



OPEN  
LENS  
MEDIA

# 2023 ANNUAL OUTCOMES REPORT



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

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# FOREWORD

## Hello and welcome to our 2023 Annual Report.

At the end of last year, I stated that our aim in 2023 would be to place a strong focus on influencing systemic changes that affect outcomes for young people and improving the quality of the opportunities our beneficiaries are able to access and receive. I'm elated to be able to report that this year we have successfully achieved these aims and made great headway creating a long-lasting impact in these areas.



Through the launch of our community consultation services and the expansion of our Pathways Employability Programme in Walsall, Birmingham, and the Black Country we have improved our consultation and employability offers which will now afford us the opportunity to work much more closely with our partners in the community going forward.

This has been no easy feat and I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank our partners at Walsall Council, specifically within the Youth Justice Service, Early Years, Care Leavers and Programme teams for their trust and engagement in our services as we all work together for better outcomes for young people within the Walsall borough.

As I look forward towards 2024, I'm heavily reflecting on our social mission, "to contribute to the development of a more equitable society where young people have equal access to progressive opportunities in employment, education, and training regardless of their socio-economic background"

It's fair to say that as we turn the page on 2023, Open Lens Media has most assuredly turned a corner in ensuring we have the necessary tools to continue to make this a reality. Within the past 3 years we have faced a continual challenge surrounding our capacity to deliver our services and the financial resources needed to enable us to do this well. Undoubtedly, we have demonstrated unwavering resilience and determination as a team to fulfilling this despite the obstacles and I take my hat off to the team for all that we've managed to achieve despite the pressures.





Therefore, I'm elated to be able to close out the year on a high note as we celebrate the securing of funding investment for our Pathways Employability Programme. I would like to personally thank our funders, The Triangle Trust and The National Lottery Community Fund. Through their combined support and belief in our project we have secured a significant amount in project development funding, which means we can now steadily roll out our Pathways Employability Programme over the next 3 years, ensuring its sustainability and success long term and most importantly, supporting young people into meaningful employment across the West Midlands.

I'm sure we've all felt the pinch this year with rising costs in energy bills and the like. So, I'd also like to thank BBC Children in Need for their funding support this year towards our core costs, as every penny helps to ensure we can continue to support young people without reducing the quality of our services.

As always, I want to thank our phenomenal board of Directors and operational team for their commitment over the past year and their invaluable contribution to the impact, we have made this year in the lives of our community of young people and the communities we serve. Over 2023 we have shone a spotlight on issues surrounding Disproportionality within the Youth Justice System, access to quality healthcare for families and support services for young care leavers.

We're incredibly invested in the work we do and care about those that we support, which is why we love to celebrate the results through our annual report. Therefore I hope you will join us in taking a celebratory dive into this year's report continue to advocate, encourage, partner and work alongside us as we continue on our mission of 'Developing Young People. Creating Opportunities and Opening the Lens on the Youth Perspective'.

**Thank you,**  
**Daina Anderson Mpunzi**  
**CEO & Business Director**

2023

# ABOUT OPEN LENS MEDIA

**Open Lens Media is a Training, Development and Engagement Social Enterprise utilising creative approaches to provide employability, educational, community engagement, training and consultation services to young people and youth focused agencies.**

We work with young people stemming from disenfranchised backgrounds, and our aim is to support them in developing essential skills that effectively help them transition sustainably into further education, employment and/or training.

We use Media Production, Communication, and Digital Skills activities to improve soft skills, educational attainment, and support creative expression by embedding hidden learning methods into our technical and practical sessions. We also deliver engagement services that provide social research into complex issues faced by marginalised communities and encourage social action.



## Our Mission

Our mission is to create and provide innovative and interactive learning tools, within safe and fun environments that engage young people and encourage them to develop their personal, professional, entrepreneurial, and academic skills.

## Our Aim

We aim to ensure that young people stemming from underreached backgrounds have equal access to opportunities that propel them into further education, employment, or training; helping them to secure a brighter future.

