How To Be A Friend Of Dorothy

A guide for event organisers looking to foster a sense of belonging for queer attendees

Who is this for?

Anyone involved in organising or running events, or anything similar, might find this guide helpful.

What can this guidance be used for?

Sections of this guide include what to consider before, during, and after an event. The points given are suggestions that may help foster a sense of belonging for queer attendees.
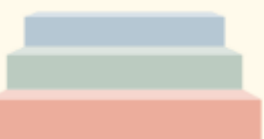
Why should I take this guidance into account?

Whilst it might not be something people consider, a large draw of events can be the sense of belonging and community attendees feel there. This can be even more important for queer attendees, whether or not the event is aimed at the queer community.

Before your event

- Provide photos of previous events if possible
- Provide clear expectations of the event and what is required of attendees (e.g., audience participation)
- Provide an action plan for the case that any negative behaviour may arise at the event
- Clear communication at every step

Venue considerations

- If you withhold the venue for safety reasons, inform attendees of when this will be released
- Provide detailed access information where possible (stairs, toilets, lighting, quiet room, etc)
- Where possible, choose somewhere that openly supports the queer community, even if this is not the focus of the event. Having a pride flag painted rather than hung can make a big difference

Choosing a venue

There's a lot to consider when choosing a venue, after looking into your own budget, availability and needs, take a look here:

Is there thorough accessibility information available- is there a suitable level of access?

Can the venue be accessed via public transport (that will run the time/ day of your event)?

Are there gender neutral toilets?

Is the venue openly supportive of the queer community?

During your event

- If possible have an open invitation for an informal coffee/ drink before the event starts for people going to the event alone
- Deliberate, informed choices show you've done the work
- Provide stickers for attendees to write their name and pronouns as they arrive
- Give clear instructions for where people should go and what they should do
- Follow procedure if anything goes wrong throughout the event
- Thoughtful decor is great!
- Staff should be easily recognised and introduce themselves at the start if possible
- Have someone tasked with making sure everyone is okay during the event
- Have someone tasked with greeting people at the door who can smile and provide directions to toilets etc

Digital or hybrid events

- Give clear expectations in advance around having camera and microphone on/off
- Acknowledge online attendees even if they opt to have camera and mic off
- Demonstrate different ways to contribute (chat functions, mic, reactions, etc)
- Have a chat moderator to ensure nothing gets missed
- Give equal space for in-person and online attendees to contribute

After your event

- Be open to feedback, demonstrate where you have used feedback previously
- Give options to sign up to a mailing list to hear about future events if applicable
- Send a thank you message to attendees after the event, ideally with an anonymous feedback link available

Where did this guidance come from?

These ideas came from a community project supported by We The Curious in Bristol.

The recommendations were collected through workshops, surveys, and focus groups wit responses from members of the queer community.

These recommendations were the main takeaways that came from this research.
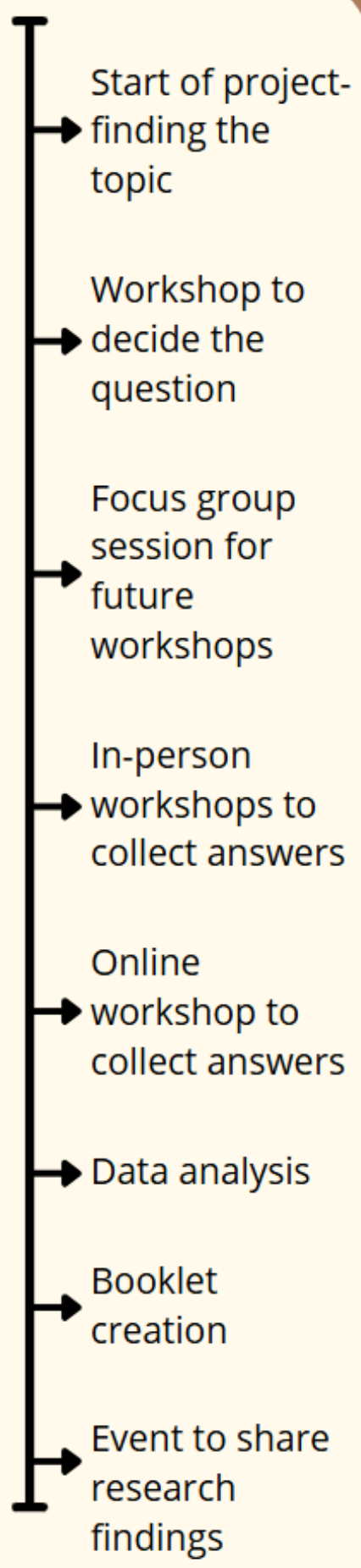
Summer 2024

Autumn 2024

Winter 2024/25

Spring 2025

Summer 2025

Start of project-finding the topic

Workshop to decide the question

Focus group session for future workshops

In-person workshops to collect answers

Online workshop to collect answers

Data analysis

Booklet creation

Event to share research findings

Research
sharing event
Summer 2025

Thank you for taking the time to look through these recommendations. We hope you have found it helpful!

This project has been supported by We The Curious.