



Highlands & Islands Equality Forum

End-of-Year Report December 2008

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Highlands & Islands Equality Forum

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2008 has been a very busy year for HIEF. Thanks to effective partnership working and good support from colleagues, partners and friends, we have been able to deliver well against our key work strands despite varying numbers within the team.

You will recall that our key objectives for the year were:

1. Training and Learning Programme

- To deliver 5 awareness-raising roadshows

2. Research:

- To work with UHI Policy Web to identify and support relevant equalities research to inform our project's work and the understanding of those in our region.

3. Strategic Work:

- To share information through networks and partnerships, including exploring the growth of British and European networks to facilitate a mutual sharing of good practice.

4. Events:

- To deliver at least 2 high profile events to raise awareness of key and current issues

5. Communication & Information Technology Programme

- To enhance the HIEF website to create a market place which will include equality tools and resources such as training modules, information updates, toolkits, e-learning and examples of good practice

6. Evaluation:

- To commission a large independent external evaluation to inform future direction and objectives of the project

1.1 Looking then, at the progress we've made on our 6 key work strands:

1.1.1 Training and Learning Programme - *To deliver 5 awareness-raising roadshows*

What we have achieved:

Roadshows: We have delivered a total of 10 Roadshows across the length and breadth of the area: Helmsdale (2/10), Alness (3/10), Lochgilphead (13/10), Kirkwall (20/10), Lerwick (21/10), Harris (3/11), Stornoway (4/11), 2 sessions in Inverness (8/12 and 9/12) and a final one in Skye (11/12).

¹ 168 participants have benefited from these general awareness-raising sessions (an average of 17 per roadshow). 27% were male; 73% female participants. It has been a bit disappointing that only 71% have been from the private sector with the majority (47%) coming from the public sector (35% vol; 1% indivs). This may be because we have been running round table discussions on the same days which meant that our visit was widely advertised through the community planning partners attending these sessions. Pre-training awareness amongst roadshow delegates averaged 43% with 86% of beneficiaries saying that their awareness had increased after the training. 6% wanted to learn more. 99% evaluated the roadshow as excellent or good

Training: 17 Training events were delivered to: UHI Executive Office Staff and Senior Management from Faculty Partners; Lochaber College – a mix of all departments; Pentland Housing – staff and board members; Inverness College – mostly staff induction but also curriculum managers and H.R. personnel; Moray College – a mix across departments; Highland Hospice – Chief Executive and departmental managers, clinical leads etc; Cairngorm Mountain – all staff; Chartered Institute of Personnel Development – open to all members; and Women@Work – Dingwall and Skye. The content of our training this year has focussed on attitudinal awareness with specific work on the subject of stereotyping, but we also delivered a session to Cairngorm Mountain on general disability awareness.

Each of these sessions required consultation with the client, planning and preparation of the training content, compilation of delegate packs with exercises and handouts, and delivery as well as recording and analysis of data post-event.

Our various training sessions benefited 231 participants (an average of 14 per event). 38% were male; 62% female participants. Private sector engagement is high at 26% due largely to our work with Cairngorm Mountain, but the main beneficiary has been the public sector (53%) because of the work with UHI and Inverness, Lochaber and Moray Colleges. 17% have been from the voluntary sector with the remaining 4% being individuals – largely board members. Pre-training awareness averaged 30% (much lower than the 43% at roadshows) – possibly because of the various public bodies requiring all staff to be trained as part of their public equality duties – and so we are reaching those who would not normally engage with. 87% of

¹ December 2008 data has been added to this report since its publication on 15th December: Final analysis may therefore have given rise to altered figures

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beneficiaries said that their awareness had increased after the training. 6% wanted to learn more. 96% evaluated the roadshow as excellent or good

