



BOOSTING THE FREQUENCY OF QUALIFICATION

CASE STUDY

BERLIN, DE IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCES

URBACT Implementation Networks

“ JBA - Implementing the Jugendberufsagentur ”



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1. Introduction

1.1. What is the “JBA” ?

The Jugendberufsagentur, or JBA for short, is the Berlin Youth Career Agency. The general objective of the Jugendberufsagentur is to enable all young adults under 25 years old in Berlin to obtain a vocational qualification. 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 relevant 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.

Some key aspects of the JBAs objective are:

- > 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.

All available instruments are used to support the young adults until they obtain a vocational qualification or, in some cases, find long-term employment. It is a relatively new concept, with the first JBA being opened in late 2015, following two years of planning and development. During 2016, the city opening a further 11 local branch offices, to create a JBA in each of Berlin’s 12 districts. By November 2016 this first phase of the implementation was complete.

1.2. Berlin and the German education system

Berlin is the capital and the largest city of Germany, with a population of approximately 3.5 million, one of the more populous cities in Europe. Located in northeast Germany, it is the centre of the Berlin-Brandenburg Metropolitan Region, which has about 6 million residents from a diverse range of 180 nations and cultures.

Berlin itself is subdivided into twelve boroughs or districts (Bezirke) each of which has a population of around between about 230,000 and 330,000 (and therefore in themselves much larger than many cities and municipality areas).

Much of its economy is based on hi-tech and service companies, including a range of creative industries and media organisations, IT, design, as well as a significant tourism sector. Whilst many large national and international companies have Berlin as their national or regional base, entrepreneurship and start-ups are becoming an increasingly significant feature of its economy, with Berlin recently being reported as outranking London in the levels of venture capital raised for young start-up companies.

Students at a Gymnasium study for the Abitur upper secondary qualification, achieved after grade 12. Students in the Integrierte Sekundarschule can achieve lower secondary qualification typically after grade 10 or move to specific vocational pathways, starting after grade 9. Integrierte Sekundarschule students can also achieve the Abitur after grade 12 or 13. There is also a berufliches Gymnasium at the vocational schools, where the Abitur can be achieved after grade 13.

However, a feature of the German education system is that different educational pathways are permeable, and people are not 'stuck' on one educational path after that early streaming. Every educational outcome is theoretically possible from almost any starting point and pupils frequently transfer between paths, albeit with extra work and additional time often required to succeed.



2. Background to the JBA

2.1. Why was the JBA created?

The main driver for the creation of the JBA was the fact that too many young people were getting lost from the support system on the way from one institution to the another. With different agencies responsible for different types of support, a young person would often go to a particular office for support, only to explain their story then be told that they needed to go somewhere else to get assistance. For complex cases, this could involve multiple different visits to different buildings and different departments. City administrations are often not structured in a way that makes sense to the citizen and so this can make navigating the different services very difficult for a young person, particularly one who is unsure of their own situation and their own future and is seeking support.

Even if they did manage to navigate themselves between the different institutions, they then had to repeat their story and situation to a new person each time, often answering the same questions or justifying their situation again, having already been through it at least once before. This was demoralising for young people and made it more likely that they gradually lose motivation and drop out of the system that was trying to help them. It was also time consuming, both for the young person travelling between different agencies and different buildings, but also for the city administration, since several employees would have the same or similar conversations with that young person at different times.

After an expert assessment, all players, especially the political stakeholders, were all convinced that the ever increasing problem of Early School Leaving or Early Leaving of Education and Training could only be tackled if they rebuilt the existing structures. Although Berlin has tried since the Lisbon strategy to achieve the objective of cutting school dropouts in half, this has not been achieved despite many different measures.

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 city of Berlin wanted to find a solution that was more efficient and more effective, where young people could go to one place and know that someone there could help them and won't send them away with the answer, "Sorry, we are not responsible for you, please go to a different place."

