



# Impact Report

**2020-2021**





# Table of Contents

## Introducing our work

Our Mission	3
Our Impact by CEO Dr Sam Holmes	4
Our Reach	5

## Highlights from our programmes

Application Mentoring	6
Working with Corporate Partners	10
Supporting Schools and Teachers	12
CPD for WP professionals	15

## And finally...

2022 - What's Next?	16
A Selection of our 2020-21 Partners	17
How to Contact Us	18



# Our Mission

**For progression not determined by privilege.**

Causeway Education is a charity that equips young people and their support networks to overcome barriers in accessing post-18 destinations. Rather than focus on the socio-economic backgrounds of individuals, we choose to foreground the significant **systemic barriers** that our unequal society places in their way and tackle them head on.

We work with a range of partners to ensure that young people facing barriers receive **outstanding support** with choices and applications:

## Universities & Uniconnects

We support Outreach staff with designing, developing and delivering initiatives to inspire and equip participants to take their next steps into Higher Education.



## Schools & Colleges

We give teachers the information, skills and resources they need to make sure that students can navigate applications for HE, apprenticeships and jobs effectively.



## Corporates

We collaborate with corporate partners, providing innovative solutions that diversify candidate pipelines and equip talented young people with skills for success.



## Charities

We share our expertise with colleagues across the third sector, working together to evaluate current practice and develop more effective interventions.





# Our Impact in 2020-2021

"When lockdown was announced, our first concern was maintaining effective support for students through the intricate processes of exploration, choices and applications. OSCAR, our tried and tested online platform, ensured we were well-positioned to help thousands of with their applications, in partnership with many universities and the Sutton Trust (pp. 6-9).

Our next priority was teachers. We knew they were snowed under and facing completely new challenges. We needed to find ways of providing updated strategies and resources which were accessible and realistic. We worked with the Sutton Trust to recraft their Teacher Champions scheme from a regionally focused initiative into an online programme for state schools across the country (p. 13). This meant we were able to deliver regular webinars to help teachers through the twists and turns of supporting applications during the pandemic.

Finally, we wanted to carry on pushing the debate on what high quality practice in Widening Participation looks like. We developed an alternative conference format and content which met the changing needs of WP professionals. We came up with our "Big Idea, Small Idea" events series, online discussions where participants pitched both immediate tweaks and more structural solutions to entrenched issues (p. 16).

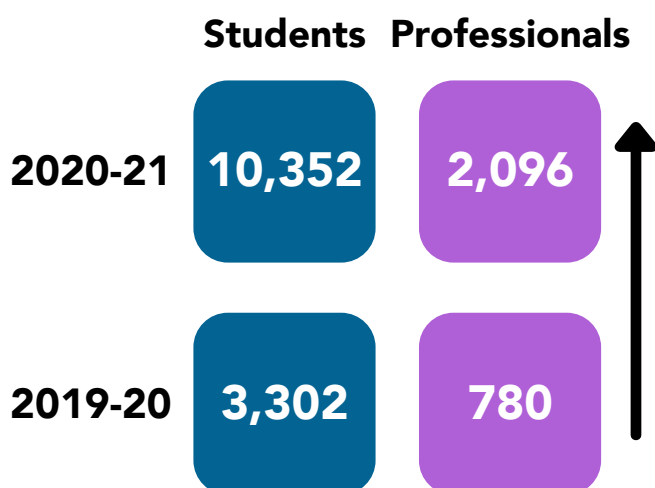
The pandemic has reinforced the need to balance providing fast, implementable solutions with championing the disruptive radical thinking necessary to ensure progression is not determined by privilege."



**Sam Holmes,**  
**Causeway CEO**



# Our Reach in 2020-2021



Our activities and programmes have rapidly expanded in 2020-2021. We have equipped thousands more young people with the skills and knowledge they need to confidently take their next steps. We have also provided expert training and support to hundreds more professionals who play a vital role in helping students overcome barriers in applying and progressing to higher education.

278

**Webinars delivered to students, teachers and widening participation professionals**



This all took place over a difficult and challenging period dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We couldn't have achieved our reach and impact this year without our partners and funders, who have supported us to scale-up and adapt our activities and programmes to meet the challenges of a year of delivering, collaborating and communicating our work and mission online.

