

CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION'S

TAKE TWO

2021-2025

EVALUATION REPORT

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Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Take Two programme, run by Cambridge Junction from 2021 to 2025, was a multi-year creative learning initiative aimed at young people facing significant barriers to education or with complex needs. The project partnered with four alternative education providers in Cambridge – Red Balloon Learners Centres (2 settings), Olive AP Academy, Pilgrim Pathways School (3 different settings), and The Cabins (3 settings) – working with cohorts from across 9 settings in total – and focused on filmmaking and broader creative and arts engagement. It was made possible by funding from a range of partners, including an extensive multi-year grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, with additional grants from The Evelyn Trust, The Limbourne Trust, and the Red Hill Trust. Some of the taster projects were funded by D&J Lloyd Community First Fund (Melbourn Cabin 2023) and The Pye Foundation (Comberton Cabin 2022); with further support from Arts Council England, Cambridge City Council, and individual donors – without whom these programmes could not exist.

Through a model of embedded, participatory learning, the programme demonstrated significant positive outcomes for young people, including increased confidence, creative ownership, the development of new skills, and an increased interest in the arts. A hallmark of the programme was how much fun everyone involved said they had – and the pride participants felt in the professional-level outcomes of their creative collaborations. Facilitators' trauma-informed, adaptive approaches were consistently praised, with the model of collaborative, adaptable partnership working described by schools as a 'blueprint' for cross-sector working.

Evaluation highlights opportunities for further development and expansion. Impacts can also be seen on practitioners involved in the programme, and in strengthened relationships between Cambridge Junction and the creative teams and education partners. A number of unintended, but highly valuable outcomes also emerged from the programme: with schools inspired to introduce more creative subjects into their curriculum; the launch of a new year-round DJ programme delivered at Cambridge Junction funded by Olive AP Academy; plus an additional Take Two filmmaking intensive, co-funded by Olive AP Academy and Co-op Community Cares Fund through the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.

Summary Outcomes:

- Worked with 257 young people (aged 9–17) from 9 settings
- Delivered 22 filmmaking projects (totalling 154 filmmaking sessions), resulting in 28 films - all of which were showcased at the annual Total Arts Film Festival 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025
- Provided 34 additional opportunities, including trips to shows and a range of workshops
- Supported 49 young people to achieve the Bronze Arts Awards.
- Total attendance: around 2,210 sessions, equating to around 4,300 hours of creative activity.
- Employed artist-facilitators for 187 days on the filmmaking projects

Summary Statement of Evaluation:

Take Two has been a landmark programme for Cambridge Junction, exceeding its targets in terms of intended reach and number of projects; and producing profound impacts for young people, partners, and the organisation itself. It has met and exceeded its aims by further embedding the responsive, inclusive, and sustainable model of creative learning developed at Cambridge Junction, deepening organisational practice, and positioning the team as leaders in the field.

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INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE & SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report seeks to provide a comprehensive description of what is a very broad and multi-layered project, and the far-ranging impacts it has had on all involved – from the young people themselves, their teachers and the artist/facilitators, to the education partners, and the Creative Learning team and wider ecosystem at Cambridge Junction. It distils the extensive body of evidence produced over the last 4 years, to serve the following aims:

- To demonstrate to delivery partners and a range of external audiences what Cambridge Junction has achieved and learnt through the process of delivering Take Two.
- To model the creative learning approach employed at Cambridge Junction – particularly where it concerns working with young people with additional barriers to education or complex needs.
- To inform ongoing development, share best practices, and guide future provision.

The evaluation did not involve a budgetary review. However, it is noted just how well-integrated pre-existing activities from the Cambridge Junction annual arts and culture programme were into the Take Two offer for partner schools.

2. METHODOLOGY

Evaluation work took place between December 2024 and May 2025. The work involved extensive review of all materials produced in relation to activities which fell under the Take Two programme – including those which may not have been covered by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation grant.

Secondary data sources included:

- Monitoring data – provided in several different formats
- Observational data of young people during filmmaking projects
- 59 feedback surveys from young people, facilitators and teachers
- 14 Most Significant Change stories
- Extensive records of anecdotal comments from participants at projects & events
- Documentary evidence related to the planning, administration and management of Take Two

Additional primary data was collected in the form of 6 interviews with personnel involved in Take Two and the Total Arts Film Festival; observation of one filmmaking session; considerable discussion with the programme leads at Cambridge Junction; and in-depth analysis of secondary data – produced over the course of the project.

A Glossary of Terms is included in Appendix 1

A detailed discussion of the approach to evaluation can be found in Appendix 2.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured in four parts:

- A. A description of Take Two**, including: its key aims; some background context to the programme; an outline of the planned/actual activities and intended outcomes for Take Two, and how monitoring and evaluation was approached.
- B. An analysis of the outcomes and most significant impacts** of Take Two on the young people who participated, and practitioners (teachers, facilitators and the Cambridge Junction Creative Learning team).
- C: Evaluation** of Take Two in terms of how it was planned, delivered and managed on a practical level, including areas for development. This leads into a discussion of the most evident gains for Cambridge Junction over the course of Take Two. This includes a tentative Framework for Learning which attempts to model the approach to sustained partnership and collaborative creative learning embodied in Take Two as a multi-year action learning programme.
- D. Recommendations:** The report concludes with a brief outline of opportunities for extending and continuing provision.



SECTION A – THE TAKE TWO PROGRAMME

1. SUMMARY OVERVIEW

Cambridge Junction's *Take Two* programme provided creative opportunities for young people with additional barriers to education or complex needs, over four academic years from Autumn 2021 through to Spring 2025.

Working with four education partners and supported by a multi-year grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the programme was structured around annual Filmmaking projects in each setting, where young people worked with artist/facilitators over anything from 2 ('tasters') to 20 ('intensives') weeks to conceive, plan and produce short films from scratch. Participants were then invited to attend a special public screening of their films at the annual Total Arts Film Festival (2022, 2023, 2024, and forthcoming) at Cambridge Junction.

In addition, each cohort was invited to engage in a range of additional arts and creative learning opportunities, including: trips to shows; industry insights and careers activities; and creative workshops or participatory arts projects.

2. BACKGROUND

Take Two is the first time Cambridge Junction has produced a multi-year schools programme of ongoing, year-round activity with multiple partners. It is founded on extensive action-learning generated over many years of projects with schools and participant groups – all of which has cemented Creative Learning as a core function of Cambridge Junction as an organisation.

Take Two extends the work of two key programmes:

- **Total Arts** – The venue's fortnightly arts participation group for disabled young people aged 13-25, led by professional artists. It was from the filmmaking strand of this programme that the **Total Arts Film Festival** was born in 2017/8.
- **The Act One Programme** - Funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Act One used filmmaking and theatre to improve the confidence, soft skills, attendance and achievements of young people with complex needs. With some adaptations to the intended programme as a result of Covid, Act One delivered filmmaking and creative projects in various formats to groups of young people in six alternative provision settings – including The Pilgrim Pathways Hospital Schools, TBAP Trust (now Olive AP Academy), Granta School, North Cambridge Academy, The Kite Trust and Red Balloon Academy – with some of the films produced then screened at the Total Arts Film Festival 2019 and then 2022.

Take Two builds on the model of filmmaking intensives, led by professional artists, leading to the Total Arts Film Festival (TAFF), with an extended programme of arts activities based at the venue to further engage participants and to support their progression more broadly.

Take Two also drew on feedback from Act One to improve planning, structure and delivery where possible; and the design of monitoring & evaluation tools – including measures to assess changes in engagement and outcomes.

3. TAKE TWO PARTNERS

- **Olive AP Academy:** an alternative provision for ages 11-16 with a centre in Cambridge, that supports up to 40 secondary learners who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. Olive AP – in its previous form as TBAP Academy - was part of Act One which Take Two builds on.
- **Red Balloon:** an alternative provision for young people aged 11-16 that have self-excluded from mainstream school due to mental health challenges or bullying. Red Balloon worked with Cambridge Junction for the first time during Act One.
- **The Cabins:** based in various secondary schools in Cambridgeshire, The Cabins support students with all types of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in their social/emotional skills, learning and emotional/mental wellbeing. Having previously worked with Cambridge Junction, St. Peter's served as lead partner; Comberton and Melbourn were involved when funding allowed.
- **Pilgrim Pathways School:** an alternative provision providing education for children and young people with complex mental and physical health needs, based in hospitals. Cambridge Junction has been working with Pilgrim since 2017; with Take Two providing further opportunity to strengthen the relationship as part of a more integrated, multi-year programme.

