



THE NATIONAL ONLINE TUITION PILOT

Pilot Report

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The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent grant-making charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement, ensuring that children from all backgrounds can fulfil their potential and make the most of their talents.

The EEF aims to raise the attainment of children facing disadvantage by:

- identifying promising educational innovations that address the needs of disadvantaged children in primary and secondary schools in England;
- evaluating these innovations to extend and secure the evidence on what works and can be made to work at scale; and
- encouraging schools, government, charities, and others to apply evidence and adopt innovations found to be effective.

The EEF was established in 2011 by the Sutton Trust as lead charity in partnership with Impetus Trust (now part of Impetus - Private Equity Foundation) and received a founding £125m grant from the Department for Education. Together, the EEF and Sutton Trust are the government-designated What Works Centre for improving education outcomes for school-aged children.

This pilot was a collaboration between the EEF, Impetus, The Sutton Trust, and Nesta. It was co-funded by the EEF alongside Wellcome Trust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Hg Foundation, Porticus UK, the Dulverton Trust, the Inflexion Foundation, and other funders.

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Executive summary

The project

The National Online Tuition Pilot aimed to support disadvantaged pupils by providing fully subsidised tuition during the summer of 2020, during and following the Covid-19 school ‘closures’. The pilot was delivered by four established tutoring organisations (Action Tutoring, MyTutor, The Access Project, and Tutor Trust) and reached 1,425 learners in 65 schools. In total, over 9,800 tuition sessions were delivered between 15 June and 28 October 2020.

The pilot targeted learners from Year 5 to Year 13. The majority (80%) of learners who took part were in Years 10 and 11. The duration of delivery varied across providers, ranging from four weeks (Action Tutoring) to 16 weeks (MyTutor). Most delivery was weekly and sessions lasted around one hour.

The mixed-methods evaluation included analysis of monitoring information and feedback data collected routinely by the four tutoring organisations, surveys of school leads and learners, paired interviews with the strategic leads at the four organisations (‘providers’), and online focus groups with tutors, school staff, and learners.

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Key conclusions	
1.	Delivering online tuition during the school ‘closures’ was feasible. Reach was high considering the circumstances and providers, schools, tutors, and learners quickly adapted to what was a new learning model for most.
2.	Learners enjoyed the tuition and there were perceived benefits for learning. All stakeholder groups felt that learners benefited from the tailored support. They saw improvements in learners’ confidence, engagement with education, and preparedness for the new school year.
3.	Relationships were crucial in supporting take-up and engagement. Investing time in building rapport helped tutors to motivate learners and tailor the support. Providers and school staff worked to identify the best ways to secure parents’ and learners’ buy-in, but were unable to reach all families during the school ‘closures’.
4.	Access to equipment and reliable internet connections were key barriers to participation, particularly for home-based learners. Solutions included providing equipment and inviting learners to take part at school.
5.	Online tuition lacked some of the benefits of in-person delivery. While the offer of online tuition was highly attractive during the Covid-19 pandemic, most learners would prefer in-person tutoring if given the choice. Tutors found it more challenging to build rapport with learners online and technical challenges risked disrupting delivery.

What are the findings?

Our evaluation of the National Online Tuition Pilot found that delivering online tuition during the school ‘closures’ was feasible. Providers, schools, tutors, and learners quickly adapted to what was for most a new learning model and the intervention was attractive to schools and learners.

Reach was high considering the circumstances of the pandemic, the short start-up time, and the summer holidays. Providers targeted disadvantaged learners and a high proportion of learners taking up the tuition were in receipt of Pupil Premium. However, some disadvantaged learners who would have benefited were not able to take part. The key reasons for this were difficulties contacting parents/carers and a lack of suitable equipment and internet connectivity at home.

The flexibility of online delivery meant that tutors were able to rearrange sessions if learners were unable to attend. Attendance was highest in primary schools and among learners working with providers that were delivering on a smaller scale, and stakeholders emphasised the importance of regular communication—between schools and parents and between providers and schools—in supporting this high attendance.

Learners, tutors, and school leads felt that the tutoring led to increased enjoyment of learning, confidence, and subject knowledge. In particular, they felt that the one-to-one attention and tailored content and routine of learning helped

learners' confidence and academic progress. However, some learners found the one-to-one attention intimidating, and—where they had previously received tuition in small groups—missed being able to collaborate with peers.

Relationships were crucial in supporting take-up and engagement. Schools with strong existing relationships with learners and families were able to identify learners who would benefit from the tuition, convince learners and their families of its value, and monitor ongoing engagement. Furthermore, tutor-learner rapport motivated and engaged learners. All stakeholders felt that tutoring was most valuable when integrated into learners' wider education and so emphasised the importance of relationships with schools and communication between teachers and tutors.

There were practical factors that supported delivery at home and at school. In general, providers and school leads felt that it was easier to facilitate delivery at school, where teachers had control over technology and learners faced fewer distractions and felt more accountable to attend. On the other hand, home-based delivery was more flexible and not affected by Covid-19 restrictions on movement.

As expected, a lack of equipment and/or good internet connection were key barriers to take-up and ongoing engagement, particularly for home-based learners. This included learners with no access to technology and those who had to share devices with other household members or had faulty equipment. Most schools and providers reported that they had provided at least some learners with equipment so that they were able to take part, but these barriers remained for some.

There were communication challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools found it hard to contact some families during this period and the short start-up time for the pilot meant that some were not reached. Tutors also found that rapport with their learners did not develop as naturally as it could in person and some learners were uncomfortable interacting with an adult online. Providers realised the importance of encouraging tutors to invest time in building rapport, including having designated 'getting to know you' sessions. Providers and school leads also felt that more communication between tutors and teachers would ensure that tutoring best complemented learners' needs and wider education.

How was the pilot conducted?

The evaluation included the analysis of monitoring information and of feedback data collected routinely by the four tutoring organisations and involved primary research (focus groups, interviews, and surveys) with the strategic leads at the four tutoring organisations, tutors, school staff, and learners.

The monitoring information represents pilot delivery across all participating providers, schools, and learners. The primary research required individuals to opt-in and so may reflect the views of tutors, school staff, and learners who were particularly engaged with the pilot. Measuring impacts of the pilot on learning outcomes was not in scope of the pilot evaluation.

Introduction

Intervention

The National Online Tuition Pilot supported disadvantaged pupils¹ across the summer of 2020 through fully subsidised tuition, during and following the Covid-19 school ‘closures’,² to mitigate a widening attainment gap between disadvantaged learners and their peers. The pilot aimed to support around 1,600 pupils across England as schools began to reopen for more pupils late in the summer term and—in some instances—across the summer holidays. The pilot was delivered by four established tutoring organisations with experience of tutoring children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Table 1 summarises key features of the four organisations’ delivery plans for the pilot. Further information on the four programmes is provided below.

Table 1: Pilot delivery

	Action Tutoring	MyTutor	The Access Project	Tutor Trust
Year groups	Y6 and Y10	Y10/11	Y10/11 and Y12/13	Y5–Y11
Number of schools	6	20	30	9
Number of learners	62	887	411	65
Geography	London, South East, South West	All regions of England	London, West Midlands	North West, Yorkshire and the Humber
Subjects	English and maths	English, maths and science	English, maths and science	English, maths and science
Tutors	Trained volunteers (unpaid)	Trained university students (paid)	Trained volunteers (unpaid)	Trained university students (paid)
Previous mode	In-person	Online	In-person and online	In-person
Intended duration/dosage	4–5 weekly sessions 1hr per session	16 weekly sessions 55min per session	Weekly sessions 1hr per session	12 sessions per subject 1hr per session
Location	Home-based and school-based	Home-based	Home-based	Home-based and school-based
Tutor:learner ratio	1:1 and small group	1:1	1:1	1:1

¹ All four organisations involved in the pilot targeted disadvantaged learners, but with slightly different eligibility criteria. Table 3 later in this report provides details of the eligibility criteria used by each provider.

² We use school ‘closures’ to refer to the period between March and July 2020 where most pupils stayed at home because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to recognise that most schools did remain open throughout this period to provide education and care for the children of key workers and vulnerable groups. Tutoring sessions were open to learners who attended school as well as those who stayed at home.

Action Tutoring supports young people facing socioeconomic disadvantage to achieve a meaningful level of academic attainment, with a view to enabling them to progress in education, employment, or training. It does this by recruiting high-quality volunteer tutors—with at least a B at A-level in the subject they wish to tutor and who have (or are working towards) a university degree in a relevant subject—to work with pupils to increase their subject knowledge, confidence, and study skills.

All Action Tutoring tutors attend a two-hour, live, small-group training session that covers expectations, challenges faced by disadvantaged young people, safeguarding, curriculum content, how to use Action Tutoring resources, online delivery, and how to engage young people. Action Tutoring also provides continuous training across the year and have programme coordinators who monitor tutoring to deliver feedback on an individual basis.

Sessions run at school before, during, or after the school day; an Action Tutoring staff member is present to oversee the delivery and enable the development of tutors. Action Tutoring has produced ten structured workbooks, designed by curriculum specialists, that include activities intended to be effective in a tutoring environment. Tutor workbooks, which mirror the pupil workbooks, contain guidance on how to explain topics and common misconceptions. All pupils sit an initial baseline assessment before they begin their tutoring, which is used to identify the subject areas where they need the most support. They also sit a progress assessment half way through their programme to help tutors to tailor the remaining sessions.

Action Tutoring delivered tuition in-person prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this pilot they delivered tuition online to learners at school with an Action Tutoring staff member present. Most sessions were one-to-one but over the course of the pilot Action Tutoring delivered some small-group tuition online. By the end of the pilot, 21% of Action Tutoring learners had taken part in at least one small-group session.

MyTutor is an online tutoring platform set up to provide affordable, high-quality tuition to the pupils who most need it. They provide one-to-one online tuition from handpicked tutors currently studying at the U.K.'s top universities. As they are relatively close in age to pupils, these tutors can share recent exam experience and offer near-peer support in a safe environment.

All MyTutor tutors complete compulsory online training units that cover safeguarding, understanding exam specifications and tier requirements, and how to plan and prepare lessons and make use of resources. MyTutor also provides additional training for tutors, including sessions on working with small groups, differentiation, giving positive feedback and using questions, and assessment and an introduction to SEND. All MyTutor training is linked to a quality assurance lesson observation process with tutors guided to complete extra training if observations suggest that they need certain skills strengthening.

Tailored to pupils' individual needs, MyTutor tuition sessions are designed to:

- accelerate academic progress;
- reinforce and build on classwork;
- target specific learning gaps using school assessment data and input from teachers;
- allow pupils to go over difficult topics at their own pace; and
- build confidence and aspirations.

During sessions, tutors and pupils communicate in real-time through MyTutor's interactive Online Lesson Space using live video, microphone, and a shared whiteboard. All lessons are recorded enabling pupils to revisit them for revision. MyTutor tutoring can be sourced by schools or individual families.

The Access Project (TAP) supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access top universities through a combination of personalised tuition and in-school mentoring. TAP works with students to make good applications, get the required grades, and transition to university.

TAP trains volunteers who have an A-level or a degree in their specialist subject. Tutor training takes the form of a comprehensive workshop and an accredited online child safeguarding course. The workshop covers a variety of topics including tutorial planning, TAP's approach to pedagogy, the practicalities of delivering a tutorial, where to get additional support, and how to make tutorials safe. The session on tutorial planning offers guidance on how to structure a tutorial

with SMART goals and suggested activities. Tutors are also given detailed advice on tailored resources and further support accompanied by TAP's Volunteer Handbook which volunteers refer to throughout their tutoring, including worksheets and resources. Staff observe all volunteer tutors throughout the workshop, offer feedback and advice, and determine whether the volunteer is suitable for a tutoring role or whether further support is needed.

Tutors work with their students for an hour a week. Schools allow TAP staff—University Access Officers—to work alongside theirs, focusing on boosting attainment. These University Access Officers help students with revision skills, university applications, and building their self-belief.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, TAP delivered in-person tuition with learners travelling to tutors' workplaces to take part. They had begun transitioning existing tutor-learner partnerships online in response to the pandemic before this pilot began and continued to do so across the duration of the project.

The Tutor Trust was created in 2011 and is a registered charity that tackles educational inequality. The Tutor Trust's mission is to 'transform lives through tutoring' by making sure every child in Years 5 to 11 who needs some additional academic support can access a great tutor.

The charity recruits and trains university students as tutors in maths, English and science and places them in state schools. Tutors are paid competitive rates to ensure that learners receive a professional service that boosts their attainment and aspirations. A rigorous tutor selection process ensures that Tutor Trust tutors are academically able and inspiring role models to their tutees. Tutors receive a minimum of two and a half days of training with Tutor Trust, including:

- a four-hour welcome evening providing information about Tutor Trust and its professional standards, plus safeguarding training;
- a full-day session covering the context of disadvantaged pupils and schools and providing training in lesson planning, behaviour management, and assessment for learning; and
- a full-day of subject-specific training.

Tutors also have access to a programme of Continuing Professional Development sessions, including topics such as behaviour management, supporting vulnerable learners, and working with EAL pupils. Tutors on this pilot received additional training and guidance about online work, including the specifics of the online platform and safeguarding protocols for remote tutoring.

The Tutor Trust delivered school-based, in-person tuition at schools prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. During this pilot it largely delivered home-based online tuition, though a small number of learners went into school to take part.

The four tutor organisations delivered their own standalone intervention as part of the overarching pilot and did not coordinate delivery. However, representatives from all four organisations met in six fortnightly online conference calls during pilot delivery. This gave them the opportunity to discuss and reflect on approaches to common delivery challenges and share success stories.

Background evidence

Education in the U.K. has been severely disrupted by the Covid-19 outbreak. While schools remained open for the children of key workers and other specific groups, most learners did not attend school from March 2020 until September 2020. There was also variation in attendance rates between school type, with more primary school children returning to school after the May half-term break than secondary school learners.

When schools closed in March 2020, it was widely accepted that the —as well as other impacts of the outbreak—would have a negative impact on learning. There was concern about the general impact on all children's learning and about the disproportionate impact on learners from already disadvantaged groups (Sutton Trust, 2020). This is because economically disadvantaged learners are likely to have less access to remote learning opportunities (for example, because of a lack of technological equipment or internet access) and more likely to be experiencing other negative impacts of the outbreak. A rapid evidence review for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) estimated that the

school 'closures' could reverse a decade's progress made in closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers (EEF, 2020).

Targeted tuition has the potential to ameliorate these negative impacts. The Sutton Trust – EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit estimates that one-to-one tuition can boost learning by the equivalent of five additional months' progress (EEF, 2018) and there is some evidence that tuition can be particularly beneficial for disadvantaged learners (Torgerson *et al.*, 2018). However, there is less evidence about how tuition can be delivered online and a lot to learn about how tuition might and should work in the context of school 'closures'. Moreover, disadvantaged families are less able to afford private tuition and so children from these households are less likely to benefit from the targeted one-to-one support that tuition brings (Sutton Trust, 2020). Subsidised tuition can be targeted at learners expected to fall behind, learners from particular disadvantaged groups, or learners whose families are least likely to source it privately, but again, delivering tuition online brings new challenges for ensuring equal or targeted access given the 'digital divide' between richer and poorer households in the U.K.

Research questions

The overarching aim of the pilot was **to evaluate the feasibility of providing online tuition to disadvantaged learners during the Covid-19 school 'closures'**. This aim was underpinned by two objectives:

- to provide rapid feedback to the tutoring organisations to inform ongoing pilot delivery; and
- to draw out lessons learnt to inform future delivery of online tuition.

