



# The Access Project

IMPACT REPORT  
2021



# Contents

An introduction from our Chief Executive, Nathan Sansom	3
Our mission	4
Our theory of change 2019/20	5
Our programme	6
Where we work	7
Our impact	9
Our response to COVID-19 pandemic	10
Transition work	12
Thank you to our volunteers	15
Our finances	16
Thank you	17
Our vision for the future	18



“ Our students are twice as likely to go to a top university as similar peers...”



# An introduction from our Chief Executive, Nathan Sansom

**The past 18 months have been full of unexpected challenges. The Access Project started the year with a hugely impactful programme, strong school relationships and a series of questions for our new strategy. We asked how we could improve the quality of our work and reach more young people who need our support, and how we would develop the organisation and our team to do this. As we did that work, none of us expected a global pandemic would turn our lives and work upside down.**

But that was what happened. We needed to act fast to ensure that our young people were still able to access our tutoring and mentoring. Thanks to our digital pilot in the East Midlands we were already testing online tutoring. We adjusted rapidly to roll that out across the country.

Now, more than ever, we are needed. The disadvantaged young people that we work with have struggled over the numerous lockdowns - because they lacked equipment or internet to learn, struggled to focus on studies in a busy household, felt isolated because they couldn't see friends, or faced economic pressures at home. The disadvantage gap is increasing, and young people are falling behind.

In response to the pandemic and disrupted learning, the Government launched the National Tutoring Programme to support disadvantaged students to catch up. It is a testament to our proven impact that we were selected as one of around thirty organisations from the 400 which applied. This partnership enabled us not just to maintain our delivery, but to expand our reach, growing into West Yorkshire. To establish school partnerships, build relationships and enrol students all in the context of working remotely was a significant achievement, and one that I am enormously proud of my team for making happen.

As a result, we've not only survived these challenging times; we've thrived in them. We've been able to draw on the country's desire to step up and help the most vulnerable in society. As our tuition has moved online, we have attracted volunteer tutors from all over the country, and increased our numbers of volunteer sign-ups.

My ambition as Chief Executive of The Access Project is for educational opportunities to be equally open to all young people - regardless of where they come from. The Access Project has helped to make that a reality for many young people - and I look forward to enabling even more to reach their full potential in the coming years. ■



# Our mission

We support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access top universities, through a unique combination of tuition and in-school mentoring. We work with them to make good applications, get the grades and transition to university.

## Working with disadvantaged young people

The Access Project is committed to working with students who need us the most and are least likely to get a place at a top university in the UK.

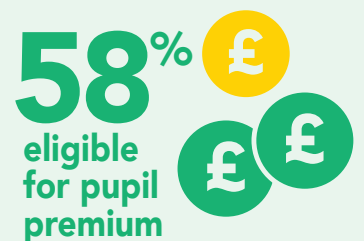
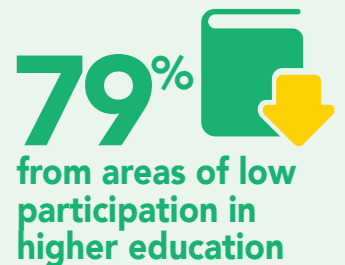
Only four out of every 100 young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds

get a place at top universities, Department for Education data shows. Disadvantaged young people are five times less likely to go to university in comparison to more advantaged students.

In 2019/20, 93% of our students came from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. ■



