



**OPEN  
LENS  
MEDIA**

## 2021 Annual Outcomes Report

Developing Young People.  
Creating Opportunities.  
Opening The Lens On The Youth Perspective.



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Hello and welcome to our 2021 Annual Report.

When thinking about how to summarise 2021 several words came to mind, however the one that stood out the most when thinking about the character of the team here at Open Lens Media is resilience. In the face of ever-changing rules, restrictions, and variants, I am so proud of the resilience we have shown as a team as we've navigated through the changes.

I am sure that for you, much like us, the last few years have presented challenges in various ways but for me it's been a true encouragement to see how communities have bound together, the team have supported each other, and we have made the best of difficult situations. Therefore, this year it was important that the team told the story of their year as it's been the team effort here that has brought us through.

This year we did everything within our power to ensure that young people felt safe coming back into group environments, and equally just as supported in achieving their dreams and aspirations. Once again we have had some fantastic testimonies of how we succeeded in this area and hope that in 2022 we'll be able to have many more.

So for now, I'm going to hand over to the team to tell you more about our 2021 and how we stuck by mantra of 'Developing young people. Creating opportunities and Opening the Lens on the youth perspective'.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report and we welcome your feedback.

**Daina Anderson**  
CEO & Director



2021

# A YEAR IN SUMMARY

2021

2021 was filled with peaks and troughs in equal measure for Open Lens Media. The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic which began in 2019 continued to be felt heavily throughout the UK and the year initiated with a national lockdown issued by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The order was announced in January 2021 and remained in effect until the month of March in which restrictions were placed on both public activities and work. During this period, we engaged with young people online as we recognised the impact that lockdowns have on young people's mental health and wellbeing. However, as restrictions lifted, Open Lens was ready to dive back into full programme delivery.



We successfully secured a new contract under Sandwell Council's Connexions Services to deliver programmes to young people in the Sandwell and Black Country area as part of the Black Country Impact Scheme. We worked with young people remotely, on-location and from our studio in Walsall town centre which has transformed throughout the year with new equipment and furnishings.

The Summer of 2021 was a great success for OLM as we expanded our outreach to wider parts of The Black Country area as well as running our annual Holiday Programme in Birmingham. We worked alongside youth services to deliver activities to young people as part of the Government's HAF 2021 Scheme (Holiday Activities and Food Programme) which included Podcasting, Video Production and Film & Screenwriting. Following the success of the summer, we continued to work with the youth services to deliver programmes.

Not only were we able to expand our outreach areas this year, but we also expanded the team, developed our curriculum and reinvented the style of digital content we released onto our social platforms. Our new team members each brought a unique creativity to the organisation and enriched our offerings to young people. We've had the opportunity to attend many networking events and exhibitions as well as hosting our own Breakfast Showcase event throughout the year and have met some wonderful people and organisations who we are keen to engage with.

Despite the growth achieved in 2021, the lasting impacts of the pandemic have been very much felt for the company. Post pandemic engagement has been very difficult to navigate and access to NEET young people became increasingly difficult. Various Government schemes such as "Kick-start" and "Re-start" were introduced to help young people get into employment or training which reduced the levels of referrals made to training providers such as ourselves. The uncertainty of referral numbers has presented financial challenges for the company to level its growth throughout the year. In consequence, OLM has had to review and adapt its business model to navigate a more sustainable income stream for unprecedented times and is something OLM continues to review moving into a new financial year.

Overall, the year was one filled with creativity and focus to ensure we could deliver the best programmes to the young people that we work with in such uncertain times and we continue to navigate the challenges that descend with us into the new year.

**Chloe Ball**  
**Project and Engagement Coordinator**

# A GROWING TEAM

We were very excited to welcome new members to our team throughout the year via the Government's Kick-Start Scheme. Each member has had the opportunity to take part in various programmes, projects, productions and training over the past year and have enhanced the delivery of sessions we provide to young people.

