

Information Day

The National Hotel, Dingwall – 24th May 2007

For people for whom English is a second or other language

REPORT

Summary

Following on from a successful Information Day event in Inverness in 2006, it was decided to hold a similar day in Dingwall to allow people in other areas to access this kind of event. The day was aimed to provide information on opportunities for education, on services and facilities that might help new people coming to work and settle in this area. The National Hotel Function Room was chosen as the venue as being a good size and convenient for both bus and train. The event ran from 12 noon to 7 o'clock in the evening.

What we did.

Planning was very much on the lines of last year but using the previous experience to fine tune the organisation of the event.

60 groups and organisations were invited and 20 of these responded to say they would like to display. Categories included Banks, Police, Procurator Fiscal, Citizen's Advice Bureau, NHS, Schools, Ethnic Groups, Publishers, English language providers, Providers of other education opportunities, Highland Libraries, Fire Service, Careers advice.

A leaflet was designed using the format of the previous one but making it clearer that this was a drop-in day where people could come and go as they pleased. It was decided to add Latvian and Lithuanian to the languages displayed on the front as these were becoming more prevalent in the Easter Ross area.

5000 leaflets were produced and distributed through the same channels as previously - Ethnic groups and associations, libraries, medical centres, schools, Service Points, CABs and English classes.

Advertising

The same radio advertisement as last time was used and went out on Moray Firth Radio. As well as English it went out in Chinese, Bengali, Polish and Russian.

Posters were displayed on the door of the hotel.

Evaluation questionnaires for attendees were available at the door for people to fill in as they left. It was also available in Polish. A £25 voucher was awarded to the one drawn out of the hat at the end of the day.

Stall holders

The hall was a good size for the number of exhibitors and each had a table to themselves.

Translation Service

We had a Bengali interpreter for some of the time and a Polish speaker for the whole time. The latter was able also to communicate effectively in Latvian and Russian which proved very useful.

Refreshments

Tea, coffee and biscuits were available for the whole day.

How did it work out? What might we change if doing again?

The Venue

The venue was excellent. Good access, easy parking and roomy enough for the exhibitors without being too big. The hotel staff were very helpful. However the number of people attending was lower than anticipated and it may be that, despite the proximity to bus and train travel, this kind of transport is too infrequent, or too difficult to access, for many people to use.

The Stalls

Were a good size and there were enough electricity sockets for all who wanted power.

The Translators

These were excellent both for the Moray Firth Radio ad and for the interpreting on the day. The Bengali interpreter did not have much to do despite the knowledge that there are a lot of Bengali speakers in the area. It was a good idea to have Polish available for all of the event.

General evaluation

The main observation was that, this time, this event did not attract as many people as we had hoped and that it might be better to keep to Inverness for future events of this kind. However the groups and organisations who displayed felt that they gained a lot from the networking opportunities with each other, being able to find out about other provision in the area for this target group.

It was noted that a good proportion of the people who attended, came with a specific purpose and with particular information that they wanted to find out. Perhaps the very name “Information Day” does not make clear to someone with limited English that it is an open day for people to see what is on offer as well as the opportunity to speak to providers about particular queries.

It may also be that people now coming to the area are able to find out much of the information they need by other means, eg the Welcome website, Citizens’ Advice Bureau, or from compatriots who have already been here for a while.

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