The evaluation was designed to answer five key research questions:

1. Can online tuition reach a high proportion of disadvantaged learners?
2. Can online tuition improve engagement with education for disadvantaged learners?
3. What factors support successful take-up and engagement?
4. Are there particular barriers to take-up and engagement and successful approaches to overcoming those barriers?
5. Are there particular features of programmes that show best promise?

Ethical review and GDPR

The NatCen Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the evaluation in May 2020, before data collection began.

We (the NatCen research team) provided all participants (tutoring organisations, schools, tutors, and learners) and parents of Key Stage 2 and 3 learners with information sheets outlining what the evaluation involved and that participation was voluntary. In addition, ahead of all interviews and focus groups, we sought consent from interviewees and briefed them on the purpose of the research and how their data would be processed and used. We reassured participants that they would not be named in any outputs and that we would endeavour to protect their confidentiality. However, we noted that because of the small number of schools involved in the pilot, people who were involved in delivery might be recognisable to each other. Learners and parents were given the right to object to their (child's) attendance data and feedback being shared with NatCen and used in the evaluation.

NatCen was the data controller and processor for data collected through primary research with the tutoring organisations, tutors, school staff, learners, and parents and a data processor for routine data shared by the tutoring organisations for the purposes of the evaluation. The lawful basis for processing data was 'legitimate interest'. This means that we believed that there was a genuine reason to process this data (to evaluate the feasibility of providing online tuition to disadvantaged groups), that this data was needed to fulfil this purpose (we could not evaluate the feasibility of providing online tuition without this data), and that using this data would not interfere with individuals' interests, rights, or freedoms. We published a privacy notice and circulated it to all concerned parties (via tutoring organisations and schools). All data will be deleted six months after project completion.

Project team

Delivery personnel

Action Tutoring

Jen Fox (Director of Transformation, Quality and Impact)
Will Hine (Data and Evaluation Manager)

MyTutor

James Grant (Co-Founder)
Dilpreet Bhagrath (Head of Customer Success)
Will Beaton (Head of Operations)

The Access Project

Fay Mahdi (Impact and Strategy Director)
Lucy Ball (Programme Director)
Naomi Burley-Baker (Head of London Programmes and Central Provision)

Tutor Trust

Nick Bent (CEO and Co-Founder)
Jenny Muter (Director of Tutor Recruitment and Impact)

Evaluation team at NatCen

Lydia Marshall (Research Director)	Principal Investigator
Jonah Bury (Senior Researcher)	Day-to-day project manager
Robert Wishart (Research Director)	Lead on quantitative analysis
Molly Mayer (Researcher)	Qualitative data collection and analysis
Emily Roberts (Researcher)	Qualitative data collection and analysis
Rebekka Hammelsbeck (Researcher)	Qualitative data collection and analysis
Anysia Nguyen (Researcher Analyst)	Quantitative data collection and analysis
Adam Gilbert (Researcher Analyst)	Quantitative data collection and analysis
Ben Stocker (Researcher Analyst)	Quantitative data collection and analysis
Daniel Phillips (Head, Evaluation)	Quality assurance and strategic oversight
Ellen Broomé (Head, Children and Families)	Quality assurance and strategic oversight

Methods

The evaluation ran from June 2020 to October 2020. We used a mixed-methods approach to establish a comprehensive picture of the pilot, including analysis of monitoring information and feedback data collected routinely by the four tutoring organisations and primary research with the strategic leads at the four organisations ('providers'), tutors, school staff, and learners. Figure 1 sets out how these activities addressed the five research questions set out above.

Figure 1: Evaluation matrix

		RQ1 (reach)	RQ2 (engagement)	RQ3 (enablers)	RQ4 (barriers)	RQ5 (promising features)
Analysis of routine data	Attendance data	*				*
	Feedback data			*		*
Tutoring organisations	Conference calls		*		*	*
	Interviews		*		*	*
Tutors	Focus groups		*	*	*	*
Schools	Survey	*	*		*	*
	Focus groups		*	*	*	*
Learners	Survey		*	*	*	*
	Focus groups		*	*	*	*

Recruitment

The providers recruited schools to take part in the pilot in the summer term 2020 with the exception of The Access Project, which had already transitioned schools and learners receiving tuition onto its online platform ahead of the pilot. Tutor Trust recruited schools it had already worked with before the pilot. Action Tutoring also recruited schools it had previously worked with except for one new school. Both of these organisations worked primarily with new learners but had some who had received tuition in-person before the school 'closures'. MyTutor recruited new schools through a multi-academy trust. Schools identified learners to offer the tutoring to. Table 2 details the numbers recruited by each provider. Table 3 summarises each provider's eligibility criteria for schools and learners.

Table 2: Recruitment by the four providers

	Schools		Learners	
	Target	Took part	Target	Took part
Action Tutoring	6	6	86	62
MyTutor	20	20	1,000	887
The Access Project	34	30	483	411
Tutor Trust	10	9	90	65
Total	70	65	1659	1425

Table 3: Eligibility criteria for the four tutoring programmes

	Action Tutoring	MyTutor	The Access Project	Tutor Trust
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher than national average numbers of students in receipt of free school meals • adequate IT infrastructure • staffing to coordinate pilot • good relationship with Action Tutoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-academy trust on EEF priority list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of learners on Free School Meals (FSM) OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of learners on Pupil Premium (PP) OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based in a deprived area³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'significant proportion' of disadvantaged learners • good relationship with Tutor Trust
Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in receipt of PP • at risk of not reaching expected standards at primary, or a grade 4 at GCSE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in receipt of PP • teacher feels they are 'under-performing' or have disengaged during the school 'closures' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum target grade of B AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eligible for FSM OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receiving PP OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in care OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a care leaver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of learners at the school who take part in tutoring need to receive PP or be in care

NatCen provided all recruitment materials. For tutors, school staff, learners, and parents these materials were sent via their tutoring organisation or their school. The recruitment steps included:

1. All participating schools signed an Evaluation Agreement, which explained in detail what participation in the pilot evaluation involved. In signing the agreement, schools agreed to their providers sharing monitoring and feedback data with NatCen for the purposes of the evaluation.
2. All tutors, schools, learners, and parents of Key Stage 2 and 3 learners received information sheets about the evaluation (see ethical review above).
3. Providers, tutors, school staff, learners, and parents were invited to take part in surveys, interviews, and focus groups by email. The emails included detailed information about the activity as well as a link to more information about the evaluation and the privacy notice. Participation in these activities was voluntary and individuals opted in by clicking on a survey link or by contacting NatCen. NatCen offered learners who took part in the focus groups a £20 voucher as a thank-you for their time.

Example recruitment materials are provided in Appendix C.

Data collection

In the following section we outline the data that we collected and analysed for each participant group. At the end we provide our achieved samples for each activity.

Routine data

We gathered **attendance data** collected by the four tutoring organisations via their digital platforms on a fortnightly basis to assess the reach of the pilot and understand delivery. We agreed templates for data collection and sharing with all four tutoring organisations that included a small number of consistent variables: the number of, and duration of, sessions delivered and number of learners reached each week. This data included only absolute numbers and did not record the numbers as a proportion of pupils who were eligible or had been offered the tutoring. The school survey (see below) did

³ Based in Polar 4 quintile 1 or ACORN 4/5 postcodes.

ask about the numbers offered as well as taking up the tutoring and the attendance data did show the number of learners who signed up for at least one session but did not attend any.

While most of the pilot delivery took place during June and July, MyTutor and Tutor Trust continued delivery into the autumn term of 2020/2021. The Access Project also offered tuition for a small number of learners during the summer holidays. The attendance data therefore covered different periods for each of the four providers:

- The Access Project: 15 June–21 August 2020;
- MyTutor: 16 June–28 October 2020;
- Action Tutoring: 16 June–17 July 2020; and
- Tutor Trust: 22 June–w/c 14 September 2020.

Some providers also sent us survey data and internal evaluation reports that they had gathered and developed during the pilot and we refer to these sources in this evaluation report. Action Tutoring shared an evaluation report based on qualitative and quantitative research activities with learners, tutors, and schools, The Access Project provided us with findings from a learner survey and MyTutor shared the results of a feedback survey with pilot schools. Tutor Trust was developing an evaluation report for the pilot but this was not available to NatCen at the time of reporting.

Research with tutoring organisations

We brought together representatives from all four organisations in six fortnightly **online conference calls** between 1 July and 9 September 2020. The conference calls had three aims: (i) to gather qualitative data on barriers and enablers to effective delivery and successful approaches to overcoming these, (ii) to feed back findings from other participant groups, and (iii) to facilitate peer learning and problem solving.

We also carried out **interviews** with representatives from the four tutoring organisations at two time-points. We used interviews at inception stage to:

- map in detail the intended inputs and activities for programme delivery during the pilot;
- identify any challenges that the organisation anticipates encountering; and
- understand the feedback that the organisation would find most useful from the evaluation.

We conducted the second interviews at the end of the pilot to:

- establish how the programme was delivered in practice;
- understand the reasons for any variation from initial plans;
- explore barriers and facilitators to successful delivery of the online tuition; and
- draw out lessons learnt for delivery of online tutoring beyond Covid-19.

We offered providers individual or paired interviews and asked them to identify the person or people best able to speak to the topics to be covered. Table 4 shows the encounters achieved for each provider.

Table 4: Interviews with tutoring providers

	Encounters
Action Tutoring	Interview 1: paired Interview 2: paired
MyTutor	Interview 1: individual Interview 2: paired
The Access Project	Interview 1: paired Interview 2: paired
Tutor Trust	Interview 1: individual Interview 2: paired

Research with tutors

We carried out **online focus groups and a paired interview** with tutors to understand:

- contextual factors supporting successful delivery;
- barriers to engagement;
- successful approaches to overcoming any barriers encountered; and
- perceived impacts on learners' engagement and learning

We aimed to conduct two tutor focus groups per provider but the number of participants per focus group varied. While we recruited at least three participants to each group, not all participants who had signed up attended the focus groups. Table 5 shows the encounters achieved for each provider.

Table 5: Qualitative research with tutors

	Encounters	Total participants
Action Tutoring	Focus group 1: 3 tutors Focus group 2: 5 tutors	8
MyTutor	Focus group: 5 tutors Paired interview: 2 tutors	7
The Access Project	Focus group 1: 3 tutors Focus group 2: 5 tutors	8
Tutor Trust	Focus group 1: 3 tutors Focus group 2: 4 tutors	7
Total		30

Research with school staff

The main source of data collection from schools was a short **fortnightly online survey**. This was sent out by the tutoring organisations to the same lead member of staff at their pilot schools every two weeks during pilot delivery—a total of five 'waves' of data collection covering 22 June to 30 August. Schools working with Action Tutoring and The Access Project were not invited to complete the survey at every wave as their delivery finished before the summer holidays. The survey asked the same five questions at each wave to assess the reach of the programme, identify barriers to take-up, and map any support that schools were giving to facilitate learners' access. We agreed with the EEF at inception phase that fortnightly was a regular enough interval to provide useful 'live' feedback during the life of the pilot while not being so frequent that it would over-burden schools. The questionnaire for the school survey can be found in Appendix E.

We also conducted **online focus groups and interviews** with schools leads to gather qualitative insights into:

- barriers to take-up and engagement;
- successful approaches to overcoming these barriers;
- factors supporting successful delivery (support offered by the school and factors at home); and
- perceived impacts on learner engagement.

We aimed to conduct two focus groups per provider but the number of participants per focus group varied. While we recruited at least three school leads per group to eight focus group discussions, school staff were incredibly busy at the time of the pilot and not all participants who had signed up attended. We wanted to value the time and effort of any school leads who did attend and so used the focus group topic guide flexibly to conduct individual interviews in two instances. Table 6 shows the encounters achieved for each provider.

Table 6: Qualitative research with school leads

	Encounters	Total participants
Action Tutoring	Interview 1: 1 school lead Interview 2: 1 school lead	2
MyTutor	Focus group 1: 3 school leads Focus group 2: 3 school leads	6
The Access Project	Focus group: 5 school leads	5
Tutor Trust	Focus group 1: 3 school leads Focus group 2: 5 school leads	8
Total		21

Research with learners

We invited all learners to complete an **online feedback survey** at the end of delivery. This survey asked about the acceptability of the intervention, factors supporting and hindering uptake, and perceived impacts on (engagement with) learning. It was developed in *Build*, a software for small and simple questionnaires. The survey included closed questions and was designed to be easy to read and age-appropriate. The survey for Year 5 to Year 9 included 12 questions while the survey for Year 10 to Year 13 learners covered 15 questions as some questions required a higher reading age (see Appendix E).

We also carried out **online focus groups and interviews** with learners to gather their perspectives on:

- barriers to take-up and engagement;
- contextual factors supporting participation;
- perceived impacts on engagement and learning; and
- recommendations for improvements to the online tuition.

We aimed to conduct two learner focus groups per provider but the number of participants per focus group varied. We were not able to recruit any participants for focus groups with learners from the Tutor Trust. This was because of challenges recruiting during the summer holidays and a relatively small pool of learners per school. While we were able to recruit participants for focus groups from the other three providers, not all learners who had signed up attended the focus groups. As with other participant groups, we conducted individual and paired interviews where only one learner attended and they were happy to be interviewed. Table 7 shows the encounters achieved for each provider.

Table 7: Qualitative research with learners

	Encounters	Total participants
Action Tutoring	Focus group 1: 5 learners Focus group 2: 6 learners	11
MyTutor	Focus group: 3 learners Paired interview: 2 learners	5
The Access Project	Focus group: 4 learners Interviews: 1 learner	5
Total		21

Achieved sample sizes

Table 8 summarises the achieved sample size for each research activity. We do not provide response rates for the surveys because, as invitations to complete the surveys were sent out via providers or schools, we do not know how many school leads and learners received the invitations.

Table 8: Achieved sample sizes for each research activity

Participant group	Activity	Achieved sample size(s)
Providers	Conference calls	6 calls with representatives of the 4 providers
	Interviews	8 individual/paired interviews (2 per provider)
Tutors	Focus groups/ interviews	8 encounters with a total of 30 tutors
School leads	Fortnightly survey	Wave 1: n = 18 Wave 2: n = 53 Wave 3: n = 26 Wave 4: n = 21 Wave 5: n = 6
	Focus groups/ interviews	7 encounters with a total of 21 school leads
Learners	Feedback survey	Action Tutoring: n = 48 MyTutor: n = 73 The Access Project: n = 173 Tutor Trust: n = 17 Total n = 311
	Focus groups/ interviews	6 encounters with a total of 21 learners

Collecting qualitative data

We developed topic guides tailored to the participant group for each of the qualitative research encounters. We used the topic guides flexibly, with open and non-leading phrasing to explore participant perspectives in detail. Example topic guides are included in Appendix D.

To ensure diversity in our sample, we selected tutors, school staff, and learners from different school stages (primary and secondary). We also tried to include tutors with a range of years of experience of tutoring, and who were delivering tutoring in different subjects. All focus groups brought together individuals working with the same tutoring organisation. Focus groups with learners included pupils from the same school.

All qualitative encounters were conducted remotely and lasted no more than one hour.

Analysing qualitative data

All qualitative interview and focus-group data was digitally recorded with permission from participants. We used a light-touch version of the Framework approach (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013) to manage the data and carry out within- and cross-organisation analysis.

