

The Weight of Waiting

By Aman-Rania Ahmed, 2026
cohort 5, Laidlaw Scholar



2

I shadowed psychotherapist sessions. No statistics prepared me for what I saw: young people carrying real weight, quietly, every day. It changed how I saw every task after that. The brand newsletter and thematic analysis weren't just tasks. They were work the Centre would otherwise have paid an agency thousands of pounds to produce. Doing it myself meant that money could go where it's needed most - straight back into care.

1

Some young people wait months for someone to help. I spent six weeks trying to shorten that wait. [Brandon Centre](#) helps people aged 16 to 25, many of whom have been kicked out of their homes or are in crisis. In 2023 and 2024, NHS referrals doubled in just six months. Waiting lists were up to 1.5 years. Across the country, more than half of homeless young people say they have a mental health issue.

Every week on that list is a week someone waits, alone, for help.
That's the weight I was working against.

3

I improved my Canva and thematic research skills and gained the confidence to engage with the CEO as an equal. This confidence grew as I saw my work put into practice and encouraged me to present proposals for the Young Ambassadors programme.



4

When I started, I wasn't sure how to work in a professional setting, so I waited for instructions. Now, I know I can handle tough feedback, act on it, and earn real responsibility. Learning a demanding new method under pressure and hearing experienced professionals call my work outstanding showed me that confidence is built step by step. I leave knowing I helped the Centre run a bit better, with stronger evidence, a clearer youth voice, and work they didn't need to outsource. But the biggest change was in me: I proved to myself that I can walk into challenging, high-stakes work feeling unsure, and come out as someone both the organisation and I can trust.



-  **Week 1** Observed the weight.
-  **Week 3** Took real ownership. Was praised for creating the Brandon Centre newsletter
-  **Week 4** Learned thematic analysis from scratch, coding real voices into evidence - received outstanding feedback
-  **Week 6** Presented a new proposal for a programme, backed by research