

Darebin Family Violence Working Group

Evaluation of the Partnership

January 2004

Introduction

The Darebin Family Violence Working Group came first together in August 2002 and subsequently determined its purpose as the coordination of a partnership approach to address family violence issues in Darebin, including the following objectives:

- to bring together local knowledge about family violence in Darebin;
- to identify and monitor family violence issues in Darebin;
- to facilitate liaison between government and non-government agencies and networks involved in the prevention of and response to family violence;
- to develop joint protocols and guidelines to address family violence in Darebin;
- to contribute to Council's Darebin Family Violence Policy; and
- to coordinate initiatives that aim to reduce family violence, such as initiatives in schools, the development of a Darebin family violence service directory, and contribute to Community Safety Month and the Week Without Violence.

This document describes the method that was used to gather feedback from the members of the Darebin Family Violence Working Group (ie., the partnership), summarises the findings and presents recommendations.

Evaluation method

In November 2003, a questionnaire was mailed to the members of the DFVWG together with a stamped and addressed return envelope. The questionnaire included 23 Likert-Scale questions with 5 predefined choices, ranging from "1 = Disagree" to "5 = Agree". In addition, three open questions and space for additional comments on three of the Likert-Scale questions was provided. The questions sought to elicit feedback on the achievements of the DFVWG's objectives, both on process and tangible outcomes of the group's work. The questions were phrased in such a way that the highest score (5) represented the most desirable outcome.

The questionnaires were mailed to 21 individuals, and subsequently 10 completed questionnaires were received. This represents a response rate of 48%. As is usual for such questionnaires, not all required boxes were ticked. When the questionnaires were mailed, there were 21 individuals on the mailing list. However, some of these (n=6) had ever only attended one or two meetings, but wanted to be "kept in the loop" and receive minutes and other information. Nine individuals regularly attended the meetings of the Darebin Family Violence Working Group (ie., they attended more than half of all meetings). It can be assumed that the majority of respondents were the more active participants in the partnership.

Further, one respondent chose values other than those presented. For example, on two occasions a tick was placed between the values 4 and 5. In adding up the values to analyse the data, half a point was added to the lower value (4) and half a point to the higher value (5).

Findings

This section summarises the findings from the 10 completed questionnaires. The responses to each question including comments are outlined in the Appendix.

Average scores

The average score for all questions was 4.41, which represents a very high approval rate. The lowest average score for a question was 3.33, while the highest average score was 5. The latter was also the only unanimous response to any question where all 10 respondents agreed that the “chairperson of the partnership facilitates and supports team building”. The second highest approval rate (an average score of 4.9) related to a question describing the way members of the group relate to each other, ie., “in a respectful, task-oriented and supportive way”.

The lowest average scores related to changes in the respondent’s work practices (3.33) and their values and attitudes (3.5) as a result of participating in this partnership. The statement “Our partnership has successfully engaged the most relevant partners from a range of individuals and organisations” received the third lowest average score (3.75). However, these lowest average scores reflect a weak agreement with the respective statements rather than a disagreement.

Common vision

(average scores between 4.3 – 4.35)

Overall, the participants in this evaluation agreed that the Darebin Family Violence Working Group has developed a clear vision, aims and objectives, as well as agreement on desired achievements. However, one person disagreed with the predominant view.

Composition of the partnership

(average scores 3.75 and 4.3)

The views of respondents varied on this aspect of the partnership. One person commented that s/he “would like to see PLC¹ or some more program deliverers there”. This finding suggests that the Working Group should re-examine the composition of the partnership, explore whether relevant stakeholders have not been invited or whether they have been invited but do not attend meetings, and develop strategies to address this issue.

Processes of the partnership

(average scores between 4.1 – 5)

Overall, participants were satisfied with the processes of the partnership, such as the decision making (4.5), conflict management (4.1), effectiveness of meetings (4.6), the way people treat each other (4.9), information flow (4.8), communication (4.8) and the chairperson’s facilitation skills (5). Within this cluster of questions was only one

¹ Preston Creative Living Centre. PLC is the major provider for men’s behaviour change programs in the Darebin area.

response that reflected dissatisfaction with the partnership's decision making processes.

One person commented on the "rigor of the processes undertaken, and the tangible products" that "have made this truly a working group rather than a network". This person also commended the crucial role of the chairperson and the fact that "Council support has been evident from the start".