Using the themes covered in topic guides and new emerging themes, we assembled a matrix in which each row represented an individual interview or focus group and each column a theme and any related sub-themes. We then summarised the interview data in the matrix, including illustrative verbatim quotes where appropriate. Once all interviews and focus group discussions were coded in this matrix, we analysed the data. This involved a phase of 'detection', which included studying the elements participants mentioned about a particular phenomenon, listing these, and then sorting them thematically. Once we had identified different themes in the data, we created higher-level categories that worked as meaningful conceptual groupings for participants' views and experiences.

The Framework approach had the advantage of enabling us to make conclusions for the pilot and for the four individual tutoring programmes—exploring themes and categories within and across 'cases'. It allowed us to identify convergence and dissonance between the four programmes, between participant groups, and across particular features of programmes.

Analysing quantitative data

We carried out all quantitative analyses using Stata 16.

Providers shared attendance data with us via secure server every fortnight during their pilot delivery. We analysed this attendance data at the learner level, matching data using pseudonymised learner ID numbers. This method allowed us to analyse the number of sessions scheduled in total and per pupil within each fortnightly period and across the study period. In the course of the pilot, we analysed data for four fortnightly periods, covering 29 June to 21 August. For this final report we have analysed attendance data covering 15 June to 28 October 2020.⁴

We analysed school survey data every two weeks to provide ‘live’ findings for the fortnightly conference calls with providers. The barriers and challenges that schools faced did not change notably over time, and response was not consistent enough to allow longitudinal analysis of individual schools’ responses. Only some schools continued with the tuition over the summer holidays, and some school leads were not working in the fortnights over the summer when the survey was sent out. Providing average responses across the five survey waves may also have ‘double-counted’ schools that took part in more than one fortnight. For these reasons, we present figures from the period with the highest response rate, 6–18 July, in this report.

The learner survey data was collected at the end of tuition and was analysed using frequencies and correlation (or ‘cross-tab’) analysis.

We did not weight survey responses to account for non-response because the surveys were administered via tuition providers and schools. The light-touch approach agreed relating to the surveys also meant that we did not collect unique identifiers or have complete sample frames of schools or pupils with relevant contextual data to link back to and produce weights. Frequencies for all survey variables are provided in Appendix A (school survey) and Appendix B (learner feedback survey).

Timeline

Table 9 provides a timeline for the evaluation.

Table 9: Evaluation timeline

Date	Activity
May–June 2020	School recruitment for intervention delivery
June–October 2020	Pilot delivery
June 2020	Evaluation agreement signed by schools
June 2020	First round of paired interviews with tutor organisations
June–August 2020	Fortnightly conference calls with tutor organisations
June–August 2020	Fortnightly school survey
June–October 2020	Fortnightly attendance data
July–August 2020	Online focus groups with school leads/tutors/learners
July–September 2020	Learner feedback survey
July–October 2020	Analysis
September 2020	Lessons learnt presentations
November 2020	Final report (draft)

⁴ The attendance analysis covers different time periods for different providers, reflecting the different delivery endpoints detailed on page 10.

Findings

Participants

A total of 1,425 learners from eight primary and 57 secondary schools across England participated in the pilot. Participants came from all regions of the country, although most schools were based in an urban setting. To be eligible for the pilot, schools had to meet certain eligibility criteria demonstrating high levels of disadvantage or deprivation (see Table 3).

Table 10: Overview of participating schools by providers

Provider	Number of schools		Number of pupils		Locations
Action Tutoring	Primary: Secondary:	n = 2 n = 4	Primary: Secondary:	n = 31 n = 31	London, South East, South West Urban and rural settings
MyTutor	Secondary:	n = 20	Secondary:	n = 887	East of England, East Midlands, London, North West, South East, South West, Yorkshire and the Humber Urban and rural settings
The Access Project	Secondary:	n = 30	Secondary: ⁵	n = 411	London, West Midlands Urban and rural settings
Tutor Trust	Primary: Secondary:	n = 6 n = 3	Primary: Secondary:	n = 48 n = 17	North West, Yorkshire and the Humber Urban settings

Was providing online tuition to disadvantaged learners during the Covid-19 school ‘closures’ feasible?

The pilot was delivered in 65 schools and reached 1,425 learners.⁶ This meant that the pilot reached 93% of the original target of around 70 schools and 86% of the original target of 1,659 learners.

The tuition was delivered online as intended and providers, schools, tutors, and learners quickly adapted to what was for most a new learning model. In total, 9,816 tuition sessions were delivered between 15 June and 28 October 2020. The subjects covered in sessions included English, maths, science, economics, geography, history, politics, psychology, French, and Spanish.

Providers reported that schools and learners were eager to access additional support during the school ‘closures’ and that tutors were highly motivated to contribute to what they saw as a national effort to support disadvantaged learners during the Covid-19 crisis.

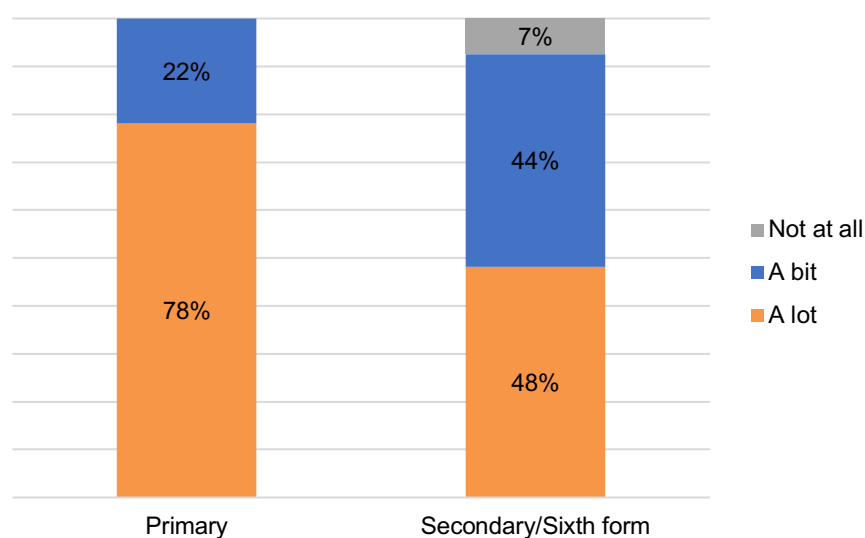
Evidence from the online feedback survey suggests that the intervention was attractive to learners. Over half (52%) of learners reported enjoying the online tutoring ‘a lot’, a further 41% enjoyed it a bit and only 6% said that they did not enjoy the sessions at all. While enjoyment was higher among primary school pupils (Figure 2), almost all (96%) Year 10 to Year 13 learners who completed the survey said that they would like to continue receiving tuition.⁷

⁵ This included 117 Sixth Form learners within secondary schools.

⁶ In total, 1,847 learners signed up to take part and scheduled at least one session but 422 of these did not attend any sessions within the study period.

⁷ This question was not asked of younger learners.

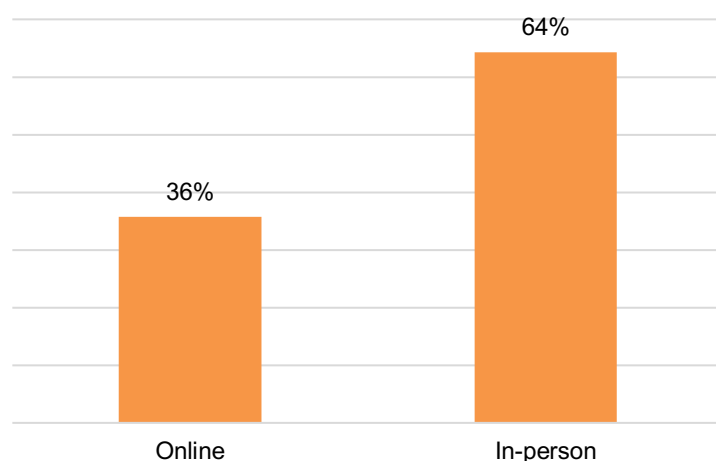
Figure 2: Enjoyment of online tuition by school phase



Base: all learners who completed the online feedback survey (n = 311).

Learners were more ambivalent when asked specifically about the online nature of their tutoring. While just over half (53%) of those who completed the survey said that they liked doing the sessions online, almost one in three (31%) said that they neither liked or disliked this and 16% said that they disliked it. In addition, two-thirds of the Year 10 to Year 13 learners who wanted to continue receiving tuition said that if they had the choice they would prefer to have it in person (Figure 3).⁸

Figure 3: Preferred mode of tutoring



Base: all Y10–13 who said that they would like to carry on with tutoring in the online feedback survey (n = 270).

As noted earlier in this report, The Access Project (TAP) migrated their existing learners online for the pilot. The majority of learners (84%) who completed TAP's internal feedback survey said that they felt they were actively participating in tutoring sessions 'about the same' amount during the online pilot as they had done in in-person tuition sessions. However, 10% said that they were participating less. Moreover, TAP's pilot delivery only included those learners who were willing to change mode to online delivery.

⁸ Younger learners were not asked this question.

Can online tuition reach a high proportion of disadvantaged learners?

Our evaluation considered reach in terms of the number of learners that took part, the proportion of these learners that were eligible for Pupil Premium, the proportion of learners who were offered the tuition that took it up, and levels of attendance among learners who took part.

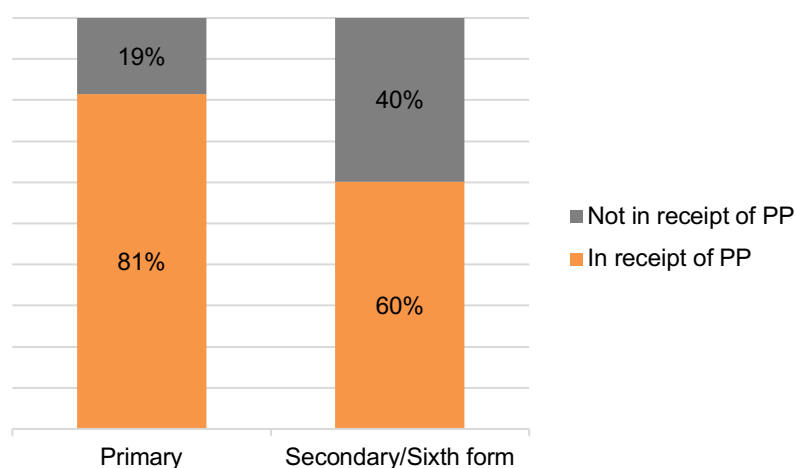
Reaching disadvantaged learners

The pilot reached a large number of learners, particularly considering the circumstances of the pandemic, the short start-up time, and the fact that delivery began so close to the summer holidays. A total of 1,425 learners took part in the online tuition pilot across 65 schools. This meant that an average of 22 learners took part in each participating school.

All providers targeted disadvantaged learners, though each had slightly different eligibility criteria (see Table 3 above). In total, 79% of the primary school learners working with Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust and 60% of the secondary school learners who worked with Action Tutoring, The Access Project, and Tutor Trust were receiving Pupil Premium (PP).⁹ This finding suggests that primary schools were better able to target disadvantaged learners, but we did not collect data on other indicators of disadvantage (such as being in care or a care leaver) that providers used as alternative eligibility criteria (see Table 3). Secondary schools may have been more likely to use these other criteria to target learners.

In total, 1,847 learners signed up to take part and scheduled at least one session, but 422 of these learners did not attend any sessions during the pilot period. Among the learners that signed up, there did not appear to be an association between disadvantage and attendance—learners who were in receipt of Pupil Premium were not more or less likely to not attend any sessions. Older learners were more likely to not attend any sessions—20% of secondary school and Sixth Form learners who signed up and scheduled at least one session went on to not attend, compared to 14% of primary school learners.

Figure 4: Proportion of learners in receipt of Pupil Premium by school stage



Base: 711 learners working with Action Tutoring, The Access Project, and Tutor Trust.

Take-up

Although reach was high, not all learners were able to take part. School leads who took part in the school survey reported that, on average, around two-thirds (65%) of learners who had been offered the opportunity to take part in the pilot were taking part. In focus groups, school leads gave two key reasons that disadvantaged learners who they felt could have benefitted from the tutoring had not been able to take it up:

⁹ This data was not available for MyTutor, the largest provider. However, given that MyTutor required schools to target learners eligible for PP, we would expect that the proportion of its learners who were receiving PP was similar or higher.

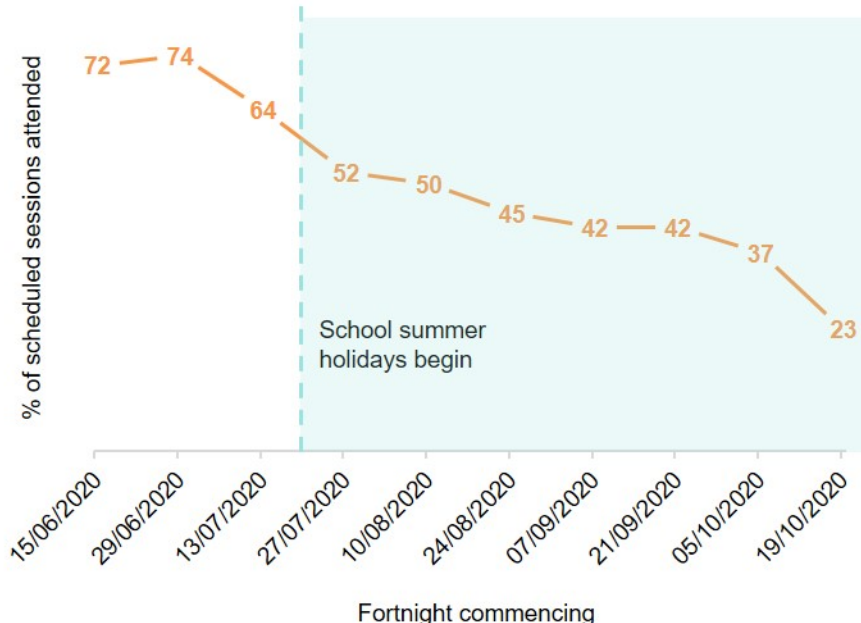
- difficulties contacting parents to explain the programme; and
- a lack of suitable equipment or internet connection at home.

We discuss factors encouraging, and barriers to, take-up and engagement later in this report.

Attendance

On average, learners who attended at least one session across the pilot period attended around three-fifths (57%) of their scheduled sessions. This average drops to 45% if we include the 422 learners who signed up but did not attend any sessions. However, as Figure 5 shows, attendance decreased over time and the total average includes fortnights over the summer holidays and into the new academic year where attendance was much lower. Looking only at the ‘school closure’ weeks during the 2019/2020 summer term, attendance was 72% in the first fortnight, 74% in the second fortnight, and 64% in the third and final fortnight (which ran into the holiday period).

Figure 5: Attendance by fortnight



Base: 1,360 learners working with Action Tutoring, The Access Project, and MyTutor who attended at least one session.¹⁰

Providers and tutors reported that attendance was slightly lower during the pilot than during previous in-person delivery. Tutors felt that it was easier for learners to miss online sessions, when compared to in-person delivery, where (a) sessions were integrated into the regular school timetable and learners were encouraged to attend sessions by their teachers or (b) learners were scheduled to attend their tutors’ workplaces.

On the other hand, providers reported that learners particularly appreciated the offer of tutoring while they were not receiving their usual, in-person education at school. They also noted that tutors and learners took advantage of the flexibility of being able to rearrange online sessions at short notice and it may be that some of the missed sessions counted as ‘absences’ in our attendance analysis were actually postponed, with learners attending at a later date.