**"A friendly and evidence-based team who offer support and innovative ideas to help support students!"**

# Application Mentoring

Application mentoring is our flagship programme for young people facing barriers in applying to higher education. We connect young people to an expert mentor, who then supports them to explore their choices and develop their application. Mentoring takes place on our online platform OSCAR, where young people can follow subject-specific pathways and use our personal statement builder to develop an outstanding application.



"Thanks to my e-mentor, my final draft was focused on activities and readings relevant to my subject rather than unrelated extracurricular activities as my first draft was!"

**Ngami**

## In the 2020-21 UCAS cycle...

**908**

registered for  
Application  
Mentoring

**613**

attended a  
personal statement  
webinar

**92%**

rated the feedback  
and guidance they  
received as helpful  
or very helpful

**94%**

felt confident that  
they'd written a  
high-quality  
personal statement



**Aron Rouse,  
Programme Manager**

"The necessity for online support meant that our Application Mentoring has gained a lot of interest. In the 2020-21 UCAS cycle, our team of mentors expanded by 157% and they mentored 62% more students than in 2019-20. We also worked with multiple new partners to provide training and ongoing support to a selection of their Student Ambassadors.

For the 2021-22 cycle, we focused on the continual improvement of the student experience. This ensured that this cycle's students were even better prepared to make the most of the opportunity and have a number of different ways of engaging with our outstanding guidance."

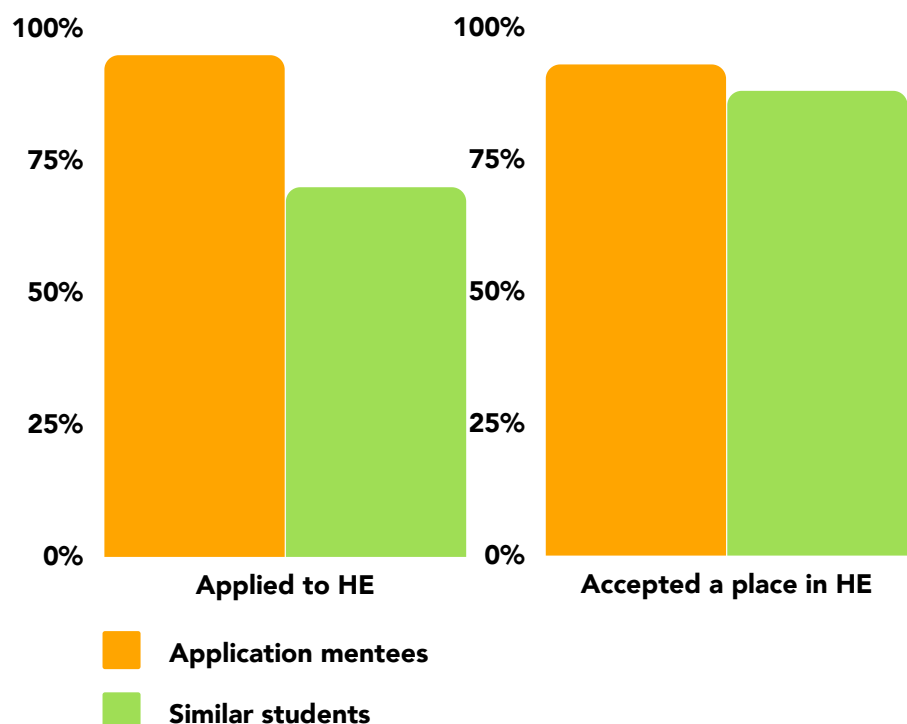
# Independent evaluation by the UCAS STROBE service

A key aspect of evaluating Application Mentoring is tracking the outcomes of the young people who take part in the programme. We worked with STROBE, a data service run by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to evaluate the impact of the programme on young people's application pathways into higher education.

**95%**  
Applied to  
study in HE

**99%**  
Received an  
offer

**93%**  
Accepted a  
place in HE



We tracked 353 students from our 2019-20 cohort who had received at least one round of feedback on their personal statement from their online mentor

Young people who participated were significantly more likely to apply and progress to HE and higher tariff HE than similar students benchmarked by UCAS

## "I felt my mentor understood what I was going through."

"The most helpful part was working with my mentor. Even if I wrote something that was not great, they never made me feel bad and they were always really encouraging. Being able to talk to someone who has been through a similar process made the programme unique; even though we never actually spoke to one another in real life, I felt they understood how I was feeling and what I was going through."