Chart 1: Training and Roadshow events – analysis of attendance by sector

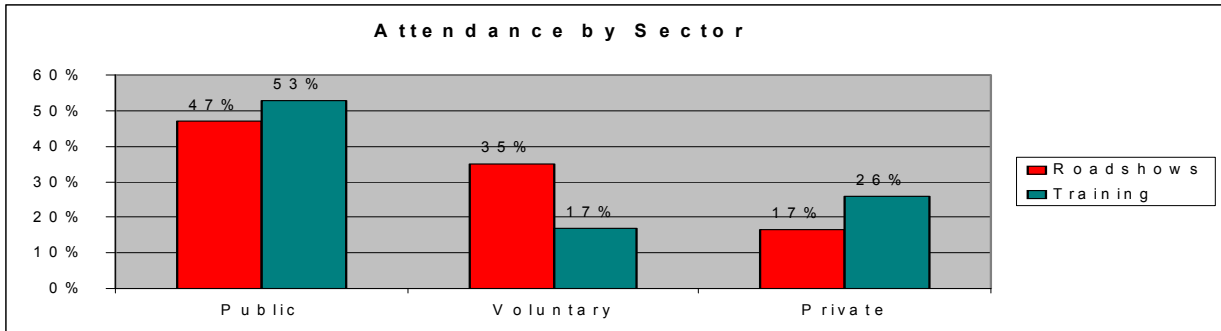


Chart 2: Training and Roadshow events – analysis of Pre-event Awareness

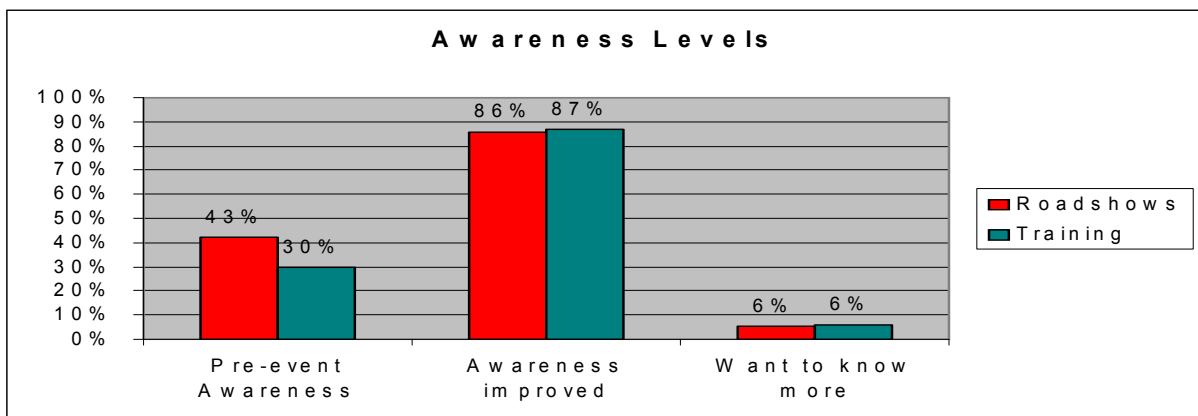
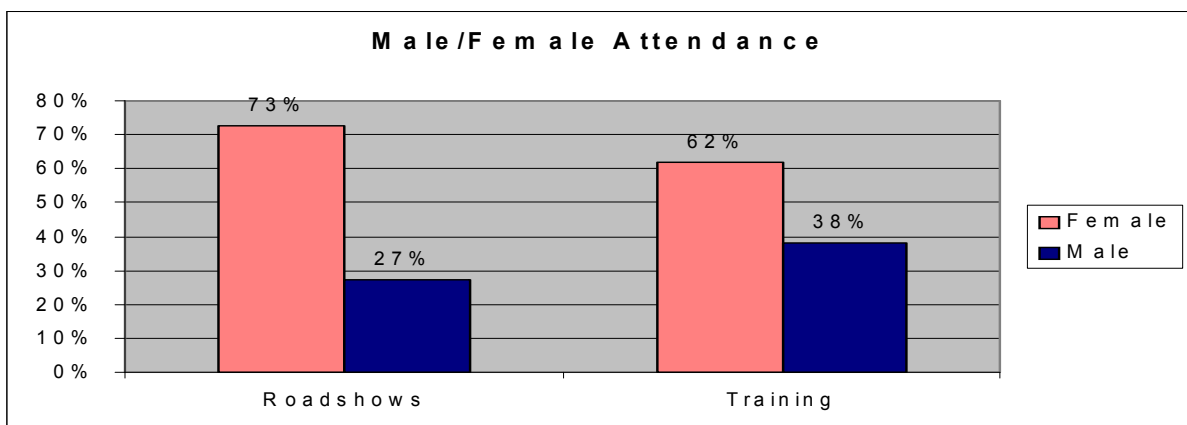


Chart 3: Training and Roadshow events – analysis of Male/Female Attendance



Study Modules: Sheila Fraser of SCVO, Euan Black of UHI and myself, worked together over the year to develop a framework for a series of four nationally accredited online study modules at a postgraduate level. These can be used towards a Masters degree (constituting between 1/3 and 1/2 of a final award). They can also be stripped of the more advanced competences of 'analysis' and 'research' to provide training modules at approximately HNC level for more general use. We also plan a 'train the trainer' module at around an HND level which can be bolted on to provide a sustainable product that purchasers can cascade within their own organisations. Each module will have a 'taster' section of about 4hrs' work which can be used as a staff induction package as well as enabling prospective students to 'try out' the training/study to see if it is something they would want to pursue. By offering a higher level of study, we hope to engage with senior personnel who have the power to effect change in our community and workplace.