Differences between providers

Levels of reach, take-up, and attendance varied across the four providers. The small scale of the pilot makes it difficult to isolate the factors behind this variation. However, patterns in the attendance data and findings from qualitative

¹⁰ We were unable to track attendance for Tutor Trust learners over time using the same methodology as the data was recorded in a different format. The date of tuition was only recorded for the first tuition session in the Tutor Trust data and an approximation of the date of subsequent sessions could not be estimated reliably.

research suggest that three key factors may explain some of the difference. These were the scale of delivery, the age and stage of learners, and the location of delivery.

Scale of delivery

MyTutor and The Access Project delivered on a larger scale than Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust in this pilot, working with a larger number of schools and a larger number of learners within each school:

- **MyTutor** worked with **20 schools** and an average of **44 learners** within each school.
- **The Access Project** worked with **30 schools** and an average of **14 learners** per school.
- **Action Tutoring** worked with **six schools** (two primary and four secondary) and an average of **ten learners** per school (16 in their primary schools and eight in their secondary schools).
- **Tutor Trust** worked with **nine schools** (six primary and three secondary) and average of **seven learners** per school (eight in their primary schools and six in their secondary schools).

The two larger providers saw lower rates of take-up than the two smaller providers. In the fortnightly survey, schools working with MyTutor and The Access Project reported that 73% and 45% of learners who were offered the tuition had taken part, compared to 89% and 90% for schools working with Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust respectively. Meanwhile, attendance data showed that learners with MyTutor and The Access project attended a lower proportion of their sessions (51% and 66% respectively) than learners with Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust (88% and 86% respectively).

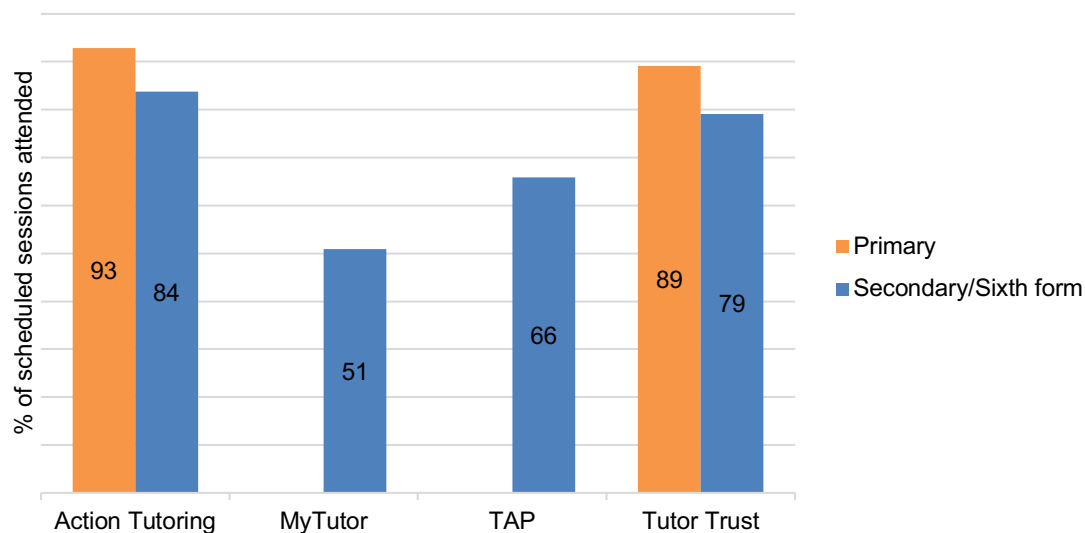
Qualitative findings suggested that it was easier for the providers working with smaller numbers of schools and learners to foster the relationships that supported initial and ongoing engagement. However, there may be other reasons for the differences in take-up and attendance across the four providers, including the ways that the providers recruited schools and learners to the pilot. In particular, MyTutor and The Access Project faced specific challenges in the pilot that might have affected initial take-up or ongoing attendance. MyTutor worked with new schools for this pilot while the other tuition providers largely built on pre-existing relationships with schools that they already worked with. This meant that MyTutor was more affected by the short onboarding time and were not able to select schools that they knew would prioritise the tuition. The Access Project migrated existing learner-tutor partnerships online and so their take-up figures reflect some learners not wanting to move online, while the other providers approached new learners with the offer of online tuition only.

Age and stage of learners

Only Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust worked with primary school learners during the pilot.

According to the fortnightly school survey, take-up was higher in primary schools (88%) than secondary schools (61%). Attendance figures for Action Tutoring and Tutor Trust show that primary school learners were also more likely to attend their sessions than their secondary school learners (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Average attendance by school phase



Base: all 1,425 learners who attended at least one session.¹¹

The providers working with different ages of learners found that primary schools often had more established relationships with families than secondary schools and so were more easily able to encourage take-up and attendance among parents and learners. They also felt that parents of younger children had more influence over their participation. While only the smaller providers worked with primary schools, the figures show that within these providers take-up and attendance were higher at primary level.

Location of delivery

Action Tutoring was the only organisation to deliver all of the pilot tuition in school. Tutor Trust had individual learners taking part in school-based delivery but largely delivered the tuition to learners at home. Providers felt that attendance was more easily secured when the online tutoring was taking place in school where teachers had oversight, learners felt more accountable to turn up for their sessions, and technology was available. However, we are unable to test this hypothesis using attendance data from the pilot since school-based delivery was primarily offered by only one provider and the attendance data for the other providers does not show learners' location. Findings from the learner feedback survey do not tell us how many sessions a learner missed but do suggest that learners who were based at home were more likely to have missed at least one session (38% of learners who were at home for the tutoring sessions reported having missed a session compared to 26% of learners who were at school). However, this difference was no longer present when accounting for school phase: the likelihood of missing a session was lower for primary school learners who were also more likely to take part in school-based tutoring.

Can online tuition improve engagement with education for disadvantaged learners?

Our evaluation conceptualised 'engagement' in terms of enjoyment of learning and feeling confident about learning. We also explored perceived impacts on learning outcomes, including increased knowledge and preparedness for exams.

¹¹ We were unable to track attendance for Tutor Trust learners over time using the same methodology.

Enjoying learning

Most (76%) learners who completed our online feedback survey reported that they now enjoyed learning more than they did before they had online tutoring compared with one quarter (24%) that did not. Almost one third (31%) agreed with this statement 'a lot' and another 45% agreed 'a bit'. Learners who had never had tuition before were most likely to agree a lot (34%, compared to 26% of learners who had previously had a tutor). Increased enjoyment of learning was most noticeable among younger learners—61% of primary school learners agreed 'a lot', compared to 26% of secondary and Sixth Form learners.

Feeling confident about learning

The perceived impacts on confidence were even more pronounced than the perceived benefits in terms of enjoyment of learning, particularly for older learners. Nine out of ten (90%) learners who completed our online feedback survey reported that they felt more confident doing their school work now compared to before they started online tutoring and only 10% did not agree at all. Moreover, two-thirds of primary and Sixth Form learners and more than half of secondary school learners agreed with this statement 'a lot'.

School leads in focus groups observed that learners had developed a more positive attitude to learning through an increase in confidence in their own abilities. Tutors and learners felt that the tutoring had benefited learners' confidence because they had been able to maintain a habit of learning despite the school 'closures' and the disruption to structured learning.

Case illustration At one secondary school, children who took part in maths tutoring completed more of the maths work online set by their teacher than they had done before the pilot started. Their teacher felt this was due to the increased confidence they had in their abilities as a result of the tuition. The teacher also reported that these children displayed higher engagement with other subjects than their peers who were not taking part.

Tutors also noted a growing confidence among some older learners to interact online with their tutor as the pilot went on. They saw this as a positive unintended consequence of the tuition, anticipating that confidence online would benefit learners beyond education, for example in online job interviews.

Learning outcomes

The vast majority (90%) of learners who completed our online feedback survey reported feeling better prepared for exams or tests as a result of the tutoring. Almost half (45%) agreed with this statement 'a lot' and the same proportion agreed 'a bit'. Just one in ten (10%) felt they were 'not at all' better prepared for exams or tests as a result of the tuition.

In focus groups, learners said they felt that the tutoring had improved their subject knowledge, including new concepts and previously covered content. Over time, tutors noted that learners performed better at short end-of-session assessments. Tutors and learners attributed these perceived outcomes to the one-on-one attention and tailored learning that the tutoring provided. Learners felt that having their tutor's full attention enabled them to better engage with the content compared to a busy classroom environment.

'The teacher is scrambled with everyone in the class ... when it's one to one they can really focus on what you're struggling with.'

Learner, Secondary

Participants believed that increases in knowledge and learner confidence resulting from the tuition had had a positive impact on engagement with education during the school 'closures'. Another hope was that the tuition could have longer-term benefits for engagement. Tutors and school leads believed that the routine provided by the tuition would help learners to prepare for the new academic year, especially for learners for whom the weekly session was the only regular form of education that they engaged with while during school 'closures'. Tutors whose learners had the opportunity to receive tuition over the summer holiday felt that this routine would be really valuable for lower-attaining students who had been making good progress before the closures.

'It will help them when they go back ... and they won't feel like they have been out of it for five months.'

Tutor

However, there were tutors who were hesitant about concluding any benefits from the tutoring after a few sessions, especially because learners might have been receiving additional support from their schools or families at the same time.

What factors support successful take-up and engagement?

During our qualitative analysis (see page 17), we identified four types of factors that aided take-up and engagement during the pilot: practical factors, the one-to-one format, the tutoring content, and relationships.

Practical factors

The practical factors supporting take-up and engagement included the affordability of the tuition, the provision of technology and equipment, and factors associated with the location of delivery.

Affordability

The National Online Tuition Pilot provided fully subsidised tuition, meaning that schools did not need to cover any costs. Providers highlighted that pilot schools with limited resources previously unable to afford online tuition were now able to access this offer, driving high levels of initial take-up at school level.

The pilot will also have reached learners whose families would be unable to pay for private tuition.

Flexibility

Tutors, learners, and providers experienced online delivery as being more flexible than in-person tuition, particularly because tutors and learners did not have to travel to be in the same place. This meant that tutors could rearrange sessions if a learner had to cancel or did not show up, could more easily schedule sessions at times that suited individual learners, and could sometimes extend sessions if a learner was late or if technical problems disrupted the session.

Case illustration Before school 'closures', a volunteer tutor used to travel two hours each week to meet the learner at a public library. This meant they were not able to rearrange sessions at short notice or change days because of the long journey. The tutor viewed the move online very positively, reporting that without needing to allow for travel time they were able to reschedule online sessions if the learner was unable to attend.

Location of delivery

Practical factors that supported take-up and engagement in **school-based** sessions—according to tutors, school leads, providers, and learners—included:

- teachers having oversight over learner attendance and access to technology;
- (where applicable) staff from the tutoring organisation being present to help school staff and learners log on and troubleshoot;
- learners feeling accountable because their teacher would know if they missed a session; and
- learners feeling like the tutoring was part of their regular schooling rather than an additional burden.¹²

Practical factors supporting take-up and engagement in **home-based** sessions included:

- providers being able to schedule sessions at times when learners were most likely to attend;
- tutors being able to rearrange sessions to suit individual learners;
- learners who had access to a quiet space feeling more comfortable and less distracted; and

¹² This feedback is limited to tutoring organisations that only offered school-based sessions (Action Tutoring) and those where school-based sessions were offered in specific circumstances (Tutor Trust).

- learners being able to attend sessions regardless of their location (as long as they had access to a device and the internet)—for instance, from a holiday or while being cared for by relatives.

Provision of equipment

Practical solutions to some learners' lack of access to technology were identified as important from the outset. School leads and learners reported that providing equipment not only allowed learners with no computer at home to take part but also helped those who, for example, shared just one device across multiple family members who were trying to work and study at home during the pandemic. Some providers were able to acquire equipment for learners, including distributing laptops donated by businesses and purchasing headphones.

Most (68%) school leads who completed the fortnightly survey reported that their school had provided equipment (such as laptops, tablets, or headphones) to help learners to access the online tuition. This rose to 72% when excluding schools working with Action Tutoring and therefore only delivering school-based tuition.

One-to-one format

Four fifths (79%) of learners who had received one-to-one tuition and who took part in the learner feedback survey liked being the only learner in their sessions.

Learners and school leads felt that, where some learners had previously received small-group tuition, the one-to-one format increased attendance and engagement because learners felt less judged when making mistakes and received more individual attention. School leads reported that learners with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) particularly enjoyed the one-to-one format as they were less likely to be distracted by their peers.

'I've got one learner, a [girl with autism] and she is flying; she loves it because she loves that one-on-one attention that she is getting from the tutor and that she is missing from school.'

School lead, Secondary

However, a small minority (5%) of learners who took part in the online feedback survey said that they disliked being the only learner in their sessions. Tutors and providers reported that some learners who had previously attended small group tuition and benefited from bouncing ideas off other learners struggled to adapt to the more personalised and 'intense' one-to-one format.

Tutoring content

Most (80%) of the Year 10 to Year 13 learners who completed the online feedback survey said that they liked the content of their tutoring sessions.¹³

Tutors who had previously delivered tuition in-person told us about how they structured online sessions differently and adapted content to the new online format to maximise engagement.

'You don't want it to feel like a lecture because that will bore them.'

Tutor

This included, for example, uploading PDFs onto the online learning platform prior to sessions so that the time in the session could be spent on covering learning content and increasing learner engagement. Tutors delivering group sessions developed games that learners could play online to keep the sessions engaging.

Tutors also believed that tailoring for individual learners and sessions helped to keep learners interested. Tutors who were able to choose the topics for their sessions found that this allowed them to tailor the sessions to meet individuals' learning needs.

'Going at [learner's] own pace keeps them more engaged because they feel like they are targeted more personally.'

¹³ Younger learners were not asked this question.

Case illustration One tutor realised that a learner knew how to do algebra but not how to read a clock. The tutor was able to react to this learning gap and spend time helping the learner understand how to tell the time.

Tutors also felt that integrating stories into sessions helped secure learner engagement and attendance. This included sharing stories of their own personal education journey to provide inspiration and making links between the content of the sessions and careers to make learning relevant.

‘When you introduce a new topic and talk about how you’ve used it in further studies, in your degree, or in day-to-day life or how you can use it in different job ... you can see the change in their attitude towards the subject that they had thought was absolutely useless to “here is a real life person who uses this”.’

Tutor

Relationships

Participants spoke about the importance of strong relationships between all stakeholders in facilitating engagement and participation. The relationships that teachers, tutors, and parents had with learners encouraged them to take up and continue to engage with the tuition. Meanwhile, relationships between these adult stakeholders made sure that the provision best met learners’ needs.

Tutor-learner rapport

All stakeholder groups recognised the importance of rapport between tutors and learners in supporting engagement.

Initial ‘getting to know you’ sessions allowed tutors to find out about their learners’ interests and adapt the content accordingly. Tutors who did not have such sessions found it more difficult to build rapport and providers who had not formally organised introductory sessions were aware that tutors might have felt pressured to focus on academic learning right from the start. Providers noted the importance of giving tutors ‘permission’ to spend more time on building rapport with learners.

Tutors also tried to find ongoing ways of identifying learners’ interests and building the relationship.

Case illustration A tutor described that before lockdown they had met their learner in person. During these sessions, it would be easy to have a conversation, which the learner often initiated. When they moved online, the learner became very shy and quiet. To get them talking, the tutor started to think in advance of sessions about topics to discuss that did not relate directly to the subject. For example, the tutor knew their learner liked astronomy so at the start of one session, the tutor asked the learner if they had seen a recent comet. The tutor continued to do this every week and felt that it really helped to get the learner talking.

