

## **Response to Covid-19 in Planning for the Future**

### **Guiding Principles**

#### **Context**

Since the closure of the GWL building on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 due to Covid-19, all GWL Staff Team members have been working from home to: rethink and reshape our events and activities into digital formats; continue to support our volunteers and Adult Literacy learners; and work together as a team, with our Board of Directors, to plan as far as we can for the future.

The purpose of developing these new Guiding Principles is to define our approach, as an intersectional feminist organisation, to the phased re-opening of GWL in line with our Core Values.

These Guiding Principles, along with our Strategic Plan, and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan, will inform two further new documents: a specific Covid-19 'Risk and Opportunities Register' (a practical document to identify potential hazards, their likelihood and mitigation strategies, and opportunities that may arise); and a 'Phased Return Plan' (a practical document that clarifies and maps how, and in what stages, we will re-open, and communicates this to the outside world).

We recognise that structural inequalities and a variety of personal circumstances influence who may be un/able to return to the GWL building in the context of Covid-19, and who may be un/able to access GWL's services, collections and programmed events digitally.

We acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected and negatively impacted more on: BAME people, who are at higher risk from the Virus; women, who have borne the brunt of unpaid domestic labour and child/care; people living in areas of higher deprivation, such as GWL's geographic community; and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable, who are at higher risk from the Virus. We will continue to prioritise BAME / Women of Colour, disabled women and local women in our EDI Action Plan.

#### **General**

- These Guiding Principles have been developed by the GWL Staff Team and Board of Directors and will be kept in place, and regularly reviewed and amended as necessary, during the length of time that Covid-19 continues to be a prevalent threat.
- In planning for the GWL building re-opening and re-entry, the safety of GWL staff, volunteers, learners and visitors will remain a priority. Legislation and Scottish Government Guidelines will be adhered to, and volunteers, learners and visitors will be consulted as necessary.
- Relevant associated GWL Policies and Procedures will be reviewed and updated where necessary in this process.

#### **Communications**

- We understand the importance of clear and timeous communication to everyone who has an interest in GWL, and we will aim to ensure that this is the best it can be, including in communicating the reasons behind our decision making during this process.

- We will ensure that our website and Social Media platforms contain accessible, clear and up to date information on what to expect when visiting GWL following re-opening.
- We will also create accessible and clear materials onsite in the GWL building that communicate key messages relating to safety and hygiene, including in community languages.

## **Our Team**

- We recognise that we are going through an unprecedented and challenging period that has impacted individual team members in different ways, including taking its toll on physical, mental and emotional health and well-being. We care for and support each other.
- We will support and facilitate, in line with the GWL Working from Home Policy, the decision of staff team members who choose to continue to work from home during this period due to caring responsibilities, health concerns, and risks or worries around travelling by public transport.
- We understand that the home working environment is different for everyone and will not make any assumptions around this.
- We will offer flexibility around travel times and working hours for those that choose to return to work at the GWL building.
- We accept that, within the building, daily duties of staff may alter to ensure safety, ease of management and a warm welcome to the public. Any changes will be minor, reasonable, clearly communicated and will not affect contracted roles or Job Descriptions. These adjustments are appreciated and acknowledged by the whole team.
- We recognise that working from home and working within the GWL building both have advantages and disadvantages, and will ensure that communication and support structures for staff working in both contexts remain robust.
- We acknowledge that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to staff and volunteers, in many areas of their lives, taking on different roles - facing additional demands, learning new skills and embracing new challenges with commitment and creativity, and we will continue to support our team in undertaking work related training and upskilling.
- We trust and respect the decision making and professional expertise of our colleagues as we adapt access to resources and delivery of services.
- In addition, we acknowledge that some volunteers may feel that they want to return to the GWL building for a number of reasons, including because they miss the social contact or that they feel a responsibility to return. We will emphasise our flexibility and unconditional support for individual volunteers' decisions.
- Volunteers will be offered flexibility of roles (including within the GWL building and roles that can be undertaken digitally) and working hours to ensure that they feel safe and supported.

## **The Building**

- Additional documents will provide a framework for re-entry to the GWL building, including the Phased Return Plan, Risk and Opportunities Register, Staff Guidelines and daily check lists.
- Appropriate signage and instructions regarding social distancing will be in place, and all necessary materials for hygiene will be provided. Safety and hygiene measures will be communicated with care and respect.

- We empower our staff and volunteers to implement the clear safety protocols in place, while stressing that it is not the responsibility of staff and volunteers to police visitors' observance of safety protocols.
- We will aim to provide a warm welcome and demonstrate care to all visitors.
- We respect and support individuals' decisions to not work / volunteer / visit if everyone is not wearing a face covering.

### **Our Collections, Events, Learners and Visitors**

- Access to the museum and archive collections will be subject to limitations, depending on staff capacity and safety precautions. This situation will be regularly reviewed and communicated via our website and Social Media.
- Due to continued uncertainties about the behaviours of the Covid-19 Virus and the fact that, currently, we cannot facilitate the intimacy and warmth (the 'Special Ingredient') that GWL events are renowned for, we have decided not to deliver any physical public events for the remainder of 2020. This will, however, be kept under regular review.
- We will continue to plan and deliver programmes of innovative, vibrant and creative digital events and activities, and will ensure that the GWL warm welcome and 'Special Ingredient' are fore fronted and brought to online sessions.
- We acknowledge that there will be a wide range of different feelings around returning to GWL as a visitor, borrower or learner, including excitement about increased social contact and anxiety about returning to public life.
- We recognise that the importance of GWL as a safe, supportive space for women may be heightened at this time, as some women look to, for example, escape domestic abuse, challenges presented by homelessness or are in need of a break from childcare.
- We acknowledge that our audiences may prefer either digital or physical events, or conversely might not be able to access digital or physical events.
- We recognise the multiple barriers to digital access, which are connected to inequality and poverty, and will continue to seek solutions within our capacity to address those.
- We will continue to monitor and gather data on who is using GWL (digitally and physically) to ensure that we are reaching those in our priority groups, and that others are also able to access GWL digitally and physically.
- We continue in our commitment to supporting creatives and partner organisations in line with GWL's Aims and Objectives, including the showcasing of their work and working collaboratively in the development of projects.