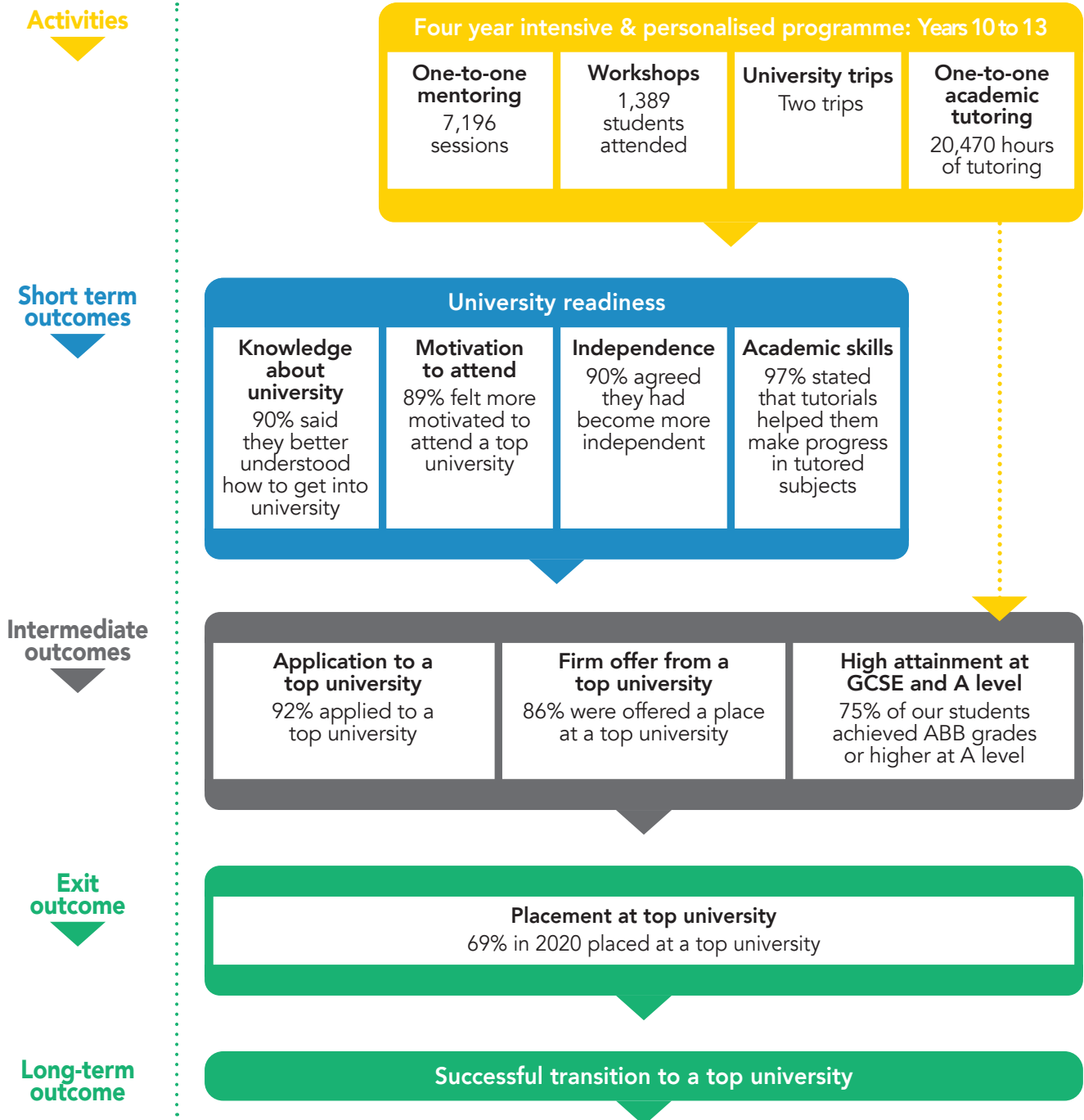
The Access Project is committed to working with students who are underrepresented at top UK universities



Source: The Access Project



# Our theory of change in 2019/20



“ Because of The Access Project I feel more supported in everyday life. I know that I have my University Access Officer there to support me and whenever I have a question or worry on my mind they are there for me. ”

Wafa Nassereddine (Year 13 at Norwood School, London)




# Our programme

## Our programme



Our trained volunteer tutors work with students for an hour a week in a specific subject **to improve their grades** and subject confidence




In-school mentors, known as University Access Officers (UAOs), help students navigate their journey to university. They deliver workshops and **one-to-one guidance** on areas such as personal statements and applications



Our societies for Oxbridge and Medicine & Dentistry provide **additional support** to students aiming to study some of the most challenging courses



Visits to top universities across the country help our students to see **what life would be like**, and we also organise career insight events in partnership with companies



We support students to successfully **transition to university** through on-hand support and peer mentoring with fellow students



# Where we work

## LONDON

Ark Globe Academy  
**Bishop Douglass School**  
Chelsea Academy  
City Academy Hackney  
Central Foundation Boys' School  
Central Foundation Girls' School  
City of London Academy, Highbury Grove  
**City of London Academy, Islington**  
George Green's School  
Haggerston School

Hornsey School for Girls  
Kensington Aldridge Academy  
King Solomon Academy  
Lilian Baylis Technology School  
Lister Community School  
The Norwood School  
Oasis Academy Enfield  
Oasis Academy Hadley  
South Bank University Academy  
St George's Roman Catholic School  
St Thomas More Catholic School

