



STAY TUNED

BOOSTING THE FREQUENCY OF QUALIFICATION

Solution Story // Implementation Journey Berlin

The story of Berlin, Germany, is about building on the initial implementation of their Jugendberufsagentur (youth employment agency - JBA) and embedding this new institution and new ways of working so that it becomes a sustainable change.

01. WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT?

Berlin were seeking to tackle their high drop-out rate from education and in particular wanted to know what happens with their schools after the 10th grade. The city was therefore are focussing on preventing early school leaving and helping their young people find their way into professional life, accessing the labour market or higher education.

They knew that a new approach would be needed - something different was required to achieve different results. One of the issue was young people "getting lost in the system". They would try to access support but be passed around too much between different services in different buildings and would either lose confidence or lose interest and drop out again. The city felt that they needed to make sure when young people were trying to access support, they needed to be kept in

the system, not allowed to fall out again. Particularly not due to the design of the system itself!

When the situation was closely considered, Berlin found that the main factor for losing young people from the system was the multiple structures that existed, which made navigation difficult. Ultimately, young people did not cope with this. The counselling process was too complicated, as was the follow-up. Both needed simplification.

The principle of bringing together all the key services and professions under one roof was a logical step. Remove the disconnect between services and stop the young people needing to (physically) move between services.

02. WHAT WERE THEY WORKING TO IMPLEMENT?

A model for a "one-stop-shop" for youth employment and education services was already in existence in Hamburg. The team in Berlin started the process to transfer this practice and set it up in Berlin. Thus the idea of the Berlin Jugendberufsagentur was born.

"JBA" for short, the Jugendberufsagentur was to become Berlin's Youth Career Agency, with a general objective to enable all young adults under 25 years old in Berlin to obtain a vocational qualification and/or access the labour market.

The principle is that all relevant services are delivered and managed together under one roof, with the Young Person having a single caseworker supporting them to access the services from within the JBA, or connecting them directly to external services if relevant.

It is therefore conceived as a "one-stop-shop" solution, where people can access the support they need and hence young people do not get "lost" from the system going from one institution to another. The plan was to establish a JBA office in each of the city's 12 districts.

In setting up the JBA, the team in Berlin were aiming to ensure that:

- Young people are given comprehensive advice in the offices or elsewhere, if necessary.
- Individual goals and prospects are developed jointly with the young adults.
- They are offered realistic qualification programs.
- These are combined with coordinated support measures.

A Young Person coming to the JBA is supported by one JBA key worker, not simply (re)directed to other services located elsewhere. This case worker helps them to navigate the complicated systems and puts them in touch directly with the right people, making referrals and supporting the transfer between functions and people.

More latterly, the plan has evolved to include increasing the connections and outreach work with schools, ensuring that young people who are potentially at risk of dropping out are being connected with JBA services before they leave school. Prevention rather than cure.

Key Policy Themes for Berlin:
Career Guidance
Training and Development of Teachers

03. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION?

The JBA model relied on four network partners working together:

- Employment Agency
- Job Centre for Social Care
- Youth Office for Special Needs
- Senate Administration Department for Education

For the JBA to work, these partners needed to be more than generally collaborating, but needed to be systematically aligned to the same mission and same ways of working; a true partnership was required. Getting these partners to all sign a contract and agree to pool resources was no simple task. The main barrier at the beginning was getting all the stakeholders together. Over decades their structures and systems had developed individually. Now the objective was to operate as a team. This caused friction and the need for negotiations, which took both time and effort.

All the partners needed to be able to agree the same values and principles about working in a client-oriented way – putting a young person's needs and motivations at the heart of the

methodology for the JBA. This methodology also needed to be able to take account of the local conditions that the young person is living, studying and working in. Berlin is a large and varied city and each of the 12 districts has its own characteristics.

Historically, many of the partners had bad experiences of working with one another, so bringing them all together as a single function was extremely challenging, particularly where there wasn't immediate agreement on scope or approach. It was difficult for partners to "leave behind" their previous experiences and work together for a common goal.

The team also were clear that a universal, one-size-fits-all JBA would not work. Each JBA office needed to be able to be tailored to local circumstances and conditions (including economic, and social conditions that might change over the course of five or 10 years as the city develops). Creating a model that has core values and principles, and common ways of working, but which is also customisable can

be very tricky to balance, especially when being run by a partnership of four different institutions.

A further challenge was the need to make people aware of the JBA. They needed PR to increase awareness levels of the JBA, in the city institutions and in each of the 12 districts.

Young People needed to know the JBA existed and what it offered. They need to be prepared to go to it and seek support. Schools and other related organisations needed to understand what it was and how it worked. This would be a big change for youth support in the city and people needed to understand the new model and how to engage with it.

