



The Access Project

Impact report 2024:
A time for growth

Our mission

We support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access top universities through a programme of tuition and in-school mentoring.

We work with our students to make strong applications, get the grades and transition to university.

We believe that every young person should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and make the most of their education.

We are passionate about reducing the educational barriers our students face so that they can follow their dreams.

Why do we do this?

Our work is vital as access to top universities in the UK is profoundly unequal.

Students from under-resourced backgrounds are almost three times less likely to attend top universities in comparison to more advantaged students.

We are committed to delivering our highly impactful programme with our students to tackle this injustice.

Who do we work with?

We work with those students who need us most.

Of the students we worked with in 2022/23:

91% from under-resourced areas

1% receiving care or care leavers

38% receive free school meals

51% eligible for Pupil Premium

'The Access Project gave me the best opportunity to succeed and I don't think I would have done as well without it.'

Layla, former student with The Access Project who is now studying at King's College London.

Foreword from our Chief Executive, Anna Searle

As we reflect on the 2022/23 academic year, we are extremely proud that we have continued to grow our programmes to support nearly 2,000 students across the country: a greater number than ever before.

These students have been met with significant challenges during their education but remain inquiring, driven and resilient. This year saw a substantial national drop in top A level results to bring grades back in line with pre-pandemic levels, and it is a tremendous achievement that 31% of our students received 128 UCAS points (ABB or equivalent) against this backdrop.

At the heart of our work remains a commitment to embed expert support within our partner schools. Our University Access Officers (UAOs) work with each individual student to understand their needs and support them on their journey to a top university, without doubt making a truly significant impact on their lives. And we know this because the young people with whom we work tell us just how important their UAO is. They tell us that progressing to a top university has helped them to deliver their dreams, harnessing their ambition to be their very best.

A crucial part of our work involves understanding the impact of this unique approach on the future life opportunities of our students. Through robust monitoring and evaluation, we continue to develop the quality of our programmes to strengthen not only the impact on our students but also contribute to the wider context of social mobility and widening participation in the UK. In conjunction with the external evaluation undertaken by UCAS, we can evidence that our students are 50% more likely to attend top universities than statistically comparable students.

To support attainment raising, we grew our group tuition model during 2022/23, thus enabling us to reach even more students. Feedback from those who participated in our group tuition sessions was positive, and we look forward to expanding this model in the years ahead.

Alongside this, our university readiness programme enabled nearly 700 students to visit a top university.

*Source: Widening participation in higher education, Free School Meals – Gap, Department for Education.



These trips complement the workshops and 1:1 support offered by our University Access Officers based in school and are an invaluable part of our programme, particularly at a time when costs for travel to university open days can be prohibitive for some.

Recognising the regional disparity in university progression rates, we are delighted that our partnership with the Queen's College, Oxford, has enabled us to grow into new regions. I would like to thank all our funding partners for supporting our growth. Thank you, too, to the staff in our schools and our volunteer tutors for supporting our service delivery. Without you, none of this would be possible.

And why do we do this? Our work is needed now more than ever. Data from the Department for Education shows that the university placement gap between those on free school meals (FSM) and those pupils not receiving free school meals is increasing, as is the progression rate gap for the UK's top universities*. By contrast, within The Access Project's cohort for 2022/23, free school meal students actually placed at a slightly higher rate than non-FSM students, demonstrating that our programme is a crucial tool to help to level the playing field.

Finally, I want to recognise the leadership of Nathan Sansom, who stepped down as The Access Project's CEO in August 2023, and to thank Nathan for steering the organisation through a challenging time. I am really delighted to be leading this fantastic team and organisation at an incredibly exciting period of growth and maturity for The Access Project and I look forward to working with our committed Chair, Board of Trustees and staff in the years ahead.

Our impact

Understanding the impact we are making on the lives of our students is central to our ethos. By analysing our data and the feedback from our students we can show real, positive change which helps to break down educational barriers and improve social mobility in the UK.

