

# EQUALITY IN PROGRESS

FAIR ACCESS, REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSION IN MUSEUMS

\*Women in profile\*

RESEARCH FROM  
A GRASSROOTS MUSEUM



ACTIVELY  
SEEK  
UNDERSTANDING  
ON THE  
STRUCTURES  
OF  
INEQUALITY

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# PART 1



# FOREWORD

GWL is a values-led feminist museum that rethinks the traditions of museum practice; and stands as a model of good practice with an innovative and proactive approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

The Equality in Progress project aims to support the museum sector to gain a better understanding of 'equality' as a theory, with the intention of widening access, representation and inclusion for people with Protected Characteristics<sup>1</sup>.

Equality in Progress' theoretical approach is grounded in the foundations and values of GWL - a grassroots museum borne of the need for provision. The organisation was founded in response to the lack of visibility of women's histories in the mainstream museum, gallery and library sector by intersectional communities of women. It upholds the belief that cultural access and participation changes lives.

This report responds to the need for analysis of the complex systems of intersectional inequality in museums. As a project we deconstructed the power relationships between museums and people, exposing the barriers to information, learning and resources; unpacking the methods that have established, and maintain inequality of access to museums.

*Equality in Progress: Research from a grassroots museum* offers innovative thinking using a feminist analysis of inequality, to support the wider sector to enact sustainable change. It advocates for feminism as a holistic equalities-led framework to address the museum as a socio-political structure in need of transformative change. It is intended to assist Scottish museum sector and workers in all roles and at all levels to examine their approaches to equality and to identify where current practices can be improved.

*Adele Patrick and Rachel Thain-Gray*

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<sup>1</sup> The nine personal characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010 are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation



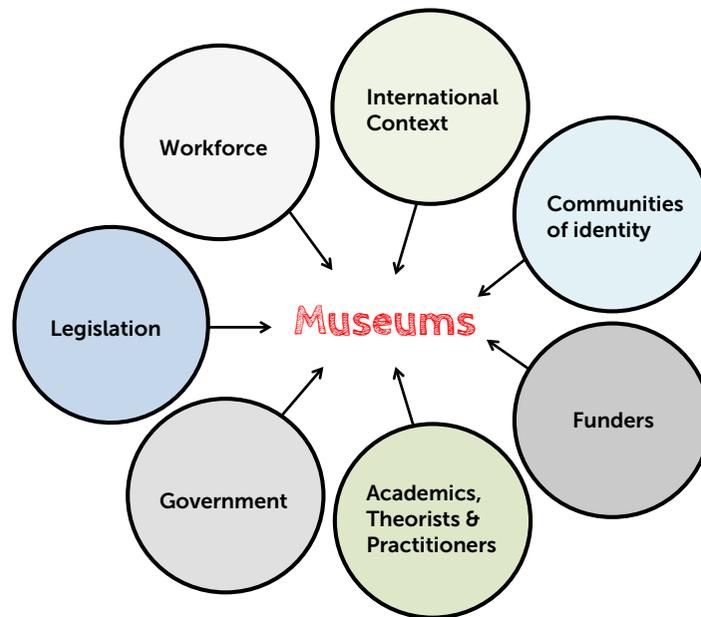
EXPOSE  
THE BARRIERS  
FOR PEOPLE TO  
ACCESS  
INFORMATION,  
LEARNING  
& RESOURCES

# INTRODUCTION



This introduction examines the pressures for change in the museum sector, introduces the Equality in Progress project, and establishes the concepts of inequality that feature throughout this report. We present models and visualisations<sup>1</sup> to support understanding of the complexities of inequality and identity in the context of the museum.

Museums face mounting pressure to address longstanding sectoral inequality from government directives (Mendoza, 2017); the enactment of the Equality Act 2010; emerging funding restrictions (Museums Association, 2016); and critiques of sectoral engagement approaches from activist practitioners (Moore, 2014) using decolonial, queer and feminist intersectional theories (Robert, 2014).



**Diagram 1. The pressures for action on inequality**

The UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2018) recently called for further analysis into the lack of diversity in the museum sector (employees and volunteers), particularly at senior levels and visitors (by age, socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality); and for further research into the drivers of cultural engagement and participation, in particular by age, socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. As highlighted by

<sup>1</sup> Our diagrams were inspired and adapted from tools by Arnold, R et al (1991); Canadian Council for Refugees (no date); Diller et. al (1996). The production of graphical representations of inequality as a practice is drawn from the equalities field. Within feminist praxis it has been widely used to articulate the mechanisms of gendered violence.

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Museums Association Director, Sharon Heal (Atkinson, 2018), more museums and colleagues are working to these themes and in doing so they are, "enhancing health and wellbeing, creating better places for us to live and work, and providing spaces for critical debate and reflection". Programmes of work in the UK like [Prejudice and Pride](#), [Disability Co-operative Network for Museums](#), [Museum Detox](#), [Space Invaders: Women Museum Leaders](#), [Network for Change](#) and [Museum Transformers](#) are deconstructing systems of inequality and driving egalitarian action.

By virtue of their methods and underpinning values identity-based grassroots museums like Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) have the specialisms that mainstream museums are being advised to implement (Lynch, 2014), and are at the vanguard of cultural social justice.

## **Equality in Progress**

The Equality in Progress project was developed in 2016 in response to a demand for information on GWL's approach to access, inclusion and representation from colleagues in the cultural sector. Creative Scotland cited the organisation as a model of good practice on equalities, and as a leader in specialist approaches to inclusive programming in the sector. This resulted in requests from Regularly Funded Organisations for advice. We felt a responsibility to support the cultural sector to build their awareness and skills on equality as this correlates with our organisational vision of influencing change on issues of access to cultural participation - which we read as symptomatic of wider structural inequalities experienced by people with [Protected Characteristics](#).

To date we have delivered development sessions to 120 individuals across 10 organisations including Museums Galleries Scotland. During these sessions staff in the sector told us that they needed guidance to develop; equality-focussed implementation plans; better awareness of inequality and how to address it; and the confidence to challenge 'roadblocks' in their organisations. With awareness from existing research that equality and diversity training courses lack longitudinal impact, and can activate bias (Levy and Green, 2009; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016; Kim, 2018), we developed a programme of organisational development using a consciousness-raising model (seeking to make people more aware of personal, social, or political issues). Through a process of critical and analytical reflection our programmes sought to link personal, professional and organisational values to encourage individual responsibility-taking; to encourage determination and resourcefulness; and to foster a greater sense of energy, commitment and

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enthusiasm for developing work that is aligned with values of social justice.

In January 2018 GWL successfully secured funding from the Scottish Government and the European Social Fund to undertake this six month pilot with five objectives:

1. Analyse the status of EDI in the museums sector in Scotland.
2. Conduct an audit of need for the sector in relation to EDI.
3. Scope methods of involving 'community critics' (experts on inequality as experienced in relation to the museums and galleries sector).
4. Produce a report that captures current research on EDI in the UK museums sector, and make explicit GWL's participation framework and define the effectiveness of our processes.
5. Conduct research and critical conversations with partners and collaborators towards a blueprint for activating change in EDI in the Scottish museums sector.

This research project responds to the need for analysis of the complex systems of intersectional inequality. As an equality-led museum we aim to address the cognitive skills gap around the mechanisms of inequality by sharing our frameworks, practice and ethos to support the development of 'automatic' thinking on access for all, as visitors and as workforce. The pilot will culminate in in June 2018 with this report and the *Disrupting The Sector Conference*.

## **What do we mean when we talk about 'diversity'?**

The term 'diversity' is widely used in the museum sector. It is important to explain how the Equality in Progress project understand this word in our practice, and in this piece of work. This requires a feminist analysis.

'Diversity' has been generally adopted without a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms of inequality. As a result the term has been emptied of an authenticity of intention as it is not informed by an understanding of how it is heard and experienced by people who are 'diverse'. As Sara Ahmed states, "Diversity obscures the issues...it becomes a technique for not addressing inequalities by allowing institutions to appear happy." (2017, p102)

Practitioners and theorists such as Museum Detox's Shaz Hussain (2017), Porcia Moore (2014) and others (Berry, 2015; Bhanot, 2015; Kyra, 2014) have unpacked the word 'diversity' as it is used by museums and as it is read by 'diverse' communities. Firstly, the term 'diversity' positions people with Protected Characteristics as

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'other'<sup>2</sup>. Othering is a well examined theoretical concept in the fields of identity and prejudice reduction. To be 'other than' asserts that there is a general default for all humans, an 'assumed neutral point' (Bhanot, 2015) which is white, male, heterosexual and non-disabled, and in museums we can add the norm of being middle class (Hussain, 2017).

When we talk about diversifying audiences and workforces we position this 'all-encompassing human' as the default setting. We centralise whiteness, maleness, non-disabled, heterosexual and middle class as 'normal' and 'standard', a position from where all other people will be assumed 'diverse'. From this position we (further) marginalise people with Protected Characteristics. We diminish their autonomy and agency as audiences and workforce. We establish a biased power dynamic which assumes that 'diverse' people are the lesser; that they are in *need* of the museum offer. Therefore this offer is passive, paternalistic and benevolent, and it perpetuates a hierarchy of knowledge and expertise.

The organisational hierarchies in place in mainstream museums are based on this model, which originates in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>3</sup>. This influence can be seen in every sphere - recruitment, governance, leadership, collections and interpretation, programming, audience and visitor engagement, and communications. This is what is meant by Autry's dictum that #MuseumsAreNotNeutral (2017), and Hein's assertion that "Every view is situated, a view from somewhere." (2010, p61). Political decisions have and are made at every level of the museum that centre those with power to the detriment of those without.

## **A theory of intersectionality and the holistic museum**

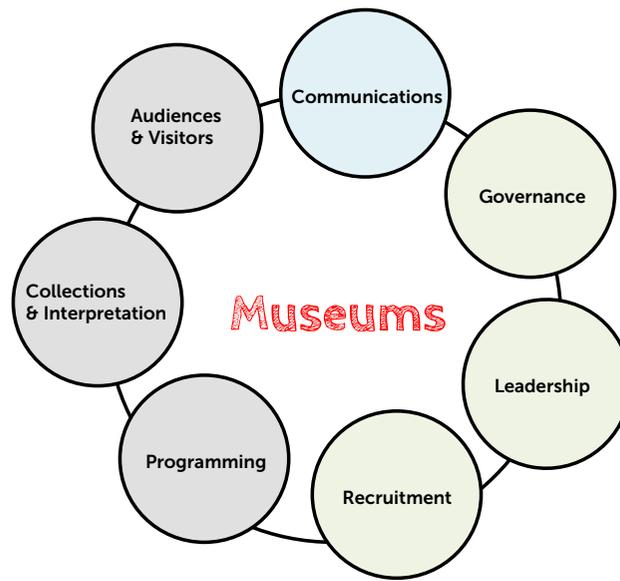
In contrast to the above GWL have developed a theory of the museum as a holistic institution where all facets of its work are interrelated. The 'access, representation and inclusion'<sup>4</sup> of the museum's users and workforce are intrinsically impacted by the organisational mechanisms across each of these seven components.

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2 'Othering' and the 'male-as-norm' principles are well researched by feminist theorists such as De Beauvoir, Spender and Wilkinson among others; and is prevalent in critical race theory (Moore, 2016; Ahmed, 2017), and disability theory (Mik-Meyer, 2016).

3 The first public museums in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries were built around the owners of the first systematic collections. As male, affluent and powerful they embedded the patriarchal, colonial structures which remain today.

4 'Access, inclusion and representation' is terminology developed by Shaz Hussain which challenges the use of the word 'diversity' (Museum Next, 2017)



**Diagram 2. The holistic museum**

The visualisation ([Diagram 2](#)) of the 'holistic museum' supports understanding of an organisation-wide responsibility for the equalities agenda. It is not an 'engagement' or 'education' or 'outreach' strand. Equality is everyone's responsibility. Messages are communicated publicly (intentionally or not) by every facet of the institution to people with Protected Characteristics, answering the question 'Am I included, represented and visible?'; and ultimately, this determines whether or not people will choose to engage with the museum as audiences, workforce, volunteers and Board.

## **Awareness of 'identity' in the museum**

In our research<sup>5</sup> we have found that having the mechanisms for awareness-raising on identity positively impacts action on inequality. When individual workers understand how power is established, enacted and maintained, practitioners are able to analyse their own identities (and unearned privilege), and those of other people. With this knowledge workers can contextualise the structural nature of inequality.

<sup>5</sup> GWL works across both the cultural and equalities sectors leading to awareness of the essential skills needed to deliver effectively on EDI.

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Diagram 3 visualises the identity groups that *all* people can be categorised under. These take into account all aspects of people's lives, and extend out-with the Protected Characteristics<sup>6</sup>.

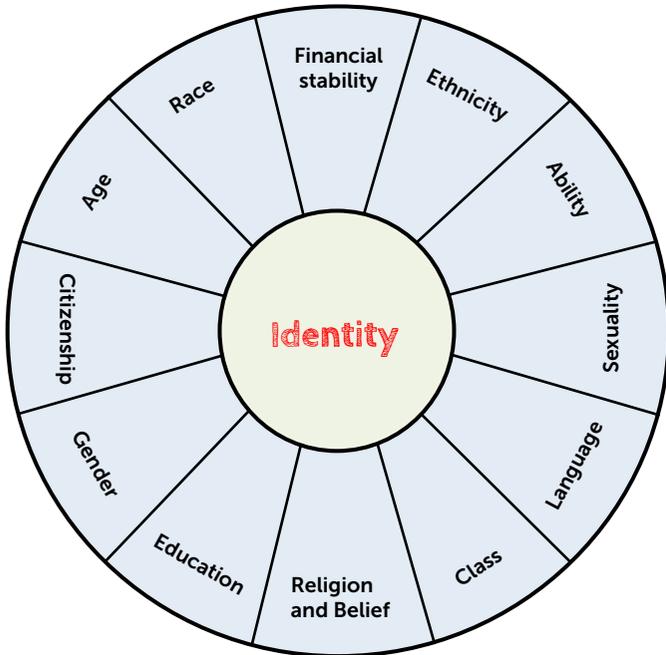


Diagram 3. Identity

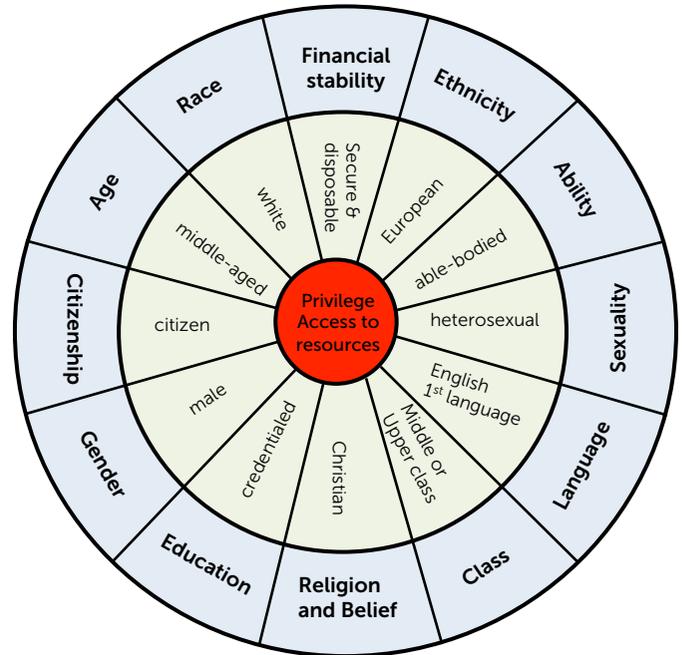


Diagram 4. Socio-political identity and privilege

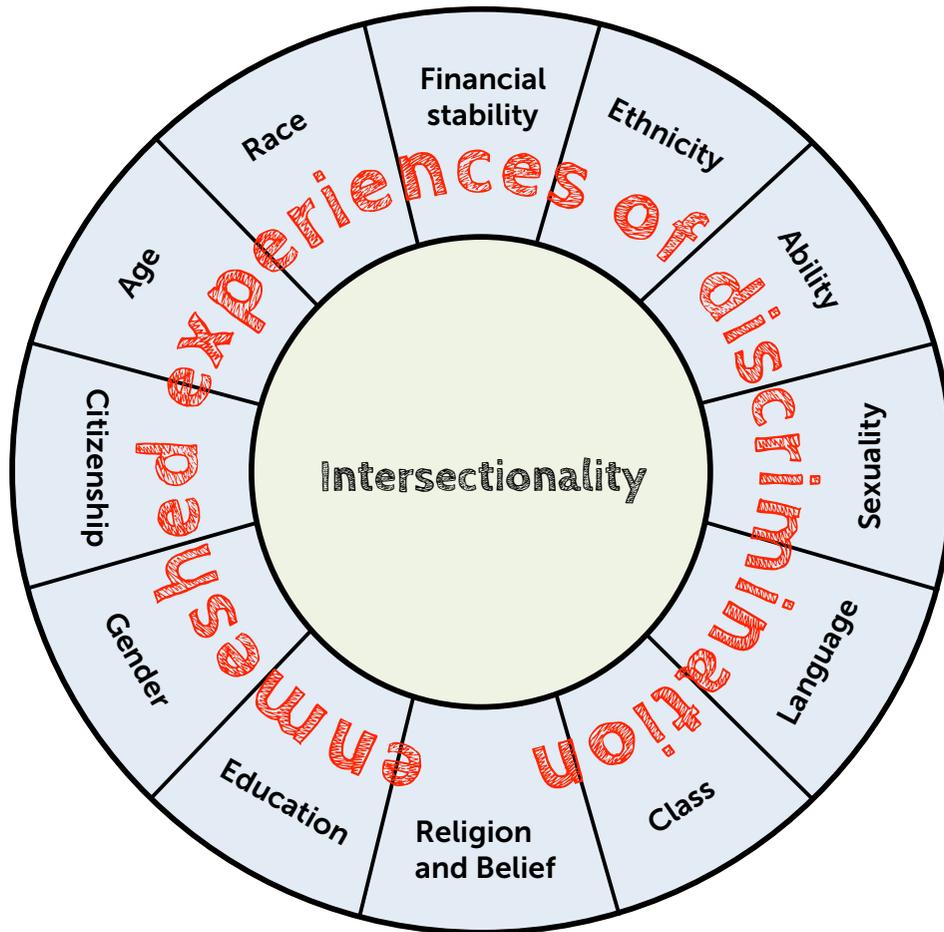
Diagram 4 shows our proximity to power. This diagram identifies the identity groups who have the closest access to societal resources.

