

## BiCon 2006: Organisers' Team Report

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### Introduction

#### *Background*

At the closing plenary at BiCon 2004, some members of the BiScotland group volunteered to bring BiCon to Glasgow in 2006. A Yahoo Group was set up almost immediately after BiCon 2004, the areas of work were quickly defined, and an announcement was made to the BiScotland group calling for volunteers. Although the BiCon 2006 team initially drew on the BiScotland group for its membership, it ran as an autonomous unit. The team had its first meeting in May 2005, and had fourteen meetings in all (thirteen prior to the event and one afterwards).

#### *The BiCon 2006 team*

The core team consisted of eight people, with overall co-ordination by a triumvirate - David, Calum, and Alison. We found three to be a good number as it allowed us to run as a limited company with these three as directors, and also because there was a good chance that in any disagreement, at least we'd have two people on one side. It worked very well - the co-ordination went smoothly, and we were able to divide work and agree on the right approach to everything.

Each team member volunteered for specific areas of responsibility, for which they were expected to report at each meeting. Each member was also given a chance to express interest in areas of work other than their own. The core team was as follows:

Calum – Director, co-ordination, Community Fair, website (technical)

David – Director, co-ordination, insurance, legal advice

Alison – Director, co-ordination, communications

SurrealT – finance

Essbee – venue liaison/accessibility, bookings/registration, crèche

Puzzle – workshops, Helping Hand Fund

Gerry – entertainments, first aid and counselling

John – graphic design

#### *Advice for future organisers*

The biggest mistake we made was in allowing people to volunteer for the areas they would cover, rather than appointing people based on known skill-set. This meant we ended up with an uneven distribution of work among the team – we went some way to addressing this early on, but things would have run more smoothly with more even work balance. We would also strongly advise future organisers to consider *when* different workloads will be heavy, so that nobody takes on areas that

mean they are very busy with more than one thing simultaneously. We would also stress that it is acceptable to reprimand team members who do not fulfill their role effectively, or to remove them from the team.

If we co-ordinated another BiCon, we would hand-pick the team. You often know who will be good at particular areas, and they are often not the people who volunteer. But we were lucky. We got, on the whole, a fantastically good team who worked together very well.

Another thing which became obvious in several areas of work – particularly some sensitive areas, such as the administration of the Helping Hand Fund – was that it is not possible to organise BiCon exclusively online. While much useful discussion takes place on blogs and e-mail lists, it is vital that organisers recognise the need to maintain phone and postal communication with attendees, facilitators and anyone else who cannot easily get online. This should be considered a key accessibility issue. Having said all this, much of the organisation can be done online, and it is important that the team has easy access to the internet during the event.

#### Co-ordination at the event itself

While communication within the team could have been better, there were no major breakdowns in communication or failures in the management chain, and the occasional loss of clarity between the team and the venue was dealt with efficiently.

We did have one attendee who behaved inappropriately on a number of occasions. As soon as this came to the attention of the team he was asked to leave.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

Our policy of having one of the co-ordinators, and one other team member, on duty at all times was rather exhausting. The person covering the overnight shift could sleep as long as the BiCon phone was audible, but they did have to stay at the entertainments until the very end.

We handled volunteer co-ordination for the Reception desk poorly. We ended up working many more shifts ourselves than was desirable, and much of the volunteer coordination was done by volunteers. A well organised desk, with a 'run book' for what to do, and a simple way to pass messages at changeover, would have made the entire event less work.

One last thing: do not underestimate the number of signs you will need to put up around the venue, or the time it will take to do so.

#### Venue and Accessibility

##### *Venue*

BiCon 2006 was held at Glasgow Caledonian University. This had all the benefits of a purpose-built, city centre University. Unfortunately, the accommodation (Caledonian Court) was separated from the main daytime building (George Moore) and the Union building (Bedsit) by a four-lane road. However, we had considered other venues and Caledonian was by far the most suitable available.

We were warned by previous organisers that venue liaison was the area of organisation where problems were most likely to arise, and this proved to be true. A key example of a lack of clarity in communication between the team and the venue was the confusion about the time from which BiCon would have exclusive use of Bedsit. However, no major problems arose from this, and there were no complaints from delegates. The staff at Bedsit – both behind the bar and on the door – were generally very welcoming to BiCon attendees, despite many of them working far longer hours than they had expected.