220



In 2022/23 The Access Project supported **220 students** to place at a top university.

Students with The Access Project are **50% more likely to attend top universities** than statistically comparable students, according to figures from UCAS.

50%



'The Access Project programme has been a really great experience, just having that support system... I always felt like I had someone to talk things over with.'

George, a former student with The Access Project who is now studying Philosophy, Politics and Economics at University College Oxford.



In the 2023 student survey:

93% of our students



- said that they feel more motivated to attend a top university.
- and that they feel more positive about their future.



The Access Project students*

UCAS control group of similar students*

92 ◀ Applied to a top university ▶ **68**

79 ◀ Received an offer from a top university ▶ **58**

52 ◀ Placed at a top university ▶ **38**

*Out of 100 students.

31%

of our students received equal to or more than **128 UCAS points (ABB or equivalent).**



Our programme

In-school mentors

In-school mentors help students navigate their journey to university. They deliver workshops and one-to-one guidance, covering every stage of the university application process.



Enrichment events

Our students experience student life on our visits to top universities across the country, as well as attending career insight events hosted by our partner organisations.



Our programme combats educational inequality and improves social mobility by raising students' grades and supporting them to understand the pathway to a top university.

Tutors

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



Societies

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



Oasis Academy Hadley is one of The Access Project's partner schools in London. More than half of the pupils at Oasis Academy Hadley live below the poverty line. Despite their disadvantages, ambition at the school is high. 70% of students achieve A* - B grades and 95% of sixth formers go on to university. In 2023, four students placed at the University of Cambridge.



Zoë Thompson, Headteacher at Oasis Academy Hadley, said: "Our school has partnered with The Access Project for the best part of a decade. In my time as head, I have watched pupils thrive under the mentorship that the programme provides."

"Our students experience a lot of turbulence in their daily lives, and I am grateful to have The Access Project's support in helping them navigate these barriers and their education."

Yesim Albay, Head of Sixth Form at Oasis Academy Hadley, added: "Every single year, our students who have been part of The Access Project gain places at world class universities including Cambridge, King's, UCL and LSE. We know that if a student is part of The Access Project, they will be guaranteed the holistic programme offer and eventually gain a place at a top Russell Group university."

"Not only are we big advocates of The Access Project for incredible results in terms of A levels and university destinations but also the skills they equip our students with – confidence, resilience, and a belief in their own abilities. The Access Project is the biggest resource for any sixth form driven by educational equity."



Georgina is from Lancashire and was one of the first students to enrol with The Access Project in 2022 when we developed our new programme in the North West in partnership with the Queen's College, Oxford.

Georgina applied to The Access Project because she was seeking additional support with her Maths and took part in over 20 small group online tutorial sessions. With help from Sam, her University Access Officer, Georgina submitted her UCAS application and received five university offers for science-related subjects, including an offer from the University of Cambridge.

Georgina was awarded four A* grades in her A level exams which meant she was able to achieve her dream of studying Natural Sciences at Cambridge University.

Georgina said: "I'm really happy all my hard work has paid off and I can finally do what I wanted to do."



Reaching new geographies

From starting out in one London school in 2008, we are proud to deliver our programme to a total of 24 London schools in the 2023/24 academic year. But this is only part of the story.

Regional disparity in university progression rates across the country demonstrates the importance of our work in other regions. According to the

Department for Education, pupils eligible for free school meals in London were four times more likely to progress to a high tariff Higher Education provider than pupils in the East Midlands in 2021/22.

Driven by this need, we continue to strive to extend our geographical reach, working in five different regions and increasing our school partners across the country.