Learners who had felt isolated during the school ‘closures’ appreciated the chance to talk to someone outside of their household and were motivated to attend their sessions for this reason. In addition, tutors (or other staff at the tutoring organisations) who had strong relationships with learners felt able to chase them if they missed sessions.

Findings from the online feedback survey reiterated the importance of tutor-learner rapport in supporting engagement. The vast majority (97%) of learners said they found their tutor helpful, with 85% of learners saying that their tutor was helpful ‘a lot’. Half of learners (51%) thought that their tutor was ‘a lot’ of fun, with a further two-fifths (41%) reporting ‘a bit’. Just 8% of learners found their tutor ‘not at all’ fun. Learners who felt positively about their tutor were more likely to report that they had not missed any sessions and to feel that they had benefitted from the tutoring.¹⁴ For example:

¹⁴ As with all the survey findings reported in this research, there is a possibility that the observed correlation may be affected by underlying unobserved factors. We discuss this further in our discussion of limitations at the end of this report.

- 61% of learners who agreed 'a lot' with the idea that their tutor was helpful said that they had not missed any tutoring sessions, compared to 50% of learners who only agreed 'a bit';
- 56% of learners who agreed 'a lot' with the idea that their tutor was fun said that they had not missed any sessions, compared to 48% of learners who only agreed 'a bit'; and
- 67% of learners who agreed 'a lot' with the idea that their tutor was fun said that they felt a lot more confident doing their schoolwork because of the tutoring lessons, compared to 51% of those who agreed 'a bit' and 14% of those who did not agree at all.

Teachers' existing relationships with learners

Some schools used teachers' existing relationships with learners to identify motivated learners who they thought would take up the offer and enjoy taking part in the tuition. By targeting these learners, they felt they were maximising take-up. There is a pay-off here, though, in that other learners who might have benefitted were not prioritised in these schools because teachers felt that they would be less likely to take part.

School leads also reported that existing relationships with learners encouraged ongoing attendance. In schools where teachers regularly called learners to check in on their progress, they felt this encouraged participation as learners were held more accountable for their participation. Three quarters (76%) of school leads who completed the fortnightly survey reported communicating with their learners about the tuition.

Parental support

Parents who bought into the programme from the start encouraged their children to engage with the tutoring and were able to assist them where needed. Providers and tutors noted that parental support was particularly important for younger learners who were taking part at home because the tutoring organisations required an adult to be present at the start of the session and because some learners needed technical support. Providers and school staff also felt that younger learners were more receptive than older learners to being told to attend their tutoring sessions by their parents.

Schools' relationships with parents

Understanding the importance of parental support for the tuition, schools tried to secure parental engagement from the outset. There were schools who phoned parents individually to explain that the pilot was a unique opportunity. These schools reported that parents felt lucky that their child was chosen and were appreciative of the offer, particularly because they would have been unable to afford private tuition.

Schools also reported sending text messages and making phone calls to parents to encourage participation throughout the pilot. While the level of this communication with parents varied, one school lead reported spending two hours a day making phone calls to parents reminding them that their child needed to log on. They reported that this was effective because parents want to be seen as doing the right thing. In the fortnightly survey, three quarters (74%) of school leads reported communicating with parents in some way about the tuition.

Providers' communication with parents

There were providers who found it helpful to have the option of their staff or tutors communicating directly with parents. In part, parents were key allies through which to remind learners to attend their sessions and troubleshoot effectively. Communicating directly with parents also enabled providers to share positive stories about learners to secure parental support and learner motivation.

Tutors noted that short chats with parents at the end of sessions were useful in facilitating learners' ongoing engagement with the tuition and with learning more widely. In these calls, tutors suggested additional resources that would stretch individual learners and consolidate learning. These check-ins also gave parents the opportunity to feed into lesson planning and highlight areas that the learner was struggling with.

Case illustration A tutor was aware that one learner did not read much outside of school. Because the tutor was able to talk directly with the learners' parent, they were able to recommend registering for a free audiobook subscription so that the learner could listen to books at home.

Communication between providers and schools

Providers noted that clear communication with schools ensured that the onboarding process was efficient, enabling learners to attend tutoring sessions without delays. Where there was clarity about roles and responsibilities, it was easier to engage parents and learners. For instance, one provider reported that schools had delegated communication with learners and parents to their organisation, which streamlined communication.

Close relationships between schools and providers were also important for ensuring lessons were tailored to learners' needs. Where teachers provided tutors with detailed learner notes, tutors felt able to prepare and deliver sessions that directly addressed learners' needs. In return, schools found it helpful for tutors to inform them about the progress of tutoring sessions, including their learners' progress and content covered.

Are there particular barriers to take-up and engagement and successful approaches to overcoming those barriers?

Key barriers to take-up and engagement included technology, the environments in which learners were trying to concentrate on the tutoring, and challenges around building relationships and motivation. There were also practical barriers specific to delivering in-school tuition during the Covid-19 pandemic and school 'closures'.

Below we discuss these barriers and challenges and some of the solutions identified by schools, tutors, and tutoring providers.

Technological challenges

Online tuition by its nature requires learners to have access to technological equipment and to the internet. As discussed above, this was anticipated from the outset and providers and schools tried to offer some solutions proactively from the start. Nevertheless, lack of adequate equipment and internet connection were barriers both to initial take-up and to ongoing engagement. A lack of digital literacy among some learners also posed a barrier. Finally, there were challenges around adapting content designed for in-person tutoring to online delivery and around the specific functionalities of the tutoring platform.

Equipment

School leads in focus groups reported there were learners who were keen to take part in online tuition at home but lacked a computer, tablet, or access to the internet.

Even among home-based learners who were able to take up the tuition, malfunctioning equipment or having to share devices across multiple household members presented a challenge. Of the learners who were able to take part and who completed our online feedback survey, still almost one in ten (8%) reported missing a lesson because of a lack of adequate equipment.

Some learners were able to use smartphones for their tutoring sessions rather than needing a tablet or laptop. While they did not mind the smaller screen surface, they reported that notifications from other applications distracted them from learning.

Lack of adequate equipment also posed a barrier for some school-based learners, though this was less pronounced than for those learning at home. School staff reported having old computers that were slow to start up. There were also schools that had problems with firewalls blocking access to their providers' online platform.

In the fortnightly survey, half (48%) of schools reported that a lack of equipment was making it difficult for some learners in their school to take part in the online tuition. This figure rose to 52% when excluding schools working with Action Tutoring and therefore only delivering school-based tuition.

Internet connectivity

Poor internet connections led some learners and tutors to struggle with poor audio quality, platforms freezing, internet lags, and issues logging on to the tutoring platforms.

Even among the learners who were able to take part in online tuition and complete our online feedback survey, around one in six (16%) home-based learners reported missing a session because their internet was not working. Moreover, 41% of home-based learners and 19% of school-based learners reported that poor internet had made it difficult for them to learn during their online tutoring lessons. Tutors reported that this was a source of frustration for learners and that there were learners who decided to stop taking part in the tutoring as a result.

'[Having to leave and log in again] can be really frustrating for [learners], sometimes you can hear it in their voice when they come back again ... they're apologising ... but they're obviously getting quite frustrated with it.'

Tutor

The learner feedback survey findings show a relationship between internet problems and learners' engagement in terms of enjoying the sessions and their learning more generally:

- 46% who reported internet or connectivity issues said they enjoyed the online sessions a lot, compared to 56% who did not report these issues; and
- 27% who reported internet or connectivity issues said they enjoy learning more as a result of the tutoring, compared to 33% who did not report connectivity issues.

Learners' digital literacy

Almost one in six (14%) of the school leads who completed the fortnightly survey said that a lack of digital skills was making it difficult for at least some learners in their school to take part in the online tuition. In focus groups, school leads explained that learners who lacked digital literacy struggled to independently navigate the online sessions, which discouraged engagement.

Adapting content for online delivery

While tutors worked hard to adapt sessions that were designed for in-person delivery to the online format in order to keep learners engaged, this was sometimes challenging. Examples included sessions that relied on:

- **physical print-outs**—learners found it difficult to engage with online sessions where they were only able to use on-screen PDFs as opposed to physical print-outs that could be highlighted and annotated; there was a particular challenge around maths activities because learners struggled to note down mathematical symbols on their computer; and
- **games and play**—tutors found it difficult to move games that they had previously played with learners, for instance games involving rolling dice, online; this could make the sessions less fun, particularly for younger learners.

All tuition started as one-to-one tuition, though one-fifth (21%) of Action Tutoring learners took part in at least one small group tuition session by the end of the pilot. In focus groups, tutors who had transitioned from in-person, small group tuition to online one-to-one delivery explained that they had sometimes struggled to adapt sessions that had been designed for group work. On the other hand, tutors delivering small group tuition online found it challenging to manage different learners' needs simultaneously. They described that faster learners in small group tuition often waited for their peers to catch up and found it harder to set additional work to keep those learners occupied online compared to during in-person sessions.

'Normally what I'd do, I'd make up a few questions, so they could practice if one was going faster, while the other was catching up and you just can't do that because then you have to write it down and half an hour later you're still struggling. So that I found really frustrating.'

Tutor

Tutoring platform functionalities

Tutors and learners also mentioned specific platform functionalities that made delivery—and therefore maintaining engagement with the tutoring—more challenging. This included:

- **difficulties with shared whiteboard functions**—tutors and learners reported the whiteboard could start to feel 'overcrowded' when multiple people were using it in small group sessions;
- **limited web cam function**—there were platforms that did not allow users to use video chat and the workspace function simultaneously, which hindered the rapport between tutors and learners; and
- **difficulties with typing maths symbols or scientific equations**—even where platforms had a formula function, participants reported that these could be challenging to type out.

Solutions to technological challenges included:

- providers running **IT reviews** prior to delivery to identify any issues with equipment or internet connections (for schools and for individual home-based learners);
- schools **delivering laptops and internet dongles** to home-based learners (via the tutoring organisation or funded by government or charity grants);
- schools using **ethernet cables** to connect learners' computers to the internet rather than relying on Wi-Fi;
- tutors asking learners using slow computers to **arrive early** so that they were ready for their session to start on time;
- providers **selecting platforms** that required relatively little bandwidth and that offered the functionalities their tutors valued;
- tutors and learners **switching to tablets** instead of laptops where possible to make it easier to write out equations and draw graphs; and
- staff from schools or tutoring organisations being on 'standby' to **'handhold' learners who lacked digital literacy** through the process of logging in to their sessions.

Learning environments

Tutors and learners explained that challenging home environments distracted home-based learners and affected their attendance and engagement. Distractions at home included family conflict, living in a noisy area, and learners' caring responsibilities.

While the challenges around learning at home were clear, providers reported that learners who were taking part at school could also face distractions from their peers. Indeed, 12% of the school-based learners who took part in our feedback survey reported that being distracted by other people in the same room had made it difficult for them to learn during the tutoring sessions, compared to 13% of home-based learners.

Findings from the feedback survey also show that being distracted during the sessions was associated with lower enjoyment and lower perceived benefits of the tutoring:

- Only a quarter (27%) of learners who reported that distractions made it hard for them to learn in their tutoring sessions said that they enjoyed the sessions 'a lot', compared to half (51%) of those who did not.
- Similarly, 27% of learners who reported being distracted felt 'a lot' better prepared for their exams, compared to 47% of those who did not.

It could be possible that, for example, learners who were not enjoying sessions were more easily distracted. However, these findings suggest that addressing distractions could be an important way to improve engagement with tutoring and to ensure that the potential benefits of tutoring are realised.

Solutions to difficult learning environments included:

- **tutors offering to reschedule** when learners were unable to take part or to focus on the tutoring because of something happening at home;
- **schools inviting learners to come into school** for their sessions if there were too many distractions at home; and
- **providers or schools purchasing noise-cancelling headphones** for school-based learners.

Relationships and motivation

Building tutor-learner rapport

Tutors reflected that it could be difficult to build the rapport that encourages learners to engage with tutoring online. Tutors with new learners believed that having little time to get to know learners made it difficult to create strong bonds. They also felt that computer screens created a barrier to effective communication, for example, making eye contact more difficult. Tutors who had worked with the same learners in-person, meanwhile, observed how some of these learners became shyer or more withdrawn online. Learners talked of feeling reluctant to interrupt tutors if they did not understand a task.

‘Sometimes I’m quite scared: “Should I ask her this?” ... I know I can but it’s just in my head, it’s like, it’s a pathetic question. But when it’s face-to-face she [can] kind of tell that you’ve got a question.’

Learner, Secondary

Tutors reported that some learners seemed to be uncomfortable interacting with an adult online. In particular, there were learners who did not like being encouraged to have their camera on, which made it difficult for tutors to gauge their engagement.

‘Because you can’t see them all of the time, you don’t always know whether they are thinking something through ... or just sitting back for a little while.’

Tutor

In the fortnightly survey, almost one in ten (9%) school leads reported that concerns about safety online were discouraging learners in their school to take part. Not feeling comfortable talking to an adult online discouraged some learners from taking part altogether. Moreover, findings from the online feedback survey show that even among those learners who did take part, discomfort with the online mode was associated with lower attendance and engagement with learning:

- Two-thirds (67%) of learners who did not like doing the sessions online said that they had missed a session, compared to two-fifths (42%) of those who liked the online mode.
- Only one-in-three (29%) of those learners who disliked having the tutoring online said they felt ‘a lot’ more confident doing their schoolwork because of the tutoring whereas this figure was 60% for learners who liked the online mode.

School leads felt that younger learners and teenage girls in particular were less comfortable talking to their tutor online.

Learner motivation

Learner motivation was the most prevalent barrier to learner engagement reported by school leads taking part in the fortnightly survey—three-fifths (58%) reported that a lack of motivation was making it hard for some learners to take part.

Tutors found it difficult to engage students who were reluctant about taking part in tutoring. They felt that, because the pilot started a number of months after they had stopped physically attending school, learners who had disengaged from education found it difficult to reengage through the tuition. Another challenge for tutors was maintaining engagement once the summer holiday began.

'One of my pupils has gone on holiday ... and you could tell for the first week she did not want to do it [the tutoring session], she was in a new place, she wanted to have fun with her cousins.'

Tutor

Gathering data from learners who were offered the tutoring but did not take it up was beyond the scope of this evaluation. Findings from the online feedback survey of learners who did take part suggest that one reason for learners lacking motivation was that the tutoring took lower priority than other activities. Being too busy to attend was the most common reason given for having missed a session. The survey did not gather further information on what learners were busy with, but it was learners taking part at home who were likely to report being too busy to take part—19% of home-based learners said that they had missed a session because they were busy, compared to a negligible proportion of school-based learners. In focus groups, tutors said that some parents expected children to prioritise chores over attending the tuition and learners mentioned that they found it difficult to motivate themselves when they had multiple tutoring sessions in a day.

Engaging parents and caregivers

Following learner motivation, parental support was the second most prevalent barrier reported by school leads. Almost half (48%) of school leads who completed the fortnightly survey reported that a lack of parental support was making it difficult for some learners to take part in the tuition.

Tutors and school leads described that parental absence and disengagement could be a barrier to take-up and engagement for some learners, especially in secondary schools where relationships between teachers and parents were weaker than in primary schools. It was difficult to contact some families at all during the school 'closures' and national lockdown. Tutors and school leads struggled to engage parents who felt it would be too difficult fit the tutoring into their family's schedule, who did not prioritise the tutoring sessions above other demands on children's time, or who were unable or unwilling to be present at the start of sessions to meet safeguarding criteria or help learners to log on.

