



# Breaking Barriers for LGBT+ Survivors of Abuse and Violence at Festivals

## Barrier: you are only responding to the “public story” of abuse and violence

The “public story” of sexual violence is the way society imagines violence and abuse. The way we imagine who “real perpetrators” and “genuine victims” are is informed by gendered stereotypes which tends to centre heterosexual, white, able-bodied people. E.g. where the bigger, stronger, white cis man overpowers the smaller, weaker, white cis woman.

This “public story” shapes the way we think about sexual violence, our responses to it and the ways that we support survivors.

LGBT+ experiences are often hidden behind this public story, and the misconception that abuse and violence only affects heterosexual and cisgender people.



**“I was literally, completely and FULLY unaware that women could commit acts of sexual violence, I had the understanding that only men could do it.”**

– Participant in Galop’s report, ‘Sexual violence: A snapshot of those harming LGBT+ people’

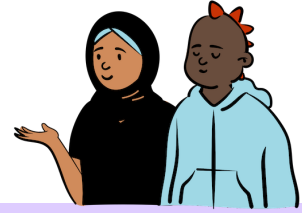
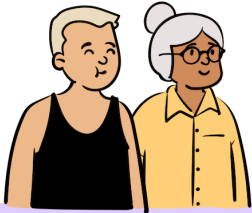
## How to break it: respond to all forms of abuse and violence

It’s important to look beyond the “public story”, and expand the way we think about abuse and violence. Try to think about the different forms of abuse that may intersect in a festival space, and how you can create more inclusive safe space.

Remember that abuse and violence can affect anyone, from any background or identity. Some of the most overlooked experiences are:

- Same-sex intimate partner violence.
- Women perpetrators or male survivors.
- Violence which is anti-LGBT+ hate-motivated.
- Violence which is not physical.

When you limit your idea of what constitutes abuse and violence to a single story, LGBT+ survivors and victims are rendered invisible, and they can end up not getting the support that they need.



## How to break it: respond to all forms of abuse and violence, continued

There are some types of abuse you might be more likely to come across in a festival space:

- Domestic abuse is any kind of threatening behaviour committed by a family member, or current or ex intimate partner to take power and control. It can happen anywhere, not just in a person's home.
- Sexual violence is any sexual situation that happens to someone without their consent. It can happen anywhere.
- Hate crime is a name for abuse, violence, stalking, intimidation or any other crime which also targets someone because of their disability, transgender identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. It can happen anywhere.
- So-called 'conversion therapy' is the pre-determined intention to change, 'cure', or suppress a person's sexual or romantic orientation and/or gender identity through abuse or violence. It can happen anywhere.

Each of these types abuse and violence can overlap, creating differing levels of complexity and nuance for each victim or survivor experiencing them. There are other forms of interpersonal abuse, but these are some of the ones you might be more likely to come across in a festival space.

You and your team don't need to offer solutions to the people experiencing these types of abuse, but you should be able to recognise them in diverse settings, be able to intervene, and/or offer signposting to LGBT+ specialist support services.

## Barrier: your LGBT+ inclusion isn't intersectional

If your LGBT+ inclusion centres on white, able-bodied, neurotypical British citizens, who are also LGBT+, then your support will exclude many people within the LGBT+ community.

## How to break it: remember there is no single way to be LGBT+

Inclusion means considering the whole person, not a single aspect of who they are.

When providing support, you should consider the challenges that LGBT+ people with multiple identities could face. These can be related to age, race, faith, and/or disability. E.g. if your support tent is in a difficult location to reach for a wheelchair user or your team doesn't outline LGBT+ support options to older attendees, you are reinforcing barriers.



## Barrier: a lack of visibility

Galop knows from our frontline work that many LGBT+ survivors have been dismissed, judged, blamed or have experienced anti-LGBT+ prejudice when seeking support for their experience of abuse or violence. This can make victims more hesitant to come forward.

The public story about “genuine victims” can result in myths and stereotypes which dismiss LGBT+ survivors’ experiences. For example, the myths that gay or bisexual men survivors should have “fought back”, that bi+ people are hypersexual and therefore always consent, that trans people are automatically potential perpetrators, or that “real” sexual assault cannot and does not occur in lesbian relationships.

When you haven’t made it clear that you have considered the experiences of LGBT+ people when planning your festival, it could make it harder for LGBT+ people to trust that you will support them if they experience of abuse or violence.

**“[I’d] hesitate to tell anyone to go to an organisation that isn’t for queer people only.”**

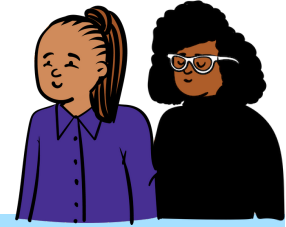
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## How to break it: be obvious!

LGBT+ survivors face enough barriers when asking for support, so making it obvious that you care about their wellbeing is the minimum that every organiser can do. Reduce those doubts in any way you can! Being obvious could look like this:

- Having a pride inclusion flag clearly displayed and visible outside your safe spaces.
- Using language in your communications that acknowledges LGBT+ experiences.
- Having a staff trained in LGBT+-experiences on-site, and/or LGBT+ resources available.
- Issuing an inclusion statement highlighting your support for LGBT+ festival goers.
- Having clearly marked LGBT+ safe spaces.
- Considering trans and non-binary people's access needs and outlining their options.
- Having a clear definition of what your policy is on discrimination or hateful behaviour.



## **Barrier: you've only integrated some LGBT+ support in your policies and responses**

If you tell LGBT+ people they're safe at your festival before you have fully integrated appropriate LGBT+ support, there's a risk of damaging LGBT+ people's trust in your festival, and potentially reducing future attendance.

You could also cause further harm to any LGBT+ victim and survivor at your festival.

## **How to break it: connect your inclusion to tangible outcomes**

When approaching LGBT+ inclusion at your festival, you should consider the following:

- Do we have a plan for an LGBT+ person who is assaulted and what your steps would be?
- Is our LGBT+ inclusion plan or policy accessible to all workers engaging with attendees?
- Are we using LGBT+ inclusive language when creating support options? E.g. ensuring that someone's gender is not assumed based on their appearance.
- Have the staff who create policies and support plans accessed LGBT+ specialist training?
- How do we share that information and ensure that the festival workforce are aware of the LGBT+ policies and know what LGBT+ support options are available?
- Are all of workers able to adequately recognise an LGBT+ experience of violence or discrimination?
- Have we undertaken LGBT+ specialist training on responding to abuse?

Being able to answer 'yes' to these questions, combined with LGBT+ specialist support, can make the difference between telling LGBT+ people your festival is a safe space and being that safe space.

**LGBT+ inclusion is not a single act, it's the culmination of honest reflection, care, and tangible actions with the intention of better responding to LGBT+ experiences of violence and abuse. AIF and Galop are here to support you in your journey to becoming a safer festival for LGBT+ people.**

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