We also managed to upset the venue by leaving things set up in Reception until Tuesday morning, even though they had earlier said we could do so. With hindsight, we should have discussed our take-down and cleanup plans with them, and then they would have been able to tell us that our Reception area was a priority to clean up.

There were some issues surrounding the allocation of rooms. In this case the fault lay with security staff at Caledonian Court, who had been responsible for handing out keys, and not with the team. We were also led to believe that one security guard entered an attendee's room without their permission, and this will be reported back to the venue.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

We would advise future BiCon organisers to get everything in writing, as early as possible. We took too long to get things in writing, relying far too much on the goodwill of the people we were dealing with. Thankfully, we managed to have our booking confirmed in writing before any issues came up. We had a change in staff at the venue, and needed to rely on the written documentation to make sure we got everything we'd agreed on. Also, check that everything is arranged, agreed and understood just before the event, and again when you arrive – information may not have been passed on to the people staffing the venue during the event. And take those written agreements with you – you might need them during the weekend.

Everything possible should be done to get workshop rooms which are close together. Our workshop rooms were in the same building, but we were unable to negotiate having rooms which were close together.

We took the word of our venue far too much on accessibility. Don't assume that because the venue claims everything is fully accessible, it is. You need to check and see for yourselves, and consider the issues attendees might have. It would be ideal if each BiCon team had someone with a good awareness of accessibility issues, who was able to view the venue far in advance and give a user perspective. Accessibility is not about wheelchair access, it's much broader. Our venue had level access to everything, but the distances between rooms weren't terribly suitable to people who had difficulty walking, but didn't use wheelchairs.

Also, people with accessibility issues wanted lots of information on what to expect – so they could prepare themselves. We were not good at providing this. Having some photographs of the main access routes, the entrances to buildings, stair-lifts, accommodation, etc. would have been very useful to some attendees. Even when we were asked for these long in advance, we didn't manage to provide them.

We were poor on accessibility – a number of attendees commented that the venue had been very difficult for them. Had we been able to identify these issues and raise them with the venue several months in advance, they may have been able to help us resolve them.

#### Finance

We decided to process online bookings exclusively with PayPal. We could have set up credit card processing directly, but the merchant account fees work out more than PayPal fees, so we didn't think it was worthwhile. PayPal allows people to pay by credit card, debit card, and from a bank account, so there really is very little not covered.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

When you have received £4,500 into your PayPal account, they are obliged to investigate you under the European anti-money-laundering regulations. In practice, this means they insist on a personal credit card being tied to the PayPal account at this point, and they get upset if you remove it again

afterwards. Things like this are best sorted out with PayPal on the phone – it's almost impossible to resolve on the website if you do something they don't expect.

We would recommend not paying suppliers in cash. We had particular problems with entertainers wanting payment in cash, and we took the view that this was not good practice from a record-keeping perspective. We would also recommend that organisers have suppliers sign a letter of terms, including their payment method, in advance.

## Communications

### *Website*

The main website was built using Plone, and hosted by Mathie at the wonderful rubaidh.com for free. Using Plone meant the whole team could write and review content, and the system would make sure that all the output was disability accessible to W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. It was phenomenally easy to configure and use, but we were fortunate to have Mathie to install it for us in the first place. We had grand plans of writing Plone add-ons to support BiCon timetabling, and integrate the booking system, but in the end we used standard Plone objects for everything, and didn't bother doing anything flashy.

The booking system was actually run on a separate website (bookings.bicon2006.org.uk). We looked around for a booking system we could use that would support all the things we wanted to do, and couldn't find any even close that weren't horribly expensive. So, we wrote our own – with lots of help from Derry. Having our own system gave us lots of flexibility, and let us do things the system didn't support manually, if we wanted to. The booking system was written in Perl and used a MySQL database.

All in all, the system worked well. The biggest issues were with getting integrated with PayPal in the first place, and with human error (which you never can eliminate anyway). The largest 'human error' issue was that despite warning in big bold letters, users would close the window after they had paid, and not come back to the BiCon site, which meant we didn't get notification that they had paid. We resolved this by downloading the payment history from PayPal, and searching for payments that had the same booking number as bookings that hadn't been paid for. (See, those long booking numbers were useful for something!)

