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## Evaluation of Dyma Ni: Final Report

November 2020



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council



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# Executive summary

Dyma Ni started as a collaborative project between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures (GRF) through which to deliver support to disabled people aged 17–30. The project focuses on skill development and social integration through a person-centred approach. The delivery of Dyma Ni has altered since its inception, as the partnership between RAY Ceredigion and GRF has dissolved, with RAY Ceredigion now solely delivering Dyma Ni activities.

This report builds on the mid-term report and further examines how the project has involved:

- The use of person-centred plans and their effectiveness in development
- Examining the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership approach to delivery
- Other avenues to partnership delivery being explored
- The effectiveness of the delivery models involved and their sustainability
- Exploring the potential for the project to be rolled out elsewhere
- How participants have benefitted.

Research data was collected from Dyma Ni staff (n=3) and the parents/carers of participants (n=7).

Overall, the project has been delivered well and has met its key aim of offering support to 17–30-year-old people with disabilities after full-time education. The person-centred approach used within the project was highlighted as being a key success, offering the opportunity for activities to focus on the needs and interests of participants.

Further project successes include:

- Participation in Dyma Ni building confidence and independence
- Increased social integration of participants
- Participants developing new skills
- Some steps made towards skill development for social enterprise, although the viability of this is questioned as well as the suitability of this for project participants
- The partnership approach having allowed for participants to experience a range of activities.

Going forward, Dyma Ni forming more partnerships could offer extended learning and development for the participants but should be undertaken with strong lines of communication with all of those involved and with clear plans in respect of partner roles. This project has highlighted the need within the area for schemes that support disabled young people, and staff believe that there is scope for the project to be adopted in other locations.

The report concludes with some recommendations for the delivery of Dyma Ni and for rolling out the project to other locations.

# 1 Introduction

Wavehill was commissioned by Ceredigion County Council (on behalf of the [Cynnal y Cardi](#) Local Action Group (LAG)) to undertake an independent evaluation of Dyma Ni, which is the subject of this final report.

Cynnal y Cardi is a [LEADER](#) programme scheme<sup>1</sup> that has been funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union. LEADER aims to facilitate and pilot innovations that increase the value and variety of economic opportunities for people in Ceredigion. Cynnal y Cardi funded the Dyma Ni project to trial new, innovative approaches to engaging and training disabled young people in order to support their social integration and help them to develop their skills.

Dyma Ni was funded by Cynnal y Cardi based on a one-year pilot of the project. This funding allowed project delivery over two days per week. This funding period has now come to an end; however, Dyma Ni has recently secured additional funding from the National Lottery to continue project delivery until December 2022.

Dyma Ni started as a collaborative project between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures that provides activities and person-centred<sup>2</sup> development plans for up to 12 people aged 17–30 with a range of disabilities. The young people can be referred to the project in a few ways: through self-referral, referral from a parent or carer, referral from an organisation such as a local day centre, or Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) initiatives such as Workways or Cam Nesa. Additionally, some of the participants were already supported by RAY Ceredigion; in these cases, referral came directly from within the organisation.

RAY Ceredigion is a small charity that provides activities and training to support the local community. Green Rocket Futures is an enterprise run by local gardening journalist Kim Stoddart, which provides person-centred gardening and outdoor activities that have been developed with individuals with autism in mind. Dyma Ni was delivered at both sites with one day in RAY Ceredigion and one at Green Rocket Futures per week.

The partnership between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures was dissolved in November 2019. This was an amicable decision led by Green Rocket Futures. The reasons for the dissolution are explored further within this report. The delivery of Dyma Ni has since continued over the two days but, instead, has been solely delivered by RAY Ceredigion at their facility in Aberaeron.

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<sup>1</sup> LEADER is a locally based approach to rural development which delivers activities that support rural communities.

<sup>2</sup> A person-centred approach is a way of delivering services that sees service users as equal partners and involves them in planning decisions to ensure that the support delivered meets their needs. You can read more on person-centred approaches [here](#).

This final report follows a mid-term report which examined project delivery, initial impacts on the participants, and key findings in order to inform delivery going forward. This final report builds on the mid-term report and considers the outcomes and impacts following the delivery of activity as well as the added value of the Dyma Ni project. The evaluation findings and conclusions will provide a series of evidence-based recommendations for the future delivery of similar interventions and for the continuation of the Dyma Ni project. Furthermore, the report includes three case studies on participant-specific experiences.

This review addresses the following research questions:

- How are person-centred plans created and how effective have they been in achieving some level of personal development?
- Has the partnership delivery approach worked and what have been the key strengths and weaknesses?
- Have avenues of synergy and collaboration with other organisations/partners to strengthen the project been explored?
- What potential delivery models could be implemented going forward and how could these be sustainable?
- Is there potential for this project model to be rolled out to other third sector organisations?
- How have the participants benefitted from the intervention?

## 1.1 Background

The Dyma Ni project emerged out of a perceived gap in support for young people with disabilities in Ceredigion. Presently, as young people with disabilities reach the age of 18 there is a reduction in available support that facilitates social integration. In Ceredigion, young people can be supported by Coleg Ceredigion for only a maximum of three years, after which, young people with disabilities can find themselves left with limited opportunities for socialising and social integration after these phases of support are withdrawn. This can have significant impacts on the well-being of disabled young people, leading to feelings of exclusion, isolation and depression. Responding to this perceived “cliff edge” of support that faces disabled young adults, Dyma Ni (with RAY Ceredigion) piloted an innovative programme for young people with disabilities who have completed or are approaching the end of full-time education.

### 1.1.1 Some Context

Isolation is a key issue among people living with disabilities. Indeed, research conducted by Mencap highlights that almost one in three young people with a learning disability spend less than one hour outside of their home on a typical Saturday, and 18% of respondents recorded that they do not spend much time with other people and do feel alone and cut off from other people<sup>3</sup>. Sense report that almost half of disabled people feel lonely<sup>4</sup>. As outlined in the background information above, these issues are of particular concern in Ceredigion, where there are limited opportunities for disabled young people to socialise after they reach the end of formal education.