Our own proximity depends on which group we are born into or acquire<sup>7</sup>. For example, a disability or long term illness, aging, losing our citizenship or economic stability. Socio-political identity refers to factors of identity that are exacerbated or alleviated by political policies, legislation or procedures. For example; LGBTQI<sup>8</sup> individuals' right to marry; women's reproductive rights; the legacy of slavery; or the disproportionate negative impact of central government austerity measures on people with disabilities.

6 Socioeconomic status is not a Protected Characteristic however the disadvantages faced by particular equality groups are underpinned or made worse by low income (Scottish Government, 2017).

7 Some aspects of identity are fluid.

8 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex



**Diagram 5. Intersectionality of socio-political identity**

**Intersectionality** (Crenshaw, 1994) is the study of multiple sources of oppression occurring at the same time on the basis of class, gender, race, sexuality, disability, age and religion<sup>9</sup>. **Diagram 5** shows this concept across all categories of identity.

## **Structural Inequality**

The theory of structural (or systemic) inequality asserts that unequal outcomes are built into our institutions based on hierarchies of gender, race (dis)ability, sexuality and religious differences. Our structures control access to resources and rights in ways that make their distribution unequal. In opposition the 'individual attributes' explanation of inequality posits differences in socio-economic success to the character, motivation and dispositions of individuals belonging to groups (Lopez,

<sup>9</sup> Crenshaw established her hypothesis to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences. She credits her hypothesis to the tenets of the black feminist lesbian Combahee River Collective in the late 1970s (Cochrane, 2013).

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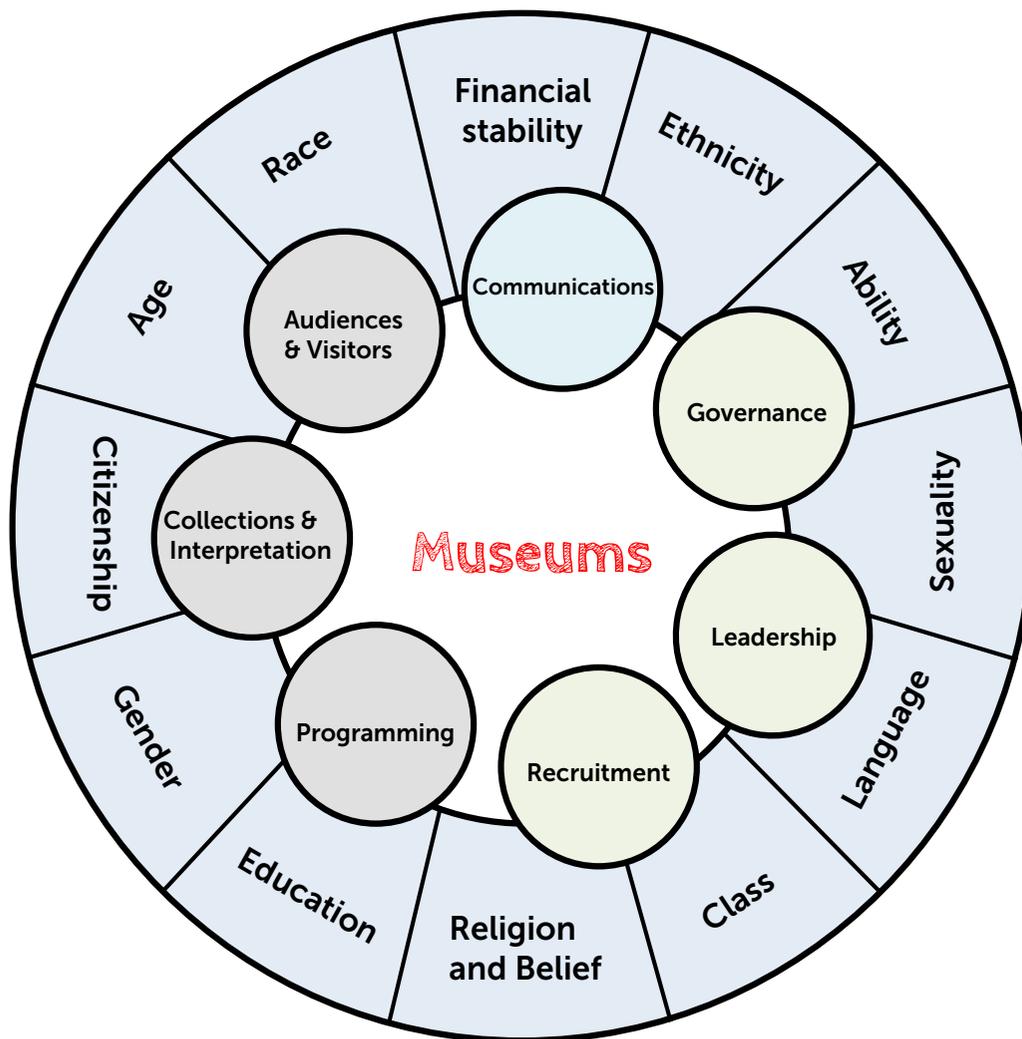
1998). This analysis is closely linked with concepts of meritocracy, the idea that success is a matter of individual application rather than opportunity. It is important to distinguish these approaches as recent research identified that "...those who are the best paid [in the cultural sector] are most likely to think the sector rewards talent and hard work, and are least likely to see exclusions of class, ethnicity and gender in the workforce" (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2018, p2).

**Diagram 4. Socio-political identity and privilege** shows that our proximity to privilege, power and the opportunity to access (and produce) society's resources is determined by the identity groups we are born or move into. Privileged (dominant) groups are in possession of unearned attributes that dictate the ease and influence they have within society by virtue of their race, religion, gender, ability, economic status, or sexuality.

By having privileged access to power they can create society's framework of laws, values and institutions including museums - such institutions reinforce ideas of 'otherness', innate differences and inclusion or exclusion. These constructs continue to ensure preferential treatment that benefits the group in power (maintaining the privilege), with the needs of non-privileged (oppressed) groups seen as secondary.

In our work with cultural organisations we support participants to analyse their socio-political identities and their proximity to power as a result of their own privilege. We emphasise the importance of moving from awareness to questioning, taking action, and not using privilege to their advantage. We encourage colleagues to examine the museum as a holistic institution (**Diagram 6**) which has systems in place that impact people with Protected Characteristics (positively or detrimentally).

We recommend that museum practitioners find out more about systems of oppression, and the social movements that challenge them. Our organisational mechanisms are a choice: structures that fail to ensure fair access, inclusion and representation of *all* people can and should be deconstructed, dismantled, and reconfigured.



**Diagram 6. Intersectionality and the holistic museum**

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**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION ARE INTRINSIC,  
NON-NEGOTIABLE VALUES  
THROUGHOUT GWL.**

**THEY UNDERPIN EVERY ASPECT  
OF GWL'S WORK AS A UNIQUE  
ORGANISATION SERVING THE  
NEEDS OF DIVERSE AUDIENCES  
THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND**

**Glasgow Women's Library  
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan**

# PART 2

## GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY: FEMINIST MUSEUMS AND EQUALITIES-LED PRACTICE



Glasgow Women's Library (GWL) is the only Accredited Museum in the UK dedicated to women's lives, histories and achievements, with a lending library, archive collections, programmes of public events and learning opportunities. GWL operates within a consciously **feminist** and participatory framework. This theoretical perspective motivates a cross-organisation commitment to **equality, diversity and inclusion** (EDI) and its goals as a changemaker based on the values of social justice.

GWL was founded as a **grassroots** project in 1991 in response to the erasure of women's historical and cultural contributions within Scotland<sup>1</sup>. Feminist, people-centred core values<sup>2</sup> are deeply embedded in the organisation, propelling its approach to equality and inclusion. Over the course of 27 years GWL has established a reputation as a unique, innovative contributor in the Scottish museum, heritage, arts and cultural sectors. As an instigator, facilitator and educator for change, GWL now stands as a recognised leader in EDI. Governed and run by women, GWL plays a galvanizing role in its community (of place and identity), nurturing communal ownership and collaborative practice where people with Protected Characteristics are centred, through which representative and inclusive feminist approaches are prioritised.

This report is a timely document of GWL's unique changemaking approach to EDI. In promoting a feminist value-led model of practice, GWL broadens, interrogates and critiques the concept of what a museum is, what it does and who it is for.

### **Methodology**

The documentation of Glasgow Women's Library's approaches to EDI was conducted by an embedded researcher working within the **Equality in Progress** project. This role was to analyse the functioning of a feminist museum, grounded in the '**holistic museum**' model. Research was gathered through critical observation of day-to-day practices; attendance at events; interviews and feedback sessions

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1 Glasgow Women's Library developed from Women in Profile, launched as a grassroots counter stance to the prevalence of 'boy' culture within the celebrations linked to Glasgow City of Culture 1990 (Patrick, 1997)

2 Glasgow Women's Library's core values are: Empowerment, Addressing Inequalities, Valuing All Women, Learning and Development, Diversity and Inclusivity, Openness and Respect



with staff, volunteers and Library users; analysis of GWL's bespoke visitor feedback database (Library Out Loud); and desk-based research of GWL policies, strategies, and self-authored publications.

### **Feminist Museum Theory**

GWL's approach is underpinned by a commitment to foregrounding feminism and equality within a museum institution. Feminism within GWL operates as a commitment to paying critical attention to structures in society and the workplace that impact directly on the everyday lives of women; this critique is mobilized by proactively challenging power imbalances within the museum, both internally and externally.

Within museums, feminism has been defined as a reinterpretation, 'conceptual restructuration' (Hein, 2007, p32) and 'a mode of transformation' (Pollock, 2003, p1). Put simply, feminism in museums is about 'bringing people into the room' (Ahmed, 2017, p2) and, once in the room, they are able to speak, be heard and be supported to instigate change. Feminist museums largely came into being in the 1980s, linked to the motivations of **second wave feminism** to redress the lack of female representation and instill women's agency. These museums grew as an alternative to the mainstream sector. They spoke to a shift from typical curatorial and collection practices, to approaches that reconsidered how value is assigned to objects, art and historical memory (Krasny, 2013, p11).

Feminist museum theory intersects with movements for **decolonialism**, both challenge the vantage of museums as neutral and objective spaces (Rodriguez, 2017; Autry, 2017), urging for accountability and action on social problems (Fleming, 2012, p72-73). Many feminist museums, originated as grassroots and activist spaces, founded on theories of collective working, structuring and meaning-making, driven by the need for visibility and inclusion. Today, feminist museums work in a context where the importance of feminism is steadily being acknowledged and incorporated into the mainstream, coincident with and informed by the rise of feminist leaders and directors<sup>3</sup>.

GWL's feminism is intersectional; meaning that it acknowledges the meshing of different marginalised identities and the specificity of individual experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Its EDI practices have developed from this understanding. Within GWL, feminist museum practice not only brings a 'non-negotiable' foregrounding

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<sup>3</sup> But not without criticism (Wilson, 2018).



of equalities, but also sees the museum space as a site to explore themes of empowerment, ownership, innovation and proactivity – important characteristics for both feminism and for a sustainability. Using feminism as a tool of enquiry, GWL ensures that its practices are flexible, fluid and creative, and its strategies link to its role as a changemaker.

### **Glasgow Women's Library & EDI**

Glasgow Women's Library's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2019](#) was produced collaboratively between the paid staff team, members of the Board of Directors and volunteers, with added input from service users, and states plainly the organisation's position on EDI:

The principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are shared across the organisation, from members of the Board of Directors, the paid staff cohort and volunteers, with a shared belief in and commitment to the positive implementation of these values in our day-to-day work, along with constant striving for improvement. GWL recognises that our key aims can only be fully achieved if equality, diversity and inclusion drive all aspects of our service delivery and development. Further, we also firmly believe that the more equal, diverse and inclusive an organisation is, the more everybody in our communities and our country benefits.

Targeted objectives (aligned with [GWL's Strategic Plan, Business Plan and Learning Policy](#)) ensure that impact is measurable. The plan is a living document that is utilised in every sphere of the organisation's work. It is a 'robust, positive and achievable strategy that will support the organisation, and hold it accountable, in its delivery of the highest quality work to the broadest possible audiences' (Glasgow Women's Library, 2016). The document is available on the GWL website with evidence of where targets are being met.

### **Governance and Leadership**

Glasgow Women's Library understands that the progressive embedding of equalities within museums can only be achieved through a conscious structural framework that supports EDI. GWL's governance structure is a mechanism for advancing its EDI commitments. It is fuelled by a history of co-creation (Cornwall, 2008, p275) and the feminist commitment to a 'flat' organisational structure<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> "Flat organizations with team structures, in which most, or at least some, responsibilities and decision-making authority are distributed among participants." (Acker, 2006, p445)



GWL's model of shared leadership across the staff team, within an intentionally shallow hierarchy, nurtures individual professional expertise. It is evidence of its vision to 'eradicate the gender gap that contributes to widespread inequalities in Scotland' (Glasgow Women's Library).

GWL operate an open and transparent recruitment process for Board members where staff and volunteers participate in the application and interview process. The Board operates within the embedded and holistic responsibility for EDI in the organisation. The Board recently established a dedicated 'Volunteer to Board'<sup>5</sup> pipeline to support volunteers to join. GWL users, learners and volunteers are recognised as having unique insights, knowledge and awareness of the day-to-day work of the organisation. This strategic action aims to harness this expertise in shaping the future of the organisation. More recently, having identified a need for younger women to be represented on the Board, specific recruitment from its Young Critics programme was implemented. These processes have successfully diversified the Board whilst also building the skills, knowledge and confidence in governance of individuals with Protected Characteristics.

GWL's 'Creative Clusters' devolve responsibility and decision-making to the whole team and empowers them to resolve 'stuck' (often critical) areas of GWL's operations. Small, cross-departmental and cross-hierarchical action groups consisting of staff, volunteers and board members, with external advisors invited to supplement knowledge and expertise, meet to make improvements, with a focus of EDI on areas including 'Our Space', 'Active Welcoming' and 'Collections'. The Creative Clusters meet regularly to ensure that the evolution of GWL is a collaborative project with multiple perspectives involved in leading change (Patrick, 2017a, p193). Collective responsibility for upholding GWL's inclusive aims is also reflected in its rolling training programme, 'This is Who We Are', for new Board, staff and volunteers; and is delivered by different staff members. With a focus on GWL's history, values and commitments, these sessions place everyone within GWL as learners and participants in the development of a feminist museum practice.