### *Publicity*

We drew up a communications strategy and timetable early on, and although we did not stick to these rigidly, they served as a useful guide. Press releases were issued on a monthly basis from January onwards to local and national press, LGBT organisations, students' unions and local authorities. We also sent news items to the bi and LGBT press online, and used the internet extensively to identify appropriate groups.

Our initial publicity was designed for BiCon 2005. The leftover flyers were used at various LGBT events in Glasgow and were also distributed at London BiFest along with booking forms. We then came up with a primary design, for posters and the front of flyers, and a secondary design, for the backs of flyers.

With the help of Elfgeek and the LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing in Edinburgh, we compiled a database of over 700 contacts including LGBT groups and venues, students' unions and local authorities, covering the UK and Republic of Ireland. We sent letters, posters and flyers to around 600 places in the UK and Ireland using a business post service (UK Mail) and the Royal Mail, and had only a handful of returns.

In terms of press coverage, we had articles published prior to the event in The Skinny (a free lifestyle paper distributed in Glasgow and Edinburgh) and The List (Scotland's best-selling entertainments

listing magazine), as well as the Equality Network newsletter. Journalists from Scotsgay and Centrepont (the Glasgow LGBT Centre's quarterly magazine) also attended to write articles for publication after the event.

#### *Handbook, Programme and Community Information Zone*

The Handbook was based substantially on Jennifer Moore's content from 2005 and updated. Only minor amendments were made to the retained content to keep a consistent style throughout. A printing error meant that the key contacts inside the front cover were omitted, but we ensured that these were inside the Programme.

The Handbook was sent out two weeks prior to the event. We found that this was popular with delegates. Sending it out at this time meant that the information was as up-to-date as possible, while allowing attendees time to prepare.

The Programme was based largely on submissions from workshop facilitators. The Community Information Zone texts were edited from 2005, the main difference being the inclusion of the BCN *Local Information* page rather than the London-specific information. The bulk of the work on the CIZ was done by Natalya (LJ: Barakta) for the 2004 event, with others feeding in. We took the view that these should be viewed as a 'BiCon Wiki', developing each year with community involvement.

We prepared large print copies of the Handbook and Programme, but these were not needed. We also put them on the website in Word format so that they could be downloaded by users with audio reader programmes.

We took the view that as much information as possible from the Handbook, Programme and CIZ should be on the website, and this was most definitely achieved, the end content being virtually identical.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

We really wanted to get at least one advert in the mainstream LGBT press. This proved to be prohibitively expensive, but it would be worth future BiCon teams considering spending some of the event's reserve funds to do this. It is in the interests of visibility and outreach to do so: BiCon relies far too heavily on underground / DIY media and word of mouth. It is worth remembering that while advertising is expensive, editorial articles cost nothing and are arguably far more effective.

We had some reminders about the photo policy from the Code of Conduct posted around the venue. We did have some incidents of people ignoring this policy (and behaving in other inappropriate ways), and it occurred to us that at future events it might be worth having an abbreviated Code of Conduct included in the Community Information Zone and/or elsewhere around the venue.

#### Registrations

In all, 200 people attended BiCon. Before the event we received 181 bookings: 154 with accommodation, 24 without accommodation and 3 one day passes. There were 19 bookings at the weekend (3 with accommodation, 7 full weekend without accommodation and 9 one day passes).

The following is a summary of bookings by income bracket:

A (Student / Unwaged)	71
B (< £12k p.a.)	18
C (£12k - 17k p.a.)	22
D (£17k - 22k p.a.)	27
E (£22k - 27k p.a.)	23
F (£27k - 35k p.a.)	16
G (> £35k p.a.)	21
H (Organisations)	2

#### *Advice for future organisers*

Online registration is very popular and is probably going to be expected for all future BiCons - bear in mind the work required in setting up PayPal registration (if you want to use PayPal) and the website, and the effect PayPal commission has on budgets. The main advantages of using PayPal are that it makes registering in advance more attractive, there are no postal delays in retrieving cheques, and there is no need to make bank deposits or deal with bouncing cheques.

When processing booking forms, it's essential that organisers keep track of all the information. It's quite possible one of those cheques paid into the bank will bounce, and you need to know what booking it goes with. This may not be obvious: some people don't use the same name on their booking form and their bank account.

