

Amplifying the voices of care experienced students in outreach

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Overview

Explore the context of care experienced students' journeys to Higher Education

Share some of the Outreach interventions made at University of Kent

Articulate why we work with Student Ambassadors with living experience on these programmes

Discuss how to make it work and challenges



Context – Care Experienced Students

13% of looked after students entered HE compared to 43% of all other pupils in 2018/19
OFS 2022

Care experienced students are 69% more likely that their peers to apply to HE aged 21 or over
UCAS 2022

19% of care experienced UCAS applicants had moved schools once, 11% had moved schools multiple times
UCAS 2022

Care experienced students are 51% less likely than their non-care-experienced peers to achieve A*AA or above at A level
UCAS 2022

60% of care experienced UCAS applicants stated they received no guidance specific to being care-experienced during their application journey
UCAS 2022

The proportion of students who had spent time in care achieving a 1st or 2:1 was 12.1 percentage points lower than for students who were not care experienced in 2018-19
OFS 2020

Our Outreach Projects

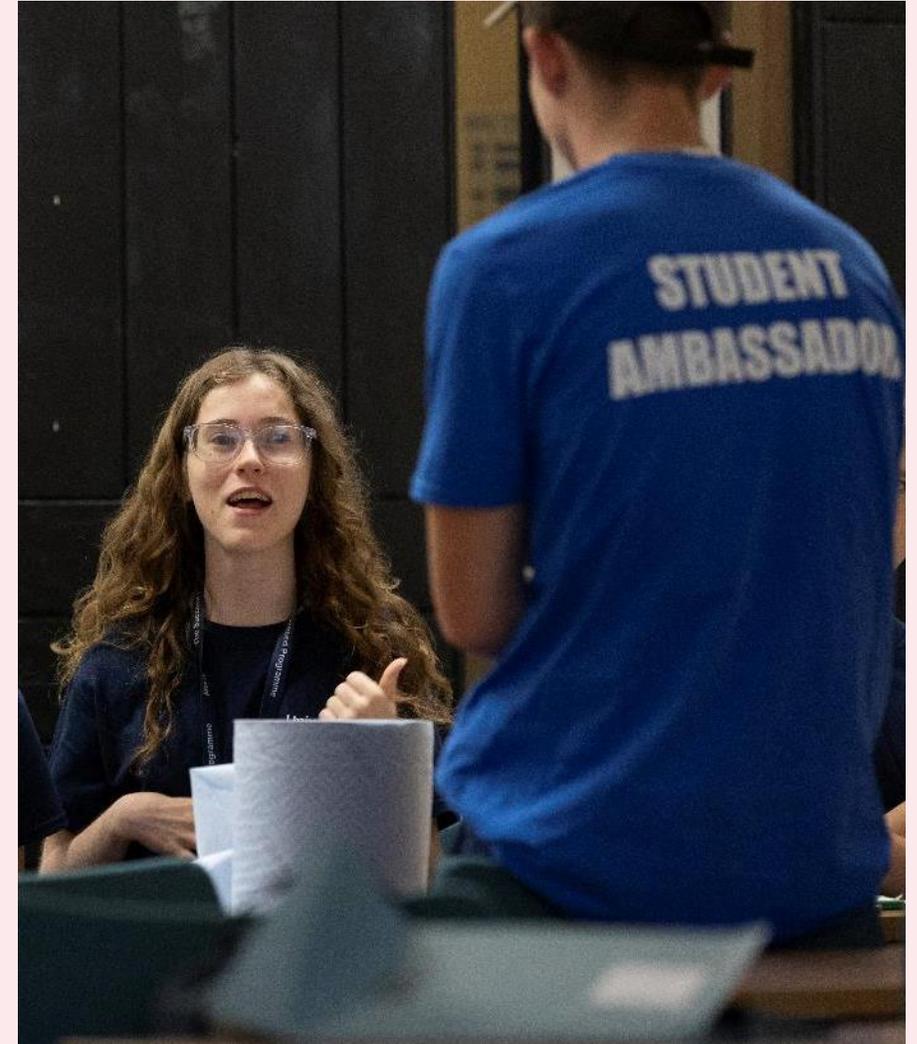
Plan My Path (pre-16 care experienced students in partner schools)

