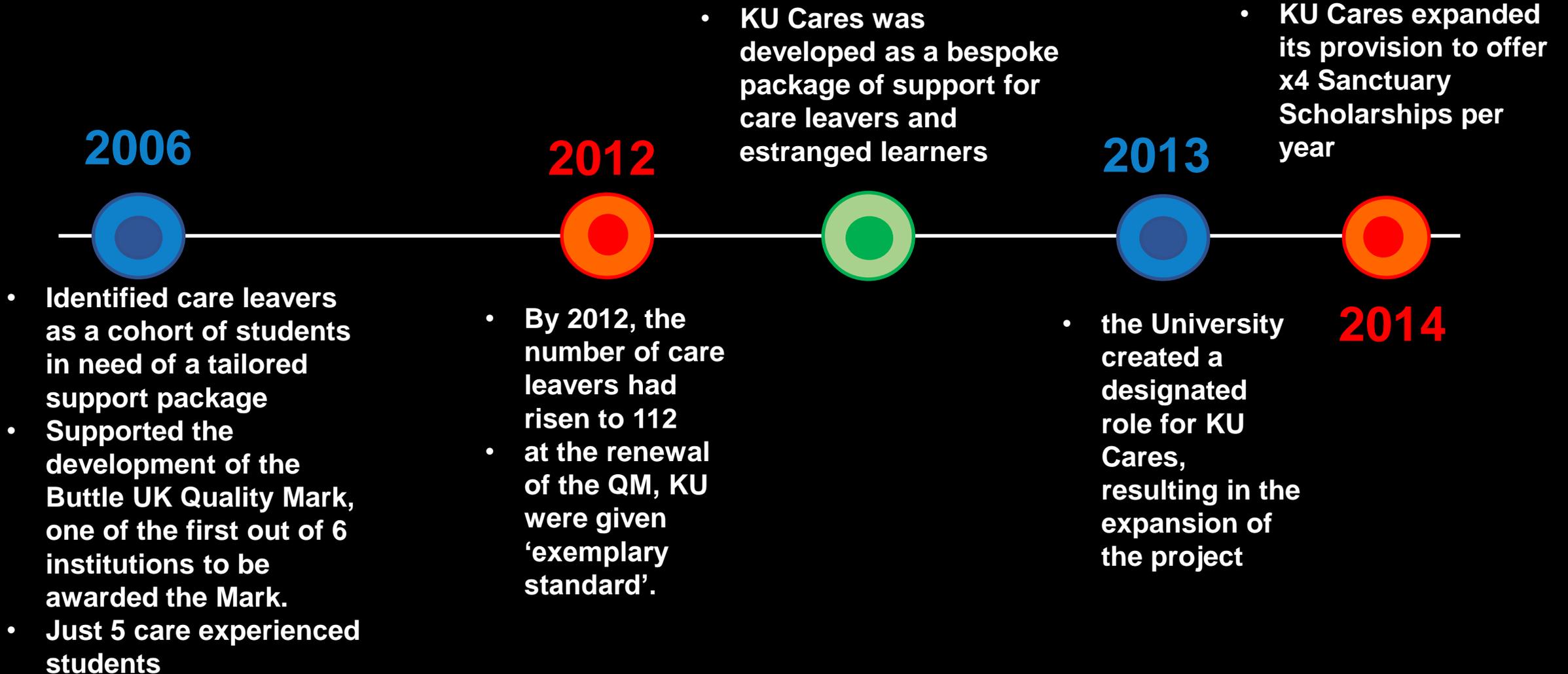


# Supporting Care Leavers over 12 years. The challenges and successes.

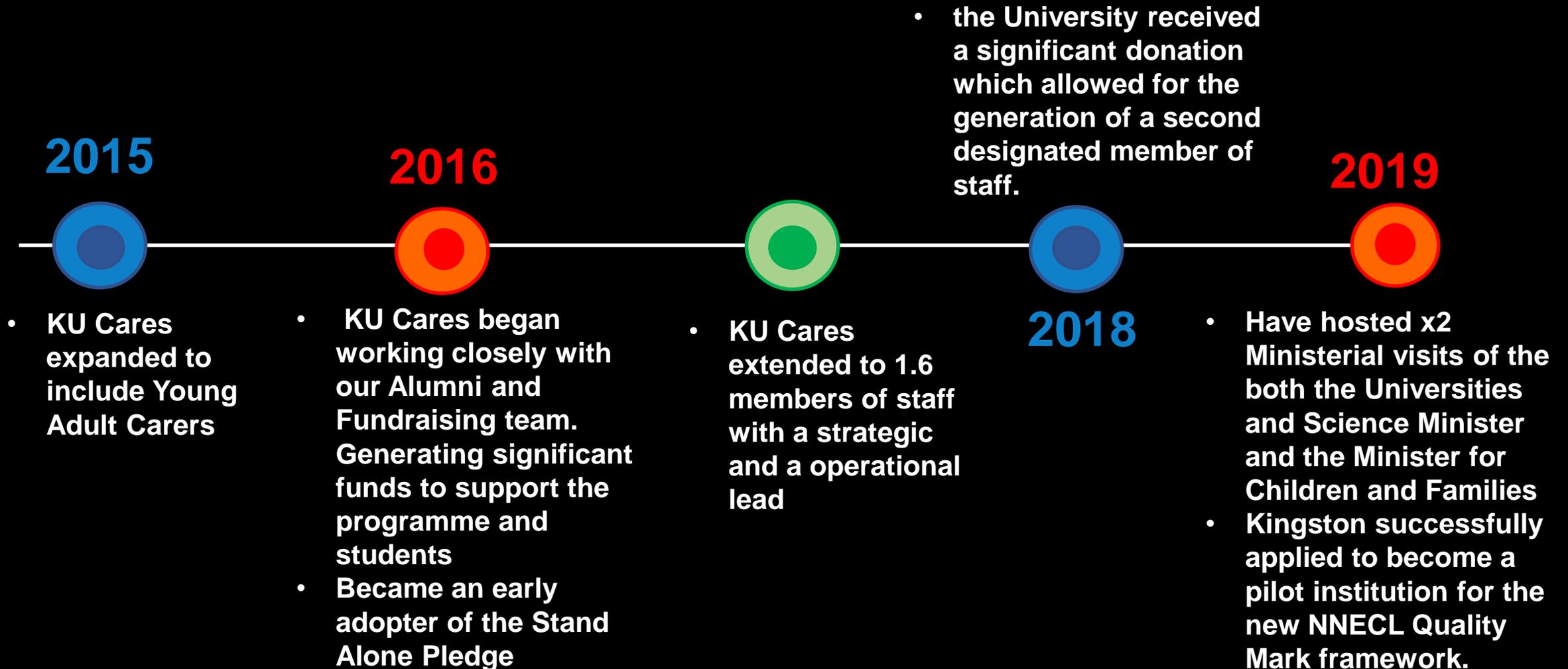
**Emily Hughes**

**Access and Inclusion Manager, Kingston University**

# Timeline of the development of KU Cares



# Timeline of the development of KU Cares



# Contributing factors to our successes

- Kite Marks, Quality Marks and Pledges- this provides external recognition and internally can be used to raise awareness and shows institutional commitment.
- Senior leadership and Board of Governors buy in;
  - Awards and badges of success also gain attention of SLT's
  - Meeting students and the impact of this. Allowing SLT to see the resilience and determination of students and hear first hand their inspirational stories
  - Keeping SLT involved and invested in developments of the programme, send invitations to events where they can regularly meet with students and stakeholders.
- Engagement with our Development and Alumni Relations Team- key source of income for KU Cares and allows us to offset current costs- between our partnership we have now raised a 6 figure sum.
- Internal promotion- ensuring our programme is integrated into the full student lifecycle and all relevant teams are aware and trained to understand the needs and challenges of the students that we support.

# Contributing factors to our successes

- External promotion- Joining networks, creating and maintaining relationships with local authorities, virtual schools and relevant charities.
- Data- having a robust dataset and evidence base that showcases the impact of our work.
- Using our APP to set targets around this work. Eg LAC outreach and the institutions commitment and vision for these cohorts of students and their progression, retention and outcomes.
- Collaborating with networks and other institutions in the delivery of outreach- eases the pressure on a single institution.
- Creating solid relationships with our students- keeps student voice central to our programme and the development of our work. This in turn provides developmental and financially gainful opportunities for the students (Media Relations Ambassadors).