**Segen**

# Mentees shared their views about the Application Mentoring programme

We collected feedback from young people and their mentors on an ongoing basis throughout the programme. We're able to improve the programme each year thanks to the detailed and open feedback that we receive, and we're committed to listening to and implementing what we learn from the young people that we work with.

**What did they think about their mentors?**

"Extremely useful and helpful"

"The best mentor I could have asked for!"



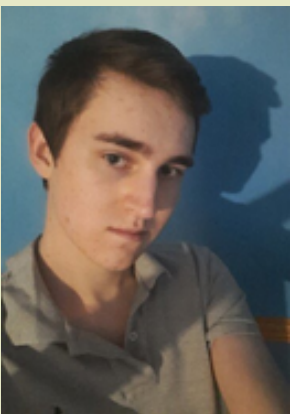
"Quick and concise feedback"

"They were very knowledgeable and could, more importantly, help you in your academic paragraphs"

"Exceptional personalised support!"

"Regular feedback, a different perspective, constructive criticism"

**"It was less stressful knowing someone was working with me."**



**Michael**

"Writing is not my strongest suit, so I knew writing a personal statement would be difficult. My mentor was great and able to get me to say things concisely but with more detail. They sent me links to extra materials to add. A mentor reviewing your work notices things you would not and having someone who is an expert in your subject means they know what to add and what a university is looking for. It was less stressful knowing someone was working with me."



**Our personal statement builder?**

"The most useful resource I could have had."

"Made the whole process of writing a personal statement much less daunting."

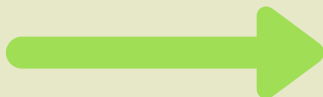
"Within each stage there were encouraging questions, this made me think more about myself and examples that I could put."

**And personal statement webinars?**

"Great at dismissing a lot of common myths surrounding writing your personal statement.."

"The guidance on what to include gave me a head start." "A lifesaver!"

**During our personal statement webinars we gave students a step by step guide on how to use our OSCAR platform and personal statement builder**



**OSCAR, our online platform for applications and references, includes a personal statement builder that guides young people through what they need to include to write a high-quality personal statement.**

Accountancy (0)  
Choose a level for your topic of interest:

Starter Accounting Coach Q&A	Standard Accounting Today article	Challenging Times Business Case Study
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Accounting Today article

- Go to the "Audit and Accounting section" of Accounting Today: <https://www.accountingtoday.com/audit-and-accounting> Select an article which you want to work on.
- Pick out 1-2 key points which particularly interested you. Why did this topic grab your attention?
- Were there any new concepts or terms which you were unfamiliar with? If so, research them online and explain them in one or two sentences.
- Did the article raise any important accounting questions?
- How did the topic change or alter your view of Accounting - were you surprised or intrigued by anything in particular?

Stage 2 provides a framework for students to explore a "topic of interest" and demonstrate their academic skills to admissions tutors

OSCAR

Personal Statement

Research shows that admissions tutors from many different universities look for roughly the same stages of a personal statement. Using the sections below, you can write strong material for each stage, and then construct it using Stage 5. Your **Reasons and Topic of interest** are the most important sections. Extra-curricular Activities is the least important section.

Subjects chosen: English, History

- 1 Your reasons ✓  
This section focuses on your reasons for wanting to study the subject.
- 2 Topic of interest  
This section helps you show off your ability within the subject you've applied for.
- 3 Course-related activities  
This section helps you discuss activities you've completed which relate to your subject.
- 4 Extra-curricular activities  
This section lets you talk about other activities which aren't related to your subject, but have given you useful skills.
- 5 Structure your personal statement  
Edit your paragraphs from each section to form a complete statement.

# Working with corporates

We are committed to supporting our corporate partners to develop innovative initiatives that equip young people with the tools and knowledge they need to reach their potential.

In 2020-2021, we collaborated with Allen & Overy to redesign their Smart Start work experience programme, ensuring that it continued to offer a high-quality route to gaining valuable experiences and skills despite the difficulties of the pandemic.



