

APRIL 2025

CONEY'S SCHOOLS PROGRAMME EVALUATION 2025

LEAVING A PLAYFUL LEGACY IN TOWER HAMLETS AND BEYOND

WHAT IS THE CONEY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME?

Our schools programme has been a core feature of Coney's offer to communities, in particular to our local borough of Tower Hamlets. The programme focuses on listening to the passions of young people and what they want to change in the world, and giving them the tools to speak to those they want to reach. This unique tool born and honed across all our projects, we've coined **Playful Activism**.



Image credit: Ross Kernahan

"Coney's work is a champion of cheer and optimism through conversations on difficult topics, their work lifts young people up so high, that it makes them feel they can do anything."

- Sandra Ata, Greenpeace

"Every class should have this magical experience!"

- Teacher at Solebay Primary on The Undercover Caretaker Agency 2025

This programme has been supported consistently by Backstage Trust and Canary Wharf Contractors for 5 years. Through these partnerships, we've been able to pilot new projects, develop them according to robust feedback from students and teachers, and grow our impact across the borough. In 2024, we significantly expanded our reach, reaching 21 schools in the borough across our 2 main projects. We reached: 1192 young people, 25 teachers and up-skilled 10 local practitioners in our unique practice. However, while this work has continued to gain momentum, Coney has had to unfortunately take the decision to close as a charity in April 2025. The loss of core Arts Council England funding in 2022 presented significant challenges, and Coney in its present form is not sustainable in the current funding climate.

Since the decision was taken, we've been pursuing a carefully planned transition period to enable our key programmes of work to both be delivered for our stakeholders this year, and to evolve into new, independent initiatives. We're incredibly grateful to our legacy partners for enabling us to end in a way that honours our commitment to our communities of stakeholders and artists. In the following report, we will detail what we have achieved and set out what the future looks like for our essential projects.

"A wonderful day of learning and sharing. Having the chance to be in a room of like-minded and politically engaged artists and teachers and hearing about the fantastic work Coney's Young Company has achieved over the years is the antidote to a world that feels, at times, scary and difficult. I'm excited and proud to be able to take forward the work of Coney's Young Company into my own practice, to feel empowered and ready to fight for change."

- Anoushka Bonwick, Freelance Youth Arts Practitioner on the Coney Schools Practice Sharing



2025 SCHOOLS PROGRAMME DELIVERY

THE UNDERCOVER CARETAKER AGENCY

The Undercover Caretaker Agency is an interactive adventure for primary schools in Tower Hamlets to explore mental health and wellbeing, developed by a team of artists with clinical review from Tower Hamlets Education and Wellbeing Service.

We've delivered UCA to **19 schools**. Each school was delivered:

- 1 box, and 2 sets of replenishable resources per year for 3 consecutive years.
- After the first round of delivery in year 1, we've reached 570 students. By the end of year 1, we will have reached 1140 students.
- At the end of year 3, 3420 students will have been impacted by UCA.
- After just 1 year, the new and improved box model works out at just £15.99 per student.
- 100% of teachers said they would recommend UCA to their colleagues
- 93% of teachers said their class gained new skills to help manage and benefit their mental health.
- 93% of teachers said they recognised clear curriculum links in the adventure, including: PSHE, Literacy/Oracy, Art, Science & more.
- You can read our full 2025 project evaluation [HERE](#).



This work was generously funded by Backstage Trust, East London Foundation Trust and Tower Hamlets Arts Music Education Service.

THE PLAYFUL ACTIVISM TOOLBOX

The Playful Activism Toolkit is a youth climate advocacy project, by Toby Peach and Mel Frances, developed with Coney and Greenpeace. The aim of it is to empower secondary school students to develop resilience to eco-anxiety, and support them to take the lead in crafting meaningful climate actions at their school over **8 sessions**.

- We delivered the Playful Activism Toolbox to 3 groups across 2 schools.
- At Swanlea we reached a group of 10 sixth form students.
- At Wapping we reached 2 groups of 21 year 8 students. We have reached 52 students in total, across the 2 schools.
- Each group undertook 8 sessions, and delivered 3 different pieces of Playful Activism to their school communities.
- 78% of surveyed students reported an increase in their knowledge of climate and the ecological crisis.
- 78% of surveyed students reported an increase in the power they felt to make change in the climate and ecological crisis.
- 75% of surveyed students would recommend the Playful Activism Toolbox to their peers.
- You can read our full 2025 project evaluation [HERE](#).
- You can watch video documentation of the project [HERE](#).



