

# Highlands & Islands Equality Forum

## **HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS EQUALITY FORUM DIVERSITY AS A RESOURCE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES EVENT**

Highlands and Islands Equality Forum were delighted to welcome upwards of 100 individuals to our Employment Opportunities Event at the Royal Highland Hotel on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Event Aims**

The idea behind the event was to bring together “inclusive” employers from across the Highlands and Islands. These are employers who do not discriminate and welcome applications from under-represented groups. Given the changing demography within the Highlands & Islands, HIEF felt it important to demonstrate the commitment to inclusiveness that exists within the employment market in this area. Through collaboration with JobCentre Plus and Careers Scotland, we were able to identify the relevant market for such an event. We appointed an external PR company – Ad Direction – who co-ordinated all advertising and allowed us to reach the widest audience possible.

### **Exhibitors**

Interest in exhibiting at this event went beyond our expectations! Exhibition stands allowed participating organisations to display material promoting both their function and also their recruitment policies. A number of other bodies who were unable to exhibit also supplied HIEF with materials to be distributed to those attending. Most of those exhibiting also publicised current vacancies so there was a huge variety of positions on offer.

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We were able to offer space to the following organisations:

NHS Highland  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Communities Scotland  
Highland Council  
Careers Scotland  
JobCentre Plus  
Scottish Childminding Association  
Working for Families  
Blue Arrow Recruitment  
Global Highland  
Northern Constabulary  
Brook Street  
UHI Millennium Institute

## **Workshops**

Throughout the course of the day, a series of workshops were running in an adjacent seminar room. We were pleased to welcome 3 experts in the field of diversity who were able to give insight into some of the issues affecting job seekers today.

Brian MacKechnie, Senior Studies Institute, Strathclyde University – Brian gave a fascinating account into the changing demography of Scotland and how this would impact upon business. He also demonstrated business benefits and practical solutions.

Anne Meikle/Gail Cook, Fairplay Scotland – Anne and Gail provided an introduction into the work of Fairplay Scotland and also an insight into gender imbalance and associated issues. Subjects such as equal pay and flexible working were discussed and further information provided.

Linda Prattis, Diversity Manager, JobCentre Plus – Linda gave a presentation entitled "Diversity Works" which set the scene as regards the current labour market. Linda also gave an overview of both constraints and opportunities and gave an interesting account of how the role of Employer Diversity Manager can benefit both organisations and individuals.

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## Feedback

Given the nature of the event no feedback forms were distributed to those attending. However HIEF staff regularly approached individuals to ensure that the event met their needs. A number of people commented that they were both surprised and pleased by both the number and variety of employment opportunities open to them. Many of those questioned expressed the view that they felt welcomed by exhibitors and did not feel conspicuous or "out of place" as perhaps might be the case at mainstream employment events. We were successful in attracting many individuals from typically under represented groups and this allowed us to make many new contacts and continue to appropriately develop the work of Highlands & Islands Equality Forum.

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