School staff and providers also reported instances where they had struggled to communicate with parents who had difficulties understanding information provided in English. This could delay initial sign-up and cause delays at the start of sessions where parents were needed to meet safeguarding protocols or help learners to access the platform.

While a lack of parental engagement was a key barrier, tutors also reported that 'overinvolved' parents could also impair engagement in home-based tutoring. Examples included parents telling their child to focus when they made a mistake and whispering answers to their child during sessions. Tutors were happy that parents wanted to help and engage in their children's education but worried that their involvement was preventing learners from engaging and learning.

Involving teachers

Challenges also arose in the partnerships between providers and schools.

As discussed earlier in this report, the different stakeholder groups agreed that tutoring was most valuable when it was integrated in children's wider learning. However, this was not always easily achieved. Barriers included:

- **teachers not providing enough information**—tutors reported it was difficult to know what content to cover and how best to cover learning gaps when they did not receive sufficient information about learners' needs and development goals; and
- **tutors not providing enough information**—school staff were disappointed when they felt they were not receiving enough information about learners' engagement and progress, and where they did not have a clear way to contact individual tutors.

Solutions to challenges around relationships and learner motivation included:

- providers offering **webinar ‘open evenings’** for parents to find out about the tutoring;
- providers **tailoring communications** to make messages specifically relevant to parents in, for example, a particular school or area;
- providers scheduling **‘get to know you sessions’** at the start of delivery where tutors could find out about learners’ needs and interests and build rapport;
- providers considering **matching learners who felt uncomfortable online with tutors who shared certain characteristics** (for example, gender);
- providers working with schools to identify the **best channels for communicating** with learners and parents (often text message);
- providers allowing **longer lead-in times** in the future to allow for proper onboarding of schools and families;
- providers sharing **templates and best practice examples** to help teachers to provide detailed information about learners’ needs;
- providers establishing procedures for **tutors to provide regular feedback** to teachers, and explaining how teachers can get in touch; and
- providers and school staff investing in ongoing communication with learners and their families to **emphasise the benefits** that tuition could offer them.

COVID-19

While there were practical advantages of school-based delivery, the specific circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and school ‘closures’ raised some challenges for delivering the online tuition in school.

Parents who had safety concerns, for instance because a family member was shielding, were reluctant to send their children to school at the time of the pilot. School-based delivery was also impacted by the restrictions on movement; learners who fell ill with cold-like symptoms were not allowed to attend school and therefore could not take part.

Finally, the fact that some transport services were not running during the school ‘closures’ made it difficult for learners to get to school and attend their tuition sessions. For example, one tutor reported that a learner in a more remote area never attended because they had no means of getting to school.

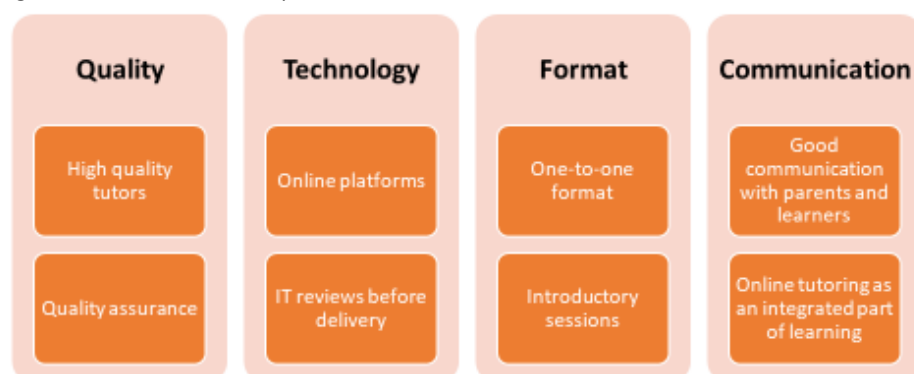
Conclusion

Formative findings

Elements with best promise

There were several elements of the pilot delivery that our research with providers, tutors, teachers, and learners found to show particular promise. These are set out in Figure 7 and explained in detail below.

Figure 7: Elements with best promise



Quality

Providers who were new to online delivery were happy that they were able to provide as high a level of quality online as they had when delivering in-person tuition and were pleasantly surprised by the opportunities for **quality assurance** that came with the change in mode. Recording and re-watching sessions helped providers to gain an accurate picture of what a 'typical' session looked like and to reflect on the resources required to improve and adapt delivery. Meanwhile, tutors found these virtual observations less intimidating and disruptive than being observed in-person.

Providers also attributed the success of the pilot in large part to the **high quality of tutors**. Our evaluation found that tutors (where applicable) adapted quickly to the online format, were highly engaged throughout, and well-liked by learners. Feedback from providers and learner surveys suggested there did not appear to be a difference in engagement levels between paid tutors and volunteers, or between those with varying levels of online tutoring experience.

Technology

Throughout the course of the pilot (and previously where applicable) providers identified **features of online platforms** that were crucial for their model of delivery and sought out platforms offering these features. These included particular safeguarding requirements and functionalities that enhanced participation and engagement such as shared whiteboards.

Another element of promise was the use of **IT reviews before delivery**. School-wide IT reviews prior to the pilot ensured that school-based delivery could begin without delays as any issues such as poor internet connectivity or school firewalls blocking sites could be addressed before delivery. Similar reviews were also helpful in identifying technological barriers for home-based learners, but this required a lot more resource because reviews had to be done for each individual learner.

Format

The **one-to-one format** helped the majority of learners to focus and enabled the tuition to be closely tailored to their learning needs. Teachers and tutors felt the format worked particularly well for less confident learners and learners with special educational needs.

Another element of best promise—and one that providers particularly came to realise during the course of the pilot—was the inclusion of **introductory sessions** at the start of delivery. Introductory sessions between tutors and learners helped to build rapport between tutors and learners and increase learner confidence. Sessions for parents and carers were also helpful in securing buy-in and providers made the most of technology to hold these remotely. Organising these sessions required coordination between all stakeholders and could delay the onboarding process. But it was beneficial because it facilitated learner attendance and engagement.

Communication

As reflected throughout this report, communication between all stakeholders was key to successful delivery. Here we highlight two specific approaches to communication that were felt to be particularly effective.

First, school leads appreciated it when **providers and tutors communicated directly with parents and learners** to encourage engagement and troubleshoot technical issues. This meant that the pilot did not add additional burden for school staff during a challenging period.

Second, school leads, tutors, and providers felt that the **tuition was particularly effective when it was fully embedded in wider learning**. Teachers providing tutors with detailed notes about learners' development gaps and tutors consistently feeding back about the sessions, learner engagement, and progress both helped to achieve this.

Interpretation

The findings from this evaluation show that delivering online tuition during the school 'closures' was feasible. Providers, schools, tutors, and learners quickly adapted to what was a new learning model for most. Although there were key challenges around technology and the provision of equipment for home-based learners, the pilot reached a large number of disadvantaged learners and stakeholders felt that learners who took part benefited from the targeted support.

Below we reflect on some of our main findings, drawing out suggestions for future delivery.

Can online tuition reach a high proportion of disadvantaged learners?

Reach was high considering the circumstances of the pandemic, the short start-up time, and the summer holidays. However, some disadvantaged learners who would have benefited from the programme were unable to take it up. Key reasons for this were difficulties contacting parents or carers to explain the pilot and a lack of suitable equipment and internet connection for learners invited to take part at home. **To ensure high take-up of online tuition and make the offer fully inclusive, providers should ensure that schools have enough time to communicate with families and that the most disadvantaged learners can access suitable equipment.**

Close relationships between teachers and parents/carers helped drive high levels of attendance among primary school learners. At secondary level, teachers were less likely to know their pupils' families well and parents were less able to influence their children's participation. **To reduce the attendance gap between primary and secondary, providers should work closely with schools to identify the best means of communication with secondary school learners and their families.**

On average, learners working with providers delivering on a smaller scale attended a higher proportion of their tuition sessions than those working with larger providers. Part of the reason for this difference might have been that it was easier for providers working with fewer learners and schools to monitor attendance and identify any emerging problems. **To ensure attendance remains high while scaling delivery, smaller providers should consider how best to manage a high volume of school interaction, for instance, through setting up automated processes.**

Can online tuition improve engagement with education for disadvantaged learners?

The vast majority of learners who completed the feedback survey enjoyed the sessions and believed that online tuition was beneficial for their learning. Learners in primary school were more likely than older learners to say that they enjoyed learning more as a result. Older learners were more pragmatic, recognising the benefits without developing more

enjoyment of learning. **To increase engagement among older learners, providers could focus on communicating the benefits of tutoring for ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ outcomes.**

Learners who enjoyed the tuition were less likely to report missing sessions and more likely to report benefits for their learning. **To meet a range of learners’ needs and encourage engagement, providers should work with schools to ensure that learners receive the format (one-to-one vs. group) and mode (online vs. in-person) most suited to their needs.**

What factors support successful take-up and engagement?

Positive relationships between tutors and learners drove attendance and engagement. **Providers should allocate time and encourage tutors to invest in building rapport. They could also consider strategies for intervening early if relationships between tutors and learners prove to be challenging.**

School leads and providers felt that it was more straightforward to deliver online tuition to learners at school than at home. School-based delivery meant that learners could make use of school-owned equipment, and gave a greater sense of accountability. **To future-proof delivery in the case of local lockdowns and school ‘closures’, providers could consider a hybrid model that combines home-based and school-based delivery and meets families’ needs.**

Regular and personalised communication with learners and parents/caregivers was key to ensuring buy-in and facilitating learner attendance and engagement. **To ensure parental and learner engagement with tutoring, providers and schools should be clear about roles, responsibilities, and processes around communicating with their parents and learners.**

Are there particular barriers to take-up and engagement and successful approaches to overcoming those barriers?

As well as prohibiting initial take-up, learners who experienced technological challenges such as poor internet connection or a lack of suitable equipment reported lower enjoyment of the tuition and were more likely to miss sessions. This is concerning because we know that more disadvantaged learners are most likely to experience these barriers (Children’s Commissioner, 2020; IFS 2020; Sutton Trust, 2020). **To ensure that online tuition is accessible to all and able to mitigate the growing attainment gap, providers and schools should work together to identify any technological barriers for individual learners and consider appropriate solutions. This might include providing equipment or inviting learners to take part at school rather than at home.**

Tutors found it more difficult to build rapport with learners online than in-person. This may have been one of the reasons that learners expressed a preference for in-person tuition. **To address the limitations of online delivery, providers should invest in introductory sessions and consider having these first sessions in-person if possible.**

Some schools felt uninformed about learners’ progress and wanted more regular feedback about the tutoring from providers or tutors. At the same time, some tutors lacked the information that they needed to start the tuition with learners’ individual needs in mind. **To ensure that online tuition meaningfully complements classroom learning, providers should develop clear and regular two-way communication channels with schools.**

Limitations

There were some key methodological and substantive limitations to this pilot evaluation that informed our interpretation of findings and that readers should be aware of:

- Quantifying impacts on learning was beyond the scope of this study. However, our learner survey and focus groups with tutors, teachers, and learners asked about perceived impacts. We have also drawn on feedback gathered by the providers.
- Research with learners who were offered the tuition but declined to take part was also beyond the scope of our evaluation. Reported findings about why some learners did not take part are from the perspective of school leads, tutors, and providers.

- Challenges around recruitment during the summer holidays meant that we were unable to facilitate focus groups with parents and caregivers. Our evaluation therefore does not include parents' and caregivers' perspectives on the acceptability of the tutoring and barriers and facilitators to take-up and attendance.
- School leads, tutors, and learners had to opt in to taking part in surveys and focus groups. Response to the learner feedback was particularly low and we are not able to see whether this is because learners did not want to take part or because not all learners in all schools were sent the invitation by their provider or school. It is likely that the achieved samples for both qualitative and quantitative data are not reflective of all schools and learners who participated in the pilot. For example, less engaged pupils may be less likely to have completed the online feedback survey and so positive experiences of the tutoring may be overrepresented. Comparing attendance data (which represents all learners who took part in the pilot) and learners' self-reported attendance suggests that the sample was biased towards learners who were very engaged or that learners wanted to give socially desirable answers (that is, under-report their absences).
- Research into the characteristics of tutors—and thus exploration of whether factors such as tutor qualifications, experience, or working arrangements affected delivery or perceived outcomes—was beyond the scope of the pilot.
- Cross-tabulating survey data enabled us to identify associations, but not causal relationships. For example, we found that learners who found their tutor helpful were less likely to report missing at least one session. One explanation is that learners who found their tutor helpful were more likely to be engaged with the tutoring and motivated to attend. However, it is possible that learners who missed sessions for other reasons were less likely to think of their tutor as helpful because they had received less tutoring. Where possible, we have drawn on qualitative data to explain patterns in the quantitative data.
- The wording of some survey questions was slightly different for younger and older learners. While the questions were designed to be comparable while using age-appropriate wording and formats, comparisons between primary and secondary learners should be treated with some caution.
- While we invited participants to reflect on wider implications, this study evaluated the feasibility of delivering online tuition to disadvantaged learners in the very specific circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic related school 'closures'. Future research and delivery will need to consider whether and how the factors that supported and inhibited reach and engagement in this context apply as schools return to in-person education.

Future research and publications

Other important avenues for future research include:

- identifying the most effective tools and approaches for communicating with schools, parents, and learners;
- understanding parents' and caregivers' perceptions of online tuition and the factors that encourage or make it difficult for them to support their children's participation (or not);
- exploring which groups of learners benefit from different models of tutoring (online vs. in person, one-to-one vs. small group);
- understanding how to best reach and benefit groups of disadvantaged learners with particular needs (such as young people with disabilities or those for whom English is an additional language); and
- identifying successful strategies for maintaining reach and quality as providers scale up delivery.

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Appendix A: School survey findings

Below are frequency tables for all variables in the school survey (Wave 2: 6 July – 18 July 2020).

Appendix A Table 1

Is your school a primary or secondary school?	n.	%
Primary	6	11
Secondary	41	77
Primary and Secondary combined	6	11
<i>Base</i>	53	100

Appendix A Table 2

Which tutoring organisation is your school working with?	n.	%
Action Tutoring	4	8
The Access Project	21	40
Tutor Trust	8	15
MyTutor	19	37
<i>Base</i>	52	100

Appendix A Table 3

How many learners at your school have been offered online tuition?	n.	%
Up to 15	9	20
16 - 49	13	28
50 or more	24	52
<i>Base</i>	46	100

Appendix A Table 4

How many learners at your school are currently taking part?	n.	%
Up to 15	13	32
16 - 49	19	46
50 or more	9	22
<i>Base</i>	41	100

Appendix A Table 5

Are any of the following challenges making it difficult for any learners in your school to take part in the online tuition at the moment?	n.	%
Lack of equipment	24	48
Lack of internet access	14	28
Lack of study space	15	30
Lack of motivation	29	58
Lack of time	2	4

Lack of digital skills	7	14
Lack of support from parents/other adults at home	24	48
Concerns about digital safety and privacy	5	10
Technical problems with the online tuition	12	24
Learners not enjoying the content of the tutoring sessions	1	2
Other challenge(s)	5	10
No challenges at this time	6	12
<i>Base</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix A Table 6

Is your school providing any support to help learners to access the online tuition at the moment?	n.	%
Providing equipment (e.g. laptops, tablets, headphones)	34	68
Communicating with learners	38	76
Communicating with parents	37	74
Inviting some learners to do the online tuition at school	15	30
Inviting all learners to do the online tuition at school	3	6
Giving feedback to tutoring organisations	20	40
Other support	4	8
<i>Base</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B: Learner feedback survey findings

Below are frequency tables for variables in the learner feedback survey (Wave 2: 6 July – 18 July 2020).

