



**Results of the Survey of Participants in
the
2009 IIMHL Exchange and Network
Meeting**

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Executive Summary

The IIMHL undertakes a brief evaluation following each Exchange and Network Meeting. The evaluation aims to assess the impacts and benefits of the Exchange and Network Meeting for the year 2009 whilst highlighting the areas for improvement identified by the participants. This report presents the outcomes of this evaluation.

A survey of the 2009 participants was collected on the last day of the Network Meeting in Brisbane. One hundred and twenty five participants completed the survey (of 300 people who attended the Network Meeting).

Results showed that around half of the people who completed the survey were there for the first time. People rated the information sent by either IIMHL or hosts as either medium to high quality. Several common themes emerged when participants were asked to identify three key benefits from being either a host or a visitor in an Exchange. These key benefits were; the opportunity to network and to develop personal and professional relationships, the opportunity for information Exchange and the opportunity to learn and implement quality processes and systems gained from other countries.

Overall people were very positive about their Exchange experiences, and had planned to take significant action to improve services as a result of their Exchange, had changed their practice (or their service's practice) based on what they had learned.

The Network Meeting opening ceremony and the majority of presentations and workshops were rated as being good overall. Major highlights were the presentations by Dr Helen Milroy and Neil Cole which received higher ratings than other conference sessions. The majority of respondents considered the Network Meeting venue, the content, and opportunity to network at the Network Meeting were considered very good to excellent overall. Suggestions for improvement mainly focused on the Network Meeting and included changing the two-day Meeting format to include more focused networking opportunities, greater emphasis on best practice and innovation, and including stronger more inspiring leadership presentations. People were critical of the social inclusion session, some reporting this as a lost opportunity for discussion and debate.

The results of this evaluation will be used by the leaders from Ireland to learn from the 2009 experience in the way the Network Meeting is structured for 2010.

Background

The overall aim of the IIMHL is to improve services for people who use them. Through this initiative the governments of seven countries fund mental health leaders to obtain opportunities to learn and share knowledge thereby strengthening leadership practices across the sector.

The IIMHL Exchange and working Network Meeting has been in operation for seven years from 2003 to 2009. Over this time Exchanges and Meetings have been held in: The UK and Birmingham; the US and Washington; Australasia and Wellington; the UK and Edinburgh; and finally, Canada and the US with the Network Meeting being held in Ottawa, Canada.

The latest Exchange and Network Meeting were in March 2009 with the Exchanges across Australia and New Zealand and the Network Meeting in Brisbane. The Exchanges involve leaders from each of the seven countries being “matched” with leaders who are involved in similar work. For example, child and youth leaders from the UK, the US, Canada, Scotland and Ireland were matched with a national service that specialises in this area in Auckland New Zealand. Leaders may share information and best practice, problem solve together, and may continue to work together between Exchanges through collaborations in research or other projects.

It is important to assess the outcome of the Exchanges on mental health leaders, services and, ultimately, on service users.

Procedure

A two-page survey was designed using Survey Monkey as the method of data collection and analysis. Ratings were made on a 0 to 5 Likert Scale (with 0 = low and 5 = excellent), some answers were “Yes” or “No” and written comments were also asked for.

The participants of 2009 Exchange and Network Meeting were given the pen-and-paper questionnaire to complete at the Network Meeting on the last afternoon.

Results

The percentage of respondents recording each option was calculated for Likert scale and Yes/No questions using the Survey Monkey programme.

Written comments were grouped into themes manually. For the purposes of this report some comments are quoted and others paraphrased. The quotes are in italics and quotation marks.