The outline plan of the framework has been sent to the Scottish Government and the EHRC for their comments and an application for the next development phase has been sent to ESF. We are currently seeking match funding to allow this to proceed and if successful, we will work on the module content and the validation and accreditation process from April 2009 to March 2010 with a market research study of potential clients, a pilot delivery programme and feedback/ fine tuning in the year April 2010 to March 2011. We aim to have the modules ready to roll out commercially later in 2011. HIEF will take the role of tutor and assessor with the validating university providing all other aspects of the certification process.

1.1.2. Research - *To work with UHI Policy Web to identify and support relevant equalities research to inform our project's work and the understanding of those in our region.*

What we have achieved:

Research into rural equalities

Whilst we haven't aligned with the UHI Policy Web as anticipated, we have carried out research into rural equalities. Outputs from our rural conference in February and round table discussions between the Equalities & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and local equality stakeholders (held in March/April) provided a useful insight into the barriers faced by marginalised and excluded groups and individuals, along with suggested practical ways to address the issues by way of collective actions and ownership. Our findings have informed several agencies, not least the EHRC and the Scottish Government, and were published in our event report which is accessible from the HIEF website (www.hief.org.uk).

SREN

It is also partly due to this research that the ²EHRC Scotland's capacity-building work with the voluntary sector in Scotland has a primary focus in 2008/09 to establish the Scottish Rural Equalities Network (SREN). Through this network, they hope to enable and empower local equalities organisations/communities, both voluntary and public sector, to form networks that

² Quote from EHRC Tender of Contract for development of SREN

will enable partnership approaches to tackling the inequality barriers that rural areas face across Scotland.”

HIEF has secured the contract to conduct a scoping exercise that will lead to the full development and delivery of this network based on our findings of need. Although this work reaches out beyond the Highlands & Islands to other parts of rural Scotland, we feel we are best placed to deliver it given our involvement to date with the research. We are showcasing the HIEF model to motivate and support other rural areas to set up their own local networks and complement each other in a joined-up national network.

Phases 1 & 2

Phase one of the EHRC brief is to complete a mapping of existing equalities networks in rural Scotland, hold round table discussions on what local stakeholders would welcome in a SREN, facilitate the establishment of at least two local networks, compile a database of those wishing to join the network, deliver 6 train-the-trainer sessions across rural Scotland and report on what the framework and substance of the SREN might be. The Commission anticipate additional funding in 2009/10 for Phase 2 to build and launch the SREN – and HIEF hope that they will secure this extension of contract and secure funding to provide the secretariat for the network.

We have already held most of the consultation round tables – in Argyll & Bute, Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, Aberdeenshire, Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway, Borders and Highland. We hope to hold two more in January 2009 – in Central Scotland and Moray. Already we are finding that there is a commonality of what folks would want from a SREN – but it is also exciting to get down to local differences. What has been particularly heartening has been the warm welcome given to HIEF and to the idea of a SREN as a way of building local capacity and overcoming the barriers to E&D caused by rurality.

One other piece of research – funding of equalities work

HIEF also facilitated a small meeting of local equality stakeholders to discuss the funding situation for equalities work in Scotland. This fed into a piece of SCVO research commissioned and funded by the EHRC. ³Ruchir Shah of SCVO has since published a report of the key findings.

1.1.3. Strategic Work - *To share information through networks and partnerships, including exploring the growth of British and European networks to facilitate a mutual sharing of good practice.*

What we have achieved:

Consultancy Network Group (CNG)– 1277 members

Some maintenance has been carried out on the HIEF database throughout the year but I am still certain that there are outdated and duplicated data that needs to be stripped out. We also need to capture the different fields of interest of each member to allow for more effective flexibility in communication. A major overhaul will be undertaken as part of the SREN development, and I would anticipate a “leaner, meaner” network.

³ [SCVO Equalities policy context for the Third Sector with a focus on the EHRC - Policy Intelligence Update - September 2008](#)

864 members have email contact

The 864 of our members who have email contact received the monthly e-bulletins prepared by Rosemary McKinnon and Claire Byard of Highland Council. Following feedback from recipients, Rosemary and Claire now prepare the bulletin in both pdf and word format and HIEF converted archive bulletins from previous months into pdf for ease of access to the various hyperlinks within each bulletin. Recipients can also request a word document version to be emailed to them rather than accessing the links from the HIEF website. We also carried out one complete mailing to the full CNG but this was very time consuming and expensive. When we have a revamped database that can better identify those who need this form of communication, we will be better placed to deliver a more inclusive communications service.

SREN

As already mentioned, this network is under development and the revamp of the HIEF network will align with this.

Media

As well as the adverts for Highlands R Us and the extensive media coverage of that event, we also took out an advert in the Big Issue to coincide with a feature on Equality & Diversity headed up by an interview with Morag Alexander of the EHRC.