There are a number of factors that underpin high levels of isolation among disabled people, including poor access to services, challenges in relation to accessibility (which can limit individuals' access to transport and venues), and financial challenges<sup>5</sup>. Where an individual is not in employment, education or training, this may also put them at further risk of experiencing isolation, and people living with disabilities are more likely to be out of work. In 2019, for example, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 51.7%, compared to 81.7% among people without disabilities<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, unemployment can lead to young people feeling isolated, experiencing poor mental health and reduced confidence<sup>7</sup>.

In this context, projects such as Dyma Ni present an exciting opportunity to reduce levels of isolation among disabled young people, build social confidence and facilitate the development of skills to bring disabled young people closer to the labour market. This report is concerned with the findings from the pilot of this project at the mid-term stage of delivery.

### 1.1.2 LEADER Approach

LEADER is a local development method which seeks to engage local actors in the development of their rural areas. It is a Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) initiative and is designed to engage and empower local communities to undertake their own local development.

Within Ceredigion, LEADER is being implemented by the Cynnal y Cardi Local Action Group (LAG), with Ceredigion County Council overseeing the administrative and financial operations on their behalf. Cynnal y Cardi is funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union.

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<sup>3</sup> Mencap, 2016. *Learning Disability Week highlights isolation faced by young people with a learning disability*. <https://www.mencap.org.uk/press-release/learning-disability-week-highlights-isolation-faced-young-people-learning-disability>

<sup>4</sup> Sense, 2019. *Loneliness*. <https://www.sense.org.uk/support-us/campaigns/loneliness/>

<sup>5</sup> Olsen, J., 2018. Socially disabled: the fight disabled people face against loneliness and stress. *Disability & Society*, 33(7), pp. 1160-1164.

<sup>6</sup> Powell, A., 2019. *People with disabilities in employment*, London: House of Commons Library.

<sup>7</sup> Prince's Trust, 2015. *The Prince's Trust Macquarie Youth Index 2015*, s.l.: Prince's Trust.

The LAG design and implement their Local Development Strategy (LDS). Some of the key aspects of LEADER include: developing and piloting local innovation which seeks to encourage new and innovative approaches and solutions to local issues, encouraging cooperation between LAGs and the sharing of knowledge, working to empower local people and organisations to take opportunities for development, and working directly with the local population.

Dyma Ni has been funded by the Cynnal y Cardi LAG, as it seeks to pilot a new and innovative approach to engaging and training disabled young people, which includes skill development and social integration through a person-centred approach.

## 1.2 Research Methods

Building on the research conducted within the mid-term evaluation, the research team has used a multi-method approach to generate rich, qualitative data in order to respond to the research questions. This approach has involved a variety of stakeholders so as to provide a developed picture of the impact of Dyma Ni upon the young people whom it supports. The following methods were used:

- The research team carried out a series of one-to-one telephone or video interviews with staff involved in the delivery to understand the outcomes and impacts of the Dyma Ni project, including the added value and the potential for the project delivery to be replicated (n=3).
- The research team carried out a series of one-to-one telephone interviews with families, support workers, and caring others. These interviews assessed the impacts and outcomes of the participants' involvement in Dyma Ni, as well as forming the basis of the case studies (n=7).

### 1.2.1 Limitations

The size of a project of this scale presents particular challenges in guaranteeing confidentiality to participants, which has resulted in challenges during data collection. The small numbers of participants may influence the findings. In particular, there may have been concerns surrounding their identifiability, which can result in a degree of self-censoring. This may have prevented the evaluation team from being able to gather more constructive feedback.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions and lockdowns have had an impact on both project delivery and research data collection. Firstly, the delivery of Dyma Ni was halted with the announcement of the national lockdown on 23 March 2020. Delivery of the project did not resume for the group until September 2020. During the lockdown period, project staff undertook a number of initiatives through which to keep in touch with participants, which will be discussed further within this report. The delivery of Dyma Ni was halted again during the 17-day "firebreak" lockdown in late October 2020.



In light of social distancing restrictions, the research methodology for the final phase contained neither face-to-face contact nor further visits to the Dyma Ni project. As a result, the data collection focused on interviews with project staff and with parents and carers of the participants. For safety purposes, all interviews were conducted via either telephone or online video calls.

The research design sought to take into account opinions on project delivery from the entire project team; however, there were challenges surrounding contacting and the availability of project staff to participate in the research, potentially due to the “firebreak” lockdown during data collection. This has led to a slight underrepresentation of staff within this evaluation, which has been accounted for within the discussion that follows.

## 2 Key Findings: Management and Delivery of the Project

This section summarises the key findings of the final review of Dyma Ni and considers each of the research questions identified above. This section draws mainly on staff interviews (n=3) as well as parent and carer interview data (n=7).

### Section summary

- The person-centred plans and approaches used within Dyma Ni were seen to be key to its success.
- Although the partnership with GRF was ultimately unsuccessful, there is potential for future partnerships to add diversity to the project.
- Any future partnership working should include frequent and effective communication to ensure synergy within the project.
- Staff felt as though the project as a whole or aspects of Dyma Ni could be transferable, but an emphasis was added to the consistency of delivery and to potential funding dependency.

### 2.1 How are person-centred plans created and how effective have they been in achieving some level of personal development?

The person-centred plans were integrated from the start of the project, with participants making pen portraits and considering skills and activities with staff on a one-to-one basis to understand what activities would be enjoyed. Thereafter, the participants undertook two blocks of taster sessions over 10-week periods to immerse themselves in a range of activities to allow them to establish what they wanted to continue and activities of little interest, as well as to review any progress made. One staff member noted the success of this approach:

*'The staff have got a really good knowledge of what each young person likes, dislikes, what they're comfortable with, how they can manage and self-regulate, what they might be made anxious by. It's helped staff record detailed information for each young person. And then it's helped the project staff to plan future activities to understand how each person might feel, and tailor the sessions for them.'* (Staff Interview)

By continually considering the needs of the participants it allowed staff to focus on particular activities, and to develop scope for participants to take part in activities they enjoy and to have their needs accommodated within these activities. Often there is a main activity running with an additional activity running alongside to allow participants a choice that better suits their interests. The ability of Dyma Ni to accommodate each participant's needs is a key strength of this delivery model. This has helped in maintaining participant engagement and making activities worthwhile and meaningful to the young people.