Outcomes for the service system

(average scores between 4.1 – 4.66)

Again, participants were fairly satisfied with the outcomes of the partnership. These included strategies/projects for coordinating and linking elements of the service system (4.2), an understanding of partner agencies' roles and functions (4.1), awareness raising for the work of the partnership (4.5), obtaining additional resources for specific projects and activities (4.44), the creation of formal and informal communication networks (4.6), local ways of addressing family violence issues (4.6), and increased interaction and communication patterns between the partners (4.66). However, one person expressed disappointment with the awareness created by the partnership and the ability to obtain additional resources for specific projects.

One respondent commented that this is "the most valuable aspect" of the partnership, while another person suggested that "the involvement of the magistrate and a principal are two remarkable coups to a local strategy" and that "the work with the police seems to be fairly revolutionary".

Outcomes for the individual members involved in the partnership

(average scores between 3.33 – 4.8)

The most significant positive changes for individual members of the partnership included better networking (4.8), communication and cooperation (4.7) with other members of the group. The participants in this survey perceived that changes to their own values and attitudes (3.5) and work practices (3.33) have changed to a lesser degree. It is interesting to note that while there is an overall perception of positive change within the service system, only a minority of the individuals involved in bringing about these changes believed that their own attitudes and work practices had changed.

Respondents commented on their increased awareness "of other agencies in the bigger picture", better communication and collaboration, and that they were now "more open to listen what others have to say". A better understanding of others' roles and limitations is also expressed in the following statement: "I have more respect for and a better understanding of police and how difficult their work is".

Positive and negative changes as a result of the partnership

Respondents were asked what they perceived as the positive and negative changes as a result of the partnership. There were no negative changes listed, other than one participant's comment that s/he "can't get to enough meetings". A lack of time to attend meetings and network was also reflected in other comments, for example "as

a CEO of an agency, I rarely have opportunity to keep in touch/network with workers & stakeholders in DV sector”.

A range of positive changes were listed, including

- “more comprehensive referring”;
- better communication and cooperation within the service system, in particular between police and support workers;
- a reduction in repeated police attendances at the same address in regard to family violence incidents;
- “better civic relationships particular with police”;
- “better understanding of the roles of all agencies, a better awareness and a change in overall attitudes”;
- a better understanding of roles and limitations;
- development of information sessions; and
- increased support of police.

In summary, the comments reflect the view that as the result of this partnership the individuals and agencies/organisations involved in the Darebin family violence service system are better informed and work together in a more effective way. In addition, there are other tangible outcomes, such as the provision of information sessions and a decreased number of recidivist family violence incidents attended by police.

Areas for improvement

The questionnaire included a question asking “in what areas we could do better and how to do it”. Two comments reflected a frustration with relevant agencies that have been invited to participate in the partnership but “fail to attend”. Another person noted that the partnership has not yet started on work with an early intervention focus within the school communities. This was attributed to the fact that Darebin City Council is still waiting to find out about the outcome of its funding submission to the Commonwealth Government’s *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. A second person also argued for more emphasis on prevention.

Another suggestion refers to the work of the *Darebin Family Violence Practice Issues Network*, a network of support workers and police where practice issues are discussed. It was recommended that “the informal discussion of cases could become formalised to establish a multi-disciplinary case management system”. Further, it was proposed to “assist in developing partners in projects/service deliver”.

Two comments in response to statements elsewhere in the questionnaire referred to service providers who work with boys and men who use violence. It was noted that services with a focus on males are insufficiently represented in the partnership.

Recommendations

In response to the views and suggestions provided by the 10 people who participated in this evaluation, the following recommendations are made to the Darebin Family Violence Working Group:

1. That the composition of the partnership be re-visited, exploring whether all relevant stakeholders have been invited to participate in the partnership, as well as exploring ways to better include those individuals and organisations that are formally part of the group but attend meetings infrequently. In particular, that efforts be made to have representation of services that work with boys and men.
2. That the Working Group explore possible improvements to the partnership's decision making processes.
3. That the Working Group explore whether it is desirable that participants' attitudes and work practices change, and if so, how this could be facilitated.
4. That the Working Group explore ways to keep face-to-face meetings at a minimum without compromising the flow of communication and interaction of group members.
5. That the Working Group explore ways to formalise the work of the *Darebin Family Violence Practice Issues Network*.