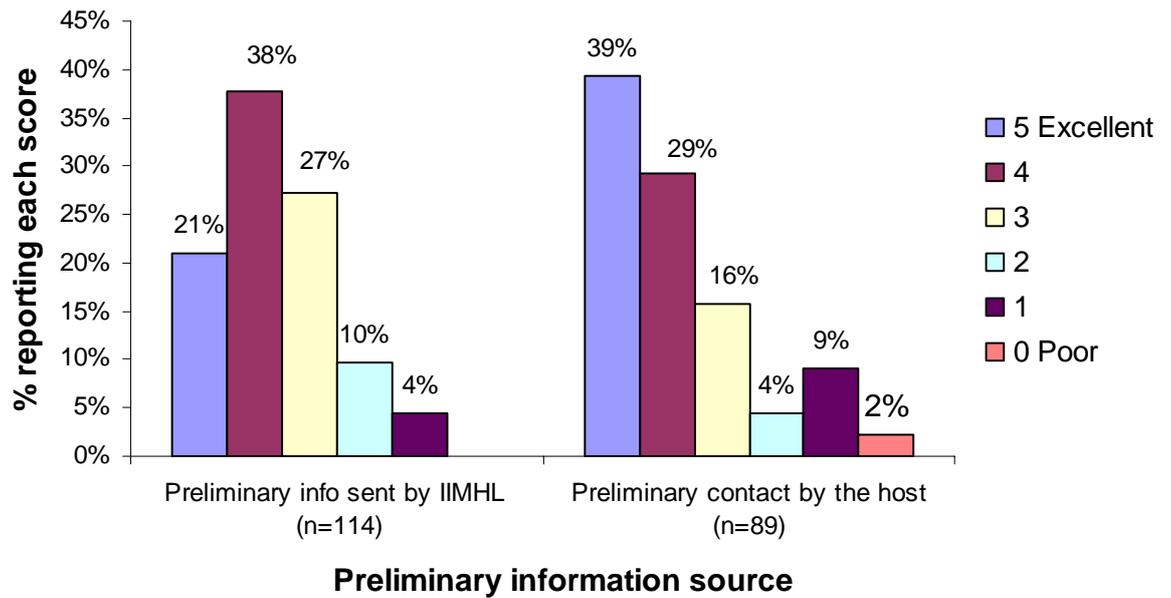
Section 1

The Exchange

1. Around half the attendees who completed the survey were present at the Network Meeting for the first time (48%) in 2009. Only 8.9% of the attendees this year had been present in 2003, with more in 2006 (25.2%) and 2007 (44.7%). Two people did not answer this question.
2. In 2009, 64% of those that participated in as a **host** in an Exchange match were Australian and 32% were from New Zealand. Many of the 100 people who did not answer were presumably visitors (or may not have attended an Exchange).
3. **Visitors** were from Scotland (.1%, England 23.4%, Australia 9.1%, USA 16.9%, Canada 14.3% and New Zealand 27.3%). Two people stated that they were from two countries. Ten people were from the Republic of Ireland which was incorrectly named in the questionnaire as Ireland. Many of the 48 people who did not answer this question were presumably hosts.
4. The majority of Network Meeting attendees (114) rated the information that they had received from the IIMHL in preparation for the Exchange as a four or above on the Likert scale as shown in Figure 1. This suggests there is still room for improvement.

When asked to rate the quality of their hosts/visitors preparation prior to the Exchange 84.2% rated the quality as being a medium to high quality (4-5). 15.7% of those who were visitors on an Exchange rated the quality of their hosts preparation as being low (0, 1, and 2) as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Feedback on the quality of information received prior to the IIMHL Exchange and Network Meeting



5. Several common themes emerged when people were asked to identify three key benefits from being either a host or a visitor in an Exchange. Key benefits were seen as the opportunity to:
- network and to develop new and strengthen existing professional relationships
 - Exchange information
 - learn and implement different systems and services in other countries
 - to problem solve
 - learn about other leadership styles
 - to reflect on one's own practice/service/leadership style/progress
 - regain enthusiasm and energy
6. The attendees identified two things that they would do to improve their practice or service as a result of the Exchange. Many attendees identified specific areas in which they could use the information gained in their Exchange to enhance their practice or service. These areas were specific to the individual needs of the attendee's service (e.g. child and youth, disability, indigenous). Most of the areas identified for improvement centred on communication, improving specific services (particularly peer support, indigenous, youth, primary care and disability services), quality issues, social inclusion and more effective lobbying, networking and leadership.