2.2. The JBA model

As stated in the introduction in section 1, the Jugendberufsagentur, or JBA, is a one-stop-shop in the district to support all young people under 25 to obtain vocational qualifications and/or employment. This made it an ideal model to tackle the problem the city of Berlin was trying to solve. Under the German education system, a vocational qualification will provide a high likelihood of the individual being able to secure employment, or if they prefer, options to access other levels of learning and education and go on to obtain further qualifications before going on to the labour market.

This may take longer than having started along a more direct route previously, but for Young People who are still lacking qualifications or employment, this may be a preferable or more suitable path to choose for their particular circumstances.

The JBA is built on the principle that all the relevant services that a Young Person might need in respect of continuing or getting back to education and training are available under one roof. The relevant services are all located together, in each JBA, and other (relevant but less core) services are closely associated with the JBA. Thus 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.

This approaches the young person from a perspective of the whole system, not just the statistics and process of each support service individually. Their case worker passes their story and details on to colleagues in other functions, removing the need for the young person to repeat themselves (although there are a number of data protection considerations which makes this challenging). This also means that the staff from other support services normally know what to expect when they first contact or meet with a young person, as the relevant information has already been discussed.

The JBA model means that young people get the impression that there is an interest in his/her future.

Target Groups

The target groups of the JBA include all young people who are under 25 years old, are about to finish school and enter the job market, and are registered in Berlin, with a particular focus on those who have not obtained a graduation or high school diploma. This transitional phase ends once the young people successfully obtain a vocational qualification. The target group also includes registered refugees who are under 25 years old, even those who (still) have no permanent registered address in Berlin.

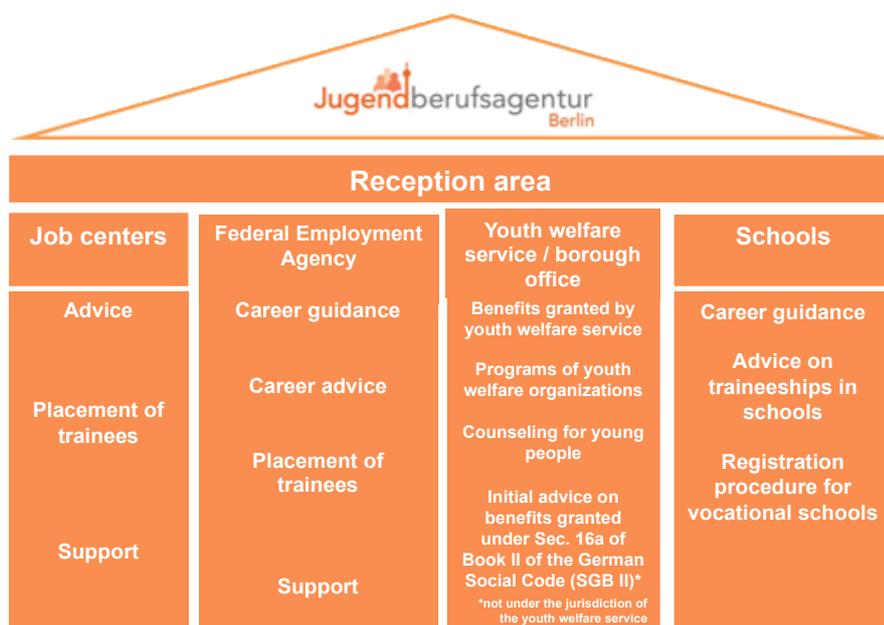
Main activities

The main focus of the JBA is to provide advice, counselling and even outreach work in some cases, to make contact with certain groups or individuals. This includes working with the young person to make a personalised plan, with realistic objectives for the young person and a suitable professional goal. This normally involves the skills and specialisms from several partners of the JBA.

Parents are typically involved where the young person is under the age of 18, and a youth office is also located in the JBA for whole family social support. There is also financial support in cases where people need additional support at school, whether that is special school activities, informal learning options and so on. The JBA team can also do school registrations during the summer when schools are closed and young people cannot access them to enrol. The summer months are often the busiest period, as young people get the wake-up call where they realise they want to need to plan the next steps in their education or their career.