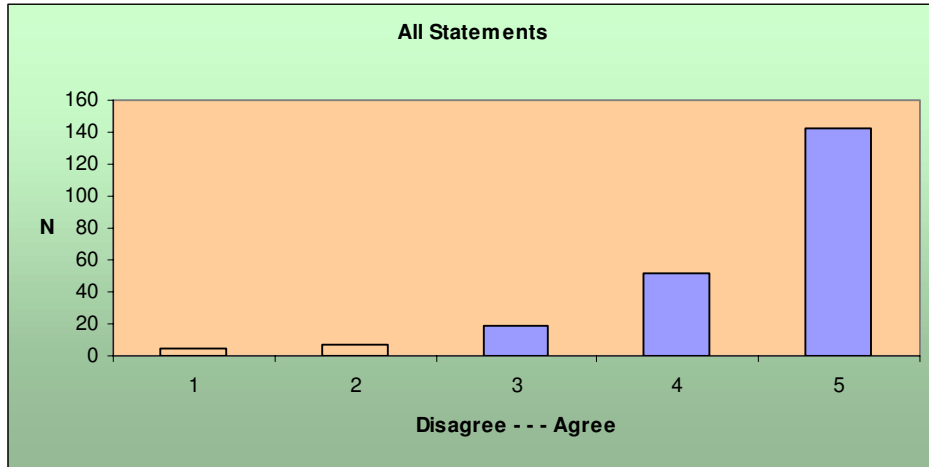
Appendix

Darebin Family Violence Working Group

Evaluation of the Partnership – Responses to the questionnaire

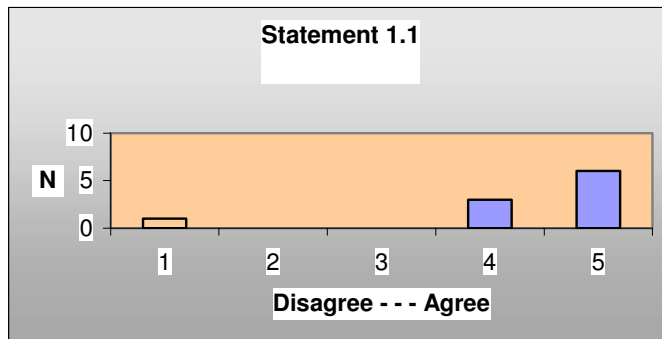
January 2004

Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Agree



Average score: 4.41

1.1 Our partnership has developed a clear vision.

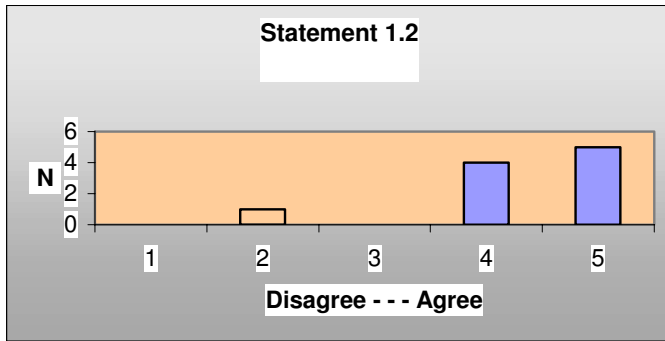


Average score: 4.3

Comment:

- This has been good and has been time limited and well and being ... of targets which is excellent

1.2 Our partnership has collaboratively identified the results we want to achieve for women, children and families.

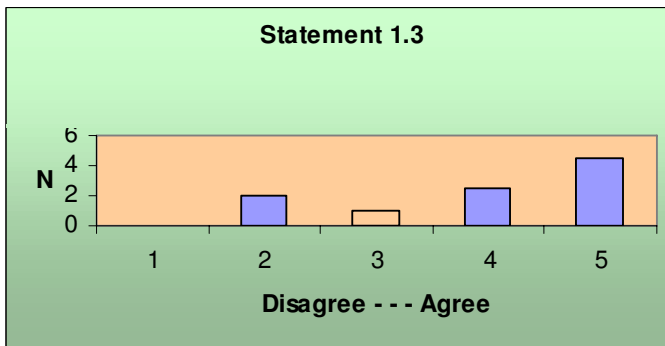


Average score: 4.3

Comment:

- The health impact process and the work Nola did also amplified our understanding as we contributed.