This work was generously funded by Shaftesbury Young Peoples' Trust and Tower Hamlets Carbon Reduction Scheme.



Image credit: Ross Kernahan

PROJECT LEGACY

Legacy funding has allowed us to:

- Spend time building relationships necessary to ensure the future life of our projects, and ensure continued provision for our stakeholders.
- Research and put together a list of appropriate funding and partnership prospects, for which we are now in contact and/or preparing applications.
- Invest in creating high quality evaluation assets, enabling all our feedback and project data to be accessed via digestible impact reports.

THE UNDERCOVER CARETAKER AGENCY LEGACY

The success of this year's delivery has strengthened our partnership with THEWS. After reaching 19 schools this year, we're now confident we can bring UCA to an even larger number of students in 2025/26 - expanding into the remaining 20 schools on the THEWS roster and doubling our reach and impact over the next 3 years.

UCA complements and supports our whole school approach in a fun, accessible way, especially in terms of developing an environment that promotes social and emotional wellbeing. It has got staff and KS2 classes talking about how they feel and practicing ways to manage anxiety in the classroom. It has also been amazing to hear how the projects pupils have created together are meaningful to them, facilitating genuine pupil voice.

- Charlie Hart, THEWS

We're thrilled that UCA and supporting staff will continue to work on this project under Mod in partnership with KIT Theatre - an award-winning company bringing immersive and interactive work to families and schools across London and beyond. To find out more about this, contact info@modgames.co.uk.

Thanks to legacy funding, during this period of transition the team has been able to:

- Begin prospecting and applying funding to produce more UCA boxes to bring this vision of 40 UCA schools to life, in partnership with THEWS.
- Create an evergreen resource page for teachers delivering UCA with a robust CPD video, tech tutorials, PDF teacher packs, FAQs, and more. This page will be accessible here from May 2025.



Image credit: Ross Kernahan

"The chance to craft a legacy for our school's programme has been invaluable for the staff at Coney, our partners in Tower Hamlets and the young people we work with. We have been able to ensure that there is a future for the practice, through sharing with other practitioners and finding pathways forward for some of our innovative projects. Coney closing is heartbreaking, but I'm heartened that the spirit of our work will live on."

- Toby Peach, Programme Lead

PRACTICE LEGACY

In March 2025, we were able to hold a full day practice sharing for local individual youth practitioners and organisations working across different areas of arts and education to deepen their understanding of Coney's Playful Activism practice, in order to bring it forward into their own work.

We looked at:

- Sparking complex conversations with play
- Adapting games as an inclusive way-in to systems thinking and system change
- Wellbeing, comfort in action, and finding agency within our school communities.

We also reviewed some of our most impactful projects - picking apart what landed well, what was challenging and why, and finally, examined different possible contexts for this work, asking where could you take this next?

PRACTITIONER TESTIMONIES

"I found the workshop to be a really accessible dissemination of information about Coney and also Coney's work. Playful Activism as a framing for working with young people to incite social change feels like such a useful tool to weave into my own practice, particularly in being able to discuss systematic change through unpicking the systems we use in workshop games. I think this is emblematic of Coney making activism approachable, and importantly, positive."

- Beth Drury, Boundless Theatre

"It was fantastic to have the chance to reconnect with my own sense of playfulness during the workshop and remind myself of the power that play can have in creating bonds between participants and opening our minds to new possibilities. I am really keen to embed Playful Activism in my work with children and young people and have already been discussing a way to do this with a school I have been working with recently who are wanting to develop a social action project for their Year 5 students."

- Jo Carey

"It was great to get a deeper understanding of Coney's work and I continue to reflect on how I can implement these strategies within SEND education settings. I have already used some of the games in staff training in order to promote lightness and play in the classroom. I am also incorporating Playful Activism into a performance piece highlighting how autistic pupils with complex support needs engage with the arts. Through play/immersive approaches, the piece aims to showcase how these pupils, who are continually underestimated, are expert artists."

- Elise Robinson, teacher in SEND settings & access consultant



Image credit: Eliza Cass

ANY QUESTIONS?

Thank you for supporting us to ensure the legacy of playful activism. We are so grateful for your partnership. If you have any questions about the future of the projects listed above, please contact Toby Peach, at info@modgames.co.uk.