Delivery staff have noted how they make monthly activity plans together and use a “loose framework” to guide the activities on offer in each session. Project activities that they noted tended to fall into the following categories:

- Development of motor skills
- Hand–eye coordination
- Confidence building; and
- Having fun.

Project staff emphasised the need for a loose nature to the plans due to the need for flexibility to cater to the group and for activities to be led by the group. One staff member stated:

*‘It’s been very fluid and led by group, so some days I come in with my plan and that lasts two seconds and then we do something different because that’s what the group needs.’* (Staff Interview)

As a result of this specialisation and accommodation of participants’ needs, many have developed a range of new skills and had positive achievements. Additionally, participants have been noted to exhibit a growth in confidence and independence as a result of Dyma Ni. When discussing the success of the person-centred plans, one staff member noted:

*‘The benefit of this approach is that it’s really responsive to their individual needs and interests. This shows in the group. It’s very comfortable. Every young person is confident in the group. They feel very supported. That’s as a result of this approach.’* (Staff Interview)

It was noted within the parent and carer interviews that the halting of the project during the COVID-19 lockdown impacted on the development of portfolios for participants:

*‘Unfortunately for the group, the stage at which the portfolio would have come together was at the first bit of lockdown.’* (Parent/Carer Interview)

However, project staff worked on these during the lockdown period and made them available to the participants. These portfolios focused on aspects of the participants’ personality, things that they enjoy, new skills developed, and achievements. Moreover, the portfolios made links to potential social enterprise activities in which the participants could be involved. These are displayed alongside a range of photographs of the participants taking part in activities within Dyma Ni, making the content of the portfolios accessible to both participants and their parents and carers. One staff member described the portfolios as follows:

*‘When lockdown happened, we wrote case studies (for each young person) focused on the strengths and how they could develop those, and the final bit looking at any skills and interests they might have linked to social enterprise. They created a personal booklet for each person.’* (Staff Interview)

Parent and carer interviews, however, often expressed a lack of knowledge of these portfolios or development plans, as the following quote demonstrates:

*'They don't really set targets or goals for individuals. It seems that they go and talk and do activities but there are no goals set. If they done that to help them get into the big, wide world, but don't know if all would do it, would be good if they had an action plan to help them in the future.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 1)

Although this is not greatly concerning, it could be addressed within the project for the future, with increased communication with families and carers with regard to the young person's development within Dyma Ni to potentially be further supported in the home environment. However, one staff member noted that all participants were adults, that they could not force them to do anything that they did not want to do, and that there was a need to respect their choices regarding the things that they do. Instead, they emphasised how confidence was a key aspect of delivery and the main focus of development through the project sessions.

The outcomes and application of skills will be discussed in section 3.

## 2.2 Has the partnership delivery approach worked and what have been the key strengths and weaknesses?

This question is being considered within this report in light of the changing circumstances with respect to the partnership between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures breaking down. It is hoped that this will offer insight into the circumstances involved and reflection on the changes to the project.

As noted in section 1, the partnership between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures ended in November 2019. Since then, the project has been solely delivered by RAY Ceredigion.

### Strengths of the Partnership Approach

The delivery staff were positive about the partnership between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures. A key strength was that the two organisations worked together whilst establishing the project. This level of engagement from the start ensured that both organisations were clear about the aims of the project and were clearly dedicated to it.

The partners also offered differing aspects to the project and this division of labour — one day at GRF and one at RAY Ceredigion — offered participants a chance to become involved with a variety of activities. The partnership brought with it additional expertise in specialised fields, which in this context was outdoor education.

GRF also offered outdoor space in which the project could operate with suitable resources with which to support the learning environment, although the lack of indoor space within the location became problematic during wet and cold weather. Conversely, the RAY Ceredigion centre in Aberaeron suffers from a lack of outdoor space. This worked as a balance whilst the partnership was in operation, with both partners being able to offer particular aspects within their site.

A final strength of the partnership was the dedication of staff across the partnership to offering support to disabled young people, as well as a belief in the project aims. Staff at both sites used tailored activities to work with the participants' abilities and appeal to their interests.

### Weaknesses of the Partnership Approach

The breakdown of the partnership was attributed to a lack of communication between the two partners with regard to delivery aspects, with GRF feeling restricted in what it could offer due to differences in approach. Staff noted this as follows:

*'At times there were different approaches to say the word "therapeutic". I think at times there were different perspectives on how to support the young people, but I don't think it ever impacted on the delivery of the project.'* (Staff Interview)

*'I think [GRF and RAY Ceredigion] were on different pages... I don't know. [I] think, basically, it was a difference in approach and what people thought the project was for.'* (Staff Interview)

This was followed up by staff stating that they felt that had the partnership continued, a discussion between the partners would have been needed so as to clarify how they were supporting the young people involved in Dyma Ni. Staff noted that although there was a difference in approach, they did not feel as though this negatively impacted on the participants, the activities on offer or the care that was received.

There was a belief that the partnership had become less dynamic as the project proceeded, with GRF feeling unable to focus on aspects of entrepreneurial skills and routes to employment within its delivery to the participants. This was felt to be a means of reducing development of the project and leaving areas unexplored. Moreover, one staff member noted a difference in the ways in which the partners work, citing a difference between RAY Ceredigion as a charity and GRF as a social enterprise and business. Again, this impacted on the perceived inability of GRF to deliver Dyma Ni as it had believed was required:

*'The partnership was a challenge... [GRF's] way of working is very different to a charity. Ultimately, [GRF] didn't have autonomy.'* (Staff Interview)

## Key Lessons on Partnership Approach

The main lesson from the partnership approach is the need for good communication between partners. Such communication is needed in order to ensure an effective level of understanding and consistency in approach across the project. One staff member noted:

*'If we'd carried on, we would have asked for a meeting to talk... and drawn up a plan to ensure we were all comfortable in how we were working.'* (Staff Interview)

Increasing effective communication could have assisted in the partnership in terms of creating synergy between RAY Ceredigion and GRF, ironing out differences in approach and for GRF to expand delivery.

