

CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

ON AIR



TAKE TWO 2021-2025 Evaluation Report

**“It’s made me realise there are other possibilities
... and when someone says anything is possible,
that’s not a lie - anything *is* possible.”**

Take Two Participant

TAKE TWO – Integrated Creative Learning with Young People facing complex barriers

Take Two, run by Cambridge Junction from 2021 to 2025, was a multi-year creative learning initiative for young people facing significant barriers to education or with complex needs. The programme partnered with four alternative education providers in Cambridge and delivered filmmaking projects and arts-based activities to almost 260 participants.

THE PARTNERS:



Olive AP Academy
CAMBRIDGE

Olive AP Academy is
an alternative provision

for secondary learners at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. 35 young people from Olive AP participated in Take Two.

The Cabins are based within secondary schools and support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). 116 learners took part from across St. Peter's, Comberton & Melbourn cabins.



Red Balloon is an
alternative provision



centre for young people aged 11-16 that have self-excluded from mainstream school due to mental health challenges or bullying. 71 young people participated in Take Two.

Pilgrim Pathways provides education for children and young people with complex mental & physical health needs, based in hospitals. 35 young people participated.



THE AIMS OF TAKE TWO WERE:

To provide young people with a range of opportunities to exercise agency, explore their own values and have their voices heard through arts-based activities, while developing interpersonal, creative & technical skills, and improvements to confidence and wellbeing.

To connect education partners with professional artists, via specialist creative projects for their students; and to enhance teachers' appreciation and understanding of arts-based learning.

For Cambridge Junction:

To develop & better understand their practice in working with young people with complex needs through collaborative creative learning projects (with a view to sharing it with others)

To explore how the combination of intensive creative projects and tailored year-round activities for specific groups adds value and supports learner progression.

To model an integrated, responsive and sustainable approach to partnership working which centres young people as active patrons of Cambridge Junction and its programme.

OUR FUNDERS

Take Two was funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, with additional grants from The Evelyn Trust, The Limbourne Trust, Red Hill Trust, The Pye Foundation, Tees Better Future Fund, and D&J Lloyd Community First Fund. Further support came from Arts Council England, Cambridge City Council and individual donors – without whom these types of programme would not exist.



The Limbourne Trust

TAKE TWO STRUCTURE & KEY OUTCOMES:



22 film projects
28 films produced
209 filmmakers



34 opportunities to
attend shows &
participate in projects



257 participants
aged 9-17 years

22 COLLABORATIVE FILMMAKING PROJECTS:

Tailored to the needs of each group and led by artist-facilitators with relevant lived experience.

Tasters ran over 2-3 sessions; **Intensives** ran for 10 - 20 sessions over several weeks

209 young people contributed to the making of 24 films & 4 documentaries.

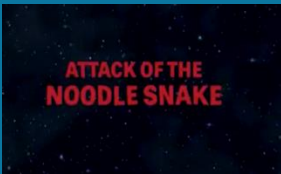


Facilitators:

Liv Ello Claire Nolan
Jas Pitt Natty Sobhee
Tink Flaherty Desree
Albert Mensah
Dauda Sols Ladejobi
Peter Harmer
Farah Dryden
HighRise Theatre
Lyrix Organix



102 young people from across 3 **Cabins** settings produced 8 films in total, including:



35 young people based in **Pilgrim Pathways** settings created 8 films that collated animated shorts created by individuals or small groups:



30 young people across 3 projects with **Olive AP Academy** produced 4 films and another 4 behind-the-scenes documentaries:



42 young people from **Red Balloon Learners** centre produced 5 films over 3 projects:



TOTAL ARTS FILM FESTIVAL:

Each year, Take Two participants were invited to a professional screening of their films at the Total Arts Film Festival held in June at Cambridge Junction, in partnership with the Light Cinema.

Curated by Total Arts, the festival runs for two days and involves workshops, screenings and a red-carpet celebration event with award presentation. Family and friends are also invited. All filmmakers are listed in the programme and given a visual story and schedule in preparation for the event.



60% of Take Two participants attended a Total Arts Film Festival



TAKE TWO STRUCTURE & KEY OUTCOMES contd.:

INDUSTRY DAYS

Designed to help young people learn about different roles in the arts and to gain insight into the creative industries - involving interactive workshops, a tour of the venue, and a Q&A session with Cambridge Junction staff and various artists.