Schools we work with

North West

Darwen Vale High School
The Whitehaven Academy
Workington Academy

West Yorkshire

Dixons Allerton Academy
Moor End Academy



West Midlands

Colmers School and Sixth Form
Holte School
King Edward VI Handsworth
Wood Girls' Academy
Moseley School
Ormiston Forge Academy
Waverley School
Wood Green Academy
Hamstead Hall Academy

East Midlands

Ashfield School
Shirebrook Academy
West Notts College



London

Ark Globe Academy
Bishop Douglass Catholic School
Carshalton High School for Girls
Central Foundation Boys' School
Central Foundation Girls' School
Chelsea Academy
City of London Academy, Islington
The City Academy, Hackney
George Green's School
Haggerston School
City of London Academy Highbury Grove
Hornsey School for Girls
Kensington Aldridge Academy
King Solomon Academy
La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School
Lilian Baylis Technology School
Oasis Academy Hadley
South Bank University Academy
St George's Roman Catholic School
St Thomas More Catholic School
The Norwood School
The Urswick School
Woolwich Polytechnic School
Woolwich Polytechnic School for Girls



Our volunteer tutoring

We remain extremely fortunate to have the support of a dedicated community of volunteer tutors who give up their time to help our students. Their passion, commitment, hard work and enthusiasm cannot be underestimated.

We were delighted that over 700 volunteers who had supported us in the previous academic year continued to tutor this year as well, and we offer particular thanks to them for their ongoing support of our mission.

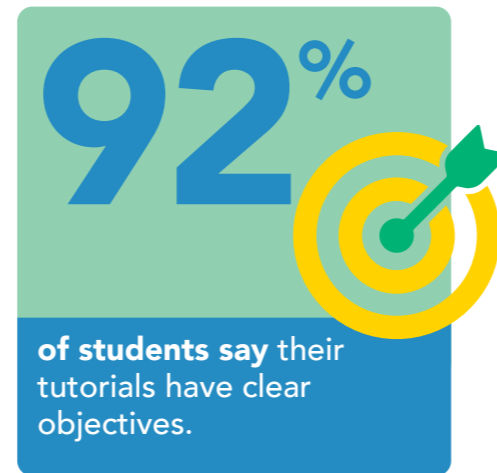
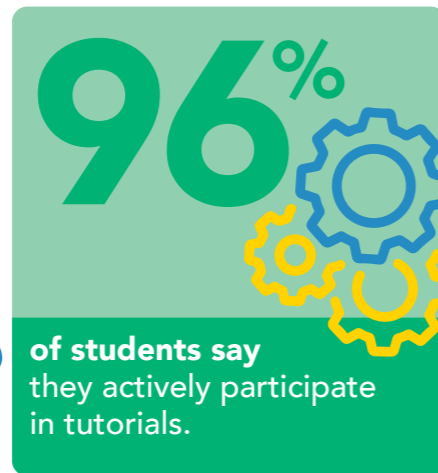
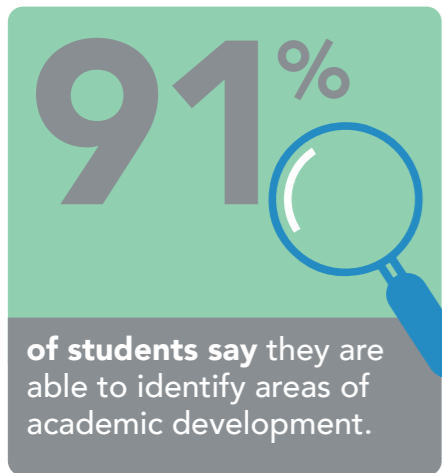
- **90%** of volunteers would recommend The Access Project.
- **98%** of volunteers feel they are making a positive impact.

The growth of our online tuition model enables us to tailor our matching process so that we are offering each student the best fit for them, regardless of their tutor's geographical location.

In 2022/23:

- **1,305** volunteer tutors delivered an amazing average of **20 tutorials** each to a total of **1,402 students**.

With The Access Project:



Sonia is one of more than 1,000 volunteers at The Access Project, working to transform the lives of under-resourced young people. She volunteers for one hour per week, tutoring A level History.

