



Highlands & Islands Equality Forum

LIFESCAN SCOTLAND/HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS EQUALITY FORUM SEMINAR FOR BUSINESS

Event Summary

HIEF were delighted to work in partnership with LifeScan Scotland Ltd to bring together members of the business community to discuss the impact of equality and diversity. Emphasis was placed on the current outlook for the Highlands & Islands and also on overcoming problems associated with inclusiveness. We were successful in encouraging both business networking and the exchange of thoughts, ideas and opinions.

The day commenced with a welcome from our chair, Sheree Sartain who is currently employed as Rural Research Networks Officer for SCVO. Sheree explained the context of the event and gave an overview of each speaker.

Our first speaker was Martin Sime, Chief Executive of SCVO. Martin's speech set the tone for the day and outlined the remit of HIEF and explained the link with SCVO. He went on to give an interesting account of how the same opportunities for inclusiveness apply to the voluntary sector and also how barriers to this can be overcome.

This linked in well with the topic covered by our second speaker, Bill Sylvester, Partnership Projects Director of Highlands & Islands Enterprise. Bill gave projections of the changing demography of the Highlands & Islands and Moray over the next 12 years. An aging population will make it even more important that we enable everyone of working age to secure employment – and that means overcoming present discriminations, prejudices and barriers. This was a fascinating insight into the future outlook for the area.

Our next two speakers came from LifeScan. Carolyn Caddick, Organisational Effectiveness Manager for LifeScan Scotland Ltd, gave an account of diversity within the organisation in Scotland and the steps taken to ensure that the benefits of difference were harnessed. Carolyn went on to explain the business case behind LifeScan's commitment to diversity and reiterated that achieving inclusion is not instantaneous but instead something that will take years to accomplish.

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Seminar for Business, 29th September 2005



Maria Simon, Director of Human Resources for LifeScan Inc had come all the way from California. Maria was keen to demonstrate diversity in action with LifeScan Inc and made evident the steps taken to ensure this was fulfilled. Maria also touched on the demographics of California and how this impacted on the organisation. Although this is markedly different to the situation in the Highlands & Islands, it was clear that similar obstacles and opportunities exist.

The morning session was concluded by Sheree. She gave a summary of the main points raised by the speakers and established the links between all the topics covered so far.

After lunch Mark Sutherland-Fisher of recruitment agency Czech Match Ltd explained how he had started bringing migrant workers to the area from Eastern Europe and some of the benefits that such recruitment can bring. Mark gave an account of the various processes that must be undergone before employment can be secured and also outlined the benefits to business that can be attained through recruiting migrant workers.

The day was concluded with a lively two part session from Kirk Tudhope of Ledingham Chalmers. Kirk conducted a short quiz on the equality issues facing HR departments and how these are dealt with. Delegates were confronted with a series of situations and questions and asked to choose the most appropriate course of action.

He then went on to give an update on equality legislation and its impact on employment. This covered all the strands of equality and gave an informative account on the current legal situation as well as information on the upcoming changes.

Delegates were given the opportunity to question the speakers individually after each presentation which gave rise to lively and topical debate.

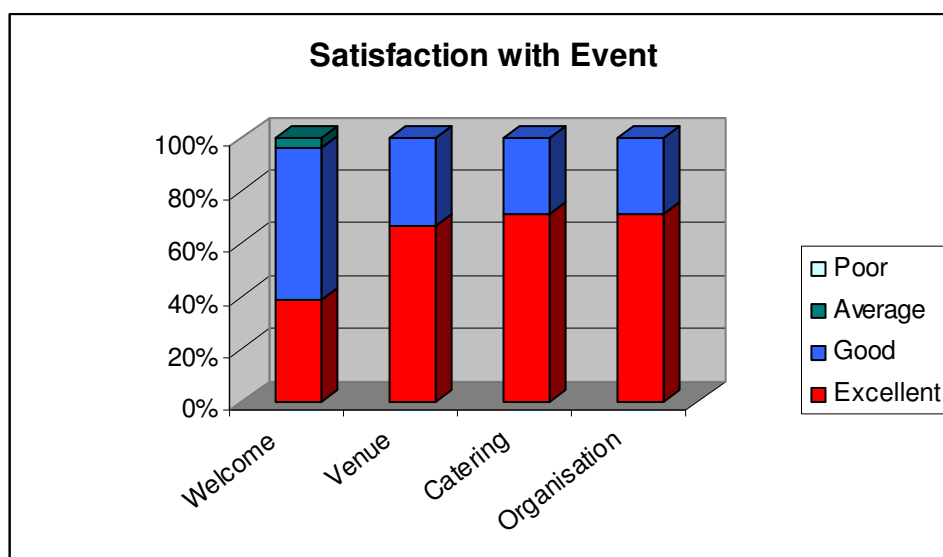
The day ended with a review of the issues raised throughout the seminar and left all with food for thought.