20 young people from St. Peter's Cabin participated: 15 attended a Virtual Industry Day in March 2023; 5 attended an in-person session in November 2023.



205 Take Two learners attended additional shows.

152 participated in additional community art

COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS to shows at Cambridge Junction.

This included:

- The annual Christmas show (2021, 2022, 2024)
- Anders Duckwork's multisensory 'Mapping Gender' (2022)
- SK Shlomo's BREATHE (2023)
- Gandini's new show *Heka* (2024)

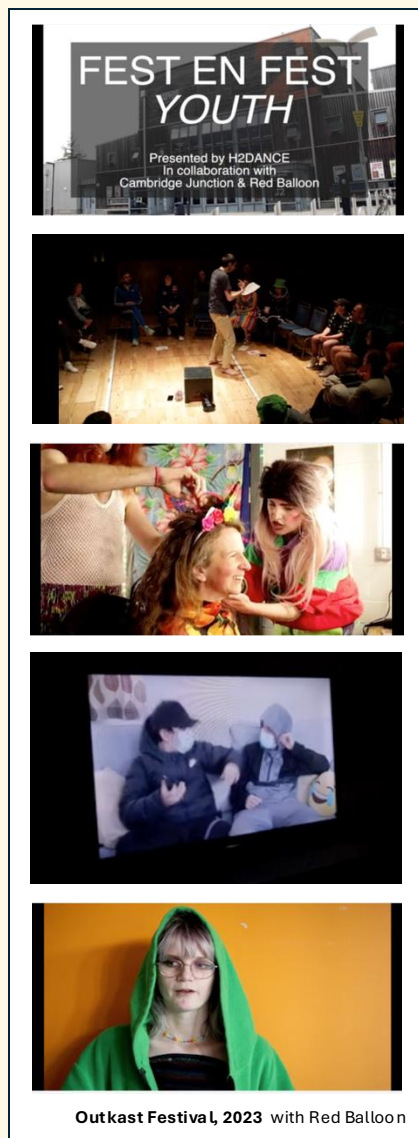
Plus performances from the Junction Young Company (JYC), and screenings of the *Democratic Set* and H2 Dance films some Take Two learners were featured in.



Breaks, Beats & Tribulations

ARTS AWARD:

Evidence of engagement was collated by students and staff during year; with **49 students achieved their Bronze certificate.**



Outkast Festival, 2023 with Red Balloon

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS

These ranged from one-off workshops to longer projects by companies on tour, including:

- The Moxie Brawl
- SK Shlomo
- Gandini Juggling
- H2 Dance for Fest en Fest
- Highrise Theatre for Beats, Trials & Tribulations
- Back-to-Back Theatre for Democratic Set
- DJ Workshops with DJ Academy

BURSARY PLACES FOR OPEN ACCESS

PROGRAMMES were also offered to participants;

One joined the **Contemporary Youth Choir (CYC)**; and another the **Junction Youth Company (JYC)**.

IMPACTS OF TAKE TWO on Young People

The Take Two programme had significant, multi-layered impacts on participants; and whilst they varied by setting, all participants personally reported gains of some kind; as supported by observational data, and teacher assessments.

➤ ENJOYMENT, PLAY & CREATIVE FREEDOM

“Having fun” was one of the most common descriptions of Take Two among participants. Enjoyment was high in all settings, but found in different parts of the projects:

- For Red Balloon, it was through creative freedom and humour, **“for turning funny ideas into actual scenes and using their imagination”**.
- For Olive AP Academy, learners enjoyed interacting with and seeing their work on screen.
- For the Cabins, play and imagination were particularly important to engagement – allowing participants “the space to be silly without being too structured or judged”.
- In Pilgrim Pathways settings, enjoyment was highly personal and tried to create autonomy: **“Even if they only participate for a couple of hours, something shifts ... a place of safety and joy is experienced”**.



“Watching them find their confidence in moments when they’re scared to perform solo but push through because of the support of the group – that’s been transformative.”

Facilitator, St. Peter’s Cabin



➤ SOCIAL CONNECTION, TEAMWORK AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

The filmmaking projects were shown to build teamwork and social skills, with group cohesion improving considerably among learners at St. Peter’s and Red Balloon especially.

“I learnt to socialise better with random people”

“I bonded with my peers more as a result of this project”.

Several at Olive AP Academy moved from total non-engagement to taking on directing and camera operation for others.