Originally from Malaysia, Sonia is a third year History student at Queen Mary, University of London. She saw volunteer tutoring as an opportunity to share her love of her favourite subject whilst giving back to a good cause.

"Previously, I volunteered with the UNHCR and I really enjoyed that experience", Sonia told us.

"When I moved to London to study History at undergrad, I really wanted to make sure I could spread my love for history with students once again", Sonia said. Since joining The Access Project, Sonia has delivered almost 40 tutorials.

"The best part about volunteering is seeing students excel in a subject they didn't think they could excel in, and for them now to go on to either do History at A level or wanting to pursue History at undergrad really warms my heart", she added.



The growth of tuition: our group tutoring pilot

As an ambitious and dedicated charity, we continually strive to adapt to the needs of the students we serve. Through monitoring and evaluation, we explore how we can optimise our delivery and impact, as well as increase our reach to even more young people in new regions and schools.

Based on this monitoring and evaluation, and backed up by external evidence from other tutoring interventions, we launched a group tuition pilot project in 2021. During this pilot, we worked with group tutors for the first time to support attainment raising at A level and to enable us to provide tuition to more Year 12 and 13 students. The pilot began with 80 students across three subjects (Biology, English and Maths).

From September 2022, we increased the pilot further to reach 467 students across six subjects: Biology, Chemistry, English, Maths, Physics, and Psychology and we are excited to grow this figure to 750 students in 2023/24.



Amjad joined The Access Project as a contractor tutor in 2023 as part of our group tuition pilot programme. He tutors A level Chemistry, working with small groups of students aged 16-18. Amjad's lessons help students solidify their understanding of topics covered in the classroom.

Amjad said: "My students are keen learners who actively engage in our lessons. They are well prepared and motivated to excel, asking questions and giving well thought out responses. I am thoroughly enjoying the tutorials and the conversations we have about all things Chemistry. I would recommend tutoring with The Access Project with no hesitation."



'I think my group tutor is great - she sets out objectives, goes through definitions and equations in detail, then does exam questions. I feel very comfortable asking questions and have improved by a whole grade since Year 12.'

Kaiden*, Year 13 student enrolled on The Access Project.



Our new programme: Accelerate

In the last 15 years The Access Project has provided mentoring and tutoring for more than 10,000 students, changing both their aspirations and life chances. But there is still more work to be done.

There are currently tens of thousands of under-resourced young people eligible for The Access Project's support. To expand our reach to serve more young people, we are aiming to increase our number of school partners. But we know that it is an extremely challenging time for schools with costs increasing and budgets being cut.

During the past year, we have been exploring ways to develop our programme while still making us a viable option for under-resourced schools. By developing our programme portfolio, we aim to widen our reach and lay the foundations for greater impact at scale.

The Accelerate programme model has been designed based on the findings from our extensive research into the most impactful aspects of The Access Project's model. The programme equips schools with a dedicated University Access Officer who provides mentorship to students. Pupils also

get the opportunity to take part in a university trip in Year 12. Additionally, each student is provided with a volunteer coach, helping students to develop essential, transferable skills. These sessions focus on building communication, problem solving, collaboration and organisational skills: all skills identified as vital for university and career readiness.

Moreover, we have developed Accelerate Plus, a programme model which provides all the benefits of our in-school mentorship with the addition of weekly group tuition sessions, helping students to solidify their subject knowledge and achieve better grades in their A levels.

Accelerate will support 30 students per programme, with additional students benefiting from year-wide workshops about getting into university that we'll deliver at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Our current Gateway programme will continue to give schools a full package of in-school mentorship alongside weekly one-to-one or group tuition in a subject of the student's choice. Through the introduction of Accelerate, we anticipate a significant increase in impact on the students we work with.

Our year in numbers



Growing our student numbers

1,873 students completed our core programme.

Growing group tuition

7,086 hours of group tuition.
25,901 hours of 1:1 tuition.