Opening Doors (information, advice and guidance programme for foster carers, in collaboration with KMPF partners)

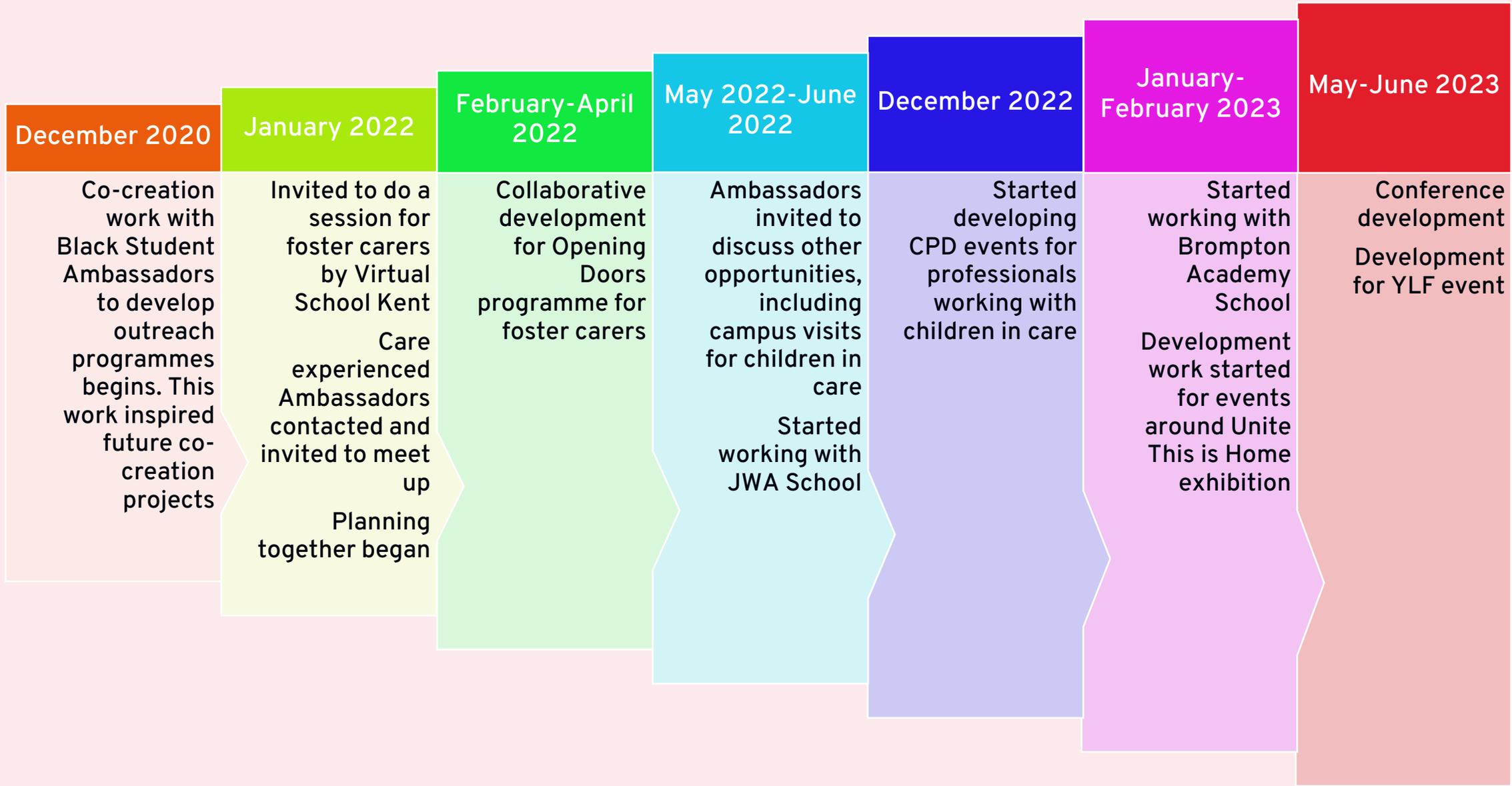
Supporting Care-experienced Young People into Higher Education CPD (for professionals working with care experienced young people, in collaboration with KMPF partners)