## Our Values

### Safety

Ensuring every person we work with feels safe and supported.

### Social Impact

Adding value to communities through impactful work and measurable change.

### Cultural Engagement

Understanding the importance of cultural differences and community intersectionality.

### Respect

Respecting the diverse viewpoints, backgrounds, and cultures of individuals in contributing to what we do.

### People

Continually nurturing a better organisational culture, employee satisfaction, motivation, and engagement.



# OUR SERVICES

## Educational Packages



Curriculum enhancing programmes designed to encourage educational engagement and youth engagement.

## School Holiday Programmes



Social Action focused, youth led programmes designed to build confidence and leadership skills.

## Employment Services



Providing help to further personal and professional goals alongside developing transferable skills to boost youth employability.

## Training & Consultancy



Bespoke consultancy for local authorities and youth-focused agencies.

## Community Engagement Services



Support for statutory bodies to form relationships with communities.

# SNAPSHOT OF 2023

At the core of OLM, we pride ourselves on supporting and empowering young people. During 2023, we've stepped up our community consultation experience and continued to deliver meaningful projects to some incredible young people, helping them to upskill, and supporting their next steps into education, employment, or training. Take a look at our impact below and continue reading to explore more about each project.

## Key Stats

100+

participants  
upskilled in 2023



90% of participants reported increased  
confidence after completing our programme

3

consultations worked on  
within Walsall Borough



1300+

people we have  
worked with to date



10+

Projects & Programmes  
delivered this year



95% participant completion rate across Projects  
& Programmes



# 2023 PROJECTS

## Digital Marketing Project with Digisheds

Date: January - February 2023

We started the year by delivering a brand new Digital Marketing Programme to a group of 40+ participants within an online setting. We partnered with DigiSheds to deliver the “Get Set” portion of their Employability Programme with the aim of preparing the participants for their next steps and developing their key personal and professional skills.

Over the course of 4 weeks, participants were taught the fundamentals of Digital Marketing, Branding and Content Creation, using Media as a learning and engagement tool. The programme comprised 13 practical and theory based sessions that were designed to teach both technical and employability skills. Sessions covered:

- Communication Skills
- Presentation Skills
- Creative Thinking
- Teamwork
- Project Management
- Creative Writing
- Problem Solving
- Editing Skills
- Camera Skills
- Script Writing
- Personal Branding
- Pitching and Presentation Skills

By the end of the programme the cohort had been given the opportunity to carry out tasks both individually and in a group, demonstrating their ability to work both independently and as a team. We received a lot of positive feedback from the participants who enjoyed the creative elements of the tasks and the development of their technical skillset.

### Case Study

Upon starting the programme, George was quiet, shy and did not participate voluntarily within group discussions but with encouragement from our facilitator Josh, George found his voice and felt comfortable in answering questions and taking part in group discussions. George engaged well throughout the entire programme, with full attendance and showing a strong understanding and interest in the content being delivered. At first, George expressed how he found Editing difficult, but by the end of the programme, his confidence and ability in Editing content grew and George expressed how he'd find this useful for his future work.

*“I just want to thank you for your support during the course, and say that I have really enjoyed having Josh as a facilitator. His energy and enthusiasm really helped in not losing my interest throughout the whole “Get Set” phase.” - George*

# Walsall Council Black Country Impact

Dates: 2019 - March 2023

This was our last year in delivering our Personal Development Programme under the Black Country Impact contract as the scheme has now closed. On this programme, we've worked with incredible young people and taught them key development skills that helped them step closer to further education or training. This programme used Media as an engagement tool for creative expression that allowed participants to identify and overcome their barriers to progressions: Participants were taught various means of media production including:

- Video Production
- Film Production
- Podcasting
- Camera Skills
- Editing Skills
- Audio Skills
- Content Creation

Whether it be through group work or 1-2-1 support, participants on this programme had the opportunity to develop their confidence and employability skills as sessions used hidden learning methods to teach: presentation skills, communication skills, teamwork, organisation skills.

