



Partners in Prevention

Phase I Evaluation Report

In 2006 VicHealth created the *Respect, Responsibility and Equality: Preventing Violence Against Women* funding round to further their research into effective primary prevention of violence against women activities. The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) submitted the idea of creating a state-wide network for professionals involved in the delivery of primary violence against women prevention projects targeting young people. DVRCV was successful in its application, receiving \$30,000 for a 12 month project and a project worker (Kiri Bear) was employed for two days a week to coordinate the *Partners in Prevention* (PiP) project.

In March 2008 DVRCV successfully applied to VicHealth for the PiP project to be 'upscaled' and receive expanded funding for the following three years – this is referred to as 'Phase II' of the project. This evaluation is intended to capture the work of Phase I of the PiP project and reflect on its successes and limitations in order to provide a firm basis for proceeding into Phase II.

Context

The PiP project recognises that the idea of preventing violence against women through work with young people is not new. In fact a broad range of violence prevention projects targeting young people have been carried out over many years. The project seeks to capture this good work and build on its strengths by drawing workers in the field into a community where they can discuss their practice and share knowledge. It is modelled after the successful Rainbow Network for workers supporting same-sex attracted and transgender young people but is the first of its kind in the field of primary violence prevention.

The current momentum around the primary prevention of violence against women has been driven by research produced by VicHealth over the last five years. Reports such as 'Measuring the burden of disease of intimate partner violence,' the 'Community attitudes to violence against women survey' and the 'Framework to guide the primary prevention of violence against women' have highlighted the issue of violence against women and provided a strong basis to lobby for a prevention agenda. The PiP project receives its funding as part of VicHealth's efforts to increase the evidence base for effective prevention strategies but it also facilitates other projects' contribution to this evidence base.

VicHealth's work has led to unprecedented interest in the primary prevention of violence against women from a variety of sectors across the state. The Department of Education is funding a stock-take of all primary prevention work happening in state schools with a view to defining best practice principles and developing a pilot program. A number of regional Primary Health Care Partnerships have identified violence against women as one of their priority issues. In the face of this interest PiP serves an important function in facilitating the flow of information about primary prevention. The project is therefore both a product of the current momentum and an enabler for effective action in response. DVRCV is ideally placed to auspice a project of this kind as it is a state-wide service with good links to government and a strong reputation in prevention.

Objectives

The initial application for PiP outlined the following objectives:

- Increase the knowledge of violence prevention theory and practice throughout the community sector
- Set up and promote the Partners in Prevention Youth Violence Prevention Network
- Assist in the development of partnerships and coordination within the primary violence prevention sector
- Share primary prevention resources and best practice models for working with young people
- Expand the evidence base for effective practice with young people to prevent violence against women
- Develop leadership within the youth violence prevention field and advocate to increase the reach and quality of violence prevention initiatives in Victoria

The overarching goal of *Partners in Prevention* was to shape an enabling environment for primary prevention activities within Victoria. We achieved this through capacity building, providing professional development to workers, facilitating the distribution of information and resources, and bringing workers together to develop partnerships and provide peer support.

[The project has] created an identity for violence prevention work with young people, building the 'sector,' building capacity but also acknowledging this work, being able to see it collectively rather than just one off programs.¹

We worked with organisations already engaging young people in violence prevention activities, to provide opportunities for that work to be shared, expanded, documented and celebrated. This in turn expanded the knowledge base of what works in programs for young people that aim to prevent violence against women.

Activities and Outcomes

What follows is a break down of each of the major activities provided in the first 12 months of the PiP project. A description of each activity is followed by reflection on the process and impact of that activity with reference to evaluation information gleaned throughout the life of the project.

There are a number of layers to a network project of this kind. A variety of activities were offered in order to accommodate people's involvement at different levels. The forum attracted a broad range of participants, a smaller number opted to be included on the email list, a subset of that group attended network meetings and a couple of workers were involved in the steering committee.

Methodology

¹ Except where stated otherwise, words in italics are directly transcribed quotes from workers during the evaluation session at the final network meeting.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

The bulk of the evaluation information in this report comes from a session conducted with workers at the June network meeting. Participants reflected on major project activities over the last year and then chose two pictures (out of a range of 60 or so postcards) that represented how the network had impacted their work. This session was digitally recorded and transcribed quotes appear throughout this report. At the meeting's close workers were asked to write: one thing they got out of the day, ideas for improving network meetings and suggestions as to how the network could support them over the next 3 years. Other evaluation information reported here comes from forms filled out by participants at the forum and at previous network meetings and unsolicited feedback on the project received via email.