Ultimately, there is a large variety of options open to young people and the case worker's role is to guide young people through this, to find the right solution for them and help them plan for it and access the support they need to carry out that plan.

2.3. All under one roof



The “one-stop-shop” principle that underpins the model for the JBA means that all the relevant have to be either physically located in the JBA offices, or well connected (both in terms of process and in terms of relationships / networks).

But this principle of joining up services from a user perspective is not just about co-location and traditional collaboration. It’s about concerted action and true joint delivery of the services.

This includes setting objectives together, measuring success and progress by jointly-defined performance metrics and having a shared responsibility for reaching them. It is also built on continuous communication and having mutually-enhancing activities, such that the core strengths of the various people and teams are used in a way that enhances the activities of the other teams too. The approach is underpinned by four principles, on which the JBA operates:

- > Transparency
- > Sharing information
- > Integrated processes and measures
- > One-stop government

This concerted effort from multiple disciplines and departments has a clear logic, particularly from the perspective of the Young People accessing the JBA services. However, it is not always easy to achieve and has involved a large amount of negotiation and contracting between the key partners and stakeholders.

There are around 50-60 staff in each JBA, 650 in total across Berlin. The functions of the JBA include:

- > career guidance
- > job centre
- > apprenticeship support
- > youth welfare
- > school counsellor
- > case managers & heads of team
- > refugee support



The reception staff at the JBAs don't always know exactly what services a new entrant is looking for. Indeed the person themselves sometimes doesn't know! The Receptions have an initial conversation to establish the likely services required and have a series of catchwords to help them spot common themes, such as careers advice, debts, school leaving diploma, vocational counselling, education support etc.

2.4. Agreements, Key Partners and Stakeholders

Bringing the JBA from a concept in Hamburg to a reality in Berlin required the support and participation of a large number of partners. On a practical level, delivery of the services has involved collaboration agreements between:

- > Senate Department for Education, Youth and Science
- > Senate Department for Labour, Integration and Women's Issues
- > Federal Employment Agency, Berlin-Brandenburg regional head office
- > All of Berlin's 12 borough administrations

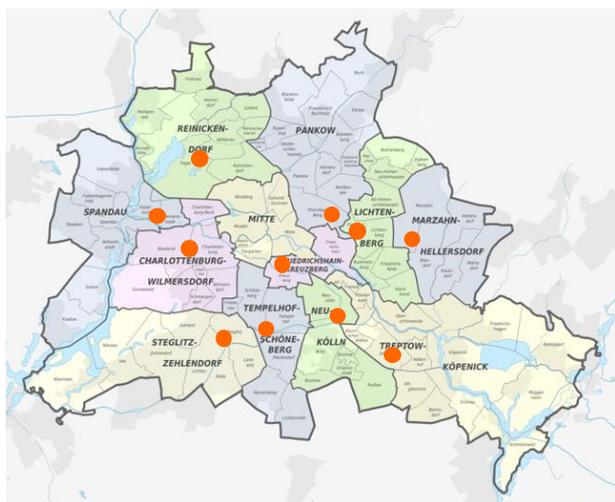
Schools also have a key role to play and there is active communications between JBA and schools. Pupils, who attend visit school (Integrierte Sekundarschule or Gymnasium) don't go direct to the JBA Office; each school has a specialised team that offers a career guidance for all pupils. It is this team that stays in contact with the JBA offices.

There was also strong collaboration with other strategic partners in the state advisory board. These partners include:

- > LJHA (Landesjugendhilfeausschuss) – State Youth Welfare Committee
- > HWK (Handwerkskammer) – Chamber of Skilled Trades
- > IHK (Industrie- und Handelskammer) – Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- > UVB (Unternehmensverbände Berlin-Brandenburg) – Berlin-Brandenburg Business Associations
- > DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) – German Trade Union Confederation

The agreements relating to the creation and running of the JBA were put in place for five years.

2.5. Focus on Districts



The city of Berlin has 12 city districts, with a local JBA office established in each city district, creating 12 one-stop-shops in total. The map on the right shows the location of the various JBAs.