The use of a partnership approach can bring in additional expertise and allow for diversification of the projects. This has allowed Dyma Ni to offer its participants a range of activities which have helped them to develop new skills, make advancements in their development, and create a better understanding of activities that they want to pursue and develop.

Finally, the integration of the two projects at the start of the development and funding process ensured that both organisations possessed a good understanding of what the project was to achieve, regardless of the struggles surrounding concepts involved with delivery. All staff noted the positives of the project and how it had been delivered, as well as outcomes observed within the participants.

### 2.3 Have avenues of synergy and collaboration with other organisations/partners to strengthen the project been explored?

Thus far, Dyma Ni has been only a partnership between RAY Ceredigion and Green Rocket Futures. This could partially be attributed to the impact of COVID-19 upon the accessibility and practicality of establishing partnerships at this time. There was no indication within the final report period that the steering group had been an effective mechanism for collaboration or support for the project.

The project staff at RAY Ceredigion noted how in the wake of the partnership with Green Rocket Futures dissolving, they had been offered use of a space within local gardens for cultivation by the Dyma Ni group. However, staff stated that this had not yet come together due to COVID-19 halting the plans for now.

There had been the opportunity for Dyma Ni participants to take part in other activities organised by RAY Ceredigion, with project staff noting how the cooking club, which supplied lunches to the Forget Me Not dementia club, had become an activity in which many Dyma Ni participants were involved. This built on participants' cooking skills developed within the project, as well as further skills such as serving food. However, staff noted that, due to COVID-19 restrictions, this activity had currently been halted for safety reasons.

Furthermore, project staff expressed that they were hoping to secure local partnerships to allow for the crafts and cookery produced within Dyma Ni to be sold within the local area, thus helping towards the establishment of a social enterprise from Dyma Ni. This would help to secure additional funding for Dyma Ni to support its future activities. One staff member stated that part of the plan was:

*'over time to work with the young people to build on their skills so that we're actually producing woodwork, cakes, crafts, etc. on a regular basis, and looking for financial outlets for that, whether it's online or local shops. That's what we'd like to do. We'd like a written agreement so that any money earned from that goes back into the project.'* (Staff Interview)

The main challenge that currently faces Dyma Ni in establishing partnerships is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has reduced the project's ability to form partnerships and has reduced the stability of the environment with respect to forming sustainable partnerships. What is more, with the halting of group activities for nearly six months it meant that progress could not be made in participants producing items for sale, thus impacting on social enterprise ventures.

Within the mid-term report it was noted by stakeholders that reaching out to a number of local groups could be of benefit to the project, namely Ceredigion People First, Mind Aberystwyth, and Ceredigion Hafal. Furthermore, it was suggested that working with local transport providers, for example, could help to increase accessibility of the project and support independent travel for participants. There was no indication given within the interviews with delivery staff that these types of partnerships had been sought or investigated. This could be because they simply did not mention these in the interviews or that consultation had not occurred. Moreover, it is important to consider that COVID-19, again, could have impacted on the project forming these partnerships.

## 2.4 What potential delivery models could be implemented going forward and how could these be sustainable?

### Delivery Model Successes and Challenges

The person-specific approach has been a key aspect in the success of Dyma Ni, allowing activities to be tailored to the interests of participants. This has helped to keep participants engaged and further develop areas that they have highlighted as being of interest. Additionally, working with the participants to gain their input brings with it a sense of empowerment and ensures that these activities are meaningful rather than tokenistic, which helps to guarantee that outcomes manifest as practical skills and are of use to the participants. One staff member expressed how this approach was:

*‘to give them belief. Everybody is capable of doing things... If you go in with that belief system, they will believe they can do it. That is across the board, not just those with learning disabilities.’ (Staff Interview)*

Although the partnership with Dyma Ni and GRF came to an end, working with another body in delivering activities has been of benefit to the project and should be considered for similar project delivery. However, partnership working needs to be integrated within both organisations, ensuring that there is clear guidance and there are clear communication pathways for both partners involved. This will ensure that there will be no discrepancies in approach and will reduce the risk of partnership dissolution.

One key aspect in the delivery of Dyma Ni was the ability to offer a consistent service to those involved in the project, namely in the form of staff and RAY Ceredigion premises. This has helped to create stability for participants and allow relationships to establish. This level of consistency is vital to those participants who are on the spectrum and makes for a stable environment for all of those involved. Additionally, the dedication of Dyma Ni staff to the delivery of the project and the care of the participants is a further aspect which has led to the success of this project.

### Project Sustainability

The project has received funding beyond that of Cynnal y Cardi from the National Lottery. This funding will allow the project to be maintained going forward — albeit on a once-per-week basis — until December 2022. The project delivery team noted how they are applying to other sources of funding to sustain the project for two days and make it a long-term prospect.

Additionally, it is hoped within the project team that creating a social enterprise — in the form of a cafe for the Dyma Ni participants to work in or of selling the crafts made within the project — will help to feed money back into the project and assist the sustainability of the group.



However, it seems to be clear that a continuation of the project will rely on some form of funding, making Dyma Ni vulnerable to further risks and instability. One member of staff raised concerns surrounding the project staffing (given the current funding situation), suggesting that if delivery were reduced to one day per week, staff members may seek alternative employment:

*'[Dyma Ni] don't want to lose the project staff and if their employment goes down to one day a week, we might.'* (Staff Interview)

This would potentially be damaging to Dyma Ni participants who had formed relationships with staff and value consistency. Additionally, this would be a loss to the effective project delivery and participant knowledge held by current staff.