The Urswick School  
Woolwich Polytechnic School

## EAST MIDLANDS

Ashfield School  
**Outwood Academy Portland**  
Shirebrook Academy  
West Nottinghamshire College

## WEST MIDLANDS

Colmers School and Sixth Form

Holte School  
Moseley School  
Ormiston Forge Academy  
Waverley School  
Wood Green Academy

## WEST YORKSHIRE

**Dixons Allerton Academy**  
**Dixons Cottingley Academy**

.....  
*New Schools*

**WEST YORKSHIRE**  
**2**  
SCHOOLS

**EAST MIDLANDS**  
**4**  
SCHOOLS

**WEST MIDLANDS**  
**6**  
SCHOOLS

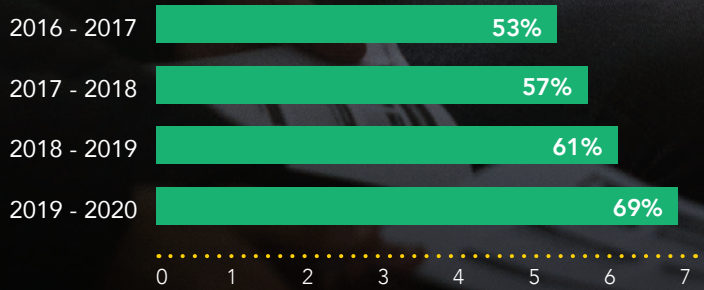
**LONDON**  
**23**  
SCHOOLS





**More of our students attend top universities every year**

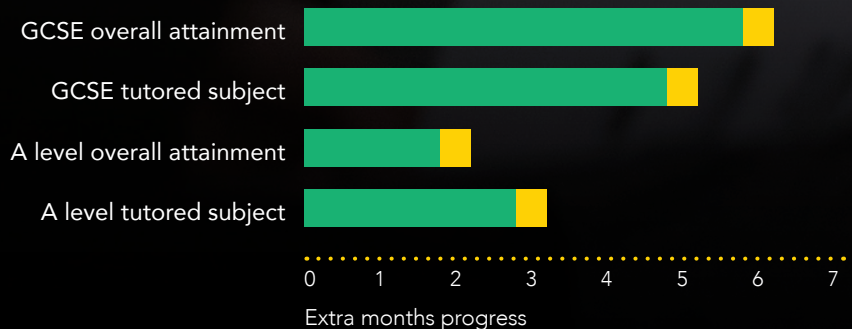
Source: The Access Project (verified by UCAS)



**The Access Project students gain up to six months of extra progress after two years of tuition**

Source: FFT Education Datalab.

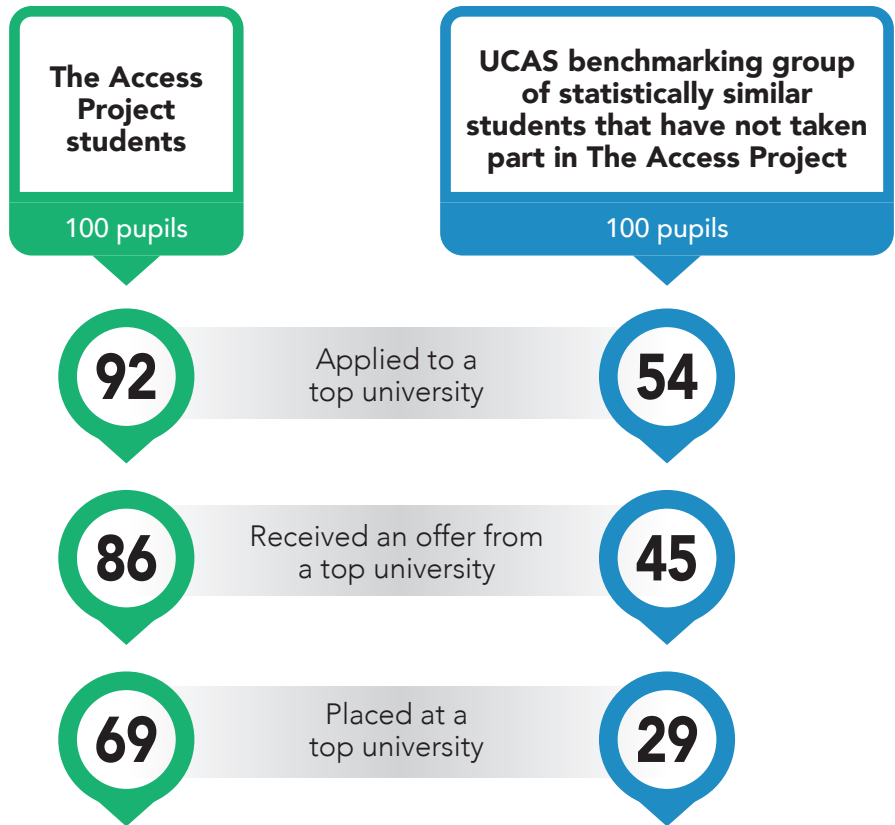
Note: GCSE overall attainment is measured through 'Attainment 8'. A level overall attainment is measured through 'Best 3'. Extra months progress is measured in relation to a matched control group of statistically similar students who didn't receive tuition.





