

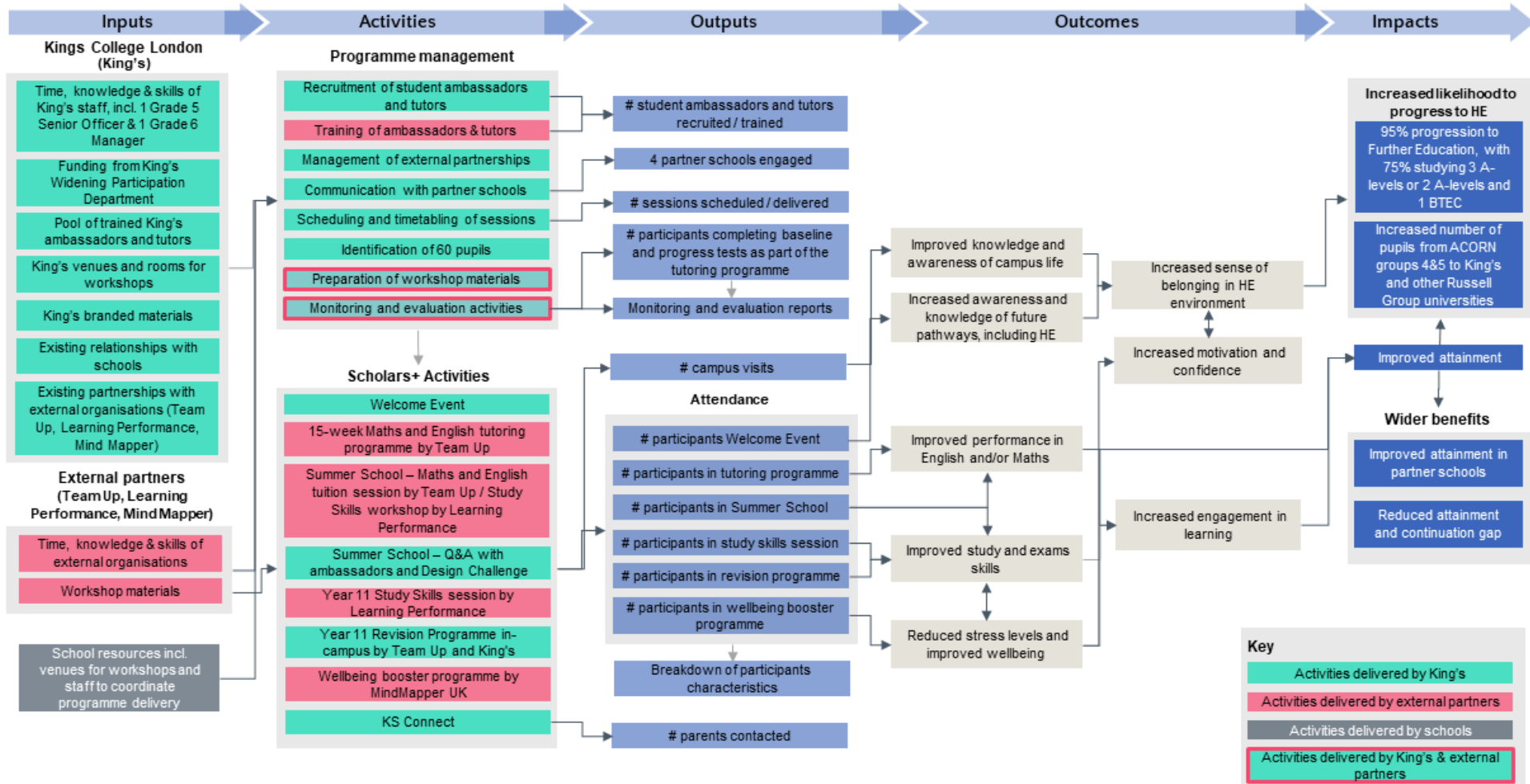
Theory of Change for Attainment Raising Initiatives Scholars+ Programme

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Theory of Change diagram



Why is this intervention being run?