Building Relations

Strategic groups: In 2008, I participated in several groups - the Highland Community Planning Equality & Diversity Strategy Group, UHI's Equal Opportunities Committee, Inclusive Cairngorms group and the European Structural Funds Programme Monitoring Committee.

We continue to work closely with Gordon Ellis of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and I was able to contribute to a filming session by the Scottish Government as part of their internal award programme. I also keep in touch regularly with other local equality stakeholders such as HIE, UHI, Highland Council, NHS Highland and Northern Constabulary - and would certainly welcome a closer relationship going forward with these key agencies.

Nationally, we have fostered good links with the EHRC – meeting Philippa Bonella (before she left), Gillian Lawrence and Douglas Guest several times. Other regular 'close friends' of HIEF are Lesley Irving and Yvonne Strachan of the Scottish Government's Equality Unit and Mukami McCrum of the Central Scotland Racial Equality Council. By meeting these key people regularly, HIEF keeps close to the heart of national strategy.

I've also met with various people interested in the work of HIEF and those who wanted help with work they are doing. As well as face-to-face meetings, the HIEF team regularly receives telephone calls, emails and letters with general enquiries on equality & diversity. We do not give legal advice but can give some general background information and signpost enquirers to where they can have their questions answered. This may be to the local authorities' equality officers or a specialist equality advocacy group or the EHRC help line for example. We never leave any enquiry unanswered. We also assist those wishing to hold an event in our area but limited man/woman power this year has meant that we took a less hands on role than usual. This year

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we assisted agencies such as Inverness College (Open Diversity Day), The Co-operative Society and Inclusion Scotland amongst others. Another recurring request is for us to comment on various Equality Policies and Equality Schemes - this is time-consuming but I like to think it is a helpful service fully in line with our remit.

Consultations: Along with Isla Cruden (UHI) and Liz Scott (HIE), I contributed to a consultation event 'Diversity Delivers – the first equal opportunities strategy for public appointments' held by the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland. I also attended the Scottish Government's round table discussion on their strategy on race and found that our understanding of rural issues made a useful contribution to this session. HIEF has also participated in various surveys circulated such as the NHS survey on 'A question of Access'.

Presentations: HIEF is now regularly invited to speak at equality events and local forum meetings. I gave presentations on the HIEF project model to the Central Scotland Racial Equality Council and Moray Council. Keynote speeches included presentations on the subject of building bridges in rural communities and were delivered at conferences run by the Co-operative Society and the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership. On 1st October, HIEF played host to a visit of 24 officials from the European Commission, ESEP, HIPP and Fisheries. Our presentation on the HIEF project was very well received with prolonged questioning that evidenced a keen interest in what we've achieved. We made sure that they understood the gratitude we felt towards our project management partners for their ongoing support, and we also stressed the complementarities between our work and the other excellent initiatives demonstrated by other forums such as the Highland Community Planning Equality & Diversity Strategy Group.

1.1.4. Events - *To deliver at least 2 high profile events to raise awareness of key and current issues*

What we have achieved: 'Equal Opportunities in Rural Scotland'

Our first main event of the year was the 'Equal Opportunities in Rural Scotland' Conference in the Drumossie hotel, Inverness on 26th February. This was a highly successful event and attracted 163 registrations – 140 of whom turned up on the day. Delegates came from rural areas outside of the Highlands & Islands and created a unique networking opportunity (96 delegates were ESF eligible). There was a good mix of sectors and interest: 51% were public sector, 41% voluntary, 4% private and 4% interested individuals. The main funder was the Scottish Government with the EHRC covering the costs of the very expensive palantypists. A steering group drew on expertise from different areas of equality and different geographical locations. Speakers and facilitators who arrived the night before enjoyed a dinner and the opportunity to chat. This allowed valuable time spent with Lesley Irving of the Scottish Government and Ros Meiklem of the EHRC.

Feedback was very positive and the outputs were so numerous and wide-ranging that it was a real challenge to distil it all. A full report was published on the HIEF web. The information gathered on barriers to equal opportunities in rural areas was summarised and taken forward into a series of round table discussions between the EHRC and local equality agencies. Events in

Dumfries and Glenrothes gathered information on what is expected of the Commission in response to the issues identified, and the final event in Inverness on 17th April was a further step on the road to positive action as two main objectives were identified for the EHRC to take forward: Communicating their services to the general public (taking rural challenges into consideration), and a commitment to working across rural areas to provide individual casework and advocacy support.

Highlands R Us 2008

Our second large event, Highlands R Us 2008, was held in Inverness City Centre on 8th July and was a huge success – attracting even larger crowds than last year and successfully communicating positive key messages about diversity to the general public. A series of workshops and seminars held in the Ramada Jarvis Hotel was, on the whole, well received – the African Drumming attracting the highest and most diverse attendance. The seminars on Jane Elliott's blue eye/brown eye exercise and the exclusion of people with learning disabilities were also well received, but the EHRC's session on rural diversity was not so successful – due largely to the failure of the presentation technology.

