

# Rough Guide to Creating a Successful Youth Hub

## The key ingredients

Robust  
governance  
systems



Effective  
project  
management



Collaborative  
culture



Experience of  
partnership  
working

## Young people

**THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

Accessible  
Inclusive  
Welcoming

**TRACKING**

Consistent  
support on  
the journey



## The to-do list

Involve young  
people

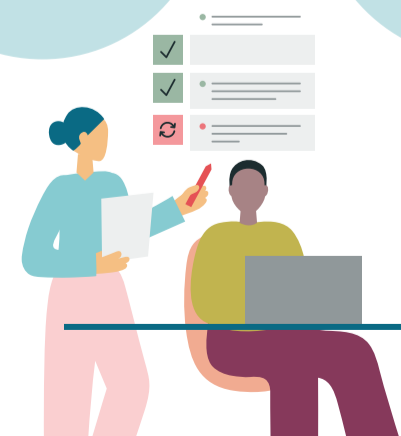


Share data



Work with  
local  
authorities  
and partners

Record and  
monitor



Test and learn

# The key ingredients

## Robust governance systems

Governance systems should have clear structures, give members equal input and leaders the authority to make decisions. Partnerships with neighbouring local authorities, JCP and other public sector organisations can help to integrate employability support across a region.

The [Work Local Report to the Local Government Association](#) on developing a modern, local, public employment and skills service provides a local government perspective on Governance and Oversight - refer to page 26

It describes the arrangements for ensuring that local government, national government and other partners have appropriate oversight of and input into the design and delivery of local public employment and skills services. This includes: the nature of any joint board and/or advisory groups between tiers of government, services, stakeholders and employers; what arrangements are put in place between services to support joint working and delivery; and the role of employers as partners.



## Effective project management

To ensure systems and processes run smoothly, communicate with and engage partners to resolve conflicts and challenges, especially critical during the early roll out of services. In addition to Partnership Agreements, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) can be beneficial.

The Talent Match programme reports that partnerships work in a variety of ways and with a range of partners. A lead partner played a key role in bringing the partnership together. Individuals within the lead partner organisation often played key leadership roles, promoting the goals of the programme. The lead partner also played an accountable body role and put in place project management and the necessary agreements to ensure the effective governance of the programme and the accountability for expenditure. Legal agreements existed with all delivery partners although they were contracted in different ways, mostly on a grant basis but some on a payment by results or spot purchase basis. This tended to reflect the lead organisation's expertise in different contracting models and the wishes of the partnership board or committee.

For details see [Talent Match Evaluation Youth Employment Partnerships](#)



## Collaborative Culture

From senior strategists to frontline staff, co-location offers opportunities for strong personal and professional relationships between staff of different organisations, particularly important between work coaches and key workers to ensure 'warm handovers' and effective support for individuals.

The Liverpool City Region Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) is a model of joint working both in the design and the delivery of the programme, enabling well-co-ordinated support services, effective trouble-shooting and sharing good practice. Wider partnerships gave participants access to a broader range of support including:

- YEG advisers working closely with employer engagement teams on job matching
- developing new employability courses in-house
- making links with a wider range of external provision, including for health and wellbeing
- enhanced collaboration with JCP to ensure co-ordinated support particularly valuable for participants with additional needs.

For example, survey respondents with a health condition were more likely than others to say that referral to another organisation was what helped them most on YEG.

For details see [Evaluation of the Liverpool City Employment Gateway](#) - Information on YEG delivery challenges can be found on page 10



## Experience of Partnership working

Local partners with previous success of co-located services can utilise existing contacts and speed up the process.

The Talent Match programme is a great example of deploying partnerships and a collaborative approach to services with useful information on:

- The evidence base for partnership working
- The rationale for partnerships
- Effectiveness of partnerships
- Understanding the longer-term development of partnership

And models of partnership:

- Overview of Partnership Structures
- Factors influencing the design of Talent Match projects
- Lead Partners and Delivery Partners and the relationships between them
- Payment and performance management
- Experiences of partnership working

The report also outlines the assisting factors as well as the constraining factors to avoid.

For details see [Talent Match Evaluation Youth Employment Partnerships](#)

## Young people

### THE ENVIRONMENT – Accessible, Inclusive, Welcoming

Creating an appealing and inclusive environment is vital. Bear in mind that some young people enjoy the social aspect of a group setting, but those with additional needs and barriers might find it unsettling. Warm introductions to group settings by trusted youth or community leaders will help young people engage.

Suffolk County Council initiated MyGo in partnership with PeoplePlus and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and developed the following approaches:

- Accessible and youth-friendly locations
- A brand that is appealing and distinct from JCP when trying to engage non-claimants
- Personalised coach-led support
- High-quality staff who are enthusiastic and approachable
- Staff dedicated to employer engagement.