One staff member noted how an important aspect to consider going forward is that of expanding to support for the families of disabled young people. Within section 3 we discuss issues surrounding Dyma Ni offering respite care (as noted by parents and carers); however, one staff member felt as though there was potential to expand the reach of the project to include families through a 360 personal development plan. This, they felt, would offer a more holistic view to care and enhancing support and would seek to address mental health issues that can often exist within families of disabled people:

*'Not just young people that need help — need to help family, too... we didn't know that when the project started. Lot of families with disabled children have mental health issues... wider issues at play. I have heard this from other providers as well. Need to look at a joined-up approach.'* (Staff Interview)

Finally, it has been noted that better communication is required between partners; however, better lines of communication could be established between the Dyma Ni team. This has been noted from the perceived lack of information within the team with regard to the future, sustainability and delivery of the project, suggesting that there is a need and scope for better sharing of project updates and progress with all of those involved in Dyma Ni.

## 2.5 Is there potential for this project model to be rolled out to other third sector organisations?

The project team felt positive that there were many elements to Dyma Ni which could be replicable in other settings and locations. The main elements noted were regarding the success of the delivery approach, the project team, and the person-centred aspects of the project.

However, it was noted by the project staff that Dyma Ni benefitted from a stable and mostly suitable location in which the group could meet. This was a benefit in terms of consistency for the group as well as in terms of costs; therefore, infrastructure would be a consideration in the applicability of the project elsewhere. Furthermore, the consistency and dedication of the delivery staff were noted as being a benefit to the project, as they allowed participants to build meaningful relationships with staff and reduced disturbance from regular staff changes (as was noted to occur within other care for disabled people, which often caused setbacks in participant development and achievements).

In terms of delivery of the different aspects — outdoor gardening and more traditional activities — of the project, the main learning from this was the need for suitable, alternative indoor spaces for the outdoor activities, should they be required. This is particularly important during wet and colder weather and could have become an issue had the partnership with GRF continued within Dyma Ni. Additionally, as Dyma Ni was using a person-centred approach, should a participant not enjoy the outdoor activities this would potentially make it more difficult to cater to their needs due to the fixity of delivery between the two partners. This suggests that more flexibility with regard to delivery could be useful here.

A further aspect to consider within the suitability of rolling out the project to other locations is the availability of funds with which to support the project. One key benefit to Dyma Ni is its ability to give consistency to the young people involved. Offering projects to disabled young people on a more fleeting or short-term basis has the potential to do more harm than good. As the feedback from Dyma Ni suggests, it has played an important part in the lives of participants, both socially and developmentally.

## 3 How have the participants benefitted from Dyma Ni?

The impact of Dyma Ni upon the participants has been collected through the project team interviews and through the parent and carer interviews. From all parent and carer interviews completed (n=7), all indicated that they had seen progress in the participant, except for one family member who stated that they had little knowledge of what happened within Dyma Ni and had no expectations or witnessed any changes as a result.

### Section summary

- Confidence and independence were the major positive outcomes from Dyma Ni for the participants.
- Further consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a social enterprise for the young people in Dyma Ni and how much this will be achievable with the group.
- The project has had some exposure locally, but more could be done to break down the barriers to disabilities through the project.

### 3.1 Confidence

Participants in Dyma Ni demonstrated an increase in confidence. This manifested through the activities and skills in which they were involved and increased knowledge regarding what they could achieve, as well as confidence growing through being part of a supportive group with the other participants, as the following quotes suggest:

*'She's definitely built-up confidence by going there, coming out of her shell more, more talkative, got some new experiences.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 4)

*'She has gained a lot more confidence, made some friends. She gets on well with the group leaders.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 1)

There was also an observed impact on confidence outside of the Dyma Ni group meetings, with many parents or carers noting how the participants had exhibited positive behavioural change, which could be attributed back to their involvement in the project.

One member of staff interviewed suggested that confidence had been the main achievement of Dyma Ni and that the project had helped to give the young people involved self-worth and respect:

*'I'm hoping the greatest thing they leave with is the confidence to do whatever they want to do and belief that they can do it and to hold their head up high, rather than looking at the floor.'* (Staff Interview)

## 3.2 Independence

Following on from confidence, another main positive resulting from Dyma Ni was that of increased independence in participants. This can be observed in participants taking independent actions such as organising to meet group members outside of Dyma Ni sessions, using public transport to get to Aberaeron, and shopping independently, as the following quote suggests:

*'He's gained quite a lot of independence. It's nice that it's quite local because he can catch a bus by himself and is very confident going to Aberaeron and picking up shopping on the way home after.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 7)

*'We've been working on him catching a bus himself or getting to Dyma Ni himself so that... on the two days a week when he goes to Dyma Ni, he may not need that much support to get there.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 6)

This independence has also manifested in a change in attitudes of participants, such as a wish to find employment or become involved in volunteering. Furthermore, parents and carers have noted that increased maturity can be seen in participants, with some hoping to start leading more independent lives and talking about the future proactively. For some participants this independence has manifested through a more general lack of dependence on carers or parents.

The ability of the Dyma Ni group has been attributed to helping to support this transition by the participants. The group has worked as a support network and creates a sense of belonging and friendship. Many of the parents and carers discussed how the participants are in contact outside of the project, and the rewards that these interactions have for the participants. One staff member described the groups as follows:

*'They are a crew. They have mates and friends. And some will maintain eye contact now, when they wouldn't look up from the floor. That's how I have been measuring [its success].'* (Staff Interview)

Additionally, one parent or carer suggested that the inclusion of life skills could be of benefit to the participants of Dyma Ni:

*'If [Dyma Ni] could teach the young adults life skills, then that would impact on all of them. Parents can only teach them so much. They don't listen to us as parents. If someone else teaches them, then it's more likely to sink in.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 1)

### 3.3 Personal Development

Parents and carers also noted that some participants had experienced personal development, which could be attributed, if only partly, to their participation in Dyma Ni. The development noted was often regarding speech progression, dealing with anxiety, and social and conversational skills:

*'[Participant] suffers from social phobia. It was hard to get her to go to a group. She has come out of her shell in terms of that.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 1)

These personal developments can be linked to the participants' personal development plans, with the participants taking positive steps during their time at Dyma Ni which are helping not only to develop skills but also to build more widely and have an impact on a greater scale.