At Pilgrim Pathways, learners worked independently but still showed improved communication and relationships with adults. In these settings, building trust and safety was paramount, with one teacher describing the projects as **“social and emotional learning interventions disguised as filmmaking.”**

➤ CONFIDENCE, SELF-BELIEF & VISIBILITY

Across all settings, participants were said to have “blossomed” and “transformed”. 91% at Red Balloon and 79% at St Peters Autism Cabins showed marked improvements in confidence, with many shy or withdrawn learners **“stepping into the spotlight and becoming visible”**.

The Headteacher at Olive AP Academy directly attributed his students’ increased attendance and change in attitude to Take Two:

“They now have the confidence to apply for part-time jobs, to speak in school more and to ask questions about GCSE’s and learning.”

In Pilgrim Pathways hospital settings, 75% of participants showed confidence gains through slight but profound changes to engagement with tasks.

IMPACTS OF TAKE TWO on Young People contd.

CREATIVE OWNERSHIP & SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Take Two gave young people creative agency as the writers, directors, editors, and performers of their own films. Seeing the results on the big screen and shared online and at school further supported long-term recognition of self-worth and achievement, as did other performance opportunities.

“Helping to turn what is sometimes quite a rough idea into something that looks really professional and great ... makes them feel so valued.” Teacher, St. Peter’s



Participants celebrated Take Two for teaching them new skills – from improvisation, camera handling, storyboarding, to set design and sound engineering. St. Peter’s Cabin especially embraced the technical aspects, with one student committing all their spare time to editing the film for their peers. Olive AP Academy had one student who worked through lunch to finish what she started, **“showing real motivation we’d not seen before”**.

“I feel good watching it. I am the main character; we were all the main character”. Participant

ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING & CREATIVE ASPIRATION

Critically, Take Two helped to redefine for students – and for some teachers – what education can be. Filmmaking projects offered an alternative “way in” to learning – allowing students to connect with their “own lives, interests, feelings and concerns”.

Teachers at Olive AP Academy reported that over the course of their year’s participation, students showed an increased ability for self-regulation and greater willingness to discuss learning goals that had previously been out of reach.

Participants often continued creative activities at school, long after Take Two. Olive AP Academy co-funded a year-round DJ programme for their students at Cambridge Junction, directly leading to a 10% improvement in their attendance at school.

“[The filmmaking project] made me realise I could create something that people would actually see. I started seeing it as a potential career, not just a school thing. It helped me see the future differently. It was really cool working with professionals. It wasn’t like a youth worker coming in and doing it.”

Participant



DJ Academy with Olive AP Academy

Improved behaviour and engagement were also observed among participants from Red Balloon – with the school supporting their interest in filmmaking by launching a new Film Studies GCSE and Green Screen Room. As was hoped, many participants began to link creative achievement to future aspirations. **“I’m pretty proud to be doing this sort of stuff as I never thought I’d be able to”**. Others said they were thinking about a career in the arts, where they hadn’t done previously.

IMPACTS OF TAKE TWO on Practitioners

Take Two had a significant impact on practitioners, fostering professional growth and collaboration among facilitators, teachers, and Cambridge Junction staff.

TEACHERS:

Staff from partner schools were introduced to new arts-based approaches and engagement methods - reporting strengthened relationships with students, and increased confidence in creative practice.

Filmmaking projects served as informal diagnostic tools, helping to uncover students' strengths, needs, interests and leadership qualities.

CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION STAFF:

For the Creative Learning Team, Take Two helped them to deepen their appreciation for ongoing collaboration with facilitators and schools. This ensured that the design of projects was responsive to changing needs and enabled the team to refine their own approach to creative facilitation. For those new to creative learning, it was very very impactful:

“Working with these groups has shown me how much goes into supporting them. We’re not teachers, nor friends: we’re trusted adults. I didn’t have much experience with young people with disabilities before this, so it was daunting. But you learn. You adapt. And over time, my confidence in those situations has grown.”

Take Two instilled confidence in the team’s ongoing development of a unique ‘Cambridge Junction’ model of participatory arts and partnership working.



ARTIST/FACILITATORS:

Take Two provided 187 days of employment for 12 facilitators with a range of backgrounds & skills.

Facilitators report feeling well-supported and informed by Cambridge Junction, and having grown in confidence when working with young people with complex needs. They felt empowered to **co-design** projects with young people, rather than having to follow a predetermined plan.