Here is what our Kick-Starters had to say about their time with us....

## Joshua Fox - Assistant Facilitator and Production

Since working for Open Lens Media I have been given countless opportunities to upskill myself alongside receiving support and mentoring from the team. It is a very healthy environment filled with hardworking, driven individuals. Each member of the OLM team plays a role just as crucial as the next. What led me to Open Lens Media was my interest within the media industry... What has kept me here is the team, the mission and rewarding nature of my job role.



When I graduated from University, I was torn between two paths: Industry OR Education. It was a choice I didn't want to make. By finding OLM, I found a balance between both. I am able to deliver sessions as part of the facilitation team and I am able to still work on productions as part of the content team. It really is a job that I thoroughly enjoy, it's a team that I'm extremely proud to be a part of and a mission that is making a difference.



## Mandisi Sibanda - Videographer and Editor

Since I started working for Open Lens Media, it has been a fulfilling experience for me as a Junior Videographer. This is mainly due to working with the youth and capturing them on their journeys of self-discovery through our facilitation sessions or community projects. The multiple projects I have worked on include the 1 in 1 million series and the Just Youth Skate Park Documentary. Through these projects I was able to better my skills on the camera and learn different ways to communicate in a team environment. Since my first day here there's been a rise in the quality of content that I am able to produce as an editor. I feel that overall as a team we have now established a style that resonates with Open Lens Media and its target audience which is people aged 16-29.

My hope for OLM going forward is to continue transcending the informative content we produce and for our audience to grow alongside it, which will allow us to attract more young people to our programmes.

2021

## Rima Ismail - Digital Content Creator and Marketer

As a very recently joined member of the company, I have already had the opportunity to attend an online social media training course over Microsoft Teams which was insightful and offered me useful theories that I can apply in my role of Digital Content Creator. I have also had the opportunity to do canvassing in the local areas, visiting job centres, colleges, and community centres to network and speak to possible new community partners about our organisation. I have also exhibited at a jobs fair with the team, speaking to job seekers about what Open Lens Media can do for them and creating dialogue with other organisations.

I have enjoyed creating and uploading content on our social media channels, designing the posts and composing captions whilst developing a communication strategy to inform the rest of the team on the direction of our communications in the meanwhile. Working in such a talented, artistic team has already been such an enriching experience and I am looking forward to progressing further in my career alongside the team and to see what exciting possibilities are in store for Open Lens Media in 2022.



2021

## Tevin Anderson - Assistant Facilitator

Having the opportunity to facilitate projects for Open Lens Media exposes me to various people, all different in terms of background, interests and life goals. The team has a strong divergence, aiding each member in having the chance to learn something from one another. Throughout my time at OLM, I feel I've been given the guidance I need to try out new things, whether that may be my style of approach towards facilitation or even my knowledge of certain areas due to workshops the team have been given over the course of time. I believe with due time I'll be able to utilise most of the skills I've learnt as beneficially and efficiently as possible.



# A GROWING TEAM

In 2021 we also introduced a new Lead Facilitator to the team, who has reflected on his year with us...



## Taran Erhart-Bains - Lead Facilitator and Coordinator

Since joining Open Lens Media earlier in the year, I have gained a range of skills and knowledge working in a diverse team environment. In my role as Lead Facilitator, it has been a privilege to deliver our programmes to young people from various backgrounds and abilities. Working as part of the team has been a rewarding experience through learning about different areas of the company such as the referrals side and also sharing my technical knowledge in productions with the content team. Being part of OLM has also given me the opportunity to continue my personal development. This includes completing a recent leadership course that covered important issues which took place over a 4-day interactive programme.

Looking ahead to 2022 I am excited to see the expansion of our programmes in the areas that we have established good relationships in this year. Furthermore, I also want to build upon this and bring further creative and community partners to the organisation to help enrich our programmes and opportunities for young people moving forward.