Appendix B Table 1

Tuition provider	n.	%
Action Tutoring	48	15
MyTutor	73	23
The Access Project	173	56
Tutor Trust	17	5
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 2

Had you ever had a tutor before this?	n.	%
Yes	144	46
No	167	54
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 3

Where were you during your online tutoring lessons?	n.	%
At home	227	73
At school	52	17
Sometimes at home, sometimes at school	28	9
Somewhere else	4	1
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 4

Was it always just you and your tutor in your online tutoring lessons?	n.	%
Yes – it was always just me and my tutor in the online tutoring lessons	278	89
No – my tutor sometimes taught me and other pupils at the same time	33	11
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 5

Did you miss any online tutoring lessons?	n.	%
Yes	141	45
No	170	55
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 6

Missed session(s) because...	n.	%
Forgot	30	10
Was too busy	55	18
Internet wasn't working	42	14
Didn't have a computer or tablet to use that day	26	8
Didn't like tutor	5	2
Lessons were too long	4	1
Lessons were too difficult	4	1
Lessons were too easy	3	1
Didn't have somewhere quiet to take part	16	5
Another reason	22	7
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 7

Did any of these things make it difficult for you to learn during your online tutoring lessons?	n.	%
I had problems connecting to the internet	115	37
I didn't like my tutor	10	3
The lessons were too difficult	7	2
The lessons were too easy	4	1
The lessons were too long	8	3
My tutor interrupted me when I was trying to do the work	5	2
Other people in the same room as me distracted me during the lessons ¹⁵	34	13
None of these things	167	54
<i>Base: All learners</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 8

If you had the opportunity, would you like to carry on with tutoring?	n.	%
Yes	235	87
No	35	13
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>100</i>

Appendix B Table 9

If you had the choice, would you prefer to continue online or have face-to-face tutoring lessons?	n.	%
Online lessons	101	37
Face-to-face lessons	169	63
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	<i>270</i>	<i>100</i>

¹⁵ This was only asked of learners in Year 10 and above and so the base for this variable is 270 rather than 311.

Appendix B Table 10

How much do you agree: My tutor was helpful	n.	%
Not at all	7	3
A bit	33	12
A lot	230	85
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 11

How much do you agree: My tutor was fun	n.	%
Not at all	21	8
A bit	111	41
A lot	138	51
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 12

How much do you agree: My tutor was inspiring	n.	%
Not at all	23	9
A bit	100	37
A lot	147	54
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 13

How much do you agree: My tutor was knowledgeable	n.	%
Not at all	7	3
A bit	27	10
A lot	236	87
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 14

How much do you agree: My tutor was patient (Y10+ only)	n.	%
Not at all	9	3
A bit	24	9
A lot	237	88
<i>Base</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 15

How much do you agree: My tutor was passionate	n.	%
Not at all	11	4
A bit	59	22

A lot	200	74
<i>Base: All Y10+ learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 16

What did you like or dislike: Doing the lessons online	n.	%
I didn't like this	48	18
I didn't like or dislike this	80	30
I liked this	139	51
This does not apply to me	3	1
<i>Base: All learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 17

What did you like or dislike: Being the only learner in the lesson	n.	%
I didn't like this	13	5
I didn't like or dislike this	38	14
I liked this	212	79
This does not apply to me	7	3
<i>Base: All learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 18

What did you like or dislike: Being with other learners in the lesson	n.	%
I didn't like this	12	4
I didn't like or dislike this	20	7
I liked this	18	4
This does not apply to me	220	81
<i>Base: All learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 19

What did you like or dislike: The content of the lesson	n.	%
I didn't like this	9	3
I didn't like or dislike this	42	16
I liked this	216	80
This does not apply to me	3	1
<i>Base: All learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 20

What did you like or dislike: My tutor	n.	%
I didn't like this	6	2
I didn't like or dislike this	19	7

I liked this	240	89
This does not apply to me	5	2
<i>Base: All learners</i>	270	100

Appendix B Table 21

How much do you agree: I enjoyed the online tutoring lessons	n.	%
Not at all	20	6.43
A bit	129	41.48
A lot	162	52.09
<i>Base: All learners</i>	311	100

Appendix B Table 22

How much do you agree: I feel more confident doing my schoolwork because of the online tutoring lessons	n.	%
Not at all	31	9.97
A bit	100	32.15
A lot	180	57.88
<i>Base: All learners</i>	311	100

Appendix B Table 23

How much do you agree: I now enjoy learning more than I did before I had online tutoring lessons	n.	%
Not at all	75	24.12
A bit	141	45.34
A lot	95	30.55
<i>Base: All learners</i>	311	100

Appendix B Table 24

How much do you agree: I feel like I am better prepared for exams	n.	%
Not at all	32	10.29
A bit	138	44.37
A lot	141	45.34
<i>Base: All learners</i>	311	100

Appendix C: Example recruitment materials

Information sheet for schools

Evaluation of the Online Tuition Pilot

Information for Schools

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) have asked the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to evaluate the Online Tuition Pilot. Our evaluation will help the EEF, tutoring organisations and policy makers to understand the most effective ways of delivering online tuition. We want to understand what helps learners to take part in online tuition, and how tutoring organisations, schools and learners can overcome any challenges and barriers that might make it difficult for them to engage.

This information sheet provides some answers to frequently asked questions about the evaluation for schools who have been invited to take part. You can find out more at www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition or by contacting the NatCen research team on 0808 1640 397 or at onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

What will taking part involve for my school?

- NatCen will **analyse attendance and feedback data** collected by the tutoring organisations from May/June to September 2020 to understand how the pilot is working in practice. The data will be anonymised, and we will not report on individual schools' or learners' progress.
- NatCen will also ask the lead staff member for the project at your school to complete a **short, five-question survey every two weeks** between June and early September 2020 (seven or eight times in total). The survey will ask about how many learners have been offered and taken up the online tutoring, any barriers they face and any support your school is offering learners.
- NatCen might also invite this lead staff member to take part in an **online group discussion** with school leaders at other pilot schools in July 2020, to share your school's experiences.
- NatCen might also invite some learners from your school and their parents to take part in an **online discussion** with each other and one of our researchers. In this group we would ask about how they have found the tutoring and what has made it easier or more difficult for them to take part in the tutoring.

Does my school have to take part?

If your school is taking part in the online tuition pilot, you will be part of the evaluation and your students' attendance and feedback data will be analysed (unless they or their parents object to this).

Participation in the survey and the online discussion groups will be voluntary, but we really hope your staff and learners will take part. It is important to hear everyone's views about online tuition and how it is progressing, to help the tutoring organisations to make sure that the tutoring works as well as possible during these unusual times and to inform future initiatives.

What will happen to the information I give?

We will share findings from our evaluation activities with EEF and the four tutoring organisations on an ongoing basis throughout the pilot. At the end of the pilot, we will provide a presentation for tutoring organisations, the EEF, co-funders and other stakeholders and a published report.

We won't use any names, school names or any information that could identify individual staff or learners in any of the reports or presentations.

Who is NatCen?

We are an independent, not-for-profit social research organisation that carries out research on a wide range of social issues, including a lot of evaluations for the EEF. You can find out more at www.natcen.ac.uk.

Your privacy

We will keep the information we collect safe and secure, meeting the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The information will be used for research purposes only. To find out about how NatCen will use your data you can visit www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition.

Information sheet for tutors:

Evaluation of the Online Tuition Pilot

Information for Tutors

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) have asked the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to evaluate the Online Tuition Pilot. Our evaluation will help the EEF, tutoring organisations and policy makers to understand the most effective ways of delivering online tuition. We want to understand what helps learners to take part in online tuition, and how tutoring organisations, schools and learners can overcome any challenges and barriers that might make it difficult for them to engage.

This information sheet provides some answers to frequently asked questions about the evaluation for tutors who are part of the pilot. You can find out more at www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition or by contacting the **NatCen research team** on 0808 1640397 or at onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

What will taking part involve?

- NatCen will **analyse attendance and feedback data** collected by the tutoring organisations from May/June to September 2020 to understand how the pilot is working in practice. The data will be anonymised, and we will not report on individual schools', learners' or tutors' involvement.
- NatCen might also invite you to take part in an **online group discussion** with other tutors working for The Access Project in July and August 2020, to share your experiences.

Do I have to take part?

If you are delivering tutoring as part of the online tuition, you will be part of the evaluation and your learners' attendance and feedback data will be analysed (unless they object to this).

If you are invited to take part in the online discussion group, it will be completely voluntary, but we really hope you will take part. It is important to hear tutors' views about online tuition and how it is progressing. What you say will help The Access Project and other tutoring organisations to make sure that the tutoring works as well as possible during these unusual times and will inform future online tutoring initiatives.

What will happen to the information I give?

We will share findings from our evaluation activities with EEF and the four tutoring organisations on an ongoing basis throughout the pilot. At the end of the pilot, we will provide a presentation for tutoring organisations, the EEF, co-funders and other stakeholders and a published report.

We won't use any names, school names or any information that could identify individual tutors or learners in any of the reports or presentations.

Who are NatCen?

We are an independent social research organisation that does research on several topics, including a lot of evaluations for the EEF. You can find out more at www.natcen.ac.uk

Your privacy

We will keep the information we collect safe and secure, meeting the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The information will be used for research purposes only. To find out about how NatCen will use your data you can visit www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition

Information sheet for secondary learners:

Evaluation of the Online Tuition Pilot

Information for Learners

We (NatCen) are evaluating the Online Tuition Pilot. We want to understand how tutoring organisations, schools and learners can support learners like you to take part in online tutoring.

This information sheet provides some answers to frequently asked questions about the evaluation for learners who have been invited to take part. You can find out more at www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition or by contacting the NatCen research team on 0808 1640 397 or at onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

Who is doing the research?

We (NatCen) are an independent social research organisation that does research on several topics, including education. The evaluation is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), an educational charity.

What will taking part involve?

- [Provider] will give us information about things like the number of sessions that you attend and how long they last.
- [Provider] will also ask you to give feedback about the tutoring sessions and will share this feedback with us.
- We might also invite you to take part in an online group discussion with other learners from your school in July or August 2020. In these discussions we would ask you what you think about the tutoring sessions and what helps you learn.

What will happen to the information I give?

We will use all of the information we collect to investigate how the tutoring is working, who it is reaching and what helps or makes it difficult for learners to take part. We won't be reporting on individual information about you.

We will share what we find out with EEF and the tutoring organisations once every two weeks. At the end of the project we will also give a presentation and write a report that will be published.

We won't use your name, or any information that could identify you, in any of the reports or presentations.

Do I have to take part?

No, it's up to you.

If you do not want [provider] to share information about the sessions you attend, please email [\[provider email\]](#) to let them know.

Giving feedback on the sessions will be voluntary. If you don't want [provider] to share your feedback with us, please email [\[provider email\]](#) to let them know.

If we contact invite you to join a **group discussion**, it will be voluntary and you will have the choice to say no.

Where can I find out more about the research?

You can find more information on our website: www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition

Or you can contact the research team on 0808 1640 397 or onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

Your privacy

We will keep the information we collect safe and secure under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The information will be used for research purposes only. To find out about how NatCen will use your data you can visit www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition.

Information sheet for primary learners:

Evaluation of the Online Tuition Pilot

Information for Learners

NatCen are doing some research about the Online Tuition Pilot. This sheet has some answers to questions you might have about the research.

What is the research about?



We want to know what can help learners like you to take part in online tutoring.

Who is doing the research?



NatCen are doing this research for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Your school and tutors are helping us.

What will taking part involve?

[Provider] will give us information about things like the **number of sessions** that you have and how long they last.



[Provider] will also ask you for **feedback** on what you think of the sessions and will share this with us.

We might also invite you and your parent/carer to take part in an **online group discussion** with 2-3 other learners from your school. We would ask you what you think about the tutoring sessions and what helps you learn.

Do I have to take part?

Your views are very important, but it's up to you and your parent/carer.



If you do not want [provider] to share information about the sessions you attend, please email [provider email] to let them know.

If you don't want to give any feedback on the sessions, you can choose not to.

If we invite you and your parent/carer to join a group discussion, you can say always say no.

What will happen to the information I give?

We will share what we find out with EEF and the tutoring organisations once every two weeks. At the end of the research we will also give a presentation and write a report.



We won't use your name, or any information that could identify you, in any of the reports or presentations.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions, you can take a look at our website: www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition



You or your parent/carer can also contact us on 0808 1640 397
or at onlinetuition@naticen.ac.uk

Information sheet for parents

Research about the Online Tuition Pilot

Information for Parents and Carers

We (NatCen) are evaluating the Online Tuition Pilot. We want to understand how tutoring organisations, schools and teachers can support learners like your child to take part in online tutoring.

This information sheet provides some answers to frequently asked questions about the research for learners and their parents/carers.

Who is doing the research?

We (NatCen) are an independent social research organisation that does research on several topics, including education. The research is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), an educational charity.

What does the research involve?

- [Provider] will give us information about things like the number of sessions that **your child** attends and how long they last.
- [Provider] will also ask **your child** to give feedback about the tutoring sessions and will share this feedback with us.
- We might also invite **you and your child** each to take part in an online group discussion in July or August 2020. We would ask what you and your child think about the tutoring sessions and what helps your child learn and take part in the sessions.

Do we have to take part?

Your and your child's views are very important, but it is up to you and your child.

If you do not want [Provider] to share information about the sessions your child attends, please email [provider email] to let them know.

If your child does not want to give feedback on the sessions, they can choose not to.

If we contact invite you to join a group discussion, you and your child will have the choice to say no.

What will happen to my child's and my information?

We will use the information we collect to find out how the tutoring is working, who it is reaching and what helps or makes it difficult for learners like your child to take part.

We will share what we find out with EEF and the tutoring organisations once every two weeks. At the end of the project we will also give a presentation and write a report that will be published.

We won't use any names or any information that can identify you or your child in any of the reports or presentations.

Where can I find out more about the research?

You can find more information on our website: www.natcen.ac.uk/onlinetuition

Or you can contact the research team on 0808 1640 397 or onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk

Your privacy

We will keep the information we collect safe and secure under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The information will be used for research purposes only. To find out about how NatCen will use your data you can visit

Appendix D: Example topic guides

Topic guide for Y10 and Y11 Learner Group Discussion

Aim of the group discussion:

The aim of the group discussion with Y10 & Y11 learners is to explore the following questions:

1. Can online tuition improve engagement with education for disadvantaged learners?
2. What contextual factors support successful take-up?
3. Are there particular barriers to take-up and engagement with online tuition and successful approaches to overcoming those barriers?
4. Are there particular features of programmes that show best promise?

The topic guide:

This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the focus groups. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the 60-minute group discussion. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

The discussion will last **60 minutes**.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Aim of group discussion is to have a conversation about:
 - their experiences of the tutoring
 - what helps learners take part in the tutoring and what makes it more difficult
 - what works well about the tutoring and what could be improved
- Participation is voluntary – they can choose not to discuss any topic. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Audio recording – we will be recording the interview, so we have an accurate record of what is said. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. Check OK.
- Data protection – data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.
- How we'll report findings – we will not mention their name or the school's name.
- Group rules:
 - we would like them to keep anything that is said today to themselves so that everybody feels comfortable sharing experiences and opinions.
 - this will be a discussion between the group. We are interested in hearing everyone's views.
 - it's ok to have different opinions but important to be respectful of all group members and listen to what others have to say.
 - If they don't feel comfortable answering a question they don't need to answer.

