



The
Access
Project



Achieving Impact at Scale

The Access Project
Strategy

2022
2026

Foreword



Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Nowhere is this more true than in access to top universities, where students from disadvantaged backgrounds are significantly under-represented. Closing the access gap matters. It matters for the young people we work with, so they can fulfil their potential and open new possibilities in their lives. It also matters for wider society. If we want a fairer society - one in which young people from all backgrounds can bring their diverse perspectives into our institutions and national life - widening access to top universities is a crucial step.

The Access Project has been at the heart of this mission to widen access since our foundation in 2008. We have grown from an after-school club in a North London school to a well-respected charity supporting almost 2,000 students across London, the Midlands, and most recently West Yorkshire. We have a proven track record of impact, and an ambition, set out in this strategy, to make a transformational difference for even more young people across England.

I am proud to have been involved with The Access Project as a volunteer tutor for the last five years, and privileged to have been appointed CEO in 2019 and led the organisation through the COVID pandemic. The team's total commitment to our young people and support to each other has been a huge inspiration. Most of all, the resilience and determination of our students despite the challenges they faced brings home the vital importance of our work. I am delighted to present our next strategy, which will help The Access Project to reach more young people, in more geographies, in the years to come. In particular, it will help us to lay the foundations for greater impact in future years, enabling even more young people to reach their potential.

Nathan Sansom



Chief Executive



The Access Project has helped to pick me up and guide me, and I believe every person, whether applying to Oxbridge or not, deserves that help.

Katie, The Access Project student, after receiving her offer to study Physics at University of Oxford



Our values

In 2022, new values were introduced for The Access Project. These were informed by survey and focus group findings from our young people, staff and volunteers and are as follows:

Empowerment

We support students and our people to develop the skills and knowledge to **accomplish their goals.**

Courage

We encourage our students and our people to **be authentic, innovative and ambitious** in order to reach their full potential and deliver our mission.

Impact

We evolve our programmes through an evidence-led approach, **supporting our students to achieve their best outcomes.**

Inclusion

We respect and value individuality and **engage diverse voices** to achieve our mission.

Ownership

We hold ourselves accountable in all our actions and efforts. We ask **“What can I do to improve my results?”**

The challenge we face

Access to university is profoundly unequal in the UK today. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are five times less likely to make it to a top university than peers from more advantaged backgrounds (Department for Education).

The access gap exists for several reasons. Students without a family history and expectation of going to university often don't know what options are available to them. They have plenty of ambition, but may lack understanding of the differences between certain courses and institutions or how to navigate the application process. Finally, they might not get the grades their talent warrants if they lack the extra academic support many of their better-off peers are accessing.

Educational inequality has been exacerbated by the pandemic and disadvantaged students have fallen further behind their well-off peers. Many disadvantaged students live in cramped housing with insufficient space to learn, have poor access to computing devices and bad or even sometimes no internet connectivity.

As a result of the challenges faced by disadvantaged young people, the Education Policy Institute estimated that a decade's worth of progress in closing the grade attainment gap between rich and poor had been erased. Regional inequalities have been particularly exacerbated, with disadvantaged pupils in parts of the North a grade and half behind their peers (Education Policy Institute). This is reflective of areas where there are higher levels of persistent poverty.

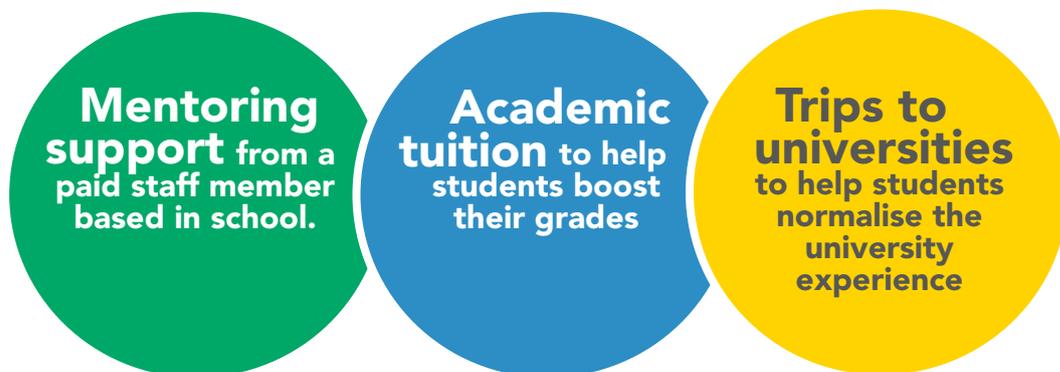
This context paints a bleak picture, but for students on The Access Project, we are making a transformational difference to their life chances, with students on our programme more than twice as likely to attend a top university.

The unique solution provided by The Access Project

The Access Project delivers a unique programme of support working in deep partnership with schools.