Partners in Prevention Forum

We began by running a forum called *Partners in Prevention: Working with young people to prevent violence against women* in order to draw attention to the project and generate interest in the issue. The forum included the following academic presentations:

- Associate Professor Moira Carmody (University of Western Sydney) '*Sexual ethics, young people & sexual assault prevention education*'
- Kim Webster (VicHealth) '*Preventing violence against women – what works?*'

Followed by shorter presentations from a number of violence prevention projects currently operating around the state including:

- *Xpect Respect* - Secondary school program, Meridian Youth and Family Services
- *REAL Life* - Secondary school teacher/worker training, Women's Health Goulburn North East
- *Respect Protect Connect* - Secondary school peer education program, Women's Health in the South East and the South East Centre Against Sexual Assault
- *Feeling Safe, Being Strong* - Primary school program, Bethany Community Support

The forum also provided an opportunity to invite Anj Barker (a young woman survivor of relationship violence) to launch the updated version of DVRC's *Bursting the Bubble* website for young people witnessing or experiencing family violence.

The day concluded with the first PiP network meeting, which largely focused on determining the needs of workers and how the network could best support them.

Reflection

The *Partners in Prevention* forum was attended 110 people from a diverse range of sectors – state government, local government, sexual assault, domestic violence, police, schools and even faith organisations. Of those 110 attendees, 80 joined the email group to receive further information on the primary prevention of violence against women and 56 stayed for the network meeting.

Feedback suggests that a great strength of the day was the mix and balance of presentations – encompassing theory and practice. Although the forum was pitched at violence prevention practitioners in the community sector it attracted workers from a broad range of fields.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

...seeing the forum and the opportunities and seeing a different view of the world and that's probably when I started seeing that I could be doing this work in my organisation.

One limitation, reported by a network member afterwards, was that the large number of participants meant that workers already well acquainted with the issue didn't necessarily have opportunities to connect with one another. This was remedied by later network meetings which had a tighter focus and attracted practitioners rather than 'interested others.'

I think part of what was good is having the forum with so many people coming along, some of whom are involved in the work and some of whom are thinking about it or in the general sector but not necessarily involved and then having these [network meetings] where there's been a smaller number of people who are usually very involved in the work, I've found that good in terms of the balance of having people that are a collegial network.

Many participants reported feeling energised and inspired by the presentations and the possibility for future collaborations.

Website and Bulletin

Information bulletins were sent out on an ad hoc basis – 10 over the course of the 12 months. When enough information had been sent to the project, or there was an upcoming event, this information was summarised and passed on to the network. The email list is an 'outlook' contact list (currently 115 people), bulletins are sent using the 'blind carbon copy' feature.

The website is essentially an 'archive' of links sent out in bulletin posts, information on upcoming meetings and notes from previous meetings. The 'projects' section currently has links to a number of local projects that have their own websites. It has been challenging to find a straightforward way of displaying information about projects that are not already on the internet. A form has been developed to capture information from these projects with the intention of 'posting' these online in pdf format.

Reflection

Feedback about the bulletin has been extremely positive. Workers said that the bulletin is current, feeds their passion and helps them link with other work that's happening.

The contact has been great and you send us information that I don't have time to search for.

When it was mentioned in a bulletin that the project coordinator was looking for feedback on the project, a couple of workers wrote to say how much they'd enjoyed receiving it.

Just to say what a great resource this update and other information you send out is to myself and other members of [my] network. (email communication)

The email bulletins keep lines of communication open in between network meetings. *Even though the meetings aren't that close together, the emails keep coming.* They keep workers up to date with recent developments in the field and provide opportunities for new workers to acquaint themselves with current issues.

Thanks for your informative email. For someone who is new to the area of domestic and family violence, I find your email a great asset in getting 'up to speed' on the topic. (email communication)

They are also a point of connection for workers who are unable to attend the meetings in person.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

One limitation of the bulletin is that it is heavily reliant on the project worker to collate the information and send it to the 'list'. Initially attempts were made to set up a google group so that anyone could send emails to 'the list' but the technology was a barrier. It required people to 'log in' to google and then 'verify' their email address, very few people made it through this system. Ideally phase II of the project could try again to set up an email group so that conversations can happen between workers online. It may be that a 'message board' on the website is a more appropriate way of doing this.