## WORK EXPERIENCE

We were also fortunate to see the return of one of our previous participants, Sadiqah Begum, over the Summer months who reached out to us for a work experience opportunity. Here is what Sadiqah had to say about her time with us:

*"I had the pleasure to work with Open Lens Media previously when I was in year 9. The amazing team taught us many creative and editorial skills that lead us to produce our own school documentary!"*

*Over the summer I had the great opportunity to do work experience with Open Lens Media at the Lighthouse which I was so excited about. However, this time around, I got to work with the team from a different view or 'Lens' should I say where I was able to understand and see the behind the scenes of what planning and organisation, creativity goes into an Open Lens Media programme.*

*In my work experience, the programme was catered towards kids and young teens. It was so great seeing how Daina and her team ensured that the kids were able to have an insight to Creative Media by giving them the chance to create a short film but most importantly enjoy the process. Since I was able to help out the team, we worked on the setup, as well as supporting the different groups with creating their short films. I would say the best part was being able to watch some of the films back with them and seeing their reaction.*

*Overall, it was a very fun and unique 2 day work experience where I was able to feel part of the Open Lens Media Team and understand how Daina and her incredible team work together and put in a lot of energy and effort to create creative programmes! I would definitely love to work with them again in the future!"*

We loved having Sadiqah on board with us over the Summer and wish her all the best in Sixth Form and with all of her future endeavours!

2021

## PROGRAMMES

Over 2021, OLM has continued to deliver its programmes to young people across Birmingham and The Black Country area. Unfortunately, the impacts of coronavirus have reduced the numbers of young people who are referred onto our programmes significantly. However, for those we were able to work with this year, we have had great success and supported over 100 young people and children across the year. We've had to adapt our style of delivery to comply with regulations depending on the organisation we worked with which included social distancing, mask wearing and sanitation.

### Key Stats 2021

Delivery Outreach: 100+ young people  
Summer Holiday Programme: 85 Young People (Approx)  
Engagement: 90%

Here is what our facilitation team had to say about programme delivery...

When a facilitator delivers a session, they are not only there to provide the relevant information from the session guide but to really support the participants in their development on the programme. This involves creating new and exciting activities, listening to what the participants really want to know and overall working as a cohesive team. The role of a lead facilitator is to drive the session, create the energy and environment for the participants to really get immersed into the session.

The role of the assisting facilitator is to support the lead facilitator throughout the session, i.e. handing out worksheets, making sure relevant forms/paperwork is completed correctly by participants and writing/drawing on the flipchart to create alternative visual learning materials for participants, etc. The assistant facilitator also has the opportunity to run activities and engage participants and offer additional support to them if needed.

Throughout our time at OLM, we've faced unpredictable challenges due to being in such a fast-paced environment, but with the right improvements as a team we've been able to handle the unexpected, deliver amazing programmes and see the rewarding outcomes that come from our young people.

# PROGRAMME BREAKDOWN

## Walsall - 1-2-1 Support

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Date: Jan-March

Course: Podcast Production and Personal Development Coaching

We began the year by providing 1-2-1 support to a young man as part of the Black Country Impact Scheme under Walsall Council. To deliver sessions to the participant during the lockdown, we had to engage them via online platforms. This itself presented difficulties within the sessions as the participant had to download suitable software and needed time to familiarise themselves with it. However, the participant was keen to learn the software features and managed to create an amazing Podcast episode about his chosen topic dogs called "Barking mad about Dogs". He was extremely proud of the progress he made within the 12 sessions on programme and experienced an increase in confidence and esteem which resulted in him seeking to gain employment.



## River's House

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Date: April - June 2021

Size of Cohort: 6 Participants (4 Completed to end)

Course: Video Production

River's House is a temporary housing unit in Walsall for vulnerable young adults who, for varied reasons, find themselves in need of supported accommodation. This year we were fortunate to work with some of the residents of River's House across 10 Weeks to deliver our Video Production Course. The programme helped enable participants to evolve their skills through the use of media roles. This was done through presentation techniques, writing skills, camera skills and generally confidence building.