Activity on the stage in Falcon Square really held the attention of a large audience and the seating provided this year was a successful addition, as were the large gazebos. The largest crowd congregated at 2pm to watch SHIMCA's (Scottish Highlands & Islands and Moray Chinese Association) Lion Dance, and again at the close of the day with the funk band, The Xylophone Race. Arts in Motion delivered interpretations of key messages in short, impactive pieces of theatre.

Our World Map was very popular and it was exciting to see sticky dots (placed by passers by) the length and breadth of the world denoting our Highland 'Routes' to diversity – we even had someone from Azerbaijan! The Vox Pops exercise that accompanied the world map exercise gave our event sponsors and funders the opportunity to ask some straw poll questions. A full event report and photos were published to the HIEF web and a short DVD was compiled.

1.1.5. Communication & Information Technology Programme - *To enhance the HIEF website to create a market place which will include equality tools and resources such as training modules, information updates, toolkits, e-learning and examples of good practice.*

What we have achieved:

Following discussions with the SCVO I.T. department, we plan to bring a revamped HIEF website into the infrastructure of the SCVO website. It will retain its external portal www.hief.org.uk and the HIEF branding but will benefit from the enhanced technological infrastructure that SCVO can offer. This will allow us to build a three-dimensional website with back office database facilities etc which we can populate with tools and resources. This is an expensive process and we consciously decided to hold off further development until we understand how it might complement the SREN web. We want to avoid expensive alterations further down the line and feel we can use learning gained from the SREN to provide a resource that will meet local needs.

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Throughout the year, however, the existing HIEF web has been regularly updated with the E Bulletins and Calendar of Event being the most populated areas within the site.

1.1.6. Evaluation - *To commission a large independent external evaluation to inform future direction and objectives of the project*

What we have achieved:

We invited tenders for an independent evaluation of HIEF to date and selected ODS Consulting to undertake the commission. We worked closely with Andrew Fyfe and felt that he quickly understood the HIEF project. A stakeholders' meeting was held in Fairways House and proved very enlightening as to how HIEF is viewed by our strategic partners in the area. The evaluation has now been completed and a full report is published on the HIEF website.

Key points from the report:

Awareness: Members of HIEF's network generally have a good awareness of HIEF, their objectives and services on offer. But there is room for improvement especially in regard to engaging with those who are more negative towards equality issues

Services: Only 3% of those surveyed had not used HIEF's services. Conferences and events were particularly well received with 75% of attendees rating these as 'very good' and most citing this as the service of most value to them.

Benefits: Stakeholders said that the HIEF network was very beneficial to them allowing them to reach out widely to others. They also drew on HIEF's expertise across all strands of equality. 80% of those surveyed said that HIEF had made at least some difference to their understanding of good equalities practice.

Perceived impact: Raising awareness and highlighting the importance of equalities issues were seen as the major achievements of HIEF to date. In addition, HIEF's training which offers opportunity for staff professional development is welcomed. Stakeholders believed that HIEF has successfully raised the profile of equalities across Highlands & Islands.

Equalities as a priority: Equalities is becoming more of a priority for stakeholders, so educating staff is very important: There is a need for instilling good practice at the earliest point and mainstreaming evenly throughout organisations

A strategic role: HIEF have increasingly played a strategic role in informing the Scottish Government of current equalities issues in rural settings and is currently working with key national agencies on a joined-up strategic approach to equalities in rural Scotland.

ODS's recommendations for the purpose of HIEF going forward:

Continue with successful aim to date to raise awareness of the importance of equalities for businesses (as employers and as service providers) – and to help develop skills and expertise in equalities amongst these groups (mainly through signposting rather than the direct provision of services).

⁴“To allow HIEF to achieve its purpose, it is important that it keeps informed about the impact of discrimination on individuals in the Highlands & Islands. In fulfilling its purpose, HIEF will also be able to make a wider contribution to the strategy of equalities in rural areas. There are clear signs that both the Government and the EHRC wish to augment HIEF's local delivery with a contribution to strategic development of the equalities agenda in Scotland”.

We were encouraged, therefore, to find that our own perceptions of the efficacy of our work are borne out by independent evaluation. The report has helped us decide that our focus going forward will remain to raise awareness amongst people in employment whilst continuing to foster links with those who are facing discrimination so that their messages are included in our training. We also aim to continue in a strategic capacity and play a key role in the development of the rural agenda.

2.0 Other miscellaneous aspects of HIEF activity

2.1 Progress against ESF targets:

Overall we have made excellent progress against our ESF targets. There are so many different parameters that our ESF funders measure us against that it would be of limited benefit to report on the full picture in this report. However, some of them are very interesting.

