need for the sector's workforce to more closely reflect the communities they serve, but there is as yet no comprehensive, systematic and longitudinal means by which this can be tracked.
- However, a number of sector-wide labour market initiatives are currently underway that are designed to address this gap.
- What evidence exists suggests that people from BME groups are significantly under-represented in the workforce, particularly at senior and board level, and have historically encountered a number of structural barriers to entering the MLA labour market.

4.1 What is Cultural Diversity?

Investing in Knowledge, MLA's operational and strategic plan for 2004/5, identifies the need to 'foster and celebrate diversity' as one of its main priorities for improving access and ensuring that 'museums, libraries and archives are at the heart of their communities'. This commitment reflects a desire for museums, libraries and archives to reflect more closely the nature of the communities they serve (across a range of activities), and to contribute towards achieving objectives such as reducing social exclusion and generating civil renewal. The concept of 'cultural diversity' is central to wider notions of diversity, although the meaning of the term varies.

Cultural diversity is most widely understood to refer to 'diversity based around ethnicity and race' – the meaning adopted in the MLA's *Cultural Diversity Statement, Issues and Action Plan* (Resource, 2003), which states that:

> museums, libraries and archives have an important role to play in promoting knowledge, understanding and value of diverse cultures, faiths and histories. Evidence shows that through their engagement with communities they can foster a sense of identity and racial harmony.

Temporarily leaving aside the question of evidence, MLA acknowledges that broader conceptions of cultural diversity are also employed across the three domains, encompassing factors such as faith, disability, sexuality, generation and gender. While the main focus is on ethnicity, then, it is currently the policy for regional groups of the MLA Cultural Diversity Network to determine their *own* priorities for action according to the demographic profile of each area.

This means that there is therefore no uniform, consistent working definition of cultural diversity that is in use across the sector, which makes comparisons of existing data and research (such as it is) problematic. Carol Scott (2004) notes that,

> notwithstanding the recent attempts by Resource [MLA] to introduce some definitional clarity into the whole arena, there remains a lack of general consensus regarding terminology.

There is a further complication when dealing with cultural diversity as a policy objective. As our previous analysis of the social exclusion and community cohesion policy shows, cultural diversity is part and parcel of these broader social policy agendas. It is therefore both an objective in its own right – grounded in a legal, ethical and moral imperative (Denniston, 2003) and (Durrani, 2000) – and an instrumental means to achieving broader objectives.

As Hajra Shaikh (2001) explains, strategies to promote cultural diversity are often developed by specific institutions in isolation, on an ad hoc basis - and often in the short-term to secure or fulfil funding opportunities and government agendas. The same basic conclusion is

reached by Helen Denniston in *Holding Up the Mirror*, a survey of the collections and workforce practice of London's museums.

4.1.1 Politically contested

It is also important to note that cultural diversity is the most politically charged area of the social policy strands covered in the present report. As the section on Community Cohesion (section 3.3.1) above demonstrates, this is certainly the case in the UK, but it is also true internationally. So, while there is a range of advocacy, research and position statements dedicated to establishing the basis for cultural diversity policies in museums, libraries and archives (eg ICOM, 1997; Ocholla, 2002; and Ingemann Larsen *et al*, 2004), the precise character of these policies differs significantly. This is because policies regarding the sector are part of broader political debates on diversity more generally, with different countries having different political understandings of the nature, aims and value of cultural diversity. One of the consequences of this is that the findings of international work on cultural diversity and museums, libraries and archives often cannot be readily translated into a UK context.

For instance, there are a number of research reports regarding public libraries and diversity, mainly from the Scandinavian countries (eg Cunningham, 2004a; Berger, 2002; Thorhauge, 2003; Christensen, 2001). However, in these cases, public library policies and the use of libraries by a range of diverse groups are assessed according to criteria and against goals which would be more widely contested in the UK. In the Danish examples, the focus is on the role that public libraries play in 'integrating' refugees and immigrants into Danish society. This stance towards providing services for immigrants and 'foreign nationals' is similarly to the fore in work from Norway and Ireland (Rekdal, 2001; and Cunningham, 2004b). Even within the Scandinavian countries, there is a recognition that there are political tensions regarding this role:

> should the libraries function exclusively as 'quiet integrators' – as an extension of political and social integration policies of varying governments?
> (Skot-Hansen, 2002)

Once again, as discussed with regards to Community Cohesion (section 3.3.1), the approach to issues of cultural diversity is generally very different within countries which were founded on diverse populations, such as Canada and Australia.

4.2 Nature of the evidence base

Cultural diversity policies impact upon the sector in a number of ways. For the purposes of this review, it is helpful to consider the evidence in terms of the following areas (Dodd and Sandell, 2001):

i. **Collections and Programming** – how the cultural diversity agenda is reflected in the activities of museums, libraries and archives.
ii. **Audiences and Users** – attracting culturally diverse audiences, participants and customers.
iii. **Workforce Development** – building a diverse workforce and nurturing the leaders of the future.

As this list makes clear, the literature on cultural diversity and museums, libraries and archives may seem unusual when compared with many of the other social policy areas – in that the focus is less upon social impact than upon issues internal to the sector itself. These internal process and output indicators are nevertheless more relevant for inclusion in the evidence base in this particular area as organisational change within museums, libraries and archives is widely identified to be both a key contributor towards, and a fundamental component of, advancing the aims of cultural diversity (cf Denniston, 2003).

Looking across the three strands outlined above, the evidence base concerning cultural diversity and museums, libraries and archives is limited, uneven and fragmented. The most detailed research has been undertaken with regard to the museums domain. In the libraries domain, engagement with the cultural diversity agenda is relatively widespread, but is often limited to practical measures such as the provision of stock and information in multiple languages, and the celebration of Black History Month and religious festivals. It could also easily be said that the engagement of many museums and archives with BME issues and cultural diversity are often shoe-horned into Black History Month. Detailed research on the impact of cultural diversity policies on libraries (and the communities that use them) is rare, and there is even less evidence regarding archives and cultural diversity.

In addition, the evidence base is limited geographically, with little in the way of national studies, and a large proportion of available research relating to particular regions (eg Tissier and Nathoo, 2004; MacKeith and Osborne, 2003), local areas (eg Nawaz, 2002) or particular institutions (eg Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001). As such, some of the literature reviewed relates to very specific, small-scale or local activities.

One of the most significant evidence gaps (with one notable exception) is that no longitudinal evidence or major comparative analysis is available. In addition, outside of the DCMS-funded national museums, very few venues have adequate information about audience profiles. And those organisations that do, often lack adequate baseline data. Both the regional MLACs in the North West and in the South West have drawn attention to the lack of national baseline data standards to provide a benchmark against which performance can be measured.

There are, however, a small number of exceptions to this picture: four research/policy initiatives in recent years stand out as attempts to research and present evidence in a systematic way.

- *Pursuing the Wind of Change: Public Library Services in a Multicultural Britain* (Roach and Morrison, 1999) was based on practitioner consultation, service audits and case studies. It revealed a fundamental failure to serve the needs of minority ethnic communities and it set out an agenda based around a national policy framework; local innovation; greater integration of library services with those of the community sector body; and more effective recruitment and training of professional library staff.
- *Focus on Cultural Diversity* (Bridgwood *et al*, 2003) is the most significant (and only sector-wide) national survey of attendance, undertaken in 2003 on behalf of MLA (and the Arts Council and Film Council) by the Office of National Statistics. The report is based on a survey of 7,600 people and provides an historic baseline in terms of attendance, participation and attitudes. (See below for more analysis).
- *Survey of Visitors to British Archives* (National Council On Archives, 2000, 2002, 2004) provides the only longitudinal quantitative data to be found in the museums, libraries and archives sector. Since 2000, the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) of The National Council on Archives has produced this biennial profile of users in England and Wales. It is based on a survey carried out by the Institute of Public Finance, involving (in 2004) over 100 record offices and almost 10,000 completed questionnaires. It asks respondents about their ethnic origin and the figure for 'non-white' users has varied slightly between two and three percent.
- *The Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage* (MCAAH) is due to report in June 2005 and takes an expert panel approach to evidence. It has brought together 20 leading professionals, including academics and heritage practitioners, who consulted the mainstream and community based heritage sector through an inquiry programme of 11 linked sessions. Although not quantitative and longitudinal, it aims to reflect the concerns voiced by the sector in regard to advancing cultural diversity. The MCAAH's recommendations will cover governance; workforce development; mainstreaming; the community sector; partnerships and education.

4.3 Collections and programming

A review of the available literature suggests that, in order to engage with diverse communities, it is necessary for museums to reflect the history and experience of these groups in their collections and programming. Sandell (2003) argues that representative collections give diverse groups a stake in institutions that may not previously have seemed relevant to their lives.

However, there is evidence that many institutions are neither involved in this kind of activity, nor intend to be. A study carried out by SWMLAC, for example, showed that less than 50% of the museums surveyed intended to collect representatively, irrespective of their views on which audiences they served or the degree to which

collections' policies were influenced by other factors (such as lack of storage space).

This is very likely to be a reflection of the wider status that diversity is afforded within individual organisations. MacKeith and Osborne (2003) point out that dedicated specialist cultural and social diversity posts appear to be non-existent in the majority of institutions, with most of those responsible for developing cultural and social diversity doing this as a part of a wider remit. Similarly, Herman (2004) and Denniston (2003) both indicate that the success of cultural diversity programmes are often dependent on the commitment of a few key members of staff, often in relatively junior positions. This can lead to pressure on resources for delivery, and a lack of support at senior management level.

Furthermore, the consensus appears to be that collections alone are not enough. Dodd and Sandell (2001) argue that successful engagement with minority ethnic communities by museums is dependent on the sensitive display and interpretation of collections, combined with inclusive and targeted education programmes, and the presence of a diverse workforce that reflects the ethnic make-up of society. Similarly, Bott (2003) claims that a combination of collecting, exhibition and education projects enable museums to engage with diverse communities and acquire relevant material for future use – and that projects and partnerships can play a more important role than the act of collecting itself.

This is partly an issue about making (both existing and new) collections relevant to a wider audience or multiple audiences. Amanda Wallace (2001) suggests that collections management is key to enabling museums to fulfil their broader social remit and reflect diverse experiences. While policies and frameworks have been put in place to encourage museums, libraries and archives to provide collections and programmes catering to a culturally diverse population, effective management is required in order to implement these strategies successfully. This should encompass a range of range of activities, including:

- investing in public value (community groups)
- cultural heritage
- collection care
- language
- accurate representation and intellectual rigour
- use of advisory body/user/community involvement
- relationship with local authorities.

The need to enable diverse communities to become involved with museums, libraries and archives, to the extent that they become *producers* of collections and programmes, rather than just consumers, has also been highlighted in international best practice guidelines for

the sector (eg Canadian Museums Association, and the European Calimera Network[3]).

Evidence for the success of this 'rounded' approach is also provided by the evaluation report of the recent 'Community Access to Archives' project which focused on community development, skills development, preservation of 'unofficial' history and encouraging the involvement of new users.

4.4 Audiences and users

Despite the report of the ONS survey (Bridgwood *et al*, 2003), there are still some gaps in our understanding of the issues affecting usage patterns among diverse groups. Part of the problem is that there is a need for better training in how to monitor and evaluate the participation of minority ethnic groups in museums, libraries and archives activities. For example, MacKeith and Osborne (2003) describe how staff are often reluctant to ask questions relating to a user's ethnic identity, for fear of causing offence. This leads to museums asking 'safer' questions that lead to inadequate information about diversity. The review of the MLA's Cultural Diversity Festival (Herman, 2004) also identifies a 'variable capacity' for evaluation, monitoring and audience profiling among the regional agencies that took part.