Note: Eight additional taster projects were delivered between 2022 and 2025 with five other specialist schools – Granta School, Castle School, Spring Common Academy, The Cavendish and Martin Bacon Academy. These projects were not evaluated within this report, although all five noted similar outcomes.

4. AIMS OF TAKE TWO

The aims of Take Two were:

- To provide young people with a range of opportunities to exercise agency, explore their own values, feel empowered and have their voices heard through arts-based activities, while developing interpersonal and technical skills, and improvements to confidence and wellbeing
- To connect education partners with professional artist/filmmaker-facilitators to deliver specialist creative projects for their young people; with teachers/staff involved in the delivery, enhancing their appreciation and understanding of arts-based learning
- For Cambridge Junction:
 - To better understand and develop 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, fully engaged patrons of the venue and its programme.
 - To explore the possibilities and benefits of working over multiple years with different education partners to embed arts-based learning into their offer to young people.

The following discusses how Take Two was planned and delivered to fulfil these overlapping, quite ambitious aims. At every point, the programme sought impact at the level of the young participants, and for practitioners (teachers, facilitators, members of Cambridge Junction staff).

5. TAKE TWO PROGRAMME STRUCTURE – INTENDED & ACTUAL

Take Two sought to deliver an integrated programme of filmmaking projects *and* additional opportunities for young people with additional barriers, over the course of a year, for three years. Partnering with the four Alternative Provision settings, Take Two was organised around the following:

- i. **An annual intensive co-created filmmaking project:** Projects tailored to each group and their specific needs and led by artist / facilitators with relevant lived experience. Short-burst ‘Tasters’ ran over 2-3 sessions; with longer ‘intensives’ involving 10- 20 sessions delivered over several weeks. Tasters were in most cases delivered by filmmaker and long-term Junction collaborator, Peter Harmer. Intensives were led by at least 2 artist-facilitators. They included: Liv Ello; Claire Nolan; Jas Pitt; Tink Flaherty; Desree; Albert Mensah; Dauda Sols Ladejobi; Natty Sobhee; Farah Dryden; HighRise Theatre; Peter Harmer; and Lyrix Organix. At least 1 member of the Creative Learning team attended all sessions – thereby ensuring consistency for participant groups.

Take Two originally sought to deliver 12 filmmaking projects. In the end, Cambridge Junction ran 22 projects: producing 24 films, and 4 behind-the-scenes documentaries.

- ii. **Total Arts Film festival:** Each year all Take Two participants are invited to see their films played on the big screen at the Total Arts Film Festival held each June at Cambridge Junction, in partnership with The Light Cinema. Curated by Total Arts, the festival runs for two days and involves workshops, screenings, a red-carpet celebration event with award presentation, and a relaxed disco hosted by local disability led DJ collective, The Funky Club.

Screenings are open to those over 11 years on Day 1; and for those aged 14+ on Day 2 (at which the films with more mature themes and language are showcased), to which family and friends are also invited. Participants are provided with a visual story and schedule in preparation for the event. All filmmakers are listed in the glossy programme.

122 from 187 Take Two participants attended one or more screenings (over 65%).

- ii. **Industry Day:** The Industry Day is 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, a Virtual Industry Day was delivered in March 2023 to 15 young people from St. Peter’s Cabin. A second delivery was planned for May that same year with another 8 learners from Pilgrim Pathways, but practicalities led to it being postponed. An in-person Industry Day for SEND students also took place in November 2023, attended by 5 young people from St. Peter’s Cabin.

20 young people from St. Peter’s & other Autism Cabins participated in one of two Industry Days.

- iii. **Invitations to selected performances:** Each year, Cambridge Junction provided complimentary tickets to performances scheduled into the venue’s wider artistic programme. This included the annual Christmas show (2021, 2022, 2024); Anders Duckwork’s multisensory solo dance work ‘Mapping Gender’ (2022); SK Shlomo’s BREATHE show (2023); Gandini’s new show *Heka* (2024); and theatre performances from the Junction Young Company (JYC). Young people were also invited to screenings of the Democratic Set and H2 Dance films that some featured in.

Attendance at additional Cambridge Junction shows totalled 205.

- iv. Additional participatory project opportunities:** Other community arts activities opened up to learners from Take Two partner schools ranged in scope from a one-off workshop delivered by productions on tour (i.e the Nutcracker; SK Shlomo's BREATHE; Gandini's Heka); to longer projects led by a visiting company (i.e. H2 Dance for Fest en Fest; Back-to-Back Theatre for Democratic Set). The filmmaking workshops delivered during the Total Arts Film Festival are included here, as is the weekly DJ programme with Karla Polk - DJ Boss Lady. One Take Two participant was also involved in a separate project at Cambridge Junction - Beats, Trials & Tribulations (BT&T) - delivered with Romsey Mill, led by Highrise Theatre, and funded by Cambridge City Council's Community Fund. Several Take Two learners who participated in these additional projects also featured in documentary or creative films about them (2 for BT&T; 1 film for Fest on Fest; and 1 for the Democratic Set film).

132 young people participated in 820 hours of additional project activity (excl. Industry Days) at Cambridge Junction, with many featuring in one or more of 4 films.

- v. Bursary places in our open access programmes:** Take Two also provided subsidised places to Cambridge Junction's suite of Open Access arts groups – namely: JYC; Total Arts (fortnightly participation group for disabled young people); and the Contemporary Youth Choir (CYC).

One learner from Take Two joined CYC; and another joined and performed with JYC.

- vi. Work experience:** The intention was to provide work experience opportunities to young people so they could gain additional experience of working in a busy cultural venue. This did not transpire for good reasons – but is discussed below as an area for future development.

- vii. Achievements recognised in an arts award qualification:** Arts Award is a nationally recognised qualification, equivalent to gaining a GCSE grades 3-1. As well as celebrating achievement it can be used to support applications for further study or employment. Evidence of engagement was collated by students and staff during the intensives and submitted later in the year.

Over the course of Take Two, 49 students achieved their Bronze Arts Award certificate.

- viii. Offer of continuing professional development to teachers:** It was hoped that Take Two would include training for teachers on how to integrate creative and collaborative techniques into their practice. CPD was not delivered in the traditional sense but was instead embedded into the programme as action learning. This included active involvement in projects as participants, and regular critical and reflective discussion of their experiences and observations with facilitators, Cambridge Junction staff, and education leads. Practitioner learning in this way is a key outcome of Take Two; and has helped to highlight what might go into targeted CPD resources in future.

The Intended Outcomes for Take Two over the course of its three-four years were to:

- Celebrate the creative work of participants during screenings at the Total Arts Film Festival
- Develop a robust monitoring & evaluation system to support multi-year programmes
- Build sustained relationships with partner organisations and artist-facilitators
- Produce an accessible, public-facing outline of our approach to creative learning

6. SUMMARY OF OUTPUTS

Take Two activities span 5 years (2021-2025); but for analytical ease are organised into 4 academic years – each running from September to July: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025.



Take Two engaged

257 individual young people

aged 9-17 from across 9 settings

(30% more than the 180 originally projected)



Take Two delivered

22 filmmaking projects 10 more than projected

187 young people across 154 sessions

Producing **28 films** (incl. 4 documentaries)

Showcased at 1 of **4 Total Arts Film Festivals**

187 days work for **12 artist/facilitators**



Take Two provided

34 additional engagement opportunities

for Take Two participants at Cambridge Junction

17 outings to 9 different shows involving 205 young people

17 extra participatory projects or workshops

152 young people, 50+ sessions, 9 visiting arts companies

2 additional films



Take Two supported

49 young people towards achieving the
Bronze Arts Award

Appendix 3 provides a summary of total activities. Appendix 4 provides detailed activities per setting.

Cambridge Junction provided many more opportunities to participants than proposed in the original Take Two application to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. These activities are discussed below, noting where additional funding was secured to support their delivery.