There is a state-level agreement on collaboration in the JBA Berlin and 12 local collaboration agreements in each of the 12 districts. This translates to 12 local operational guidelines, one for each JBA. Those are based on the state-level minimum standards that define the operational structure for JBA Berlin overall.

The district approach is necessary because of the structure of the Berlin municipality and its wider governance context. The city has a two-tier administrative system: one is responsible for the whole city, e.g. Senate Department for Education, Youth and Science, Senate Department for Labour, Integration and Women's Issues. The other part is the administration of the district. To contact to all young people, all levels have been used.

Implementing with control and adjustments based on the local context have been important when making sure the JBAs will work effectively in the local context.

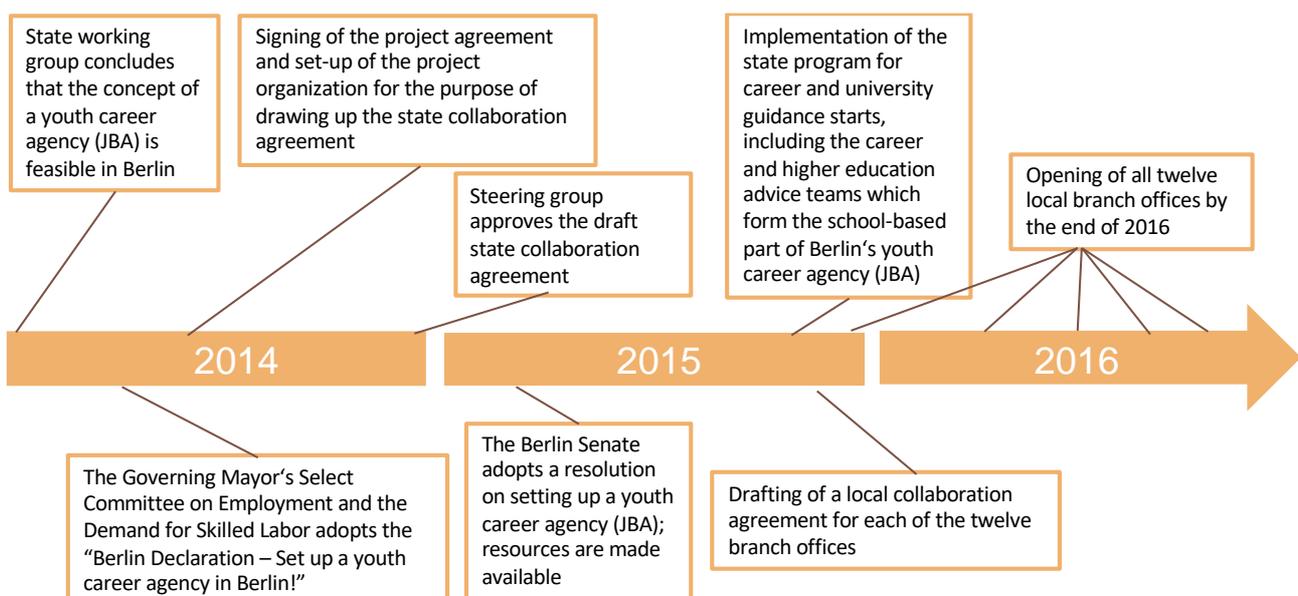
3. THE IMPLEMENTATION JOURNEY

3.1. JBA Implementation Timeline

The model and implementation process were both discussed with colleagues from Hamburg, where the JBA model had been tried already. Hamburg, like Berlin, is a city state, which meant many of the structural and governance situations were similar. The JBA in Hamburg had also included a school as one partner, which was also of interest to Berlin was also including schools as partner in the project from the beginning.

The journey from concept to reality has taken over two years of work so far. Even so, the timeline from the Berlin Senate resolution on setting up a JBA and resources made available in the spring on 2015 and the first JBA opening in October 2015 meant there was not much time for the initial implementation.

The general timeline of the initial JBA roll-out is shown below.



Berlin's focus is now on dealing with the outstanding issues from the initial implementation, including improving communications, particularly in working with schools, and developing a true "single team" culture within JBA functions.