“I am more versed in creating lesson plans on the spot that centre young people, focused around their needs and what they enjoy.”

Facilitators found the experience both life-affirming, and a unique opportunity to expand their professional skillsets and deepen their approach to creative engagement – particularly in trauma-informed and flexible practices.

“It’s more than a participatory arts project – it’s a collaboration in someone’s life.”

All of the facilitators described the experience of as “personally transformative,” and providing a sense of pride and fulfilment.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES for Cambridge Junction

PARTNERSHIPS STRENGTHENED:

Take Two allowed Cambridge Junction to build long-term, trust-based relationships with schools; and showing them how to embed arts-based practices into teaching & learning. Their approach is now seen as model for arts-led partnership working.

INTERNAL GROWTH & ENHANCED PRACTICE:

The Creative Learning team further honed their approach to project management, communication, and collective problem-solving. This created a culture of shared ownership for the programme among staff, teachers, and facilitators.

Take Two also led to the testing and development of new methods for evaluating and reflecting on projects, informing future practice.

“We have a format that works to engage our really challenging learners. Your level of flexibility has been incredible. *We use our working together as a blueprint.*”

Pilgrim Pathways

“This work [is] really changing the landscape for our students.”

Olive AP Academy

VENUE IDENTITY:

Take Two made Cambridge Junction feel welcoming and central to participants’ creative futures, with the Film Festival further celebrating youth voice and achievement. This brought more young people, with diverse needs, into the venue as active participants and audience members.

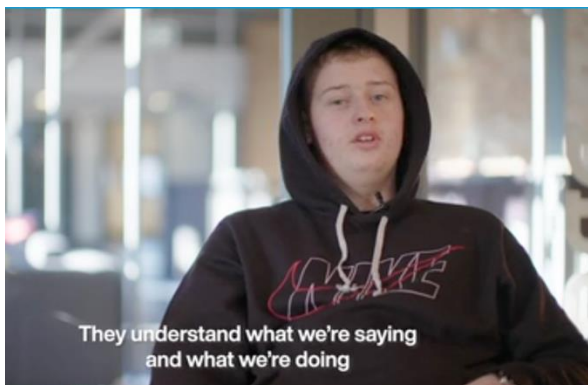
PLANNING & MANAGING TAKE TWO

The positive impacts of Take Two on participants and practitioners are due to the approach taken by the Creative Learning team at Cambridge Junction.

➤ COLLABORATIVE DESIGN & PLANNING

grounded in deep understanding of needs (schools, learners, facilitators). This included careful matching of facilitators to participant groups.

"The project has exceeded expectations. Especially with regards to planning and scheduling, ensuring we didn't miss anything or cause disappointments." Red Balloon Lead



"What's so important is the matching of facilitators – they don't just know "cool technical stuff", they also know how to speak to our young people, or *with* them ... they look like them, and they 'get' what matters – to them at least. Our students *need* those people in their lives." Olive AP Academy Lead

➤ ROBUST COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT for teachers, education leads & facilitators. School teachers praised the **"kindness, concern, and welcoming approach"** of the entire venue staff.

Facilitators felt part of a community and could **"adapt, lead, and grow professionally."** This included counselling support for facilitators when needed and ongoing check-ins.

"As an artist, I have artistic input. As a facilitator, you can bring your whole self. There is time enough to prepare for projects – to collate materials and plan sessions with kids who have quite specific interests. The communication is amazing; and the fact they take on feedback is amazing – you can see the change. Cambridge Junction have a great way of asking direct questions, but then giving you loads of space to say what you need to say."

Facilitator

"We felt completely and entirely supported. The team held all parts of the project."

Facilitator

➤ FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE PROJECT DELIVERY

By centring trust, agency and co-creation, learners were empowered to build skills and confidence *and* to experience joy, pride and belonging – regardless of starting point. Adaptations for different learners included:

- **Play and Creative Exploration** Building time into sessions for play, silliness and games, helps manage and respond to variable energy levels and changing group dynamics.

"Fun was the glue that kept momentum high and relationships strong, ensuring everyone looked forward to participating and felt safe to take creative risks." Facilitator

- **Scaffolded, Accessible Learning** "Chunking down" tasks into manageable stages enabled learners to participate at their own pace.