1.3 Our partnership has successfully engaged the most relevant partners from a range of individuals and organisations.

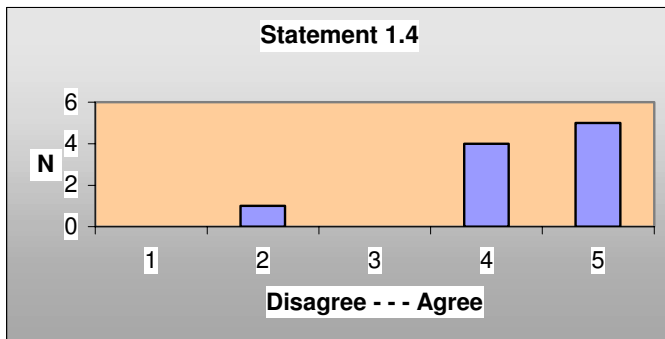


Average score: 3.75
(third lowest average score)

Comment:

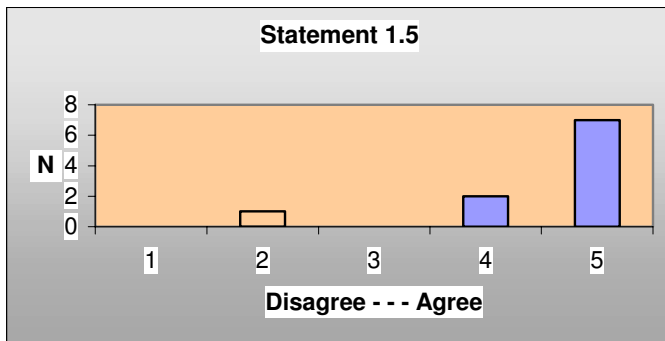
- Would like to see PCL or some more program deliverers there.

1.4 The members of our partnership have the right skills and characteristics.



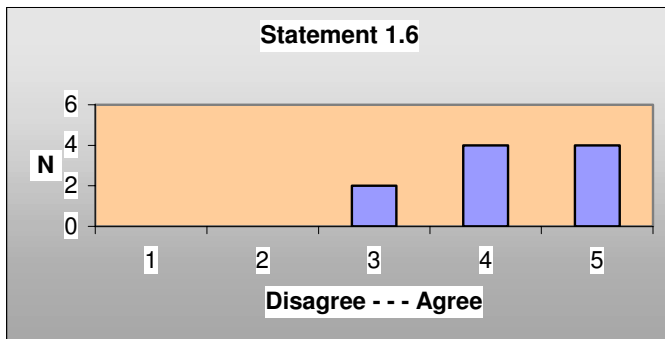
Average score: 4.3

1.5 The decision making in our partnership is effective.



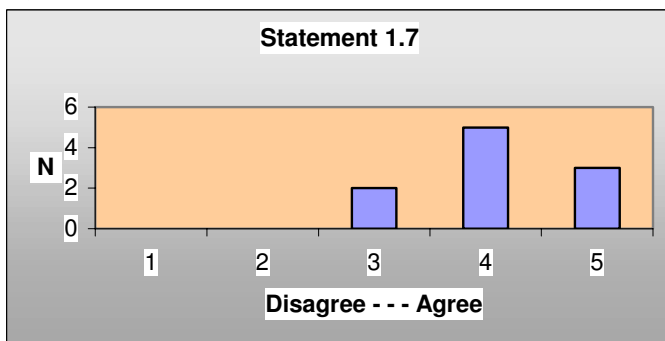
Average score: 4.5

1.6 Our partnership has developed strategies/projects for coordinating and linking relevant elements of the service system.



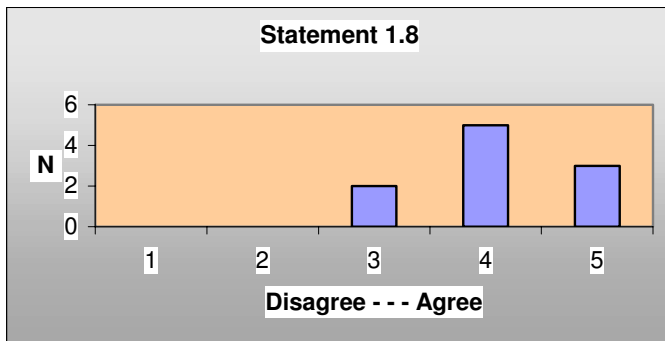
Average score: 4.2

1.7 All partners involved have an understanding of who the other partners are, what organisations they come from, and what those organisations do.