Areas to improve their practice following the Exchange included:

"To improve communication within the service and externally"

"To stay connected with international colleagues"

"To network more effectively"

“To seek increased consumer, youth and indigenous involvement in services”

“To implement peer support services”

“To bring new knowledge re social inclusion into our services”

“To involve consumers more in the service”

“Include the voice of youth”

“To learn more about indigenous processes and services”

“To be more open to others’ perspectives”

To improve our measures of quality”

“To learn how to lobby more effectively”

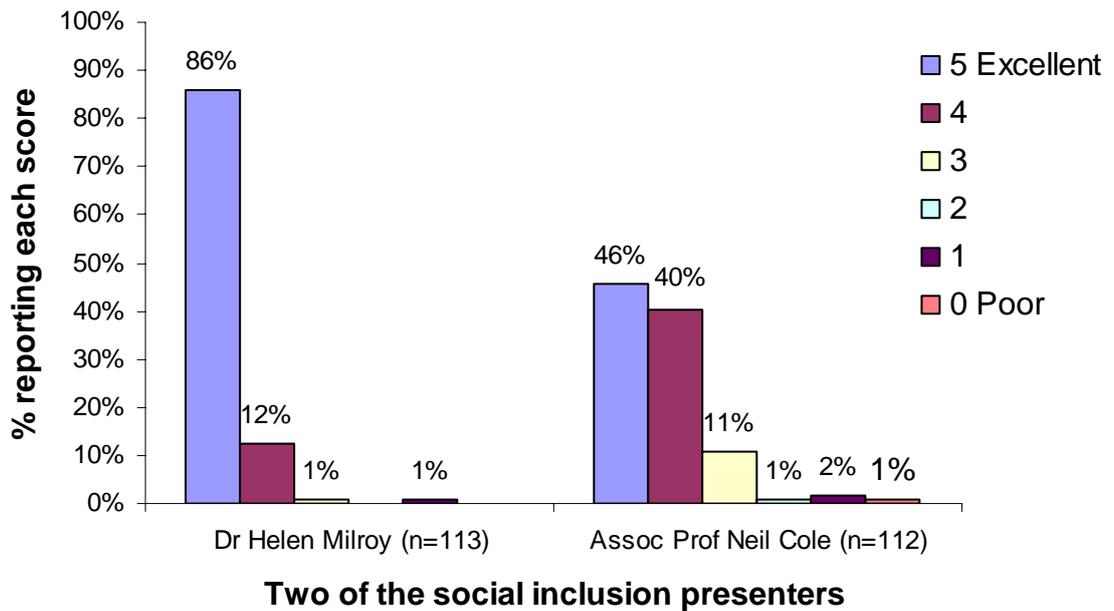
Only a handful of attendees identified that their Exchange was not a good service match either because their host was not organised or because the service “fit” was not right.

Section 2

The Network Meeting

1. When asked to rate the opening ceremony on a scale of 0 - 5 (poor to excellent) 90.4% rated it as good (4) to excellent (5) standard. One hundred and fourteen people out of a possible 125 answered this question.
2. As shown in Figure 2 the top two presenters most commonly given scores of excellence were Dr Helen Milroy (85.8% of respondents) and Neil Cole (45.5%). Presentations by politicians received the lowest scores.