Evidence shows that, from a young age, a gap in achievement opens between children from the most and least affluent backgrounds. By the end of primary school, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds have, on average, made 5.4 months less progress than their peers and are less likely to reach a high level of attainment. This gap becomes more pronounced at secondary schools.

Existing research suggests small group tutoring can benefit those with the potential to achieve strong GCSE results. For this, King's College London (King's) is running a targeted GCSE Maths and English tutoring programme, which also includes wellbeing support and study skills sessions, called Scholars+. The programme aims to help pupils, mainly from underrepresented or low-income backgrounds, to improve their attainment.

The Scholars+ programme sits within a range of programmes delivered by King's to support pupils from Year 7 to Year 11.

Who is the intervention for?

This intervention is designed for pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have been eligible for Free School Meals in the past six years,
- Are currently eligible for Pupil Premium funding,
- Come from ACORN Category 4 – Financially Stretched or Category 5 – Urban Adversity neighbourhoods¹,
- Live or have lived in Local Authority care,
- Are young carers, or
- Are forced migrants.

The targeted group can also include pupils who teachers consider might require extra support to be able to achieve better GCSE results. All participating pupils have to be working towards a grade 7 and above in Maths or English GCSE.

Scholars+ participants may have taken part in King's Scholars programme in Year 7 to 9, which is an additional programme that explores Higher Education, future careers, and metacognition skills. Year 10 participants are expected to continue in the programme as they progress to Year 11.

What is this intervention?

Scholars+ offers a series of activities – such as a Welcome Event, English and Maths tuition programme, and revision and study sessions – to support attainment.

Inputs

In order for this programme to be delivered successfully, sufficient resources (inputs), including both tangible and non-tangible, are needed from King's, external partners, and participating schools.

¹ ACORN is a postcode-based tool that categorises the UK's population by level of socio-economic advantage. More information about ACORN classifications is available [here](#).

King's is expected to provide the time, knowledge, and skills of different staff members – including one Grade 5 Senior Officer and one Grade 6 Manager – for the design and coordination of the intervention. King's Student Ambassadors – who are paid to participate in the programme – are also needed to support the delivery of the programme activities. King's funding from its Widening Participation Department is necessary to ensure the delivery of the activities and to cover salaries. Other inputs include venues and rooms for workshops, as well as King's-branded materials that are distributed to pupils during the Welcome Event.

Additionally, King's is expected to leverage on its existing relationships with the schools and partnerships with external organisations (e.g., Team Up, Learning Performance and Mind Mapper), which are responsible for the delivery of some activities.

Inputs from external partners include time, knowledge, and skills of staff involved in the delivery of the programme as well as workshop materials. As for the schools, they are expected to provide resources such as venues and provide support with the coordination of programme delivery.

Activities

The activities for this intervention are divided into two strands: the management of the programme and the delivery of Scholars+ activities for pupils.

The programme management strand includes ongoing communication with four partner schools participating in the programme. This collaboration is needed to schedule sessions in schools and at King's campuses and ensure eligible pupils (identified by teachers with King's guidance) take part in the programme ([Assumption 1](#)). School teachers are also responsible for communicating to King's which pupils will focus on English or Maths as each pupil can only be entered for one subject. On average, each school identifies 15 pupils, totalling 60 pupils.

Other programme management activities include recruiting King's students (including Student Ambassadors) and training them to deliver the programme ([Assumptions 2 and 3](#)). Training can be delivered in-person and/or online and covers the content of the tuition sessions and safeguarding issues. Other activities include managing external partnerships, preparing workshop materials – which is done by external partners in collaboration with King's – and conducting monitoring and evaluation activities (e.g., gathering feedback after sessions and assessing the results of baseline and progress surveys).