### **The Team**

As a feminist organisation, the workforce at Glasgow Women's Library conduct themselves with conscious recognition of the discrimination faced by women in societal systems of inequality, including in the wider museum sector. The spirit of egalitarianism and enactment of 'right conduct' aims to counter discriminatory

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<sup>5</sup> The 'Volunteer to Board' pipeline was a strategic outcome in GWL's EDI Action Plan.



or prejudicial practice in the working environment. This social code of conduct maintains, promotes, and elevates harmonious relationships as standards that are essential to the well-being of the team. It is sustained by a sense of personal responsibility. The maintenance of a supportive and open workplace culture aligns with GWL's feminist values. This actively and affirmatively situates procedures, practice and behaviours within an equalities framework. GWL's EDI Action Plan stresses its objective to 'ensure that the GWL team is truly equal, inclusive and diverse with high levels of awareness, skills and knowledge regarding EDI issues across the organisation' (Glasgow Women's Library, 2016, p15). GWL's 'team' consists of paid staff members, the Board of Directors, and in excess of 80 volunteers, the use of this term and that of collective nouns used by individuals across the team to describe GWL across the team helps to reinforce the significance of a sense of ownership, opportunity and values shared throughout the organisation.

GWL's recruitment process is a democratic system of fair comparison measured against essential and desirable criteria. The assessment system is designed to reduce barriers and to ensure transparency. Staff, Board and often volunteers are involved in recruitment, providing a cross-organisational approach to promoting a fair, equitable practice. This same approach is applied to student placement and internship recruitment. With the imperative that internships are fully covered by grants and scholarships, GWL ensures that working within its museum is not reliant on individual means or contributes to the culture of unpaid labour for full-time work (BOP Consultancy, 2016, p212).

GWL rethinks the traditional criteria for museum work<sup>6</sup>, instead positioning knowledge and awareness of equality as essential requirements of all posts. Uniquely, the majority of the paid team comes from a background in equalities or the creative arts. The first museum and archive professional was recruited 10 years after the first paid post<sup>7</sup> was established.

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6 In contrast to requiring specialist postgraduate qualifications (Ng, Ware and Greenberg, 2017, p150).

7 In 2000 GWL received funding from Comic Relief to employ its first paid project workers for the Lesbians in Peer Support Project.



The entire team is equipped with inclusion and access expertise, which is implemented across every facet of the organisation's work<sup>8</sup>. Specific **Adult Literacy and Numeracy** and **BME**<sup>9</sup> development workers and projects such as the **Mixing the Colours** and **In Her Shoes**<sup>10</sup> conduct targeted work to alleviate barriers to learning and cultural participation with women who are the most likely to experience discrimination and prejudice.

GWL's internal work culture pays specific attention to supporting women within the workforce with the environment and resources to support their professional trajectory. GWL has an empathetic HR practice that is accommodating of childcare, sickness, and external commitments. This is demonstrated through flexible working options and pay parity; as a Living Wage employer; and in providing opportunities for skills and career development.

As an organisation borne from a volunteer-led project, GWL's volunteering programme is an integral mechanism for barrier-free access to cultural participation. GWL prioritises access for women with Protected Characteristics and works in partnership with third sector organisations<sup>11</sup> to recruit from their local community<sup>12</sup>. By providing an empowering environment of peer support and feminist consciousness-raising<sup>13</sup>, the volunteering programme nurtures the growth of women's social and cultural capital. As volunteers are facilitated to work with and get to know the collections they access further opportunities for consciousness-raising; they develop their own interpretations; become confident in leading tours; and gain specialist knowledge that helps shape a dynamic evolving organisation..

8 There is no specific engagement strand or designated posts.

9 Like the term 'diversity', BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) or BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) is problematic in its 'othering' of individuals and communities. We recognise that our use of the term BME, although recognised government terminology, is one that should be negotiated and reflect language that communities and individuals use to self-identify. BME is a reductive phrase that suggests a 'monolithic' identity for People of Colour. However, within organisations and culture today there remains a need for a term that recognises intersectional experiences of inequality in relation to race and ethnicity, and challenges the suggestion that access to opportunities are gained through individual merit alone (Barrett, 2018)

10 From 2013-2015 *Mixing the Colours* engaged diverse groups of women in discussion about the affects of sectarianism in their lives. Between 2016-2017 the *In Her Shoes* project heard women's experiences of hate crime, and as a result produced innovate prejudice reduction resources.

11 GWL works with a number of partner organisations, including but not limited to Mental Health Network, Calton Heritage Centre, Thenew Housing Association and The Scottish Refugee Council.

12 GWL is situated in Bridgeton, an area of high deprivation in Scotland.

13 Feminist consciousness-raising as a tool for women's empowerment grew in prominence during the second wave of modern feminist activism. By bringing women together and facilitating discussion, feminist consciousness-raising aims to stimulate critical awareness, and confidence, whilst helping women make sense of their own experience within society (Cornwall, 2014, 2)



Counter to the notion of volunteers within the sector as a 'resource,' (Metzendorf and Cnann, 1992, p263, 265), GWL's volunteers have an engaged role in decision-making and internal communications – contributing to meetings, and strategic and programme planning. Although some volunteers go on to work in the organisation the volunteering programme is not used as an unpaid access route to the sector – it is, essentially, a cultural access point for all women.

### **Collections and Interpretation**

GWL is the only Accredited Museum dedicated to women's history in the UK, and with both museum and archive constituting its status as a Recognised Collection of National Significance<sup>14</sup>. The collection consists of 3,000 museum objects, 300,000 archive items and 20,000 books.

Evolved entirely through the donations of thousands of Library users, supporters, and partners, the collection is representative of a range of intersectional identities and life experiences. Beyond the commitment to diverse representation within its museum holdings, GWL's collection is informed by feminist classification practices<sup>15</sup> developed by women's museums, archives and libraries. The creation of a unique classification system is appropriate for the organisation materials relating to women<sup>16</sup>, and supports ease of access for users.

The collection addresses the values of community ownership, both by proactively reflecting user interest and by defining what is valuable and representative of women's history (Golding, 2013, p20). For example, the **She Settles in the Shields** and **Speaking Out** projects collected previously undocumented oral testimonies from South Asian migrants to Scotland and those with memories of Scottish Women's Aid respectively. This process elevated voices and preserved experiences that would have otherwise remained absent from the historical record.

GWL's regular drop-in Open Archive sessions utilise the collection to explore the historical legacy of women's inequality. The weekly Story Café underscores the concept of the feminist museum as a site of stories and histories by linking objects to texts in the library collection.

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14 Recognised as significant to Scotland by the Scottish Government and Museums Galleries Scotland

15 More information on GWL's feminist classification system is available from: <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/2009/10/06/subject-in-process/>

16 Feminist classification systems counter gender bias and homophobia.



GWL's participatory model of collection development, interpretation and use extends to its curatorial practices (Feldman, 2017, p113). The **Community Curators** and **Women Making an Exhibition of Themselves** project ran from May 2017 to March 2018. 15 women volunteered once a week to explore the collection, research items, selecting pieces and interpreting them for permanent display. Working closely with the collection team the Community Curators gained specialised skills and expertise in museum practices. The collection is also continually used by academic institutions, artists and independent researchers<sup>17</sup>. GWL looks at the ways that research produced in the museum is shared and made publicly accessible for all people, (for example research undertaken on zines is incorporated into the programme of Glasgow Zine Festival).

Currently, GWL is in the process of developing a feminist, ethical collecting strategy with communities of stakeholders. This typifies a values-led feminist approach; it actively involves women in decision-making in the museum (Patrick, 2017b, pg86) with the ultimate goal of increasing fair representation of intersectional communities of women in art collections.

### **Programming**

Glasgow Women's Library's approach to programming is inextricably linked to its feminist values, which have innovatively grown an organisation that supports a community of users (Patrick, 2017b, p85). Programme content is a catalyst for cultural and societal dialogue and the enactment of active citizenship in a participatory model of adaptation, ownership and reciprocal learning (Lynch, 2011, p151, 159). It is a bold and expressive public statement of its EDI priorities. Examples include the **In Her Shoes** participatory activist production **No-one Who Harms Me Will Go Unpunished. I Am A Woman** in collaboration with City of Glasgow and Glasgow Kelvin Colleges; **Sex in the Women's Library** (a Wellcome Collection collaboration) produced a publication and a short film; and **Badges of Honour**, which resulted in a new collection, exhibition and oral histories film revealing women's personal and political achievements through their badges.

GWL's EDI Action Plan describes programming as integral to delivering 'consistently diverse, innovative and inclusive creative and learning'. This is demonstrated across embedded services including the daily ESOL classes and Adult Literacy and Numeracy project (Glasgow Women's Library, 2016, p8, 10). The BME development

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<sup>17</sup> To support widened access to the collection, researchers produce 'finding aids' such as blogs to share their findings.



project promotes a flexible programme of regular targeted events, utilising a combination of creative learning and skills development. Partnerships with local community groups ensure that resources are shared and long-term relationships are built. This is further evident in GWL's network for women of colour creatives, **Collect:if**, a project that facilitates opportunities for networking, collaboration and skills development for a community that experience underrepresentation within the cultural sector (Arts Council of England, 2017, p33) . The National Life Long Learning (NLLL) outreach team widens the reach of the museum beyond the physical walls nationally and internationally, programming workshops with women and youth groups, schools and HM Prisons. These projects ensure that the programme and collection extend the ownership of the museum and are active in expanding its community of museum users.

The quarterly programme is conceived through a democratic, collaborative process. Staff, Board and volunteers meet to pitch ideas for the upcoming programme and make decisions about applications for partnership working. These are assessed based on their alignment with the EDI Action Plan and GWL's core values. Programme-planning sessions follow critical reflection on the previous season's programme content through case studies and discussion on successes and challenges.

An ethos of community involvement, women's empowerment, social transformation and creative knowledge production results in GWL's innovative content. For example, **Open the Door** is an annual literary festival revealing the diversity and range of Scotland's women writers, and **Herland**, an 'irregular event night' distilling the essence of GWL; learning and pleasures, the historic and the cutting edge. Herland is a crucible for sharing ideas and making connections, where established and emerging women creatives perform arresting work in a supportive environment.

In 2017 GWL worked with over 200 partners in the cultural, heritage and voluntary sectors including artists, academics and activists. GWL's feminist and equalities values are explicitly communicated with partners to ensure that prospective content aligns with their priorities. Partnership working allows GWL to cultivate and showcase talent, and access specialist knowledge and fresh perspectives while supporting partners to foster their own EDI practice. This reciprocal practice infuses the museum with creative agency and innovation.



GWL's volunteer-led **Women Make History** project - **Women's Heritage Walks** and **Bike Rides** – demonstrates the extension of programming beyond the museum threshold. A range of Women's Heritage Walks developed by volunteers map women's social history in the streets of Glasgow and Aberdeen<sup>18</sup>. These guided walks, **audio tours** in community languages, and BSL interpreted tours have uncovered the hidden histories of women and have been shared with thousands of attendees over the past decade. Teams of volunteers participate as '**women's history detectives**' to develop each walk<sup>19</sup>. These teams research and contribute their own knowledge to build scripts that create a lasting legacy celebrating the women who changed our cities. Heritage Walks exemplify GWL's commitment to ensuring that programming is relevant and co-created.

The determination to adapt and develop the programme in partnership with communities of women is representative of GWL's values led approach. EDI is not a means to an end but a mode for ensuring constant relevance (Ahmed, 2012, p17).

### **Communications**

GWL recognises that every facet of the 'holistic museum' publicly communicates who is centred in the institution. Consciously targeted messages are disseminated through GWL's events programme<sup>20</sup> and its digital presence<sup>21</sup>. EDI is strategically embedded<sup>22</sup> in the conception of these communications with marketing used as a tool to remove barriers to inclusion in the museum.

The full staff team work collaboratively to generate copy for each programme of events - attending copywriting workshops to gain feedback from colleagues and volunteers. This ensures that the finished programme and website is assembled with a critical eye that prioritises accessibility for new and regular audiences. A collaborative approach to copywriting ensures that perspectives are multifarious. The result is a consistent warm welcome for all people to its physical and virtual spaces.

GWL recognises social media as an essential medium for outreach, involving new audiences and furthering its values-led approach to EDI (Hannon, 2016).

Digital communications align with the feminist characteristics of risk-taking and

18 The NLLL Project provided training and support for Aberdeen Women's Alliance to develop the walk.

19 Garnethill, Necropolis, West End, East End, Merchant City, Gorbals and the **Suffragette Heritage Trail**.

20 Printed quarterly and available online in audio and larger print versions.

21 The website and social media.

22 In the Marketing and Communications Plans 2018-2021.



experimentation (Patrick, 2018), extending ownership of the collection to an online community.

GWL invests in visually inclusive and representative communications through its Designer in Residence scheme. This partnership with Glasgow School of Art started in 2015 and provides an early-career designer the opportunity to professionally develop their practice in a feminist environment. The scheme supports the cultivation of GWL's communication aesthetics aligned with the values of EDI.

GWL's communications establish the organisation as a changemaker and influencer. Their 'Guidelines for promoting external events' serves as an example of its unique nature. The Guidelines determine if events-out with GWL correspond to their inclusive cultural access goals. Alignment with GWL's EDI objectives is established as essential criteria for cross-promotion.

### **Audience and Visitors**

GWL reflects the dynamism of its diverse user base who inhabit the space as creators, partners and learners (Patrick, 2015). GWL is particularly aware of its location within an area of high social and economic deprivation – Bridgeton is in the top 5% most deprived communities in Scotland (The Scottish Government). GWL's focus on eliminating barriers to access for all is critical to their feminist participatory practice. GWL is free to visit (including special exhibitions). Becoming a library borrower is free and GWL does not operate a fine system. When certain events do involve a charge, individuals<sup>23</sup> are offered subsidised rates. There is no stigma or judgement attached to discount requests and no proof of income or status is requested. A 'Pay it Forward' scheme further broadens socio-economic cultural inclusion. This demonstrates the understanding that people with intersecting Protected Characteristics are more likely to experience socio-economic deprivation (Scottish Government, 2017).

Anticipating a museum visit can pose a psychological barrier for people with Protected Characteristics (Gurian, 2005) (Mason, Whitehead, Graham, 2013, p171). At GWL the built environment is equipped with gender neutral toilets, lift access, induction loops, in-house speakers of community languages and staff trained to support diverse users<sup>24</sup>. GWL prioritises the needs of visitors with Protected

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<sup>23</sup> Students, people with low income, people who are unemployed or in receipt of benefits.

<sup>24</sup> As of November 2017, 86% of staff received Third Party Reporting/Hate Crime training, whilst links with the local Alzheimers Scotland has led to dementia training



Characteristics to ensure that they feel valued as long-term stakeholders (Papalia, 2013; Moore, 2014). Staff focus on the emotional, social and physical aspects of belonging. It is designed to promote flexible use, interaction and reinforce ownership. In facilitating a space for different users to congregate and connect (Simon, 2010) GWL proactively involves women in the design of the space and wider services.

GWL proactively seeks and mobilizes user feedback via Library Out Loud<sup>25</sup>. The #GWLHearsMe evaluative project<sup>26</sup> and corresponding national event #GWLNeedsYou (2016) specifically asked library users how GWL could work better to serve their needs. GWL's strategic mechanisms and programme of work responded to feedback from communities of women from across Scotland, for example extending its opening hours and timetable of events throughout the week and at weekends; recognising that finding time can be a barrier to visiting museums and cultural spaces (Cornwall, 2008, p279). The initiative saw a prevalence of 'friendly' and 'welcoming' user experiences, and emphasised the visitor desire for a broad definition of the service provision.