So that we can finish on a happy note, let me start with a couple of targets that we failed to meet:

Failed Target #1: We expected to reach 80 participants from Social Enterprises. Without getting into the debate about what is a voluntary organisation and what is a social enterprise, I have to say that only 4 participants defined themselves as belonging to a social enterprise. However, a further 105 defined themselves as belonging to a voluntary organisation and I'd guess that a few of these could be classed as social enterprises – although we would still certainly have failed to reach a full 80.

Failed Target #2: We stated in our ESF application that we would create two training certificates at Level 1: A HIEF Certificate of Attendance and a HIEF Certificate of Equality & Diversity Awareness. I'm sorry to report that we didn't develop these certificates. I had considered doing them retrospectively but it would be very expensive in terms of printing and postage costs as well as staff time, so think we have to accept that this is something to take forward to remedy in the next year.

⁴ Quote from ODS Evaluation Report

But, other than that – huge successes!!

Table 1. HIEF Progress against ESF Targets

Measure	Target	Actual	Achieved as % of target
Total Beneficiaries	200	541	270%
Employed	200	502	251%
Economically inactive	7	39	557%
In Education	11	56	509%
Lone Parents	2	26	1300%
Family/Caring responsibilities	28	175	625%
Disabilities	13	37	284%
Mental Health Problems	3	51	1700%
Physical Illness	3	27	900%
Multiple Deprivations	15	34	227%
Ethnic Minorities	8	90	1125%

2.2 Participants from SMEs 2004 – 8

The targets that we have to measure against each year are partly dictated by the funding conditions of ESF (and what is being measured has changed over the years) and partly by some additional information that we wish to collate for ourselves (such as the representation of participants across the sectors).

In our project management group discussion about our target audience, it became clear that the term 'SME' can be taken to mean the private sector or can be small to medium enterprises across all 3 sectors. Concerns that past reporting may have given the impression that our engagement with SMEs had diminished led to a retrospective analysis of our statistics over the past four years which clearly shows that, whilst we have engaged fewer numbers of private sector participants at times (especially during the period that the 'Equality Matters In Business' project), our engagement with SMEs has remained robust.

Table 2. SMEs by Sector

	SMEs			
	Total	Private	Public	Vol
2004	320	168	62	90
2005	205	85	7	113
2006	403	188	82	133
2007	209	46	90	73
2008 to date	242	71	112	59

Table 3. SMEs by Sector (%)

SMEs					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 to date
% Private	52.5%	41.5%	46.7%	22.0%	29.3%
% Public	19.4%	3.4%	20.3%	43.1%	46.3%
% Voluntary	28.1%	55.1%	33.0%	34.9%	24.4%

Chart 4 Sectoral % in SMEs

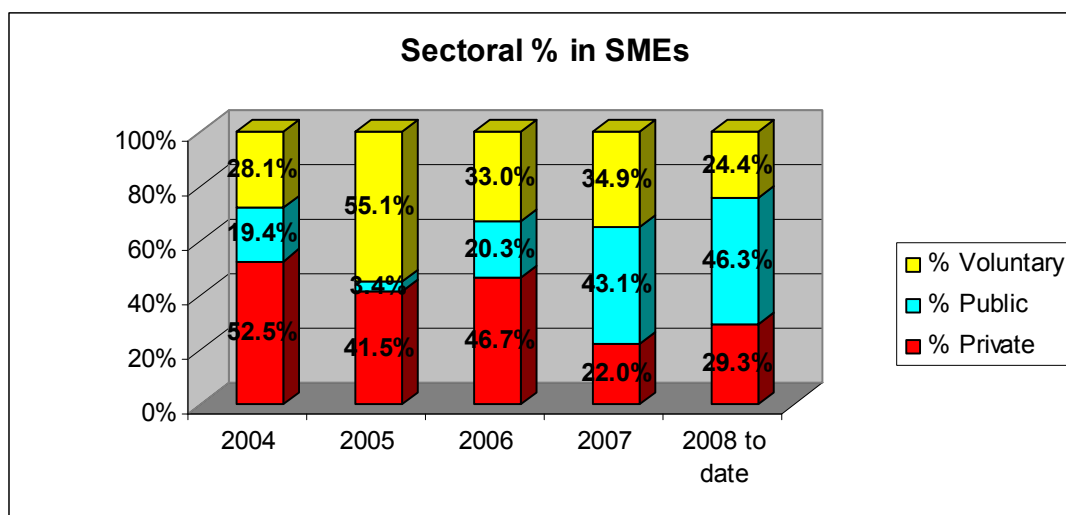


Table 4 Large Enterprises by Sector

	Large Enterprises			
	Total	Private	Public	Voluntary
2004	68	13	53	2
2005	104	24	79	1
2006	137	17	108	12
2007	101	13	83	5
2008 to date	157	0	141	16