Furthermore, staff noted how they had worked on awareness of others and empathy. Through this they encourage understanding the other participants and their feelings and respecting others. One staff member noted:

*'We have spent time on working on how someone would feel, spending time talking about how would you feel if someone did something they didn't like. Now at place where if they... think that might have upset them and that is huge. For someone on the spectrum to say that is huge... It's giving them a broader view on the world.'* (Staff Interview)

However, not all parents and carers were aware of the personal development plans and the work that participants had done towards these, as the following quotes suggest:

*'They do lots of crafts, but don't think she has had a one-to-one.'*  
(Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 1)

*'I don't think she's done that. I haven't seen anything like that.'*  
(Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 4)

This suggests that more could be done to highlight the importance of these plans and encourage development more holistically (including through the home environment), as a few parents or carers noted that they were not aware of all the activities undertaken during the Dyma Ni meetings.

However, it should be noted that it is not solely the responsibility of staff to keep parents and carers informed. Often it is due to a lack of communication between participants and their families/carers, which is beyond the control of the project. Additionally, as noted above, all participants in Dyma Ni are adults and are not forced into doing anything that they do not want to do, even if it could be of benefit (as highlighted within any personal development plan). Participants are given the autonomy to choose that in which they become involved.

Participants making positive progress can also impact on their attitudes and expectations regarding achievements, which can also encourage and inspire them to push themselves further and break down barriers for themselves to try new things.

### 3.4 Respite and Safe Care

An additional aspect that was of importance to parents and carers was the respite care that Dyma Ni offers, with a few parents and carers noting that since lockdown it has been good to have some space:

*'It gives me an opportunity for respite. Since lockdown we've been together all the time. We get on well. She's a very nice young person, but she needs to be told to do things... When she's at Dyma Ni, it's given me and my husband... a break.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 4)

*'It used to give my husband respite for the day knowing she's doing something else with someone else.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 2)

Similarly, a few parents noted that they believed that Dyma Ni was a safe environment for participants and were reassured of the care that they would receive while there:

*'I feel quite safe with him there. I know that he's happy.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 3)

The safety of the environment was also noted by project staff, who stated that it was important for participants to feel comfortable in their surroundings.

Additionally, in terms of safety, since the project reopened following the COVID-19 lockdown in September 2020, a number of new measures have been put in place to ensure participant safety. These have included splitting the group in order to reduce the numbers for one-day-per-week sessions over the two days. This allows for social distancing to be maintained and activities to be safely carried out. As a result, all members have returned to the group since it restarted and have adapted well to the changes.

During the lockdown period the Dyma Ni project team were in contact with the project participants on a weekly basis to check in with them. From May onwards the team started to visit participants for one-to-one "walk and talk" sessions. These lasted for about two hours each and offered the participants a chance to leave the house safely. Furthermore, staff noted those suffering with their mental health as a result of the lockdown and created a pack with exercises and support to assist them. Equally, they focused on working through these exercises with them during their meet-ups.

### 3.5 Community Integration

A wider component of Dyma Ni was that of developing community integration of the participants. This has been established in part through the developing independence of the participants through the project and their wider activities outside of Dyma Ni.

Additional hopes that RAY Ceredigion could establish a social enterprise working with Dyma Ni participants, however, is yet to be seen, although it should be noted that progress in this had been halted due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the subsequent 'firebreak' lockdown.

However, one staff member noted that they felt that this aspect of the project may be unobtainable. They attributed this to the understanding of the participants, whose focus, regarding craft making, was upon producing products for family and friends rather than upon selling:

*'[It was suggested that] they would have skills that they would run their own business, but I'm not sure how realistic that is. The ones that are gifted artistically who could sit and produce a piece of work that was saleable — their brain just doesn't work like that. We have produced wonderful pieces, but they know who it is going to. I have had conversation "you could sell these" and got a look of horror from them. They all know who it is for — their mum, their gran or their dog. There is one or two who could produce sellable work, but there isn't one thing they have produced they would consider selling. Had conversation with them to suggest they could sell them and they say, "Why?".' (Staff Interview)*

This staff member suggested that if this is a pathway that the project is to follow, it will need to be explicit regarding every piece of crafting that they produce so as to ensure that participants do not attribute gifting to the item and do see it as being an item to sell. They suggest that crafting for the participants is more a social action attached to friendship and enjoyment than an economic one.

Parents and carers felt that Dyma Ni has encouraged some participants to consider employment or volunteering opportunities (rather than personal social enterprise activities), as the following quotes suggest, which is encouraging for better community engagement in the future:

*'[Participant has] done some volunteering with [local college]. He helped out with the toddler playgroup, which he loved.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 7)

*'[Participant's] sociable skills have definitely developed. She would be good at doing volunteering more so now, I think.'* (Parent/Carer Interview about Participant 4)

One staff member noted how the project itself had had little exposure and that barriers continued to exist in the perceptions of ability of disabled people. They stated:

*'We do go out and mix, but institutional bias will be there forever and a day. It's difficult to tackle.'* (Staff Interview)

This suggests that more could be done to reduce bias and educate more widely regarding the achievements within the group and more generally. Furthermore, one staff member reduced this to a need for respect for all, including those with disabilities.

### 3.6 Wider Impacts

When considering the impact and outcomes of Dyma Ni, one should also consider the wider impacts of the project upon those participating and the community more widely. Firstly, a positive impact is upon perceptions of disabilities. During the project staff interviews, one interviewee noted that when obtaining funding for the pilot, they felt up against stereotypes surrounding what their people with disabilities were like and could achieve from within the LAG. They felt that Dyma Ni was a step towards helping to dispel these stereotypes and altering the perceptions of disabilities:

*'A wider impact is to try to dispel preconceived ideas on people with disabilities. Not sure it achieved that, but certainly for the volunteers and those involved, it did happen.'* (Staff Interview)

However, another staff member noted that more could be done within the local community and within RAY Ceredigion itself to break down barriers and prejudice towards disabilities.