Easter School for Care Experienced Students (two-day non-residential programme in collaboration with KMPF partners)

Other events:
Explore University event
Next chapter event
Show & Play



Co-creation Journey



Why co-create? Benefits to Young People

- [My lasting memory of the day is] the nice food and the nice people that work here and the ambassadors, *Plan My Path participant*

Empowerment by seeing people further along on their journey

Overcoming negative stereotypes of care leavers

Having care experienced people involved helps with trust and bringing care leavers into that safe space with care experienced students

It not just being professionals involved in their lives. We are peers

It's more fun and there is more motivation to participate

Having that presence helps them feel understood and accepted

Why co-create? Benefits to professionals working with care experienced young people

To deepen their understanding of care-experienced students through these ambassadors' experiences, allowing for more effective support strategies

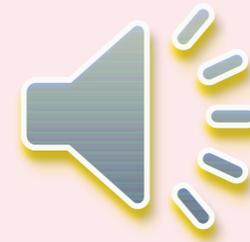
Many professionals working with care experienced students haven't heard from care leavers going to university

To encourage them to improve their practice

Foster carers can help to amplify the voices of the young people they work with. We are creating a person-centred approach to university. To become better advocates for their young people's individual journeys

“I think from my perspective the ambassadors who have been involved in your projects have added validity through their lived experience... In the feedback which we received ...the ambassadors were identified as being a great asset to the workshops and they appreciated the insight they provided... in short they are fantastic.”
*Catherine Thompson,,
Virtual School Kent*

Why co-create? Benefits to Ambassadors



Empowering – I feel a lot more comfortable and confident to tell my story. Doing this work has made me own my story a little more

Opportunity for self-reflection

To provide a platform for personal and professional growth

Discovering ways to make care experience into a strength and how to share that

Increased confidence and feeling of empowerment

Sense of belonging to a community

“The most I can say about it is how it has helped me. It has helped me a lot because this has been a very touchy area for me to speak about if I had not been engaged with the Outreach programme.

It has helped me become more confident about who I am in terms of my care background. It has empowered me, if that makes sense. I use my experience as a strength rather than something that I have to hide and become more assertive about what I like and don't like. Here's my story and I decide how I want to tell so it has been very empowering for me.”

Why co-create? Benefits to Outreach and Widening Participation

To learn from living experience and improve our practice

Enhance the understanding of the needs of care experienced students

Can improve all the work you are doing by listening, to make sessions more tailored to the needs of the learners

To create a creative, inclusive, and inspiring space for development

“I quite enjoyed seeing the perspectives of staff moving as well and actually seeing that they’re more accommodating in language they use. [...] It’s been great to see them become more inclusive in the language they use and I feel like that’s been quite a good experience.”

Where to Start Co-creating with Ambassadors with Living Experience

Seek the support of your university's Designated Member of Staff to identify students who can work with you

Be genuinely interested in learning and knowing that you don't know everything. Making mistakes, but learning from them

Training - "I think one other thing is to make trauma-informed practice within it so make sure that whoever's working on it, as staff, understands what are emotional regulation techniques and what are going to be the signs of distress that these young people may be feeling."

Work on building trust with students - "I think we need to create a safe and supportive environment for care-experienced people to be able to feel comfortable to share and express themselves. I think, also, understanding the idea of consent and choice, respecting the autonomy that care-experienced students would have with being able to share their story if they want to."

Safeguarding - Ensure clear policies are in place to keep people safe and to have a support system included in the processes



Challenges and Considerations

University students are busy!

Ensuring the work is valuable to the Ambassadors

Putting time and resource into this, despite the numbers of participants always being small (being able to get buy in on this)

Taking the work beyond just Outreach

Making it fully collaborative from the start

Understand that lived experiences are still living. Respect boundaries and be clear about the focus.



Conclusion

See a film we made about the experiences of care leavers at university



University of
Kent

Co-creation is beneficial for all involved. It empowers, inspires, and gives confidence to all stakeholders

Co-creation is person-centred and requires everyone to listen, learn, make mistakes, and try new ways of working

Start with a conversation, and good luck with your projects!



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