Average score: 4.1

1.8 In our partnership, we are able to successfully manage conflict.

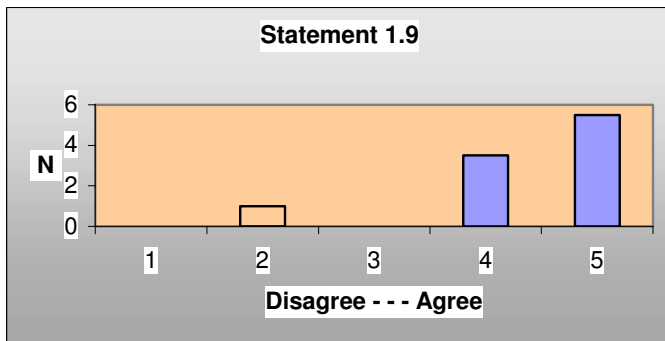


Average score: 4.1

Comment:

- Not really been tested.

1.9 Members of our partnership understand the aims and objectives of the Darebin Family Violence Working Group.

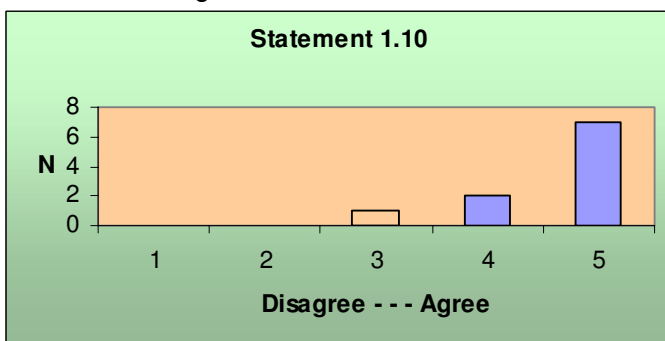


Average score: 4.35

Comment:

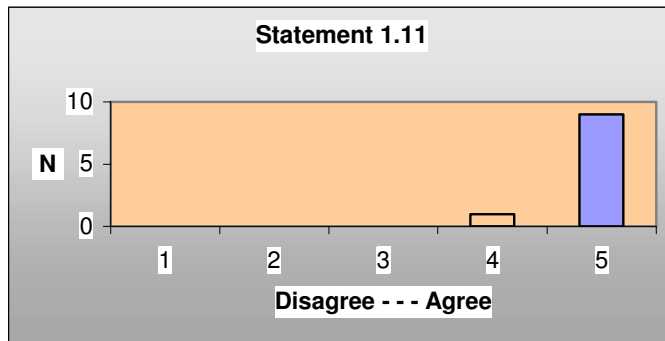
- How does this differ from 1.1 and 1.2?

1.10 Our meetings are effective.



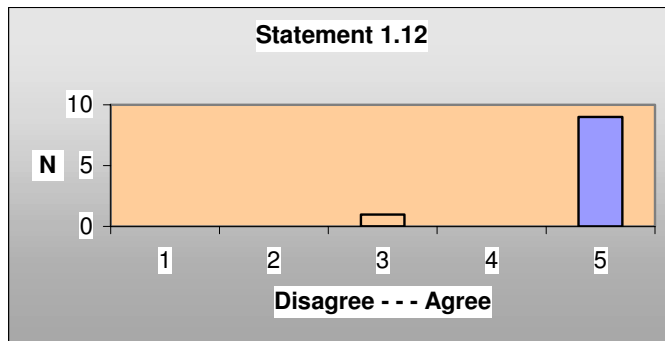
Average score: 4.6

1.11 Overall, members of the partnership deal with each other in a respectful, task-oriented and supportive way.



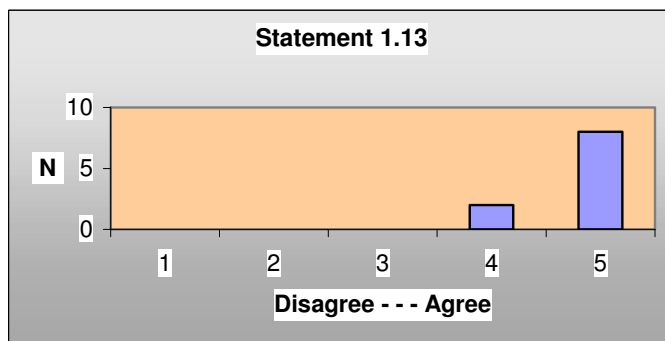
Average score: 4.9
(second highest average score)