GWL is built on the values of feminist participation and is committed to being an educator, facilitator and changemaker in visitor experience both internally and externally. GWL's volunteer-led group Seeing Things supports access to cultural spaces out-with GWL. The project removes barriers to cultural engagement by supporting women who have felt excluded from arts and culture to attend exhibitions and events nationally. The group actively engage in some of Glasgow and Scotland's most prominent cultural events such as the Turner Prize (at Glasgow Tramway); the Scottish Queer International Film Festival; Glasgow International Festival; Edinburgh Book Festival and major exhibitions at the Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art. All of the women involved have been supported and encouraged to think and write critically about the work they see. This project exemplifies GWL's approach to access, inclusion and representation; fostering feelings of belonging and ownership of public cultural spaces.

### **Conclusion – Women's Museums**

At Glasgow Women's Library equality, diversity and inclusion is approached holistically throughout the organisation. It is of critical relevance, embedding responsibility for access at the core of all practices, structures, policies and

<sup>25</sup> GWL's bespoke monitoring system for visitor feedback.

<sup>26</sup> The project ran during 2015 and 2016.



decisions. GWL's approach is intrinsically linked to its feminist values and mission as a changemaker. This has motivated the museum's development from its grassroots origins to its contemporary status as a sector leader in EDI. A values-led approach drives their participatory and collaborative museum practice. This practice frames the museum as a space for opportunity, dialogue and action for all. GWL positions itself within contemporary feminist movements for social change, and in correspondence with women's museums across the world.

Women's museums, consciously feminist or not, are models of practice that are inherently rooted in equalities goals, language and actions. Women's museums share a commitment to flexible practice, rethinking institutional structures, partnership working, and the communal ownership; placing representation and inclusion at the core of the organisation's functions and purpose. As GWL has grown, its links to other women's museums have placed it within a global conversation on innovating contemporary museum practice.<sup>27</sup>

This research documents GWL's equalities priorities and their enactment across the organisation, demonstrating the rationale of the 'holistic museum' approach to EDI. GWL's EDI Action Plan is a strategic mechanism for the organisation's core priorities.

In the wider sectoral drive for fair access, representation and inclusion GWL is cited as a model of good practice. The organisation, its workforce, leaders and Board are committed to having conversations, listening, adapting and evolving to challenge the barriers to the cultural resources that belong to all of us.

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<sup>27</sup> Glasgow Women's Library was involved in the KnowHow project, establishing a network of over 400 women's libraries around the world, and has strong links with European feminist knowledge centres, such as Atria in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. GWL has also encouraged knowledge exchange with women's museums in Europe, such as with the Frauenmuseum in Furth, Germany and the Kvindemu-seet in Aarhus, Denmark.



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## PART 2

### GLASGOW WOMEN'S LIBRARY: FEMINIST MUSEUMS AND EQUALITIES-LED PRACTICE



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UNPACK  
THE METHODS FOR  
ESTABLISHING  
& MAINTAINING  
SYSTEMS OF  
INEQUALITY

# PART 3



## ANALYSING SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY IN THE MUSEUM

Reports dating back to the late 1990s expound the manifold benefits of 'diversifying'<sup>1</sup> the workforce, and make the case for change from cultural, business, strategic, legal, and social justice perspectives. Yet equality measures have failed to take hold at an impactful, strategic level in museums.

Sectoral action to address and combat organisational inequality has taken the form of toolkits, affirmative action schemes<sup>2</sup>, training and knowledge exchange conferences. Surveys and longitudinal analysis reports like Character Matters (BOP, 2016) and Valuing Diversity: The Case for Inclusive Museums (Museums Association, 2016) uncovered overt and covert experiences of prejudice and hostility against marginalised identity groups going some way towards gathering information about the organisational environments that 'diverse' people are working in, trying to gain entry into, or leaving behind.

The Museum Association's Diversify report (2013) recommended a broadening of our idea of 'diversity' as a term and concept, to enable a better understanding of the invisible dimensions of inequality and interconnected relationship with organisational structures, values and processes; and a commitment to fully embracing the ethical case for change (not just an acknowledgement of the economic or business case).

A key aim of the Character Matters Delivery Plan 2018-20 (Museums Association, 2018) is to 'Develop organisational culture: to create the conditions to support individuals and achieve a diverse, skilled workforce'. This acknowledges that current conditions of organisational culture are in need of transformation: We locate this squarely as a consequence of current structures of authority.

Meaningful and sustainable transformation requires an analysis of structural inequality that is adept enough to address the complexity of how inequality is produced, maintained and reproduced in museum systems. This analysis must also

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1 Our [introductory chapter](#) explores the problematic nature of the terms 'diversifying' and 'diversity'. In acknowledgement of this we have used single quotation marks where we use these terms.

2 Including HLF Skills for the Future; Creative & Cultural Skills Creative Employment Programme; ACE Changemakers; Diversify; Bill Kirby traineeships; Support and Challenge; Culture Change, Dynamism and Diversity; Working Wonders: A Workforce Action Plan.



come from an **intersectional** perspective - enabling us to consider and address the experiences of multiple sources of oppression on the basis of class, gender, race, sexuality, disability, age and religion.

**"OUR MOVEMENTS FOR CHANGE ARE LESS LIKELY TO FRACTURE IF WE INCREASE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW IDENTITIES AND POWER WORK TOGETHER."** Kimberlé Crenshaw, 2015

In this chapter we respond to this need by putting forward US sociologist Joan Acker's conceptual framework<sup>3</sup> of '**inequality regimes**' (2006, p441), to produce knowledge on how inequality is generated at an organisational level in museums as a system of choice.

### **Theoretical rationale**

Acker's theories of organisational inequality have previously been used to analyse the public and private sectors (Healy et al, 2011; Acker, 2006). In a museum context her framework provides an analytical approach to support our understanding of the creation and perpetuation of inequalities in organisations, aiding us in identifying complex inequality-producing practices at all levels, and their locations in museums' structural processes.

In doing so we provide an intersectional feminist analysis of the organisational systems in action, identify the barriers to enacting equality, and establish the areas that are in need of targeted action.

### **The impact of existing organisational systems of inequality**

It is well documented in a plethora of reports<sup>4</sup> that regimes of inequality exist for people with Protected Characteristics entering into (and remaining in) the museum workforce. This data predominantly covers England rather than the UK as a whole but as an overview it shows that:

- 60% of the museum workforce is women (Grijpstra, 2018; Schwarzer, 2010), who on average earn less than men in the sector and are less likely to hold senior management positions (BOP, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Acker's framework is informed by civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw hypothesis on **intersectionality** defined in our **Introduction**.

<sup>4</sup> Museums Association (2018); Arts Council England (2018); BOP (2016); Creative and Cultural Skills (2013).



- 2.7% of the museum workforce is from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, and their presence decreases with job specialism and seniority (Arts Council of England, 2018)
- 4% of staff identify as disabled (Arts Council of England, 2018)
- 1% of staff identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (79% of the sample selected either 'prefer not to say' or did not answer) (Arts Council of England, 2018)
- People from working class social origins are largely absent from the sector<sup>5</sup> (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2018)
- Many in the workforce have spent a significant amount of time undertaking work experience in order to break into sector. Over half of these placements were unpaid and many were for nine or more months. (BOP, 2016)
- 55% of the sector earns less than the UK average wage in 2015 of £27,600 (BOP, 2016)
- Over a third report an increased level of responsibilities with no corresponding increase in pay, meaning a drop in pay in real terms. (BOP, 2016)
- Rates of mentorship, coaching and job secondments are very low. (BOP, 2016)

### **Methodological approach**

We have structured a framework of regimes of inequality to analyse learning from recent workforce research reports, as well as responses from the Equality in Progress (EiP) project Approaches to Equality Survey and Senior Management Focus Group.

This structure is broken down into four areas:

- Recruitment, Job Classification and Wage Setting
- Security in employment
- Construction of the day
- Informal interactions and practices

Acker's theories of systemic power disparities, the 'visibility of inequality' (2006, p452), the 'legitimisation of inequality' (2006, p452) and methods of 'control and compliance' (2006, p454) are evident as crosscutting themes across these four strands.

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<sup>5</sup> The Character Matters Report (BOP, 2016 p12) highlights that "the combination of the existence of unpaid work to get into the sector, high levels of formal education, and higher than average levels of attendance at fee paying schools suggests that the sector recruits most regularly from a narrow strata of society."



## **An overview of systemic power disparities**

**“ 'Others' are not represented at a strategic level.”**

Survey participant

Access to power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes in the museum create systemic power disparities, and impact the strategic action of embedding equality across governance, leadership, recruitment, collections and interpretation, communications, and audiences and visitors.

Access to decision-making power is hindered by the steepness of organisational hierarchy<sup>6</sup> and a lack of awareness of inequality. Acker says that both racial and gender disparities in authority is greatest at the higher levels of organisational hierarchies (2006). This is confirmed by sectoral research, which shows that women, people of colour, and (extending Acker's frame of study) people with disabilities, people from working class social origins and LGBTQI<sup>7</sup> people are not present in senior or executive roles to any significant degree.

If people with Protected Characteristics are not involved in strategic planning, as Board, senior management or workers they cannot inform policies and practice with perspectives that go beyond the current narrow demographic of current individuals and teams.

**“There is a lack of understanding by the majority and a lack of willingness to engage with these issues.”**

Survey participant

We can flip this statement by saying that the lack of willingness to engage is actually a result of a lack of understanding. This may be unintentional, in that it is genuinely outside the parameters of an individual's experience and awareness, compounded by the invisibility of inequality to those with privilege<sup>8</sup>; or it is intentional and rooted in prejudice.

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6 Control over workers is made possible by hierarchical organisational power, and draws on power derived from hierarchical gender and race relations. (Acker, 2006)

7 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex

8 "The invisibility of inequality to those with privilege does not give way easily to entreaties to see what is going on. The intimate entwining of privilege with gendered and racialized identity makes privilege particularly difficult to unsettle." (Acker, 2006 p457)



**“The majority of senior staff have out-dated antagonistic attitudes to inclusion.”**

Survey participant

Regardless, as receivers of public money, those in power in museums are no longer in a position to choose whether to engage in opening up the museum to all people - or to exact intentional discriminatory exclusion.

The EiP project's Senior Managers' Focus Group reported the combination of steep hierarchies and a lack of awareness of inequality as significant barriers to change, stating that as workers they have a personal commitment to the ethical, moral and social justice case for change, but feel restricted by the management structures around them and above them.

Many reported that they were lacking the confidence to make coherent, assertive arguments for change. People wanted those at the top of their organisations to really care about EDI issues, and not just as "tick box compliance" (focus group participant).

## **Regimes of inequality framework**

### **1. Recruitment, Job Classification and Wage Setting**

Exclusion from the workforce is created and perpetuated by systemic practices, which begin well before individuals attempt to enter the sector<sup>9</sup>. Our survey participants reported (as current workers, volunteers and those who had left the sector) that:

- ‘Diversity’ in recruitment was being driven forward predominantly by learning departments; and linked to gaining funding, looking good on paper, and as a (flawed) method that is thought to lead to diversification of audiences and visitors. We know from GWL's approaches that engagement with identity groups is generally better received (and trusted) when delivered by a person with similar lived experience. However, when the presence of people from marginalised identity groups is not mirrored across all roles and positions of seniority, the impression is that people of colour/BAME, working class, LGBTQI and disabled people are only wanted for their perceived connections to communities.

<sup>9</sup> "Not enough children and young people would necessarily consider a career in arts and heritage."  
(Museums Association 2016, p14)



- 'Diversity Schemes' or affirmative action programmes which intend to remove racial and gender barriers are being used as a solution to attract workforces that reflect the population – but our survey and focus group participants reported that they are time limited, ad hoc, externally funded, not seen as equally important to the wider work in the museum, and are not embedded when funding ends. They also reported internal bias against those who did not have academic museum qualifications.

This speaks to people's experiences of navigating organisational cultures where they are regularly asked to validate their presence<sup>10</sup> on merit, or are accused of being a 'diversity hire'<sup>11</sup>. Acker says that diversity schemes support entry into existing hierarchical positions (2006). As a consequence people with Protected Characteristics are expected to 'fit in' to the white, male model, subjecting people (who are already at risk of inequality) to persistent, hostile interactions in the workplace.

"Many of those different people are then taught how to 'fit in' and play a traditionally white, straight and male role for survival and success in the professional work environment. The trouble is we're losing the different people because they aren't prepared to wait and balancing 'fitting in' and being your 'authentic self' is emotionally exhausting." (Woodfield, 2017) .

The weight of the structure you are expected to 'fit in' to is part of what Acker identifies as the internalised control of the hierarchy, which results in a belief that there is no point in challenging the fundamental gender, race, and class nature of things.

Managerial training pathways are also being suggested (again) to address the lack of people with Protected Characteristics but analysis of previous targeted schemes<sup>12</sup> show poor staff retention.

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10 "In order to navigate organisational cultures, people report needing to constantly articulate and demonstrate how they have achieved their position on merit" (Museums Association, 2016, p14).

11 Audience comment recorded at Museums Galleries Scotland's 'Inequalities: Bridging The Gap' Conference 2017.

12 "Well over 80% of participants secured initial employment in museums and some 60% of participants responding to a survey are working in museum management or on track to work in museum management. However, perhaps a quarter to a third of participants who gained work in museums will have left the sector within a decade." (Davies and Shaw, 2013).



Without targeted action on structural inequality, the desired effect of causing a generational shift in the demographics of staff will not take. Diversity schemes alone will not solve the issue of representation in the workforce, as they fail to address the underlying processes that are present in inequality regimes. Concurrent action is needed, which is both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'.

## **2. Security in employment**

Between 2013 and 2016 there was a shift to short term contracts in the sector. This is not new; it has been a growing trend since the early 2000s.

"The sector has become saturated with short-term contracts and over-subscribed internships. Highly qualified and experienced museum professionals face a revolving door of short-term contracts." (Patel, 2017)

This practice is an inequality producing method of ensuring compliance and exacting control over (an increasing number of) temporary workers who "have less participation in decisions and less security than regular workers. And, the resulting fear of loss of livelihood controls those who might challenge inequality." (Acker, 2006, p458). In an age of #MeToo this is a worrying development.

The impacts are also stark for communities. Our focus group participants said that projects were at risk of being ad-hoc and patchy and that, "Communities can be sought out for specific projects and then abandoned when the funding runs out" (focus group participant).

All participants had a desire for better understanding, sympathy and awareness from funders to equality issues, as funding timeframes and a reliance on project-based work set major hurdles, often meaning that a sense of purpose was lost. This impacted practitioners who were personally committed to EDI and required compromise on the quality of service delivery for visitors and audiences. This negatively impacts trust in the organisation. Funding timeframes also means that organisations work with groups they already know, rather than making new connections.

## **Occupational Segregation**

Current job classification and wage setting systems result in occupational segregation, the result of which is evident in the research. The roles available to people (at recruitment and promotion stages) are segregated according to the



'appropriate' gender, race, (dis)ability, class and sexuality, as determined by those in positions of power. Acker, citing Royster (2003) says that "Images of appropriate gendered and racialized bodies influence perceptions and hiring. White bodies are often preferred, as a great deal of research shows. Female bodies are appropriate for some jobs; male bodies for other jobs." (2006 p449).

Acker locates the origins of this in male and white superiority, and the belief in innate biological differences and inferiority across gender, ethnicity and race groups (and we would include disability here too).

**'Our museum is made up of male senior staff – [management] is generally seen as a male job.'**

Survey participant

In Acker's analysis of the private sector, women's jobs were grouped into bottom ranking categories, and assigned to the lowest wage ranges. The men's jobs fell across many more categories extending over a much wider range of wage levels. This results in a gender wage gap.

We know that there is a gender wage gap in museums (Steel, 2018), that the sector has an issue with low pay structures (Museums Association, 2017), and an issue with the over-representation of men in positions of authority and influence<sup>13</sup>. We view the museum sector as a 'pink-collar' workforce<sup>14</sup>. Wittman (2016) explores this, noting that "The rise of women in the museum workplace has also correlated with a rhetorical (and often actual) shift in the dominant role museums propose to play in society; from cultural authorities and arbiters to heightened interest in informal learning and community engagement goals." And she notes, "This work also has a history of being low-wage work or, at times, going uncompensated."

Further project research is needed on job classification systems in museums<sup>15</sup> to decode - using an intersectional feminist lens - how jobs are assigned to wage categories. As the Equality in Progress project moves into Stage 2, we will work in partnership with **Close The Gap** to conduct a thorough analysis of the sector as a 'pink collar' workforce in 2018/19.