There is a big difference between achieving 12 JBAs being open and true integrated working within and between the offices.

3.2. Challenges experienced and overcoming these

The main barrier at the beginning was getting all the stakeholders together. Over decades the structures and systems had developed individually. Now the objective was to operate as a team. This caused friction and the need for negotiations, which takes time and effort.

Time

One of the initial challenges was a lack of time, meaning it was difficult to spend a lot of time on the fine detail of the implementation. Then from the initial implementation to the completion of all 12 being open was less than one year, so it was not felt there was much opportunity to change much during this time.

However, this time constraint also provided an urgency and gave 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.

Purpose

Agreeing the precise nature of the target group was an issue in the implementation of the JBA. Historically, different partners dealt with different cohorts and groups. Whilst there was much overlap between the target groups of the individual delivery partners, there was disagreement about which groups / cohorts should be included or excluded from the precise remit of the JBA.

Many of these discussions were about detail, rather than overarching principles (“should cases like X be excluded; should people needing services such as Y be included as well”). These details were not explicit in the mandate received from city leaders. The issues had to be resolved as part of the implementation process. This was done through negotiation and compromise via the various boards and stakeholder meetings.

Flexibility

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 contribute to establishing structures which are binding and reliable in the longer-term. Through the process of combining structures, existing laws are still valid and had to be observed in the process, 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.

Standardising the offer has also been a challenge. The nature of the local agreements on collaboration allows for flexibility to respond to local circumstances, but can also lead to inequality of services received in different areas of the city. The JBA is built upon the principle that the same level of service should be available from each JBA, but this is not yet fully achieved.

One of the strengths of the JBA plan was the level of buy-in and resource allocated by senior politicians and other partners. However, whilst this buy-in and support made the project possible, it also made it much less agile and less able to adapt (at least until the 12 JBAs were all up and running). This has created a necessary ‘second phase’ of the project: to achieve better coordination between the JBAs and better harmonisation within them, in terms of joint working and single team ethos etc.

Management and Leadership of Change

Changing structures which have been valid for many years in order to implement a new system which should work better has been a major part of the challenge in establishing the JBA model. Partners are used to working in isolation – processes and protocols that are in place have been working in that way for many years. They include inherent assumptions, based on the old way of working. All these need revising and updating. Even then, the people operating those processes need to be supported to change and adapt to new process and new concepts. This can involve personal upheaval, such as learning new systems, working to different standards, moving to a new workplace. All this requires careful planning and leadership and takes time to bed-in as people adjust.

There was a mixture of new staff and already employed staff. They 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.

Even so, the cultural shift within staff and teams is still not complete over two years after the first JBA offices were opened. People have an in-built inertia to preserve previous ways of working unless they are actively led and supported to embrace a new way of operating. This is an ongoing process.

Joint delivery

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.

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

Thus, the issues were largely resolved through discussion in the various project boards, linked to a clear framework and an imperative timetable. The overarching mandate and timescale provided a driver for resolving conflicts and achieving a workable compromise between parties in a timely fashion.

Nevertheless, issues relating to harmonising and truly integrating service still persist and are not yet completely solved. Old metrics, reporting and performance measures from the previous regime can also end up left in place (or at least not correctly updated/replaced). These can drive the wrong behaviours very easily.

Some individual institutions still focus on their own objectives in a dominant way. The theory of mutual understanding is for example, in competition with the individual objectives that the employers try to achieve e.g. the VET schools want to have more students, whereas the employment office wants more successful work placements. Each party wants to show that their own numbers have improved.

Standards

Linked to the above points, it has also been a challenge to achieve the same interpretation of the quality standards from each delivery partner. At the start, the proposed action was defined and presented to each leader of the individual political entities involved, as well as all other partners of the future JBA. They had to decide unanimously that they agreed to the new setup. This led to a binding document of a mutual agreement on the level of the region “Land Berlin” and a handbook of common minimum standards.