- **Youth-led, Creative Autonomy** Participants' ideas drove the creative process, giving them ownership over their work.
- **Empathetic, Trust-based, Trauma-informed Facilitation** helped learners "feel seen and safe to express themselves authentically and to take creative risks".
- **Contextualised Safeguarding** Detailed protocols ensured participants with different levels of consent could engage safely meaningfully.
- **Real-world Engagement** Working with industry practitioners helped position participants as makers and co-contributors, first, and as students, second

CREATIVE COLLABORATION

The term 'co-creation' is often used to describe activities where participants are invited to input ideas, but in ways which feel superficial or piecemeal. The approach taken on Take Two sought to ensure the creative process was *entirely* collaborative and authentically embedded in the ideas, thoughts, lived experiences and dynamics of each group. As one Take Two learner reflects on their time on a project with a different company:

“That [other project] wasn’t really me. It felt like a project people were going to do *with* us, but it wasn’t *for* us, you know? Like, it was already planned, and we were just filling it in with stuff. We didn’t have a clear aim. It was like, “Here’s the thing. Now, what are we gonna fill it with?” And we were like, “Uh... fun stuff, I guess?” It wasn’t led by us. Sometimes we’d have a quick discussion, and then suddenly it was like, “Oh, this is what’s happening.” That’s what made it feel ... disconnected. It didn’t represent us.

If we’d had more of a conversation with [the artist] or something that really merged his work with our experiences, it could’ve been more impactful. The way we worked on the [Take Two] projects was different. Those were fully designed by us, which made them feel more personal.”



With Cambridge Junction, the process *genuinely* embodies the spirit, quality and intention of collaborative participatory work and co-creation: shared decision-making, mutual learning, creative emergence, and collective becoming. This is captured in the following proposed, reclaimed, definition:

At Cambridge Junction, co-creation means more than just participation: it is an emergent process where participants are empowered as active partners in the creative process – holding power and agency equal to that of our facilitators, technicians, artists and creative learning team – shaping not only the content but the approach, direction and outcomes of our projects. This is a model that is transparent, responsive, and rooted in humility, imagination, joy and genuine collaboration.

We work to uphold these principles in every aspect of our work, from collaborating with partners, facilitators and visiting companies, to how staff work with each other day-to-day – ensuring everyone has a genuine and encouraged voice and shared responsibility in the space.

“[It] is meaningful for everyone involved. Even though I’m not there as a young person, I feel part of that collaboration, and it’s authentic to *me*. There’s a reciprocal relationship there. They [the young people] bring you in, and everyone is supporting each other. My entire world becomes what’s going on in that room – belonging in a space together where everyone is understood and leading towards something together.”

Creative Learning team-member

A FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING: The Cambridge Junction Model of Aspirational Collaborative Creative Engagement

Take Two demonstrates that an integrated programme of creative engagement, delivered over an extended period, and when made relevant and accessible, can be transformative for young people facing significant barriers to education, engagement and careers-related learning.

This was made possible only because the Creative Learning team committed to a holistic process of continual reflection and to creating trusted, inclusive environments, where *everyone* has equal value and is enabled to learn. Take Two reveals a practice that holds and creates space at 3 different levels:

1. PARTNERSHIP & PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Embodied in a Theory of Change, the multi-year Take Two was highly responsive to the needs, interests and barriers faced by learners in each setting, and to the ambitions of teachers & facilitators. This involved:

- **Collaborative Co-design** over a sustained period – enabled by robust & empathetic communication.
- **Consistency, Quality & Continual Improvement** across *all* areas of planning, management, contracting and evaluation through action-learning
- **The Promotion of Creative Learning** as of equal value to ‘formal’ educational approaches
- **Community Integration** by inviting young people into the venue as active participants

“It isn’t just a two-week activity; it’s a lasting memory and a shift in mindset. For many, it’s the first time they’ve created something entirely their own. They can look back and say, *I made that film when I was 15. It’s a confidence boost and a connection to a place they can return to and reach out. Years from now, they’ll remember they weren’t judged here. They could be themselves, experiment, and learn without fear of mistakes. A place where they could thrive and feel like they mattered.*”

Take Two partner Lead

As relationships strengthen, the more assured the team could be in recommending extra opportunities for engagement & participation.

2. PROJECT DESIGN

Design is iterative and responsive to the setting, each cohort & individual learners – meeting young people on *their* terms, from 1 session to the next.