# Our impact

Despite the disruption caused by COVID-19, students with The Access Project are more than **twice as likely** to attend top universities as similarly disadvantaged students, according to UCAS. ■



**92%** 

**of our cohort applied to top universities in 2019/20**

showing the impact we are having on raising aspirations of young people

**75%**  **ABB**

**of our students achieved ABB grades or higher**



# Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Young people across the country have faced unprecedented challenges in their daily lives and education during the pandemic. For the students that we work with, the barriers they already faced became even more daunting.

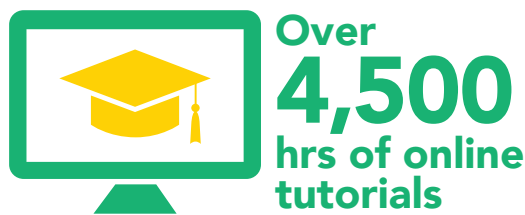
It has been predicted that the attainment gap between the most disadvantaged young people and their more well-off peers could widen by up to 75% as a result of COVID-19.

As students returned to school in September 2020 it became even more apparent that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds would be disproportionately affected by months of remote learning. In order to ensure that our students could access support we made the decision to continue online tutoring during the academic year 2020/21, to guarantee reliable delivery in challenging times.

Throughout the last academic year, the whole team at The Access Project has been committed to ensuring our students receive the same level of support. It is thanks to the dedication of over 1,800 volunteer tutors that:

- Students have received over 35,000 hours of tutorials
- Our volunteers have delivered over 15,000 more hours of tuition than last year
- We achieved the highest number of tutorials in The Access Project's history. ■