The aim of this was to successfully complete a final project, in this case a documentary about River's House. In general, participants developed skills across a wide range of areas of media. First attending the course with little to no knowledge of production skills, our participants expressed interest in their project and through this worked well as a team showing good chemistry, leaving the course with a good basis of skills going forward whether in the working world or further education.

## Sandwell Council - The Shape Forum

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Date: November 2021 - February 2022

Size of Cohort: 10

Course: Video Production

The Shape Forum provides the opportunity for young people to meet other young people aged 11-23 across the Sandwell Borough, regionally and nationally, organise SHAPE Events and act as a consultation group for Sandwell Council services and partner agencies. We have been working with The Forum to deliver our Video Production Training Course over 7 sessions. Participants in the sessions will then utilise their skills to record performances that will be used as part of Sandwell Council's Anti-Bullying Roadshow. During the course, participants would develop skills in camera operation, audio production, script writing, communication, creative development and many more. Conversations within this programme are centred around the topic of bullying and anti-bullying to help shape the content in the performances. The forum will then form a production crew to film the performances with the help of Open Lens Media. This programme is expected to run until February 2022 so we are very excited to work with The Forum and see the content that they produce.



## YMCA

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Date: December 2021

Size of Cohort: 1

Course: Film and Podcasting

The YMCA is a charity whose work focuses on the following areas: accommodation, family work, health & wellbeing, training & education, support & advice, and policy & research. In December 2021, we had the pleasure of working with an individual referred in through the YMCA to take part in our Film and Podcasting Training Programme. The participant demonstrated creativity right from the start and used the sessions to gain skills in both film and podcasting. Not only did they learn technical media skills on this programme, but they also developed their soft skills such as confidence, presentation and communication skills. It was amazing to see the development of the participant and the podcast episode about music and friendship that he created alongside his peer who appeared as a guest.



# HOLIDAY PROGRAMMES

The Summer of 2021 was a great success for Open Lens Media as we worked with community partners across Birmingham, Walsall and Sandwell to deliver our holiday programmes funded by Children in Need. We were able to work 80+ young people aged between 11-16 years old across the 6 week summer holiday period and help as part of the Government's HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) Scheme.

## The Lighthouse Young People's Centre

Size of Cohort: 50+ young people  
Course: Video Production Workshops

We were very excited to return to The Lighthouse to deliver our annual Summer Programme to young people in the Birmingham area including Aston, Lozells, Nechells, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Great Barr. The Lighthouse offered an array of activities throughout the Summer for young people to take part in including our Video Production Workshops. The workshops were a great success as groups had the opportunity to shoot with cameras and create short videos. Despite the workshops being short in length (1 hour session), participants were able to gain knowledge of creative storytelling, camera operation and camera angles. Overall, the groups were well engaged and enthused by the sessions and we received positive feedback from the participants.



## Sandwell Just Youth

Date: July - August  
Size of Cohort: 4  
Course: Podcast Production

We had the privilege to connect with Sandwell Council's Youth Service known as "Just Youth" this Summer. We worked with a small group of 4 young people across 5 weeks to train them in Podcast Production at The Coneygre Arts Centre. Topics in this course included podcast production, audio skills, camera skills, scriptwriting and project planning. The group were able to work together to create 2 Podcast Episodes and expressed that the course had been a fun provision to engage with over the Summer. Overall, the group were well engaged throughout the programme and brought their own creativity to the activities in the sessions.

