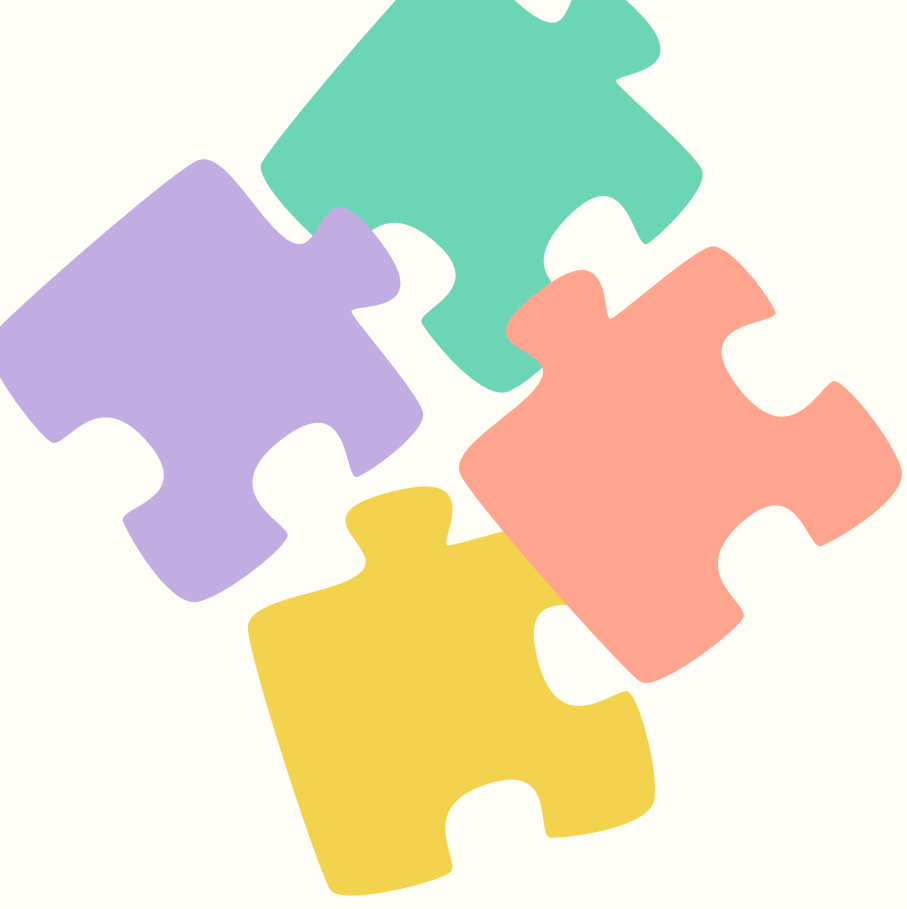




LEADERSHIP-IN-ACTION

FROM SILENCE TO SUPPORT

ANH (ANNE) HUYNH, 2026 LAIDLAW SCHOLAR

Unlocking Potential (UP) is a London-based charity that supports schools and communities to ensure no child or family struggles alone with their social, emotional and mental health needs. With the UK's current scale of social and mental health challenges affecting children more than ever, UP's multidisciplinary offer of psychotherapy, occupational therapy and speech & language therapy, alongside with family and parenting support, is extremely valuable, particularly considering the capacity and funding pressure on statutory systems. Coming from a context where children's mental health was rarely recognised, discussed, or prioritised, working with UP has given me a new perspective on the importance of early and accessible support and an opportunity to contribute to work that support and empower our young generation.

WHAT I CAME TO LEARN

- Develop a deeper understanding of the UK charity sector.
- Improve my verbal communication skills.
- Improve my qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills.
- Build strong interpersonal connections with my colleagues.

WHAT I DID



TARGET BOROUGH MAPPING

Mapped borough-level needs, priorities, potential commissioning and funding opportunities to identify where UP could expand and where its offer aligned with local demand.

I learned to move from "What can I find?" to "What does UP actually need to know?" – especially when the information available was incomplete or difficult to compare. This taught me that good analysis is not about collecting the most data, but identifying what is useful enough to inform a decision, in this case, where UP could most meaningfully focus its growth.



COMMISSIONING CASE STUDY

Investigated how similar organisations had entered and developed relationships within local commissioning systems.

Commissioning information was often fragmented and difficult to reconstruct from public information. I learned to work through this by connecting



COMPETITOR & MARKET ANALYSIS

Researched the children's mental health & well-being market and its charity providers.

It was tempting to approach the market by asking how UP compared with other organisations, but I found it more useful to first understand why different organisations had succeeded and what needs they were responding to identify genuine gaps and opportunities.



ALL-STAFF-DAY PRESENTATION

Shared data & impact measurements with therapists and school leads.

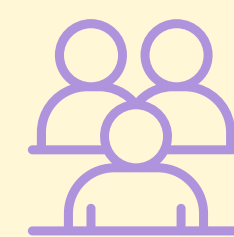
By having to communicate the same information to people with very different professions and relationships with data, it taught me that effective communication is all about understanding what matters to your audience and helping them to see how the information being delivered matters to their work.



EXTERNAL-FACING AUDIT

Reviewed how UP currently presents itself to external audiences, identifying opportunities to strengthen its visibility, positioning and communication with potential commissioners, schools and partners.

Because I knew UP relatively well by this point, it was easy to see its work through an internal lens. But by looking from the perspectives of someone knowing nothing about UP, I learned that it is important to have perspective-taking, starting with the other audience's needs rather than your own offer.



AUDIENCE PROPOSITIONS

Tailored key messages for headteachers, MAT CEO, LA & NHS/ICB commissioners.

Different audiences required different language, priorities and routes. I learned that adaptability does not mean changing your message without direction; it means holding onto the underlying purpose while finding the language and emphasis that allow different people to connect with it.

WHAT STAYED WITH ME

Trust yourself and your ability: Before the LiA, I was unsure whether I could contribute meaningfully to a sector I had little prior exposure to. However, I was able to learn quickly, adapt to unfamiliar subject matter and take on responsibilities beyond what I was initially comfortable with. Working alongside colleagues with significantly more experience also taught me that I do not need to know everything before contributing – I can ask questions, learn from others and still bring my own judgement and perspective. This has made me more confident in my ability to enter unfamiliar environments, navigate uncertainty and trust myself to figure things out along the way.

Impact doesn't need to be something huge: The LiA challenged my assumption that meaningful impact must always come from producing something large, new or immediately measurable. Instead, impact can also mean making an existing process more efficient, organising information that others can build on, or providing research and recommendations that enable better decision-making. Even tasks that initially seem small can be important because, without them, the organisation may not have the foundations needed to pursue its wider goals. This changed how I think about contribution: success is not always about being the person who creates something new, but also about making it easier for others to create impact.

GOING FORWARD

This LiA took me from understanding a sector I knew little about to finding my own voice and contribution within it. I leave with greater trust in my ability to adapt, take ownership and persevere through uncertainty. From silence to support, this experience has shown me that meaningful change can begin simply by listening, understanding, and finding where I can contribute.

LET'S CONNECT ON LINKEDIN!