# Challenges we have faced along the way (and still face)

- Student Numbers
  - Numbers of care experienced students are a small percentage of the full student population.
  - However, relatively speaking we have a large cohort of students and therefore student/staff ratio is high for personalised support
  - Budget for bursaries is spread across a significant number of students and therefore individual financial support is limited.
- University staff
  - Levels of understanding and compassion vary amongst academic and professional services staff.
  - Behaviours and attitudes of students linked to trauma and their care experience are not understood. Students are perceived as being 'rude' or 'ungrateful' for their support.
  - Training opportunities are offered, but same staff members attend.
  - Providing contextual support- assumptions that students aren't as 'clever' as their non-care counterparts

# Challenges we have faced along the way (and still face)

- Hard to reach audience with challenging cases and circumstances
  - Don't always have the in-house expertise
  - Can take a lot out of staff
- Data
  - Not having sector comparable data,
  - Therefore never comparing like for like in institutional data

# Evaluation Framework

- We have invested in dedicated resource (human and systems) to monitoring and evaluation our work in this area.
- We have an institutional data warehouse that allows us to flag care experienced students and monitor the impact of our support on their outcomes in comparison to the wider UG population or other disadvantaged groups (not a like for like comparison).
- We look at outcomes such as; academic progression, retention, attainment and employability
- We use a nuanced approach- quantitative data to tell us what is going on and qualitative data to tell us why (eg we know these students don't progress as well as their peers due to gaps in their ability to study, often due to their mental health or financial issues, but we support them pastorally to complete their degree).
- Solid qualitative data is imperative to 'tell the story', and fills the gaps left from quantitative data. It also allows us to keep the student voice at the heart of our programme
  - We collect this through engagement surveys, outduction interviews, focus groups, video blogs and case studies

# What our data tells us

- 100% of KU Cares students were retained as current students throughout 17/18, compared to 83.5% of the wider undergraduate population
- The first year continuation rate of KU Cares students has increased each year since 2013/14 and is currently above that of the wider UG population
- Students who attended Head Start our pre entry summer school were also more likely to stay at university - 94.4% held their current status throughout 17/18 compared with 88.3% of eligible students who did not attend.
- Attendance at Head Start is also associated with improved academic outcomes – attendees were 2.6 times more likely to progress (i.e. pass the year and move to the next level of study) compared to eligible students who did not attend. They were also more likely to progress at their first attempt, rather than having to do resits.

# Our top tips on developing a successful programme

## Engage with Senior Leadership Team

- Invite them to meet with students and allow them to share their stories, allow them to be able to talk about your programme and your students authentically
- Share data and information on what your service does that contributes to institutional targets and KPI's (if you have a KPI on progression- work on that for that cohort)
- Apply for kite marks and awards (this is great internal and external currency)

## Raise awareness

- Engage with students and recruit Ambassadors who are happy to speak out and represent your organisation
- Run training events and awareness raising conferences internally for staff to learn more
- Publish good news stories

Ensure your work is reflected within your APP- have clear targets and evaluation frameworks that reflect it and how your programmes are working

Engage with your Alumni and Fundraising teams- seek funding opportunities

# What next for KU Cares?

- Always striving for continuous improvement
- The middle part of the student journey we feel we have mastered
  - Focus on participation in HE (outreach) and developing prolonged interventions with young people in virtual schools and those 18-25 year olds who would like to return to education
  - Improve employment outcomes for our graduates- this relies on collaboration and working with employers and encouraging them to assess potential differently (eg many careleavers wouldn't have 3 A's or AAB at A Level- still a requirement for many graduate roles, but they have demonstrated the ability to achieve at higher education despite their circumstances)

**Thanks for listening!**

**Any Questions?**

I welcome any questions or comments at a later date. Please contact me at [e.hughes@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:e.hughes@kingston.ac.uk)