1.12 I network with other members of the partnership on a regular and/or needs basis.



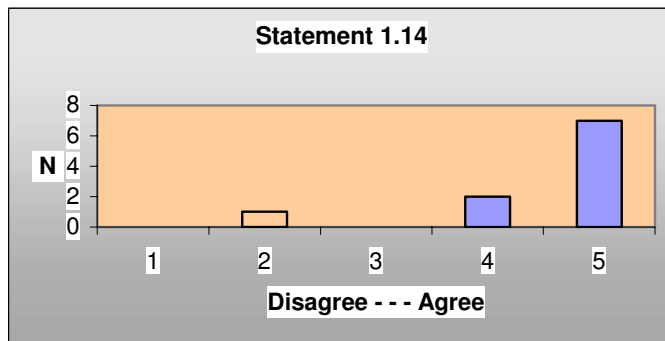
Average score: 4.8

1.13 Our partnership regularly communicates with all partners to keep them informed about its work.



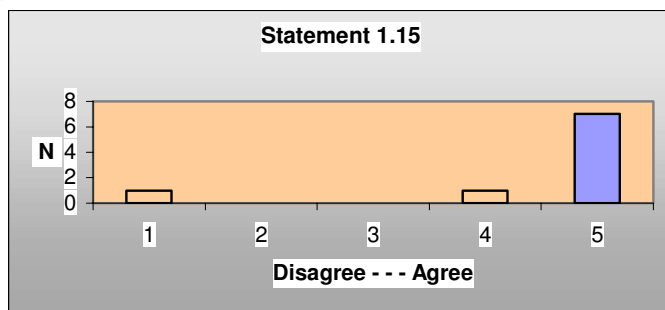
Average score: 4.8

1.14 Our partnership engages in activities to create awareness about and increase support for the work of the partnership.