<sup>13</sup> 19% of women in Scotland in 2017 were the Directors of major museums and art galleries (Engender, 2017b).

<sup>14</sup> Work traditionally ascribed to women.

<sup>15</sup> Grounding our research in women's historical journey in the museum workforce, which is extensively examined in Schwarzer, M. (2010).



### **3. Construction of the day**

Acker conceptualises the expectations that incorporate the construction of the working day in the "image of the unencumbered worker" (2006 p448); a person with no need for any flexibility in the organisation and typified as:

- A white man (to this we would add non-disabled, heterosexual and without religion)
- He is totally dedicated to the work
- He has no responsibilities for children or family demands, other than earning a living
- He is able to do eight hours of continuous work away from the living space
- He is able to always arrive on time
- His total attention is to the work
- He is able to work long hours at short notice

Acker identifies gender, race, and class inequalities as simultaneously created in the fundamental construction of the working day, in work obligations and expectations on workers (2006). On 19th March 2018 #museumhour hosted a discussion on 'Flexible Working Within the Heritage Sector'. Practitioners identified their needs for flexibility in the working day, illuminating how the narrow image of an 'unencumbered worker' particularly impacts women, (who are subject to the added burden of invisible work<sup>16</sup>); people with or who acquire a disability; those with physical illnesses or mental ill health; people who are neurodiverse; and people with emerging personal circumstances. Acker says that flexibility to bend these expectations is more available to high-level managers (who are predominantly men), than to lower-level managers, and that lower-level jobs have, on the whole, little flexibility<sup>17</sup> (2006).

### **4. Informal interactions and practices**

Informal interactions and practices in which class, disability, race, and gender inequalities are created in mutually reinforcing processes, are documented in the Valuing Diversity: The Case for Inclusive Museums Report "For people who self-identify – or who are identified as – being of a diverse background, the day-to-day experience of working in museums can be exhausting and can present regular emotional and psychological challenges." (Museums Association, 2017 p14)

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<sup>16</sup> Women still do the majority of invisible work including housework, raising children and caring for vulnerable relatives. Engender (2017a)

<sup>17</sup> One #museumhour participant drew attention to the fact that as a front of house worker she had no option to request flexible working as she had sole responsibility for staffing this role.



Acker says that “the interactions that re-create gender and racial inequalities are often subtle and unspoken, thus difficult to document. White men may devalue and exclude women and people of colour by not listening to them in meetings, by not seeking their opinions on workplace problems, or by not inviting them to join a group going out after work.” (2006, p451)

Our survey drew out similar themes from participants:

- **“As the only person who represents ‘the other’ I feel a responsibility to correct prejudicial statements. This is mental and emotional labour.”**
- **“As the only woman on the front of house team I experience sexism on a daily basis.”**
- **“I am subjected to jokes about mental health – which is something I’ve struggled with myself.”**

### **Recommendations**

- Make inequality visible through consciousness- and awareness-raising (not **diversity training**) and support the workforce to analyse and connect with their socio-political identity and privilege .
- Create a National Equalities in Museums Framework and accompanying Peer-Review Network.
- Diversity schemes should run concurrently alongside organisation-wide internal programmes of (in)equality analysis and awareness raising.
- Future work is needed to engage funders on the inequality-producing implications - for both communities and workers - of the current short-term approach to financial support for museums.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of the sector as a ‘pink collar’ workforce.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis in this chapter is the tip of the iceberg. It is evident that we need to do more to support willing senior managers to reflect on and analyse their own structures, and to provide a measurable peer-reviewed equalities framework from which to externally affect change.

Acker says that a major opportunity for change on inequality regimes is the presence of broad social movements outside organisations, which agitate for change. Current



social conditions, and emerging contemporary social justice campaigns such as #blacklivesmatter, #MeToo, #genderpaygap, and #TimesUp are bolstering the drive and demand for action in the museum. With combined social movement and legislative support outside the organisation, and with active support from insiders, the drive for impactful action on inequality in the sector might just take hold.

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## PART 3 ANALYSING SYSTEMS OF INEQUALITY IN THE MUSEUM



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ANALYSE  
THE  
POLITICS  
OF THE SPACES  
YOU CAN  
ENTER

# PART 4



## EXPERTS IN EXCLUSION: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUDIENCE INCLUSION FROM GWL'S MUSEUM CHANGEMAKERS

People don't engage with museums for a variety of reasons. The People Culture and Heritage Report (Scottish Government, 2015, p7) identified a "lack of interest" as the main reason stated for non-attendance or non-participation in culture in Scotland; further stating that people without qualifications and people who live in areas of high deprivation were more likely to agree with the statement "Culture and the arts are not really for people like me" (Scottish Government, 2015, p38 and p42). Museums (and the wider cultural sector) have been quick to position these (and other) groups of people as 'hard to reach' (Brown, 2018). This report argues that people are not 'hard to reach'<sup>1</sup> rather museums are 'hard to reach' for many people and this results in disengagement from cultural resources.

### Methodology

GWL's approach positions women with Protected Characteristics as the experts and problem solvers on fair access, representation and inclusion in museums. By supporting critical analysis of their own experiences of exclusion, we recognise the valuable, critical work being undertaken on a daily basis by people experiencing inequality and discrimination. This approach also reveals what Sara Ahmed calls the "embodied experience of power" (2017, p10), in which women are "building theory from the description of not being accommodated in the world." (2017, p12)

GWL's method of feminist participatory practice is embedded in the fact that as practitioners we don't 'do' equality 'to' or 'for' people. We recognise our privileged position as practitioners who have already gained access to the organisations we work in, and the resources and the benefits that go along with this: we recognise that we inhabit a position of power<sup>2</sup>. With our awareness firmly rooted in an analysis of our own privilege, we work with an understanding of the ways that women are negatively impacted by **structural inequality**. Our role is to create clear pathways for women who are restricted from increasing their social, cultural and economic capital, to access societal resources and their means of production.

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1 When we position people (who are already subject to discrimination) as 'hard to reach' we problematise them, asserting that they are responsible for their own exclusion.

2 Especially when we hold senior roles within these organisations.

## PART 4

### EXPERTS IN EXCLUSION: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUDIENCE INCLUSION FROM GWL'S MUSEUM CHANGEMAKERS

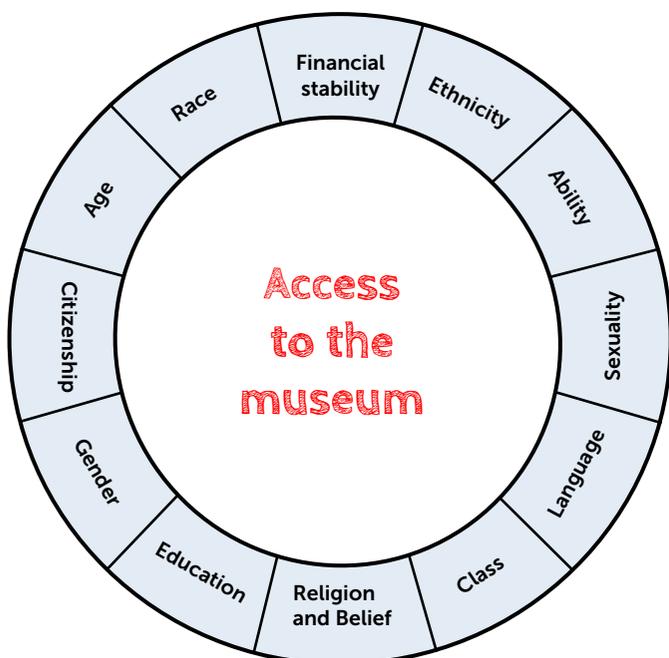


During this research period we delivered six Museum Changemakers sessions<sup>3</sup> which were run by a practitioner with shared Protected Characteristics or lived experience of inequality<sup>4</sup>. Participants had multiple Protected Characteristics (including socio-economic disadvantage and refugee status).

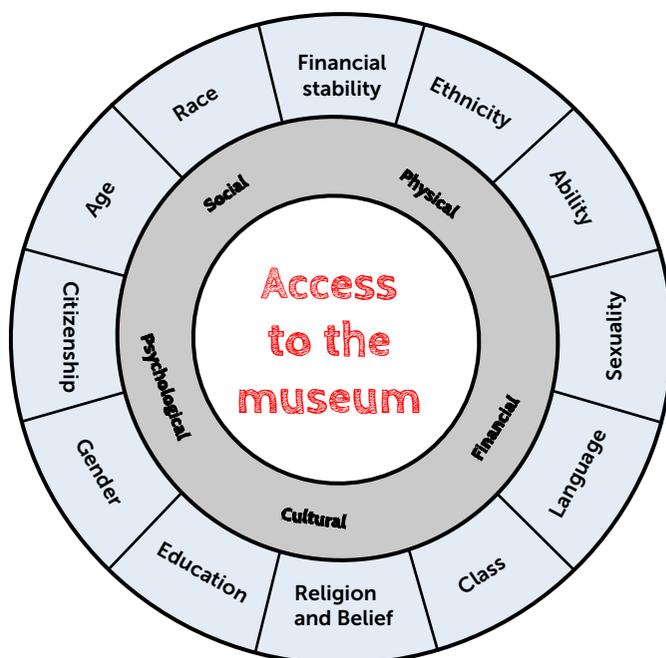
GWL's approach challenges the hierarchy of knowledge and the notion of who the 'experts' are on the barriers and solutions to exclusion and access. The information gathered (through facilitated critical questioning, analysis and problem solving sessions) articulates participants' perspectives and insights, utilising and unleashing their expertise and supporting their central role in a productive critique of the museum. The result is a resource of community-led qualitative evidence, with recommendations for wider, more meaningful and sustainable access.

### Access to Cultural Participation

Access to cultural participation is multifaceted, and fair access (or exclusion) is established well before the point that people choose to walk through the door. Access is impacted by identity ([Diagram 1](#)), and the barriers to access can be defined as psychological, social, physical, cultural and financial ([Diagram 2](#)).



**Diagram 1. Identity and access**



**Diagram 2. Identity, access and barriers**

<sup>3</sup> Museum-based and outreach sessions with Thenu Housing, Lapeyre and Lapeyre, Edinburgh and City of Glasgow College, with promotion through queer and disability organisations.

<sup>4</sup> This links to further discussion in [Part 3](#).

**PART 4**

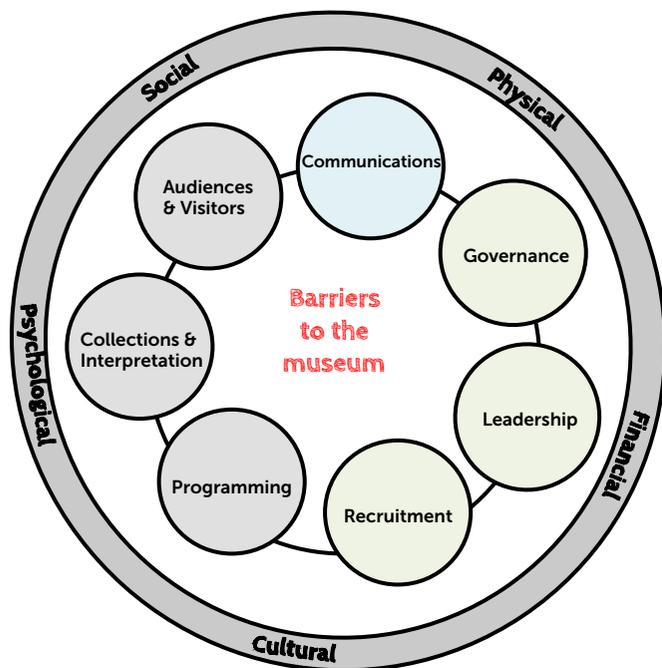
**EXPERTS IN EXCLUSION: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUDIENCE INCLUSION FROM GWL'S MUSEUM CHANGEMAKERS**



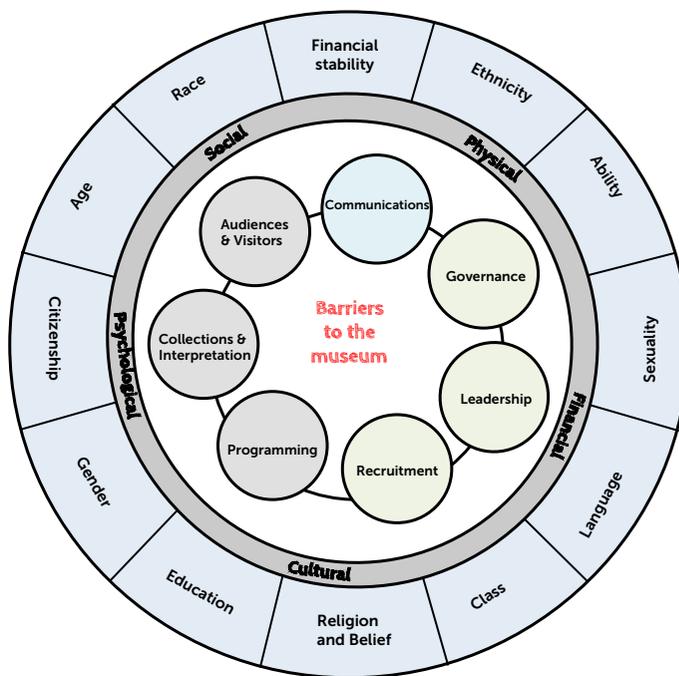
We define the barriers to access in museums as:

<b>Psychological</b>	Alienation based on negative perceptions of the museum or lack of feelings of relevancy.
<b>Cultural</b>	The spiritual, relational or dietary, language, communication or information needs of certain groups and individuals are assumed, not taken into account, valued or given weight.
<b>Social</b>	Discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, religion, and/or class and social-economic status.
<b>Financial</b>	Financial barriers associated with participating in or visiting the museum.
<b>Physical</b>	Physical barriers associated with participating in the museum - accessing buildings, specialist equipment, braille and hearing loops.

Our analysis of these barriers situates the museum as an holistic institution (Diagram 3) which either alleviates or exacerbates these barriers for people, within a matrix of intersectional identities (Diagram 4).



**Diagram 3. Barriers and the holistic museum**



**Diagram 4. Identity and barriers to the holistic museum**

## PART 4

### EXPERTS IN EXCLUSION: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUDIENCE INCLUSION FROM GWL'S MUSEUM CHANGEMAKERS



We used this concept as a framework to investigate the reasons that people might choose to not engage with museums; to examine what the reported "lack of interest" (Scottish Government, 2015 p7) is based on; and to ask why might people feel that culture and the arts were not for them?

Three overall research questions were established around how women with intersectional Protected Characteristics experience exclusion from museums. From the individual's perspective:

1. What are the psychological, financial, physical, social and cultural barriers to participation?
2. How could the psychological, financial, physical, social and cultural barriers to inclusion with museums be removed?
3. What does a useful and relevant museum look and feel like?