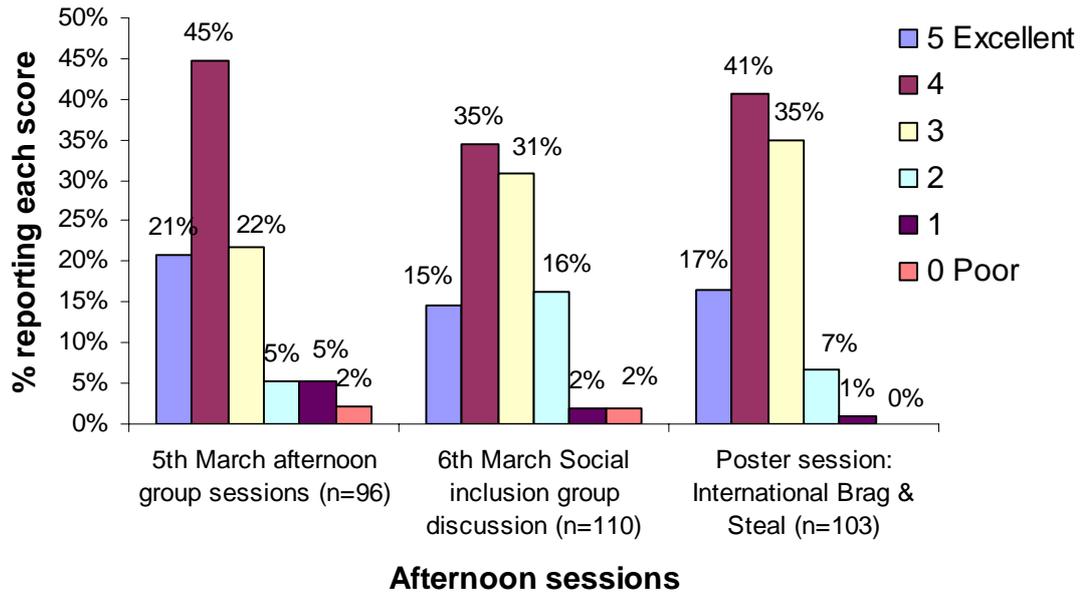
Figure 2. Feedback on social inclusion presenters: Dr H Milroy & Prof N Cole



3. The attendees were also asked to rate the afternoon group they attended on the first day. The majority of people (87.5%) rated the group they attended as a medium to high score suggesting that these groups were well received. The groups included: clinical, Interrelate (consumer), child, youth and family, peer support, disability and indigenous issues. The indigenous group received the most positive written comments. Some caution should be drawn in comparing scores between the groups because of confusion among participants among group names.
4. The Brag and Steal session appeared to be well received too as demonstrated in Figure 3.

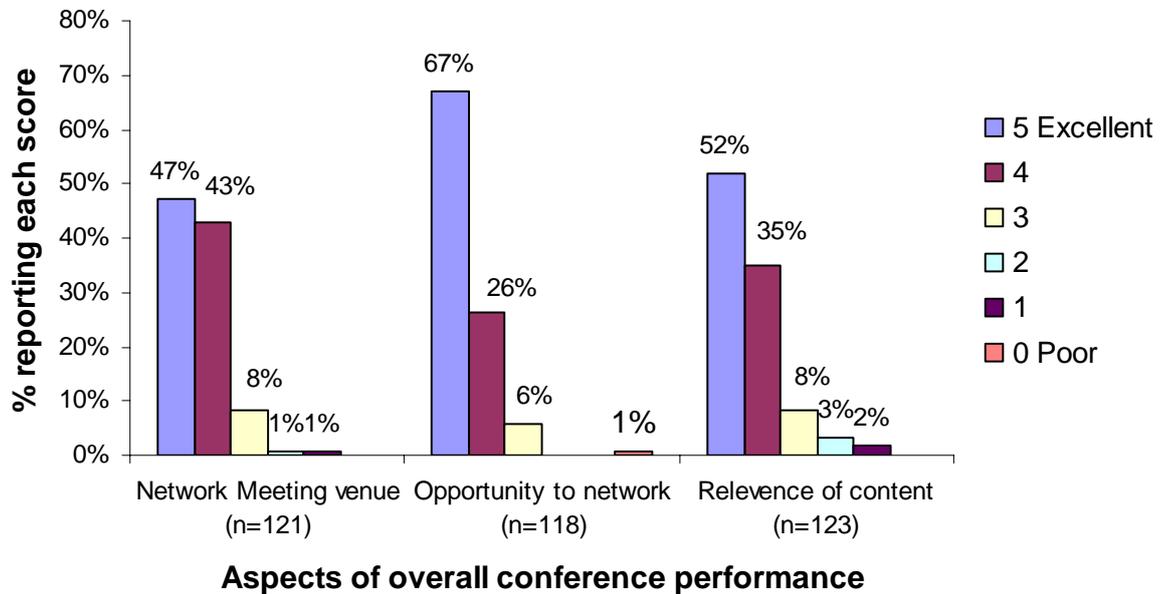
The social inclusion group discussion on the second day of the Network Meeting did not receive as many excellence ratings as other afternoon sessions. In the written comments given many people expressed frustration at the lengthy feedback process during this session.