7. MONITORING & EVALUATION

The way Cambridge Junction makes sense of *what they do* and *how they do it* was a central concern of Take Two. One year in, with the support of consultant Pat Cochrane, a comprehensive strategy for improving monitoring and assessing impacts was produced, which informed how and when data was captured. Appendix 5 details which data sources were collected at various ‘touchpoints’ on the programme, and how they were included in the analyses for this Evaluation. In summary, data was collected in the following ways and formats:

OPERATIONAL & MONITORING DATA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATTENDANCE & SESSION DATA for all 22 projects REFERRAL FORMS with information on participant needs, interests & ‘readiness to learn’ for 8 of 23 cohorts. 	
EVALUATIVE DATA to assess how activities were experienced by participants and partners	
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES (Feedback Forms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People: for 9 / 24 projects, from 35 (17%) of a possible 209 participants. Artist/Facilitators: for 5 / 22 projects – 9 forms from a possible 35 (26%) Teachers: 15 forms for 14/22 projects (60%) 	ANECDOTAL & INFORMAL COMMENTS from young people about most of the 22 filmmaking projects & for 2 additional Take Two opportunities. Informal comments from attendees at 2 Total Arts Film Festivals.
MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORIES (qualitative narrative accounts) from 13 primary stakeholders, incl. teachers; facilitators; Creative Learning team member 1 learner. Training was provided by Future Arts Centre.	DOCUMENTARIES – behind-the-scenes footage was captured for all projects, except in hospital settings, alongside interviews from participants and staff. Short documentaries were made for 4 projects.
OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENTS of individual learners for 13 of 24 projects, to track changes on a 5-point scale for: Confidence; Engagement with Peers; Engagement with Adults; Motivation; Challenge; Teamwork; Resilience; Managing Emotions; Expressive Communication. Some descriptive data also exists.	SCHOOL DATA – data was provided by schools for 2 cohorts evidencing changes in their students’ behaviour, engagement or attendance as a result of (or correlated in some way to) their participation in Take Two.

Appendix 6 provides the raw data and summary quantitative analysis of feedback and observational surveys, per setting.

SECTION B – OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

This section presents a global view of the impacts of Take Two (which includes all of the activities listed above) whilst highlighting key differences between each setting.

1. IMPACTS OF TAKE TWO ON YOUNG PEOPLE

The Take Two programme had significant, multi-layered impacts on young people across all settings. While core themes of play and enjoyment, increased confidence, creative ownership, social connection, and skill development were consistent across all cohorts, the nature and depth of impacts varied in response to the unique needs and cultures of each setting.

A. Enjoyment, Play & Creative Freedom

A standout feature of the Take Two filmmaking projects was how much participants enjoyed themselves, describing the process as “**lots of fun**”, and their experience as “**happy**”. Practitioners consistently highlighted how important humour, fun and silliness were to the process. As the facilitators working with St. Peter’s each said: “**Humour is a really important thing. It should be fun**”, and “**We had a blast making the film, so it was a very fun atmosphere throughout the whole thing**”.

The Cabins placed the strongest emphasis on **play and imaginative freedom**; with acting, costumes, and green screens key to enjoyment. As one teacher at St. Peter’s said:

“Projects like this allow [the young people] that space to be creative and silly and not be super structured. They can have their voice, not be judged and then confidence grows [and] having that means they can open up a new world. Like, our kids have gone on to study film. They’ve gone to do something they really enjoy.”

Participants at Red Balloon also relished **creative freedom and humour** – expressing ongoing enthusiasm for “**turning funny ideas into actual scenes**” and “**using [their] imagination**”. This is reflected in the themes of their films, with *Red Balloon Exposed* in 2022 and another mockumentary in 2024 sending up the quirky nature of the school.

For Olive AP Academy, enjoyment was often linked to the immediacy of watching footage back in sessions, which encouraged **playful banter and interaction**. In Pilgrim Pathways settings, it was closely tied to emotional safety, with projects offering moments of joy and emotional release: “**Even if they only participate for a couple of hours, something shifts ... a place of safety is experienced**” (Facilitator).

B. Confidence, Self-Belief & Visibility

A universal outcome was **increased confidence** among participants – who were described by practitioners as “**blossoming**”. Even those who were reticent at first became enthusiastic collaborators:

“I wouldn’t usually be in a video like that but doing all this has just helped me actually be in it and rap. It’s made me feel better” Red Balloon Participant (2022)

“I wasn’t that confident at the beginning, but I felt more confident at the end”
Olive AP Academy Participant (2023)

“I felt nervous ... but now I feel happy and excited” St. Peter’s Participant (2023)

“Throughout the entire thing, it boosted my confidence” St. Peter’s Participant (2025)

Learners from Red Balloon saw the most consistent and deep-rooted transformation, with 91% showing improvement, often from a place of high initial anxiety. Staff noted students **“stepping into the spotlight and becoming more visible”**; with many who were initially withdrawn or non-verbal becoming visible and active contributors.

‘One student who doesn’t usually speak at all, totall changed after the Film Festival. She was actively being funny and putting out these witty one-liners. To see her confidence grow like that has been amazing. She used to come in part time but during the project came in full time”.

Confidence gains at Olive AP Academy were dramatic but often fragile, requiring ongoing reinforcement within sessions. Nevertheless, 74% of participants were reported to have shown improvements, with many moving from reluctance to active leadership:

“Witnessing the growth in confidence of some of the young people who had low engagement at the beginning of the project, to becoming directors/storytellers [was] incredibly powerful.” Facilitator (2024)

“Students who wouldn’t really talk to external people before working with you, are now able to go out and go to college interviews, have the confidence to apply for part time jobs, to speak in school more and to ask questions about GCSE’s and learning. That has been a noticeable change since they started with you, to where they are now.” Olive AP Academy Headteacher

“The biggest impact has been the shift in mindset. Many students initially thought, “This isn’t for me.” But once they gave it a chance, they thrived. They learned to say yes to new opportunities, even when uncomfortable.” Olive AP Academy Teacher

In St. Peter’s projects, teachers highlighted the **joy and pride** learners took in their achievements: “They are constantly asking me ‘when’s the next thing?’ It’s now accessible when it wasn’t before”; Whilst facilitators noted the importance of **group support in enabling solo performance**:

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

The **Film Festival also served as an additional incentive** to engagement during the making of films, and a critical part of Take Two’s legacy – validating participants’ contributions long after the projects.

“Seeing those children watch themselves in that cinema, they just burst and beam. It’s incredible. Like the buzzing they have on the way there and the way back ... and they talk about it with everybody. It’s that sense of pride and that joy that this project brings to them.” St. Peter’s Lead

For learners in Pilgrim Pathways settings, confidence gains were profound and often deeply personal, with one teacher noting how the female students especially **“did things I wouldn’t have expected”**. For many, simply tolerating watching their films back in a group was a major milestone.

C. Creative Ownership & Skill Development

Take Two fostered creative agency, with young people taking on roles as directors, editors, and performers. The approach to facilitation validated all participants’ ideas and contributions, which helped encourage a sense of ownership: **“They all have voices-and those voices were all heard in this space”** (Facilitator). Further, participants gained exposure to and practical experience of activities they would otherwise never have come across at school. As one facilitator put it:

“The sort of skills and experience taken away from the filmmaking project – whether that’s collaboration, working respectfully, working creatively, advocacy acting for yourself - these are transferable skills and tools that, whether the participants choose to go into a career in film or the arts or not, they can take away with them and use to bring to their everyday.”

For the handful of participants who returned year-on-year (ie. St. Peter’s Cabin & Red Balloon), they were observed by practitioners to have **“grown with Take Two”**. Several demonstrated quite nuanced appreciation of how projects differed, or the process was becoming more organic. Greater familiarity with the techniques, equipment, spaces, facilitators and the Creative Learning team, clearly helped to enhance confidence, comfort levels, and readiness to participate by learners from one project to the next. Seeing ‘veteran’ participants **‘jump in’** to activities newer students saw as ‘scary’ served as positive social modelling and predictability: supporting their peers further contributed to a **sense of self-determination and creative agency**.

For learners in all settings, participants gained a wide range of technical and creative skills – from **“learning how to film something and use the camera”** to character development and storyboarding, to set design, music production, performance techniques and sound engineering. Whether they were part of one or several projects, this afforded them a sense of **achievement and aspiration**:

“I’m proud to be doing this sort of stuff as I never thought I’d be able to” (Red Balloon, 2022).

“[It has] made me think about pursuing a career in the arts” (Olive AP Academy, 2023/4).

As one teacher observed, projects fostered a sense of **professionalism and pride** in learners:

“Being able to take what’s sometimes quite a rough idea and make it into something that looks really professional and great ... it makes them feel so valued.”

They also highlighted the impact on students of seeing how it *is* possible to make something with other people: **“They normally want things their way ... this showed them one person’s idea is actually better with lots of people’s input”** (Teacher). Critically, the facilitator worked **to “make all ideas, however wild, part of the film” – building both autonomy and group cohesion**, and which students recognised **“really validates everyone.”**

Skill development was scaffolded and tailored to individual needs, **“so it didn’t feel like a lesson”**. This was particularly important in Pilgrim Pathways settings, where projects introduced new possibilities by saying (as one teacher put it): **“this is a world where you are welcome and can be the way you are”**.

D. Re-engagement with Learning & Aspiration

Having seen the possibilities of making something of their own, and of having agency in the process of learning, multiple students who were previously disengaged began attending school, sitting exams, and applying to college. Teachers noticed **improved behaviours** in school during the periods young people were involved in projects, and a greater willingness to talk to adults.

