

**Report to:** Head of Regeneration and Housing Investment  
**Report from:** Victoria Livingstone, Marketing Manager  
**Date:** 15 April 2010  
**Subject:** Assessment of the exhibition stand at the 2010  
Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference

### **Purpose of report**

To review and assess effectiveness, success and value for money of the Council's exhibition stand at this year's Chartered Institute of House (CIH) Annual Conference.

### **Event**

The exhibition ran from 16 – 18 March at the SECC in Glasgow alongside the CIH annual conference and was visited by delegates in between conference sessions and at the beginning and end of the days.

Aberdeen City Council's Housing and Environment Service joined Glasgow and Edinburgh City Councils in taking stands in the exhibition hall. The aim was to raise awareness of the Council's Housing services and specifically to focus on the ground breaking approach taken by the service to encourage independent living for the city's older population. The activity involved creating and manning a stand at the exhibition, dealing with individual requests for information and ensuring a presence both online and in conference literature.

In total 800 delegates attending the conference and visited the exhibition over the three days.

### **Presence created by Aberdeen City Council**

The Council was represented at the conference by the Head of Service for Housing and Community Regeneration who was also Chair of the CIH, the service director, senior and service managers, tenant participation officers and tenant volunteers. In total 10 Council staff and tenants attended the conference, a figure that roughly mirrored delegations from other organisations.

In addition, three of the Council's marketing team attending the exhibition with two staff members on the stand each day.

The cost of creating a stand at the exhibition was as follows:

	(£)
Stand	1380
Materials	1459
Accommodation	744
Travel	197
<b>Total</b>	<b>3780</b>

This was funded through the Housing marketing and engagement budget managed by the marketing team.

### **Assessment**

Attending the exhibition was valuable from a reputation point of view. Conference delegates represented other local authorities, housing associations, housing professionals and tenants with whom there is comparatively little contact outside of the event. A majority of the 800+ delegates came from across Scotland but there were also representations from England and Wales.

The Council's exhibition stand was also visited by Alex Neil MSP, Minister for Housing and Communities.

The marketing team engaged with approximately 300 delegates during the course of the conference. The team received very positive response to the Housing Services' proactive approach to independent living and especially for Rosewell House.

Feedback from the team reported that 'ultimately it was a good for building reputation with some stakeholders. However, our most important stakeholders are staff, citizens of Aberdeen and local media and these were not reached at all at the conference'.

In previous years the conference has been held in Aberdeen, where the local venue enabled a strong PR campaign to be developed for residents. This year the campaign concentrated on national recognition and a much broader approach. Opportunities to develop a national reputation are few and the team maximized this approach as much as possible.

Again, feedback from the team suggests that we maybe got more out of the conference when held in Aberdeen as 'we were able to take people around the city to see areas of best practice to build awareness' and a positive reputation.

### **Was the exhibition valuable from a business point of view?**

The purpose for attending the exhibition was to build and create a positive reputation, and to encourage dialogue and engagement amongst peers, stakeholders, and service users.

As we were not selling services directly from the stand the presence was not valuable from a business or commercial perspective.

### **Was the exhibition was valuable from an awareness point of view?**

This year the stand was far smaller than it had been at previous exhibitions with much less spent on dressing and decoration. As all materials had to be taken to Glasgow this approach was chosen for ease and to allow for the extra expense of travel and accommodation. Previous sponsorship arrangements for badges and lanyards were not renewed this year for the same cost reasons.

The approach at the exhibition was to invest in one giveaway to attract people to the stand. This featured the Council's website for follow up communication. The team also

produced information leaflets concentrating on the ethos and inspiration behind Rosewell House. The approach was broad and chosen to illustrate the 'next generation of care homes'. The giveaways were eye-catching, bright green apple corers that loosely supported the idea of independent living. These were a huge hit, quickly becoming a real talking point across the conference and driving many people to the stand.

To make the giveaways 'earn their keep' no one received a corer without listening to details about Rosewell and the benefits of the Council's approach to independent living. Each corer was handed out with a leaflet. Business cards were collected and a tally of people visiting the stand and asking for further information was also kept.

### **Did the exhibition provide value for money?**

With the interest in and traffic to the stand the exhibition achieved one aim in increasing profile, reputation and standing amongst peers. This could have been enhanced still further by having staff from the service present to provide more detailed information to answer questions and queries from delegates with specialist knowledge and interest.

Staff manning the stand had to deal with peaks of high interest between long quiet periods whilst the delegates attended conference sessions. An alternative to having marketing staff on the stand could be for housing staff attending the conference as delegates to also be on the stand during breaks and for it to be unmanned during sessions.

### **Other comments**

Preparation for, building and attending the event in Glasgow was quite intensive in terms of staff resources. During the conference three members of the marketing team were away from the office for several days. Whilst it is a core part of the team's function to produce this sort of marketing activity, we also needed to be able to call upon housing staff for detailed and specialist information, advice and guidance. The team struggled to make contact with the managers and teams at Rosewell to develop the promotional materials and this affected how complete a representation could be achieved. Should we attend future exhibitions it would be advantageous to have this support from the service through a working group in advance of the event and with stand support during.

### **Impact/presence and positive/negative PR?**

The cost of creating a stand at the three day exhibition was just under £4000. As a direct comparison this would buy a full page advert in the Press & Journal for all editions for one day or nearly two weeks advertising on Northsound FM. The value in attending the exhibition was that it gave us access to a focused audience we would never usually reach; the decision makers, policy makers, stakeholders and service users across Scotland. Ideally it would be our intention to build upon this for future exhibitions to increase the profile of the Council's housing services across Scotland.

It is the Service's decision whether or not to continue with a presence at the exhibition. We look forward to receiving this decision and also your comments and feedback on the conference, exhibition and this report.