Positive outcomes reported from this programme included:

- Participants demonstrating increased confidence and self-esteem
- Participants demonstrating improved communication skills with authority figures and peers
- Participants having a greater understanding of the options available to them when leaving the course

"Gained a lot of new skills about podcasting and learned about how to use a camera and mics" Myles, 21 (2021)

"I did learn a lot and gained a lot from the group; I enjoyed using the camera and learning camera angles, different shot takes and audio was most valuable." Mo, 20 (2022)

"All of the sessions were enjoyable. I got the chance to use professional equipment and learn more!" James, 24 (2023)



## School Holiday programmes at The Lighthouse

**Dates: Easter and Summer Holidays 2023**

We were very excited to return to The Lighthouse Young People's Centre in Birmingham to deliver our annual holiday programmes to young people aged 11-15 who live in the Birmingham area including Aston, Lozells, Nechells, Handsworth, Perry Barr and Great Barr. The Lighthouse offered an array of activities throughout the holidays as part of their HAF programme in which we were invited to deliver a range of Media workshops that engaged their young people. This consisted of various interactive games, icebreaker activities and fun activities which taught the young people camera skills, storytelling, character development, script writing and presentation skills.



## Social Media and Data Collection Training Project

**Dates: July - August 2023**

The Data Collection and Social Media training project was a new, bespoke 1-to-1 project that ran this year for our participant Sam, an apprentice working at Walsall Youth Justice Service. Across 6 weeks in July and August 2023, we worked to unlock Sam's creative potential; particularly focusing on data collection, data visualisation, storytelling, social media strategy, and video production techniques. Sam gained insight into how he could improve on his data collection methods when working with the young people involved with the Justice System, successfully creating effective visual data representations, learnt how to optimise social media content, and produced a video despite being new to non-fiction video creation. Overall, Sam actively participated in all sessions, showed enthusiasm, and progressively applied the knowledge gained. He expressed satisfaction with the sessions, and acknowledged his personal and professional development during the project.



*"I couldn't have asked for anything more during the sessions." - Sam*

## Triangle Trust

**Date: March 2023 - 2025**



We also received grant funding from The Triangle Trust as an extension of our work with the Walsall Youth Justice Service. This funding will help us to continue to address the strategic reduction of the Disproportional number of Black and Mixed Heritage boys within the Youth Justice Service for the next 2 years.

This funding allows us to deliver our Pathways Programme to a concentrated group of 20 young Black and Mixed Heritage boys to upskill within the YJS to upskill them and encourage the development of their personal and professional skills to help them secure brighter futures.

This is a person centred provision, supporting young boys in their personal, social and communicative development. The programme adopts a creative approach, utilising Media and Production practices to encourage self reflection and personal awareness whilst also providing more intensive 1-2-1 support to improve employability and engagement skills. Dependent upon the individual, we can also explore employability options too.

## Care Leavers Sessions

**Date: October 2023**

Walsall Council commissioned Open Lens Media to deliver a 2 part project that involved empowering and developing their Care Leavers and documenting their lived experiences.

In preparation for the documentary, we delivered a range of media production and empowerment sessions to a group of Care Leavers. Whilst learning about how to use new equipment such as cameras and the podcast desk, participants also had the opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute towards the topics that would be featured in the documentary.

In national Care Leavers Week, our sister company Open Lens Productions, then led the production of the documentary which captured interviews from Care Leavers, Asylum Seekers, Staff Members and Heads of Service to understand the experiences of being a Care Leaver. The documentary follows the Head of Service living the life as a Care Leaver throughout the week and various forum discussions with the Care Leavers themselves. The documentary is to be screened next year.