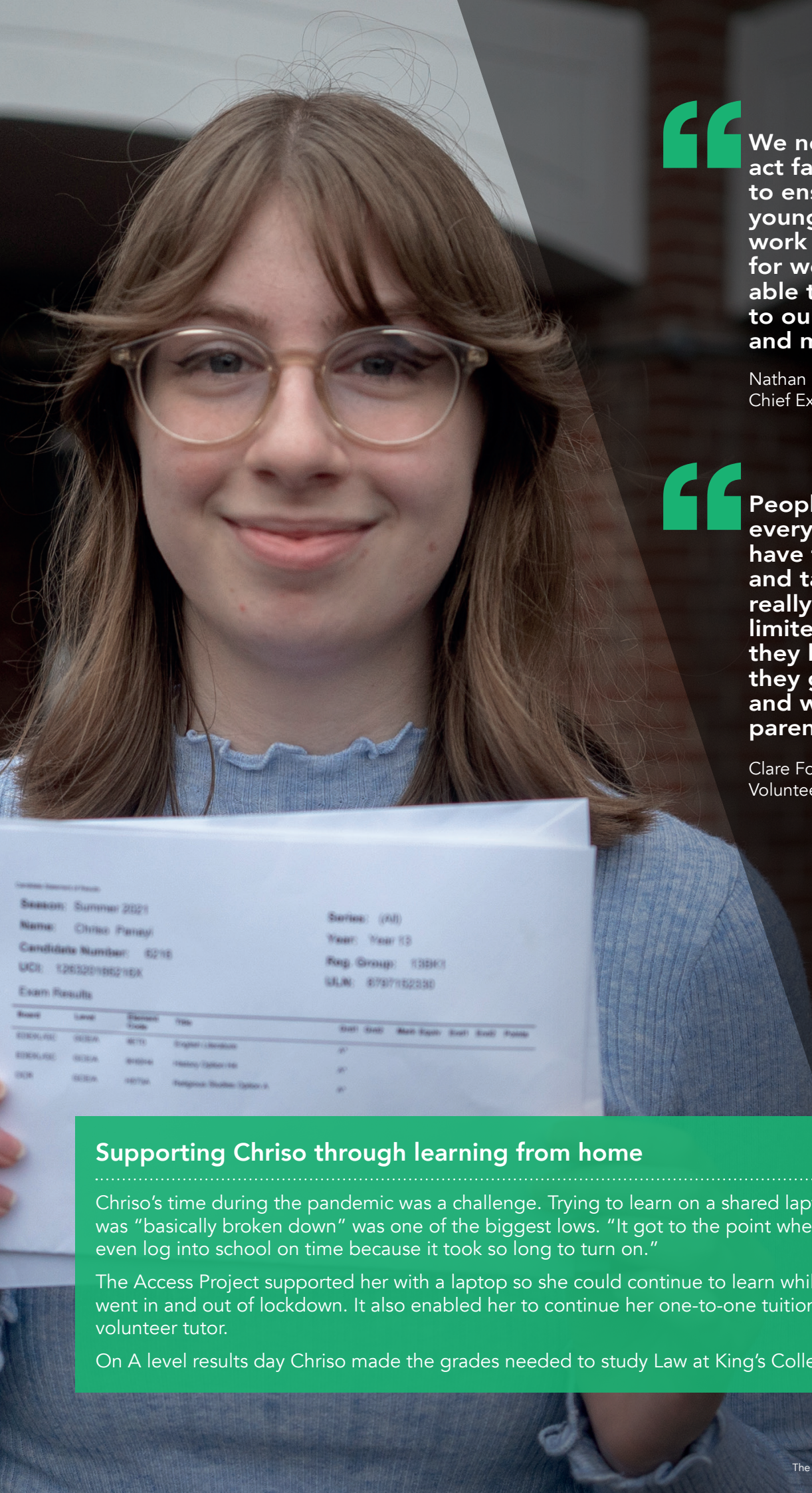
During lockdown\*, The Access Project pivoted quickly to support students virtually



Source: The Access Project \*March 20 until end of academic year







“ We needed to act fast if we were to ensure that the young people we work with and for were still able to get access to our tutoring and mentoring.

Nathan Sansom  
Chief Executive

“ People from every background have their abilities and talents - it's really naff if it's limited by where they live, where they go to school, and what their parents do.

Clare Ford  
Volunteer tutor

Candidate Information Sheet

Season: Summer 2021  
 Name: Chriso Parsyl  
 Candidate Number: 6216  
 UOI: 126320180216X

Series: (All)  
 Year: Year 13  
 Reg. Group: 13BK1  
 ULR: 8797162330

Exam Results

Exam	Level	Element Code	Title	Dist	Dist	Mod	Exam	Dist	Exam	Points
EEENL100	GCSE	4ET1	English Literature	A*						
EEENL100	GCSE	4ET04	History: Option 1A	A*						
EEENL100	GCSE	4ET04	History: Option 1A	A*						

## Supporting Chriso through learning from home

Chriso's time during the pandemic was a challenge. Trying to learn on a shared laptop that was "basically broken down" was one of the biggest lows. "It got to the point where I couldn't even log into school on time because it took so long to turn on."

The Access Project supported her with a laptop so she could continue to learn while schools went in and out of lockdown. It also enabled her to continue her one-to-one tuition with her volunteer tutor.

On A level results day Chriso made the grades needed to study Law at King's College London.



# Transition work

**We are very aware that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to face challenges when they get to university. Non-continuation rates among disadvantaged students are higher than those of their more affluent peers.**

