

The Weight of Waiting

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Before designing anything, I observed psychotherapy sessions. No statistic could have prepared me for what I saw: young people quietly carrying heavy burdens every day. That changed how I approached every task after. I wanted to improve my Canva skills to create outreach materials, so I measured progress through feedback on real projects — the newsletter, posters, flyers, and LinkedIn posts. These stopped feeling like tasks. They became work that would have cost the Centre thousands if outsourced, money that could go straight into care instead.

That shift took time. At first I waited for clear instructions, not trusting my own judgement. Things changed when I was given the newsletter with almost no guidance and had to decide for myself what "good" looked like. Getting it right and hearing that back taught me that ownership isn't handed to you; you earn it.

1

Some young people wait months before anyone can help them. I spent six weeks trying to shorten that wait. Brandon Centre supports people aged 16 to 25, many of whom are homeless or facing a crisis. NHS referrals doubled in just six months across 2023–24, and waiting lists stretched up to 1.5 years. Nationally, more than half of homeless young people say they have a mental health issue. Each week on that list means someone is waiting alone. That was the challenge I faced, and it led me to set three goals: improve my creative and research skills, become more confident working with senior stakeholders, and help strengthen the Centre's operations.

Every week on that list is a week someone waits, alone, for help.

That's the weight I was working against.

3

Shadowing meetings with the CEO, partner charities, and the psychotherapy team, I saw how much complexity lies behind even routine decisions. This experience gave me real respect for the judgement that meaningful work needs. That respect pushed me to stop observing and start contributing: bringing proposals, not just updates, and eventually pitching the Young Ambassadors programme, supported by my own research. I began to see leadership not as having authority, but as being willing to share an idea and stand behind it.



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When I started, I waited for instructions because I wasn't sure how to work in a professional setting. What changed things was getting tough early feedback on the newsletter. I heard it wasn't landing, so I had to rework it quickly. Getting through that, and learning thematic analysis from scratch while under pressure to organise real voices from the Centre's outreach work into usable evidence, taught me I could take criticism, act on it, and still deliver something people called outstanding.

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 bigger change was in me: I proved I can walk into high-stakes work feeling unsure and come out as someone both the organisation and I can trust. Confidence, I learned, isn't a starting point. It is built step by step.



Week 1 Observed the weight.

Week 3 Took ownership; 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, research-backed proposal for the Young Ambassadors programme

References: Brandon Centre, Annual Report 2023/24 · Centrepoin, Mental Health Needs of Homeless Young People (2023) · Braun & Clarke (2006)