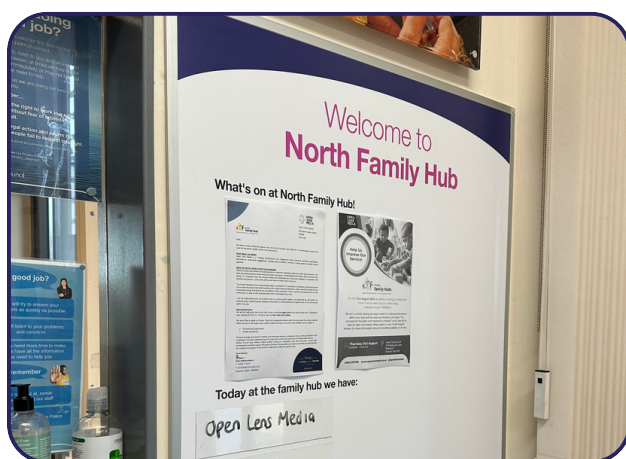
## Walsall's Early Years Consultation

**Date: March 2023 - Present**

We are delivering a consultation for Walsall Early Years Children Services, investigating the accessibility of services for various communities and low uptake of vaccinations for babies and children aged 0-2 years old in the North Borough of Walsall. This consultation involves working alongside GP Practices and the North Locality Family Hub to capture the lived experiences of families within the Blakenall area. We will achieve this through a series of:

- Family Forums
- Interviews
- Empowerment Workshops
- Wider Community Meetings

The findings from our consultation research will be documented through a series of professionally produced audible and visual educational content episodes and training resources.



## Bloxwich Youth Consultation

**Date: October 2023 - Present**

Walsall Council are embarking on a journey to deliver an Incubation and Digital Access Centre in Bloxwich. The development will provide start-up and small businesses with office space, equipped with state of the art digital connectivity and collaborative space. The Centre will also support residents with their digital access needs, providing advice, guidance and training. We have been commissioned by the Council to engage and consult with young people aged 16 – 24 who live in the area, to obtain feedback that will help shape the services that are to be delivered at the Centre.

# Youth Justice Disproportionality Project

**Dates: 2021 - 2023**

We recently completed a 18 month social research and youth consultation with Walsall Youth Justice Service, investigating the effects of Disproportionality on the lived experiences of Black and Mixed heritage boys within the Walsall borough.

As part of this consultation, we interviewed heads of localised services, such as the Police, Education and Children services, to explore their services' contribution to the life trajectory of these young boys.

For this, we conducted a 3-staged approach as follows:

## **1. Disproportionality and Communications Training:**

We delivered a series of Disproportionality training sessions to the YOS team, to empower and equip them in navigating challenging terrain and culturally sensitive issues. The training aimed to facilitate a safe space for open and honest discussion in order to create greater awareness of individual bias through self-reflection, whilst exploring how these affect performance and outcomes. The training also provided tools and practices to adopt in order to challenge individual bias. This then led into further discuss on how bias can affect the disproportionate numbers of overrepresented Black and Mixed Ethnicity children and boys within the YJS.

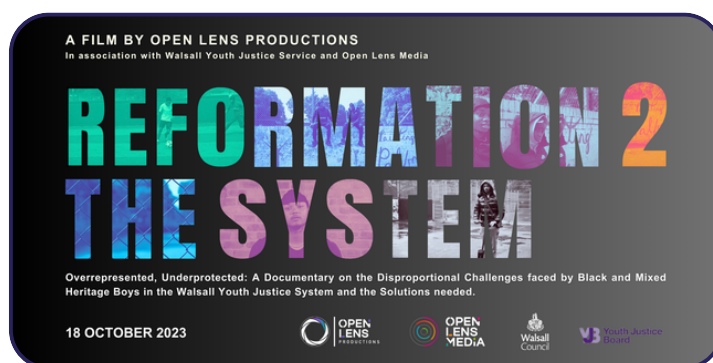
## **2. Youth Engagement and Personal Development Project:**

We delivered two programmes to a group of Black and Mixed Heritage Boys over 16-weeks. These programmes combined tailored peer groups and intensive 1-2-1 support in Engagement, Personal Development and Employability which supported participants in the development of their key personal and professional skills; whilst also improving their confidence, raising their aspirations and self-esteem.