Olive reported among its students a range of outcomes, including **improved attendance, exam completion, and aspirations** for further education. Similarly, participants from Red Ballon and St. Peter’s began to link creative achievement to future aspirations and alternative perspectives:

“For a lot of the children, filming wasn’t something they thought they could access; it’s on the tele, it’s very out of reach. So, it was new for everybody, no one was the expert. They all have that in common now. They are interested in something else, something different, that they weren’t into before. It’s now accessible when it wasn’t before.” St. Peter’s Teacher

For many participants, projects allowed them to **“figure out what I do and don’t like in terms of creating stuff”** and to reimagine new futures: engaging in conversations about GCSEs and careers, openly expressing interest in **“becoming a rapper”**, or simply choosing to attend another session. As one Red Balloon participant put it:

“[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.”

Unlike initiatives which centre *training* as the means to ‘develop talent’ through pre-existing skills, Take Two demonstrates the value of taking a more emergent, holistic approach to supporting young people with complex needs – building creative agency, self-expression, resilience, confidence and aspirational futures through participatory collaboration (co-creation).

E. Social Connection, Teamwork, And Emotional Growth

Projects were structured to build teamwork and social skills, though the degree and nature of this varied by setting. Resilience and emotional regulation were developed through the creative process, with students learning to handle setbacks, ambiguity, and the emotional demands of performance.

At Red Balloon, 74% of students showing **improved collaboration with peers and adults**, as one teacher observed: “**The project has had an incredible unifying effect. [It] has brought them together**”. Similarly, 86% of learners from St. Peter’s Cabin showed improved social engagement.

“I feel I bonded with my peers more as a result of this project. I feel a sense of accomplishment and closure at the end” Red Balloon Participant (2022/3)

“I learnt to socialise better with random people” St. Peter’s participant (2023)

Teachers described the projects as “**social and emotional learning interventions disguised as filmmaking**” (St. Peter’s) with a strong focus on collaborative working and respect for others’ ideas. This was highlighted by facilitators as a key feature of the process and to the success of projects:

“It’s great that we can create an environment that encourages and generates ideas, but to watch them get excited about each other’s ideas, and to build on others’ contributions, and find new ideas out of that, that’s collaboration. And that’s really special.”

At Olive AP Academy, teamwork gains were more variable, reflecting the cohort’s fluctuating engagement and emotional regulation. **Peer influence catalysed participation**, and at other times amplified disengagement. But teachers observed how facilitators worked to use differences in opinion as material for their films, or re-directed energies in the room by actively encouraging participants to encourage their peers or support them by “**directing and operating the camera for others**”. Switching up roles helped learners find their niche, with some thriving in behind-the-scenes tasks. One teacher described how one student “grew from total non-engagement, to

By necessity, facilitators with Pilgrim Pathways focused on individual projects and emotional regulation, with collaboration emerging organically. The **building of trust and emotional safety** was central to this – largely by way of facilitators being open and honest about their own identity, vulnerabilities and neurodivergence. “**Coming into the space, open to being seen for who I am, being honest about being autistic – some of the young people and staff did a double take – and that felt radical.**”

F. Distinctive Setting-Specific Outcomes

Across all four settings, Take Two delivered transformative impacts on young people, with consistent **gains in confidence, creative skills, and social connection**. Its legacy is visible in the **pride, aspiration, and new sense of possibility** it fostered in participants.

Projects were tailored to each setting's unique needs, revealing nuanced distinctions in how different approaches catalyse outcomes for each cohort. At Red Balloon, the most consistent transformation was seen in participants' increased confidence and visibility, with strong group cohesion and creative aspiration: taking advantage of the additional engagement opportunities at Cambridge Junction, they most clearly see the projects as a pathway into arts careers.

Learners from Olive AP Academy began with low trust and challenging behaviour. But impacts extended beyond in-session confidence gains, to improved school attendance and engagement, with some students overcoming entrenched school refusal.

The most evident impacts for St. Peter's Cabin were in group-based confidence and professional pride; projects served as social-emotional interventions as much as creative ones. The partnership enabled innovation, such as the Virtual Industry Day, and fostered a fun, playful atmosphere.

Impacts felt by those in Pilgrim Pathways settings were deeply individualised and therapeutic; trust, emotional safety, and creative autonomy were paramount; projects supported personal growth, co-regulation, and identity affirmation.

2. IMPACTS ON PRACTITIONERS

Take Two shows how creative learning projects can be transformative for everyone involved – given the right conditions. Without exception, all artist/facilitators included here, Cambridge Junction staff, and school teachers reported positive outcomes in relation to their own professional practice.

A. Enhanced Confidence & Skills

Facilitators and the Take Two coordinator report how they also grew in confidence during Take Two. They describe the process as genuinely collaborative – and of being empowered to co-create *with* young people and *with* each other, rather than expected to deliver a pre-determined programme. Being brought into the earliest stages of project planning and design, created a sense of shared ownership and meant facilitators could adapt their approach, develop new skills in co-creation and working with young people facing complex barriers to engagement.

“I have become more versed in creating lesson plans on the spot that centre young people and are focused around their needs and what they enjoy.” Facilitator, Olive AP Academy

“Looking at myself from an artistic perspective, I think I've built confidence in my practice and learned to use it in many different ways ... working with Cambridge Junction allowed me to have a bit more of a fuzzy edge. I could plan all I wanted, but once I was in the space, it became about what worked for those young people, led by their needs.” Facilitator, Red Balloon

Facilitators were clear that this type of work requires far more than technical teaching: it demands **presence, adaptability, and care**. One spoke of learning a “**different kind of patience**”, and creating spaces where emotional honesty was not only welcomed but essential. For some facilitators, Take Two was an opportunity to learn about and develop their skills in attachment-aware, trauma-informed practice – testimony to the supportive environment created by the team at Cambridge Junction. The relational depth here is key:

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

Facilitator, Total Arts

B. Professional Insights & New Creative Pathways

Teachers gained new insights into students' strengths and needs through the filmmaking intensives – suggesting that **Take Two Projects served as a kind of informal diagnostic tool**. At Red Balloon, students' leadership qualities and hidden confidences emerged; whilst at Olive AP Academy, students were reported to have increased their capacity for self-regulation and were open to conversations about learning goals where they previously hadn't been. Teachers spoke of seeing sides to students they hadn't seen before, noting how the arts surfaced hidden strengths and new forms of expression:

“He'd never worked on a project for more than two weeks ... and here he was giving up lunch to finish the edit.” Red Balloon Teacher

Teachers also saw Take Two as a means of **reframing for young people what education is** and could be. The projects became for the participants (and for the teachers), an alternative 'way in' to learning and to connecting outside world with their own lives, interests, feelings and concerns.

“They can have their voice and not be judged – and then confidence grows.”

Staff at Olive redesigned their timetable to include the filmmaking intensives in their schedules, but also then funded the weekly DJ sessions at Cambridge Junction so that their students could continue to attend activities after Take Two had ended – increasing school attendance by this cohort as a direct result. In advocating for the continuation of the programme, they also secured approval from their Academy Trust to match-fund the 3-week filmmaking project in January 2025. This highlights the value Olive AP Academy placed on the partnership with Cambridge Junction and the impacts of Take Two beyond what the team imagined. As the Headteacher explained:

“It's something that we're not able to deliver and that's why it's so powerful. We are able to come outside of school and work with you guys in this amazing building where the facilities are fantastic, and that brings something we can't. And from an arts perspective, I want to be able to give the students the opportunity to learn the skills that you can teach them. It can't just be about Maths, English and Science. There has to be other opportunities for students to engage outside of those.”

At Red Balloon, filmmaking projects paved the way for a new GCSE Film Studies course, and the opening of a Green Screen Room; whilst for Pilgrim Pathways, the animation projects affirmed the need for bespoke, scaffolded projects that could hold space for complexity and trauma. Beyond curriculum, the projects deepened relationships between students and staff, helped reintegrate disengaged learners, and prompted long-term thinking about partnership and provision. Cabins staff reported greater openness to arts collaboration by school leadership as a result of participating in the project. Interestingly, the lead from St. Peter's Cabin acknowledges how real-world creative opportunities like these bring wider benefits to their school:

“When parents come to St. Peter's to see if the Cabin is right for their child, we say that this is something we do, and it always pricks up their ears to hear their children could have this experience in the creative arts. Sometimes it can be not as accessible [to their children], because of sensory needs and sensory overload, but the way that Cambridge Junction and Take Two works means they can flourish in that environment. And that's really lovely.”

