End of Project Evaluation Report:

Living and Being in the Community (1 & 2)

Cwmni CELyn on behalf of Arloesi Gwynedd Wledig

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1.   Introduction to the Evaluation

1.1 Purpose and Aim

The end of project evaluation is intended to assess the performance and impact of the Living and Being 1 and 2, projects, identifying lessons and recommendations that might influence future projects.

1.2 Constraints

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, we were unable to undertake any face-to-face fieldwork as part of the evaluation process. However, it was possible to undertake an evaluation through virtual means and over the telephone.

1.3 Evaluation Questions

As part of the evaluation we will consider the following questions:

- What has the project achieved in terms of activity, outputs and outcomes? How effective was this?
- What was the impact of the project on stakeholders?
- Has the project delivered within the budget?
- Is there anything that could have been done differently or better? What are the lessons?

1.4 Research Methods

The evaluation was conducted using mixed research methods, including:

Desktop research – Including a review of reports and presentations resulting from the project.

Interviews – A series of interviews were conducted with a sample of 7 stakeholders and officers in October and November 2021.

2.   Background to the Project

The Living and Being in the Community Project was established in the Summer of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of the project was to address two challenges simultaneously – namely:

"To provide work for young people during the pandemic, when work was not available (e.g. College students in usual employment during the holidays) and also to encourage them to identify challenges in their community whether linked to Covid-19 or not."

It was noted that the need for the project had been identified as a result of a number of young people at home from the University seeking temporary employment, but opportunities had been limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim was to create employment opportunities for an 8 week period through employment by local enterprises. As part of **Living and Being 1** – There was an open call to participate, with 6 Social Enterprises across 5 communities in Gwynedd expressing an interest to be involved in the project:

Antur Aelhaearn
Partneriaeth Ogwen
Menter y Plu
Cwmni Bro
CellB
Siop Griffiths

The initiatives were then responsible for recruiting and appointing local young people to the posts. An independent Mentor was also employed as part of the project to support the young people.

During Living and Being 1 a total of 18 young people were employed for a period of 8 weeks each. Following the success of the project it was decided to create a follow-up project, the Living and Being 2 project, with a total of 6 additional young people employed by Partneriaeth Ogwen (3 young people), Cwmni Bro (2 young people) and Antur Aelhaearn (1 young person).

As part of the Living and Being 2 project, mentoring support was provided by the Social Enterprises themselves, having identified this as a lesson from the first series, the work being too much for one person and it made sense for this support to be provided internally by the employer.

3.   Findings – What did we find out?

3.1 Costs

The project operating costs were as follows:

Living and Being 1 Costs = £42,164.34 (Including salaries for 18 young people, weekly mentoring and administrative costs).

Living and Being 2 Costs = £10,100 (Salaries for 6-young people).

On average, young people received a salary of around £250 per week.

For a total of just over £46,000 24 young people had been employed for up to 8 weeks each.

3.2 Reports

All the young people and the initiatives were required to produce a report on their achievements during the project. A sample of the reports were reviewed over the period. There is evidence that reports have been submitted by all initiatives and some of the young people, with some consistent messages:

- There was a wide variation in the roles and type of work the young people were doing, with the initiatives responsible for organizing programmes of work in accordance with their needs/local needs.
- The standard of reports varied, some were very comprehensive and some lacked detail.
- As well as job creation, there was an element of teaching and developing skills. The young people had the opportunity to learn about community development theory, the history of social enterprises and the history of the area as part of the process of preparing it for the roles.
- The project encouraged the development of young people's research skills, by giving them the opportunity to identify local challenges through their own eyes and influencing the identification of local responses.
- Community engagement was central to the process, identifying the need to reach hard to reach groups such as young people, and recognising that young people themselves would be best able to identify how to do so.
- One initiative noted that it would have been useful to identify mentors specialising in specific areas, to advise when needed – e.g. energy, farming, technology.
- 2 of the initiatives had been successful in attracting grants as a result of successful applications developed by the young people.

3.3 Interviews

During October and November 2021, 7 one-to-one telephone interviews were held with representatives from the initiatives, young people and project officers.   The findings can be grouped under the following themes:

Benefit to the Organisation
It was clear by talking to the enterprises that they had experienced positive benefits from being involved in this project. This included:

- It increased the capacity of the temporary enterprises to respond to challenges within the local community.

  "We put in a lot of work to make it a success, it wasn't easy but it was very valuable to us as an organisation"

- The initiatives had been able to offer temporary employment to young people in the area who would otherwise have struggled to find work.

- Strengthening engagement with young people.

  "It can be hard to reach young people, and this project has been successful in helping us strengthen our arrangements"

  "We used the young person to develop a consultation process as part of a wider project and it worked extremely well."