Scholars+ consists of multiple sessions delivered by different partners ([Assumption 4](#)). The sessions are:

- **Welcome Event** (delivered by King's to Year 10 pupils) – This session seeks to present the Scholars+ programme to participating pupils so they understand its purpose. It gives pupils the opportunity to discuss the programme with their parents afterwards and opt out if they do not want to take part. During the Welcome Event, pupils receive branded King's materials to promote a sense of belonging.
- **Maths and English tutoring** (delivered by Team Up to Year 10 pupils) – This 15-week programme provides Maths or English tutoring to pupils, as requested by school teachers. Tuition is usually provided in small groups of 2 or 3 pupils. In the first session, pupils are asked to complete a baseline test for tutors to understand their level and ensure the content of the programme is tailored to their needs. After two sessions, pupils conduct a short test to reflect on

what they have learnt, and in week 14 they complete a progress test, which is used to assess progress made.

- **Summer School** (delivered by Team Up, Learning Performance and King's WP to Year 10 pupils) – This two-day session consists of three key activities. On the morning of both days, English and/or Maths tuition is delivered by Team Up. The afternoon of the first day consists of a study skills workshop run by Learning Performance that covers metacognition, revision techniques, wellbeing, exam preparation, and a Q&A with King's Student Ambassadors. Pupils have the opportunity to ask questions to King's Ambassadors about their transition to Year 11. In the afternoon of the second day, Year 10 pupils bring everything they have learnt together by creating "top tips" posters, which are then printed and sent to schools.
- **Year 11 Study Skills session** (delivered by Learning Performance to Year 11 pupils) – This session targets participants who ended Year 10 and progressed to Year 11 ([Assumption 7](#)) and seeks to build on the learnings from the summer school.
- **Year 11 Revision programme** (delivered by Team Up and King's WP) - The revision programme consists of a revision day in-campus during February half-term holidays and a second session during Easter holidays. It covers Maths and/or English tuition and gives pupils the opportunity to explore the King's's campus.
- **Wellbeing booster programme** (delivered by Mind Mapper) – This session focuses on equipping pupils with tools to manage stress and maintain a positive wellbeing during Year 11.
- **KS Connect** (delivered by King's) – This is a text message service that seeks to send event reminders to parents to boost parental engagement with King's.

What is this intervention expected to achieve?

Scholars+ is expected to achieve a range of outcomes and impacts for participating pupils.

Outcomes

Pupils participating in the programme are expected to **improve their performance in Maths and/or English** (depending on the subject they have received in tutoring sessions), as well as **improve their study and exam skills** ([Assumption 5 and 6](#)). In turn, improved skills are expected to lead to an **increased engagement in learning**.

By attending in-campus activities and building relationships with King's Student Ambassadors, participants are expected to have a **better understanding of future pathways**, including Higher Education (HE), and increase their **awareness of campus life**. In turn, this is expected to lead to an **increased sense of community and belonging in a university environment**.

The Wellbeing Booster programme is also anticipated to reduce pupils' stress levels and **improve their wellbeing**. Overall, the programme is expected to increase pupils' **motivation and confidence**, which can both result from and feed into the above-mentioned outcomes.

Impacts

Drawing on the assumptions that there's sufficient buy-in from all delivery partners ([Assumption 4](#)) and engagement from participants ([Assumption 6](#)), increased engagement in learning is expected to lead to

an **increase in attainment at pupil level**, which could contribute to **reducing the attainment and continuation gap** in King's partner schools ([Assumption 7](#)).

An increased sense of community and belonging in a university environment is expected to lead to an **increased likelihood to progress to HE**, which would be reflected by the achievement of 95% of progression to Further Education, with 75% studying 3 A-levels or 2 A-levels and 1 BTEC; and an increased number of pupils from ACORN Category 4 or 5 neighbourhoods going to King's and other Russell Group universities.

Who is delivering the intervention?

King's leads the overall management, coordination and design of the intervention, as well as the delivery of the Welcome Event and KS Connect.

Team Up is responsible for the delivery of the tutoring programme, part of the Summer School activities, as well as the revision programme. They are also responsible for training King's students (including Student Ambassadors) who deliver tuition.

Learning Performance delivers the Study Skills workshop as part of the Summer School activity and the Year 11 Study Skills session.

Finally, MindMapper delivers the Wellbeing Booster programme.

How is this intervention delivered?