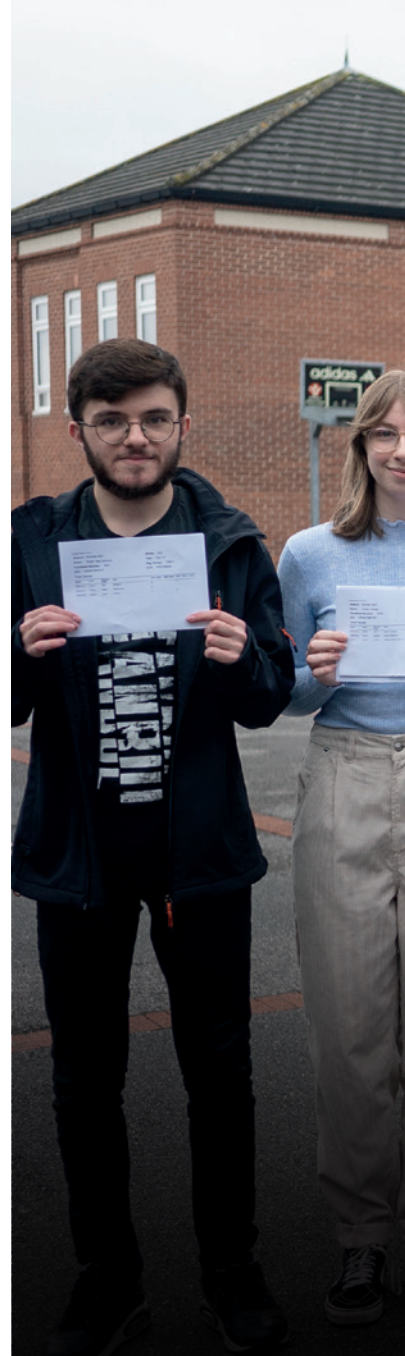
In addition, 73% of students from disadvantaged households graduated with a 2:1 or a first class degree in comparison to 83% from more advantaged households.

We want to ensure that the young people we support get through their first year of university – and place onto their second.

We therefore decided in February 2020, before the pandemic, that we would revise and improve our offer specifically to help students make the transition to university. We decided to focus on ensuring they enrol at the start of their second year as most drop-outs occur in year one. We secured specific funding to do this work

and implemented a programme of support which:

- Prepares students for the upcoming university experience - ranging from studying skills to education around different sources of income - through our Transition Week
- Matches students with alumni from The Access Project in older year groups through our peer mentorship scheme
- Improves chances of our young people getting good graduate jobs through our partnership with charity upReach. They have reserved spaces on their programme for our students - who will benefit from support to access and sustain top graduate jobs. ■



# Year in review

## MARCH 2020

All staff began working remotely and tuition moved online

## AUGUST 2020

By this point, The Access Project delivered 1,121 one-to-one mentoring sessions and 1,003 extra check-ins with young people. Additional support for students in the lead up to and after results day with our student hotline