Furthermore, for teachers, exposure to unfamiliar art forms and creative technologies such as animation and filmmaking expanded their professional toolkits, while the support and preparation provided by the Cambridge Junction team equipped them to take creative risks and try new things.

For the newest member of the Creative Learning team, their role as Take Two coordinator gave them an entirely new perspective on the city itself, the range of needs existing among young people, and just how important creative opportunities are for addressing disparity of outcome:

“Working with these groups has [...] shown me how much goes into supporting them. We’re not teachers, nor parents, nor friends – we’re this mix of all three. We’re trusted adults.

I didn’t have much experience with young people with disabilities before this. It was daunting, [...] but you learn. You adapt. And at the end of the day, they’re just people working on the same project as you. And over time, my confidence in those situations has grown.”

Many practitioners on Take Two describe having learnt something about responsive delivery by watching others in the room. Modelling is seen here as key to creating a trusted environment where **everyone is learning**, and has equal value, no matter their age, position, or background:

“Here we are, figuring it out. No hierarchy, no intimidation. That’s what Take Two has done: it’s built trust. With partners, with ourselves, with the young people. And that trust is everything. But it takes time. Even after Take Two ends, the relationships will stay. They’ll remember. And that’s the legacy: the trust, the connection, the impact.”

Creative Learning team member

C. Personal Fulfilment

All of the facilitators described the experience as “**personally transformative**”, noting how Take Two rekindled their passion for their profession, provided a sense of pride and fulfilment, and in some cases, a renewed sense of purpose.

“This project allowed me to say, ‘You can work and have value.’” Facilitator, Pilgrim

Similarly, **personal fulfilment and wellbeing** featured strongly in the accounts of teachers and the Creative Learning team. Many described the emotional impact of witnessing young people’s breakthroughs – seeing a previously withdrawn learner participate, or a group achieve something together. **Relationship-building** was another significant area of impact for facilitators and for teachers – with many of them speaking about how the work deepened their connections with each other as well as with the young people:

“As facilitators, we’re not there to impose a way of working but to learn how they work best. Modelling authentic collaboration means recognising and adapting to their dynamics. It’s about creating something together while holding space for everyone’s voices, emotions, and perspectives. It’s magical.” Facilitator, Pilgrim

Facilitators who brought their own lived experience into the room found that **modelling vulnerability and openness helped create a safe space**, fostering stronger bonds and more effective teamwork. The process of building trust, especially in settings with high anxiety or trauma, was cited as both challenging and profoundly rewarding. Teachers, facilitators and Cambridge Junction staff described what happened *within* the sessions as a two-way learning street – where they learned from young people’s creativity, resilience, and perspectives, which in turn influenced their own teaching, facilitation, and personal outlook.

“I was able to learn as much as the young people I was working with” Facilitator

Further, having someone from the Creative Learning team participate in sessions alongside the young people helped foster a space of equity, generosity and mutual learning, where ‘the adults’ became **co-creators** and if anything were even *more* unsure of what was emerging than they were.

Teachers similarly acknowledged the value of this “**moving together**” – even if they were not always as much part of the action as others in the room. In any case though, teachers report how “**amazing**”, “**special**”, “**surprising**” and “**impressive**” they thought the creative outputs were – *on account of the journey* they all took to get there.

This **collaborative ethos** extended beyond the project itself. Take Two projects acted as a catalyst for positive shifts within school settings, with teachers reportedly feeling more confident, vocal, and open to new ideas. The visible success of these collaborative methods gave teachers the confidence to advocate for similar approaches in other areas of their work.

Furthermore, a recurring theme within the feedback from all practitioners was how much fun they had on projects. Critically, this wasn’t just a by-product but a deliberate and deeply valued part of the Take Two experience. All stakeholders - learners, teachers, facilitators, and staff – shared in moments of playfulness and laughter, which created a positive, energising space for learning and collaboration. This makes sense when reviewing the following reflection by a member of the Creative Learning team:

“‘Fun’ is key to our work – it sounds really basic, but we really deeply value fun! It may just be a language thing, but it’s [more than] ‘enjoyment’ and ‘joy’ – which are also there of course. [And there’s] equal buy-in: everyone has fun: learners, teachers, facilitators, us! And fun creates such a positive space for all of us to learn and keep momentum developing. It strengthens all of our relationships and how we communicate: we can be really silly in a space with learners/teachers/facilitators and then have really open and complex conversations to share learning, reestablish boundaries and develop together.”



SECTION C - EVALUATION OF TAKE TWO

1. PROCESS & DESIGN: PLANNING, MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY

The impacts discussed above were enabled by several interconnected factors: the collaborative approach to project design & planning; strong, ongoing support from Cambridge Junction for facilitators and education partners; and the flexible, scaffolded design of projects that allowed for adaptation in and between sessions; and a commitment to reflective practice. The following discusses these as key components of the approach to Take Two specifically, but in mind of how they reflect a broader set of principles and working practices developed across the Creative Learning department as a whole. A strength of this approach is in its responsiveness - and hence areas deemed in need of revision or improvement tended to be dealt with 'in-action' as the programme progressed. Nevertheless, where areas for refinement do still exist, these are highlighted below (>> *italicised*).

A. Collaborative Planning & Responsive Design

Take Two's planning approach exemplifies collaborative design at its best. The shape, size, and structure of each project was informed by priority outcomes and learner needs in each setting, with delivery taking place at Cambridge Junction whenever possible, except where participants' mobility was limited or unfamiliar places might exacerbate anxieties. Further adaptations were made on the advice of teachers and their hopes for each cohort of learners; as well as for group size (which change year-to-year and often after the first session). As the Take Two coordinator notes:

"It's been fascinating to see how we've adapted to each setting. The team have such a solid foundation for running and organizing a project, but it's flexible. The same basic structure worked for Pilgrim, St. Peter's, Red Balloon, and Olive, even though they're all so different."

The positive outcomes felt by practitioners were largely due to everyone feeling suitably prepared, clear on what to expect from the process, and what the purpose of each project was. This was encouraged through collaborative early-stage planning with education partners, and the development of sessions *with* facilitators based on a thorough understanding of individual learner needs. Teachers praised the structure and delivery:

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

However, areas for development emerged around pre-project alignment. While the introduction of referral forms and improved pre-project briefings made facilitators **"feel prepared throughout"**, staff at Olive AP Academy suggested there was room for **"stronger pre-project briefing processes"** where advance meetings between learners and facilitators are not possible. This would help clarify behavioural expectations, shared responsibilities (particularly in high-needs settings), and how to collectively troubleshoot challenges. That said, where this did not happen, it was not for want of trying: school pressures often led to teachers' capacity being squeezed, and meetings being cut short/postponed or pre-project information not being shared in time.

>> Further emphasis should in future be placed in the very earliest stages of planning with schools, on the importance of their attending regular meetings and sharing information in a timely fashion to ensure Cambridge Junction and facilitators are as well-prepared as possible.

B. Facilitator Matching & Resource Allocation

A key strength to the programme has been the matching of facilitators to participant cohorts. Speaking to the life circumstances so many of these young people are facing, one facilitator emphasises just how critical this kind of work is to: “quite literally saving them from themselves. Some of them are so driven, but there’s nowhere to take that drive, except down the wrong path because of what life has dealt them. We are there to show them there’s a different path”

One teacher at Olive AP Academy supported this, highlighting how important it is that the facilitators don’t just know “cool technical stuff”, but that they also: “know how to speak to them, or with them, that they look like them, and that they ‘get’ matters – to them at least.”. As another education lead put it: “They need those people in their lives. Sadly, for many of them, home is difficult, so they haven’t necessarily got the role models they need to fulfil their potential. So, we need to be that.”

Practical challenges emerged around group size and resource allocation. Some facilitators felt that group sizes were too large, limiting individual attention. The optimum number of learners for projects with just two artist-filmmakers appears to be 8-10, considering the need for relationship-building and regulation support. Some learners expressed desire for more editing and technical roles, although this had to be balanced with providing equal access and meeting filmmaking deadlines.

C. Robust Communication & Support

Cambridge Junction’s **clear communication and support systems represent a particular strength** of Take Two. Thorough preparation and the team’s ongoing presence during and between projects gave facilitators and teachers the confidence to try new approaches and collaboratively troubleshoot challenges. Teachers noted the “mutual respect” between staff and facilitators, with “needs being fully met, year on year”.

The team were commended for prioritising facilitator wellbeing, for recognising the emotional demands of working with vulnerable young people, and for maintaining active, two-way communication during and between projects. Many praised the “kindness, concern, and welcoming approach” of the entire staff at Cambridge Junction, where facilitators felt part of a community and could “adapt, lead, and grow professionally”. As one facilitator put it: “We felt completely and entirely supported. [The team] held all parts of the project.”