The programme is delivered face-to-face in groups of approximately 15 pupils. Some activities, such as the Maths and English tuition, is delivered in smaller groups of 2 to 3 pupils.

Where is the intervention delivered?

Welcome Event and tuition sessions are delivered in schools while the Summer School and Revision Sessions are delivered at the King's campus.

How many times will the intervention be delivered? Over how long?

The programme runs once a year and pupils are expected to take part in all activities as they transition from Year 10 to Year 11. There is a new cohort per year, with activities running across the whole school year. Within the programme:

- Maths and English tuition sessions run for 15 weeks.
- Revision sessions run for one day.
- Summer School lasts two days.
- Study skills and wellbeing sessions run for one day.

How will implementation be optimised/tailored?

Regular communication between schools, external partners and King's is needed. This helps with the coordination of workshops and ensures there is a clear understanding of pupils' needs so that the tuition

sessions can be tailored accordingly. Workshops and tuition sessions are designed to address pupils' needs, which are identified through a baseline survey and with school teachers' support.

It is also important to ensure engagement from pupils, so they continue in the programme once they progress from Year 10 to Year 11. Clearly explaining the potential benefits of participating in Scholars+ during the Welcome Event, and building trusted and positive relationships with tutors, are both facilitators for increasing pupil engagement. Using Student Ambassadors as tutors often leads to better delivery as well.

What assumptions underpin the programme?

1. School teachers buy-in is secured and teachers are able to identify eligible pupils.
2. Sufficient number of King's students can be recruited as tutors.
3. Training offered to King's students is effective.
4. External providers are engaged and the partnership works well.
5. External providers have the required skills and resources to successfully deliver their activities and sessions.
6. Pupils are engaged during the sessions.
7. There is pupil retention. Participating Year 10 pupils also attend the programme sessions targeting Year 11 pupils when they progress to their next academic year.

What are the key risks to delivery?

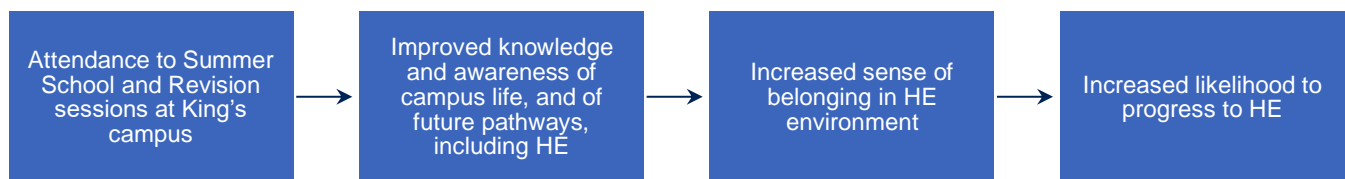
1. Lack of budget and school buy-in may affect the continuity of the programme.
2. Low pupil retention (e.g., some pupils not progressing to Year 11) can affect the achievement of anticipated outcomes and impacts.
3. Lack of trained and suitable King's students to participate in the delivery of the programme (e.g., lack of Student Ambassadors who have previously worked with young people).
4. Responses from pre-and post-surveys vary in quality and tutors are unable to identify pupils' needs.

What are the causal pathways?

Causal pathways explain how the programme activities are expected to lead to the programme's anticipated outcomes and impacts. This section outlines the key causal pathways reflected in the programmes' Theory of Change and presents existing evidence to support them. These causal pathways are based on the assumptions and observations made by the King's team participating in the design and delivery of the programme, as well as on data collected through their monitoring and evaluation activities, and on the underlying evidence base available. Please note, however, that the evidence presented here is not exhaustive.

Overall, evidence shows that multi-intervention approaches that combine two or more activities into an ongoing programme of support for the same cohort of learners, as Scholars+, increases learners' knowledge of HE and other post-18 options, and has a positive impact on confidence and interpersonal skills². As stated in the Third Independent Review of Impact Evaluation Evidence Submitted by Uni Connect Partnerships, evidence also suggests that this type of intervention can have a positive influence on learners' intentions towards HE and the likelihood they will apply. Further details on the key causal pathways are outlined below.