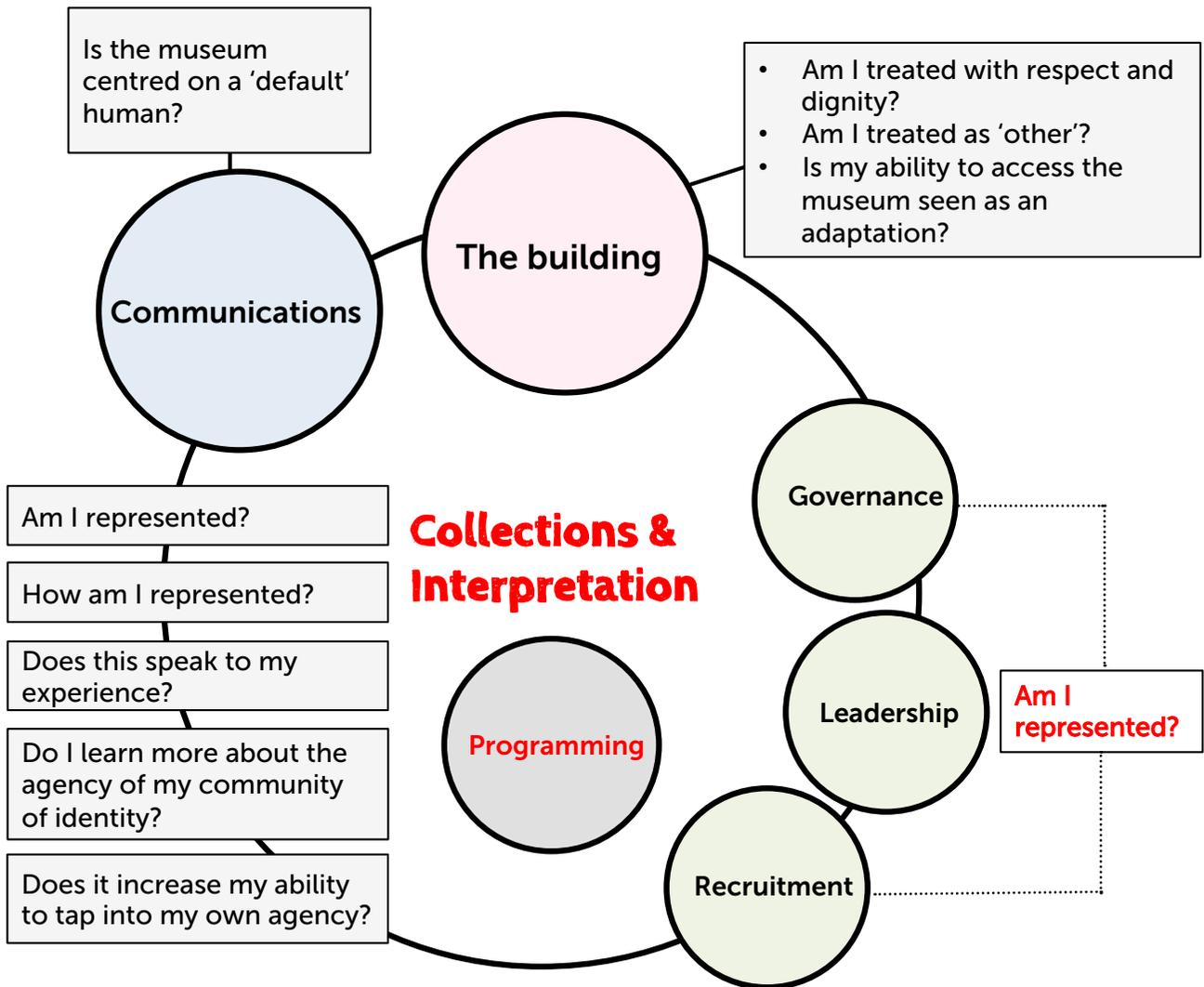
#### Barriers and solutions identified by Museum Equality Changemakers

The word cloud below is based on the responses from the sessions, providing an illustration of the dominant topics. Greater prominence is given to the words and terms mentioned more frequently, which helps illustrate the prevalent themes.



Diagram 6. Key themes emerging from Changemaker sessions





**Diagram 8. Where is my welcome?**

Diagram 8 is a visualisation of the critical questions informing perceptions of access, highlighting the complexity and intersectional nature of barriers. Analysis of the identified barriers and solutions raise two encompassing questions, which are identified in Diagram 8, we will explain these in the following narrative:

1. Who does the museum centre?
2. Where is my welcome?



### **Governance, leadership and recruitment**

Visibility of people with Protected Characteristics in staffing and leadership in the museum has an impact on perceptions of welcome, and lack of representation builds the preconception that the personal needs of those with Protected Characteristics will not have been considered. For example the presence of women and people of colour in displays (objectified in the collection), but not in positions of power; or the feelings of **tokenism** when staff with Protected Characteristics deliver community engagement programmes, but are not visibly represented in leadership structures.

### **Communications**

As mentioned in our introductory chapter, messages are publicly communicated (intentionally or not) by every facet of the institution, to people with Protected Characteristics. An analysis of these messages tells us who is centred as the target audience and who is most welcome in terms of inclusion, representation and visibility. These messages have a psychological impact, which is either validated or absolved by the social experience of visiting or interacting with the museum, determining if people will choose to engage with the institution or not, as either audience, workforce, volunteer or Board.

### **The Building (and the staff)**

Access to the built environment also communicates with audiences and visitors the demographic of the person who is centred by the museum. Access is physical, psychological, social, financial and cultural and the ease of access communicates whether people are welcome or not. A respectful and dignified approach to access is demonstrated by ensuring people can easily get through the door, use the toilets, are treated well and that their needs are seen as important and integral to everything the museum does. This says that they are valued. That needs such as wide doorways to move about the space freely, prayer rooms, freely available discounts, affordable food in the cafe or the option to bring a packed lunch, or being able to make noise are normalised and acknowledged as central to who the museum belongs.

### **Collections, Interpretation and Programming**

Representation is well researched in the field of museum theory<sup>5</sup>. Our Changemakers drew significant attention to this multifaceted and aspect of equality of access.

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<sup>5</sup> For example the *Rethinking Disability Representation in Museums and Galleries* (Dodd, Sandell, Jolly, and Jones, eds., 2008) ; *Gender bias: Representations of work in history museums* (Porter, 2008); and *Politics of Representation in Museums* (Tythacott, 2017) to name just a few texts.



We have drawn together their critical questioning as points for consideration and analysis:

- Am I represented in the collections, exhibition and programming content? Are the artists and makers part of my community of identity?
- How am I represented? Is the content passive (or offensive) in its depiction of the community I am part of? Is it a fair representation? Does it establish and maintain me as 'other'?
- Is there a truthful historical context for how and why the collection was gathered?; a rationale for why it is preserved, maintained and considered of value?
- Does it speak to my experience? Does it speak to the intersectional nature of my experience? Is it multifaceted?
- Does it celebrate me and my community? Does it disrupt the dominant fiction about me? Is it a truthful counternarrative to stereotyping and damaging rhetoric about me and the community I am part of?
- Do I learn more about the positive agency of my community of identity? Does it raise consciousness and awareness?
- Does it inspire me to find out more? Does it inspire me into action? Does it expand my consciousness and ability to access and nurture my own agency<sup>6</sup>?
- Is the interpretation intellectually and physically accessible, and sensory-friendly?

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the barriers to access, inclusion and representation conducted by the Changemakers identifies key issues that museums and practitioners can use to conduct strategic action planning for sustainable change in their organisations and the wider sector.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of all people, and taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential. When we access public money we have a civic (and legislative) responsibility to ensure that we are relevant<sup>7</sup> and accessible for *all*

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<sup>6</sup> Recognising the role of individuals as having the agency to be involved in the decisions that affect them; and able to define their own objectives.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of 'relevancy' in the museum is explored in detail by Nina Simon (2017).

## PART 4

### EXPERTS IN EXCLUSION: BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO AUDIENCE INCLUSION FROM GWL'S MUSEUM CHANGEMAKERS



people, and that we meet their needs by positioning them as central to what we do, and who we are for across our whole organisation.

Colleagues can supplement the learning in this chapter with the following questions:

- Do people with Protected Characteristics see themselves in my organisation and its work?
- Do our institutional policies, processes and practices sustain an organisational culture that excludes certain people or groups? If they do, how do I go about changing that?

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DO  
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WORK

# PART 5



## HOW ARE SCOTTISH MUSEUMS CURRENTLY APPROACHING INEQUALITY?

With the aim of understanding how equality of access, representation and inclusion is enacted in the museum sector, we conducted an audit of approaches to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) as reported by practitioners. The purpose of this research is to produce a snapshot of current methods, skills and levels of awareness, and to identify areas where change could be made to increase access, representation and inclusion of people with Protected Characteristics at all levels of the museum.

We conducted a sector-wide survey during February and March 2018, with two core research questions:

1. Are there embedded approaches to EDI in the sector?
2. Do museum practitioners and institutions have the depth of understanding on the mechanisms of inequality to affect change in their organisations and the wider sector?

We conducted our Senior Management Focus Group in May 2018 with the core research question:

1. How can we support and build the museum's capacity to plan for and respond to 'diverse' and changing community needs?

GWL's intention is to support our colleagues in the sector to align their practice and structures with Equality Legislation under the Public Sector Equality Duty; with the ultimate aim of reducing discrimination, and increasing inclusion for people with Protected Characteristics in employment and participation in culture, art and heritage.

This report confirms that while many museum practitioners and managers express a firm commitment and alignment with the values of equality, a cognitive skills gap on the mechanisms of inequality, and problematic structural frameworks stand in the way of change. This research sets a baseline, establishing where support is needed to take proper account of EDI in the sector.



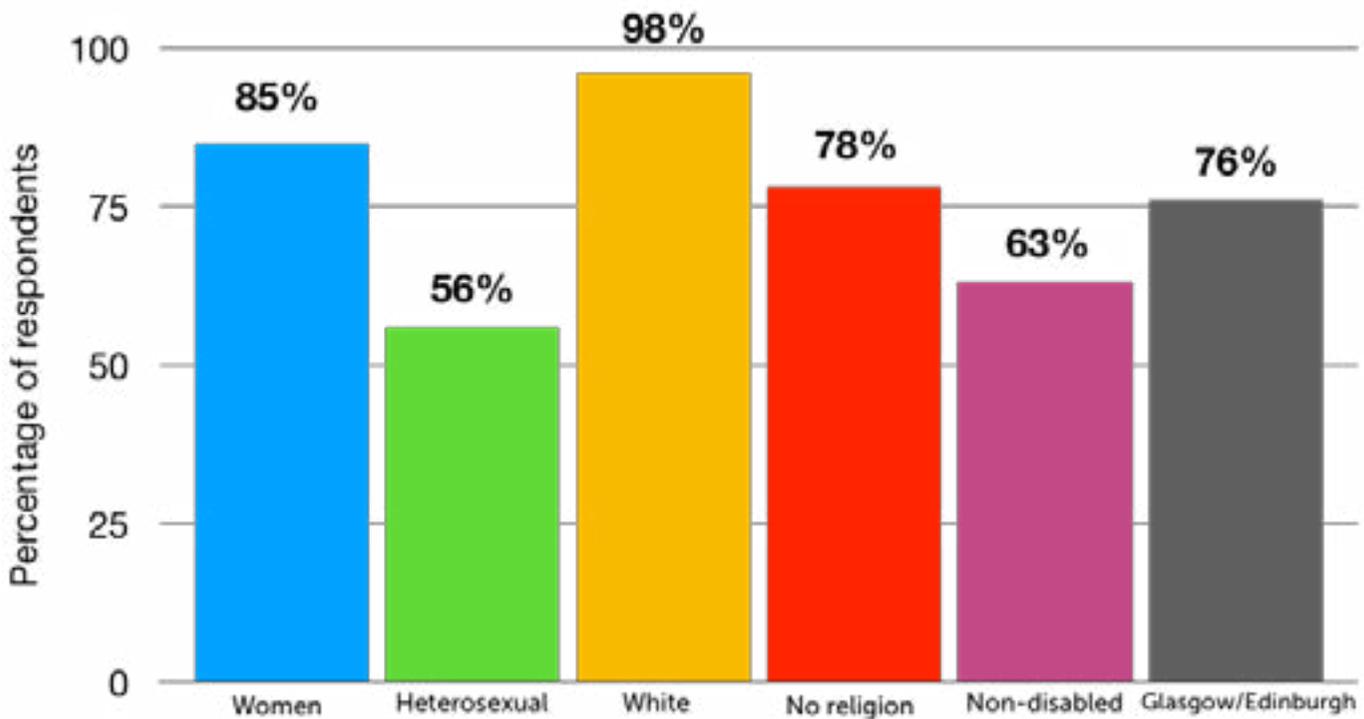
### Survey Profile

The complexity of the survey content required a commitment from respondents both in terms of time and levels of personal reflection. We believe that this impacted the number of completed responses and affected the overall amount that were statistically useful. There were 242 respondents in total, of which 52 completed the survey, 41 of those worked in Scotland - comparative statistics have been drawn from this group. We extracted useful narratives from the wider pool of 146 respondents who identified themselves as working in Scotland<sup>8</sup>.

### Survey Respondents

61% of respondents identified as being between 25-39. 85% were women (which is reflective of the sector) - only 6 respondents were male. 56% identified as heterosexual with a second significant proportion identifying as Bisexual (27%). 98% of respondents were white (again, this is reflective of the current state of the sector). 78% reported being of no religion. 63% reported having no disability, health condition or learning difference. 56% reported being single. 96% were neither pregnant nor on maternity leave. Respondents were predominantly based in the central belt (76%) (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1. Profile of survey respondents



<sup>8</sup> As opposed to the rest of the UK, and the world.

## PART 5

### HOW ARE SCOTTISH MUSEUMS CURRENTLY APPROACHING INEQUALITY?

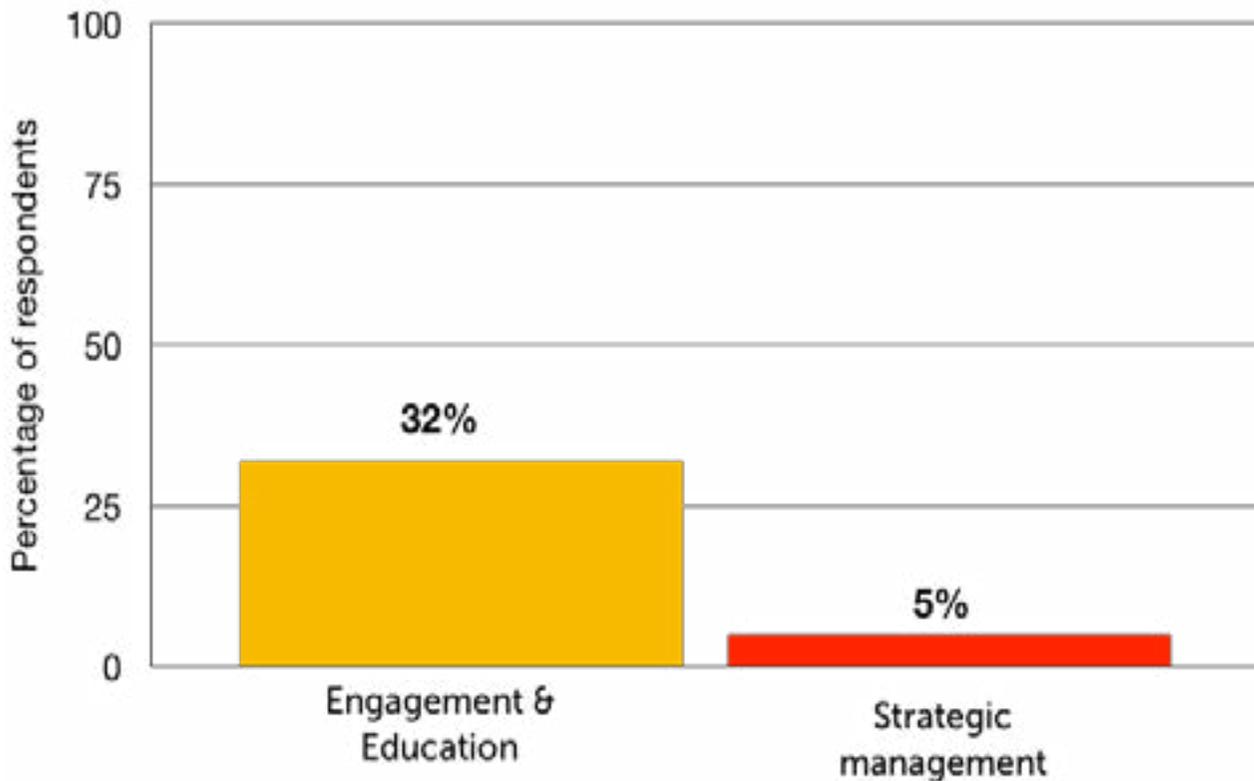


This survey did not set out to collect information on the social profile of museum practitioners, however, the make-up of respondents points to the established characterisation of the museum workforce as being female, white and non-disabled.

The largest number of respondents (**Diagram 2**) reported their area of work as Engagement and Education (32%) with only 5% reporting strategic management roles. Both survey respondents and focus group participants reported in their narratives that the remit for equality was generally associated with education, engagement and learning departments. "[Equality is] seen as a community engagement role." (survey respondent).

As these workers have predominantly responded, it may be that this assumed role has been adopted, or that education and engagement workers are more likely to be interested in or delivering on equality issues.