However, there is a number of smaller or local studies (eg Tissier and Nathoo, 2004), together with some, albeit rather dated, national studies (eg Desai and Thomas, 1998) which indicate that a range of factors act as barriers to prevent wider participation by minority ethnic communities. These include:

- **Personal and social issues**: for example, lack of basic skills; low income; direct and indirect discrimination; racism; lack of social contact; social pressures; low self-esteem; language barriers; lack of time.
- **Perceptions and awareness**: for example, lack of knowledge about available services; perception that services are of limited or no relevance; lack of interest; fear of not understanding; fear of 'not belonging'; lack of understanding.
- **Environmental**: for example, access into buildings; physical/geographic isolation; transport; colonial architecture and imagery
- **Staffing**: the need for the community to see itself reflected in the workforce of its museums, libraries and archives.

However, upon closer scrutiny, many of the factors given as reasons provided for non-attendance by minority ethnic participants in focus groups, are the same as those given by some members of the white population (Desai and Thomas, 1998). Cost, lack of interest, lack of time and a fear of not understanding are all factors and attitudes that correlate closely with socio-economic groupings. These findings from

[3] Cf the 'Community Mapping and Museums' project on the Canadian Museums Association website at www.museums.ca and the Calimera Guidelines on 'Cultural Identity and Cohesion', available at www.calimera.org.

Desai and Thomas' work for the Museums and Galleries Commission are echoed in more recent research in London into non-users for ALM-London (Tissier and Nathoo, 2004).

The correlation in many instances, then, is not strictly between ethnicity and attendance but between *class* and attendance. Research undertaken by MORI for the Museums and Gallery Commission in 1999 demonstrated that visitors to museums and galleries tend to be middle class and in full-time employment (regardless of ethnicity). Similarly, both Jermyn and Desai (2000) and Skelton *et al* (2001) observe a similar correlation between socio-economic status and arts attendance.

However, this is not the full story. Desai and Thomas (1998) go on to identify additional barriers to attendance for culturally diverse audiences. These include a lack of publicity material relating to participants' cultural and religious identities, and attitudes towards the interpretation of culture and history in museums and galleries (often viewed as exclusive, elitist or colonial). Similarly, the 1999 MORI study showed that members of minority ethnic groups were more likely to state that museums and galleries did not meet their needs because of a lack of relevant content, language barriers, and the 'persistent use of negative images of some communities'. Attitudes towards the sector also varied within and between different minority ethnic groups, with factors such as age, gender and religion influencing behaviour

Despite the apparent barriers towards attendance for BME groups, there are signs that attendance rates among BME groups have risen – though it should be noted that this varies by age and by domain (ie whether it is attendance at museums, libraries or archives).

For instance, the 1999 MORI report found that 'the proportion of ethnic minorities visiting museums and galleries is similar to that found among the general public'. Similarly, the ONS Survey in 2003 found that attendance at libraries, museums and galleries was widespread among all ethnic groups, with libraries in particular attracting a high proportion of non-white users. Indeed, for those in the 16-44 age range, a higher proportion of those from BME backgrounds had visited a library in the previous year than those from the white sample, with similar numbers of male and female respondents attending. However, older BME respondents were less likely to have visited a library than older white respondents. It should also be remembered that the use of archives by BME groups constitutes only 2-3% of all users, and that those from a BME background form 24% of visitors to London's museums in a city in which the BME population is 29%.

4.4.1 Online audiences

The literature on audiences and users in the museums, libraries and archives sector (whether on cultural diversity specifically or more generically) is at present almost exclusively focused on *physical* access and participation. However, 'virtual' access to collections through the internet is becoming ever more important across the

sector. For archives in particular, online access has the potential to revolutionise both the extent and the nature of how people access and engage with archival material. A number of the more significant online archive projects in the UK focus on issues of cultural diversity, in particular the Moving Here site (http://www.movinghere.org.uk) which focuses on the history and experience of migration to England.

It is still too early to assess what the actual impacts of online access to collections are for the museums, libraries and archives sector. Clearly, though, it is a developing area and DCMS will in future, on a case-by-case basis, include online access / participation in their performance indicators.

4.5 Workforce development

The MLA Workforce Development Strategy 'Learning for Change' (2004) recognises the need for the sector's workforce to more closely reflect the communities it serves. MLA considers all aspects of diversity to be important, including ethnicity, gender, age and disability. One of the four priority objectives of the strategy is:

> Developing a fit-for-purpose workforce composed of a diverse and representative range of people to deliver the 21st century vision for the sector.

Despite this commitment, there is currently no systematic and longitudinal evidence capture which measures diversity in the museums, libraries and archives workforce at either a regional or national level. If this is indeed an accurate reflection of the evidence base, it would appear to be a significant knowledge gap that should be addressed.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that improving the evidence base for workforce development is a priority issue for the Workforce Development Strategy. The Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Creative and Cultural Skills (in development) and Lifelong Learning UK have primary responsibility for data collection and dissemination. Part of MLA's funding agreement with the two SSCs in 2005/6 will be to address the gaps in labour market information. Further initiatives that will address this knowledge gap are also currently underway. In particular, a labour market study which is being piloted via SEMLAC, and an MLA research project which is identifying barriers for young people from BME backgrounds looking to enter the museums, libraries and archives workforce.

Despite the lack of comprehensive, time series data on the composition of the museums, libraries and archives workforce, there is some partial evidence which suggests that individuals from BME backgrounds are very poorly represented. For instance, research undertaken for the *Holding up the Mirror* report (Denniston, 2003), found that less than 4% of people working in London's museums belong to a BME group. Similarly, anecdotal evidence – such as that gathered for the Review of the Cultural Diversity Festival (Herman, 2004) – appears to indicate that minority ethnic employees are often

under-represented in the workforce, and particularly at senior and managerial levels, and at board level.

In putting forward explanations for this under-representation, Sandell (2000) reports that the museums domain is often characterised by exclusive approaches to selection and recruitment, which results in a profession that appears resistant to diversity and closed to new perspectives and ways of working. A historic lack of progression routes into the sector for people from minority ethnic groups is one reason for this situation, though this is latterly being addressed through strategic and policy interventions from appropriate public and industry bodies[4]. This follows the lead of a number of organisations in the sector in the US that have used public funds to provide financial incentives to actively recruit, retain and support people from under-represented groups within the museums and library workforce[5].

Some institutions have adopted a more proactive approach to re-dressing the imbalance in the ethnic make-up of the workforce. For example, through the introduction of employment targets to try and ensure that the workforce better reflects the demographic profile of the audiences they serve. Rochdale Arts and Heritage Service is a case in point, having established a target to employ at least one Asian male and one Asian female, and to have at least one member of staff who is able to speak Urdu or Bangladeshi. (When at the BBC, former director general Greg Dyke stated that 'abstract commitments to diversity don't, in my experience, actually change much in large organisations – you only do that by real figures and regular monitoring').

4.6 Map of existing and possible cultural diversity activities in museums, libraries and archives

Figure 1 below summarises the range of existing and possible diversity activities across the MLA sector. The schematic identifies both the target of activities (ie MLA workforce, individuals or wider groups and society in general), and the likely outcomes that may arise in terms of developing an evidence base. The main distinctions in terms of evidence are:

- **Input, process and output indicators** – internal measures which track the level of resources attributed to work on diversity ('Inputs'); what uses resources are then put to ('Process' – eg established a diversity post and ran a diversity festival); and then what the institution delivers ('Outputs' – eg10,500 BME visitors to archives during London BME Archive Week). As they are largely internal indicators, they are the easiest to capture.

[4] For instance, the Museums Association Diversify scheme, launched in 1998, has successfully offered bursaries and traineeships to prepare individuals from ethnic minority communities for a career in museums. Diversify traineeships and bursaries are now supported by MLA's Renaissance in the Regions programme. See Porter (2004) for an evaluation of these.

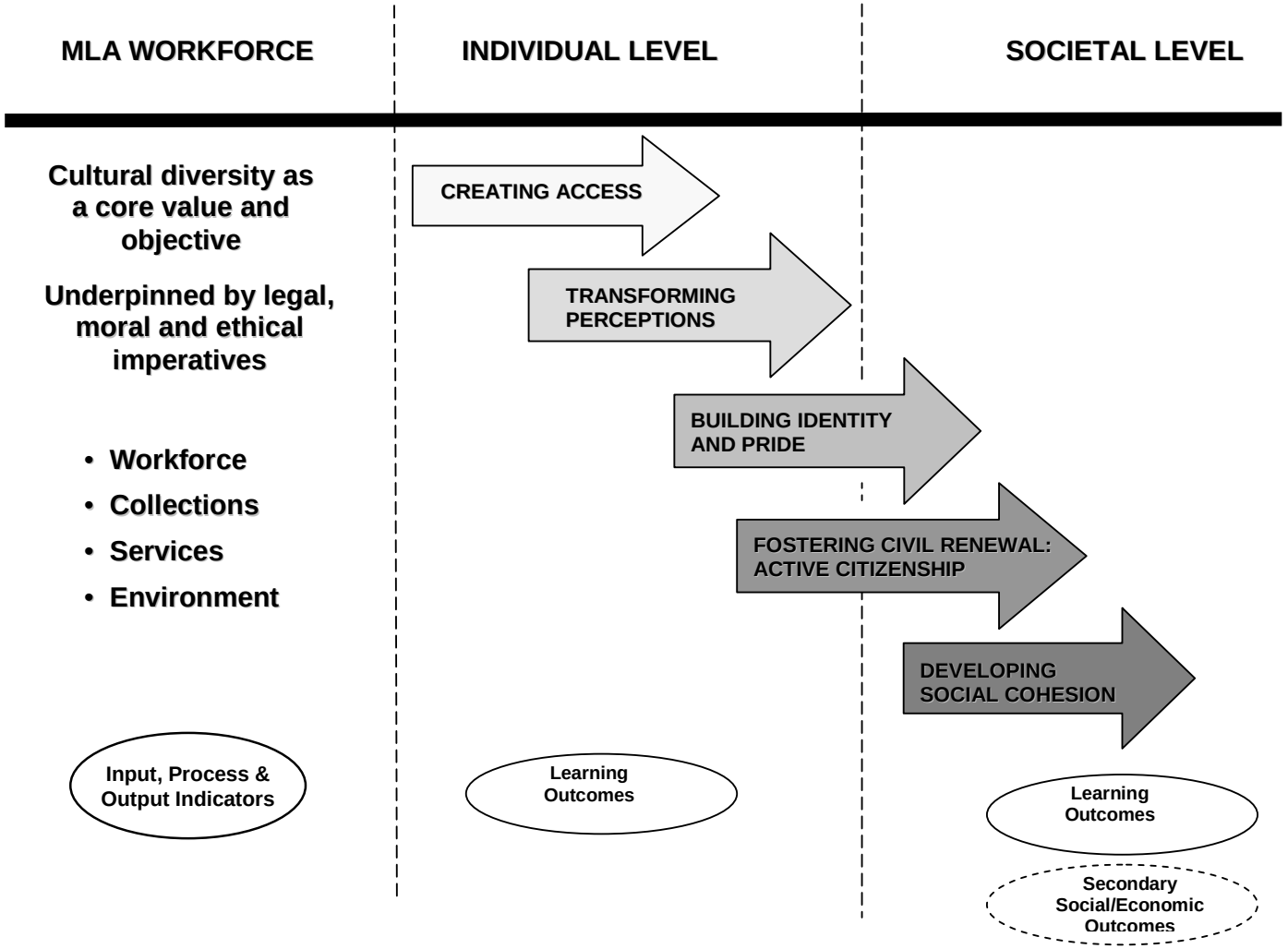
[5] See, for example, the American Library Association Office for Diversity, which received a grant for almost $1m in 2004 from the Institute of Museums and Library Services to provide a range of support and incentives (http://www.ala.org), and the Association of Research Libraries' 'Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce', which offers a stipend of up to $10,000 to attract students from under-represented groups to careers in academic and research libraries (http://www.arl.org).