Network meetings

As PiP is a state-wide network we were keen to make meetings accessible to rural workers. At the forum I canvassed workers who had travelled from rural and regional areas to find out what would be most useful to them. Their feedback was to have fewer network meetings of longer duration in order to make the travel more worthwhile and to hold the meetings at a central (CBD) location. With this in mind meetings were held quarterly and each was made up of a professional development component and an information sharing/gathering component.

October 2007 – Evaluation strategies

In the first meeting (on evaluation) I was very concerned about ensuring good quality content. We had a workshop about survey writing from Bernie Murphy (Deakin University) and a presentation from Renee Imbesi on her evaluation of the CASA House schools program. The overwhelming feedback from participants was that they wanted more time to share information with each other and hear about everyone's individual projects. (18 workers attended)

February 2008 – Information sharing/ SWOT analysis

In response to feedback, the second meeting focused on information sharing. Each person had the opportunity to talk about themselves and their work. This was followed by a SWOT analysis of the violence prevention sector, which fed into the application for the upscale of the PiP project and will guide the project's advocacy efforts. (10 workers attended)

June 2008 – Self-care/ PiP evaluation

The idea for a meeting on the topic of self-care was offered by a worker on the steering committee with some years experience in the field. I initially had doubts because I wondered whether newer workers would find it valuable and whether more experienced workers would make time to attend. I was pleasantly surprised that this meeting was a great success. As it was the last meeting for phase I, we had a self-care workshop with Deb Bryant (manager, WestCASA) followed by some activities to evaluate the project and a fully catered celebratory lunch. (16 workers attended)

Reflection

The majority of workers who attended network meetings were employed in the community sector, coming from a range of organisations – eg. CASA's, women's health, local government, community health, church-based. All meeting topics came out of a combination of suggestions from workers and the needs of the PiP project. Response from workers has generally been very positive:

The training component part of the meetings has been really relevant and valuable stuff.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

During the evaluation activities a consistent theme that several workers returned to was the power of collegial relationships.

'You can talk the talk without having to give the preface explanation' being able to step out of the role of educating people and discuss the work with colleagues.

Many discussed being the only worker in their organisation involved in prevention and the only one who understood exactly what their work involves.

The networking is definitely a really important part of it for me, the partners part of the Partners in Prevention, because some of us work, a lot of us work alone.

For workers who are committed to preventing violence against women as a vocation the PiP network provides an opportunity to stay connected to the field as well as receiving support outside their organisation.

It's not about the organisation so whatever organisation I'm in I can still come here and still be able to continue on this work which is really important to me.

While it hasn't always been easy to find the time, especially for those of us who travel, once I'm here I'm really glad that I have, and it's stuff that we were talking about before about the network and bits and pieces, it's that pressure of keeping on top of things, for me it's been fantastic to being able to do that and taking the time away from the office to talk with people in the same field.

Although these sentiments were largely expressed by workers who had been in the prevention field for some time, newer workers appreciated being privy to the discussions taking place.

This year everything's been very black and white like 'What are we going to do? How are we going to do it?' and I think this network's provided colour for me and linking with all the other programs that are out there that we might connect with so thank you for the colour.

The network provides a shortcut to more developed thinking around the primary prevention of violence against women for workers who are new to the field.

In spite of these promising comments there are plenty of opportunities to improve the work of the project. For example more could be done to give workers opportunities to talk about their work in detail. Several workers suggested that part of each meeting could be devoted to a presentation and discussion of one or two projects. These projects could then be invited to write about their work for DVRC's quarterly newsletter. In future we plan to rotate the day of the week that meetings are held on to accommodate the large number of part-time workers in the sector. In phase I this proved too difficult to coordinate with the project worker's limited hours.

Consultation and advocacy

The project's outcomes in terms of advocating for violence prevention with young people are twofold.

First there is the work that the project has done to spread the word about violence prevention. These include:

- Delivering presentations on young people and violence prevention for the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Primary Care Partnership (PCP) and the Northern Metro PCP.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

- The inclusion of members of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) on the steering committee.
- Running the forum and producing the email bulletins, to disseminate information to a wide audience (an article about the forum's keynote speaker appeared in the Sunday Age).
- Responding to requests for information from workers across Victoria, Australia and the world (the project has received emails from as far a field as South Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand and even Ireland).

Secondly there is the impact of network involvement on member workers, this is best captured by the following comment:

We're all in this together, even if it's a small group of people it's incredibly powerful to have these discussions and being able to take this perspective into other forums and be able to advocate for the work that we do and the importance of that work.

This suggests that involvement in the network increases the capacity of individual workers to describe the work of violence prevention and to advocate for its advancement within their local areas.