- The work undertaken by the young people in a short space of time created a good foundation for broader work in the community e.g. research, observational work.

- The initiatives appreciated the contribution of the young people, their ideas and enthusiasm, recognising the value of this for the future and are keen to create more opportunities for the young.

  "It has made us realise where we want to go in the future and creating opportunities for young people is a priority for us now, based on the success of Living and Being."

- Some of the initiatives had been able to ensure progression to the work, by keeping some of the young people on and in other roles:

  "X has stayed on with us in a longer-term job, the 8 weeks she spent with us as part of the Living and Being project surely contributed to this and provided valuable experience that was beneficial for the role."

Community benefit
As the money went to community enterprises, which operate for local benefit, interviewees felt that the communities had definitely benefited:

- It had created employment for young people and therefore contributed the economy, in challenging times.

- It had set in motion wider projects in the community as a result e.g. one young person had gone on to start a new social enterprise following his experience, based on a challenge facing his local community.

- It had built a firm and better understanding of the needs of the local communities e.g. some young people had worked on specific pieces of research to better understand the needs of the communities and this had then contributed to the success of wider projects.

  "We learnt a lot more about the community and its needs during this time, and it was good to have extra capacity to investigate the issues. This has helped us since, when applying for grants."

  "The work created by the young person has created a sense of pride in the community".

Benefits to the young people
- The young people had clearly benefited from being involved in this project.

  "It's been a project that's within my community and 'I've acquired a range of new skills"

  "It would be good to get feedback now as to what the outcome of our work was and what this has led to"

  "It was an exciting training experience and I enjoyed being involved, I was lucky to get a more long-term job with them"

  "A great experience, it gave me a lot of confidence and it was good to help my community"

  "It's been great to develop my skills, be part of the community and part of community development"

  "It has made me appreciate my community even more".

- Young people noted that they had learnt much more about the work of social enterprises as a result and learnt to appreciate their work.

Arrangements generally

- It was noted that the arrangements were good and effective. In addition, organisations felt that good support was available and that the mentoring role had been important.

  "There was good support from start to finish"

  "There was a lot of work to do within a short period but there was definitely value and good support"

- Reference was made to the importance of the mentoring role and that this had been helpful, but a possibility for future consideration would be to create a mentoring role within the Organisations to support the young people (as in the case of the Living and Being 2 project).

- Timing – As the project was over the summer, this was not easy at times as Officers tended to want to take leave. But there was recognition that this was the best time to 'catch' young people at home from university over the holidays.

- The flexibility of the scheme meant that there was variation in the use of the roles and that this had led to inconsistencies in what was achieved.

4.   Conclusions – What does all this mean?

Despite being a short term project, it is clear that the project brought many benefits to the Enterprises involved, the communities and the young people.

During the period, the project increased the capacity of the organisations in order to identify specific challenges within their communities and to enable them to respond proactively. It has built a foundation for the development of wider projects within the communities and spurred on other developments.

In addition to the obvious benefits, personal benefits have been gained for the young people and the wider community. This included increasing the confidence and skills of the young people, leading to some taking up long-term jobs and another going on to set up a social enterprise in response to a challenge that the individual had identified. The enterprises noted that there was now a better understanding of the contribution and perspective of young people, and that their engagement with hard to reach groups, such as young people, had improved as a result.

The aim of the project was to:

"To provide work for young people during the pandemic, when work was not available (e.g. College students in usual employment during the holidays) and also to encourage them to identify challenges in their community whether linked to Covid-19 or not."

No specific targets or conditions had been set for the project. There have been obvious advantages in the flexibility of the project and this has enabled the Enterprises to deliver according to local needs. However, the fact that it is so open-ended has meant that the use of the money has varied, making it difficult to compare outputs and outcomes across organisations.

All the Organisations commended the project and expressed their thanks, with a desire to take part again if a similar opportunity presents itself in the future.

5.   Recommendations – What do we propose in response to the Conclusions?

In response to the conclusions we propose the following recommendations for any similar project or further follow-up:

- Whilst the aim of the project was to be as flexible as possible, if a similar scheme is established in the future I would recommend that there should be minimum conditions, so as to provide benchmarking targets and an improved level of consistency.
- This scheme was aimed at University students or those who had just graduated. For any future scheme, I would recommend that an element of the project should target 'hard to reach' young people who are not in education, training or employment.
- There would be benefits in bringing the Enterprises and young people across the areas together, on a regular basis in order to network, learn from each other's experiences and share good practice.
- Consideration might be given to a process of reporting back to the young people, to inform them of the long-term impact and results of their work.