- **Learning outcomes** – effects on individuals arising from direct participation/attendance in museums, libraries and archives activities. Most of these could be accommodated within the existing GLO framework (eg 'Knowing about something' – "the exhibition has changed the way I think about society as I now know that Britain has always had different cultures in it and lots of migration"; 'Empathy /capacity for tolerance' – "I now know that discrimination on the basis of race is wrong" and so on[6]). These kinds of learning outcomes are currently difficult to capture by individual organisations at present due to their lack of knowledge as to how to assess them. Therefore, a common framework, such as the GLOs, is required if these outcomes are to be captured in a way that allows for aggregation and comparability.

- **Secondary social/economic outcomes** – a range of possible social and economic outcomes that can, in some way, be attributed to museums, libraries and archives activities. As this implies, this is where diversity blurs into the broader community areas of social inclusion and community cohesion. This could include fewer hate crimes, greater ties and participation between people of different faiths and ethnicities, and so on. It is most likely that these outcomes will occur 'down the line' (as it were) from the original involvement in activities within the museums, libraries and archives domains. This, together with the problems of causation, and the linking of individual effects into group or community effects (discussed in section 2), make evidencing these kinds of outcomes extremely difficult.

[6] The categories of 'Knowing about something' and 'Empathy' are both taken from the MLA's guidelines to the GLO Framework 'More about the Generic Learning Outcomes', available from http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/. The specific examples provided under each category are purely hypothetical but they are presented in the style of those given in the 'More About the GLOs' document.

Figure 1. Map of existing and possible cultural diversity activities in museums, libraries and archives



5 Health/Mental Health

Summary

- Health/mental health are increasingly taken by government to be holistic concepts that go beyond direct physical health, to mean a 'complete state of physical, mental and social well being'.
- Despite this, there is no body of literature which specifically examines the effectiveness of MLA activities in health/mental health in England.
- The health agenda is new to most of the sector and the evidence base simply does not yet exist. Even the extent of activity is not yet known, though it is likely to be modest.
- However, many of the issues for the MLA sector and health/mental health are very similar to those in the arts, which has an evidence base of more than 20 years' work in health/mental health.
- The arts and MLA sectors are part of a wider debate about the nature and causes of health: beyond examining how material circumstances affect health (eg deprivation and mental health), some commentators argue that there are additional social and cultural factors which influence health.
- Arts and health interventions thus consists of two main elements: (i) improving healthcare delivery via arts-based approaches, aimed at direct improvements in physical health (ii) arts-based activities that aim to improve individual/community health by addressing the social determinants of health.

Assessing clinical outcomes

- The evidence base on the clinical outcomes of improving healthcare delivery via arts-based approaches is now relatively well established and does show the effectiveness of interventions in a range of areas.
- It is difficult to apply the same methods to evaluate clinical outcomes for arts-based activities in community settings as (i) it is too difficult to disentangle specific aspects of intervention (ii) projects are too small-scale to suit many of the standard methods of evaluation in health.
- Nevertheless there are a few instances where community-based arts and mental health projects have successfully applied standard forms of evaluation from the health sector, though sample sizes remain small.

Assessing social outcomes

- Assessing outcomes for arts and health projects that focus on building the social factors that influence health outcomes outside of clinical settings is more difficult.
- Most research has focused on demonstrating the health benefits that accrue to improving the level of social support and connectedness between individual/communities, based on the theory of social capital.
- But the evidence here remains inconclusive and equivocal.
- There is less research on projects that focus on improving *individual* health outcomes through arts and health/mental health projects, where the activities once again effectively focus on developing 'life skills'.
- While some extant quantitative research has established a link between certain conditions (including mental health) and learning activities, qualitative studies suffer from the lack of a common evaluation framework.

5.1 Changing notions of 'health' and mental health

In a number of quarters, health is latterly being seen as much more than simply physical health and the absence of illness. Rather, it is conceived in more holistic terms, perhaps best summarised by the World Health Organisation's definition of health as a 'complete state of physical, mental and social well being' (WHO, 1997). This theoretical shift in thinking about health has also been accompanied by more applied cost benefit analyses of the comparative costs of prevention versus cure (Wanless, 2002; 2004). It is within this context, then, that the NHS is currently refocusing many of its priorities towards public health and prevention rather than the treatment of chronic conditions.

With health thus defined, it becomes a much more complex, multi-factoral phenomena that requires a corresponding diversity of approaches in health practices, and in the partnerships that the medical establishment needs to enter into with the rest of society, including with the cultural sector (DH, 1999). This more holistic approach to health has been applied equally to mental health:

> Given the current limitations in the effectiveness of treatment modalities for decreasing disability due to mental and behavioural disorders, the only sustainable method for reducing the burden caused by these disorders is prevention … and prevention and promotion in public health should be integrated within a public policy approach that encompasses horizontal action through different public sectors
> (WHO, 2004)

It is this background which provides the rationale for MLA's New Directions work in the health/mental health sphere. Museums, libraries and archives, it is argued, have a particular role to play in terms of mental health due to the fit with their functions as memory institutions and information providers, as well as their status as 'neutral spaces' which are relatively well used by excluded groups (including people with mental health needs) which the medical establishment consider to be 'hard to reach' groups (MLA, 2003a). More prosaically, there has been little emphasis placed on mental health issues across the sector, despite the fact that the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) encompasses people with mental health problems and/or a history of mental health problems.

5.2 Museums, libraries and archives evidence base

Despite the seeming appropriateness of a range of museums, libraries and archives activities for public health and mental health in particular, the evidence base does not yet exist to support or disavow the effectiveness of such activities. This does not mean that the situation is analogous to that in the areas of social exclusion/social cohesion, ie that a lot of advocacy materials exist but little real 'evidence'. Rather, the precise extent of museums, libraries and archives and health/mental health activity is as yet unknown, though it is fair to say that it is modest in

comparison with, for instance, museums, libraries and archives work across the range of community areas. Further, and more importantly from the point of view of evidence, even where projects and programmes do exist, very little evaluation, monitoring or research is available.

The lack of formally captured, written information seems to be common across the board, whether it concerns a relatively long running mental health project such as Hatton Gallery's work with users of St. James Hospital's psychiatric unit in Newcastle, or a more recent public health initiative such as the National Gallery's work with the Department of Health's Teenage Pregnancy Reintegration Unit in Waltham Forest. The museums, libraries and archives sector is therefore at a rudimentary level in terms of engaging with issues of health/mental health, particularly in being able to evidence the effectiveness of any interventions.

However, the arts sector has been undertaking arts and health work for well over two decades and many of the issues that arise in relation to the evidence base for arts and health are common to the museums, libraries and archives domains.

5.3 Social determinants of health

The arts and museums, libraries and archives domains are part of a wider debate about the nature and causes of health, and particularly health inequalities. Until the end of the last decade, most work in the UK focusing on health inequalities concentrated on the influence of material circumstances, ie socio-economic status/demographic factors (Mohan *et al*, 2004). Much of this work continues in, for instance, the Office for National Statistics (2002) report on the social and economic circumstances of people with mental health needs. The ONS research has provided quantitative data which, taken together with expert testimony, has established a now widely acknowledged link between mental health and social exclusion (Dunn, 1999; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003; Rankin, 2005).

However, the work of Richard Wilkinson has shifted the terms of the debate somewhat as he has highlighted that even after allowing for material factors, there are still differences in health outcomes. Mohan *et al* (2004) succinctly summarise Wilkinson's position as viewing the most important links between illness and income to be:

> psychosocial, operating through the pathway of social cohesion … It is not the absolute standard of living in advanced economies that affects a population's health experience; instead, relative inequality influences levels of isolation, anxiety and insecurity, with the key causal pathway being chronic stress.

Wilkinson's work has caused controversy and debate but it has contributed to a developing interest in looking at the links between social capital and health outcomes. In particular, picking up on elements already underway in its predecessor's (the Health Education Authority) Research Strategy (1996-99), the Health Development Agency commissioned a

number of research studies as part of a programme on Social Capital and Health, describing social capital in the Foreword to the Series as:

> one coherent construct which will allow us to progress the debate and discussion about the general importance of social approaches to public health and health promotion[7].

5.4 Arts and health

The Arts Council of England's (ACE) current draft *Arts and Health Strategy* identifies two types of activities under the heading of arts and health:

1. *healthcare delivery that uses arts-based approaches* and that seek to enhance the healthcare environment
2. *arts-based activities that aim to improve individual/community health* by addressing the social determinants of health.

This is an important distinction as the two types of intervention are generally designed to have different aims and outcomes, therefore requiring different types of research and evaluation.

Healthcare delivery using arts-based approaches and/or that seek to enhance the healthcare environment, covers a number of activities that includes:

- the use of the arts in operative and post-operative recovery
- arts therapy more generally
- the role that arts and humanities plays within the education and training of practitioners
- the introduction of works of art into the design of healthcare environments.

As such, the outcomes of these interventions tend to be oriented towards clinical outcomes and/or improving the standard of care provided by practitioners.

Arts-based activities that aim to improve individual/community health cover a more diffuse range of activities that encompass public health promotion, improving life skills (self expression, self confidence communication skills etc) and building social capital (developing the range and number of relationships, helping to foster shared norms and values etc.). In these instances, the outcomes are more likely to be social in nature as the interventions here are directed towards building the factors that precipitate or facilitate improvements in health (HEA, 2002) rather than direct, immediate improvements to physical health (although

[7] This view of social capital is perhaps misleading in terms of over stating the degree of coherence, or certainly consensus, that exists with regard to the notion of social capital. See Pevalin and Rose (2003) for a discussion of the different ideological foundations and interpretations of the term 'social capital' and what this means for studies on health.

there are some proposed 'biological pathways' for how the two are medically linked[8]).

5.5 Evaluation and research frameworks in arts and health

There are a number of approaches that have been developed to try and assess the effectiveness of arts and health activities. However, there is still an opinion within the field of arts and health, most often expressed by arts-based practitioners, that formal evaluation and attempts to measure definable outcomes will always necessarily fail, as the influence of arts-based health activities is not susceptible to 'positivist' methods of investigation (Smith, 2003). Despite these discontents, the general conclusion of the literature is that proper recognition from the health field for arts-based interventions will 'only follow from good evidence that they achieve their intended health and wellbeing outcomes' (Hamilton, 2003). This means that it is important to examine how arts and health/mental health projects measure up to the generally high standards of evidence required in the health sector.