Growing our hours

12,793 student contact hours (including tuition, workshops and trips).



Growing our societies

109 students enrolled on Medicine & Dentistry Society.

(55 Year 12s received support and 54 Year 13s completed the Society programme).

166 students enrolled on Oxbridge Society.

(91 Year 12s received support and 75 Year 13s completed the Society programme).

Growing our workshops and mentoring

930 workshops.

2018 students attended at least one mentoring session.

6,181 student contact hours at workshops.

3,157 1:1 mentoring sessions.



Growing our university trips

691 students went on a total of 14 university trips (405 Year 10s and 286 Year 12s).



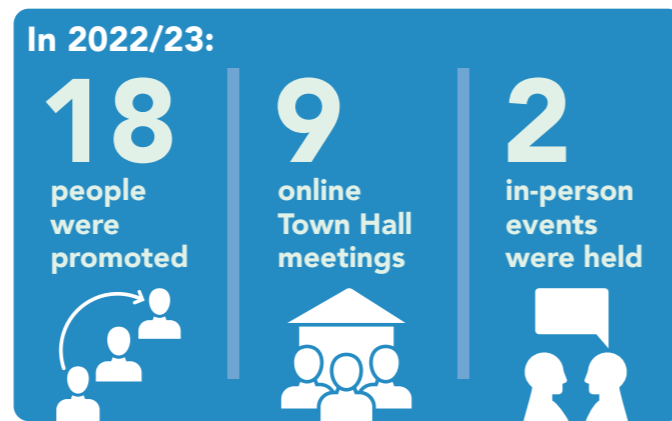
Supporting our organisation

In September 2022, we launched our new organisational values to guide us as we work together to achieve our mission: Empowerment, Inclusion, Impact, Courage and Ownership.

These values were implemented through regular staff communications and an interactive values workshop in July 2023.

Our people strategy vision is to enable and inspire all staff to achieve, grow, succeed and thrive. In the last year we engaged with staff across our organisation and co-created an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion vision, strategy, and objectives. Our work on this will continue to develop to ensure The Access Project can foster an equitable place to work.

Over 80% of staff took part in our December 2022 staff engagement survey which asked for feedback on accomplishment, support, reward, recognition, resources, input, expectations, leadership vision and strategy, pride and commitment. The average score was an excellent 4.0 out of 5, an increase on 2021.



Our staff meetings have been a successful way of sharing and celebrating the work achieved in each team and building relationships within our staff community.

We have a team of four trained Mental Health First Aiders available to support our staff team, and in June 2023 we asked staff to complete the first Wellbeing survey. **The survey had four questions, and the response rate was 78%:**



Freya "I first joined The Access Project in June 2022, working as a University Access Officer (UAO) across two schools in Hackney. At the time, I was studying for an MA in Education Policy, so the role provided a brilliant opportunity to experience policy in action.

I then progressed to the role of Senior UAO, where I shared some of my professional and academic learnings with colleagues through our peer mentoring structure. This experience offered valuable insight into line management and programme leadership. Around the same time, I also took on the role of Student Voice Lead, reinvigorating our student participation work across the organisation.

I applied for the role of Senior Programme Officer in September 2023. As part of the Programme Leadership Team, I am continually encouraged to push myself.

When I first joined The Access Project, I was passionate, critically reflective, and eager to make a change. I feel that my enthusiasm has only been supported throughout my time here. I am grateful to be able to carry these learnings forward in my career in third sector education and youth work."



Funding our strategy

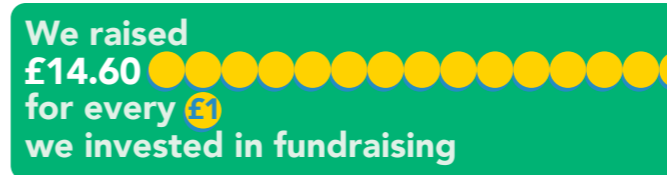
Queen Mary University of London is a partner university with The Access Project. Originally joining our mission in 2018, our partnership expanded in 2022 with QMUL partially funding our programme at Central Foundation Girls' School.