Case Study: Participant A is a 15 year old male who has shown a lot of development throughout the time spent on the Youth Justice Disproportionality project and has continued to engage with our 1-2-1 sessions as a form of personal progression support. At the start of the programme, similar to many of the other participants, Participant A did not engage much or want to become involved within the sessions. However, once covering various themes around identity and breaking stereotypes in Ricky Otto's empowerment sessions he showed more interest and began to contribute as part of the group. Since this point, Participant A's confidence levels increased as he has spoken on issues important to him through podcasting and developed presentation skills. Participant A already showed good communication skills with his peers but was able to expand this and speak more openly with 'authority figures' and facilitators within the session environment. Participant A has continued this good progress during 1-2-1 sessions and maintained good attendance as he worked towards his goal of securing a football scholarship upon completing his studies.



### 3. Strategy and Development:

OLM led the design and development of a robust report for the Walsall YOS team which provided insight into some of the behavioural causes driving Disproportionality alongside recommendations of how the service can work with other local services, communities and grassroot organisations to reduce the concerning levels of Disproportionality highlighted by the HM Inspectorate of Probation 2021 Thematic Report. This report provides a roadmap for the Walsall YJS and wider Partnership board with clear actionable steps that will help to reduce the high levels of overrepresentation in the service.

We also adopted a creative approach to the communication of the findings by producing a Documentary film with our sister company, Open Lens Productions. This documentary captures our consultations with multiple Agency Leads, Black and Mixed Heritage boys and Service Providers to gain a wider perspective of the systemic pipeline that affects the boys who end up engaging with the Youth Justice Service. This documentary was screened at The Light Cinema in Walsall on October 18th 2023 to representatives of the service and Partnership alongside a panel discussion with key partners that were included within the film.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

## Chloe – Project Manager

I'm really proud to be a part of all Open Lens has achieved in 2023. We've navigated challenges, delivered a range of successful projects throughout the year and developed our services so that we can make a greater impact for the communities in which we serve. It's been incredible to witness the positive outcomes from our projects and the significant impact it has on the young people's lives that we support. We've worked closely with valued partners who have supported us in our efforts to create opportunities for young people and I look forward to seeing how we can develop this further next year.

As we head into 2024, I look forward to continuing this positive work alongside our wonderful team and to see how we develop and grow as we work towards our mission and aim.



## Joshua – Facilitation & Production Assistant



This year has been packed full with exciting projects and I've had the pleasure of working 1-2-1 with some great participants. As part of this, we've provided training and mentoring, assisting our participants with finding further employment and/or training both in media and non media related fields. A new experience for myself this year was facilitating a project online. In 2023 Digital Marketing is a vital skill needed for most businesses and entrepreneurs and this year we had the delight to work with DigiSheds in providing Digital Marketing training to their wonderful participants reaching all across the UK.

Another great experience was working with the Lighthouse Young People's Centre in Birmingham. Across the Easter holidays, we were putting on workshops with a variety of activities to take part in. From capturing content of the wide range of activities available with a team of young content creators, to having young people test their wits on our Logline Activity, or put their imagination to action by planning, filming and editing their own music videos. I would like to thank the Lighthouse for having us.

## Taran – Lead Facilitator



2023 has been a very productive year where we have continued to deliver our sessions to a wide range of young people from the Walsall and Birmingham areas. In particular the DigiSheds sessions proved to be an interesting challenge to deliver a fully online programme to a range of participants whilst they engaged in a variety of activities remotely. Alongside this, working with young people in our 1-2-1 sessions was a rewarding experience as they developed their skills throughout the programme and spent time discovering which career path may suit them when thinking about future roles.