>> *Communication between facilitators and teachers specifically could still be strengthened, as already mentioned.* Further, while teachers benefited from “being in the room” during projects, structured CPD offers or toolkits would help embed learning, and enable reinforcement, engagement and learning in-between sessions. Several teachers also expressed an interest in developing skills for film and media projects independently.

D. Session Design & Delivery

Filmmaking projects were praised for the expert and incredibly empathetic approach of facilitators, which is rooted in emotionally intelligent facilitation, co-design, and trauma-informed practice. Making adaptations as and when situations presented themselves is central to this way of working, meeting each young person where they are at, regardless of starting point. Where in other, less flexible settings, facilitators may have struggled with the range of needs, Take Two projects allowed everyone to be themselves – and valued as such. By example, the Creative Learning team recall one student who would often need to sleep, but they found a way of turning this into a comedy role within the film: or making another learner’s fastidiousness the basis of his character in the film.

The defining features of this approach, and how projects were adapted for different learners include:

- **Play and Creative Exploration** Coming armed with a range of planned activities as well as ‘back-pocket’ exercises, ensures facilitators can respond to variable energy levels and to changing group dynamics. Critically this includes building space into *all* sessions for play, “**silliness**” and games: “Fun was the glue that kept momentum high and relationships strong, ensuring everyone looked forward to participating and felt safe to take creative risks.”
- **Scaffolded, Accessible Learning** Tasks were “**chunked down**” into manageable stages. This was particularly effective for neurodiverse and SEN learners and those with low confidence (i.e. Pilgrim Pathways, St. Peter’s Cabin), so they could build up to participation at their own pace. Sharing footage and encouraging positive peer support provided learners with behavioural challenges and histories of exclusion tangible, immediate feedback (i.e. Olive AP Academy).
- **Youth-led, Creative Autonomy** Participants’ ideas drove the creative process, giving them ownership over their work. Seeing their films shared on the big screen, at school and online, further supported longer-term recognition of self-worth and achievement. Facilitators adapted the pace of things when cohorts appeared to prefer “**getting on with making**” as opposed to devising and generating ideas – such as with St. Peter’s Cabin and Red Balloon. For young people experiencing high anxiety and self-exclusion, allowing them to **switch between multiple roles** (on- and off-camera) helped build confidence incrementally,
- **Empathetic, Trust-based Facilitation** Careful facilitator selection and matching helps participants “**feel seen and safe to express themselves authentically**”. Facilitators’ ability to build rapport, read emotional cues, and adapt accordingly – stepping back or making suggestions when needed – is especially important for those with histories of exclusion, trauma, or mental health challenges.

“Our students are really good judges of character, and they know if you’re not in it for the right reasons. You all just really care about the work that you do, and that rubs off on the kids. You’ve got the recipe for some really amazing things to take place. And they need those people in their lives.” Olive AP Academy Headteacher

For highly vulnerable, transient cohorts with complex medical needs, projects were delivered on-site and were highly individualized. Facilitators prioritized emotional safety, trust and co-regulation to allow even the most withdrawn to participate.

- **Contextualised Safeguarding:** The team developed detailed protocols to ensure participants with different levels of consent could engage safely and meaningfully. Creative solutions such as voice changers, masks, costumes, filming only hands, or offering behind-the-scenes roles ensured learners maintained power and autonomy even if they weren’t to be identifiable on film. By example, a parent requested their child not be filmed so the team worked with the participant so they could still take a leading role in a way that protected them. The team now routinely ask about and accommodate such needs, adapting practice to uphold safety and creative empowerment.

Areas for Consideration:

- **Session structure & Pacing** Time was “**very tight when shooting**” and towards the end of projects, particularly when sessions span several weeks (possibly because they begin from a place of greater scope and ambition). But practitioners acknowledged that time pressures – as with periods of working around – reflect the professional context of filmmaking; and that the time spent “**getting to know and building trust**” (i.e. Red Balloon; Olive AP Academy) was necessary.

>> *Where possible, the recommendation is to budget additional time for facilitators to undertake activities between sessions (such as scriptwriting or editing) to maintain pace in later stages.*

>> *Advance scheduling of breaks and clearer expectations around ‘the need for professionalism’ whilst at Cambridge Junction could reduce the time spent ‘rallying’ older cohorts back to “class”.*

>> *Practitioners emphasised the importance of “adequate time for reflection and celebration”*

- **Technical Skills & Role Allocation:** Some students expressed a desire for more time editing roles. This often relied on schools being able to resource such activities at school.

>> *In future, the Creative Learning team could work with partners to identify software needs or how to bring in teaching staff to support additional engagement in between project sessions.*

- **Additional Opportunities:** Even more integration with the wider programme at Cambridge Junction, more industry days or placements and teacher-CPD could have been of value, but the number of additional opportunities opened up to Take Two learners was in any case considerable – especially with the logistical challenges of aligning school timetables to that of the venue.

>> *If funding were available for another multi-year programme, the insight gained during Take Two would allow for longer-term scheduling of activities, more targeted programming of careers-related and specialist technical provision for learners interested in pursuing filmmaking further.*

E. Programme Management & Evaluation:

Take Two is an excellent example of sophisticated programme management, that successfully balances structure with flexibility across diverse, complex settings. The Creative Learning team’s approach to planning, design and management of Take Two demonstrates commitment to reflective practice and continuous improvement. The flexible, scaffolded design allowed for adaptation between sessions, supported by robust communication systems and ongoing support for facilitators and teachers, which created conditions for significant participant impact.

In terms of evaluation, extensive feedback and data was collected over three years. While participant voice was well-captured qualitatively (Most Significant Change stories included), long-term impacts on confidence, skills, or education pathways were less formally tracked.

>> *Future programmes of this scale would benefit from a robust plan for sorting and analysing data, as well as how and when it’s to be collected. This will enhance the efficacy and reliability of tools.*

>> *Some additional evaluation techniques and inquiry methods to consider include:*

- Standardising monitoring / survey tools to make cross-cohort comparison less challenging; and building database / analytic tools in advance
- *Grounding* evaluation in the data – identifying emergent themes as the programme progresses
- Longitudinal Tracking 6-12 months after the programme to assess legacy impacts.
- SEN appropriate evaluation - involving young people more directly in the design of tools

Any areas for development which do exist reflect the natural evolution of an ambitious, responsive programme rather than fundamental flaws. The programme's greatest strength lies in its commitment to continuous learning and adaptation – as discussed in the following section in terms of what and how Cambridge Junction has learnt over the course of Take Two.

2. TAKE TWO & CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION

Take Two more than achieved its aims, including those Cambridge Junction set for itself - delivering wide-ranging significant and multi-layered benefits for the venue in terms of its strategic positioning, organisational learning, and advancing the Creative Learning team's practice.

A. Strengthening Sustainable Partnerships

Take Two allowed Cambridge Junction to deepen their relationship with education partners, and with artist-facilitators. Sustained, multi-year collaboration allowed for ongoing, iterative improvement, and the embedding of arts-based approaches within partner settings; with the Creative Learning team praised by all four partners for their responsive project management, clear communication, and willingness to adapt.

“[They are an] excellent team that we hope to work with again and again. We feel safe putting our kids in your hands. **It's been the best partnership we've had**”.

Red Balloon Lead

“We started with our partnership and ended with improved confidence, communication and social skills, as well as outcomes in qualifications. Put it all together and [students] go to post-16 provisions, stick to it, and pursue their careers. **It's a remarkable story. Long may this great work continue because it's really changing the landscape for our students.**”

Olive AP Academy, Headteacher

“[This project] has actually made us more confident in terms of provision for young people. It made us far more vocal. **If a company can't flex, then we just won't do it.**”

St. Peter's Lead

Take Two affirmed Cambridge Junction as unique in how it works with young people facing barriers – marking them out as specialists in the field. Describing the partnership as their most impactful and responsive, Pilgrim Pathways now use Cambridge Junction as a commissioning model for other partners:

“For us, **you are our most successful partner**. Over a number of years, we have developed a format that works really well to engage our really challenging learners, which is something [they] really struggle with [having] often had a really poor experience in their own schools. So for us, that's really significant. Your level of flexibility with us has been incredible. If we are looking to work with other agencies now, **we use our working together as a blueprint.**”

Whilst proposals for bedside delivery in Pilgrim Pathways settings did not transpire in the end due to funding, that they were open to extending the scope of projects is highly significant and testimony to the impacts Cambridge Junction's work is having in this area.