**Diagram 2. Presence of representation in areas of work**



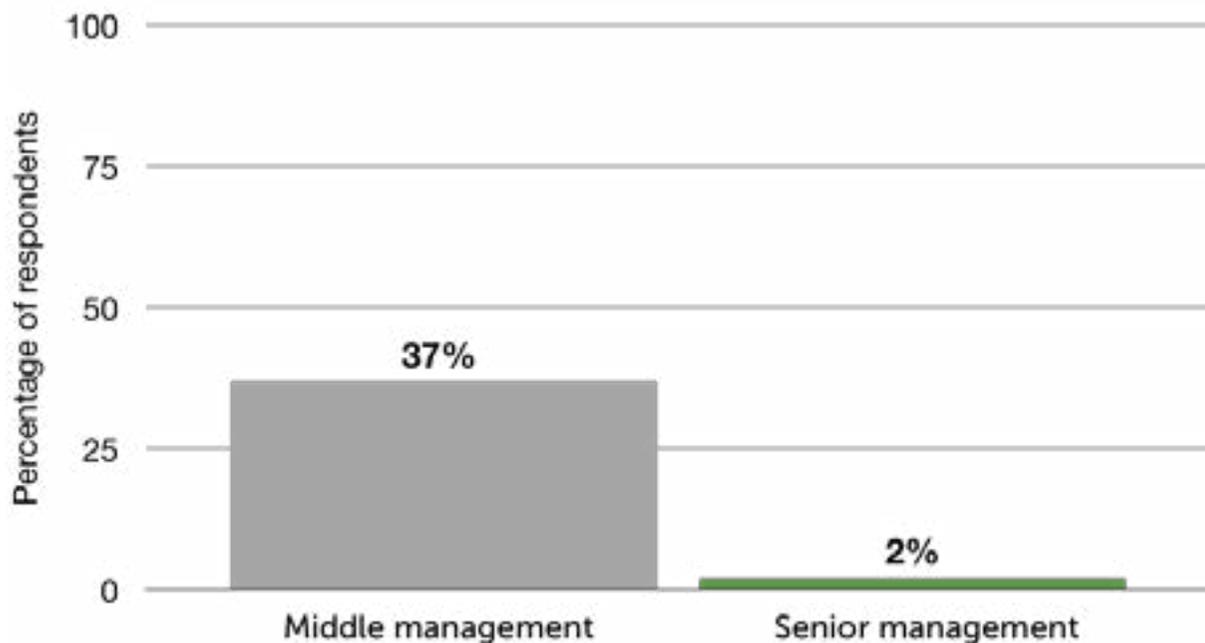
## PART 5

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Middle managers were the largest sample of respondents at 37% (Diagram 3), with a sharp drop off to only 2% of senior managers or directors. No Board members completed the survey. The Senior Management Focus Group event was established to ensure input from this group<sup>9</sup>. Participants with a variety of roles and remits were invited, yet there was a strong attendance from those with education and engagement remits, echoing the survey findings. All in attendance identified as women.

**Diagram 3. Presence of representation in the roles of survey respondents**



### How are scottish museums currently approaching inequality?

We asked Survey respondents and Focus Group participants to position their museum on an 'Equality Roadmap'<sup>10</sup> - a continuum from 'avoiding' to 'sustainable'. The aim of this question is to support museums to baseline their position. With this information we can begin to strategise from an honest position (Diagram 4, p61).

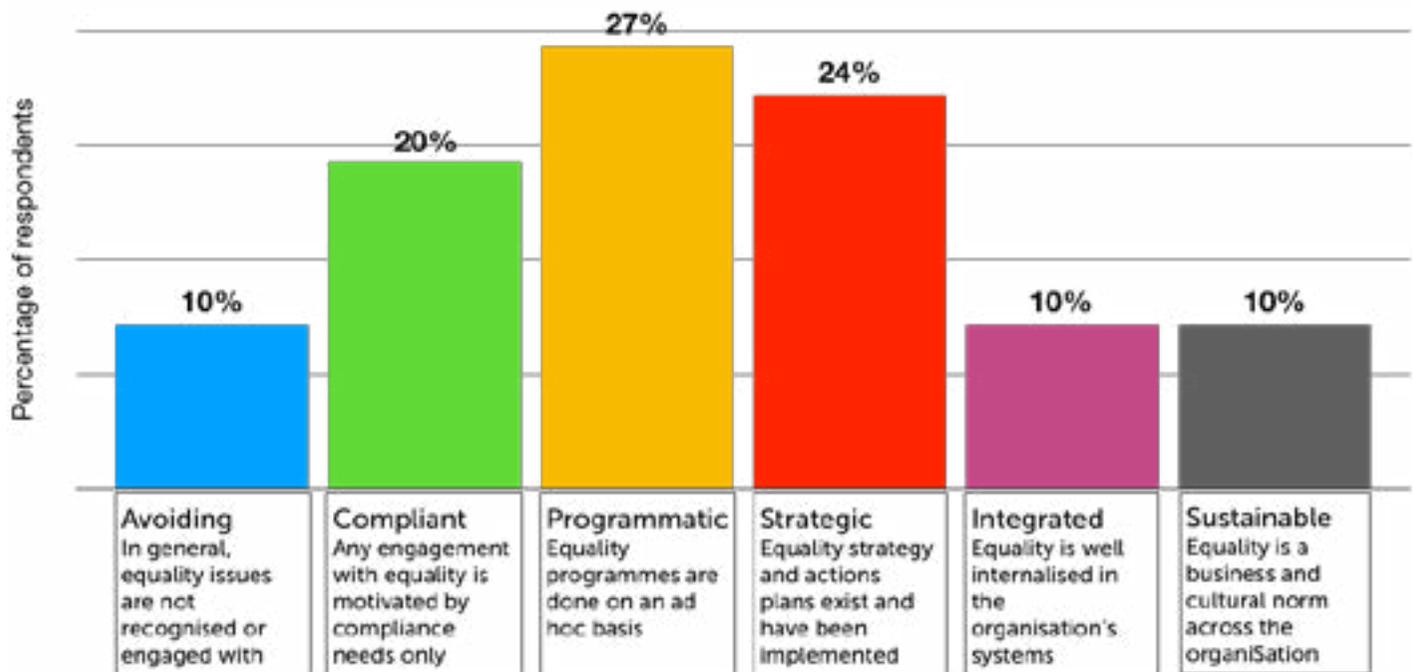
Focus Group participants reported being between 'compliant' to 'programmatic', with many saying that the desire was there but not enough action being taken. Many said that their organisation's approach to EDI was patchy; not shared across the board; with some departments doing much better than others.

<sup>9</sup> We directly approached a number of senior managers in the sector.

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from the *Gender Equality Roadmap model in Workplace* (Gender Equality Agency, no date).



**Diagram 4. Equality Roadmap: Which statement best matches your organisation's approach to equality?**



Some said that compliance (to legislation or to equality action plans) was the main factor, without much motivation beyond that. Where good work had been done it was not embedded in the organisation and was vulnerable to change in personnel. However, the feeling was that for many organisations, change was in the air. Many were planning large-scale capital projects and thinking about embedding refreshed ways of thinking from their inception.

With the recognition that a strategic framework is necessary to ensure action is focused and driven forward, there was support for producing (or adapting) organisation-wide, cohesive, strategic equality actions plans.

We asked respondents about strategic leadership on equalities (Diagram 5, p62) to analyse if there was a compelling and strategically influential message on equality across the organisation, if resources were being made available for capacity building, and if theoretical frameworks were used to analyse inequality<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Theoretical frameworks helps us to practically apply concepts of inequality. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017)

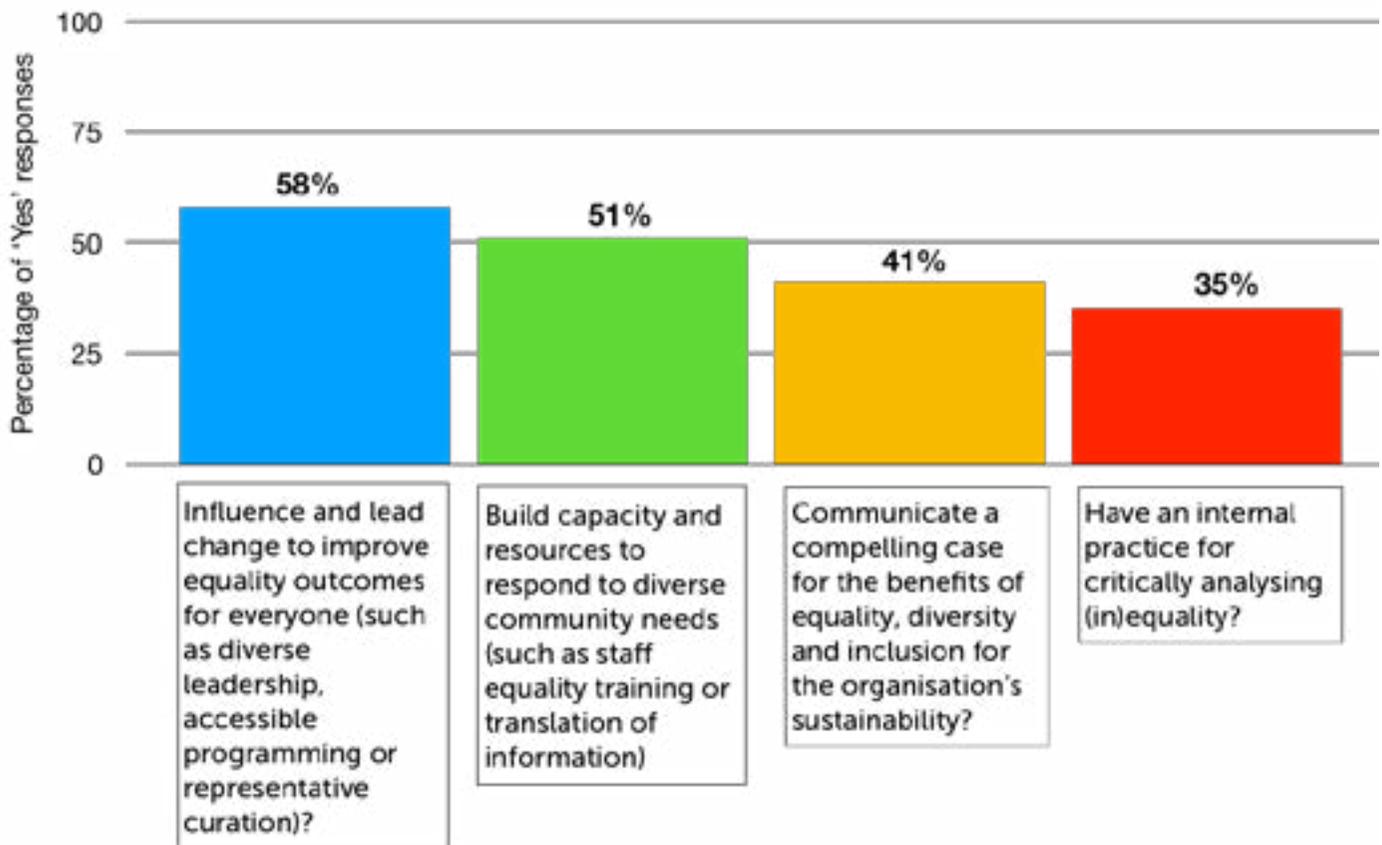
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Responses show that strategic leadership on EDI is not strong. Survey participants reported vague attempts at 'box ticking' but no real drive or commitment. Both survey and focus group participants said that, with very few exceptions, EDI was not prioritised by senior management and Boards, because, "...they are not the people who have experienced barriers from a lack of equality" and that "...most of the really important management positions are held by men." (survey participant)

**Diagram 5. How does your organisation lead on equalities?**



Participants reported the hierarchy above them as a major barrier to embedding EDI. This supports the need for strategic action that is embedded at all levels in the 'holistic museum'. Staff who had the will and motivation for embedding EDI work found hierarchical barriers "extremely frustrating" (focus group member). The Senior Manager Focus Group found the complexity and depth of structures above them restrictive, saying, "We need buy-in at an executive level. We are working in the area of EDI and take a sectoral role. There is a need for capacity in our organisation as the decision-making sits elsewhere."



One participant stated, "I worry that something resulting in a public shaming will be the only catalyst for change."

### **Knowledge and Awareness on Equality**

We wanted to find out if museums practitioners and institutions had the depth of understanding on the mechanisms of inequality to affect change in their organisations and the wider sector. We asked survey participants about their backgrounds, training and motivation to develop critical competencies - the essential knowledge and understanding that staff need to have to deliver on EDI to a high standard:

- Having a sound understanding of systemic disadvantage as it affects people with Protected Characteristics disproportionately.
- Having a rich understanding and intersectional equalities competence to respond to the needs of 'diverse' communities of identity
- Having effective mechanisms to enable the organisation to build strong and effective relationships with diverse stakeholder communities internally and externally
- Having a broad understanding of EDI delivery and emerging policy directions
- Having a sound understanding of the regulatory frameworks

Essentially, staff need to know what to do, have the capability to do it and have the motivation to drive it forward. As is evident from this research<sup>12</sup> equality-focused structural frameworks are the integral lynchpin to supporting staff to deliver cognisant, sustainable action on EDI.

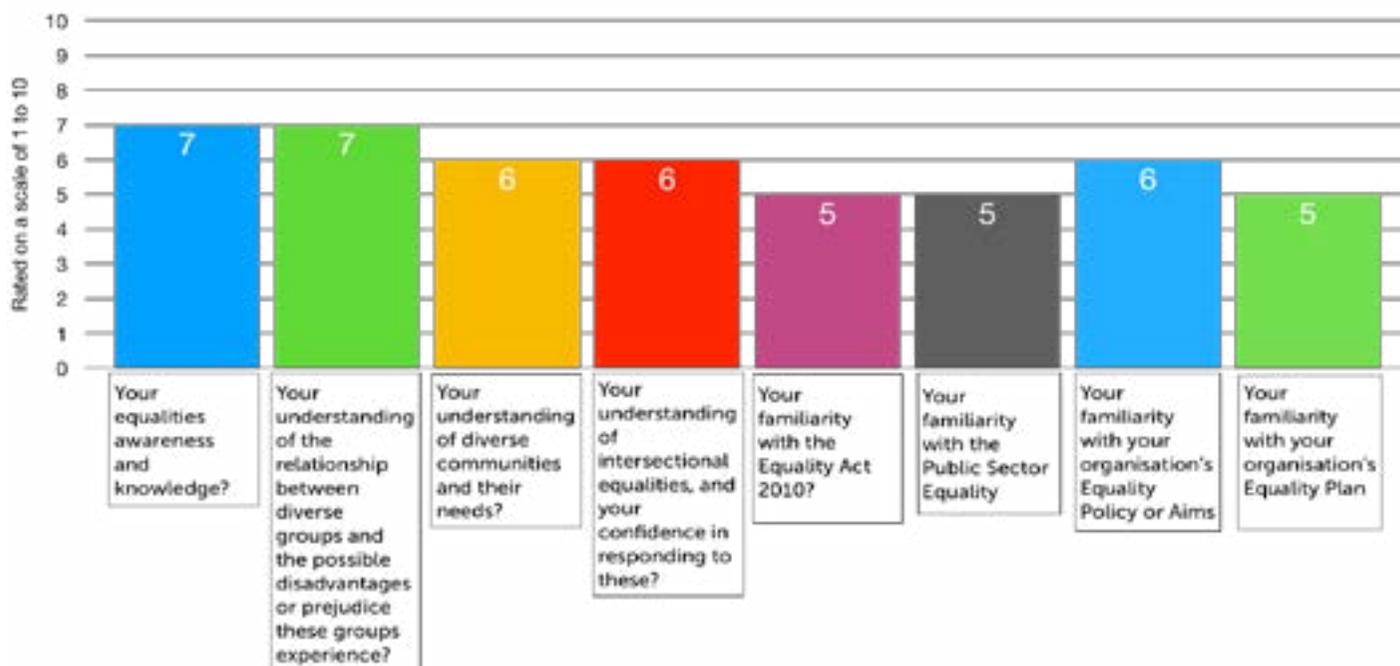
We asked survey participants to rate their awareness on a scale of 1 (none) to 10 (expert) on eight indicators (**Diagram 6, p64**):

- Equalities awareness and knowledge
- Understanding of the relationship between diverse groups and the possible disadvantages or prejudice these groups experience
- Understanding of 'diverse' communities and their needs
- Understanding of intersectional equalities, and their confidence in responding to these
- Familiarity with the Equality Act 2010
- Familiarity with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Familiarity with their organisation's Equality Policy or Aims
- Familiarity with their organisation's Equality Plan

<sup>12</sup> And further detailed in **Part 3**.