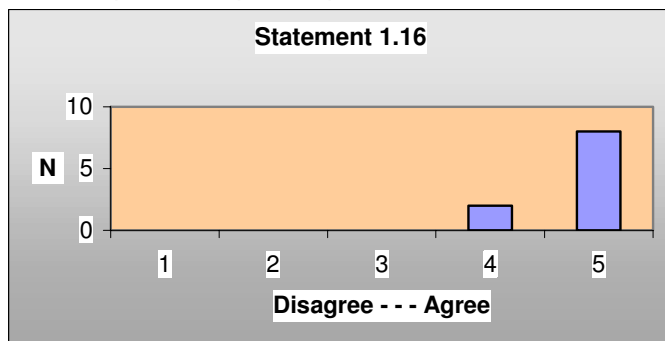
Average score: 4.5

1.15 Our partnership has been able to obtain additional resources for specific projects/activities.



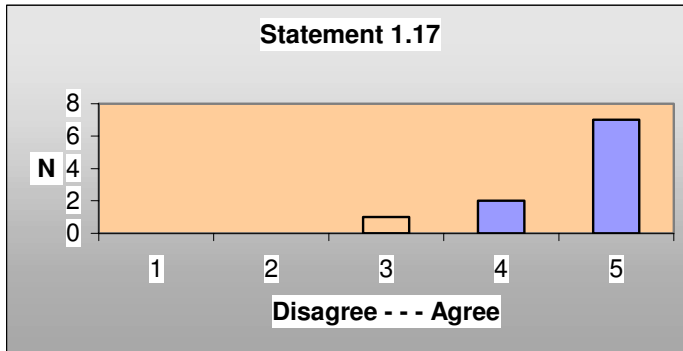
Average score: 4.44

1.16 Our partnership has open and clear communication.



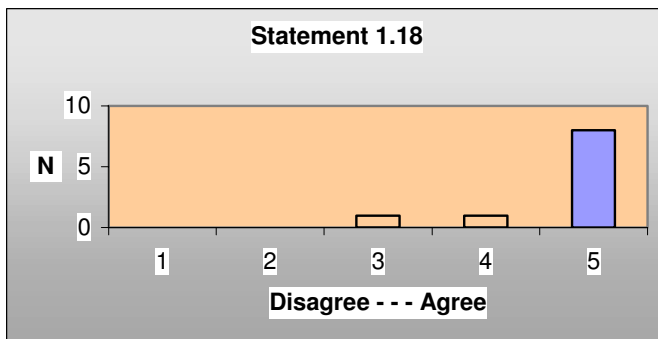
Average score: 4.8

1.17 Members involved in our partnership are connected and have established informal and formal communication networks.



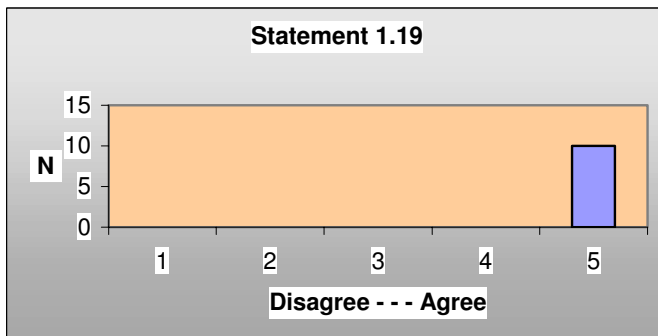
Average score: 4.6

1.18 Compared to 15 months ago, I feel now more confident to approach other members of this partnership to exchange information, ask for assistance, offer services, etc.



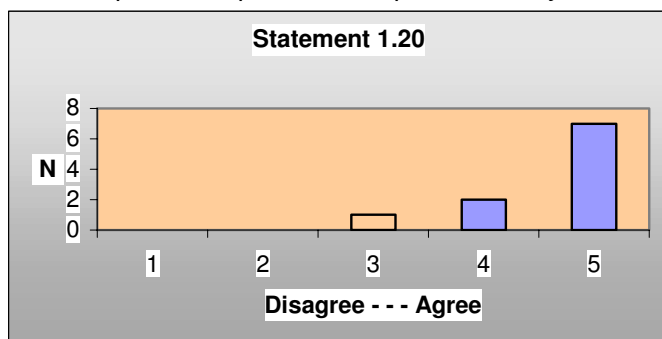
Average score: 4.7

1.19 The chairperson of the partnership facilitates and supports team building.



Average score: 5.00
(highest average score)

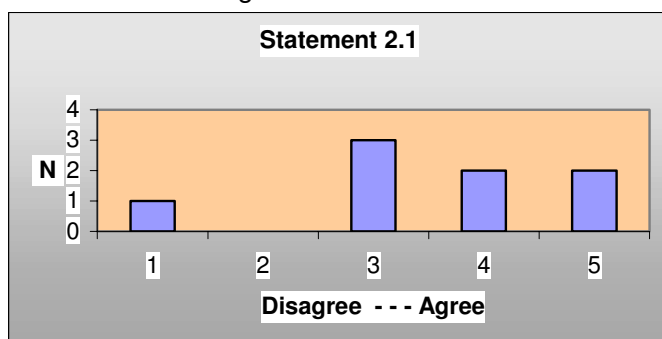
1.20 The partnership has developed local ways of addressing family violence issues.



Average score: 4.6

Section 2

2.1 As a result of my participation in this partnership, some of my values and attitudes have changed.



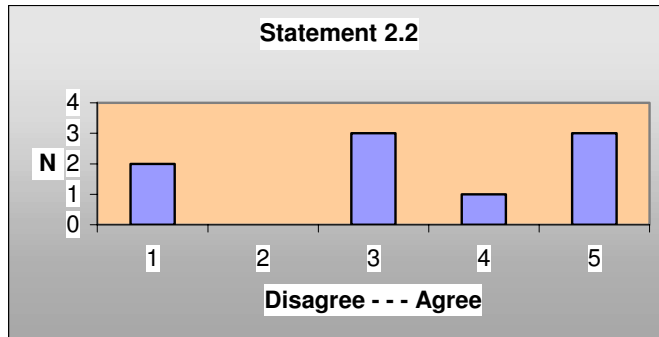
Average score: 3.5

(second lowest average score)

Comments

- The different agency perspectives have helped me to develop a much broader appreciation of family violence.
- This has not necessarily been in congruence with the group. I feel the absence of male focussed interventions and have crystallised some feelings around this issue.
- Being more aware of the help that is available and how to achieve it.
- Thinking more of the victim in ...
- I am more open to listen what others have to say.
- I have more respect for and a better understanding of police and how difficult their work is.
- Have been working in family violence for 18 years, but nevertheless learnt from this forum.