108

**young people took part in mock job interviews via Zoom and received feedback and guidance on how to improve their interview skills**

100%

**rated the mock job interviews as useful or very useful (2020 cohort)**

114

**young people were supported by an online mentor to support them with their university applications**

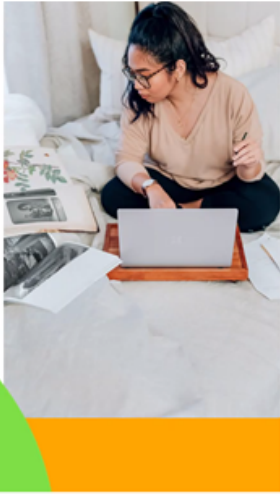
100%



**rated our webinars on course choices, personal statements and admissions tests as useful or very useful (2020 cohort)**

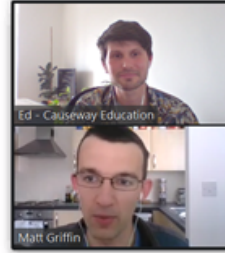
**"My experience with Smart Start could not have been better."**

"My experience with Smart Start could not have been better. The webinars and online workshops were really useful, as they provided a lot of detail and really got students involved in the discussion. At first I was disappointed that we couldn't go into the office [because of the pandemic], but having the videos of the webinars recorded and available on the online portal was actually one of the most useful things."

**Ravleen**



 @causeway\_edu  
 @causeway\_edu



## Smart Choices

Smart Start Information Day

We adapted all our delivery to suit an online format, from information days to workshops



**"It was very useful to prepare myself for future opportunities."**

"The experience was better than good. I feel like if I hadn't done it then I would have really missed out, because there was a lot of support with getting to where you wanted to be. The webinars were really important to me because they provided a picture about different pathways and things to consider. It was very useful in order to prepare myself for future opportunities."

**Laura**



## Skills Builder

Progressing in essential skills

2021-22

We are delighted that Smart Start 2021 was awarded Skills Builder Impact Level 4, the highest possible level! This is testament to the fact that the programme enabled participants to develop and embed essential employability skills, giving them the best possible preparation for future applications and roles.

# Supporting schools & teachers

We believe that embedding outstanding practice in schools is one of the most effective ways to ensure that young people are best equipped to overcome the barriers they face in taking their next steps. We support schools and teachers with a wide variety of initiatives. This year we ran CPD sessions on a variety of topics, from effective personal statements and references, to how to use and integrate OSCAR, our free tool for state schools, into school systems and practice. We knew that teachers were feeling overwhelmed this year, so we adapted our offer to best fit the needs of schools.

Teachers shared with us what they found most useful about Causeway's CPD sessions:

- Learning how to give effective feedback on personal statements and references
- Advice on timelines for school UCAS processes
- Access to free, high-quality resources, like OSCAR
- Discussing ideas and best practice with other teachers

"The personal statement workshop was really useful in showing how to provide the feedback effectively."

"The OSCAR personal statement platform will be invaluable"



## OSCAR for Free



Locations of schools that used OSCAR in 2020-21

OSCAR is our online platform which has been designed with outstanding university applications in mind. It's free to all UK state schools.

OSCAR supports:

- Students to develop competitive, subject-focused Personal Statements.
- Teachers to submit line-by-line feedback and comments.
- Teachers to produce effective references.

**In FY 2020-21 we reached 958 education professionals and 4,356 students through OSCAR for Free.**

# Access Champions

Our Access Champions programme trains a lead teacher in a school to make lasting changes to the systems that support their students with choices and applications. The programme builds on our firm research-led conviction that teachers can be powerful advocates for HE and that reducing disparities in school practices will lead to more equal outcomes.

In 2020, we finished supporting our third cohort of Access Champions schools based in Kent and the West Midlands.



**"Every one of those students got an offer. This told us that with our references and statements we were doing something right. It also gave students the confidence that they could go to that type of university if they choose to."**

Herne Bay High School is a large Kent comprehensive made up of 1600 students with roughly three hundred on roll across Year 12 and 13.

Before becoming an Access Champion, Head of 6th Laura Wrigley was finding that the school was struggling to get students accepted into high-tariff institutions. Motivated to give all chances of success to her students, Laura has taken full advantage of the the programme. She implemented OSCAR, our HE application support tool, and organised CPD opportunities for staff delivered by Causeway. Students also attended a Causeway regional workshop and those who were applying to courses requiring interview had in-person or virtual practice interviews.

With specialist knowledge on applications to higher-tariff universities, Laura found Causeway 'an excellent point of contact for relevant advice and guidance.' Laura focused on supporting students to evaluate their applications and used one-on-one interview time to research the potential of a high-tariff university being amongst their choices.