Queen Mary University of London also hosts annual visits for our pupils, giving guided campus tours, academic taster sessions, and the opportunity to find out more about student life.

Poppy Hudghton, Deputy Head of Student Recruitment and Widening Participation at Queen Mary University of London said: "We've partnered with The Access Project since 2018 to support the attainment and progression of learners from groups under-represented in higher education. Most recently, supporting learners in Tower Hamlets through a school partnership with Central Foundation Girls' School, and welcoming students to campus for a university-taster experience. The Access Project have helped us to recruit volunteer staff and student tutors who continue to support attainment-raising initiatives, helping us to meet our goals of being the most inclusive Russell Group university."

In 2022/23, we raised £2.4m through the generosity of our partners, funders and donors, all of whom gave voluntarily to support our students. This was a growth of 41% of fundraised income on the previous year.



Our fundraising contributed to almost three quarters of our expenditure, demonstrating how much we rely on our supportive partners and donors to positively impact our students.

Perella Weinberg ran an auction with their staff to raise money and delivered CV writing workshops for our students. In the summer of 2023, we celebrated ten years with our longest partner, Slaughter and May, with students from the Central Foundation for Boys School. Bain & Company spent time capacity building our Communications team to run digital marketing advertising for volunteer recruitment.



We started our biggest ever partnership with ICG in 22/23. Another multi-year partner, The Considered Ask, brought us together, with other grantees, to share learnings about the work we do with young people. Our long-term partner, Rothschild & Co, supported us, not only with funding, but with employee fundraising, volunteering, and individual giving.

In October 2022, we launched our partnership with The Queen's College, Oxford in Cumbria, in two of our partner schools, grabbing attention from ITV Border news. The Queen's College also funded our valuable work with a new school partner in Lancashire. In addition, we worked with many universities who generously arranged trips for our students to their campuses as part of student enrichment activities.

We would like to thank all of our partners who supported us in 22/23 in their very unique and diverse ways. Every penny and every minute from each partner has had a huge impact on our students' lives. To every one of our 47 funding partners, thank you from The Access Project.

Meet our students

Laura was a student at St George's Roman Catholic School. She joined The Access Project in 2021 and completed the programme in 2023.

Laura achieved four A grades in her A levels and secured a place at the London School of Economics to study Environment and Sustainable Development. She's the first in her family to go to university.

"The Access Project has definitely helped me get this far", Laura said. "As a first-generation student, it all also feels somewhat surreal and I hope I can tutor others in the near future, doing my part to help students as this programme has helped me."

"It was a great experience and Lucy was a lovely tutor. My lessons varied from help with revision and understanding the subject I was tutored in, to choosing the right university course for me, and making sure my application was at the highest possible standard. These past two years have been challenging, but The Access Project managed to ease my nerves", Laura added.



Nabid from the West Midlands, joined The Access Project in 2019, subsequently sitting his A level exams in 2023. In his last year on our programme, he attended 25 one-to-one Physics tutorials with his matched tutor, working hard to prepare for his summer exams.

Nabid was awarded three A* grades in his A levels which meant he was able to take up a place studying Physics at the University of Warwick, one of the UK's top universities.

During his studies, Nabid was also awarded the R&Co4Generations Bursary. As part of its partnership with The Access Project, Rothschild & Co. awards a number of students who are moving away from home with a sum of £6,000 a year towards each year of their degree course to help with living costs.



Thank you


We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone that supported our work in 2022 and 2023. Your support really does make a difference to the lives of the young students on our programme. Thank you very much to all our partners, donors and volunteers, including:

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John Kelly-Jones
Keble College, University of Oxford
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Magdalen College, University of Oxford
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Ownership Capital
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Strand Parishes Trust
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The Queen's College, University of Oxford
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