Furthermore, one of the delivery staff noted how their participation within the project had assisted them in developing more knowledge on using a person-centred approach and on the delivery methods. This, they noted, had proceeded to add to additional work that they have undertaken, stating that Dyma Ni had had a positive impact on their professional practice.



## 4 Case Studies

This section includes three case studies of Dyma Ni participants. Each has been chosen to represent some key aspects of the project, as well as for an illustration of impacts and outcomes which have resulted from being part of Dyma Ni.

### Case Study 1 (Participant 7)

For the parent of Participant 7, Dyma Ni has played a huge role in developing their independence, maturity and thoughtfulness. Participating in Dyma Ni for Participant 7 has given them the freedom and confidence with which to catch the bus to the group sessions every week, as well as to shop for the family on the way home, something that their parent sees as them developing consideration for the family and the role that they play within it:

*'He's gained quite a lot of independence. It's nice that it's quite local because he can catch a bus by himself and is very confident going to Aberaeron and picking up shopping on the way home after... It's lovely to see that he can plan and do things by himself, things that are helpful for us. [The participant has] become a lot more independent and thoughtful.'*

Dyma Ni has also given Participant 7 an opportunity to mix and socialise with people their own age and develop friendships as a result. The parent describes how they are now in touch with their friends every day.

As part of the work with Dyma Ni, the parent of Participant 7 describes how they have a portfolio booklet of what they have achieved and enjoy as part of Dyma Ni. This helps the family to stay in touch with the participant's interests and activities in the project.

A positive development since the participant has been involved in the project was that they had signed up for a work placement project. This allowed the participant to secure a few local job roles and their parent noted that they had since applied for a permanent role within a local business. Again, this was noted to have been due and helped to increase their confidence:

*'He signed up to another project which looked for work placements for him, so he worked at [local business] for a while and at [local business]. He's more and more confident now and he's in the process of applying for a job at [local business], where they can support his role. That would be another way for him to meet people of a similar age and to develop proper friendships the way everyone else does.'*

During the COVID-19 lockdown the parent of Participant 7 noted that they managed to find things for them to do around the house, as they like to be kept busy. Moreover, the participant had contact from the project worker every other week to check up on them and how they were doing. This, they believed, reduced the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions upon the participant.

The family are working to help increase and develop the independence established within the participant; for example, when they go shopping, they ensure that they also come but have their own trolley so as to experience shopping independently. They noted that they often had not noticed what the participant could do, but this was highlighted through their achievements in Dyma Ni, as the following quote suggests:

*'With the way that he's progressing, it's obviously satisfying something to give him the confidence to reach a new milestone each month. Sometimes I didn't realise he hadn't got there already — he's thinking for himself a lot more. Instead of having to tell him what he needs to buy for Christmas presents, he'll buy them himself or go shopping for us on the way home to help us.'*

The parent of Participant 7 feels that without Dyma Ni the friendships established within the group would cease to exist and they would have less to keep them occupied. They see Dyma Ni as a great opportunity for local young people and note that it would be good if the experience were open to more people in the area.

### Case Study 2 (Participant 6)

The support worker for Participant 6 noted that they love attending Dyma Ni, with the project staff making it fun and interactive for them and all participants. Moreover, they highlighted how the project has helped to develop the participant's conversational and social skills greatly. They feel that being part of a group has helped them to have a safe and informal environment in which to develop:

*'I think the biggest thing is the relationship with the people who work there. They're so interactive all the time. And the other people in his group, it's the only place he knows them from and in a short session when doing stuff, he interacts with most of them. He just likes the people who do it. If he talks about it, they're the first thing he talks about. They're so amenable to him. He has always needed coaxing into do the things they do, but the fact that they have managed to get him to make all these things to take back to his grandma is fantastic. It's always fun for him. It's been a great club for him. All of his developmental things have been on speech, conversational and confidence.'*

Dyma Ni has allowed Participant 6 to develop confidence in the new skills developed through the project and their support worker noted that the trust given to the participant to be allowed to try new things and the independence for them to develop have been of huge impact:

*'His conversational and social skills have come on leaps and bounds. All the activities they do open up the developmental stuff ... he's been really happy to be part of the group.'*

The support worker for Participant 6 explained how the relatives of the participant are all proud of their achievements through the group and more widely as a result:

*'His grandmother has been so proud of him. The impact on his whole family has been great, to see how far he's come on... we delivered the portfolio to his very elderly grandmother. He gets so excited about it and talks in a way you can't really understand what he's saying, which is lovely to see because he usually says when asked what he's done, "Not much".'*

They explained that they are developing their independence further by working with the participant on catching a bus to Aberaeron for Dyma Ni.

During the COVID-19 lockdown the support worker stated how the participant missed the group and how it hampered setting targets and portfolio work within Dyma Ni. However, they noted that without Dyma Ni altogether the participant would likely experience a 'slump' in their progression, and that there is little out there — similar to Dyma Ni — that offers support to young people.

They concluded by stating that Dyma Ni is such a positive and happy environment, which is inclusive of all its members and generates a sense of group belonging and comfort for all of those who attend:

*'He found it so easy to join in and not be rejected by a whole load of people. He can get hurt quite easily if you say anything mean-sounding or raise a voice. There's a lot of laughter and jokes there. Whether they get it or not, I don't know, but it's genuinely a really happy atmosphere there. Even if someone is down, it wears off quick enough. It's a thoroughly good club all round. I have to say as well that their vulnerability is so respected there — there's no dodgy vibes at all.'*

### Case Study (Participant 4)

The relative of Participant 4 believed that their being able to mix with people of their own age and the chance to meet new people were seen to be great benefits to their development and happiness:

*'She loves going there. She's mixing with her own age group, doing a lot of things there that satisfies her and us — she thinks the world of the place.'*

Dyma Ni allowed them satisfaction in the things that they do, and was an opportunity to get them out of the house and away from a computer screen:

*'For her to get out, meet new people and learn new skills — the art stuff is good for her hands to be doing something other than being sat on her computer or phone.'*

The relative of Participant 4 described how they have come out of their shell more and been having more social experiences with other people since starting at Dyma Ni:

*'I think the fact that she's built confidence through meeting and sharing experiences with other people of her age group.'*

They have also seen Dyma Ni as being the start of the participant's enjoyment of cooking and photography.