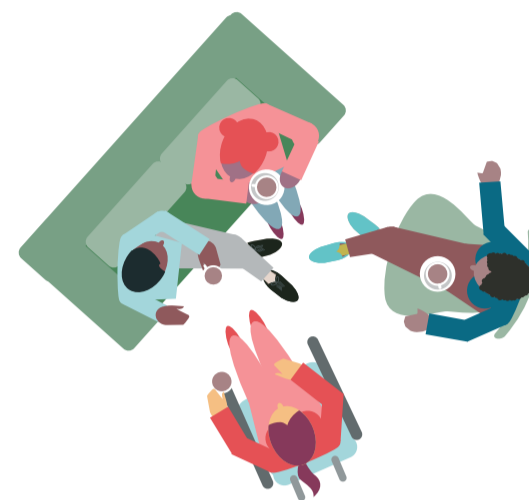
For details see [MyGo Evaluation Final report summary](#)

Engage 'harder to reach' young people through outreach activities and partnerships with organisations in the local area. Provide suitably engaging 'hooks' and make the offer sufficiently flexible to help to engage young people with more complex needs. A single service that extends beyond the JCP claimant offer and local authority/ partner-led services can engage more participants not claiming benefits at the point of referral.

The Liverpool City Region Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) succeeded in supporting young people furthest from the labour market; the evaluation makes the following recommendations:

- Invest in a flexible budget to address barriers to work entry and sustainment and explore ways to make this work most effectively for young people further from the labour market
- Focus on increasing awareness of support among key referral partners and co-ordinate efforts to engage and enrol participants
- Ensure that wider support services to address barriers and promote sustainable work for young people are available and accessible, in particular for young people with additional barriers
- Explore ways of building on the effective adviser-led models of support, with a greater focus on support for young people to sustain and progress in work

For details see [Evaluation of the Liverpool City Employment Gateway](#), page 96



## TRACKING

### Consistent support on the journey

The most effective models:

- assess participants' support needs
- provide a clear support 'journey'
- refer the participant or give a warm handover to services
- the case manager and referral partners have clear shared systems and processes in order to respond to actions or referrals and share information, so participants do not have to state their needs or barriers repeatedly.

For the Liverpool City Region Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) disengagement was an ongoing challenge, most likely to occur immediately following the initial registration meeting, possibly because:

- participants were attending simply to 'pay lip-service' to JCP requirements
- a poor referral service with limited information about what to expect
- participants' negative experiences of previous programmes.

Key tactics to engage and re-engage participants:

- build up a good rapport, if possible from the first meeting
- tell participants about the budget as early as possible - a good engagement hook
- use several modes of communication with 'dormant' participants
- ensure written communications look 'inviting', and explain 'the offer' clearly
- communicate closely with the participant's work coach at JCP
- promote a range of support options tailored to the individual's interests and goals
- participants about any remaining funds in their budget as an excuse to 'check in'.

For details see [Evaluation of the Liverpool City Employment Gateway](#), page 35



## COACHING SUPPORT

Key elements identified by participants and staff which contribute to a quality coaching experience:

- One-to-one coaching support was usually the most valued aspect of the service
- Being treated as an individual and feeling they were being supported towards a job they could aspire to
- Young people value advisors or coaches who are helpful, caring, approachable and knowledgeable
- Having sufficient time to build up trust
- Having a good relationship enables advisors to encourage participants to apply jobs or courses they may not have considered and weigh up the options together
- Well-trained staff equipped to identify and support young people with additional needs, including mental health or learning disabilities.
- Continuity - changes of advisors or coaches disrupt support and prevent effective relationships being formed.

Participants in the Liverpool City Region Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) programme said:

*'She's very chatty and she's very fair. She doesn't like force me to do anything, but she's pushing me to do things.'*

*'She gives me confidence, she says I can do it... she believes in me, she encourages me.'*

For details see [Evaluation of the Liverpool City Employment Gateway](#), page 36

## In-house engagement and training

- Offer of trainers, employer engagement and in-work support
- sequencing of work experience, traineeships and work-focused training
- steer young people towards a job they are interested in – and more likely to stick with
- strengthen relationships between advisors, local training and support providers and local employers as opportunities are often regional
- support with job applications, online tests and interview preparation and access to work experience, accredited qualifications and signposting to careers advice and guidance
- in-work support to help participants work towards their longer-term goals while in work from someone with whom participants already have a relationship and understands their situation (see data and tracking).

For details see [MyGo Evaluation Final report summary](#)

## The to-do list

### Involve young people

Involvement of young people is extremely beneficial to creating services that they will engage with. Their 'lived experience' can help shape the nature and delivery of activities and delivery partners. Examples include involving young people in interview panels for the selection of delivery partners, acting as peer mentors and in challenging providers' assumptions about young people's needs. It is vital to involve the young people who are receiving support and coaching in shaping their training and employment needs.