Event Feedback

Of the 60 delegates who attended, 90% stated that their knowledge on the topic had increased.

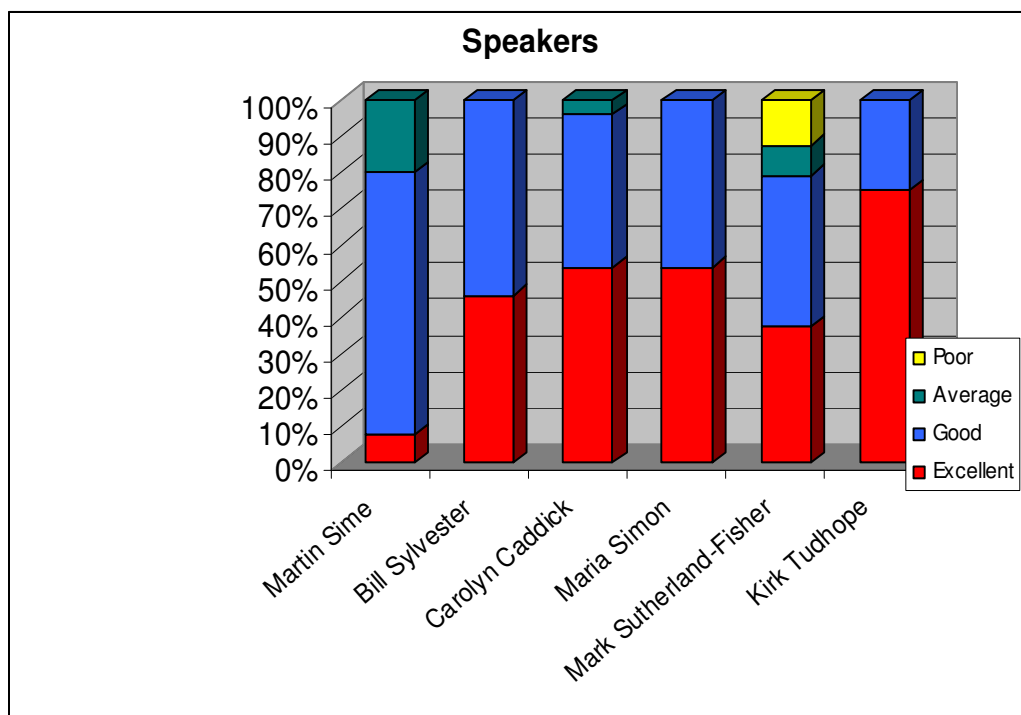
The make up of the audience was mainly private sector (60%) but there were also representation from the public sector (22%) and the voluntary sector (18%). This demonstrates the relevancy of the topic to all of society.

The graphs below indicate the popularity of the various aspects of the event as per the event evaluation forms:



Aviemore Highland Resort proved to be a popular location for the event with all delegates ranking the venue and catering as either excellent or good.

All delegates also seemed to be happy with the organisation of the event and the welcome from the chair proved to be popular too.



All of our speakers received great feedback and proved popular with the audience. Comments on the event overall showed it had been a successful and highly informative day.

Some comments:

"Well organised event – good opportunities for audience participation"

"Good speakers. Very informative info on demographics"

"Excellent, well run conference"

"Very rewarding day"

"Particularly impressed & informed by Kirk's talk on legislation"

"Interesting throughout, provided much food for thought"

"Varied, interesting and very relevant"

"Interesting and excellent venue"

"Interesting speakers giving a diverse perspective in a well timed event"