Diagram 6. Awareness on equalities



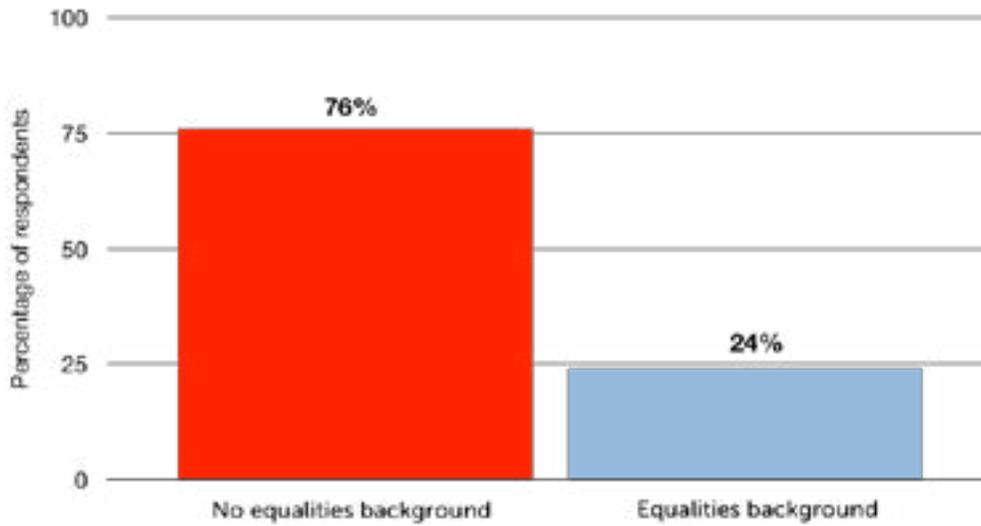
Participants scored themselves relatively highly in terms of equalities awareness and understanding of disadvantage and prejudice. This score reduced on understanding 'diverse' communities needs and responding to intersectional inequalities. A further drop occurs on awareness of equalities legislation. Overall we observe a skills and awareness gap in this small sample of the sector, and suggest (based on previous Equality in Progress work and research on inequality of access) that this provides a general picture for the sector.

The majority of respondents rated their familiarity with their museum's equality policy as 6 and their equality plan (where there was one) as 5. We discovered that almost a third of the respondents worked for organisations that did not have an Action Plan, or were unaware if one existed (32%). There was a great deal of narrative evidence suggesting that those out-with senior levels had poor knowledge of what policies or behaviours their organisation may have in place around EDI.

To further explore awareness and understanding of inequality we asked respondents if they had a background in equalities work, analysis or study (Diagram 7, p65) - have they worked in an equalities-related organisation or role, or undertaken formal study in a related subject? 24% of participants reported that they did have an equalities background.



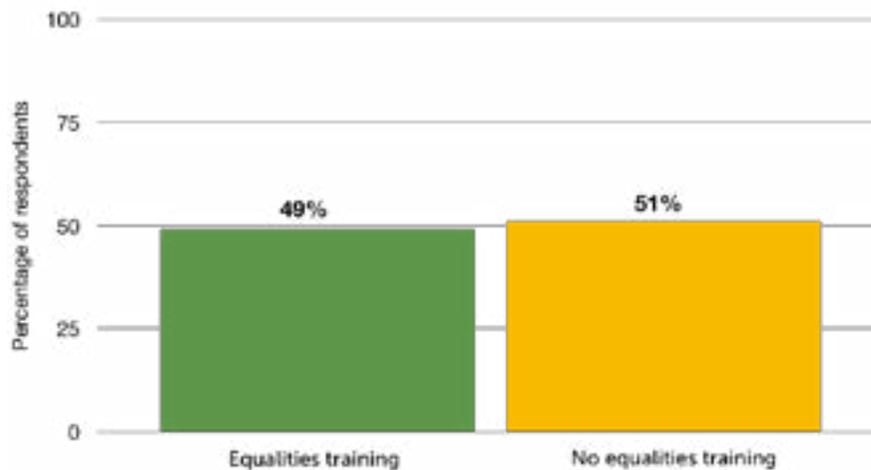
Diagram 7. Do you have a background in equalities work, analysis or study?



Further examination of the 24% revealed that 30% reported having worked in or studied community development, prejudice reduction 20%, participatory or community arts 50% and 40% reported 'Other', which comprised of policy development, gender theory, equality scheme development, race relations and refugee services.

We asked respondents about the equalities training they had completed in the past (Diagram 8), when it took place, and if or how this equalities training translated into strategic organisational change. Respondents were divided almost exactly in half between those that had undertaken equalities training (49%) and those that had not (51%).

Diagram 8. Have you undertaken equalities training in the past?



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### HOW ARE SCOTTISH MUSEUMS CURRENTLY APPROACHING INEQUALITY?



There was a lack of consistency in the frequency and length of time since training: one person stated that they completed yearly online training, others said that they had undertaken training in previous roles and others gave years ranging from post-secondary school to 2017.

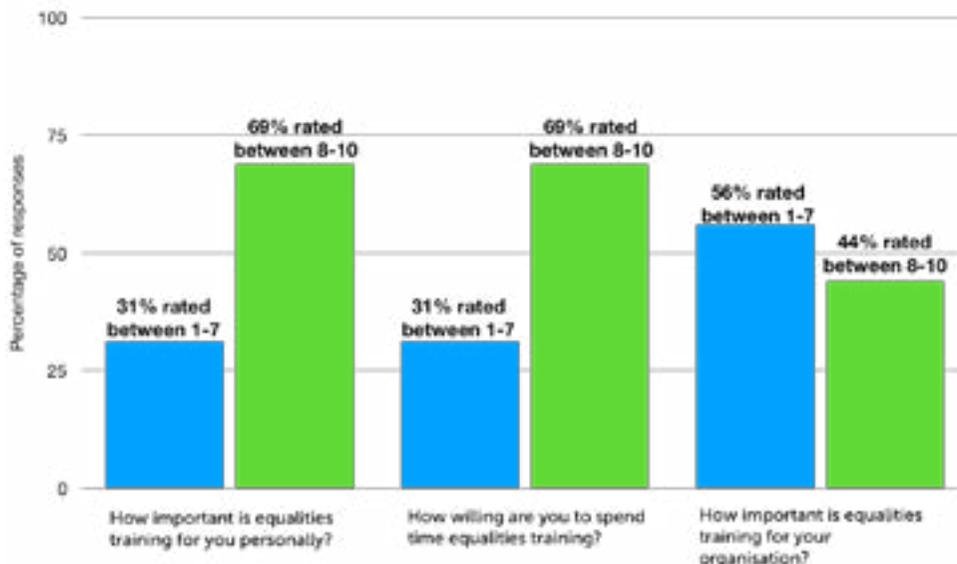
Respondents report positive and negative experiences, and different degrees of organisational impact:

- "The equalities training is given as an introduction to the organisation. It is constantly seeking to engage all groups and reviewing how [we] can improve equality and accessibility."
- "[It translated into developing our] Equalities Action Plan."
- "Training was seen as a relatively cheap but easy and visible way to demonstrate commitment to satisfy requirements without having to adopt any particular organisational or systemic change."
- "The training was only given after an incident and a complaint made the organisation want to look like it took equalities seriously."

To gather an indication on willingness to learn about EDI amongst the workforce and perceptions of their museums (Diagram 9) we asked respondents to report on a scale 1 (Not at all) to 10 (Very):

- How important equalities training is for you personally?
- How willing you are to spend time on equalities training?
- How important equalities training is for your organisation?

**Diagram 9. Willingness to learn about EDI**



## PART 5

### HOW ARE SCOTTISH MUSEUMS CURRENTLY APPROACHING INEQUALITY?

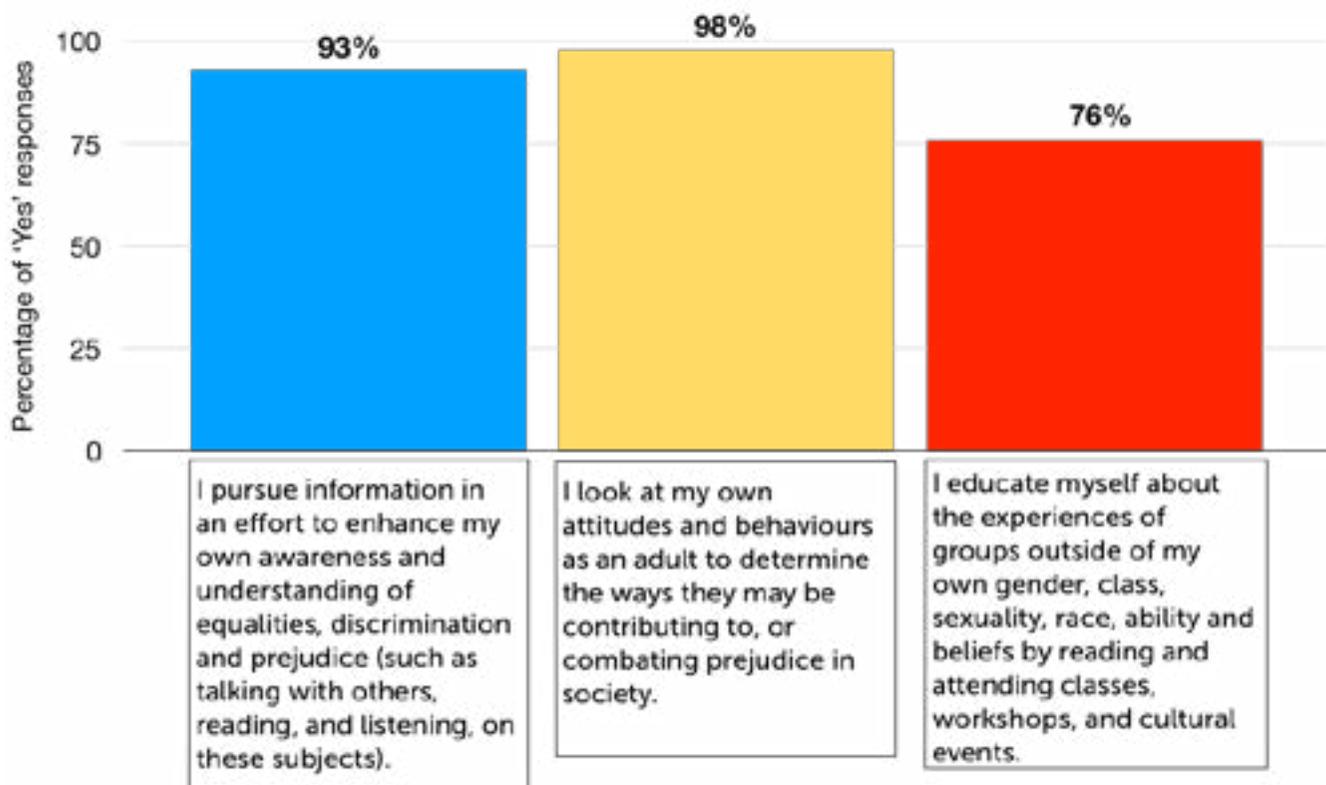


There is a demonstrable willingness to learn about EDI amongst the workforce. The same enthusiasm was present in our focus group. Engaging those in senior and executive roles in learning and the adoption of strategic action planning was identified as the main barrier to change.

To measure respondents intellectual flexibility we asked them to respond to the following statements<sup>13</sup> (Diagram 10):

- I pursue information in an effort to enhance my own awareness and understanding of equalities, discrimination and prejudice (such as talking with others, reading, and listening, on these subjects).
- I look at my own attitudes and behaviours as an adult to determine the ways they may be contributing to, or combating prejudice in society.
- I educate myself about the experiences of groups outside of my own gender, class, sexuality, race, ability and beliefs by reading and attending classes, workshops, and cultural events.

**Diagram 10. Intellectual flexibility**



<sup>13</sup> Adapted from Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (2014).



Despite the identified barriers, practitioners appear to be engaged in and motivated to advance their own learning, and to be willing to self-analyse and reflect on equality, prejudice and discrimination.<sup>14</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This research shows a will and a desire for equalities-focused work from respondents. Participants' motivation to broaden and develop their understanding of intersectional equalities issues as they are lived by people with Protected Characteristics will be an important driving factor in the future. However, this is dependant on museum professionals being supported by adequate structural frameworks.

There is currently a structure at work which reduces equalities work to a vague and changing concept of 'diversity', which allows museums to attach their own level of meaning and achievement onto the term. Seema Reo (2017) highlights that, "Museums are getting pretty good at talking about diversity. Organizations are starting to speak the 'right' words, adding access and inclusion to their sound bites. They are prominently placing people of color in their advertising. They are adding programs to diversify curatorial staff or visitorship. But, as it stands, these efforts will likely fall short. Why? Because these efforts are usually built on inequitable foundations."

Frustration with a lack of strategic ownership, direction and support for organisation-wide approaches to EDI at the executive level is evident. The sector lacks the equalities knowledge, understanding and expertise (at all levels), and the investment in these skills. The money is not there, the time is not there - these are the myths that uphold inequality. Investment in skills is more than a fiscal or capacity issue. Reo typifies this as "a culture that hopes to bring more people in while not making the internal changes necessary to actually invite the people in." (2017).

Job descriptions (at all levels, but particularly senior, executive and Board level) need to be reconstituted to make equalities criteria essential. It is only with an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce that we can drive forward the complex action of sectoral transformation for fairer access, representation and inclusion demanded by legislation, government directives, theorists and communities of identity.

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<sup>14</sup> Some positive responses may be attributed to social desirability bias - the over-reporting of good behaviour in surveys.



## **Recomendations**

Moving forward into stage 2 of the Equality in Progress project we will work in partnership with the sector to:

- Support senior management teams to ensure that they have the right skills and expertise to excel in leading the Equality and Diversity work in their area
- Support the development of a National Equalities Framework for Museums
- Support the development of Equality Action Plans for meaningful equality, diversity and inclusion

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# PART 6

## APPENDIX 1: KEY TERMS



### **Decolonialism**

A social justice movement, used within museums to make explicit the impact and enduring legacy that European colonialism had/has on how culture has been shaped, collected, presented and understood. Decolonialism bursts the myth of museum neutrality, whilst championing narratives for those that have been negated and ignored. Key practitioners working in this field include but are not limited to LaTanya S Autry, MASS Action, Porchia Moore and the inluseum.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**

The terminology for equal opportunity, representation and access for all as used in organisations and institutions, in accordance with requirements and responsibilities set by the Equalities Act 2010.

### **Feminist**

Relating to the theories and activism of women's equality, rights and representation. Feminist structures aim at critiquing and challenging the established systems of power whilst affirmatively offering an alternative way of doing and being that is grounded in the ethics of equality.

### **Grassroots**

Being started by and involving 'ordinary' people, normally at a specific local level, for social, economic and political action.

### **Inequality regimes**

Inequality regimes are the interlocked practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities in all work organizations (Acker, 2006 p441).

### **Intersectionality**

A concept introduced to feminist theory in 1989 by American critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in reference to the interlocking webs of identity and power – in relation to race, sex, sexuality, class, disability, ethnicity amongst others – that contribute to complex socio-political experiences. Intersectionality is used within feminism as a critical tool for analysing cultural and structural oppressions that impact specific identities more than others.



### **Praxis**

The practical enactment or application of practice

### **Protected Characteristics**

The nine personal characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010 are Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity, Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

### **Second Wave Feminism**

A period of feminist action and theory-building, occurring between 1960s and 1980s. Following on from the 'first wave', which was driven by ensuring women's right to vote, the 'second wave' focused on women's personal experiences – work, politics, family, sex and relationships - within a patriarchal structure and campaigned for opportunity, rights, support within this broad area.

### **Social Stratification**

A process of differentiation that places some people higher than the others. Stratification is viewed as a social process as well as a method devised by sociologists to understand inequality in the society.

### **Socio-political**

Relating to topics, issues, themes that involve both social and political influences and factors. For example, human rights issues and equalities work.

### **Tokenism**

A façade of equality and fair representation, that tries to hide the lack of robust systems for true structural change and access. Tokenism uses community voices and diverse identities as a novelty and in a 'tick box' approach to EDI.

# PART 6

## APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY



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