B. Affirming The Venue's Offer & Strategic Focus

Take Two reinforced Cambridge Junction's identity as more than a performance venue or delivery site. Firstly, it 'brought in' as many aspects of the venue's ecosystem as possible (front- and back-stage) – from targeted activities (i.e. filmmaking intensives; Industry Days), to pre-existing shows and workshops – whilst the Total Arts Film Festival provided high-profile opportunities to celebrate participants' achievements. Secondly, facilitators noted that participants “**saw themselves differently**” when filming there, compared to in school where stigma and self-perception could be a barrier. Over time, the space became part of the participants' imagined future and an active partner in their lives. As a teacher from Olive reflected:

“This work matters because it gives them a safe space. When they’re older – 25 or 26 – they’ll remember this place. If they have issues, they’ll know they can come back and reach out. This project 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 safe space they can return to. Years from now, they’ll remember they weren’t judged here. They could be themselves, experiment, and learn without fear of mistakes. They watch, assess, and remember everything. And when they think of us, it’ll be with respect and gratitude for giving them a place where they could thrive and feel like they mattered.”

Take Two is a perfect example of Cambridge Junction’s “something extraordinary”, to which everyone is invited to be a part of. It upholds their commitment to creating “radical, inclusive and engaging shared experiences” and to enabling young people to share in arts and creativity in all its forms. It is evident in how Cambridge Junction embraces activities such as Take Two that creative learning is a central function of its work. As further evidence, it was during Take Two that the Creative Learning network was established – a monthly newsletter for the sector and wider audiences.

C. Enhanced Practice

Take Two gave the Creative Learning team the opportunity to critically reflect on and evolve its approach to creative learning in practical terms. Looking back on Act One, as a pilot for Take Two, its primary focus was to establish trust with schools for meaningful engagement – taking care not to rush the process, getting to know each setting’s unique culture and the needs of their students, and introducing young people to professional artists and creative practice. By contrast, Take Two gave the team more time to build relationships with partners, *and* to work on fine-tuning delivery, and widening access to creative opportunities. Looking across the entirety of Take Two, this included:

- **Refining Referral & Planning Processes**

The introduction of Referral forms in the early stages of Take Two provided an effective way to capture the needs and interests of participants in advance. This significantly helped the team prepare for sessions, and tailor activities and support to each context. They evolved from basic information-gathering tools into detailed, sensitive documents that captured practical needs (i.e. medical / access requirements), emotional triggers, preferred ways of working, and individual strengths.

Learning from one session and project to the next helped the team better understand the nuances of dealing with specific incidents or needs. This informed their developing safeguarding policy and application to multiple contexts, both in and beyond the venue. This was especially useful where it became clear how differently students from different contexts tended to behave and manage themselves in different settings. Whilst some thrived in Cambridge Junction space, for others the openness led them to go exploring in lieu of fully engaging with the filmmaking sessions. Such incidents, however, did reveal the importance of working *with* participants to set expectations in advance; and presented an opportunity to engage participants in discussion about professionalism.

- **Facilitator Support**

Over time, the team honed their approach to supporting facilitators - especially where they had not previously worked with each other, or with young people from alternative provision. In all cases, the team sought to understand facilitators’ needs, how information should be shared with them, and the emotional labour of working with those living with trauma, discrimination or mental health challenges. As one facilitator said, after the team arranged (and funded) reflective supervision for them:

“No other client or organisation has done this for me before. It’s challenging working with some Young People – who are tube-fed, with life-limiting conditions, or under section ... that’s not an easy space to be in. So, I asked for some supervision – and [the team] came up with some suggestions, which was amazing, but then let me work with someone I already had a relationship with. I had a session before going on site to help me prepare, and another afterwards to digest and make sense of it all. That’s just, real care. From an organisation.”

Take Two also provided development opportunities for artists already familiar with and making work at Cambridge Junction, to lean more into creative learning and social practice, “**doing something that matters**”. This has helped grow the pool of practitioners who learn from each other, and from the unique projects at Cambridge Junction – the key principles of which they can model elsewhere.

• **A Culture of Action- & Shared- Learning**

The iterative, cyclical nature of planning, managing, and reflecting on 22 projects in 3 years, has allowed for ongoing improvement in the administration and management of projects. The team report feeling “**much clearer now on how we articulate our approach to artists and facilitators, so we can support them**”; as evidenced by the following quote from a facilitator:

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

Crucially, this culture of in-action learning is not limited to individual projects. Insights and lessons were regularly shared across the team and with external partners, creating a living body of knowledge that shaped future activities. As one facilitator reflected, “**We’re always learning from each other – what works, what doesn’t, and how we can do better next time.**” This openness to adaptation and improvement has been central to Take Two’s success.

Monitoring and evaluation also developed, with the team undergoing training to support work in this area. This led to the adoption of the Most Significant Change framework, which allows them to capture real-world accounts without diluting rich testimony as often occurs with ‘feedback’ forms and post-project briefings.

D. Defining Creative Learning Practice

The Creative Learning team was encouraged during Take Two to describe the key features and guiding philosophy of their work – conscious of how impactful their participatory projects have been over the years, and with the hope of sharing it more widely. Considerable work has already been undertaken with some external support: including an emerging Theory of Change for creative learning at Cambridge Junction [see illustration below]; and the initial setting out of a ‘pedagogical’ framework. These tools informed the following attempt to capture in a single model the Take Two approach to long-term creative collaboration, which has at its core a commitment to authentic co-creation.

Reclaiming Co-Creation

The term ‘co-creation’ is often employed to describe activities that invite participants to input ideas, but in ways which feel cursory or piecemeal, as this Take Two participant’s experience of a project delivered by a different company suggests:

“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 him, or something that really merged his work with our experiences, it could’ve been more impactful. **But the way we worked on the [Take Two] projects was different. Those were fully designed by us, which made them feel more personal.**”

One member of the Creative Learning team framed their own experience as a participant in Take Two sessions as ‘authentic co-creation’, because:

“[It] is meaningful for everyone involved. Even though I’m not there as a young person, / 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.**”

At Cambridge Junction, this practice is distinctive because it *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.

This is a holistic process, made possible through the skill, experience and care of a team who continually reflect upon what it means to create trusted, inclusive, equitable learning environments. What Take Two reveals is a practice which holds and creates space at several different levels, and often simultaneously:

- At the structural layer of partnership development & programme design (driven by Theory of Change);
- In the responsive framework of each project / delivery strand; and
- Within the workshop space itself (i.e. in each session).

These layers of activity impact and are impacted by each other in a dynamic system of learning and adaptation. For example, adjustments to the overall programme cascade into adaptations within projects and back again. Year-on-year, and session-by-session, these feedback loops are carefully maintained through continual re-negotiation with participants, facilitators and partners, of what is needed and what is possible, now and in the future.

From this perspective, the approach practiced during Take Two can be seen to embody several key characteristics, variously aligned to the different levels of co-creation. Together they comprise the Framework for Learning summarised below and discussed in more detail in Appendix 7.

A Framework for Learning

Still in draft form, the framework will provide a set of clear commitments to guide a way of working at each level of co-creation; Partnerships & Programme Design; Project Design; Session Delivery.



This approach focuses on the holistic development of learners and actively draws on principles of inclusive design practised in SEND and alternative learning settings: the aim of which is to cultivate environments where each participant feels valued, respected, and empowered. In this context, new ideas, knowledge or – as in Take Two – an actual film, embodies the contributions of everyone in the room. Young People are actively framed in this space as co-creators first, and students, second. In this way, Take Two’s “pedagogy” is distinctive for its responsiveness to the needs of participants and in its integration of principles more commonly associated with adult learning (andragogy) and social learning, such as autonomy, valuing experience, and collaborative approaches.

Aspirational Creative Learning

What makes Take Two additionally distinctive is how it integrates aspects from conventional skills-based / creative careers-related training, with responsive, trauma-informed, inclusive practice. Giving young people with significant barriers hands-on ‘professional’ experience centres them *as future creatives* and moves beyond narrow conceptions of what pathways initiatives are and who they are for. The Take Two filmmaking intensives, Industry Days, backstage tours and the Film Festival provide authentic creative career exposure, equipping participants with technical skills (camera work, editing, storytelling) and transferable competencies like collaboration, problem-solving, and resilience. Like conventional “talent development” programmes, Take Two prioritises high-quality, professional and industry-standard outputs – but does so within a creative learning / social practice / therapeutic framework. Films written, produced by and featuring young people who aren’t ‘usually’ celebrated publicly, are seen as legitimate artistic works, challenging stereotypes about whose stories matter. This visibility fosters creative identity and belonging, critical for those often excluded from cultural spaces.