2.2 As a result of my participation in this partnership, some of my work practices have changed.



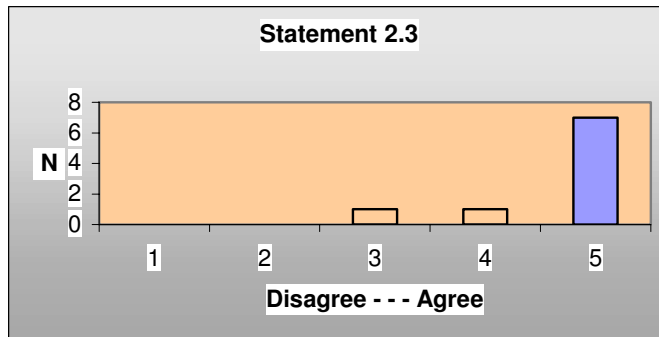
Average score: 3.33

(lowest average score)

Comments

- I am much more aware of other agencies in the bigger picture.
- More collaborative.
- More open.
- Very much now in a tutorial role, assisting and guiding members through incidents and complex issues.
- Increased communication.

2.3 As a result of the partnership, interaction patterns between individuals/ organisations/agencies have changed.



Average score: 4.66

Comments

- Interaction patterns have changed in a very positive way.
- The involvement of the magistrate and a principal are two remarkable coups to a local strategy. The work with the police seems to be fairly revolutionary!
- Better understanding of the roles played by other parties and their limitations.
- I feel that this is the most valuable aspect. I am very impressed with the results obtained by increased understanding and cooperation between agencies.
- As a CEO of an agency, I rarely have opportunity to keep in touch/network with workers & stakeholders in DV sector.
- Increased interaction and communication.

2.4 I have noticed the following positive changes as a result of the partnership:

- More comprehensive referring.
- Far more agency cooperation.
- A general reduction in return visits of problem families.
- Better communication.
- Better civic relationships particular with Police.
- Better understanding of the roles of all agencies, a better awareness and a change in overall attitudes.
- Better communication and cooperation. between police and support workers.
- Better understanding of each others roles and limitations.
- Flow of information about services for victims of violence both at and between meetings.
- Development of information sessions.
- Increased support of police.

2.5 I have noticed the following negative changes as a result of the partnership:

- There are no changes for the negative as a result of this partnership.
- Nil.
- I can't get to enough meetings.
- Nil.
- Nil.

Section 3

Please tell us in what areas we could do better and how to do it.

- The informal discussion of cases could become formalised to establish a multi-disciplinary case management system.
- I suppose waiting for the Federal Funding has meant that we have not started to work on some of the project aspects which have an early intervention focus. Maybe this is my need to link to the school communities more.
- We should try to prevent a problem, it will be harder to solve a problem than prevent it.
- Assist in developing partners in projects/service delivery.
- Some members of the Working Group are more involved than others. I would like to find ways to involve the "others" more.
- No complaints at all with group – in fact highly impressed. Only complaint concerns certain agencies that fail to attend.
- Nothing to suggest.

Section 4

Any other comments you wish to make:

(feel free to add an additional page with your comments)

- ❑ Keep up the excellent work.
- ❑ The rigor of the processes undertaken, and the tangible products have made this truly a working group rather than a network. I have always felt that good research and evidence ...actions and good reflective practice is encouraged. Your chairing role has been critical, also the weight of Council support has been evident from the start. Many behind the scenes briefings etc have actively contributed to the ... engagement of Council teams.
- ❑ The family violence is a problem that Council easily be solve. There are many factors that can trigger the family violence and one of the main factors is the financial position of the family and how they plan in life, and the cooperation between partners. The Gambling, Drugs, and drinking contribute to violence.
- ❑ If the government were to make more funds available to assist agencies a more responsive result would be achieved.
- ❑ Group provides a great cross-section of community workers, police, management, Magistrate etc to learn & seek info from.
- ❑ I find it pleasing to see how individuals have come together as a team and have created an atmosphere where people feel comfortable expressing a range of views and opinions, and work together on common projects.