Responding to people is very important - people worry when they don't get a receipt or response for their booking (online or postal), and worry even more if you don't answer their email promptly. We weren't always very good at giving people prompt replies (for example, sending receipts to people who booked early on). Also consider that information given to the Registration team may well be confidential (especially with things like the Helping Hand Fund). We felt it was best to share information that was potentially confidential only on a need-to-know basis within the team. Confidentiality is of great importance. We had problems with this in respect to one team member in particular, and having a formal confidentiality policy might have helped here.

The sliding scale pricing structure adds a layer of unpredictability to budgeting. It might be worth future teams looking for a way to improve or simplify this, while retaining the guideline requirement for accessibility for those on low incomes.

We would also recommend introducing a registration option for those attending for the evening only or for part of a day - we had a few people wishing to bring a guest to the evening entertainment only, and had to come up with *ad hoc* registration policies. (One suggestion was that future organisers could consider running the BiCon Ball as an 'event within an event' and ticketing it via local LGBT groups etc., which future teams may wish to consider, although this would have its own problems.)

We allowed people to pre-register at BiCon 2005, to allow them to get the Early Bird price for BiCon 2006 no matter how late they booked. This was a bit of a pain to administer. Perhaps a better system would be to ask people to donate £5 to the Helping Hand Fund in order to secure an Early Bird price, rather than it going towards their booking.

#### Workshops

There were fifty-seven workshops confirmed prior to the event, with another five proposed at the event itself. There were over forty facilitators, some of whom facilitated more than one session.

We started by contacting those individuals who had expressed interested in 2005 to run workshops in 2006. In particular we asked those facilitators whose slots were popular whether they would be happy to run them again. We looked at previous years' programmes and agreed that there should be First Timers' and Re-Entry sessions.

We asked all facilitators to describe their workshop in terms of content, aims and objectives, and what they hoped to achieve in their sessions. We also asked each facilitator for a short biography, even if they were well-known in the community.

We asked what sort of space facilitators were looking for (e.g. whether they needed space to move around freely, to be away from noise etc.). We also asked them whether any equipment was needed to run their workshop, although we were clear that we could not promise to provide all required equipment. In terms of scheduling, we asked facilitators to give three preferences for a time slot (not a preferred day), and where possible we gave them their first preference. We ensured that all facilitators knew how long their allocated time was in order for them to plan accordingly.

We sent the draft timetable out beforehand so that any clashes could be ironed out. We were prepared for scheduling problems, but found facilitators to be extremely co-operative and understanding on this front. We maintained a database of facilitator's contacts, time preferences, and equipment needed.

We sent an e-mail to all facilitators before the event giving them final details – such as how long they should allow for setting up and clearing up, and notes about equipment – and general encouragement.

The organisation of workshops was one area where phone contact proved vital.

#### *Use of strands*

This year the use of strands was essential for planning the programme, both in the use of colours and symbols. The strands we used were Fun, Suggested First Timers, Gender, Spirituality, Relaxation, General Discussion, Activists, Research and BDSM.

The strands were deliberately broad for ease of scheduling, and to help attendees quickly identify area of interest. In doing so, we were able to ensure that in each timetabled slot there was always one the themes available. If an attendee only wished to attend one type of workshop for the whole of the weekend, they would be able to do so. In particular, we hoped that the strand aimed at First Timers helped those people settle in quickly. It reduced clashes between workshops of a similar nature, and allowed facilitators running similar workshops to attend each others' sessions.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

It is important that whoever is organising workshops has a good feel for the venue. We would recommend that this person views the workshop rooms at least once before inviting workshop proposals, and at least once nearer the event. It is also important to keep facilitators up-to-date with what is going on, and to answer their questions promptly. It was especially important to inform them of any changes to the programme, including evening entertainments if running evening workshop slots. We would recommend that a draft timetable is sent out as early as possible to allow facilitators to comment on any potential clashes (obviously this is dependent on facilitators responding to the workshop organiser promptly).

Other than ensuring that you meet all your facilitators and that their needs are met as far as possible, it is vital to put in place a clear system for communicating programme changes to attendees. We stuck with the tried and tested method of noticeboard space and plenary announcements, and we thought this worked well.

The colour/symbol coded strands were popular and we would suggest that these should be retained for future BiCons.

We think the First Timers, Fitting and Misfitting and Re-Entry workshops are especially important to the programme.

Workshop facilitators are arguably the most important contributors to BiCon. It is important to ask them what they think was done well, what could have been better, and whether their details can be passed on to the next year's team (if they would be willing to do it again). Most importantly, say thank you to those that gave up their time to run a workshop.