Key Implementation Challenges for Berlin: Maintaining an Integrated Approach Stakeholder Engagement

04. WHAT WAS THEIR DELIVERY APPROACH? HOW DID THEY TACKLE THE BARRIERS?

The team had the advantage of starting from a good practice that existed in Hamburg. They used the evidence from this case to work with politicians to gain broad political support for the project. However, this took time to achieve and the remaining time from agreement to deadline for having the 12 JBAs being open was less than one year. However, using the time constraint to their advantage meant that they created an urgency and were thus able to give real momentum to the early stages of the implementation process. It provided a lever to get all the relevant partners and stakeholders to be engaged in the project.

From early on, there was an agreed time schedule for putting the plans into action. Parallel to this, the political decision-makers signed an agreement. The team defined work packages with the central authority being the Senate Department for Education, but all institutions named experts for each work package. Control and decision boards were set up. Immediate action started, trying to tick off the work packages in a stringent way.

Thus, they largely resolved issues through discussion in the various project boards, linked to a clear framework and an imperative

timetable. They used the overarching mandate and timescale as a driver for resolving conflicts and achieving a workable compromise between parties in a timely fashion.

To help build confidence, the team first set up JBAs in the four city districts that were most motivated by the project - "Work with the willing". These were not necessarily the districts with the greatest need, but those which would most likely get the JBA working and quickly become champions for the model. Expedient implementation and good public relations was more important than ideal positioning of the early JBAs.

In the new JBAs, there was a mixture of new staff and already employed staff. The existing staff had to consciously reorient their work process to a new model. Staff also needed training to know the service offers of the other JBA partners. In addition to the "factual" knowledge of other partners, all staff needed to learn to switch their counselling practice to go beyond the institution to which they exclusively represented previously. They had to consider the offer of the whole system. The staff needed to tune into a comprehensive

approach – considering themselves as part of a multi-institutional team and not as islands.

The implementation of this was managed through supervision, regular meetings within the boards and of all stakeholders, regular external evaluation and written feedback which is then taken into consideration in the

following meetings and debates. To develop the concept, 10 different project groups were established, represented by all institutions involved. Steering groups on different levels discussed the different issues and the leaders of these institutions agreed on common solutions.

Key Implementation Themes for Berlin:
Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Decisions
Open Working and Stakeholder Involvement
Joint Delivery of Projects

05. WHAT WORKED? AND WHAT DIDN'T?

The JBA addresses a defined problem. The city team were clear from the start about what they were trying to achieve and which problems they were targeting. This made securing political support more easy, as they could illustrate the problem, show them where it occurred in the city and provide data and evidence on the nature of the problem and its impacts.

The fact there was political support from the outset was important. But 'political patience' was the key factor in the success – being prepared to wait for the longer term results to be seen.

Complex negotiations between local, regional and national partners have been needed and this presented a barrier to quick development. On the other hand, these factors also contributed to establishing new structures which are binding and reliable in the longer-term.

Strategy was driven by a state-level mandate but with change delivered via local-level agreements on collaboration. This provided a citywide impetus, but enabled the change and

implementation process to be responsive on a local level, resulting in a quicker deployment.

The conditions for implementation in Berlin were compared to previous tests of the model (in Hamburg). Similarities were high, so success of the model was more likely; differences were identified and accounted for in the design

Programme & implementation management was done via clearly defined boards. This provided an agreed forum for monitoring progress, actively managing risks and tackling issues when they occurred.

Staff in the JBAs note the fact that they can see colleagues makes it more personal and easier to build those critical relationships. However, they also recognise that co-location was the 'simple' part. Because it is still a relatively new team, they are still encountering new situations that they haven't solved yet. They know there will be some gaps but because the model is new, they acknowledge that they probably haven't found them all yet. They need to be responsive and continuously adjust

how they work as a result, whilst the model beds in properly. The fact that they understand this is promising for the ongoing development and embedding of the model.

But the principle of a standardised offer in JBAs was difficult to achieve in practice; common principles and aims existed, but the local implementation needed to be responsive to characteristics of the different districts. Local leaders had discretion to act to adjust the approach, within those principles. This was good to tailor to local needs but also means the JBA teams in different districts are still operating in slightly different ways and to

different levels – the implementation is not consistent yet across and there are still different (lower) standards of service in some JBAs.

Overall, the JBA model starts to work on the complex nature of ELET – it is the inclusion of people, the ‘human element’ that enables responsive decision-making to work and help teams respond to the realities. This is helping to manage the challenge of ELET in Berlin, but it is not a “solution”; the problem is not eliminated. Removal of the JBA would see the system revert to previous and likely increase ELET again.

06. WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

Interestingly, different members of the team are managed from one of four different departments present in the JBA. Whilst they are physically co-located and work collaboratively, the line management arrangements are still with their original departments. But they have made this work by close collaboration and cooperation at the team level, but just as importantly, between the various department heads within the district.

For example, staff in the team in Neukölln district JBA observe that on an operational level, they need to be open-minded in order to work together and that the department heads need to be in continuous conversation and be working towards a common goal. This collaboration has been a challenge for some colleagues, and the functions are not yet working as well together in other JBA offices.

Joint delivery between the partners was hard to establish and still is not fully integrated. Whilst there was agreement and contracts between the partners, it is much easier to sign

the piece of paper than it is to change how you and your staff work and behave. For example, the leadership style from the department heads needs to be open and devolve control closer to the point of delivery – staff need to have discretion to act, and to collaborate. This can be challenging to achieve – a different mindset and behaviours is required and leaders need to relinquish some control.

They are also still learning exactly how to operate within this new way of working. Currently, the old specialisms still exist. Transfer of knowledge is ongoing but takes time.

The true integration of the functions and the transfer of skills and knowledge takes much longer and is more complex. People only really understand the other service offers properly when they work directly on such cases that mean they interact or work with those colleagues. This happens more organically, as different cases present themselves and people have the opportunity to collaborate around support for specific young people. It is true

experiential learning, but it is difficult to plan it or accelerate it.

Money and support have been key. The project has also required 'political patience': that is, the recognition at the political level that

results will take time to be achieved. Returns on the investment will not be seen in the short term (at least not in terms of outcomes for Young People – some input measures and feedback on outputs are visible more quickly).

07. WHAT DID THEY CHANGE AS A RESULT?

The JBA is now well established as a structure in Berlin. The four partners are pursuing the same common goals. Young people are coming voluntarily to the JBA, getting individual help and the four network partners are working closely together and discussing the cases of the young people.

The JBA model is effective where district teams have now worked out the methodology and are embedding it. In the district of Neukölln for example, they have formed new relationships and have respect for one another's functions and abilities. In handling cases, they interact in a positive way, which results in learning for all parties as different cases are discussed and tackled. This has been a challenge, as they came together from completely separate departments.

One area that was surprising for Berlin was the speed in which the concept was put into action in all 12 districts. In Berlin, action

usually takes a long period of time as it has become a complicated administrative entity over the years.

The team were pleasantly surprised that, once everybody had agreed, they saw how the challenges can develop into a powerful driver for rapid change. The political decision makers agreed on a tangible issue and the time span was so limited that they had to take immediate action in order to be successful. This kick-started the process and created momentum for implementation. However, the process of getting it truly embedded is taking longer than hoped. There is often an assumption that once the first implementation is complete that the embedding of the change will follow automatically and very quickly. Sadly, the reverse is often true – getting the changes to stick and to feed through into real long-term results can be much harder than making the initial change in the first place.

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08. WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE? WHAT DO THEY PLAN TO CHANGE IN THE FUTURE?

The JBA is still a 'temporary' system. The original agreement was for five years, as are the associated budgets. As a result, the teams will need to be able to demonstrate the (quantifiable) benefits of the JBA ways of working. Instinctively, they feel it is right and a big improvement. But the empirical evidence will not be visible for another year or so at least. They still have a challenge ahead to make the Political case for establishing the JBA structures and funding on a more permanent basis.

But the anecdotal evidence is that the JBA is effective. Staff involved report better outcomes for young people and more effective working between colleagues. Under the current conditions, if the JBA were removed, some of the working practices might remain in a tacit way, but it would be likely that the system would slowly revert to the previous form and the benefits would be lost. There is still work to do to anchor the new model and create systematic, sustainable change.

Implementation of integrated action plans in complex contexts needs to be done in a way that recognises the need to change over a

longer time period. It also need to be underpinned by the correct support, financing and leadership to ensure the change 'sticks' in the longer term. It takes time for behaviours to shift and to achieve true, lasting change. It takes even longer for the results of that change to be seen.

Through the process of combining structures when setting up the JBA, existing laws are still valid and had to be observed in the process and the new model, sometimes restricting flexibility of the implementation approach. In the longer-term, some of these could potentially be reviewed if the JBA model proves successful enough to warrant legislative changes to enable greater potential gains.

The other major consideration is that of long-term funding. The JBA was established based on additional resources. For this to be sustainable, they ultimately need to divert funding from elsewhere in the system (from where ELET reduction leads to reduced costs) in order to become a truly sustainable model. Then, the full transition from implementation into business as usual will be achieved.