But one big problem became apparent – that there was only one common concept: that the JBA is represented in premises in each district. Since the districts differ from each other in social structure and working conditions it can be a problem to take into account and adapt to the characteristics of each district whilst at the same time assuring all minimum standards were observed. This is still a point of ongoing discussion and working, both within and between the districts and other governing groups.

Links with schools

An ongoing challenge is to get a common level of career guidance available in all schools. The JBA has a key link with the school career guidance function, but they are not the only player and not the only influence. Whilst there are careers guidance staff on-site in each JBA who have close links with schools, the schools themselves are arms-length institutions, with a certain amount of autonomy and a greater level of disconnect with the JBA than other partners who have staff based in the JBA offices. As a result, career guidance is not as consistent as hoped and work continues to tackle this challenge.

3.3. Current situation and future plans

Currently, the JBA teams in different districts are still operating in slightly different ways and to different levels. In the district of Neukölln, for example, the multidisciplinary team are beginning to work very effectively. 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.

Interestingly, different members of the team are managed from one of five 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. This works due to **close collaboration** and cooperation at the team level, but just as importantly, between the various department heads within the district. Staff in the team in Neukölln 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.

Integrated working needs to happen at multiple levels – departments need to be led by example.

Their aim is to have a system whereby there are “no gaps” i.e. that they have specialists within their network so that no young person falls through the net: the JBA team can always engage with the right people to help a young person that comes in. Currently, they are looking for gaps that they haven’t found yet! 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.

As there is only one JBA office in each district, they are using the data they have to understand how many young people exist who haven’t secured education or training places. Data is still a barrier here, as they only know the number of Young People for the whole of Berlin; it is not broken down per district, which makes it difficult for them to find a definitive number.

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**. But they note the fact that they can see colleagues make it more personal and easier to build those critical relationships. However, they also recognise that **co-location was the ‘simple’ part**. 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).

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.

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.

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 needs to be underpinned by the correct support, financing and leadership to ensure the change ‘sticks’ in the longer term.

3.4. Possible areas of learning for other cities

The story of the JBA has insights for all implementation projects. 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. Some key areas for further observation and investigation are included below.

Points of note

✓	There was political support from the outset – but ‘political patience’ was the key factor
✓	Strategy driven by a state-level mandate; change delivered via local-level agreements on collaboration
✓	Solution addresses a defined problem
✓	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
✓	Specific resources were allocated to fund the JBA; each partner managing their own budget
✓	Principle of a standardised offer in JBAs was difficult to achieve in practice; common principles and aims, 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.
✓	Tight timescales for initial implementation; but a long time required to create genuine, sustainable change (2 years since first implementation and 4+ years since the start of the journey)
✓	Joint delivery between partners was hard to establish and still is not fully integrated
✓	Leadership style from the department heads needs to be open and devolve control closer to the point of delivery – people have discretion to act, and to collaborate. This can be challenging to achieve – different mindset and behaviours is required.
✓	All participating institutions had to rethink the way they had cooperated before and starting anew
✓	JBA does not introduce major new support services – first step is to deliver existing services via a different model
✓	Individual institutions still exist – now cooperate under a common umbrella
✓	Programme & implementation management via clearly defined boards.
✓	Communication is still a challenge – particularly working between JBA and schools
✓	Problem of ELET is currently <i>managed</i> via JBA model, not <i>eliminated</i> . Removal of the JBA would see the system revert to previous and likely increase ELET again.
✓	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

3.5. Summary

The JBA has been very successful in its primary aims to we reach out to more young people through improving the cooperation and exchange of information among the institutions involved. The initial implementation was focussed on establishing 12 one-stop-shops and that has been achieved. Initial results from the JBA are promising and appear to represent tangible improvement.

But the initial implementation is not enough to achieve the long term change that is desired. Further iterations of fine-tuning and improvement are required to achieve the model as it was originally envisaged. The members of the JBA teams are not one institution but different individual players under one umbrella. Conflicts must be named and solved together. A lot of patience is needed as is a focus on the long term objectives.

Key to this is improved communication approaches. An example is that Berlin have seen that operational problems need to be processed and presented in such a way that decision makers understand quickly and fully what the issues are.

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