*See appendix 1: Workshop Feedback.*

### Entertainments

Entertainment kicked off on Thursday night with a karaoke host known to the Glasgow LGBT scene, which was reasonably popular, and issues of volume were sorted out early on. This was followed by a disco. On Friday night we had an audience participation showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show, hosted by Doctor Scott's Extra Forks. This was immensely popular. Again, sound issues arose, but were soon sorted out, and again, a disco followed.

The DIY Disco was controversial as ever. We did everything we could to put clear instructions about submissions in the Programme, but some people still missed the deadline. Rather than having a voting system, a small group sorted through the CDs to ensure that at least one submission from each person was included, and the CDs were then passed on to the DJs to compile a playlist which was published beforehand.

The BiCon Ball was another massive success, with a ceilidh followed by a disco. We had had reservations about the fancy dress theme and were thrilled to see people putting their hearts into it and expressing their personalities so creatively while in keeping with the Scottish theme (or not!). It was especially wonderful to see people ceilidh dancing in body paint, wheelchairs, kinkified kilts and Irn Bru costumes. We had an e-mail of thanks from the band, Chulainn, who had also had a lot of fun.

While we had a lot of volunteers for DJing, we relied heavily on Matt and Joan and would like to thank them once again for their help here (and also for Matt's kickass fire art).

### *Advice for future organisers*

We would suggest that next year's team rethink the format if having a DIY Disco, perhaps having a workshop session set aside for anyone interested to help with the playlist.

Having two spaces for as long as possible was very popular with attendees, as was the late licence. The Back Bar at Bedsit, which we intended to be a quiet space, was actually quite noisy due to the volume of conversation. Cheesy entertainments on the first night make good icebreakers, as long as there is alternative space provided, although we did have one complaint about there being entertainments on the Thursday.

### Helping Hand Fund

Six people donated to the Helping Hand online, with donations ranging from £5 to £30. Many others waived the £5 discount they were due for pre-registering at BiCon 2005. There are no exact figures of how many people contributed by post. The breakdown of the Fund was as follows:

£260.00 received by postal bookings  
£159.00 received by online bookings



£500.00 allocated from budget

Twenty people made enquiries to the Fund, ranging from queries about the income brackets to queries about the level of support available. Fourteen people followed up with applications to the Fund, and none were refused support. All fourteen were supported to attend BiCon, at a cost of £758.00.

The team agreed to allow people to book in the lowest income band if they would otherwise not be able to attend. No places were subsidised in full: the team agreed that everyone should contribute something in attending BiCon. That way they would feel they contributed what they could afford.

It was decided early on that the team working on the Helping Hand Fund had to be small, to ensure confidentiality and that team members were not privy to more information than was deemed necessary. Later on, it was agreed that only one individual would be in charge of the Fund. The reasons for people receiving HHF were never known outside of their application.

A discount code was set up so that an application could be completed online. For those attendees who chose to pay by post, registration was informed only that an individual's payment would be less, again with no reason given other than HHF support.

We agreed that priority should be given to applicants who were attending BiCon for the first time, or those who had accessibility / childcare needs, financial difficulties or excessive travel costs. However, due to the generous donations to the Fund, we did not have to use these criteria.

#### *Deadlines*

We were aware that previous organisers had often had complaints by those applying to the Fund that they didn't hear if their applications were successful until the very last minute. This then made it difficult for applicants to make arrangements to attend. This year we set a deadline of 16th May for applications to the HHF. This gave us sufficient time to process the applications, and tell applicants the result of their applications a month before the event, allowing those attendees to make use of cheap travel deals etc. We were in fact able to support three late applications.

#### *Advice for future organisers*

It is vital to the smooth administration of the Fund that those people handling bookings and those handling the Fund communicate efficiently. It is also worth considering that those people who need the Fund the most may be people who cannot easily get access to the internet for whatever reason. Telephone contact with applicants was found to be very useful, especially where it was necessary to follow up on their application.

Confidentiality is, obviously, of paramount importance in the administration of the Fund.

#### Childcare, first aid and counselling

The crèche, which ran as an informal facility, was organised by a relative of a team member and parents took turns to look after the children. No problems were reported.