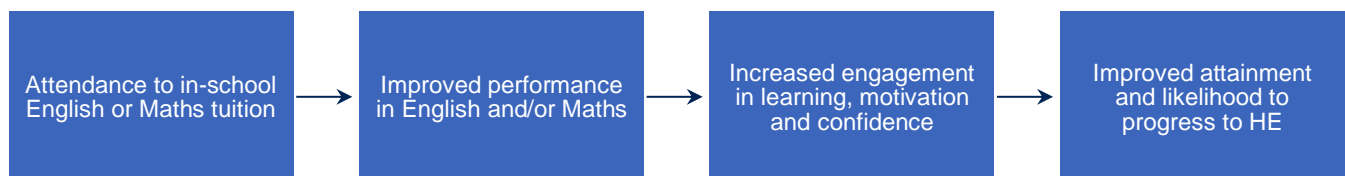
Causal Pathway 1



This causal pathway hypothesises that by attending the Summer School and Revision sessions delivered at King's campus, pupils improve their knowledge and awareness of campus life and of future educational pathways such as HE, as they get to work alongside King's Student Ambassadors and experience campus life first hand. In turn, this is expected to lead to an increased sense of belonging in a HE environment and increased likelihood to progress to HE.

This pathway is supported by existing evidence that suggests that employing Student Ambassadors to provide information, guidance, and support to school pupils is effective and positive (See [TASO's Rapid Evidence Review](#)). Some studies on programmes that involved campus visits also showed that these activities were positively associated with pupils' knowledge of most aspects of HE and student life and progression³. Evidence on the effect of campus visits on learners' intention towards HE is still mixed, but further evidence of a positive impact is emerging, therefore further research is still needed to assess whether this causal pathway holds true.

Causal Pathway 2



This pathway hypothesises that attending small group tuition in English and/or Maths will improve pupils' performance in English and/or Maths (depending on the tuition subject they have attended). In turn, improved performance is expected to lead to increased engagement in learning, as well as improved

² Patel R., Bowes L., (2021) Third independent review of impact evaluation evidence submitted by Uni Connect Partnerships. Available [here](#).

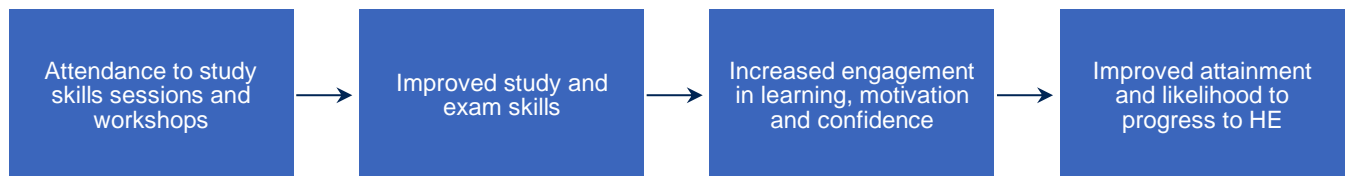
³ Patel R., Bowes L., (2021) Third independent review of impact evaluation evidence submitted by Uni Connect Partnerships. Available [here](#).

motivation and confidence. Together, this is expected to result in improved attainment and increased likelihood to progress to HE.

Research shows that one-to-one and small group tuition can be highly effective in supporting learning outcomes. The Education Endowment Fund’s (EEF) Learning and Teaching Toolkit summarises the evidence base for small group tuition as having ‘moderate impact for low cost based on moderate evidence’.⁴ Based on 62 studies (across education phases), the average impact of small group tuition is four additional months’ progress over the course of a year, though this tends to be lower in secondary schools (two months).

Evidence also shows that academic attainment is associated with access to HE (Office for Students, 2022)⁵.

Causal Pathway 3



This causal pathway hypothesises that by attending study skills sessions and workshops delivered as part of Scholars+, pupils will improve their study and exam skills. This is expected to support their academic performance and increase their engagement in learning, as well as motivation and confidence. Together with the pathways above, pupils are expected to have improved attainment and increased likelihood to progress to HE.