## SEPTEMBER 2020

Launched Infiniti, our bespoke online tuition platform

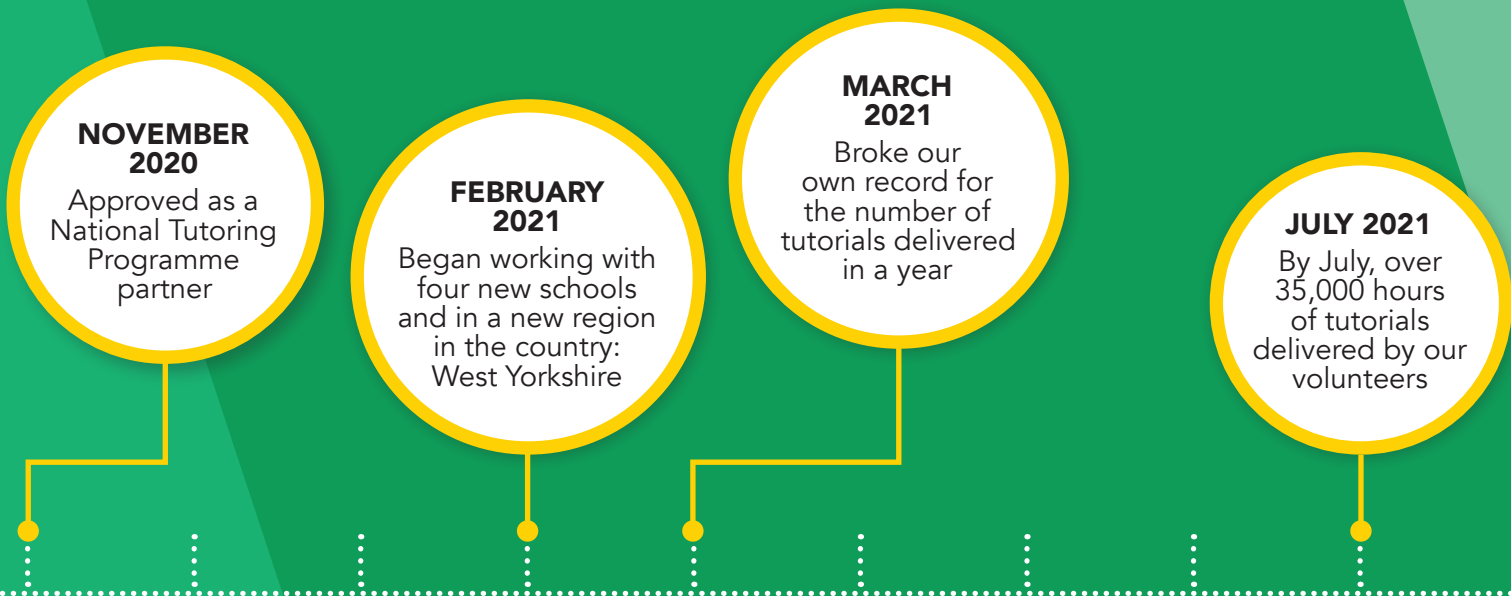
2020





The Access Project doesn't just end after school – their support goes on into university and I think that's a really good thing.

Nana, former student who is now attending the University of Oxford



2021





To sign up to volunteer please visit  
[theaccessproject.org.uk/volunteer](https://theaccessproject.org.uk/volunteer)



“

Laila, who is a student at Hornsey School for Girls, said of her tutor:

**Before I met her I was working at grade 4. Now I'm working at grade 6 thanks to her. It was a shaky subject for me but she's really built my confidence.**

”



# An enormous thank you to our volunteers

**When the UK locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people came together to help those most in need. This was particularly true at The Access Project.**

With the move to online tuition, we were able to open up volunteering to people across the country. And applications flocked in - from Cornwall all the way up to Scotland.

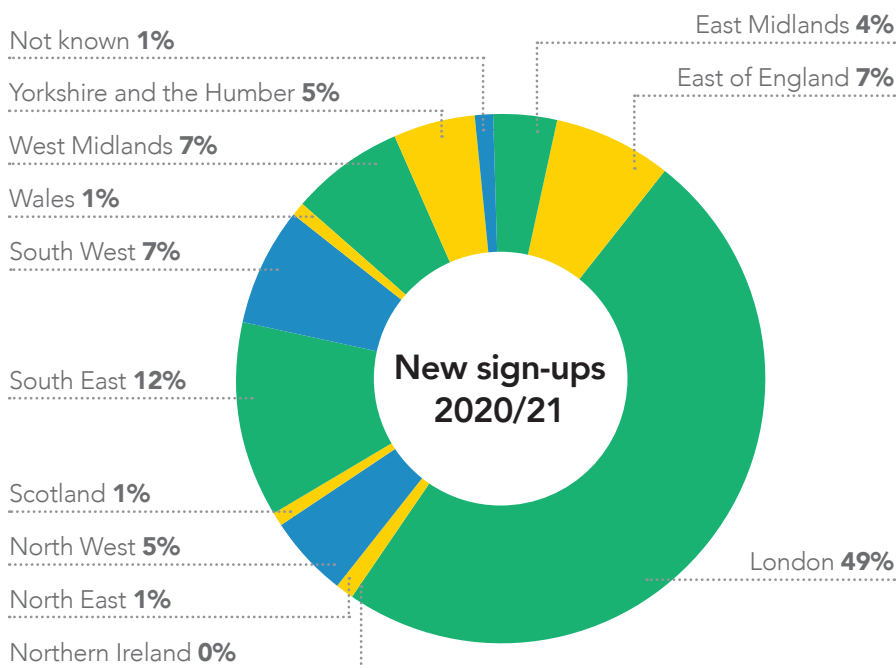
Overall, we saw a 72% increase in the number of volunteer sign-ups over 2020 and into 2021. On average those that went on to successfully volunteer donated 15 hours of their time to help disadvantaged young people get the grades they need to place, and thrive, at university.

It is thanks to our amazing volunteers that the

disadvantaged young people we work with are able to beat the odds to secure places at top universities.