We had around twelve qualified volunteers for first aid and counselling, with many people offering to take on both roles. At all times we had a main counsellor and a back-up, and if there were more problems developing, then others could be drafted in. This healthcare team met every day after the main plenary. The radios were proving problematic due to radio drift from the local shopping complex, so they were quickly abandoned in favour of direct contact via mobile phones, co-ordinated by the on-call committee member.

### *Advice for future organisers*

We were fortunate enough to have volunteers with professional experience in first aid and/or counselling. We would stress the importance of vetting volunteers for suitability. An enthusiastic amateur could do more harm than good in this area.

### Welcome packs, safer sex supplies and t-shirts

We were fortunate enough to be given free carrier bags (Clone Zone), free or subsidised safer sex supplies (Healthy Gay Scotland, The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, Sandyford Initiative and the Steve Retson Project) and other LGBT resources and freebies (Healthy Gay Scotland), and we were very pleased with our welcome packs.

Our t-shirts were produced by Bar One Ltd.

### *Advice for future organisers*

It is important to start enquiring about safer sex resources well in advance. While condoms and lubricants are relatively easy to come by (ho ho), dental dams, gloves etc. are often forgotten until it is too late. Within three weeks of the event it becomes extremely difficult to get adequate supplies - this is often the minimum amount of time required by health authorities to get supplies. Health authorities whose jurisdiction is outside the area in which BiCon is being held will not necessarily be able to get supplies at all.

It is virtually impossible to judge the correct number of t-shirts, and the spread of sizes. We found our shirts quite difficult to sell. We suspect the choice of colour had something to do with this, although we didn't plug them as well as we could have.

### Summary

#### *Things we did well*

We think we proved that a team of people who hadn't previously organised a BiCon - and some of whom had never even been to the event, or who had only been once - are able to do a good job of it (and hopefully give encouragement to other organising virgins to have a go). We were also happy to get BiCon out of the 'August bank holiday weekend' rut.

We introduced the Community Fair space in response to enquiries by local groups and BiCon attendees wishing to distribute or sell resources.

We had lots of positive comments about the smoking ban in Scotland, although we can't take credit for that.

#### *Room for improvement*

Generally speaking, the 2006 team was overwhelmed to have been part of an event which ran so smoothly and at which so many people had such a good time. We like to think we've raised the bar in some ways, but we think there are plenty of ways in which future BiCons could be even better.

Some first-timers voiced the common criticism that the event was too cliquy. One team member commented that there is "too much of a feeling that it isn't enough just to be bisexual: there's all the other categories to name-check - bi and poly; bi and BDSM; bi and Goth; bi and Trans; bi and Vegan!"

The Community Fair wasn't a huge success, largely because it was organised too late and was too remotely situated. However, we think this could be a successful element to future BiCons and would like to see it developed.

### **The BiCon 2006 Team**

## Appendix 1: Workshop Feedback

Fourteen facilitators gave us feedback.

### What did we do well?

“The email you sent with advice on getting there early to set up helped lots.”

### What could have been done better in the run up to BiCon, for you as a facilitator?

“I would have liked to know the timing of my workshops sooner; I realise that this can be difficult, but feel that those people who suggest workshops late should be prepared to fit them in around the existing timetable. I would also have liked earlier confirmation that my workshops were accepted. As every BiCon committee has a different outlook, I wasn't quite sure what you were looking for, and didn't feel that I could prepare fully when I might have to abandon them or change them dramatically. I prefer to have plenty of time to prepare so that I can fit it in around my other work commitments.”

“One thing that would have made it easier for me as a facilitator I guess, would have been a downloadable RTF document for me to fill in with my workshop details.”

“Nothing I can think of. Maybe finalising the timetable earlier on, but that's obviously difficult to do, given the numbers of workshops and trying to take account of everyone's needs.”

“I was mostly happy with the run up to BiCon stuff. The releasing of provisional times was good. I didn't realise an organised entertainment slot was happening at the same time as my workshop otherwise I'd have requested a re-timetabling in advance instead of hassling you on Friday itself. That was mostly down to the entertainment start times not being 100% clear.”

### What could have been better for you (as a facilitator) at the event?

“I didn't personally have any problems with this, but facilitators complained to me that there were no pens handy for whiteboards (they may have been supposed to pick these up at Reception, but once they were in rooms far away from Reception and realised the problem, this wasn't much help).”

“I had a workshop interrupted by workmen moving furniture into the room, which upset some of the attendees. The workmen left when asked to, but the intrusion should never have happened. I'd appreciate it if the University could be advised of this.”