We support students to overcome the barriers to getting to a top university through a combination of mentoring support from a paid staff member based in school, and academic tuition to help students boost their grades. Tuition is provided through a mix of volunteer tutors providing one-to-one support and paid tutors working with students in small groups. We also run trips to universities to help students normalise the university experience and visualise themselves at a top institution.

Our programme



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our students still achieved impressive rates of progression to top universities over 2020 and 2021, 75% and 67% of them getting to top universities respectively. This gives us confidence that our programme is still making the difference despite the extra challenges faced by our young people.

Our strategy and priorities

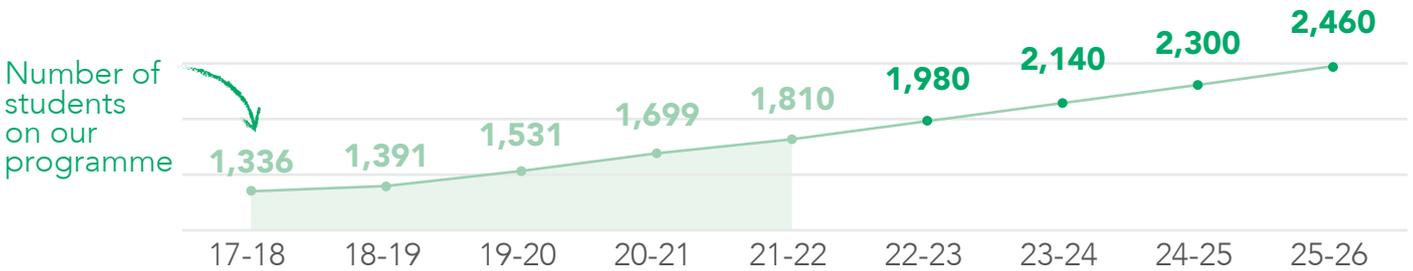
The scale of the national problem has grown and regional disparities have become wider. However, our programme is making a real difference for young people, and our strategy is clear.

We are setting out to:

- expand our reach to serve more young people;
- grow into new regions; and
- lay the foundations for greater impact at scale through programme innovations.

1) Expanding our programme

We will expand our reach to serve 2,460 students by the end of the strategy period, growth of 35% compared to current delivery levels.



2) Reaching new geographies

From September 2022, we will expand into the North West, supporting schools in Cumbria and Lancashire. In September 2024, we will grow into a further new hub in the north, drawing on our experiences of recent expansions into West Yorkshire and the learnings from the North West. This northern expansion has been driven by high levels of need in these areas as well as key partnerships with schools, Multi Academy Trusts and university supporters which we formed to establish this presence.



3) Key Stage 4 pilot

As part of our research and development for this strategy we found that many schools outside London and the West Midlands do not have sixth form provision. Given we want to serve more students outside these regions, we have developed and begun piloting a Key Stage 4 pilot, with the same objective of supporting students to place at a top third university. The pilot operates a similar model of in-school mentoring and volunteer tuition during the GCSE years. It supports placement at a good Key Stage 5 provider (school or college) as the exit outcome. For the students who will have participated in this pilot we will continue to provide less intensive support within their Key Stage 5 setting, and will monitor top third placement rates to learn about the efficacy of this pilot.

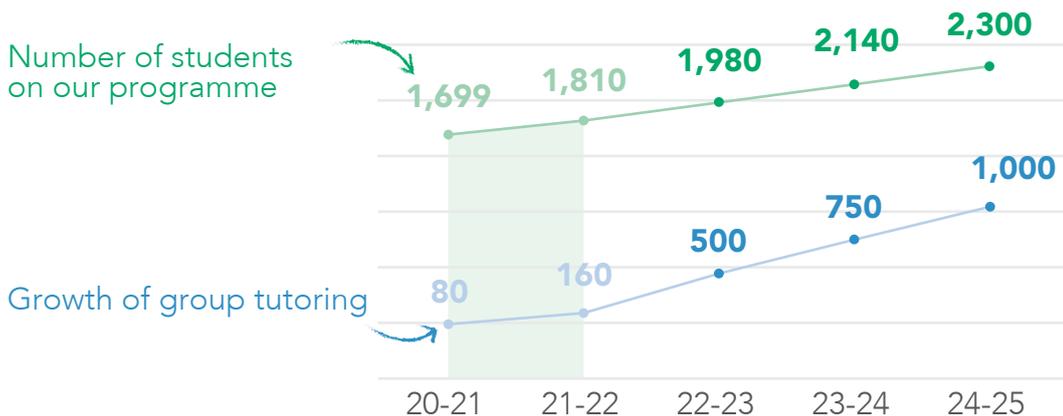
4) "Online first" volunteer tuition model

Throughout the pandemic, we delivered all our volunteer tuition through an online platform, drawing on the learnings of our online tuition pilot to support delivery in the East Midlands. During this period, we saw that online tuition enabled us to reach the same outcomes for students as in-person tuition. We also found that students and tutors engaged well with online tuition and attendance rates were high.