Elevating Creative Learning

Take Two demonstrates how aspiration thrives in inclusive ecosystems. By merging the participatory / social arts with structured skill development, Take Two offers a blueprint for creative learning that:

- Validates lived experience through artistic and creative practice and outputs
- Scaffolds risk-taking through relational trust
- Reframes "talent" as emergent through collaboration, not innate ability

In this way, Take Two elevates the value and status of creative learning, positioning arts-based and extra-curricular interventions as equally significant and impactful as more conventional, curriculum-based education and training. It demonstrates that creative learning is not an optional enrichment activity, but a core educational practice that fosters confidence, engagement and achievement across diverse learner groups. This challenges traditional hierarchies that place academic attainment above creative development, showing – through both outcomes and participant experiences – that creative learning and formal education can be mutually reinforcing and of equal value in preparing young people for future success.



SECTION D – BEYOND TAKE TWO: Opportunities to Extend Provision & For Sector Leadership

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. Key opportunities lie in expanding to new settings, developing progression pathways, deepening cross-sector and community partnerships, and sharing the framework through CPD and sector engagement.

1. EXTENDING TAKE TWO:

Continued Relationships: There is great potential for Cambridge Junction to continue working with all 4 partners from Take Two: ideally as part of another multi-year funded programme. But in any case, everyone involved – schools and facilitators – would like to do something more.

New Settings: There is strong evidence that the model is transferable and could be extended to new providers, or setting types, such as youth justice, hospital schools, and young carers' organisations. It would be good to see a focus somehow on care experienced young people.

Parent & Community Engagement: More intentional engagement with parents and carers could amplify impact, perhaps by way of supporting schools to deliver “collaborative home/school creative challenges” as one teacher suggested. In any case, there is a need to better understand the impact of these projects on parents and carers.

The Film Festival already serves to broaden awareness of and positive reframing of Alternative Provision settings and young people to wider audiences; but there is scope to broaden invitations to industry groups and local communities.

Modular and Flexible Delivery: Take Two proof-tested several formats for the filmmaking project, suggesting that shorter versions of the programme could allow for greater flexibility and accessibility, especially for settings with high turnover or limited space in their curriculum.

Considering other art forms: Whilst the intensives focused on ‘filmmaking’, this involved a wide range of activities and roles. The model of devising, writing, storytelling, and performing works well because it also involves the capturing, editing and screening of participants’ experience and achievements. And the film / animation / music videos ‘outputs’ are central to Take Two’s success. Collaborative music projects which culminate in mass end-of-programme performances work in a similar way. But the ‘magic’ of film, celebrated in such an exciting Film Festival setting, is key to participants’ continued learning and the legacy of Take Two.

2. PATHWAYS FOR PROGRESSION

Developing modular formats, work experience opportunities, and helping to embed arts-based activities and creative careers into school curricula are all possible next steps.

Had Take Two extended to another year, it would have been valuable to provide more opportunities for older participants to take on paid mentor and assistant delivery roles on other projects, as Cambridge Junction facilitate for alumni of Total Arts and Open Access programmes.

Some Take Two participants also expressed a desire for more advanced or technical opportunities: suggesting there is scope to offer more in-depth or specialist workshops (e.g., advanced editing, music production, or digital storytelling) as follow-ons or parallel strands to Take Two.

Critically, components that made Take Two so successful include:

- Cambridge Junction serving as a **third space** for young people – outside the boundaries of home and structures of school
- Broadening participants' awareness of **creative roles** and how to access them
- Empowering participants to take ownership of their **creative futures** by providing them with additional opportunities to engage with the arts and pathways initiatives

These provide the bases for another multi-year, co-created, learner-centred initiative – which should again focus on marginalised young people (those with complex needs, barriers to education, underrepresented in the creative sector). Such a programme could focus more on:

- Creative Careers Insights and Awareness-raising – through in-person and Virtual Industry Days for schools, CPD & teaching resources for school staff to deliver themselves
- Delivery of creative projects (such as the filmmaking or theatre intensives) – with additional time spent getting to know backstage as well as performance and creative roles
- Clearly defined pathways and next-step activities for participants – including, where feasible, work-based learning / shadowing opportunities in Cambridge Junction and (ideally) with other arts venues or creative spaces.
- Through-year support (signposting & mentoring) for participants, as they build knowledge and practical experience of creative roles, and consider a range of pathways
- Co-design of support resources to build capacity in local business and arts organisations, to better equip them for hosting placements or employing young people with diverse needs

Furthermore, the focus on connecting young people more explicitly with local industry has potential to impact the wider sector and developing workforce; as shown with the flexible apprenticeship being led by Cambridge Junction, involving work placements in several other creative organisations.

3. SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Sharing the Framework & Insights: Cambridge Junction's approach to creative engagement is a leading example of embedded, participatory arts learning for young people with complex needs.

“From a pedagogical perspective, it's really outstanding.” St. Peter's Cabin, Teacher

Once finalised, Cambridge Junction are encouraged to share the framework beyond their own network, at national fora and conferences on participatory arts, inclusion, and youth voice. Where Take Two worked as an excellent example of action research, there is more to explore in terms of how this type of trauma-informed, adaptive arts-based approach can achieve a range of outcomes in other settings, with specific cohorts, and aligned to inclusion work more broadly (neurodivergence, mental health, LGBTQ+, care-experienced youth).

As suggested above, work needs to be done on reworking the language around creative learning, talent development, 'employability preparedness', and creative careers, especially when it comes to working with people already experiencing barriers to engagement, education, and professional practice. Furthermore, the term 'creative learning' itself needs defining; if not more so than 'co-creation' – especially if the goal is to position arts-based social practice as of equal value to more

traditional health / wellbeing / social interventions and, of course, formal education (even within alternative provision). Cambridge Junction is encouraged to present these questions to the sector - by way of, for instance, a symposium, a programme of action learning sets, a PhD candidacy in partnership with a resonant HEI, and the training opportunities mentioned below.

Continued Professional Development (CPD): There is an evident need for training of artists who wish to develop skills in facilitation, creative learning and trauma-informed practice; which Cambridge Junction is perfectly placed to lead on. The team is strongly encouraged to explore ways of extending their artist development programme. [Examples of good practice can be provided].

In addition, Cambridge Junction are encouraged to consider establishing a mechanism for the exchange of practitioners from *other* organisations to shadow and learn from each other, in the spirit of practice-sharing / action-learning. There is evidence to suggest this would be welcomed by many in the sector – especially those who have yet to work with groups with significant need.

Supporting Organisational Responsiveness: The type of projects produced by the Creative Learning team in recent years have emerged from within an organisation that purposefully enables experimentation, empowerment, inclusivity, and *fun*. Bold, ambitious and unique programmes like Take Two thrive in this environment. Several facilitators highlighted how the kindness, enthusiasm and support shown to them by the Creative Learning team “**is just part of the culture at Cambridge Junction**”. Indeed, the Business Plan could as well be describing Take Two specifically, when it states that: “We nurture creativity. We amplify talent. We inspire curiosity. We grow compassion. We spark hope. We model the future.”

It has been suggested that Cambridge Junction be “recognised as a Centre of Excellence” for their work with young people with complex needs. This remains a valuable and worthwhile ambition, but should serve not as an end in itself, but to orient a sustained commitment to action learning – actively engaging in the work, fostering peer learning, and ensuring consistency and quality throughout Creative Learning at Cambridge Junction. There remains scope for the organisation to more explicitly demonstrate how these principles are embedded into *all* distinct business functions – that is, *beyond* Creative Learning. The team are encouraged to consider how they make sense of and practice structured reflection and evidence-based design in their day-to-day work, as a step towards sharing this with colleagues.

Curriculum Influence: Take Two has already influenced curriculum innovation (e.g. new GCSE Film Studies at Red Balloon). There is scope to advocate for the integration of arts-based, participatory models into mainstream and alternative provision curricula; by liaising with local authority to explore how Cambridge Junction might support schools to deliver creative qualifications (Bronze Arts Award, NVQ, GCSE) or augmenting delivery of creative subjects.

Cross-Sector Partnerships: There is significant opportunity to deepen partnerships with health and social care sectors, aligning with national frameworks for mental health and re-engagement. This could involve the offer of training / practice insight sessions about arts-integrated, relational practice in these settings - positioning the Creative Engagement model as part of holistic recovery.

Furthermore, seeking partnerships with local creative employers could help extend engagement for the most creative careers-oriented Take Two participants. The intention to provide bespoke work experience did not fully materialise but remains a promising avenue. A starting point would be to produce a ‘Guide to Hosting young creatives’ for creative employers and other venues, to encourage them to welcome young people into their spaces for short-term work-based learning activities.