# Oxford teens explore mental health in bafta Young Game Designers finalist entry



Isabelle Grace Taylor, 16, and Emily Qiaoqi Sun, 17, have gained notable recognition as finalists in the prestigious BAFTA Young Game Designers competition, particularly in the Game Making 15-18 category. Their entry, titled *Mikka Bouzu*, centres on a burnt-out game designer seeking to reclaim her passion for creativity by navigating through three of her unfinished projects. The game is designed not just as entertainment but also as a medium to explore the nuanced challenges faced during the transition from childhood to adulthood. Isabelle and Emily state, “We hope that our game will be able to provide a way of processing these common and underacknowledged feelings, and that players may work through their own difficulties alongside Mikka's struggles.”

The competition marks its 15th anniversary this year and has whittled down a pool of participants to 52 finalists aged between 12 and 18. It aims to both inspire and support young talent in game development, providing them with a vital platform to showcase their creativity and technical skills. The Young Game Designers initiative, managed by BAFTA, is designed to encourage young individuals by granting them access to industry insights and mentorship opportunities, expanding their pathways into a career in gaming.

Finalists like Isabelle and Emily were selected based on the creativity of their ideas and the technical execution of their game prototypes. This year’s awards are divided into two categories: the Game Concept Award and the Game Making Award, each accommodating two age brackets. Notably, finalists had the privilege of engaging with previous BAFTA Breakthroughs, Henry and Fred Hoffman, co-founders of Newfangled Games, who held a webinar discussing game development insights. Their game, *Paper Trail*, has recently made its debut on the Netflix mobile app and other major gaming platforms, illustrating the kind of real-world connections and exposure that accompany participation in the competition.

Tim Hunter, BAFTA’s executive director of learning, inclusion, and policy, spoke on the significance of the initiative, highlighting the invaluable support from various partners which has enabled the programme to flourish for over a decade. He remarked, "This year's finalists have built thoughtful stories and displayed real technical prowess in creating their games, drawing on topics that nearly anyone can relate to - from concerns about climate change to mental health." Such themes underscore the evolving landscape of video games, where young creators are increasingly tackling meaningful social issues through their narratives.

While the spotlight is currently on the finalists, the broader impact of the BAFTA Young Game Designers initiative on the landscape of gaming in the UK cannot be overstated. The program nurtures creativity and innovation among young developers, potentially leading to the emergence of a new generation of talent in an industry that continues to expand rapidly. The culmination of this year's competition not only celebrates the ingenuity of young creators but also lays the groundwork for future advancements within the gaming sector.

In addition to Isabelle and Emily's compelling narrative, other outstanding finalists were also recognised, such as 17-year-old Charlotte Bigham from North Ayrshire with her game *Midieval*, a fantasy-adventure set in an imaginative world, and 14-year-old Fionnlagh Carter, the only finalist from Scotland in the Game Making category for his rocket simulator *ShetLANDER*. These examples illustrate the diverse storytelling capabilities being harnessed by young developers across the UK.

The BAFTA Young Game Designers competition, therefore, stands as a vital incubator for the next wave of game designers, fostering an environment where passion meets innovation, and creativity finds its voice in the digital age.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25188119.oxford-teens-named-finalists-bafta-competition/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.bafta.org/programmes/young-game-designer)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25188119.oxford-teens-named-finalists-bafta-competition/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://www.bafta.org/media-centre/press-releases/bafta-reveals-finalists-for-2024-young-game-designers-competition-selected-by-britains-top-game-experts)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.bafta.org/programmes/young-game-designer), [[4]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25188119.oxford-teens-named-finalists-bafta-competition/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/c97d17604lpo)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25188119.oxford-teens-named-finalists-bafta-competition/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.bafta.org/media-centre/press-releases/bafta-reveals-finalists-for-2024-young-game-designers-competition-selected-by-britains-top-game-experts), [[6]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25188119.oxford-teens-named-finalists-bafta-competition/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bafta.org/programmes/young-game-designer> - The BAFTA Young Game Designers (YGD) competition is an annual initiative by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) aimed at inspiring and supporting young people aged 10 to 18 in the field of game development. The competition encourages participants to design, develop, and present new game ideas, providing a platform for young talent to showcase their creativity and technical skills. Winners receive industry-supported workshops, mentorship, and their games are featured in exhibitions such as the Power Up experience at the Science Museum in London and the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester.
3. <https://www.bafta.org/media-centre/press-releases/bafta-reveals-finalists-for-2024-young-game-designers-competition-selected-by-britains-top-game-experts> - BAFTA announced the finalists for the 2024 Young Game Designers (YGD) competition, selected by a panel of experts from leading UK gaming companies. The competition featured two main awards: the Game Concept Award, recognizing the most original and well-thought-out game idea, and the Game Making Award, awarded for the most impressive use of coding skills to create a prototype game. Each award was divided into two age categories: 10-14 years and 15-18 years. Finalists were chosen based on the creativity of their vision and the technicality of their execution.
4. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/> - Scottish talent has been recognized in the BAFTA Young Game Designers (YGD) awards, with several young developers being named finalists. Notably, 17-year-old Charlotte Bigham from North Ayrshire was nominated in the Game Concept 15-18 category for her game 'Midieval,' a fantasy-adventure-rhythm game set in the city of 'Panmusica.' Additionally, 14-year-old Fionnlagh Carter from Glasgow was the only finalist from Scotland in the Game Making 10-14 category for his game 'ShetLANDER,' a rocket simulator set in a world where Shetland houses the UK's first spaceport.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/c97d17604lpo> - The BBC Newsround article highlights the winners of the 2024 BAFTA Young Game Designers (YGD) competition. The Game Concept Award for the 10-14 age category was won by 14-year-old Orson for his game idea 'Collateral Damage,' where players take on the role of 'George the Caretaker' cleaning up after superhero battles. In the 15-18 age category, 17-year-old Tallulah won for her game idea 'The Whispering Wilds,' set in a world of ancient magic where players explore and learn about plants and medicine. The Game Making Award for the 10-14 age category was won by 13-year-old Ethan for his game 'DnB Bullet Hell,' a fast-paced game where players dodge bullets in time with drum and bass music. In the 15-18 age category, 17-year-old Dan won for his game 'Unplugged,' an electricity-themed game where players solve puzzles by powering electrical items.
6. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/> - Scottish talent has been recognized in the BAFTA Young Game Designers (YGD) awards, with several young developers being named finalists. Notably, 17-year-old Charlotte Bigham from North Ayrshire was nominated in the Game Concept 15-18 category for her game 'Midieval,' a fantasy-adventure-rhythm game set in the city of 'Panmusica.' Additionally, 14-year-old Fionnlagh Carter from Glasgow was the only finalist from Scotland in the Game Making 10-14 category for his game 'ShetLANDER,' a rocket simulator set in a world where Shetland houses the UK's first spaceport.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/24351089.scottish-talent-bafta-young-game-designer-awards/> - Scottish talent has been recognized in the BAFTA Young Game Designers (YGD) awards, with several young developers being named finalists. Notably, 17-year-old Charlotte Bigham from North Ayrshire was nominated in the Game Concept 15-18 category for her game 'Midieval,' a fantasy-adventure-rhythm game set in the city of 'Panmusica.' Additionally, 14-year-old Fionnlagh Carter from Glasgow was the only finalist from Scotland in the Game Making 10-14 category for his game 'ShetLANDER,' a rocket simulator set in a world where Shetland houses the UK's first spaceport.