When a worker from New Zealand visited Victoria to research the primary violence against women prevention initiatives happening here, a worker set up a lunch for her to meet with others in the field. When we arrived the worker commented "This wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for PiP." The idea of being in a network and being part of a sector inspires workers to collaborate more readily with each other.

Reflection

Workers in the network felt that advocacy was an important part of the project:

Someone said before about not having to do the introduction that we're on the same page to start with that's good but also that we need to keep advocating for this work being done and encouraging and introducing other people to these concepts so I think it's good that PiP's done a bit of both and I think the balance has been good in it.

They enjoyed the benefits of the network for themselves as prevention practitioners but also wanted to see violence prevention being brought to new audiences. When asked how the network could support them over the next 3 years, many workers suggested advocacy.

The strengths of Phase I's advocacy efforts could be enhanced in Phase II by developing leadership within the network. Inviting workers to write newsletter articles, supporting them to present at conferences and offering opportunities for involvement in working groups/ steering committee are all avenues for empowering workers and increasing the profile of primary violence against women prevention.

Steering Committee

At the beginning of the PiP project a steering committee was convened to assist and advise the project worker in advocating for the primary prevention of violence against women through youth and community focused initiatives. The steering committee comprised representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Department of Community Development and Planning, Brophy Youth and Family Services (Warrnambool), CASA House (Melbourne) and from DVRCV.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

During PiP phase I the steering committee met 5 times and contributed to a range of project outcomes including: a map of the authorising environment for violence prevention in Victoria, conceptualisation of the project upscale and of general project activities such as the website and evaluation.

Reflection

According to one worker involvement with the PiP steering committee yielded the following results:

- *More developed relationships with government, funding bodies and other community organisations*
- *Enhanced understanding of VAW and prevention issues within government structures and non-VAW sectors*
- *More 'systems advocacy' work in my own job role*
- *Enhanced focus on development of student program as 'curriculum' within our Prevention Program*

The committee involved a good mix of people – rural and metro, community workers and government – offering the project worker a rich diversity of perspectives on project activities. It was particularly beneficial to have a rural worker on the committee to assist the project in maintaining a genuine state-wide focus. The strong participation of rural workers in network activities demonstrates the success of the project in listening to rural workers and incorporating their needs into project planning.

The committee facilitated dialogue between policy makers and project workers in the community sector. The representatives from DEECD and DPCD gave insight to other committee members on government processes and received insights in turn into community sector responses to violence against women.

Additional Outcomes

In addition to the outcomes related to specific project activities outlined above, the evaluation yielded two outcomes that have arisen out of the project as a whole.

Program publicity

Several workers commented that they appreciated the way the project has shared information about their programs and their work.

An opportunity to take my program out there to people who might not otherwise have been able to access it

Another worker expanded on this sentiment, stating that the network has led to greater public acknowledgement of the work that is taking place

I think you've made our work visible, you seem hidden as one person with one program, then it's great when your work is out there, other people can see what you do.

Identity for violence prevention work with young people

The network has impacted workers' view of themselves and the work that they do. The very fact of having a network validates workers' efforts to create social change and strengthens their identity as violence prevention practitioners.

The breadth of it being a state-wide thing and getting pictures and snapshots of all over the state.

Workers described seeing themselves as part of a broader movement, feeling that the network had brought a sense of cohesion and connection to their various roles.

PiP Phase I Evaluation Report Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Having a person to hold the work, you can have all those things as scattered activities – having Kiri

Having a dedicated networker role was perceived as a great strength of the project, integral to those feelings of cohesion and connection. The networker role was seen as a powerful opportunity for workers' views to be represented in other forums and to enhance communication between government and the sector.

Recommendations

Phase I of PiP has made significant progress in addressing each of its main objectives. With the expansion of PiP phase I comes a capacity to build on these successes and overcome some of the project's limitations. This evaluation has led to the following recommendations for PiP phase II

- Explore possibilities for fostering communication between workers using online technologies.
- Increase opportunities for information sharing and peer support at network meetings.
- Develop leadership within the field by encouraging workers to talk/write about their work in other forums (eg. conferences, newsletters), providing opportunities to become involved in network projects and advocating for network representation on relevant policy bodies.
- Expand the network membership through advocacy with other groups eg. Parent's Victoria, Family Planning Victoria, Independent Schools Association.

The Partners in Prevention project would like to thank the following supporters:



PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



Domestic Violence Resource
Centre, Victoria