The school has seen outstanding success as a result of Access Champions. All of the target group achieved at least one Russell Group offer and the school achieved their very first fruitful Cambridge application.

# Teachers who took part in Access Champions shared with us...



"My confidence has increased in delivering personal statement advice and writing effective references."

"Improved delegation of responsibilities due to greater awareness of UCAS."



"The biggest change is in training other members of staff with personal statement support - it spreads the workload and ensures that the staff who have regular access to the students are able to give them accurate advice."

How it helped them in their role...

"Staff are now more involved in the process of giving advice and reference writing as well as providing feedback to students regarding personal statements."

"Students have access to better opportunities, are more successful in their P18 applications and therefore are more socially mobile than ever before."

"Our school now has a much more systemic approach to supporting our students in securing post-18 destinations that are both 'brave yet right' for them and their ambitions"

...and made an impact on their students

"This is the first year we had a successful application to medicine, and our systems for supporting students are so much more informed that we hope to ensure that students with the capability are able to fulfil their plans."

"It was a beneficial and fully supportive programme and it generated aspiration within the school."



# CPD for WP Professionals

We're committed to supporting widening participation and outreach departments to improve their effectiveness by sharing the insights we have gained from research and practice. Over the past year we delivered a number of CPD workshops and bespoke training for outreach teams and student ambassadors on:

- Objective-led planning
- High-impact online delivery
- Training student ambassadors

"Engaging"

"Informative"

Outreach professionals described our training as...

"Thought-provoking"

"Innovative and helpful"



"Really engaging and clear - a nice balance of detailed information and practical, hands-on activities."

## Big Idea Small Idea



During the pandemic, everyone was talking about getting back to normal, but for the Widening Participation sector, is that enough? In December 2020, we organised a series of three talks and roundtables to discuss this very question. We were incredibly fortunate to be joined by nine inspiring speakers, each of whom shared their big idea to transform the sector and their small idea to shape WP practice now. You can (re)watch the events [here](#).

### Some of the (many) big and small ideas we discussed were:

- To draw more heavily on the lived experiences of those who have faced barriers in access to HE when developing activities and programmes.
- To challenge the idea that Black families do not have aspiration for their children, but recognising the need to support Black parents and carers to acquire in-depth knowledge of HE choices and applications.
- To help young people to understand the application processes for Degree Apprenticeships and the specific demands of the programmes.

**342**  
people attended across  
our three events

**94%**  
of attendees found the  
events useful or very  
useful

"The session left me feeling completely inspired and hoping to put the ideas into effect!"



# 2022 - What's next?

## **Addressing disparities in progression rates**

Causeway is leading the development of a new tool to support those working to eliminate disparities in access to HE. By measuring “undermatch” for different groups of students at key points in the application process, this tool will flag up gaps in support for young people and highlight how these gaps are impacting particular types of applicant.

Insights from this tool will enable schools, colleges, universities and WP organisations to identify which groups of students need additional support, develop measures targeted at the specific barriers they are facing and evaluate the impact of their interventions at a completely new level of granularity.



## **Supporting young people to overcome barriers to apprenticeships**

With a particular focus on Higher/Degree apprenticeships we will continue our endeavours to ensure these sought-after schemes of learning, training and work achieve their potential of becoming a vehicle for social mobility. This is, and will continue to be, achieved through our projects in conjunction with the FEA Intrapreneurship Award, partnering directly with like-minded organisations and working with the appropriate professional bodies.



## **Ensuring progression is not determined by privilege in growth sectors**

To ensure we achieve our mission it is important that we have programmes representing multiple industries. This will mean we can offer high-quality IAG for a diverse range of HE/career areas, reflective of the varied skills and aspirations of the young people and key influencers we work with. In the coming months we aim to extend our expertise into some key sectors, chiefly focusing on the creative and built environment sectors.

We strongly believe that both sectors:

- Present excellent job opportunities for young people.
- Offer a variety of entry points, both through HE and (flexi-)apprenticeships.
- Currently lack diversity yet stand to benefit greatly from it, particularly in addressing significant skills gaps which require diverse talent to address.





# A selection of our 2020-21 partners

## Our core partners



ALLEN & OVERY



## Other organisations we supported



The  
**AMOS**  
Bursary



## Universities & colleges we worked with



... and more than 400 state schools on OSCAR!



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