Now that the world is opening up again, we want to build on the momentum of last year. The reality is that over one million people have been plunged into poverty (according to the Legatum Institute), and the attainment gap is predicted to be as high as 75% by Department for Education officials. Young people need more support than ever before if they are to achieve their dreams. ■

## All tutors



# Our finances

	Financial year 2019/2020	Financial year 2018/2019
<b>Income from:</b>		
Donations	£1,473,000	£1,815,000
Charitable activities	£698,000	£847,000
Investments	£2,000	£1,000
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£2,173,000</b>	<b>£2,663,000</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>		
Charitable activities	£2,000,000	£1,880,000
Raising funds	£438,000	£256,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£2,438,000</b>	<b>£2,136,000</b>

In the financial year to 31 August 2020, we received income of £2.2 million, of which £1.5 million came from general donations and £698,000 from funding partnerships with schools and school linked donations.

We spent £438,000 on our fundraising efforts and £2 million on the delivery of our core programme. Delivery of our core programme also included money on our transition programme supporting students in their first year of university, and on our continuing pilots of undergraduate and online tuition. ■





# Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who has supported our work during the pandemic years. Your dedication to young people in such challenging and difficult times has enabled us to continue to support disadvantaged young people into top universities. We are proud to work with so many driven and passionate volunteer tutors, donors and partners.

## Thanks to the following partners for their support in 2020 and 2021:

2U	Insurance Industry	Salesforce
AimHigher West Midlands	Charitable Foundation	Slaughter and May
Alta Advisers	Ironmongers' Company	St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge
Allen & Overy	J E Newman	Student Code
Amazon	John Kelly Jones	SOAS University of London
Aston University	John Lyon's Charity	Trailstone
The April Trust	Keble College, University of Oxford	University College London
The Alvarez & Marsal Covid-19 Response Fund (Prism the Gift Fund)	KPMG	The Worshipful Company of Founders
Bank of America	Lars Windhorst Foundation	The Worshipful Company of Insurers
Barclays	Lincoln College, University of Oxford	
BCG	Linklaters	
Bloomberg	London Higher	
The Chartered Accountants' Livery Charity	Magdalen College, University of Oxford	
Charterhouse in Southwark	Marina Poletto	
CHK Foundation	Merkle	
CMS	The National Tuition Programme	
Curio London Ltd	Neil Cosgrove	
The David Farnham Memorial Gift	Nesta	
The D.E. Shaw Group	Net Natives Ltd	
The Dulverton Trust	Newby Trust	
EQ Foundation	Newnham College, University of Cambridge	
EY Foundation	Northern Trust	
Friends and family of Professor Jeff Cash	PDT Partners	
Garfield Weston Foundation	Quadrature	
Gowling	Queen Mary University of London	
The Hiscox Foundation UK	RETAILMENOT Ltd	
The Hobson Charity	Robey Warshaw	
Imperial College London	Rothschild & Co	
Impetus		

### We want to say a huge thank you to our trustees for their time, passion and expertise:

Donna Bennett  
Katie Brewis  
Andrew Burns  
Tahmid Chowdhury  
Neil Cosgrove  
Mary Curnock-Cook CBE,  
former Chair  
Jimmy Daboo  
Peter Denison-Pender,  
Treasurer  
John Kelly-Jones  
Emma Leech  
Neil McIntosh CBE  
Fatos Nacakgedigi



Thanks to everyone who donated online, made a regular gift or who donated anonymously. **You can support our work [here](#).**

# Our vision for the future

We completed a strategy review in early 2020 and were preparing to embark on this new direction when the pandemic struck in March 2020.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we were able to make progress with significant elements of our new approach. As we emerge from the pandemic, we are taking stock before we finalise our future plans. We will present this in the New Year, and will build on the three strategic objectives we set ourselves:

## Expand reach



There are thousands more young people who are eligible for our programme and who we want to serve. We will be expanding our reach to support more of them, including by growing into new regions such as the North West of England.

## Enhance impact



We are tireless in improving what we do, and our analysis shows that the biggest barrier for our students in getting to university is achieving the grades they need at A level. We are piloting tuition with experienced paid tutors in small groups to test if this can raise attainment further.

## Extending to support transition



Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to complete their first year of study. We are not satisfied only with supporting our students to make it to top universities; we want them to thrive. Therefore, we have extended our mission to support effective transition to university, to ensure they complete their critical first year of university education.

As young people return to school for the new academic year, we will support them to reach their full potential, doing all we can to help them make up for learning lost due to the pandemic. ■









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Wapping Lane, London E1W 2SF

[www.theaccessproject.org.uk](http://www.theaccessproject.org.uk)