

Staff Profile

Jackie Best (Education Liaison Adviser)

What's your background?

I have been working with children and young people for over 20 years and my experience has included everything from being a Registered Child Minder, running a Pre-School Playgroup to heading a team of Learning Managers at a local secondary school. I completed my degree in Supporting Young People, Children and Families in 2011 and I'm currently studying for an NVQ Level 4 City and Guilds Qualification in Information, Advice and Guidance.



How long have you been working for the Youth Justice Service?

I had been volunteering for the YJS since 2012 it gave me a taste of working with young offenders which subsequently led to me securing my current role of Education Liaison Adviser within the West Team in July 2014.

What motivates you about your role?

I believe education is the key to a better life for every young person. I try to help improve educational outcomes for young people with orders from the court, as this improves their life chances. This includes attendance at school as well as attainment or accredited qualifications.

Thinking back to your first day with the YJS how have you adapted and changed?

I have gained a thorough understanding of what it is like for young people to be within the Youth Justice Service and how this impacts on their education, training or employment. This has changed my practice in working with them and I believe this has made me more effective in my role. I try to use restorative practices with young people and their educational providers if these relationships have broken down and have found that persistence, consistency and faith in young people helps me effectively advocate for them.

What advice would you give to someone seeking the same career?

Working with young people, and particularly those within the YJS can be challenging but also very rewarding. Resilience and an organised approach is the key to working in this area. A thorough knowledge of legislation surrounding young people as well as an ability to keep up with changes in educational policy and procedure is vital.

What challenges do you face in your role?

From a procedural perspective, sometimes implementing change can be time-consuming with lots of levels of bureaucracy to navigate. From the young person's perspective, if they are not yet ready to make the changes necessary to move their lives forward, it can be a frustrating process trying to help them build the motivation to change.

What is your proudest moment?

I am proudest of those young people that have faced their challenges and dealt with the complexities of their lives and allowed me to support them in building a better future.

Would you change anything?

In an ideal world, bespoke packages of education or training could be built around every young person to ensure all their needs are met. In the real world, budgets, policy, procedure and other restrictions make meeting the needs of every young person very demanding. I would like a magic wand to help young people turn back time so that they could make better choices, deal differently with situations and put them in a better position to access the highest quality education available.

What's an average day like?

There is no typical day in my role and each day brings something different. I work directly with young people and their families as well as strategic working with educational providers, multi-agencies and Youth Justice Officers. I advocate for young people with those responsible for their education and try to look for creative ways to keep engaged or reengage young people with the education process. Keeping up with legislation and changes to education and curriculum is vital to my role as I advise others in this regard.