“Overall the event went really well and I think this is quite an important point to make. There are small niggles, though I'm sure that some of these were out of your control. One was the distance between workshops / the desk / etc., a bit too spread out.”

“Informal 'how to run workshops session' by someone experienced in facilitating on Thursday evening. Awareness that workshop running can be difficult/scary, particularly for those new to it.”

### If a how to guide for facilitation was compiled, what do you think is essential to know/do when running a workshop?

- Arrive early to set stuff up
- Check everyone's in the workshop they think they're in
- Make the size of the circle/other seating appropriate to the size of the group (and near the white board if you're planning on using it)
- Work out the appropriate balance between facilitator and participant generated material to cover
- Flexible planning of material - there's no way to tell whether you'll get novices or very experienced people turning up
- Don't try to cover too much - 75 minutes isn't very long. It's probably better to cover a few topics in depth rather than a number superficially (but this will depend on the topics in question)

- Use appropriate voice level / size of writing on a white board. Have spare white board pens
- Advice on how to deal with 'difficult' participants - those dominating the discussion/missing the point etc.
- Think about how you're going to feel / react if anyone leaves the workshop because they're finding it emotionally difficult
- Think about how to be aware of the emotional state of the group in general and how you'll deal with it if people become upset
- Plan the conclusion - don't end in a rush. Have a handout available listing online / other resources for participants to go to if they want to do further research
- Prepare notes or questions beforehand
- Facilitators have the right to restrict entry to a limited number of people if they feel that is appropriate - either by closing the door once desired numbers appear, or having a sign-up-in-advance list that people need to complete before coming along

Is there any information that we can circulate on the website, contacts info, where to go from here that may have come up from your session?

*Intersexuality :*

- Books of Alice Dreger
- Support groups can be found at <http://www.bodieslikeours.org/forums/index.php?> (Bodies Like Ours) and <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Intersex-Androgynous> (Intersex Androgynous)
- Campaigning information appears on the Intersex Society of North America's pages at <http://www.isna.org> and information on what's happening in Scotland will shortly be available from the Equality Network at <http://www.equality-network.invisionzone.com>

*The Bisexual Creative Network:*

- <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/BisexualCreatives>

*Juggling:*

- <http://tinyurl.com/mpbbk>
- <http://tinyurl.com/g7f9l>
- <http://tinyurl.com/oeckf>

*Single and Poly:*

- The uk-poly mailing list - <http://bi.org/uk-poly>
- <http://www.uk-poly.net> - UK based website with discussion boards
- <http://www.polyamory.org> which links to alt.polyamory

*BSL:*

- Contact Natalya direct [barakta@barakta.org.uk](mailto:barakta@barakta.org.uk) (Permission given to use her email)
- Or [http://www.barakta.org.uk/bsl\\_resources.shtml](http://www.barakta.org.uk/bsl_resources.shtml)

*Some of our facilitators agreed that their e-mail addresses could be passed onto future teams. E-mail [team@bicon2006.org.uk](mailto:team@bicon2006.org.uk) for more details.*

Anything else to add?

"I had major problems with the layout of the venue, and this is something which I hope you will pass on to the University. I had been assured that there would be level access to all facilities, and this was, strictly speaking, correct, but getting to ramps etc. rather than using stairs would have meant walking a lot further (sometimes several hundred yards), which is exhausting for me at the best of times and was impossible in the hot sun. Inside the George Moore Building, it was frustrating to walk past dozens of empty rooms to reach the ones which we'd been allocated. It took me approximately fifteen

minutes to get from Reception to the most distant rooms; naturally this made it difficult for me to get between workshops in consecutive time slots. The lifts were good, but level access does not equate to disabled access; I saw at least four other people on sticks or crutches experiencing difficulties. I understand that booking rooms close together may have been difficult because work was being done in the university and no-one was sure when it would be complete, but would it have been so very difficult to rearrange the rooms close to the date of the event. The disabled toilet in Bedsit was locked for most of Sunday night. I'm wish to note these things in the hope that the University will rethink the facilities they offer to conferences and that future BiCon organisers will realise how difficult that much extra walking can make it for some people to attend and to participate fully.

After all that, I'd just like to say that I've been attending BiCons on and off since 1994 and that this was the one I enjoyed the most. The atmosphere was great, and I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all the organisers.“