Figure 3. Feedback on the afternoon sessions



5. The survey also asked people to rate the Network Meeting venue, the opportunity that those who attended had to network, and how relevant the Network Meeting was to their work. These ratings are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Feedback on the overall Network Meeting performance

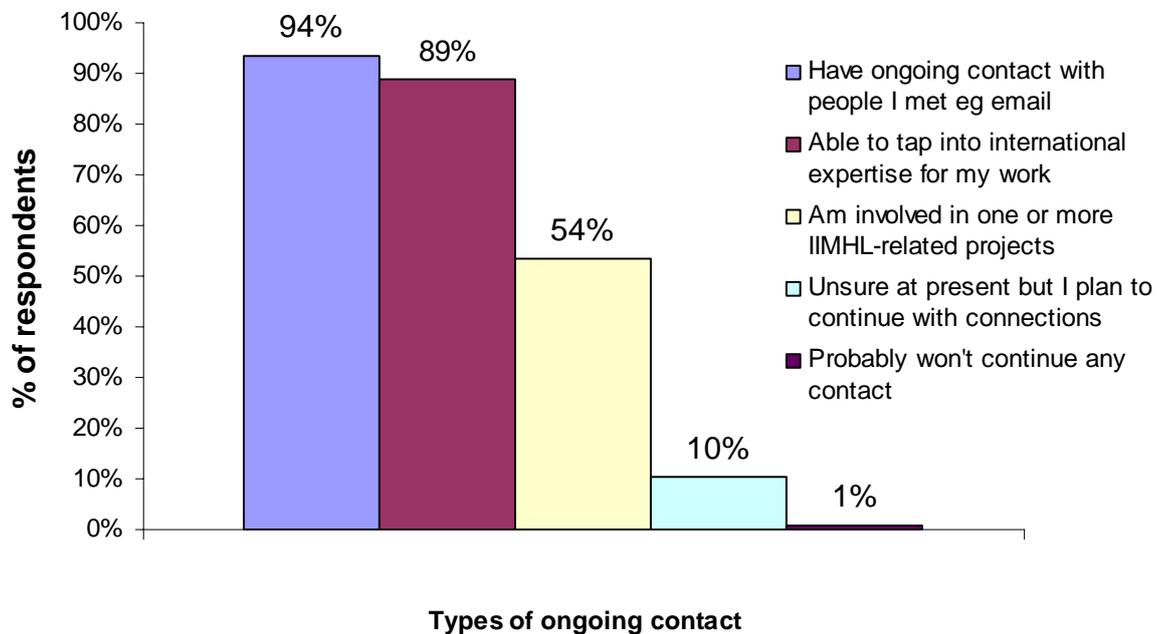


Section 3:

This part of the questionnaire related to people’s intentions to engage in ongoing activities and connections with people in other countries. Those that completed the survey were asked to answer a series of questions that asked yes/no questions about their plans to continue with IIMHL connections. One hundred and twenty one people answered at least part of this section with 4 people skipping this section.

