

What does evaluation do?

Evaluation helps us find out:

- Is the project effective, well-run and does it give good value for public money?
- Are people satisfied with it?
- What it has achieved for the people it aims to help?
- How does the project compare to similar projects in other places?
- What we can learn, develop and share, to make improvements for this project and others in the future?

The independent evaluation was conducted by Vision Sense, working with a team of diverse participative evaluation volunteers, from the communities that the Coalition aimed to serve. Over two years, the team collated over 1200 forms, conducted over 40 interviews and received over 200 reports and reflection logs from Coalition events.

The full evaluation report is available to download from www.visionsense.co.uk.

How has the CADE project developed social capital?

Evaluating social capital helps us assess chances for excluded people and groups to improve their lives (chances might be made better through social contact, work, volunteering, training etc).

Improvements can happen through making positive connections with other people. Of course, inequality can be worsened when disadvantaged groups cluster together in poor positions in society, so assessing what is happening is important, to ensure developments are positive.

We assessed bonding, bridging and linking, to discover if communities are becoming more cohesive and equal through projects like this one. The Coalition proved that it was effective at building confidence and providing opportunities to meet new people (bonding social capital). The LGBT and Race strands have demonstrated the most effective successes in this area (as evaluated by the beneficiaries and participants in the strands).

The bridging and linking dimensions of the Coalition can are being achieved by joint campaigning and training for each other's strands, as well as sharing resources with excluded people, who can then directly enjoy seats around the policy table with public bodies.

This interdependence and integrity of grassroots Voice (already shown in the LGBT strand) will sustain trust, reduce exclusion and build the longevity of a true, strong, regional Coalition in the future.



What has the Coalition achieved?

- The North East VCS Equalities Coalition has formed a regional network, with a Management Group. There is a lead delivery organisation or partnership from each diversity 'strand' (race, faith, LGBT, disability, gender, with groups for age representing both young people and older people).
- From 2007-2009, the strands have delivered 145 events and the lead bodies for each strand have delivered 933 business support sessions (including 310 to voluntary sector organisations in the region wanting to improve equality and diversity). In addition, Coalition delivered 1219 non-accredited skills development outputs which were applicable to the CADE project.
- Coalition representatives are part of the North East Equality and Diversity Board. This allows strand representatives to feed their views to decision-makers and influence policy as a strong collective voice.
- BECON members and the Years Ahead Forum worked together well, as did the gender and faith strands, producing work that will continue to benefit these communities, with good satisfaction levels reported by people who took part.
- 40 Equalities Advocates were trained at a residential weekend and more funding has been secured for future Action Learning Sets in the region.
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Trans gender 'strand' has formed the LGBT Federation NE and have shown how a gender-balanced, democratic network can be built (supported by the CADE project) with multiple identity organisations working together, whilst maintaining vibrant dialogue and celebrating diversity.
- The age and faith strands Successfully demonstrated how they had Influenced regional policy on behalf of their members.



“ (The best part of the event was) getting to know other agencies, listening to the ideas and solutions from real people in audience who had been there.” ”



5 Recommendations For Coalitions..

Coalitions have strength in many people with a common interest working together. In the ones that work, these things happen...

- 1 At the start, everyone must agree the goals of the Coalition and how decisions will be made. Reinforce your values with new members and revisit them regularly.
- 2 Drive your Coalition with a participatory, democratic consensus (power in a top-down hierarchy will cause conflict and isn't a Coalition); decisions should be made by stakeholders.
- 3 Have an Accountable Body or Secretariat who provide administration, and a central point of contact and information.
- 4 Contested views and autonomy of member groups are inevitable (and necessary!) inside a Coalition; but you must present a coherent image to the outside world, to protect your voice and the integrity of your message.
- 5 Make sure you feed information both ways, to members and people you are lobbying consistently; leave enough time to get genuine views from the grassroots members and show them how their views have made a difference.

A checklist for Coalitions is in the full evaluation report.