5.5.1 Clinical outcomes

When compared to assessing and measuring social outcomes, there is a relatively well understood process and set of criteria for analysing the clinical effectiveness of arts in health interventions. Healthcare delivery using arts-based approaches are assessed in much the same way as other medical treatments. That is, evidence is assessed according to a hierarchical framework, in which evidence from one or more Randomised Control Trial (RCT) is at the top of the hierarchy, working down to expert opinion and theory at the bottom. Though there are slight individual differences between frameworks, this is effectively the structure of, for instance, the '5-Type system' used by the evidence-based healthcare journal Bandolier[9], and adopted in the development of the National Service Framework for Mental Health (DH, 1999), or the model developed by the Medical Research Council for evaluating complex interventions (Campbell *et al*, 2000)[10].

The most recent and comprehensive research in this area is the 2004 ACE commissioned review of the medical literature on healthcare delivery using arts-based approaches (Lelchuk Staricoff, 2004a and 2004b). The study, which considered evidence from 1990 to 2004 and was based on an analysis of 385 articles in specialist medical journals and books, concluded that there are a number of medical areas in which 'clear and reliable evidence that clinical outcomes have been achieved through the intervention of the arts' (Lelchuk Staricoff, 2004a).

[8] See, for instance, Pevalin and Rose (2003) which documents a number of what they call 'plausible biological pathways'.
[9] See Bandolier website for more information and access to their e-journal at http://www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/index.html
[10] For a fuller discussion of the Medical Research Council model, see Geddes (2004).

Among others, the areas where effectiveness was demonstrated include cancer care, pain management, surgery and mental health. The use of arts in mental health services has been demonstrated to lead to behavioural changes in mental health users, with patients becoming more calm and co-operative, in addition to reported improvements in communication skills, and enhanced self-expression and self-esteem (Lelchuk Staricoff, 2004a).

Aside from its application in assessing healthcare delivery using arts-based approaches, there are particular problems with using these hierarchical frameworks for trying to assess the impact of community arts-based activity in mental health. At a theoretical level, Hamilton (2003) suggests that it is easier to assess the impact of interventions in clinical settings than within communities and neighbourhoods where it is more difficult to disentangle specific aspects of intervention. More prosaically, community arts in mental health projects are 'too small-scale and too modestly resourced to yield statistical and cost comparative results that can be validated [in this way]' (White and Angus, 2003).

However, some practitioners within art-based community mental health projects have used 'standard' forms of evaluation from the health sector. For instance, the work undertaken by the Stockport Arts and Mental Health Scheme has been monitored by using the General Health Questionnaire, which demonstrated positive results albeit on a very small sample size (33 people), and workers are continuing to use it in conjunction with the Edinburgh Post-natal Depression Scale which is used to monitor a scheme for mothers (White, 2004).

Consultation also suggests that the medical establishment is now prepared to be more flexible in the area of community interventions in mental health as regards evaluation. In particular, to accept aggregated, small-scale case studies which have nevertheless been assessed using comparable methods.

5.5.2 Social outcomes

As alluded to above, developing the evidence base for arts-based health activities outside of clinical settings is a more difficult task than for those interventions that take place within the medical establishment. However, it is a developing field and one that Mike White (2004) classifies into two overall categories:

- **Individual approaches:** termed 'socio-cultural' approaches which focus on individual experience, expression and the acquisition of skills and knowledge. As such, they are essentially concerned with the social and wider benefits of learning. White draws on work undertaken for the Upstream Healthy Living Centre in Devon to determine a theoretical underpinning to these approaches, based on Maslow's hierarchy of need and the desire of individuals to achieve 'self-actualisation'.

- **Community-based approaches:** those which focus on improving the level of social support and connectedness of individuals/communities, based predominantly on the theory of social capital.

In terms of the evidence base, most evaluation and research work has been focused on community-based approaches, viewed through the lens of social capital (Health Education Authority, 2000; Angus, 2002), and within the context of a broader investigation into the links between health and social capital (Pevalin and Rose, 2003; Mohan *et al*, 2004). However, despite the attention and research resources devoted to social capital and (arts and) health, the evidence remains inconclusive.

While Robert Putnam's concept of social capital and its link to health outcomes has been validated by some studies (eg Campbell *et al*, 1999), the empirical studies in the Health Development Agency's Social Capital for Health programme are very equivocal in the evidence that can be claimed for any links. Where there is evidence of some links, they are primarily concerned with:

- *bonding forms of social capital* – linking members of a group to each other rather than to the wider community (Argyle, 1996, cited in White, 2004), rather than the more 'beneficial' bridging and linking forms of social capital (cf section 2.2.6 above).
- *social participation* – improved health outcomes are related to social participation rather than any other facets of social capital, such as kinship networks, levels of trust, reciprocity and civic engagement (Pevalin and Rose, 2003)
- *outcomes for specific groups and conditions* – correlations between social capital and health are strongest with regard to mental health and older people (Pevalin and Rose, 2003)
- *individuals rather than groups* – any improvement in health outcomes are individual health outcomes and do not translate to the neighbourhood or community level (Pevalin and Rose, 2003; Mohan *et al*, 2004)

The Mohan *et al* (2004) study, which assesses whether social capital has any identifiable effects on health outcomes at the community level in the UK, also found that individual social class was an abiding factor in health outcomes and that,

> the direction of the relationship between social capital indicators and health is not always consistent, indicating that the positive health advantages of high levels of social capital cannot be presumed.

Perhaps more fundamentally, there was also 'a great deal of co-linearity between deprivation and the measures of social capital', ie that areas with high levels of deprivation have low levels of social capital, such that 'it is impossible to unpack their relative effects in a combined model'. This could be interpreted as empirical validation for more critical and dialectical conceptions of social capital which, after the work of Pierre Bourdieu, see

social capital as being 'implicated in the reproduction of the very inequalities it is generally thought to mediate against' (Pevalin and Rose, 2003).

Given the contested status of the general relations between social capital and health, and the emphasis placed on any possible links to health outcomes residing in *individual* health outcomes, it is perhaps surprising that there is no comparable concerted research and evaluation programme devoted to investigating individual outcomes. As outlined above, individual approaches are essentially about evaluating the personal learning experience gained (where this is understood to cover life skills) and any health and wellbeing outcomes that are linked to this learning.

There is already some research which is suggestive of how these wider benefits of learning might be researched and evaluated. For example, a quantitative study conducted by the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning has established evidence for what it describes as 'robust effects of learning on obesity and depression', through examining formal qualifications and health outcomes (Feinstein, 2002). More specifically, a NIACE (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) study in 2000 identified learning benefits of arts in mental health in a number of case studies, indicating their effects on patients' self-care and healthcare strategies (James, 2000, cited in White, 2004). However, as with many case study examples of this sort, the NIACE study suffers from being a one-off study that is unable to utilise a common evaluation framework. White goes on to suggest that a useful model for developing such a framework would be the 'Inspiring Learning for All' Generic Learning Outcomes, MLA's re-working of the Quality Assurance Agency's learning outcomes:

5.6 Gaps in the evidence base

The main gaps (as opposed to shortcomings) of the evidence base in arts and health relate to a greater consideration of the link between arts-based activities and employment opportunities/chances for economic participation. As the ONS (2002) report demonstrates, people with mental health problems are one of the most excluded groups from the UK's labour market. In addition to the financial exclusion that this represents, 'it is clear that participating in work has a therapeutic value' (Rankin, 2005) as employment is one of the main ways to develop life skills, form relationships and engage in the wider social sphere (ie build social capital). Also, issues of more general mental health wellbeing are an increasing source of concern to employers due to sickness absence and staff turnover.

This aspect of arts and mental health projects has received greater attention in other countries such as Australia, where, for instance, the 'Creative Connections' community arts and mental health project funded under the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation's Mental Health Plan, identified economic participation as one of the three determinants of mental health that the project would focus on (VicHealth, 2003).

The accumulation of evidence over a long period is now such that real progress has been made in integrating art-based approaches within healthcare delivery. Further progress could still be made, particularly in terms of establishing a way to assess possible cost savings of reductions in medication in mental health as a result of arts-based approaches. Even here, commentators suggest that there are already some evaluation frameworks that may be applicable, such as the CORE model (Clinical Outcomes for Routine Evaluation)[11]. However, it needs to be recognised that arts-based activities will only ever be 'part of the jigsaw' of treatment where mental health users are concerned (White and Angus, 2003).

The main stumbling block to developing a stronger evidence base in the arts/museums, libraries and archives domains and mental health is the lack of a common framework for evaluating community-based interventions that aim to build the social factors that precipitate or facilitate improvements in health:

> If, as a collective body, arts in health could agree on the common aims and issues, agree a way of evaluating, and then share and collate the results, the field would achieve a critical mass of information.
> (White and Angus, 2003)

This means that in the specific area of community arts and mental health, evidence is the least well developed, with no systematic reviews having been undertaken and often no clear stated aims of projects. Thus, 'there is not a lot of reliable evidence on the effects of art and health projects; because it is not always clear what effects are intended' (White, 2004). This situation needs to change if the arts and museums, libraries and archives domains are to be able to develop their case for playing a key role in tackling mental health and wellbeing. It has to be hoped that the recently commissioned DCMS/DH research into the arts and mental health will successfully develop the nationally-based evaluation framework and programme of comparative case studies that it is needed.

5.7 Map of existing and possible health/mental health activities in museums, libraries and archives

The intention of this section is to provide an 'ideal-typical' scenario for both the kinds of health/mental health activities that are already in existence across the museums, libraries and archives sector, and those that might reasonably be developed in the future on the basis of the evidence review.

The scenario is presented as a schematic in Figure 2 below which identifies the:

[11] Suggested by White (2004).

- target of activities and interventions (ie museums, libraries and archives workforce, wider society as well as individuals with mental health needs)
- purpose of activities and interventions (eg health promotion); with some illustrative examples (eg exhibitions)
- likely outcomes that may arise in terms of being able to evidence the effectiveness of interventions.

The intention of the map or schematic is not to be exhaustive; rather it is to provide a framework in which the museums, libraries and archives can begin to think more clearly about the sector's role in relation to health/mental health agendas.

5.7.1 Inclusive services

In terms of interventions, the starting point is to ensure that museums, libraries and archives provide inclusive services. This means the mental health and wellbeing of the museums, libraries and archives workforce itself, as well as ensuring that museums, libraries and archives are welcoming and neutral environments in which people with mental health needs can access a range of services and activities in comfort and safety. There are a number of dimensions to achieving this, which include among others:

- **workforce development** to raise awareness and provide training to museums, libraries and archives staff regarding their own health and wellbeing, as well as that of others
- **developing capacity and building partnerships** with a range of agencies across the health/mental health sector, including Primary Care Trusts, Mental Health Trusts, non-governmental organisations, charities, research institutes and education
- **environmental design** – assuring that both the built and 'soft' infrastructure (eg visitor orientation, staff uniforms etc) across the museums, libraries and archives sector are welcoming and accessible by all and conducive to promoting health and wellbeing.

5.7.2 Promotion, prevention, challenging stigma and improving skills

This relates to activities which can increase awareness of, and potentially have an impact upon, broad public health agendas. It encompasses activities designed principally for the community at large, including the key role that libraries play in providing a wide range of information sources on health matters, as well as specific exhibitions that address contemporary health agendas, whether

this is obesity, mental health or sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, there are interventions that are more directly aimed at individuals, for instance, libraries' current involvement in the joint DfES/DH 'Skills for Health' programme, which aims to improve health outcomes by tackling basic skills problems.

