

My LIA with Christians Against Poverty (CAP) an eye-opening experience that left me with some incredible insights into leadership, strategy, and organizational culture.



CAP is on a mission to eradicating poverty in the UK. This is done through a mix of practical support, financial smarts, and a network of partnering churches. They offer things like debt counselling, financial education, job training, and community engagement. CAP isn't just about throwing money at problems; they empower individuals and families facing financial hardship with the tools and knowledge to break free from the cycle of poverty. It's a holistic approach that not only deals with immediate financial issues but also aims to create lasting, positive change for

communities in the UK.

I had the privilege of closely collaborating with the Director of Strategy and Insights, which was a fantastic opportunity to dive deep into CAP's leadership. My main task? Conducting a thorough evaluation of CAP's strategy planning procedures, which couldn't have come at a better time given the challenges CAP and many other not-for-profits had faced recently.

One thing that struck me from day one was the sense of belonging and support at CAP. The people here aren't just colleagues; they're like family. There's a genuine commitment to CAP's mission that creates a culture of ambition, support, and shared dedication. They tackle challenges together.

One of the takeaways that I would like to implement as a leader in the future was the weekly '3Ps' session within the strategy and insights team. This was a space where anyone could talk about their progress, plans, and challenges. It was all about embracing authenticity and supporting one another. It taught me that everyone's ideas matter in an organisation's culture.

My project was a deep dive into CAP's planning processes. I had to understand the current process, find its pain points, suggest improvements, and lay out opportunities for enhancement. This was no small feat – it involved quickly digesting a wide variety of information, talking to the experts in the team, and chatting with managers who go through the planning process every year. I then needed to be able to collate this information into a clear and concise evaluation of the key themes and areas of priority for change. Furthermore, in my final report, I suggested practical ways to improve the current planning process.

One leadership skill I picked up at CAP was the confidence to ask the right questions to the right people. Curiosity was my best friend as I navigated this new community. And finding that sweet spot between directness and being an 'outsider' was crucial when questioning the way things were done, in order to understand where there was potential.

As I got deeper into CAP's strategic planning processes, my confidence grew, and I felt more comfortable sharing my ideas and opinions. I also had the chance to put my Circle coaching skills to use, helping project managers informally think through decisions to reach their goals, as well as assisting others in clearly identifying where their challenges with the current strategy planning process lie.

The main output from this project was a detailed report on CAPs strategic planning processes. I shared it with the strategy and insights team and even presented my findings to the Strategic Planning Board. This report laid the groundwork for larger organizational changes, like improving resource management and boosting planning and collaboration.



CAPs faith-based culture had designated prayer times during the workweek, creating moments of reflection and renewal. As someone who is incredibly busy usually in a workweek, this not only showed me how taking time out can improve productivity, but also showed me the exciting possibility of having a genuine work-life balance, while feeling like I am progressing and achieving goals.

I also had some incredibly insightful experiences during my conversations with colleagues from different offices, like New Zealand and Scotland. Throughout all of them, the significance of inclusive language and understanding cultural context was highlighted. Names, identities, and the way we talk truly do matter so much in building a positive network and relationships. Going forward, I hope to be able to continue asking questions which show I care about other people's diversity of thought and experience and enable me to be approachable and supportive of all people.

In a nutshell, my time at CAP was a journey of personal and professional growth. I gained skills, identified, and embraced valuable personal traits, and feel more confident ensuring diversity and inclusion is at the forefront of my leadership in the future.

CAP's mission to eradicate poverty was a powerful reminder of the impact dedicated individuals and organizations can have on creating positive change in society and it was a privilege to be a part of this mission.