Online recruitment of volunteers also enabled more people to participate by removing the constraint of geography. In future, we will therefore prioritise our online volunteer tuition model, while retaining some options of in-person delivery for particular corporate partners.

5) Small group tuition pilot

Online tuition will help us to reach significantly more volunteer tutors to support our students. Despite the overall growth in volunteers, we find it challenging to source tutors for STEM subjects at A level. We have therefore begun a pilot using paid tutors who deliver tuition to small groups of students, typically three or four. There is significant evidence from other tutoring interventions that small group tuition can be effective, and we therefore expect to see positive results from this pilot. We are planning to scale up the number of students receiving small group tutoring over the period covered by this strategic plan.



6) Designing and piloting “TAP at Scale”

Over the five years of delivering our current programme model, we have learned a huge amount about how to support students to place at top universities. Working with partner schools, current and former students and other stakeholders, we will review our programme model and wider research into what works. We will concentrate our offer on those elements of provision which have the biggest impact so we can create a programme which is more cost-effective and scalable. We have begun development on this model and will pilot it through the strategy period.

7) Supporting our organisation

We want to enable and inspire our passionately committed staff to do their best work and feel fulfilled at The Access Project. We are implementing a people strategy as a key enabler of our wider organisational strategy, which includes a focus on supporting development pathways into management roles, and ensuring staff are well prepared to make this transition. It is very important to us that all staff are able to achieve their potential and feel included at work, and we recognise we have a way to go before we are the fully inclusive and diverse organisation we want to be. We are developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with support from external consultants and engagement from staff and trustees. We will publish a three year EDI strategy by February 2023 setting out the actions we will take to improve our practice and take the next steps on this journey.

8) Funding our strategy

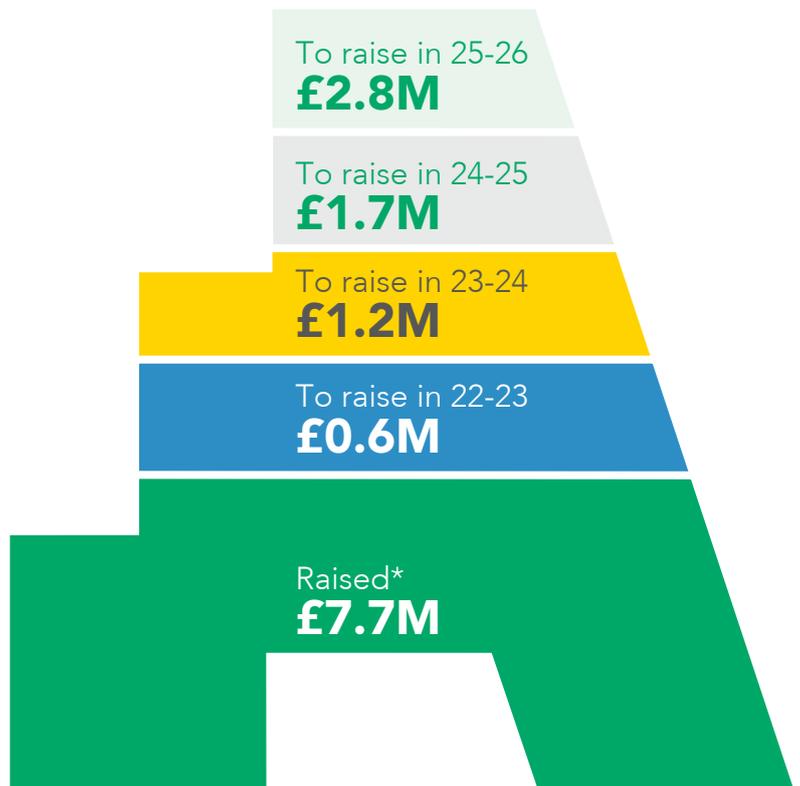
To deliver on the ambitious plans included in this strategy, we need funds. Around 25% of the cost of our programme has been paid by schools, with the remainder raised from a range of sources: individuals, trusts and foundations, corporates and universities. Our approach to increasing fundraised income over the period of our strategy is to focus in particular on new corporate partnerships and major donations from individuals - the latter through the development of a donor affinity group. We will also strive to move partnerships with universities, corporates and individual donors to three-year pledges, to match the commitments of schools.

We need your support

We want to offer a huge thank you to all of our current partners and donors who have made our work and impact possible and thank those who have already committed support to this strategy.

We are seeking new partners to join us so we can expand into 16 more schools, and support nearly 2,500 students by 2025/ 2026. To deliver this ambitious strategy, we need £14M in total over the next four years.

* Raised income includes all anticipated school income, even where the school partnerships have not yet been confirmed.



We are also looking for more volunteers to tutor our students and help improve their grades.

If you are interested in hearing more about our work and how you could support us financially, or through volunteer tuition, please contact us:

Email: partners@theaccessproject.org.uk

Call: 020 4513 5999





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