Table 5 Sectoral % in Large Enterprises

Large Enterprises					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 to date
% Private	19.1%	23.1%	12.4%	12.9%	0.0%
% Public	77.9%	76.0%	78.8%	82.2%	89.8%
% Voluntary	2.9%	1.0%	8.8%	5.0%	10.2%

Chart 5 Sectoral % in Large Enterprises

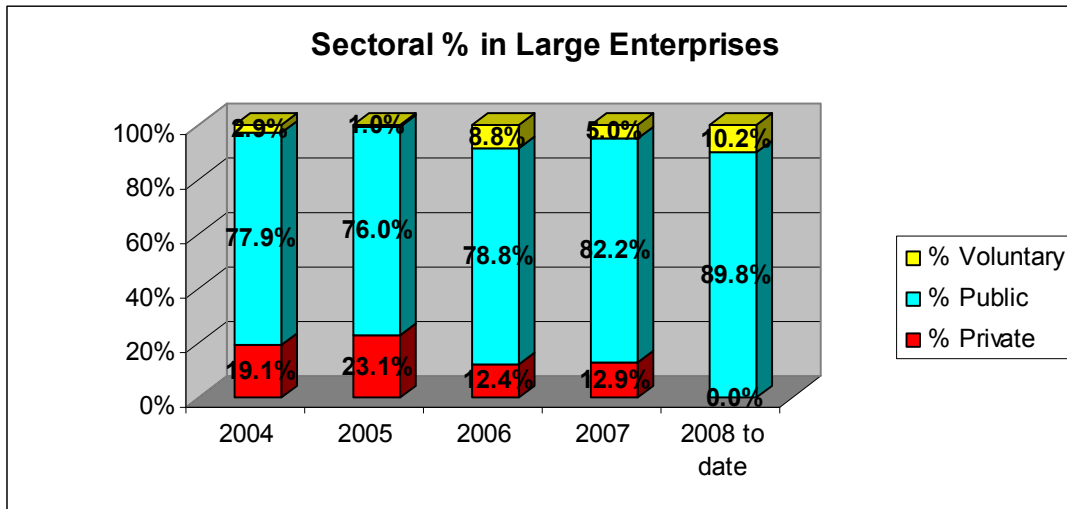
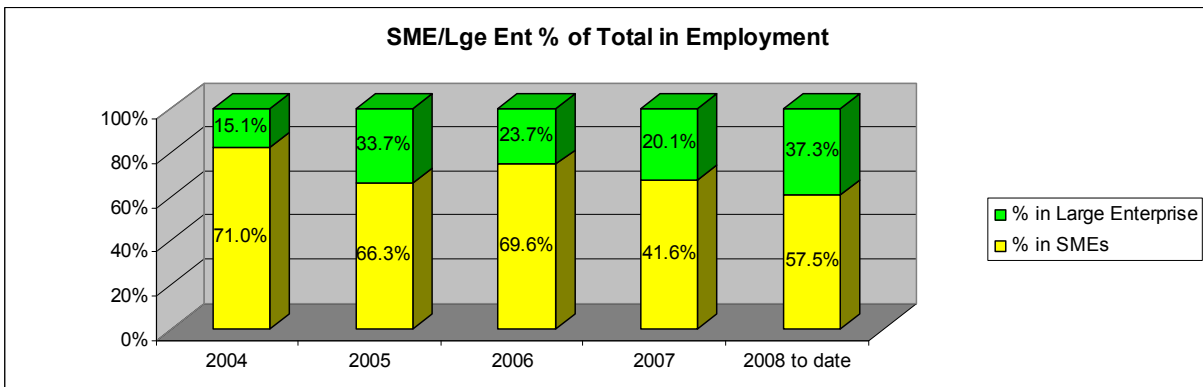


Table 6 % of Those Employed in SMEs/Large Enterprises

	Total in employment	% in SMEs	% in Lge Ents
2004	451	71.0%	15.1%
2005	309	66.3%	33.7%
2006	579	69.6%	23.7%
2007	502	41.6%	20.1%
2008 to date	421	57.5%	37.3%

Chart 6 % of Those Employed in SMEs/Large Enterprises



3.0 HIEF Staff Development

To ensure that the HIEF team keep abreast of the ever-changing equality agenda, we do from time-to-time, have the opportunity to attend events run by others.

Events and Training Attended

As a bit of light relief after HIEF's February conference, I attended an STUC meeting on the EU Lisbon Treaty and enjoyed the 'debate' around the tensions between the commitment to a free market economy and the protection of workers' rights - equality and diversity being very relevant.