As can be seen in Figure 5 the majority of people plan to have ongoing contact with the people they met and tap into international expertise in their work.

Figure 5. Intended methods to continue connections with the IIMHL Exchange or Network Meeting



Additional comments

The respondents were also invited to make further comments. Responses are grouped below into positive and negative feedback.

Positive Feedback:

- Several people expressed their gratitude to the organisers (e.g. “Great job – you’ve bought the world together again!”)
- The majority of people found their Exchange to be very worthwhile

- People expressed being reinvigorated with renewed motivation following the experience
- Many said that their Exchange had given them key contacts and resources with which to use in their own service or role.

Negative Feedback:

Negative feedback centered on four main issues:

- The lack of clarity and conclusion around social inclusion: *“The topic wasn’t progressed enough”*
- Some speakers: *“Less rhetoric from politicians; more best practice showcased”*
- Lengthy feedback session from group discussions on Friday (as mentioned before). and several people gave suggestions as to how it could have been done better, for example:
 - *“Feedback could have been handed in summarised and sent to participants”*
 - *“One key point could have been given by each table”*
 - *“This sort of process needs tight facilitation”*
- Time wasted: for example one person said: *“At the Network Meeting we spent half a day opening and half a day closing – we need to shorten these to leave room for innovation, inspiration, best practice”*

In addition some people wanted to have a delegates list in the Network Meeting pack and a few did not have a good Exchange experience.

Suggestions for improvement

Suggestions mainly focused on the Network Meeting. Several people suggested that the next Meeting could:

- Showcase best practice or innovation in specific services
- Provide more of an opportunity for continuity from the Exchange (e.g. have “streams” focusing on key interest areas like child, youth and family or indigenous issues)

- In addition many leaders from the disability sector felt that it was now time to have their own parallel process of Exchanges and Network Meeting

Limitations of results

The results were from the 125 people who remained at the Network Meeting on the last day. Thus they do not include people who had attended an Exchange but not the Network Meeting and those who left the Meeting early or did not hand in their survey form.

In addition it was difficult to decipher some leader's writing thus errors may have been made when transposing information. Another limitation is that the questionnaire only asked people what they plan to do but did not assess what they have done or the impact of their attendance on quality of service delivery or service user outcomes (obviously beyond the scope of this survey).

Discussion

The positive feedback on Exchanges highlights the fact that people find this part of the learning process very useful in terms of ongoing connections and learning new systems. In addition there was strong indication that people were already connected (or planned to be) with fellow IIMHL participants and engaged in ongoing research or projects.

Many attendees identified specific areas in which they could use the information gained in their Exchange to enhance their practice or service. Most of the areas identified for improvement centred on communication, improving specific services (particularly peer support, indigenous, youth, primary care and disability services), quality issues, social inclusion and more effective lobbying, networking and leadership.

Moderate ratings were received for the Network Meeting overall. This is in line with past evaluations. However from the ratings of the meetings and workshops it would appear as though participants were generally pleased with the standard of the presentations. The presentation by Dr Helen Milroy received the highest ratings at the Network Meeting (and of any presentation to date in the seven years). When looking at the results it appears that most meetings and workshops were well received with most acquiring an average rating. The majority of the negative feedback that was given referred to the Network Meeting rather than the Exchange. Key areas for improvement were the structure of the Network Meeting and the need for an emphasis on innovation and best practice.

It is clear that the Network Meeting cannot be all things to all people. However it does look like leaders from individual population groups (e.g. indigenous issues, disability, child and youth; leadership development and consumer issues) want stronger "streaming" of their area, more emphasis on best practice and innovation; and, "inspirational speakers".

The quality ratings and suggestions for improvement will be considered by the leaders from the Republic of Ireland in their planning for the 2010 Exchange and Network Meeting. We are grateful to those people that took the time to complete this questionnaire. Your comments have helped change our processes for the future.

Acknowledgement

We are appreciative of the work of Jenny Long who did the graphs for this report.