

Warmth

One year later...

It has been 1 year since we shared our 'Warmth' project with the world. This is what we have done over the past 12 months:

We put our Ethos of Warmth into practice.

Over the next few slides we will share how we implemented Warmth into all aspects of our work:

- Being a caring Employer
- Being a warm Organisation
- Warmth & our Community and Participants
- Warmth in our Leadership
- Warmth Failures
- Plans for the next 12 months

Being a caring Employer

- treating individuals as individuals
- giving time off for mental health breaks
- paying freelancers sick pay
- reminding ourselves within the team that people come before profit, always
- asking funders and partners for extensions when deadlines cannot be met
- creating forms that help our team and creatives to identify their own needs such as access needs and professional development needs
- paying for training and support

Being a warm Organisation

- We sent back funding that our community identified as not aligned with our ethos (Common Wealth funding)
- We asked for payment for our expertise and some paid whilst others told us that our expertise was not needed
- We had to have difficult conversations internally when we were doing the gatekeeping and replicating toxic working models (like expecting people to work beyond their capabilities or to suffer for success)
- We had to have difficult conversations with people in the industry when we knew they were being exploited
- We stopped using "funding speak" in funding bids and wrote honest and warm bids (we were successful in receiving Paul Hamlyn Funding this way)
- We pay for counselling for all our staff and freelancers
- We speak openly about what salary/fee we each earn

Our Community & Participants

- We started listening to what our community needs and paid them for their knowledge
- We didn't stop at co-design, we hired the community members to lead their own sessions and projects
- We continue to listen to them and to support the projects with trust, money, materials, time and effort
- We stopped using deadlines, outcomes and numbers as measures of success and instead concentrate on what is actually happening, what are people saying, doing and feeling.

Warmth in our Leadership

- We added 2x new directors to our board
- We increased how much we ask directors to join day to day affairs (conflict resolution, recruitment panels, advice)
- After a lengthy and hard recruitment process we recruited a new Artistic Lead: Aaisha Akhtar
- We had to unlearn that age and experience are the only necessary signifiers for being a good candidate
- We had to start trusting our own gut feelings and remind ourselves to trust creatives
- We had to defend our recruitment choices to partners
- Aaisha and Josie (outgoing artistic lead) are currently job-sharing until April
- Aaisha is bringing her fresh take on what it means to be a caring employer and organisation and when to say 'NO'
- Josie is stepping to the side and taking on other roles in the organisation such as finances and fundraising

Warmth Failures

- We make an effort not to look at conflict as failure but instead see it as an opportunity for growth: we speak honestly to those involved, we handle the issue quickly and with warmth
- We learnt that we have to start with our shared ethos and ensure everyone is on board with it
- We learnt that we have to be brave when speaking up against injustice, relying on our team for support
- We have a working grievance procedure which puts the people at the heart of the method
- We realised that there were times when we didn't pay people according to our pay parity table and so we rectified this by paying them what we owed them
- We realised that we didn't always treat ourselves with the same grace and warmth that we treated others so we reminded each other that we had to practice what we preach and start with ourselves first

The next

12 months

- We will continue to practice Warmth and ask ourselves: "What is the warmest way to do this?"
- We will continue to explore supporting people with Warmth whilst also recognising the importance of maintaining healthy boundaries to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our team
- Warmth in the workplace can only be successful if rest, safety and support are implemented rigorously, as being supportive and caring requires emotional labour which, when unchecked, can lead to burnout / overwhelm
- We will continue to interrogate normative ideas concerning professionalism as we have established that they are rooted in whiteness as well as capitalist ways of working which do not put people before profit
- We are learning how to support others in their own journey of unlearning and deinstitutionalisation
- We need to overhaul our artist membership scheme and make it more inclusive and accessible
- We want to be more visible from the street and improve access to our building