Our colleagues in SCVO generously gave HIEF one copy of Gillian Neish's training material on race and I benefited from Gillian's train the trainer session by Video Conference. These materials will be very useful to our online modules and other training programmes.

I attended a training event held by Breaking Barriers (17/9) and it was good to refresh knowledge of LGBT issues. Other events that I have attended include Caledonian University's 'Innovate to Integrate' seminar (26th June) which I found to be of patchy usefulness. Of more useful interest were Brian McKechnie's Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice Roadshow (30th April) and UHI's Public Lecture (14th May) delivered by Yvonne Strachan in which HIEF was given many plaudits.

As a member of Inclusive Cairngorms, I was invited along with members of the Cairngorm National Park Authority to SNH's training on EQ Impact Assessing. This was delivered by an external agent and was very enjoyable. Of most benefit to me was to realise that we are delivering high quality training of our own and that we can take confidence in the knowledge that we are doing a good job.

Day-to-day Support

All HIEF staff are given excellent support and development by SCVO with regular one-to-one meetings, line management and HR support. I spent four days in Perth completing an SVO management training course. Margaret Ann Clark, a solicitor specialising in employment law, was a good source of technical information and I learnt a few things about equality! I have also received training on Health & Safety and attended our summer Away Day. At The Gathering, HIEF hosted a table at the Charity Awards dinner and welcomed guests Isla Cruden, Barbara Love, Douglas and Fidelma Guest, Mukami McCrum and Gordon Ellis.

4.0 Next steps

Extension Project 2008

Because of the delay in the start date of the next ESF programme, HIEF has been given an extension to our 2008 project until the end of March 2009. We still, however, have to confirm our match funding for this by the 9th January but aligning with the financial year will make things a bit easier for our SCVO finance department. We have, however, the challenge of finding extra match for the first three months of the new year as well as for April 2009 onwards.

ESF 2009

We have submitted two ESF applications – one which contains all our usual activity plus the work we plan to do to develop the SREN. This will include a series of five seminars to be held in rural Scotland to continue the debate on rural issues. We will focus on rural identity and diversity. This first ESF application is for a three year period April 2009 – March 2012 which coincides with the end of this final ESF programme. By then, we will have to have developed an exit strategy for HIEF to continue.

The second ESF application is a two-year one for the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) work around the development of our online study and training modules. This is a large and costly piece of work and has been kept as a separate work stream in case funding is not forthcoming – it will be easier then not to pull out from this piece without jeopardising other HIEF work.

Working together

We want to continue with a balance of delivery and strategic work and are keen to open up a dialogue on new ways in which key local and national equality stakeholders can engage with the HIEF project. I will be working on a new HIEF Strategic Plan for the 1st April 2009 when we have a better idea of what our funding (and therefore our capacity) will be. Your thoughts on what you would like HIEF to do and how you might be engaged in our work, is always welcome.

.....And Finally!

5.0 Thanks

Partners and Funders

We are of course indebted to those who support and fund our work throughout the year – whether that is in a general sense as match funders or those who help us with specific events. We are particularly grateful for ESF funding as without it we would not be in existence. My personal thanks go to Isla Cruden (UHI) and Liz Scott (HIE) for their loyal and consistent support and willing engagement with the work of HIEF. Our management meetings are a useful part of our work schedule but we also achieve much outside of this.

HIEF/SCVO

Although I have spent most of the year as the only fulltime member of the HIEF team, SCVO has provided a full complement of staff to safeguard the project's delivery and I am very grateful to several people for their support over the months. You have to look no further than the huge support of 'Highlands R Us' from all our Scottish offices: I don't even want to name names for fear of leaving someone out – but they're all listed in the event report.

Administrative support has come from Sasha Milligan/Devine, Hayley MacKenzie, Matt Colbourne, Ross Brindle, and most recently – Gregor Yule. Alison Cairns has overall responsibility for the HIEF project and has provided line management support to the team and taken a very hands-on role especially in regard to strategic work and funding applications.

HIEF Leader's End-of-Year Report December 2008

Barbara Love has dealt with the finances in the widest sense – from ESF applications and claims to other financial modelling for particular pieces of work. Both Ali and Barbara can be relied on to pitch in and turn their hand to anything that needs doing and I simply could not have got through the year without them. And last, but certainly not least, my thanks to Matt Tyrer who has since October been on secondment to HIEF as Development Officer. He joined us at a really busy time and in true HIEF/SCVO fashion tackled a huge learning curve whilst delivering flat out in roadshows, training and SREN seminars. Someone outside of work asked me the other day whether an additional new member of staff was a real benefit or whether it involved a lot of time invested in training. I very confidently replied that my new development officer was a true bonus from day one and I'd like to thank Matt for that.

Report Ends

Morag E Redwood 15.12.08