## Walsall Youth Connect

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Date: August

Size of Cohort: 10+ per session (Approx 30 young people)

Course: Video Production



Over the summer we were fortunate to connect with a new organisation called Youth Connect. Youth Connect is a youth service that empowers young people and offers advice, coaching and support across a wide range of activities at locations in Walsall. We delivered a Video Production course across 3 weeks for Youth Connect at Pleck Youth Centre for young people aged 10-16. In this course young people learned about storytelling, camera operation, camera angles, production roles and audio skills. Participants helped to contribute towards the final project which was producing a promotional video for the centre. The video captured all the work and activities that occurred over the summer as part of the HAF 2021 programme and was well received by Youth Connect who posted the video on their social platforms.

## FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Open Lens would like to take the opportunity to express our deepest thanks to all the partners we have worked with throughout the year who have helped us in working with young people.

The Coneygre Arts Centre

Youth Connect Walsall

The Lighthouse Young Peoples Centre

Sandwell Council

Just Youth and The Shape Forum

Walsall Council

# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

## New Programme

Here at Open Lens, we are always wanting to develop our curriculum and offer the most exciting courses that will engage young people no matter what their interests are. In 2021, we have developed, launched and delivered our new programme known as Film and Screenwriting! In this course, participants learn skills in creative writing, storytelling, script development, camera operation, audio skills as well as developing softer skills such as confidence, communication, presentation skills and many more. Participants can see their ideas transform into a real project on screen and have a creative input throughout the whole process. The initial response to this new programme has been overwhelmingly positive from participant feedback and we look forward to delivering and developing this course over the next year.

## Learning Management System

We have also been working hard all year to develop our Learning Management System to enable easy online learning and delivery of our programmes and are excited to announce that the OLM online portal will be launching early 2022! This learning platform will enable OLM to reach more young people who prefer to do 1-2-1 learning rather than group based and will also support our young people in gaining a qualification from our programmes.

“The staff were friendly,  
we learned different  
camera shots and angles”  
Prem, aged 16



# CONTENT REVIEW

April 2021 marks the birth of OLM's Content team. From when we first started out at OLM, we knew we were producing content for a great company and mission. The time we have had with OLM have only helped to produce higher quality content with each project, series and webisode. Keep reading to get insight into our thoughts behind the project process.

## 1in1 Million Series

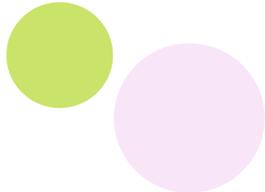
The aim of the 1in1 Million miniseries was to celebrate the achievements of young people aged 16-29 who live in the West Midlands area and the journey they had experienced getting to where they are now. The purpose of this series was to inspire young people by bringing light to the stories and lives people have led so far. We were very fortunate to have worked with some very inspirational people and showcase some of their work. We worked with the likes of Alex Darknell, The Mowatt Sisters, Romanah Malcolm, John Paul Conway and Jay Gill. Many of these guests we have kept in contact with as we really do care about the contributors that we work with.



## A State of Opinions - Season 2

This year marked the launch of season 2 of the 'A State of Opinions' podcast. This is a follow up to the relatively successful first season. We decided to bring back the original cast of Myles, Lerato and Kacper and let them discuss issues and topics that are affecting the youth. These topics included; Online learning, Cancel culture and Capitalism etc. To make the new season bigger and better we upgraded the production value by utilising the company's new podcast gear and lighting, while adding some live animations to the opening titles. Judging by the viewership and comments it seems the second season was received well and the production team and young people were happy that their creative visions were all met by the editor.





# 2021

## Meet the Team

The initial idea behind the Meet the Team video was a series of short profiles to introduce each member of the OLM team and the role that they play within the company. The plan for the video evolved to become similar to a game character selection screen. The content team believed this was a more fun, unorthodox approach of showcasing the amazing team here at OLM. It was filmed in front of our green screen within our on site studio. Each member of the team either selected or was assigned a prop to represent their role. Each member of the team then performed their 'animation' with some very funny results.