5.7.3 Supporting care and recovery

There are a range of existing and possible activities/interventions that focus specifically on contributing to the care and recovery of individuals with mental health needs. These more targeted interventions are likely to require a high degree of partnership working with other agencies in the health sector, and include:

- **Bibliotherapy or 'books on prescription'** – one of two versions: (i) patients are 'prescribed' a range of self-help books, such as those on cognitive behaviour therapy, that are known to be available from particular libraries, allowing them to better manage their own mental health needs; or (ii) a reading group format, based in a library, in which the act of reading and discussing literature is used a means for improving health and well being (perhaps the best known of which is the Kirklees Bibliotherapy Project).

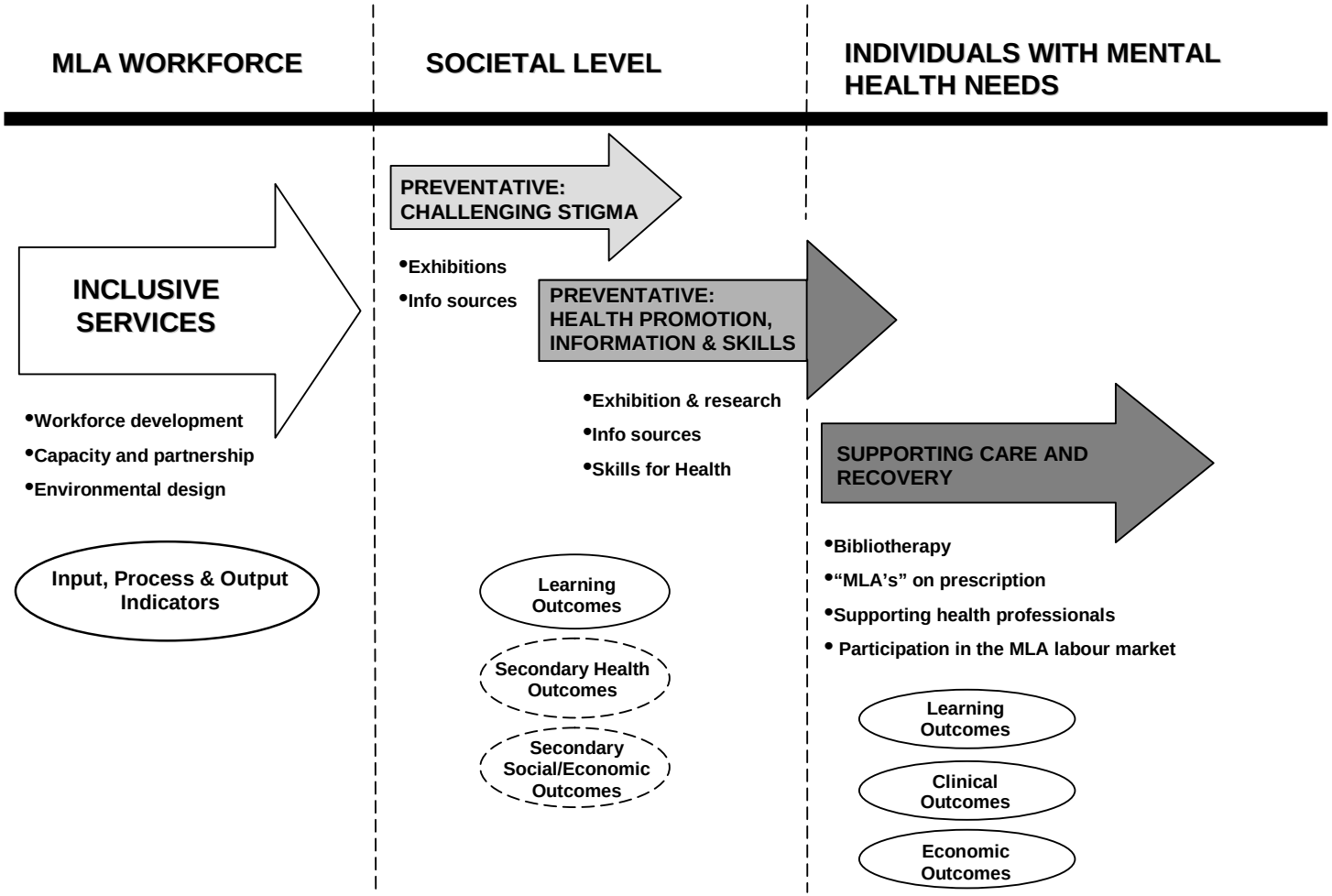
- "**Museums, libraries and archives" on prescription** – similar to books on prescription in that individuals are referred from the health sector to participate in a variety of other activities that can take place within a museum, gallery or archive context. Less common at present than even bibliotherapy projects, and largely focused around painting and other visual art activities in galleries, but could also take in some community archive and oral history projects.

- **Supporting health professionals** – through both the work of the large number of health archivists and librarians within the medical establishment, as well as the (far less common) examples of museums, libraries and archives developing learning resources for medical students (eg the Bethlem Hospital Museum and Archive). Although noted here, the impact of this role is not considered further, because of this review's focus on publicly accessible services.

- **Participation in the museums, libraries and archives workforce** – referring to the role that the sector can play in providing opportunities for individuals with mental health needs to (re)enter the labour market. This covers the full spectrum of participation from opportunities for volunteering and temporary 'intermediate labour market' schemes (in which employment is combined with mentoring and other skills development activities), through to permanent full or part time employment within the sector. As noted above, in section 5.4, there seems

to be very little evidence that such schemes currently exist in England.

Figure 2. Map of existing and possible health/mental health activities in museums, libraries and archives



5.7.4 Developing the evidence base

Many of the issues concerning the kinds of outcomes that might be evidenced are similar to those discussed in relation to Cultural Diversity in section 5 above. Thus, the main distinctions in terms of evidence are:

- **Input, process and output indicators** – internal measures which track the level of resources attributed to work on health/mental health ('Inputs'); what uses resources are then put to ('Process' – eg established a partnership between the local Mental Health Trust and three PCTs); and then what the institution delivers ('Outputs' – eg15 referrals participated in the books on prescription scheme). As they are largely internal indicators, they are the easiest to capture.

- **Learning outcomes** – effects on individuals arising from direct participation/attendance in museums, libraries and archives activities. Most of these could be accommodated within the existing GLO framework (eg 'Knowing about something' – "the exhibition taught me a lot about how changes in diet in history has changed how fat or thin we are and the kinds of diseases we get"; 'Empathy/capacity for tolerance' – "people with mental health problems need to be helped to get better rather than just thought of as bad and dangerous", and so on[12]). The GLOs could also be used to assess the skills development of those individuals with mental health needs undertaking paid and voluntary work within the museums, libraries and archives sector (eg by developing 'Communication Skills', 'Emotional Skills', 'Information Management Skills' etc.). At present, these learning outcomes are often difficult to capture by individual organisations due to their lack of knowledge as to how to approach assessing them. Therefore, a common framework, such as the GLOs, is required if these outcomes are to be captured in a way that allows for aggregation and comparability.

- **Clinical outcomes** – specifically related to individuals with mental health needs and most obviously realised through reduced medicalisation and improvement in symptoms/acute episodes. Likely to be assessed in conjunction with partners from the health sector and through the use of one of a number of the existing and/or developing frameworks currently in use within the medical establishment (as discussed in section 5.5.1).

- **Economic outcomes** – specifically related to those individuals with mental health needs who participate in the museums, libraries and archives workforce in some way. One of the most common ways to monitor the effectiveness of intermediate labour market schemes or other employment interventions would be through destination tracking; ie monitoring whether individuals progress onto further employment or education opportunities and benchmarking this against a control group.

[12] The categories of 'Knowing about something' and 'Empathy' are both taken from the MLA's guidelines to the GLO Framework 'More about the Generic Learning Outcomes', available from http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/. The specific examples provided under each category are purely hypothetical but they are presented in the style of the examples given in the 'More about the GLOs' document.

While it is relatively straightforward for individual institutions to capture 'output' data related to labour market programmes (eg 'over the last five years, 20 individuals have completed work placements of between 3-6 months'), capturing outcomes related to these outputs (in this case, long term employability) through destination tracking is far more difficult.

- **Secondary health outcomes** – a range of possible health outcomes among groups or society in general (eg reduced medicalisation as a result of better work/life balance after a specific museums, libraries and archives health promotion campaign) which can, in part, be ascribed to learning new information or changing attitudes and behaviour as a result of museums, libraries and archives activities. These outcomes will occur 'down the line' (as it were) from the original involvement in activities within the museums, libraries and archives domains and this, coupled with the problems of causation and the linking of individual effects into group or community effects (discussed in section 2), make evidencing these kinds of outcomes extremely difficult.

- **Secondary social/economic outcomes** – a range of possible socio-economic outcomes among groups or society in general that can, in some way, be attributed to museums, libraries and archives activities (eg reduced sick leave as a result of better recognition and understanding of clinical depression after users have accessed a large web-based archive of personal testimonies from sufferers of depression). As with secondary health outcomes, these outcomes will occur 'down the line' from the original involvement in activities within the museums, libraries and archives domains and this, coupled with the problems of causation and the linking of individual effects into group or community effects, make evidencing these kinds of outcomes extremely difficult.

6 Regeneration and economic development

Summary

- There is relatively little work that looks specifically at museums, libraries and archives, and regeneration and economic development.
- However, the MLA sector does feature in the broader literature on the role that cultural institutions and services can play in both regeneration and economic development.
- Much of this considers how iconic buildings, new capital investments and possible increases to cultural tourism can contribute to revitalising depressed economies.
- There is an overlap with Richard Florida's 'Creative Class' theory that emphasises the role that cultural amenities can play in attracting knowledge workers and, with them, developing faster growing regional economies.
- However, this body of literature is contested in terms of (i) whether the stated effects can actually be empirically demonstrated and (ii) whether the outcomes are actually desirable.
- In particular, the fashion for iconic buildings has been criticised for the degree to which the benefits 'leak out' of an area and the role that it plays in spurring gentrification.
- The 'creative class' theory has been criticised for under-playing the social sustainability of regions and for valorising and promoting a form of economic development that increases polarisation.
- Commentators have responded that a different approach is required; a more sustainable model of cultural regeneration that results from conscious policymaking that explicitly attempts to avoid the problems of unbalanced growth.
- However, the recent DCMS review of culture and regeneration suggests reports that this is some way off in the UK, as cultural planning is rarely integrated into mainstream economic strategies, and not consistently covered in social policy, quality of life indicators, or the discourse of the 'knowledge economy'.
- Despite the criticisms of Florida's work, recent work on regional economic development continues to stress the importance of both human and social capital in knowledge-based economic development.
- There is a growing body of material that argues that cultural investments have a particular role to play here, both in developing human and social capital and in bringing together 'local buzz and global pipelines'.

6.1 What is Regeneration?

Regeneration is a broad term, one that according to Evans and Shaw (2004), is place-based (concerned with a specific area, neighbourhood or town) and

encompasses environmental, social and economic aspects. It is far more than a 'bricks and mortar'-type improvement in the local environment, but is one that should also ensure improved employment opportunities, increased health and well-being and enhanced quality of life (Evans and Shaw, 2004).

While the term regeneration, in the UK at least, implies the development of deprived or declining economies – much of the literature on the economic potential of culture, is concerned with the success of 'creative economies' (eg Florida, 2002) and does not look explicitly at issues of decline and deprivation. Indeed a major critique of this strain of writing (Douglas and Morrow, 2003), is its 'boosterism', and relative underplaying of the issues of polarisation and deprivation. However, we have been asked by museums, libraries and archives to focus on 'sustainable' economic development, which we take to include issues of equity, and will thus pay attention to all three aspects of sustainability – the environmental, the economic and the social.