The relative noted that the participant previously had undertaken local volunteering but that they were released due to their vulnerability. However, the relative now notes that the participant's confidence and social skills have since developed tremendously, and feels as though they may be able to take up volunteering roles in the future:

*'She did volunteer ... She was very disappointed when they had to let her go because of her vulnerability. She's 21 and she can have nice conversations with people, but sometimes it feels she's much younger than 21. Her sociable skills have definitely developed — she would be good at doing volunteering more so now, I think.'*

The relative has been surprised by the progress of the participant and that Dyma Ni is allowing the participant to prove that of which they are capable. Furthermore, Dyma Ni is providing respite for the family, with the knowledge that the participant is in a safe and caring environment while the family can relax at home.

The participant missed Dyma Ni during the COVID-19 lockdown and their relative stated that it would be a disaster if the group were to end. They were worried that the lockdown restrictions would make them 'miserable', but they tried to keep them busy around the house during the restrictions. Moreover, they noted that during the lockdown the participant had regular contact with the Dyma Ni team, who also take part in local walks together and outings with the participant.

# 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

## 5.1 Conclusions

The evaluation has found that, overall, the Dyma Ni project was considered positive by all involved and has met its key aim of offering support to 17–30-year-old people with disabilities after full-time education. Some of the main positives highlighted within the research included the project's ability to give participants additional confidence and independence, the importance of the person-centred approach, and the dedication of the delivery team to making the project a success.

The project was initially funded as a pilot through the LEADER programme in Ceredigion, i.e. Cynnal y Cardi. As a result of its success, it has proceeded to secure further additional funding with which to support future provision of the project. Dyma Ni has demonstrated through this report that it has met many of the LEADER criteria, including establishing a local response to the provision of support for these young people. Additionally, Dyma Ni has highlighted the need for this type of project to allow for the continued support and development of disabled young people after they leave education. It has especially been important in allowing the participants to gain further confidence and independence, as well as forming friendships with other participants.

The project has also demonstrated that it has made good steps towards integrating the participants into the community. Examples of this within the report can be observed in participants shopping, using public transport, and in their involvement in activities without parents or carers. Additionally, this report has highlighted some instances in which participants either are actively seeking or feel more prepared for taking on a job or volunteering role. However, the viability of the project developing entrepreneurial skills and social enterprises as a result of participants may be either further down the line or not of key importance to some of the participants.

Dyma Ni has also added value more widely. The project team noted how the project can help towards altering perceptions of the capability of the young people with disabilities. Furthermore, it was noted by a member of delivery staff that their involvement in the project had helped to inform their practices and within subsequent similar work with those with disabilities.

The partnership model of delivery initially worked well. During the period in which Green Rocket Futures was involved in project delivery it offered the participants an opportunity to become involved in outdoor activities, which, undoubtedly, helped many participants to understand what they enjoyed and wanted to pursue. What is more, the opportunity to become involved in outdoor activities helped many participants to break down barriers and learn new skills.

The partnership working between Dyma Ni and Green Rocket Futures generated important additional development and skills for the participants and was of benefit to the project. Such benefits could be replicated again by creating more partnerships between local organisations for the future. However, this needs to be done with active communication and understanding between all partners in order to ensure consistency and awareness of the approach. Additionally, more resources may be needed for this to be done effectively.

The success of Dyma Ni's person-centred approach of tailoring activities to participants and assisting with skill development means that it is the recommended model for the delivery of any similar projects, with project staff feeling as though the project could be transferable.

Finally, Dyma Ni has demonstrated that there is scope for similar projects to be rolled out in other locations. Indeed, similar projects may have fewer challenges to overcome than those faced by Dyma Ni, most notably transport issues and rurality.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Below are recommendations for the further delivery of Dyma Ni and for the potential wider delivery of the project elsewhere.

### For Dyma Ni

1. Consideration should be given to the skills included within project delivery. As highlighted by a few parents and carers, the addition of life skills could be of extra benefit to some participants. These skills could include aspects of money and budgeting, independent living, and using public transport.
2. In addition to the above, more consideration could be given to specific interests of the group, such as ICT and gaming, in order to help tailor more activities to the interests of participants.
3. Greater emphasis could be given to the development of the personal development plans by staff. This could include a more holistic approach which incorporates parents and carers to assist in the development alongside the activities at Dyma Ni and enhancing the support system.
4. Dyma Ni should further explore partnership delivery, such as with local transport delivery or education providers. This could be done on a more flexible basis than the partnership with Green Rocket Futures, and not only could provide direct engagement with the young people involved in Dyma Ni, but also could form support and guidance with regard to its delivery. This could facilitate learning which could positively impact on project transferability.
5. Should Dyma Ni work with a partner or partners again in the future, a framework outlining delivery approaches and definitions of support mechanisms should be established between partners. This would ensure that all are working together to offer consistent delivery.

6. Equally, any work with partners should include frequent and open communication to ensure consistency of approach and greatly enhance the tailored experiences of participants.
7. Similar to communication with partners, there should be effective and frequent project updates between the Dyma Ni team at RAY Ceredigion so as to ensure that all project staff are up to date with the project delivery and sustainability.

### Rolling Out the Project

1. Focusing on a person-centred approach should be considered a key element in any future project of this sort. This approach has been key to the success of Dyma Ni and this model could be replicated elsewhere.
2. Offering meaningful activity to the participants is of importance, with the ability to offer not only tailor-made activities, but also activities designed to offer skills to the participants upon which they can build and develop throughout their time on the project.
3. The project should ensure consistency within delivery, including project staff and locations. This level of consistency is vital for many with disabilities and allows the participants to build positive relationships with staff and feel secure in the location.
4. The project should consider working with a range of different partners who can offer flexible project delivery, including considering offering assistance to family members who support young people with disabilities.
5. Finally, funding availability and delivery resources should be considered. Long-term funding is preferable in order to ensure that projects of this sort offer stability to these young people.

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