

International Experience Blog

Although my Leadership in Action project was based in the UK rather than abroad, it offered me a powerful insight into the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and lived experiences that exist within London. I spent six weeks volunteering with *Solidarity Sports*, a charity dedicated to supporting children who have undergone complex trauma. My work involved helping to run sports sessions, arts and crafts activities, drama workshops, and a residential trip to Turville in Buckinghamshire.

From the very beginning, it was clear that supporting children with such backgrounds required more than simply leading fun activities. I underwent safeguarding training that prepared me to respond appropriately to signs of distress and to manage disclosures sensitively. This training was invaluable, as it helped me understand the weight of responsibility when working with vulnerable groups, and how safeguarding frameworks serve to protect both the children and those supporting them.

Day to day, I encountered behaviours that were sometimes challenging—sudden withdrawal, emotional outbursts, or difficulty engaging with peers. These moments highlighted the reality that trauma manifests in many different ways, often surfacing unexpectedly. I learned that the most effective response was patience, consistency, and empathy. Rather than reacting immediately, I found it important to give children space, validate their feelings, and offer quiet reassurance. Over time, I saw how these small but intentional acts of support built trust.

The project also deepened my appreciation for the role of play and creativity in healing. Whether it was kicking a football, painting, or acting out a short drama, these activities provided safe outlets for children to express themselves and develop confidence. On the residential trip, I saw children step outside their comfort zones - driving a boat, starting a fire, or trying trampolining for the first time. For many, these experiences represented milestones in overcoming fear and building resilience.

Although my project was not international in a geographical sense, it was deeply international in spirit. The children I worked with came from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the global character of London itself. Engaging with them reminded me that being attuned to cultural sensitivity, communication styles, and differing needs is just as important as any formal training.

Ultimately, my experience taught me that leadership in these contexts is less about directing and more about listening, creating safe environments, and empowering others. These lessons will stay with me far beyond this project, shaping how I approach leadership in both personal and professional settings.