The section will begin by looking at the evidence for regeneration, before moving on to the wider issue of economic development. Our working assumption is that the degree to which the benefits of economic growth can address problems of deprivation is the core issue here, and suggests that the agendas are not distinct, but related.

There is relatively little research that looks specifically at the role of archives, museums or libraries in economic development. Work on 'iconic buildings' focuses often on galleries, particularly of modern art (Baniotopoulou, 2001), but the majority of the literature looks at the broader 'cultural' sectors or what is sometimes called the arts, which in many cases will include museums, libraries and archives domains.

Other research (Florida, 2002; Gertler, 2004) looks at the creative industries or 'creative economy' – an even wider attribution including sectors such as advertising, design and architecture, as well as the traditional cultural sectors. It is central to our case that to understand the role that culture plays in economic development, one needs to understand the term broadly – thus this review will include both the cultural and creative sectors. It may well be that the role of the museums, libraries and archives domains is distinctive in its contribution, but the extant research does not allow us to state this with any certainty.

6.2 Culturally-led or cultural regeneration?

In their review of the evidence for the contribution of culture to regeneration for DCMS, Evans and Shaw (2004), distinguish between three models by which cultural activity contributes to regeneration:

- **Culture-led regeneration** – where cultural investment of some kind is the catalyst or engine of regeneration. Examples they offer include the Sage Music Centre in Gateshead, Peckham Library or Tate Modern, all of which represent large, capital investments.

- **Cultural regeneration** – where cultural activity is fully integrated alongside other activities. One example they give is Birmingham's Renaissance Strategy.

- **Culture and regeneration** – where some sort of cultural spend, either a public art programme or specific exhibition, takes place alongside a regeneration strategy but is not integral to it.

Evans and Shaw are careful to note that there are examples of success and failure in all of these models and that no 'hierarchy' is suggested by their use of the terms. However, although a useful framework, much of the international literature does not distinguish between the economic effects of cultural investments in this way. Thus we will use the term 'cultural regeneration' to cover both of the first two categories, where cultural activities are integral to a specific regeneration effort. The third category, culture and regeneration, which some commentators argue may be more sustainable in the long term (Stern, 2002), we will treat simply as an aspect of public investment in amenities (Nichols Clark, 2002).

6.3 Cultural regeneration and iconic buildings

There is one major exception to low profile of the museums, libraries and archives domains in the research on regeneration. For many people, the notion of culturally-led regeneration is closely linked with the idea of iconic or 'destination buildings' and, as Baniotopoulou (2001) points out, many of these buildings are art (particularly modern art) galleries and museums. The Guggenheim in Bilbao is perhaps the best example of this in Europe, and it is one that many other cities have tried to emulate in the past decade (Hannigan, 2004; Evans 2003).

As Beatriz Garcia (Garcia, 2003) points out, the legacy of the Barcelona Olympics and the Seville Expo meant that Spain in the early 1990s saw urban regeneration very much as an outcome of flagship, high profile capital projects. The Guggenheim – a cultural icon in a depressed, post-industrial city – fitted this picture exactly and was joined by other major infrastructure projects, notably a high quality underground rail system, designed by Norman Foster. As Garcia suggests, the short-term benefits were impressive; a worldwide transformation of the city's image, indicated by a large rise in tourism. Overseas tourism increased by 43% between 1994 and 2000, while domestic tourism rose by even more (58%) over the period.

But in recent years questions have been asked about the sustainability of such high-profile initiatives. In particular, does the tourism impact last beyond first time visits? Does it translate into other local jobs (in Bilbao's case unemployment is still growing)? And in the case of an overseas investor like Guggenheim, does it provide a platform for local artists or simply act as a franchise of the US parent institution?

Baniotopoulou (2001) is very clear on this last point, arguing that the presence of the Guggenheim in Bilbao has done relatively little for the local

arts scene, featuring relatively few Basque or Spanish artists among its acquisitions and reflecting instead the desire of the Guggenheim Foundation itself, to be at the forefront of the international art world.

Evans (2003) argues that this lack of a link between 'flagship' cultural projects and local creative businesses is not confined to Bilbao, but is a weakness of grand cultural projects everywhere. Indeed, along with others (Baniotopoulou, 2001), he goes on to argue that such flagship projects are often undertaken at the expense of local and regional cultural development.

In addition, as David Harvey argued over a decade ago (Harvey, 1989), despite their relatively high costs, such flagship projects can in fact be relatively easily reproduced in different locations, 'thus rendering any competitive advantage within a system of cities, ephemeral'.

6.4 Cultural clustering

The challenge of sustaining such high profile initiatives (and the natural limits to the number of iconic buildings) means that the policy focus is instead shifting towards supporting smaller, more localised regeneration projects (Hannigan, 2004) which seek to combine both production and consumption.

Mommaas (2004) describes this as a 'more finely tuned' policy of 'cultural clustering' that is, 'aimed at creating spaces, quarters and milieus for cultural production and creativity'. As Evans and Shaw (2004) point out, these aim to take advantage of information and knowledge sharing as well as what geographer Michael Storper calls 'local buzz' (Venables and Storper, 2003). Local buzz strategies are concerned with increasing the density of relationships between firms within a geographic area and providing specialised support and services, that range from business support to *in situ* consumption activities.

Although many of these strategies are focused on small creative businesses – amenities such as galleries (public and private) are often used to complement these production centres, as has been the case in Manchester's Northern Quarter, London's Hoxton and the Lace Market in Nottingham (Evans and Shaw, 2004; Shorthose, 2004).

There has been little systematic comparison of these 'cultural clusters', though there are case studies of specific examples (Evans, 2004; Bottomley *et al*, 2003; Shorthose, 2004). Gertler (2004) suggests that case studies demonstrate that successful clusters perform an additional function in addition to providing live-work spaces. By combing live-work space with spaces for consumption and, crucially, providing for a rich mix of occupants, including non-profits and public agencies outside the cultural sphere, they are 'strengthening the social space and connective tissue in which creative activities thrive'.

According to Polese and Stern (2000), these wider services help maintain the social sustainability of cities and are as important to creative economies

as 'globally-oriented talent-driven', clusters. Similarly Shorthose (2004) in his work on Nottingham's Lace Market argues that the, 'feeling of a creative community', or what he calls a 'convivial ecology', persists, even though many of the independent businesses have been driven out of the Lace Market by rising rents.

6.5 Libraries and regeneration

The role of public libraries as an agent of this more community-based regeneration has received some attention of late (Bryson *et al*, 2004; Resource, 2004). In much of this work, issues of the design of libraries – both as high quality public buildings which demonstrate a commitment to the public realm and as more usable public spaces – receive much attention.

The Resource report *Better Public Libraries* uses terms like 'the living room in the city', or 'contemporary cultural market place' to describe the form of new library buildings as a opposed to traditional ones, stressing the informal 'third place' nature of their aspirations. In addition, the bundling of libraries with other public services or with community-oriented consumption spaces, such as cafés, is an attempt to create Gertler's 'connective tissue,' with an emphasis on social rather than purely economic outcomes.

According to Bryson *et al* (2003) in their case studies of new public library buildings in Norfolk and Stratford in East London, part of this connective tissue is developed during the planning process. However, even intensive involvement of the public during panning and construction cannot guarantee ongoing levels of attendance. Rather, high quality marketing (including a variety of media) is also required to maintain the ongoing role of the library as a social setting which, 'facilitate[s] the connections between people and resources that can help to ameliorate the breakdown in society'. (Bryson *et al*, 2004).

6.6 Gentrification

Despite the more localised and finer-tuned nature of these initiatives however, many have not escaped the problems associated with gentrification entirely. One of the most detailed studies of these smaller, neighbourhood-based cultural regeneration projects was carried out at Toronto's Ryerson University (Jones and Lea, 2003). It compared three neighbourhoods – one in Vancouver (near a newly renovated theatre) and two in Toronto (with artists live-work space) – with two neighbourhoods in Toronto that had no specific community of artists and with data for the city of Vancouver as a whole.

Rather than using multipliers, they used a combination of geomatics and other spatial data to look at the effects on a very specific area (500 metres around the arts facilities in question). The researchers took into account factors such as how many building permits had been applied for, turnover of retail businesses, sales generated by square foot of retail space, rents and property values in the neighbourhood and the employment rate. In addition,

they looked at social indicators such as crime and the age, ethnicity and education of residents – as well as polling residents about how they felt about their neighbourhoods.

The results were mixed, but do provide some evidence for supporters of culturally-led regeneration. In general, property values, number of renovations and retail sales were up – and by a larger amount than those in the control areas. In the Vancouver example, major crimes fell, but car and motor thefts went up. And both residents and businesses in all three places supported the presence of the arts facilities in their midst and saw them as a positive change in the neighbourhood, although they also complained about increases in traffic.

It also appears to be the case that the 'churn' in local businesses increased around the time that cultural facilities were developed (suggesting changes in type of businesses), but that this settled down after a few years, with between 20-30% of new businesses being in culturally-related activities.

More worryingly however, improvements in income, the presence of more managerial and professional jobs and higher educational levels in the population, were found to be largely associated with people moving *into* the neighbourhood, rather than with changes in the circumstances of the people who already lived there.

Similarly, as Graeme Evans (2004) has commented about Hoxton:

> 1,000 local jobs a year have been created, but the local unemployment level never seems to change. Partly thanks to the success of Hoxton, land values in the area have soared. So locals who do get jobs often have to move outside the borough.

In response to this, some local authorities have sought to take a more pro-active stance to ensure that culturally-led economic development is more balanced and less in danger of driving out the creative entrepreneurs (and other locals) on which it depends (Gertler, 2004; Bottomley et al, 2003). Cameron and Coaffee (2004) in their study of Gateshead argue that there is a distinction between cities where gentrification is driven by commercial capital (such as the Hoxton example) and where what they call 'positive gentrification', is driven by public authorities. The latter, they argue, is more relevant in cities affected by de-industrialisation such as the North East of England, where,

> private capital has to be dragged kicking and screaming into de-valourised urban locations through the initiative and investment of the public sector.

Here public policy goals ought to have more leverage, though they admit that the evidence is not yet clear on what kind of 'urban renaissance' has been delivered in Gateshead. While they argue that the town clearly has a, 'renewed, revitalised and more dynamic urban core', the question is can this cultural regeneration can have an impact,

> outside of the Quayside 'amphitheatre of regeneration' on the adjacent areas of Gateshead, which contains some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the UK?
> (Cameron and Coaffee, 2004)

6.7 Attracting the 'Creative Class'

While much of the research on cultural regeneration has focused on the role of artists and cultural entrepreneurs, one of the most influential of recent writers on this topic has instead looked at the ability of cultural investments to attract a much broader class of 'knowledge worker'.

Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) was eagerly seized upon by policymakers in the UK and elsewhere. Florida's book, and his other work over more than a decade, builds on the insights of urbanists (Jacobs, 1992; Hall, 1998) and 'new growth theorists' (Romer, 1994) about the importance of human capital in a knowledge-based economy and the roles of cities and city-regions, in attracting that capital.

Florida's main contribution has been to link the mobility of a 'creative class' – a wide ranging demographic group that he posits consists of those employed in science and the arts, as well workers in financial services and healthcare – to the amenities and lifestyle options of the city or region where potential employers are located. Of particular interest to cultural policymakers is his linking of amenities (arts, entertainment, access to countryside) to broader cultural and social conditions, such as the diversity and tolerance of an area.