This involves:

- **Careful facilitator-learner matching.**
- **Adaptive Project Design.** Activity strands may overlap or change, and roles switched as needed
- **Scaffolding tasks** to support risk-taking and skill development without pressure.
- **Play, imagination & Fun** as foundations to engagement, relationship-building, and learning.
- **Real-world Engagement**

Aspirational creative learning foregrounds emotional safety and sensory-responsive approaches to accommodate specific needs; but works to **demystify creative work**, provide **hands-on experience**, and **expand what young people believe is possible** for themselves.

3. SESSION DELIVERY

Facilitation in these contexts is a way of creating *with* participants a space of mutual discovery, problem-solving, expression and learning. Facilitators support autonomy and resilience, focusing on visible outcomes, without expectation. Key to this is:

- **Trauma-Informed, Emotionally-Intelligent Facilitation** Creating a sensory-aware, predictable and empowering environment, with multiple ways to engage & clear boundaries. Facilitators respond with empathy and calmly support self-regulation.
- **Reflective, relational practice** allowing for timely, nuanced and multi-modal feedback
- **Shared Decision-Making & Co-Authorship** Participants’ ideas drive the process – no matter how leftfield, varied or contradictory.
“We’re creating something together while holding space for everyone’s voices, emotions, and perspectives.” Facilitator
- **Sincere & Effective Modelling** by facilitators / the team, of acceptance, inclusivity and playfulness. This helps participants feel seen, safe to express themselves, and encourages professional, respectful and collaborative behaviour.

BEYOND TAKE TWO: Future Opportunities

The Take Two programme and its wider creative learning approach have established a robust, adaptable model with significant potential for further growth and sector influence.

EXTENDING TAKE TWO

- Schools and facilitators have expressed a desire to **continue working Cambridge Junction**: ideally on another multi-year programme.
- Take Two could be **extended to additional settings**, such as youth justice, hospital schools, and young carers' organisations.
- It would be valuable to better understand the **impact of projects on parents & carers**, and to increase their involvement in school projects.
- **Invitations to the Total Arts Film Festival** could include industry groups and wider community.
- **Shorter versions of the filmmaking projects** – which allow for greater flexibility and accessibility – could be rolled out for settings with high turnover or limited space in their curriculum.

SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Cambridge Junction's model of creative engagement is a leading example of participatory arts for young people with complex needs; praised for its trauma-informed, adaptive approach. Opportunities exist to:

- **Share the framework** widely, to encourage sector-wide discussion about **careers-related creative learning** in alternative; and **support capacity-building** for work of this kind
- **Advocate for creative learning broadly** - clarifying the language around creative learning, talent development, and employability
- **Enhance sector-wide learning** – by hosting symposia / action learning sets; and establishing an exchange programme for **practitioners to shadow each other** in their respective settings.
- **Co-deliver CPD / artist development** training in trauma-informed practice & creative leadership – possibly with a tertiary education provider.
- Further develop the **model of monitoring, evaluation & structured reflection** for this work.
- **Expand cross-sector collaboration** with health, social care, and mental health sectors



Integrating the wider arts programme into the lives of Take Two learners demonstrates how easy it is to include young people with complex needs, when the right approach and provisions are in place.

PATHWAYS FOR PROGRESSION

Take Two demonstrates the potential of creative learning programmes to:

- a. Broaden participants' awareness of the **creative roles** which exist and;
- b. Help them see a creative career as a relevant and accessible opportunity for them in future

A multi-year programme could include:

- **Creative Careers Insights and Awareness-raising** – through in-person and Virtual Industry Days for schools, CPD & teaching resources
- **Filmmaking / Theatre projects** with additional time spent on demystifying backstage roles
- **More Creative Pathways activities** such as placement / shadowing opportunities in Cambridge Junction and with other venues
- **Through-year support** (signposting & mentoring) as participants build knowledge and practical experience of creative roles & pathways
- **Co-design of resources** to build capacity within local arts organisations & creative industry employers, to better equip them for hosting young people with diverse needs & delivering placements



Well, for the time being, anyway.

CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

BE PART OF SOMETHING

With thanks to all the young people, facilitators, teachers, partners, artists, Cambridge Junction staff, Film Festival attendees, visiting companies and audiences who made Take Two so special and impactful. A special thanks to everyone who was interviewed and contributed to the evaluation of Take Two.