The editing process was key to the idea coming together as Mandisi (Editor) had to figure out how to edit using the layers system that is mainly known for photoshop. This was required if the video was to meet the video game concept idea. Judging by the response the video was successful and we were able to bring the Meet the Team idea to life.

## A Year on Social Media

This year, our social media communications have centred around Facebook and Instagram; making use of the story features has proved beneficial to boost live engagement of our audiences to promote interactions, whilst posts have allowed us to present photographs of our team running programmes and sessions for our audience to familiarise themselves with the team and what we do. We have used YouTube to upload videos from projects such as A State of Opinions, 1 in 1 Million, and also some footage of the sessions that we have run which has enabled us to exhibit the work of both our team and the young people we have worked with, whilst also showing our technological capabilities and equipment. We have launched our TikTok account which thus far has been primarily utilised to upload clips from our YouTube channel as short promotional videos, however we are planning to incorporate the platform more into content communication in the new year. We are also looking to start integrating the Reels function on Instagram into our content creation to improve our online engagement through short-form videos. The potential for using social media for our communications is expansive and will continue to provide exciting, refreshing possibilities for OLM.

Undeniably, OLM's content team have had a productive and successful year despite the difficulties that the pandemic had imposed upon our company. As a team, we have led, produced, and marketed numerous projects ranging from videos and documentaries to podcasts. Each project had utilised and showcased the content team's talents and had pushed our creativity further than ever before. We are currently in the process of assembling and publishing fresh content for the start of the new year which we are hoping will make 2022 the most constructive and rewarding year for the team yet.

## SOCIAL ACTION PROJECTS

In the summer of 2021, OLM were tasked with producing a Skateboarding documentary for 'Just Youth', which is a youth service under Sandwell Council that supports young people in the Sandwell area with advice, activities, advice and guidance. As part of the Governments HAF 2021 scheme, the council wanted us to showcase kids being taught how to skate and being provided meals for their efforts through 5 weeks of events throughout the Sandwell area. Therefore, our job was to capture all that content and produce a documentary that highlighted the many benefits the Just Youth project had on the community over the 5 weeks. We were able to interview many special guests that came to the event, which included Spencer Smith and Jordan Hall who are pro skaters that were there to train and inspire the next generation of skaters. Overall, the documentary was received positively and the team agreed that this was the most challenging shoot we've had the privilege to work on and we were happy with the final product.

"Gained a lot of new skills about podcasting and learned about how to use a camera and mics"  
Myles, aged 21



## HOPES FOR 2022

We are always looking ahead here at Open Lens Media and have some exciting things in the pipeline for 2022; one of which is our new Exit Pathway Scheme for young people. The Pathway Scheme will consist of Pre-Employment support and Soft Skill development to help move young people closer into education, employment or training. We'll be developing the pathway curriculum and establishing relationships with partners who can help us provide real opportunities for pathway participants.

Over the course of 2021, we have been establishing links with Creative Partners within the region such as mainstream broadcasters, independent creative bodies and independent artists. Our aim in 2022 is to be able to offer our participants meaningful and tangible opportunities within the creative industries that lead to progressive employment or training within the creative field. We will achieve this by:

- Widening the scope of our curriculum
- Partnering with Establishments such as the BBC on their bootcamp and apprenticeship programmes.
- Launching our Pledge 10 initiative (10 arts organisations to pledge with OLM for 12 months to support arts development within the region).

Another aim of ours in 2022 is also to become an accredited provider offering accredited NVQ and online courses that will allow young people to gain a qualification upon the completion of their programme. To achieve this we will be scoping our curriculums to become Level 1 & 2 accredited courses and launching our learning management system.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the year 2021 was one filled with many achievements and challenges for Open Lens Media. We are proud to have made such progress within such an uncertain time and would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our stakeholders for their continued support! The uncertainty of the pandemic and referral numbers continues to be a concern, but we are hopeful that the new year will be as full of opportunity and growth as 2021 was.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Open Lens Media CIC.