His other distinctive contribution is his attempt to quantitatively measure, through the uses of 'indexes' of various sorts, the conditions that he deems necessary for successful city-regions. His analysis of this 'talent model', together with figures on regional economic growth, leads him to argue that there is a causal relationship between cities and regions that have high numbers on the various indexes and their growing economies.

Both the 'gay index' and the 'bohemian index' are said to measure a region's tolerance and lifestyle diversity. They are based on Florida's notion that gay people in particular are often the 'advanced guard' of gentrification in a particular area – and therefore that a high number of gay people in the population signals a tolerant community. His measure is of coupled, same sex households living in a particular Metropolitan area. The numbers are drawn from the US Census and have been criticised for including same-sex households that are not gay.

Florida's work has been undeniably influential, but there are those that worry that its rapid adoption into policy outside the US reveals a lack of recognition of the different political, social and economic circumstances that prevail elsewhere (Douglas and Morrow, 2003; Oakley, 2004; Gertler 2004).

6.8 Critiques of Florida

As Douglas and Morrow (2003) point out, Florida's talent index has been adopted by many North American city regions and internationally as well. However, many commentators have argued that there are limits to the model and a critique of Florida's work has been building. In particular,

- Many of the practical interventions that have resulted from it have focused on simply marketing the consumption value of 'bohemian' districts; concentrating on short term physical improvements to particular neighbourhoods, while at the same time under-investing in the essential amenities (from good schools to good public transport) that help sustain city-regions. The critique is that simply that simply focussing attention on 'the creative class' (for which read young, single men) may lead to neglect of other policies, from affordable childcare to good schools, that may apply to older and/or female knowledge workers (Bradford, 2004)

- In addition, care must be taken not to conflate tolerance with cultural consumption. An interest in ethnic food or world music is not the same as genuine racial or religious tolerance and other indicators need to be taken into account, such as racial divisions in the labour force, or number of attacks on racial or religious minorities, before declaring a place as 'tolerant'.

- As Bradford (2004) argues, 'in celebrating cultural diversity, Florida pays much less attention to the reality of racialised urban labour markets and the fact that some of his creative hot spots are also socially polarised places'. When that does happen, a less optimistic picture of Florida's creative economy appears, as he himself admits in more recent writings (Florida 2004). His colleague Kevin Stolarick, has developed an index of wage inequality which compares the wages of the creative class to others and reveals that, in the US at least, city-regions that rank highest in terms of creative economic strength, also rank highest in economic inequality.

- Florida's preference for 'street-level culture', also means that resources may be made available for certain kinds of cultural consumption (restaurants, bars, night-clubs, a music scene), while others (from brass bands to historic houses) may be neglected. While funding for cultural amenities has always reflected certain kinds of taste preferences (traditionally high art over popular culture), an over-concentration on the amenities that attract the young and/or bohemian at the expense of others, could be counter-productive. In particular, we do not yet understand how the particular mix of publicly-funded culture, community arts and commercial creative industries that exist in most cities, work together. It seems likely that in countries with a relatively strong public culture (most European countries), there is some cross over between those who work in the publicly-funded sectors and those in creative industries.

- Finally (and perhaps of most practical concern for regions in the UK seeking to use this formula), Britons are much less geographically mobile than people in the US, in common with other Europeans. Only about 10% of households move every year in England, of whom only about 1% move between regions (Donovan *et al*, 2002). Thus trying to regenerate, for example, Teesside, solely via a strategy of attracting the 'mobile creative class', not only risks problems associated with gentrification, but is unlikely to succeed in attracting people in sufficient numbers.

Other writers, while accepting that there may be a link between culturally diverse cities and economic growth (Storper, 2004), argue that,

> we don't really know whether the diversity of cities helps their incomes to grow by making them more innovative through real synergies and a diversity of ideas and talents; by simply draining brains from different places; or by establishing an immigrant underclass whose services raise the incomes of the rest of the population.

As Meric Gertler (2004) notes therefore if we reject the notion of cultural regeneration as simply the 'plug-and-play-ground for twenty and thirty-something members of the creative class', then we need to adapt this thesis to our particular political and social context and, in particular, to the challenge of developing sustainable communities.

6.9 Sustainable communities

As Bristow (2004) comments, the concept of sustainable communities can appear amorphous, though it clearly aims to combine three factors:

- economic development, with a flourishing local economy
- environmental benefits such as access to green space and a high quality built environment
- socially sustainable places which offer high quality public services, 'a sense of place' and good cultural and leisure facilities. These could be summarised as 'quality of life'.

The tension between these factors, is the source of much of the literature in this field. Donald (2001), in her review of the literature on urban development policies reveals two contradictory themes. The first is that economic growth is antithetical to quality of life and sustainability; the second, along the Florida lines, is that quality of life is vital to economic growth, particularly of cities. As Bottomley *et al* argue (2003), it may be that pursuing economic growth alone, particularly along neo-liberal lines, is incompatible with enhanced quality of life.

Donald (2001) argues that the problem with 'quality of life' arguments is that they are fundamentally individualised and thus we again run into the problem that critics of Florida have pointed out – focusing simply on the quality of life

of knowledge workers may divert public resources from more needy citizens. Instead, she proposes a notion of 'quality of place', which represents a consensus of views about what should be the priorities for spending on culture and other aspects of quality of life, to ensure that all communities are represented as far as possible.

As Gertler (2004) argues in the Canadian context, the desire to build 'socially inclusive creative places', has to be a conscious choice of the part of policymakers – inclusivity is not inherent in cultural regeneration. However, he and others (Bradford, 2004; Bottomley et al, 2003) argue that cultural investments can have a specific role in making city-regions both competitive and more socially sustainable.

6.10 Human capital

In increasingly knowledge-based economies, a growing consensus (Douglas and Morrow, 2003; Florida, 2002; Wolfe and Gertler, 2004) suggests that the quality of both human capital and social capital available in an area helps to determine its relative economic competitiveness. As discussed earlier in the present report, many of the social effects that arise from cultural interactions are learning effects, in other words they contribute to increased human capital.

In addition, the context in which human capital is deployed – that is, the relationship between firms, or between institutions and actors (Breschi and Malerba, 2001) – appears to be particularly important, and specifically the degree of trust and informal associations between those actors. This is important both in cultural industries themselves, where 'spatially sticky tacit knowledge' (Wolfe and Gertler, 2004) is often the core of competitive advantage, and more generally.

To the degree that cultural participation can develop social capital more widely (Stern and Siefert, 2002; Jeanotte, 2003), the possibilities for social sustainability are increased (Stern and Polese, 2000). This argument is taken up by Bryson *et al* (2003) who argue that public libraries in particular come close to fulfilling Oldenburg's notion of a 'third place', being highly accessible, free public spaces, which a relatively diverse community accesses on a regular basis.

The role of publicly-funded institutions – including publicly-funded culture – may have particular importance here. Wolfe and Gertler (2004) argue that 'there is a strong interdependence between economic structure and social institutions' in successful economies. In creative industries, this also refers to the links between publicly-supported culture and private sector creative industries. John Holden (2004) argues,

> a vibrant culture needs a rich tapestry of historic buildings, archives, landscapes and artefacts to sit alongside libraries, theatres, galleries, concert halls, rappers, buskers, fashion colleges and so on.

Stern and Siefert's (2002) study of community arts organisations in Philadelphia, suggests that although artists and other cultural workers move freely between non-profit and commercial sectors – the institutional links between these sectors are not strong and that in policy terms, we need to focus on these 'structural holes'. However, they also argue that in many cases, particularly for small cultural organisations, the strength of their networks is more important than their individual organisational strength, thus we need an 'ecological model', as a guide to policymaking, rather than a traditional focus on organisations. The plea for an ecological approach to understanding the health of the cultural 'system', is echoed by others (Holden, 2004), but there has as yet been little systematic research in the UK on relationships within this complex ecology and exactly how they work.

One insight from recent work in economic geography suggests that one of the roles that cultural institutions might play is by combining 'local buzz' with 'global pipelines' (Bathelt *et al*, 2002). There is little doubt that within an urban context this development of 'milieu' or local buzz is important, as Bathelt *et al* (2002) put it,

> the buzz consists of specific information and continuous updates of this information [and] intended and unanticipated learning processes in organised and accidental meetings.

But what such strategies often miss is the need for 'global pipelines' as well. In other words, very few places, whether clusters of firms or entire neighbourhoods can be completely self-sufficient in terms of their knowledge base – they need to draw on both local and global knowledge. Publicly-funded organisations, particularly museums, galleries and archives, have a role here – as they are often linked into wider networks of scholars and practitioners. As Bradford suggests (2004), this is not only beneficial from an economic development point of view, but may be useful in linking the needs of, 'both traditional flagship cultural institutions and grassroots street scene movements'.

7 Overall conclusions

7.1 Weaknesses of the evidence base

A variety of critiques have been levelled at attempts to measure the value of cultural investments in broad social and economic terms. Many of these relate primarily to charges of 'instrumentalism', an objection to seeing the benefit of cultural investments in anything other than their intrinsic 'artistic worth'. As John Holden (2004) has recently commented 'this concept is open to challenge on the grounds that it is a reversion to patrician and patronising attitudes', in other words, we will decide what has intrinsic worth and you will value it. Such a position is simply too difficult to sustain in the less deferential, post-modern age. This is not to argue that there is no role for value judgements about cultural issues or anything else, simply to recognise that, as Holden puts it, the word 'culture' now begs the immediate response 'whose culture?' – and that in itself is no bad thing.

However, we do need to be concerned with other criticisms that are made of much cultural research, particularly where it pertains to the weakness of the evidence base.

Lack of causality

The difficulty in establishing causality in any kind of social research is widely acknowledged (Wavell *et al*, 2002), particularly when one is looking for impacts such as increased social cohesion. As Ann Bridgwood (2002), Head of Research at the Arts Council, points out 'in a neighbourhood which could easily have an Education Action Zone, a Health Action Zone, a New Deal for Communities programme, a Single Regeneration Budget scheme, a Sure Start programme for pre-school children as well as core public services, how is one to say which programmes are having which effects?'

Measuring what can be measured

Faced with these complexities, practitioners often fall back on the technique of measuring commitment and effort, rather than effectiveness. This leads to a focus on outputs rather than outcomes, as Coalter (2001) argues in his review of libraries. Thus the presence of a policy or stated commitment to embrace cultural diversity or social inclusion, is often presented as 'evidence' of impact, as we have found in

our consultations for this project. Or, as Wavell *et al* (2002) point out, documents tend to describe the potential for social impact, illustrated by some 'case studies' or depth interviews purporting to illustrate this potential.

Anecdotal evidence/low standards of case study evidence

The use of 'anecdotal' evidence in policymaking remains contentious. As Ray Pawson (2003) comments:

> whilst it is hardly obsessed with the lofty ambition of qualifying for the inner sanctum of 'science', the very idea of evidence-based policy rests on the matter of differentiating its efforts from 'common sense', 'intuition', experience', 'value judgements', and so on.

Others argue that in always valuing 'hard data', above the 'anecdotal', we simply privilege certain kinds of knowledge; the scientific and the rational, usually the preserve of cultural and economic elites, above the more informal or intuitive 'local knowledge'.

The current government view (Davies, 2004) is that single studies, case studies and public opinion surveys do indeed have a role as evidence, if carried out to 'the highest possible standard'. The issue then becomes one of standards, not just methods, of evidence-gathering and much of the research that has been reviewed for this study falls short of the required standards. This is particularly true of 'case studies', a term which is frequently used simply to describe a depth interview with an individual. The subjects for interview are rarely chosen as systematically as even the most basic quality standards would require.