- Reminder of group discussion length - will finish at X pm at the latest. Check OK.
- Reminder that we will send the code for the £20 voucher after the discussion (if applicable)
- Any questions/concerns?
- Permission to record and informed consent
 - Can you please confirm that you are happy for the discussion to be audio recorded.
 - Can you also please confirm that you are happy to take part in the discussion.
- Start recording

1. Background and context

Aim: To gather background information on the participants and ease them into the group discussion.

Note to facilitator: Ask each participant

Participant information

- Name
- Year group
- One nice thing they have done in the last week

Tutoring experience

- Whether they have had tutoring before
 - From same/different tutor

2. Description of tutoring sessions

Aim: To gather details about what online tutoring looks like and

Typical online session

- What does their typical online session look like?
 - Location
 - Length and frequency of sessions
 - Breaks
 - Format (1-2-1 or small group)

Mode of delivery

- **If previously have done face-to-face tutoring:** How they would describe the main difference between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring
- **If previously have done online-tutoring:** How they would describe the main difference between doing online tutoring now compared to the time before Covid-19

Key ingredients

- What they think makes a good online tutoring session
 - Content
 - Tutor
 - Easy platform

3. Barriers/facilitators to participation and engagement

Aim: To explore what helps and hinders participation and engagement for learners

Barriers to attendance

Note to facilitator: Explain to learners that you would now like to discuss some of the things that might make it difficult for them to attend sessions. To do this, you will share with them a slide which includes some items that might make attendance difficult.

Read the items out loud and ask each learner to share anything think makes attending difficult for them. They can discuss items not on the list. Give them about 20 seconds to think before opening up the discussion:

- What makes it difficult to attend
 - Why
- What might be difficult for others to attend
 - Why

Solutions and facilitators to attendance

- Whether there has been anything that has helped them overcome these challenges
 - Things they've done
 - Help from parents/school/tutor organisation
- Whether they can think of anything else that could help them attend

Barriers to engagement

Note to facilitator: Explain to learners that you would now like to discuss some of the things that might make it difficult for them to engage with sessions. To do this, you will share with them a slide which includes some items that might make engagement difficult.

Read the items out loud and ask each learner to share anything think makes it difficult for them to engage. They can discuss items not on the list. Give them about 20 seconds to think before opening up the discussion:

- What makes it difficult for them to engage
 - Why
- What might make it difficult for others to engage

Solutions and facilitators to engagement

- Whether there has been anything that has helped them overcome these challenges
 - Things they've done
 - Help from parents/school/tutor organisation
- Whether they can think of anything else that could help them learn

4. Perceived benefits

Aim: To explore participants' overall views of pilot and perceived benefits.

Benefits

- How much they feel online tutoring has helped them feel

- More confident with schoolwork
- More enjoyment of learning
- Better prepared for exams
- Anything else?

Overall views

- What they like most
- What they like least

5. Concluding remarks

Aim: To gather thoughts on future participation and final comments.

- Would they want to continue with online tutoring
- One thing they would improve about online tutoring
- Anything else

TURN OFF RECORDER

- Thank participants for their time and for the helpful discussion
- Stress the value of discussion in helping to shape the project
- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity
- Explain that you will send them an email shortly with the access code for the shopping voucher they received via email. Please ask them to get in touch if they don't receive the email (if applicable)
- Explain dissemination plans - Evaluation report will be published early 2021
- Wish them a restful summer and say that you will stay on the call for a bit longer in case they would like to discuss anything further

Topic guide for School Lead Group Discussion

Aim of the group discussion:

The aim of the group discussion with school leads is to explore the following questions:

1. What contextual factors support successful take-up?
2. What are barriers and successful approaches to overcoming these?
3. Are there particular features of programmes that show best promise?

The topic guide:

This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the focus groups. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the 60-minute focus group. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

The discussion will last **60 minutes**.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Aim of group discussion is to have a conversation about:
 - learner take-up of the online tuition offer
 - what has helped and hindered take up for learners
 - what has worked well and less well about the pilot overall
- Participation is voluntary – they can not to discuss any topic. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Recording – we will be recording the discussion, so we have an accurate record of what is said. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. Check OK.
- Data protection – data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.
- How we'll report findings – we will not mention their name or the school's name but due to the small number of participating schools their views may be identifiable.
- Group rules:
 - we would like them to keep anything that is said today to themselves so that everybody feels comfortable sharing experiences and opinions.
 - this will be a discussion between the group. We are interested in hearing everyone's views.
 - it's ok to have different opinions but important to be respectful of all group members and listen to what others have to say.
- Reminder of group discussion length - will last around an hour. Check OK.
- Any questions/concerns?
- Permission to start recording.

1. Background and context

Aim: To gather background information on the participants and ease participants into the group discussion.

Note to facilitator: Ask each participant.

Participant information

- Job role
- How they would describe school
- One positive feature of lockdown for school

Pilot participation

- Reason for joining pilot
- When tuition will finish

2. Description of pilot at schools

Aim: To gather basic details about pilot delivery at their schools.

Note to facilitator: Ask each participant.

- Year groups that are being offered pilot
- Location of tutoring
 - At home
 - In the classroom
- Format of tutoring
 - 1-1
 - other

3. Set-up process

Aim: To explore the set-up process at their schools and take-up to date.

Working with tutor organisation

- How long school has worked with them
- Why they decided to work with them

Onboarding and selection

- Description of onboarding
 - Requirements
 - Challenges
- Process of selecting learners
 - Challenges

Take-up

- Whether take-up has been higher or lower than expected

4. Barriers and facilitators to take-up

Aim: To explore barriers and facilitators to taking part for learners and solutions to overcoming challenges.

Note to facilitator: *be clear that we are not talking about general barriers and facilitators they experienced in delivering the programme but are talking specifically about barriers and facilitators to taking part take-up.*

Where applicable, probe for differences between face-to-face and online tutoring and whether challenges are particular to current context or more generic

Barriers

- At sign-up stage
 - Technical problems with online platform
 - Lack of equipment/internet access
 - Lack of support from parents
 - Concerns about digital safety/privacy
- For ongoing participation
- For specific learners
 - with special educational needs and disability (SEND)
 - with English As and Additional Language (EAL)

- Whether they expect barriers to be the same in other schools
 - If so, why
 - If not, why not
- Any unexpected challenges
- Any anticipated barriers (if tuition continues)

Solutions

- What they have done to address these challenges
- What could be done to address them

Facilitators

- What has helped to sign up learners
- What has helped ongoing participation
- Any anticipated challenges that didn't turn out to be any

5. Views on pilot

Aim: To explore participants' overall views of the pilot to date and perceived benefits.

Note to facilitator: *Where applicable, explore whether they think benefits/challenges are particular to current context or more generic*

Views

- What has gone well so far/less well
 - Set up process with tutor organisation
 - Working with tutors
 - Online platform
 - Scheduling lessons
 - Duration/number of lessons

Perceived benefits

- Whether they think the pilot has improved learner engagement
 - Any other perceived benefits

6. Concluding remarks

Aim: To gather thoughts on the future of online tuition for the school and suggestions for improvement.

- Whether they would continue with online tuition after pilot
- Suggestions for improvement
- Any other final comments/ remarks

TURN OFF RECORDER

- Thank them for their time and for the helpful discussion
- Stress the value of discussion in helping to shape the project

- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity
- Next steps –
 - Fieldwork – explain we are also conducting FGs with tutors and learners
 - School survey – encourage them to keep completing school survey for as long as tuition is ongoing
 - Dissemination
 - Presenting findings fortnightly to the tutoring organisations (and funders) so that they can make changes
 - Presenting final findings to the tutoring organisations, funders and other stakeholders like DfE in the autumn
 - Evaluation report will be published early 2021

Appendix E: Survey questionnaires

Fortnightly survey of schools

Landing page

Online Tuition Pilot

This is the short survey that all schools participating in the Online Tuition Pilot will be asked to complete every two weeks. It shouldn't take you more than **five minutes** to complete.

If you have any questions or experience any problems completing the survey, please contact the NatCen evaluation team on 0808 1640 397 or email onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk

Thank you for completing this survey. It will help to make sure that the online tuition works as well as possible for your learners.

Background section

Before you start the survey, please give us some basic information about your school.

Please enter your school postcode.

We are asking for your postcode so that we don't confuse your answers with other schools. We won't use it to identify you and won't include the postcode of name of your school in any of our reports.

Stage

Is your school a primary or secondary school?

- Primary
- Secondary
- Primary and Secondary combined

Organisation

Which tutoring organisation is your school working with?

- Action Tutoring
- The Access Project
- Tutor Trust
- MyTutor

Main section

Offered

1. How many learners at your school have been offered online tuition as part of this pilot?
<numeric>

TakingPart

2. How many learners at your school are currently taking part in the online tuition?
<numeric>

Barriers

3. Are any of the following challenges making it difficult for any learners in your school to take part in the online tuition at the moment?

Please select all that apply.

- Lack of equipment (e.g. laptop, tablet, headphones)
- Lack of internet access
- Lack of study space
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of time
- Lack of digital skills
- Lack of support from parents/other adults at home
- Concerns about digital safety and privacy
- Technical problems with the online tuition
- Learners not enjoying the content of the tutoring sessions
- Other <specify>
- No challenges at this time

Engagement

4. Is your school providing any support to help learners to access the online tuition at the moment?

Please select all that apply.

- Providing equipment (e.g. laptops, tablets, headphones)
- Communicating with learners
- Communicating with parents
- Inviting some learners to do the online tuition at school
- Inviting all learners to do the online tuition at school
- Giving feedback to tutoring organisations
- Other <specify>
- School isn't providing any support at this time

Feedback

5. What is the one piece of feedback you would like to give the tutoring organisation you are working with to best improve the online tuition over the next two weeks? (300 characters max)

Closing page

Thank you for taking your time to complete our survey. We look forward to reading your responses. In the meantime, should you have any questions, please contact the NatCen evaluation team at: onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk or 0808 1640 397

Learner feedback survey (Y5-9)

Landing page

Online Tuition Pilot

Welcome to our short survey about the online tutoring you have been doing. You might want to ask an adult to help you answer our questions.

If you have any problems doing the survey or want to ask us any questions, you or your parent or carer can call us on 0808 1640 397 or email onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking part.

Main section

Year

What year group will you be in when you go back to school in September?

For example – year 6

[open text box]

Location

Where were you when you did your online tutoring?

- At home
- At school
- Sometimes at home, sometimes at school
- Somewhere else <specify>

Format

Was it always just you and your tutor in your online tutoring lessons?

- Yes – it was always just me and my tutor in the online tutoring lessons
- No – my tutor sometimes taught me and other pupils at the same time

{ask if Format = No}

Format_Pref

Which type of lesson did you like the most?

- Lessons where it was just me and my tutor
- Lessons with other pupils

Miss

Did you miss any online tutoring lessons?

- Yes
- No

{ask if Miss = Yes}

Barriers_Att

Did you miss any online tutoring lessons because...?

Please tick all the boxes that apply to you

- I forgot
- I was too busy
- My internet wasn't working
- I didn't have a computer or tablet that I could use that day
- I didn't like my tutor
- The lessons were too long
- The lessons were too difficult
- The lessons were too easy
- I didn't have somewhere quiet to take part
- Something else – please tell us the reason _____

Barriers_Eng

Did any of these things make it difficult for you to learn in your online tutoring lessons?

You can tick as many answers as you like.

- I had problems connecting to the internet, for example I couldn't hear or see my tutor properly
- I didn't like my tutor
- The lessons were too difficult
- The lessons were too easy
- The lessons were too long
- My tutor interrupted me when I was trying to do the work
- None of these things

EnjoyLes

Did you enjoy the online tutoring lessons?

- Not at all
- A bit
- A lot

EnjoyLearn

Do you now enjoy learning more than you did before you had online tutoring?

- Not at all
- A bit
- A lot

Helpsw

Will the online tutoring help you with your school work?

- Not at all

- A bit
- A lot

Tests

Do you feel better prepared for tests because of the online tutoring?

- Not at all
- A bit
- A lot

PrevTut

Had you ever had a tutor before this?

- Yes
- No

Learner feedback survey (Y10-13)

Landing page

Online Tuition Pilot

Welcome to our short survey about the National Online Tuition pilot. It shouldn't take you more than **ten minutes** to complete.

If you have any problems doing the survey or want to ask us any questions, you can call us on 0808 1640 397 or email onlinetuition@natcen.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking part.

Main section

Year

What year group were you in during the 2019/2020 school year?

- Year 10 or 11
- Year 12 or 13

Location

Where were you during your online tutoring lessons?

- At home
- At school
- Sometimes at home, sometimes at school
- Somewhere else <specify>

Format

Was it always just you and your tutor in your online tutoring lessons?

- Yes – it was always just me and my tutor in the online tutoring lessons
- No – my tutor sometimes taught me and other learners at the same time

If Format=No

Format_B

Which of these types of online tutoring lessons did you receive?

Please tick all the boxes that apply to you, even if you only received the type of lesson once.

- Online tutoring lessons where I was the only learner in the lesson
- Online tutoring lessons with one other learner in the lesson
- Online tutoring lessons with two other learners in the lesson
- Other <specify>

If Format=No

Format_Pref

Which type of lesson did you like the most?

[Display Format_B responses]

Miss

Did you miss any online tutoring lessons?

- Yes
- No

{ask if Miss = Yes}

Barriers_Att

Did you miss any online tutoring lessons because...?

Please tick all the boxes that apply to you

1. I forgot
2. I was too busy
3. My internet wasn't working
4. I didn't have a computer or tablet that I could use that day
5. I didn't like my tutor
6. The lessons were too long
7. The lessons were too difficult
8. The lessons were too easy
9. I didn't have somewhere quiet to take part
10. Something else – please tell us the reason _____

Barriers_Eng

Did any of these things make it difficult for you to learn during your online tutoring lessons?

Please tick all the boxes that apply to you

1. I had problems connecting to the internet, for example I couldn't hear or see my tutor properly
2. I didn't like my tutor
3. The lessons were too difficult
4. The lessons were too easy
5. The lessons were too long
6. My tutor interrupted me when I was trying to do the work
7. Other people in the same room as me distracted me during the lessons, for example making noise while I was trying to listen to my tutor
8. None of these things

Adj

How much do you agree with the following statements?

My tutor was...

[Single response grid]

1. Helpful
2. Fun
3. Inspiring
4. Knowledgeable
5. Patient
6. Passionate

- Not at all
- A bit
- A lot

Like

What did you like or dislike about the online tutoring lessons?

[Single response grid]

1. Doing the lessons online
2. Being the only learner in the lesson
3. Being with other learners in the lesson
4. The content of the lesson
5. My tutor

- I didn't like this
- I didn't like or dislike this
- I liked this
- This does not apply to me

Impact

How much do you agree with the following statements?

[Single response grid]

1. I enjoyed the online tutoring lessons
2. I feel more confident doing my schoolwork because of the online tutoring lessons
3. I now enjoy learning more than I did before I had online tutoring lessons
4. I feel like I am better prepared for exams

- Not at all
- A bit
- A lot

PrevTut

Had you ever had a tutor before this?

- Yes
- No

Continue

If you had the opportunity, would you like to carry on with tutoring?

- Yes
- No

Mode

If you had the choice, would you prefer to continue online or have to face-to-face tutoring lessons?

- Online lessons
- Face-to-face lessons

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