According to [TASO’s Rapid Evidence Review](#), the strength of evidence for activities to develop soft and study skills is emerging, as there is evidence that general study skills interventions contribute significantly to attainment yet the impact of these types of interventions delivered by HEPs on pupil attainment has not been systematically evaluated.

Data collection opportunities

This section outlines the different data points that are currently being collected by King’s that can be used to assess the programme’s performance against anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts. It also provides recommendations on future data collection opportunities where gaps have been identified.

Outputs

King’s is currently collecting a range of **monitoring information** that can be used to assess the performance of Scholars+ against its anticipated outputs. This includes recording the number of partner schools engaged, number of sessions scheduled and delivered (including campus visits), number of tutors and Student Ambassadors recruited and trained to deliver the programme, as well as the number

⁴ Small group tuition. Education Endowment Foundation, 2021. Available [here](#).

⁵ Schools, attainment and the role of higher education. Office for Students, 2022. Available [here](#).

of baseline and progress tests that are completed (See Outcomes subsection). King's also collects attendance data, including number of participants per workshop type.

Outcomes

Scholars+ involves different evaluation and monitoring activities that can be used to assess progress against anticipated outcomes. **Evaluation forms** are collected at the end of all sessions – excluding the Welcome event and Kings Connect activities. As part of the tuition programme, Team Up conducts **baseline tests** and use results to understand pupils' needs and adjust the content of the sessions. They also deliver **topic tests** after two sessions and a **progress test** towards the end of the tuition programme. Pupils also complete a wellbeing and self-efficacy survey at the start at the end of the programme. These tests allow King's and delivery partners to assess whether pupils have improved in English and/or Maths, and developed soft skills, as a result of the tuition.

Recommendations for future data collection:

*Revise current **pre- and post- Scholar+ surveys** to address issues around the wording of the self-efficacy survey and its relevance/suitability for the age group. Surveys could also integrate questions to assess pupils' sense of belonging in HE and engagement in learning. King's could also explore using TASO's Widening Participation Questionnaire (can be requested [here](#)), which includes questionnaire scales aimed to measure intermediate outcomes associated with HE access and success (e.g. the Study Strategies scale).*

Impacts

The assessment of a programme's long-term impacts are often more difficult to incorporate into monitoring and evaluation activities given their long-term nature. However, King's is able to assess attainment by accessing the **GCSE results** from Scholar+ participants, as Data Sharing Agreements have been established with partner schools. King's is also a HEAT member, which allows the university to track pupils through a range of administrative datasets that provide data on their educational outcomes.

The assessment of other long-term impacts such as education pathways (e.g., whether they progress to HE) or career development would require longer-term follow-up with participants using primary or secondary data.

Overall, a future impact evaluation with a counterfactual⁶ is needed to assess the effectiveness of the programme and whether it achieves the intended outcomes and impacts. King's Scholars (Year 7-9) who did not progress to Scholars+ (Year 10-11) are currently used as a comparison group, which provides

⁶ For more information on evaluation methods, please visit TASO's Evaluation Methods guidance, available [here](#)

one opportunity for understanding the impact of the programme compared to what would have happened in its absence.

Recommendations for future data collection:

*HEAT members have access to data and reporting from the **HEAT Track**, an ongoing longitudinal tracking study whereby outreach participants are tracked through a range of administrative datasets to provide data showing their educational outcomes. HEAT members receive three HEAT Track reports annually which include information on exam attainment at GCSE and A-level or equivalent, as well as HE progression, which can be used to assess the educational pathways participants have chosen after finishing school. HEAT could be used to track outcomes for any pupils that took part in Scholars+ that went on to attend King's.*

Future evaluations should assess whether pupil-level attainment and progression data can be accessed for pupils who took part in the programme as well as a comparator group who did not. In the case of using King's Scholars who did not progress to Scholars+ as a comparison group, the team should aim to assess how similar or different the two groups are in terms of observable characteristics. If they are similar, they can be more confident that differences in attainment could be related to the programme. Ideally, future evaluation should employ (quasi-) experimental methods to assess the impact.