Lack of longitudinal research

As Coalter (2001) argues, research is often too short term, sometimes project-specific and funding driven, while the requisite follow-up work to determine longer-term outcomes is never carried out. These shortcomings do not lead to a diminution of

claims however, and a small short-term impact on a sub-group of people is often presented as though it were an enduring impact on a much larger group.

Little work on opportunity costs

There is rarely an attempt to measure opportunity costs, that is the benefits of spending money on one particular intervention rather than others. The real question for policymakers is not, did this work, but did this work better than another approach? This is not to minimise the difficulties in answering such questions. Detailed social experiments of this type, comparing one set of activities with another, are expensive and can be difficult to construct, but this is not an excuse for researchers to ignore the issues altogether.

The 'advocacy' problem

In many of these instances then, the primary problem is the gulf between the claims made for a particular activity and the evidence to substantiate those claims. This can be summed up as the advocacy problem, a widespread critique that research in this area is rarely impartial and is too often confused with advocacy (Selwood, 2002). The perception of cultural funding as marginal and often vulnerable to political changes, has lead many in the sector to feel that without constant advocacy, funding will inevitably fall. Thus there is often a tendency in findings to minimise evidence of conflict and present only the positive side of any intervention.

Distinctions between advocacy and research are not binary; and even if one accepts that complete 'objectivity' can be attained, in practice, it rarely is. However, as cultural research becomes more evidence-based, more 'balanced' conclusions, which discuss both the welfare gains and losses that arise from public interventions, should be expected.

In addition, a greater awareness of the difference between evaluation and research is needed. In other words, evaluation of

> individual projects, however well carried out, cannot alone add up to an evidence base used to support policymaking for all the reasons discussed above. Evaluation is above all useful for the organisations involved. Longer-term, more systematic research carried out by third parties is likely to be more useful for policymakers.

Finally, research into the social impacts of culture will only have come of age when it is routinely included with broader research frameworks – whether it is studies of quality of life, citizenship or economic development. It is becoming clearer that culture has a major role in these issues, but a full understanding of that role cannot be achieved by studying 'culture' in isolation. The need now is to acknowledge the weaknesses in the evidence base and to move on to develop more robust methods: longer-term, more systematic, research and a more realistic appraisal of the spill-over effects of cultural investments.

This will involve being more explicit about the role of research vis-à-vis other sources of information, as well as greater clarity about the relative strengths and weaknesses of different methodologies. We should not expect case study-type work to diminish in this area and we are likely to see a growth in qualitative work. This is all to the good. But where claims are being made for particular effects, we should not be afraid to demand some harder evidence of these effects.

It is likely that research in the cultural arena will continue to feature a plurality of research methods – improved statistical data, surveys, case studies and so on. It is therefore important that policymakers at local, regional and national level are made aware of what methods are appropriate in which case, what constitutes 'evidence' as opposed to argumentation, and what the limits of evidence are. This is not to suggest that they need to become methodological experts; simply that a greater appreciation of the possibilities and limitations of research is necessary in evidenced-based (or influenced) policymaking.

We need to understand that, in the well-worn phrase 'lack of evidence, is not evidence of lack'. Many of the arguments that have been advanced for the social and economic benefits of investments in culture have been neither proved nor disproved. In most cases, the 'evidence' points to both welfare gains and welfare losses – it is the job of policymakers, not researchers, to decide how to act upon evidence and how competing interests can be balanced.

7.2 Overall conclusions of our literature review

In reviewing the literature on the social impacts of museums, libraries and archives, a number of key issues and gaps stand out. We hope to draw them together in this conclusion and use it to distil the lessons for practitioners and for policymakers.

I. There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that interactions of various sorts with museums, archives or libraries can have a variety of beneficial effects on individuals.

II. These effects are of two primary kinds: educational in the broadest possible sense, in that they effect the development of new skills, new attitudes and new awareness; and social, in that they can be linked to the formation of new relationships and connections with other people. In other words, they can contribute to the formation of human and social capital.

III. The processes by which this takes place is complicated and it is unclear how individual capital becomes social capital. Perhaps more important, however, recent work in both economic and social development suggest that both are needed for the development of 'socially inclusive creative places' (Gertler, 2004).

IV. Despite their differing policy 'tags', many of the issues discussed in this report in fact share the same characteristics and potentially the same solutions.

V. The areas of cultural diversity and health, although they feature occasionally in broader social or regeneration literature on the museums, libraries and archives sector, lag behind considerably in terms of the body of published literature and the development of an evidence-base which has practical use for policymakers.

Our overall conclusion is that policymakers need to take a broader and more holistic view of the processes whereby cultural investments in general, and the museums, libraries and archives domains in particular, contribute to human well-being. While from a practical point of view, we need to use the language of 'neighbourhood renewal', or 'active communities', it is unwise to get trapped in particular policy agendas.

Political – and hence, funding priorities – are liable to change, ensuring that the evidence collected is often out of date for the particular new priority – to the exasperation of practitioners everywhere. In addition, proving a causal link between a particular kind of cultural engagement and an impact in a particular policy area, is difficult, not to say impossible.

Instead, we need to understand more about the positive contribution that these sectors, as part of the wider cultural eco-system, can make to human and social capital development. This is not to suggest that these are either

fully understood or uncontested terms – they are not. But they provide a framework for understanding how learning can contribute to employability or economic growth; how participation and activity can contribute to making places attractive to live in; or how the experience of other cultures can develop better community relationships. It is this framework that we need to develop and we hope that this report goes some way towards doing that.

8 Recommendations

Our recommendations are grouped under two headings, reflecting the two fundamental gaps in knowledge and understanding identified by our review:

8.1 Improving the policymaking process

Our consultation within the sector and among broader stakeholders has revealed a 'knowledge gap' in the policymaking process itself, resulting from the differing perceptions and understandings between three groups of professionals:

- those at the core of government (eg the Cabinet Office) driving the modernisation of the policy-making process
- policymakers at departmental level responsible for developing the rationale for government investment; and
- the sector professionals themselves, developing and delivering the programmes which generate social impact.

The development of an evidence base for social policy needs to be an MLA-wide, rather than a Learning and Access issue alone. We recommend, therefore that the Learning and Access Team should work with the Research Team to establish a 'Social Policy Research Network'. This would bring together professionals from across the sector, government officials, researchers, academics, policy makers, and representatives from other parts of the cultural sector who are developing social policy. It would be a pro-active body, holding regular briefings and events and publishing regular bulletins and good practice guides. It might be developed out of the existing 'New Directions' advisory groups.

The main internally-focused task of the network would be to develop systematic and longitudinal research programmes into social impact and embed new models for measuring impact within the sector. The main externally-focused task of the network will be to engage and influence the main stakeholders in government, in particular the DCMS, the ODPM (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Social Exclusion Unit), the Department of Health, local government, and the regional development agencies (RDAs).

- The recently announced review of MLA and provides an opportunity to introduce this new high profile approach to evidence policy-making.

8.2 Developing a systematic evidence base for social impact

The fundamental challenge for social policymaking in the museums, libraries and archives domains is the difficulty of evidencing the broad social effects

which result from the work of the sector. There is no immediate solution to this problem, but there is an urgent need to develop a more systematic approach to researching and monitoring these outcomes. Our review and consultation has shown that progress is being made but it is slow and patchy. MLA – through the proposed Social Policy Research Network – should advance the research agenda on three main fronts:

1. ***Make a further sustained effort to include the museums, libraries and archives domains into mainstream research***

Canadian researcher Nancy Duxbury (2003), talks about how the 'interpretative frames' of 'quality of life, sustainable development and healthy communities', are merging into what the Canadians call 'community indicator', projects, within which arts and cultural indicators can be combined with a wide range of other social and economic indicators.

Similar work in the UK is currently held back by the low profile of cultural research within broader indicator frameworks and research projects. This gap is perplexing – particularly as much research is concerned with what are broadly called 'quality of life issues', in which one would imagine culture plays a large role. Yet the Strategy Unit's paper on life satisfaction (Donovan and Halpern, 2002) looks at a variety of potential contributors to happiness, (including work, relationships, health and even religious observance), but has no evidence on the role played by cultural activities.

Similarly, the Audit Commission's development of voluntary Quality of Life indicators includes none that refer directly to cultural activity, other than one around 'facilities for young people'. And the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which in a sense considers the converse of quality of life, does not include measures of cultural deprivation, aside from education.

There is some sign that things are changing – indicators for sustainable communities do contain some that refer to culture, including one for measuring people's priorities for improving an area (CC03) and one that looks at where people 'regularly meet and talk with people of a different ethnic origin', in which cultural facilities are one of the potential categories.

2. Develop generic social outcomes model (GSOM)

Although it has not yet been fully tried and tested, the Generic Learning Outcomes within Inspiring Learning for All, provides a model of how to introduce more rigour and standardisation into the development of an evidence base. In view of the need to link the effect on individuals to broader social outcomes it makes sense to develop the GSO model alongside GLOs. The growing body of data on quality of life and social capital described above could provide valuable raw material with which to develop the GSOs, as well as providing a conceptual underpinning.

3. Fast track research programme: cultural diversity and mental health

The areas of cultural diversity and mental health will, of course, be core components of the research agenda and the proposed GSO model. But there is a strong case for putting both these areas on a fast-track in terms of profile and resources. Where the former is concerned, the priorities will be to publish an agreed definition to guide future research, to provide resources for research at a regional and national level and to ensure that cultural diversity is a major component of the proposed DCMS/ONS participation and attendance survey. In the area of health, the priority is to publish a set of core advocacy documents signalling the MLA's commitment to developing this area of policy and to work to ensure that the sector features in the current DCMS/DH Arts and Mental Health Survey.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Consultees

Alec Coles, Tyne and Wear Museums
Alison Tingle, Policy Research Programme, DH
Ann Thompson, Hounslow Libraries
Bernadette Bidmead, EEMLAC
Bridget Yates, Association of Independent Museums
Carol Dixon, ALM London
Chris Chadwick, NWMLAC
Clare Lavis SEMLAC
Clive Markes, DCMS
David Boursnell, DBA
Fiona Davison, London Hub
Frieda Midgley, TNA
Hannah Gould, CLMG
Hazel Courtley, EEMLAC
Helen Wilkinson, Museums Association
Ian Blackwell, NEMLAC
Ian Wood, Analytical Services, DCMS
Isabel Hughes, SEMLAC
Isobel Ashford, EMMLAC
Jocelyn Goddard, SEMLAC
Jackie Lord, Library and Information Services, Royal College of Nursing
Jane Moss, Home Office
Jenny Moran, Northamptonshire Archives
Jill Wiltshire, The Big Lottery Fund
Jo Ward, MLA North West
John Vincent, The Network tackling Social Exclusion
Karen Brookfield, Heritage Lottery Fund
Kevin Byrne, Education and Social Policy, DCMS
Kevin Harris, Community Development Foundation
Leila Brosnan, Arts Division, DCMS
Mari Davis, Local Government Association (LGA)
Makeda Coaston, Mayor's Commission on Black and Asian Heritage
Martin Thomas, SWMLAC
Mary-Anne Edwards, ALM London
Mary Heaney, SCONUL and University of Wolverhampton
Mary Tidyman, Mentality

Meli Hatzihrysidis, Arts and Health Officer, Arts Council England
Michael Cooke, MLA West Midlands
Nick Lane, ALM London
Nicky Morgan, EMMLAC
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