The involvement of young people in the programme co-design and co-delivery was a defining feature of Talent Match. Young people were involved both formally as members of partnerships groups, but they also 'greatly assisted' or 'assisted' in activities such as:

- Marketing
- Evaluating research
- Engaging other young people / Outreach work
- Media and dissemination
- Management of the Talent Match partnership and/or service delivery
- Membership of the core partnership group or committee
- Commissioning of services
- *Delivery of services*

For details see [Talent Match Evaluation Youth Employment Partnerships](#), refer to:  
- page 16 - 3.9 - *Involvement of Young People*  
- page 17, Figure 3.7 *Types of youth involvement - assisting or constraining delivery*



### Share Data

The sharing of data between statutory and non-statutory agencies, on an informed consent basis, makes life easier for advisors, vastly improves the quality of support offered and helps keep young people engaged. In many cases, this will require data sharing legislation and/or use of service level agreements and informed consent.

*The MyGo programme - Suffolk Country Council in partnership with PeoplePlus and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) - deployed a range of partnerships with organisations in contact with the target group, e.g. local authority teams, schools and colleges, training providers, employers and specialist organisations such as local charities. However, it was found that partnerships were only effective with:*

- simple referral processes
- good quality data systems and sharing processes
- regular communication and a shared understanding of the aims and objectives of the service
- clarification of the role of MyGo in the customer support journey vis-à-vis other organisations and to communicate that to partners, including delivery level staff.
- prioritising efforts to share data and information
- where possible exploring opportunities to increase or pool funding to support onward referral for those with more complex needs.

For details see [MyGo Evaluation Final report summary](#)



## Work with Local Authorities and partners

Local authorities as experts on their local labour market and the demographics of their area are well placed to join up the two. Acting as both the broker and data analyst to provide up-to-date information on supply and demand, so that partners can better understand the underlying barriers to employment in any given area and how to tackle them and plug gaps. By mapping local labour market trends, utilising local intelligence and through brokering local relationships and networks, local authorities can create appropriate channels to disseminate this information to local employers and their residents.

The Work it out - Creating Local Systems of Employability report goes into more detail on the role of local authorities with some local level recommendations. It reports that local authorities need to form partnerships with neighbouring local authorities, JCP and the wider public sector and should take steps towards shaping their places regardless of whether they are part of devolution deals or not. They can do so in the following ways:

- Co-locate JCP with other public services.
- Partnerships with neighbouring local authorities.
- Develop Local Integration Boards.
- Map supply and demand in the area.

For more information refer to the [Work it out - Creating Local Systems of Employability report](#), with specific reference to Youth Unemployment in Chapter 3

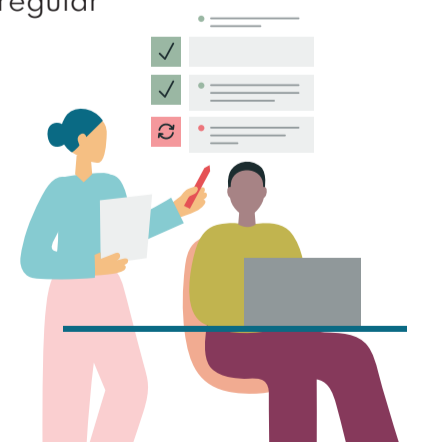
## Record and monitor

Clearly articulated systems and processes for managing referrals, that are maintained and shared with partners, are critical a common understanding across partners. This enables accurate and timely follow-up of referrals and ensures support participants are not lost between the different services.

Effective ways of improving referral rates, introduced during the Liverpool Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) programme and JCP staff, included:

- maintaining a database of all new claimants and when their eight-week eligibility criteria would be met
- pre-referral of potential participants to YEG after five weeks of a claim, which allowed YEG providers to identify potential participants and prepare them for referral in advance
- YEG staff delivering group information sessions at JCP for potential participants to provide information about the programme
- mandating attendance at the first YEG meeting (to prevent drop-out between referral and the first meeting)
- Improving awareness of YEG among JCP staff by YEG staff distributing leaflets and organising regular meetings to discuss the programme and to respond to any queries

For more details see [Evaluation of the Liverpool City Employment Gateway](#), page 32



## Test and Learn

Early, robust evaluations can overcome difficulties in learning across delivery partners and create a culture of joining up at every level. The early commissioning of evaluations to run alongside programme delivery helps to alleviate some of the barriers early on and provides a common focus for strategic and operational delivery partners. This enables partnerships to adapt activities which are not working sooner, and to try new ones. The

new Youth Hubs model offers potential for a coordinated nationwide evaluation by learning from activity on the ground, capturing and sharing insights across the network.

The Talent Match programme was designed to develop and test innovations in supporting young people towards sustainable employment. Models of partnership working should be responsive to local need, and learning about 'what works', and what doesn't, should inform delivery.

Fifteen out of the 21 Talent Match partnerships indicated that during the programme they had changed some of the ways in which their services/activities were delivered. All partnerships agreed that these changes had improved delivery – 13 'improved a lot' and one 'improved a little'). See 3.10, page 18 of the [Talent Match Evaluation report](#) for examples of some of the changes that had been made.

Please contact the Youth Futures Foundation to discuss further: [info@youthfuturesfoundation.org](mailto:info@youthfuturesfoundation.org)