

Blackpool Council

Blackpool Council led the development of a youth employment strategy in 2013 in consultation with cross-sector partners, including training providers, charities and JobCentre Plus. The Youthability Hub forms a key part of this, helping Blackpool's out of work young people get back into employment. It is essentially a drop-in centre that brings together a wide range of services for 16-24 year olds, including Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, counselling, substance misuse support, and access to training opportunities and apprenticeships.

Senior Manager Mike Taplin was keen for evaluation to play a crucial role in assessing the value of these services—a complicated task with so many on offer. He found the highly practical, evidence-based solution he was looking for when a voluntary sector partner introduced him to JET.

Mike presented the JET framework to Youthability Hub service delivery partners, managers and commissioners part-way through discussions to develop an evaluation approach. It helped to identify gaps in outcomes already discussed and *'was particularly useful from a strategic perspective. It enabled us to look at where we needed to gather evidence, and select some additional tools.'*

While some partners, including counselling services, already used a number of tools in the JET framework to measure outcomes such as self-esteem and substance misuse, they did not have pre-existing measures for employability skills, such as teamwork and communication, and adopted the JET employability skills scale in full.

The Youthability Hub's evaluation partner, Research in Practice, developed a range of questionnaires for all aspects of the Hub's work. The Hub is now starting to use these with the young people who come through its doors every Tuesday between 1 and 5pm.

Interim findings in July 2014 will be used to help assess whether bringing together agencies under one roof adds value by increasing the ease and speed at which young people can access support. They will also allow Mike to look in closer detail at areas for improvement.