Looking ahead to 2024, I am excited about the prospect of growing our recruitment arm Pledge 10 which was set up this year. We have already secured our first partner and I feel there are a lot of reasons to be enthused about the future of this area and being able to offer tangible opportunities for those looking to enter the industry which is so important.

## Rima - Digital Content Creator & Marketer

2023 has been an incredible period marked by personal and professional development and notable progress.

Working with young individuals has been a rewarding experience. Their energy, creativity, and eagerness to learn continues to inspire me. Witnessing their growth, whether in skill development, confidence, or personal milestones, reaffirms the importance of our work. I had the privilege of contributing to several remarkable projects throughout the year. One that particularly stood out for me was the 1-to-1 Data Collection and Social Media training project as I had led the project from session planning, through session delivery, and all the way to completion.



Looking ahead to 2024, I envision OLM continuing its impactful initiatives and reaching even more young people in our community. I hope to see our organisation remaining to pioneer programmes that address emerging challenges faced by today's youth and strengthening the connections we have made with partner organisations.

I'd like to express my gratitude for the whole OLM team whose continuous support and care over the past 2 years has made working here an absolute pleasure.

# PLEDGE 10

Our new recruitment arm Pledge 10 was officially launched this summer and we have already secured our first partner, Brit Asia! With their background in broadcasting and studio facilities located in central Birmingham we hope to announce some exciting opportunities for our participants to gain valuable experience with Brit Asia and other partners in the near future.

Pledge 10 is a 12-month recruitment initiative designed to provide meaningful and tangible opportunities for our participants as they make the transition from training to employment through forming media partnerships with 10 local creative companies. These opportunities could be in the form of a work placement, apprenticeships, work experience, part/full-time employment.

We are looking to work with a range of organisations who can offer different experiences to the young people we work with which can include but is not limited to:

Media Production	Communications
Broadcast Journalism	Performing Arts
Digital Marketing	New Media, Gaming &
Arts, Culture & Entertainment	Technology

If you're interested in becoming a Pledge 10 partner, please get in touch with us to find out more!





# WORK EXPERIENCE

This year we had the pleasure of hosting a work experience opportunity for a year 10 student named Pierre. Pierre joined us several times during this past year and had the opportunity to experience life on a production set and the behind the scenes of our Summer Holiday Programme! During his time with us, Pierre was tasked to create a behind the scenes video which was posted across our social media platforms.

Here is what Pierre had to say about his time with us:

*"On the Production Day filming the Podcast, I was involved in filming the BTS for the episode as well as making sure everything was in order before recording. At the Lighthouse, I helped Taran and Rima with setting up the activities and engaging the younger children with the media-focused games and activities set."*



*"During my time at Open Lens Media, I learnt a multitude of useful skills such as how to edit on editing softwares I wasn't familiar with and what a typical day of filming required. The staff at Open Lens were so friendly and I had such a good time while learning skills that help me currently and will do later down the line."*

# A YEAR ONLINE

Throughout the year, our online presence has been dynamic and engaging, fostering meaningful connections with our audience across multiple platforms.

Our website underwent a transformation and was re-launched in April with a number of new features, improved accessibility, and an easier navigation system for both desktop and mobile users, thus enhancing user experience and positioning our website as a valuable resource hub for our audience. This year, we also focused our efforts on Instagram, X/Twitter, LinkedIn, and Mailchimp email marketing, all of which we have seen a growth in followers and steady engagement levels on. Our strategic use of content has aimed to increase brand awareness, provide value to our followers, keep our audiences up-to-date with our work, solidify our position in our industry, widen our B2B and B2C audiences, and strengthen our connections with them.



Overall, our online initiatives have not only amplified our reach but also deepened our connections with our audience, underscoring our commitment to delivering valuable, engaging, and impactful content across our online platforms. Looking forward into 2024, we are hoping to scale up our social media presence whilst keeping our long-time followers entertained, engaged, and educated through our content.



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# HOPES FOR 2024

Looking forward towards 2024 and beyond, our overarching aim is to ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of our organisation. We are always moved by the testimonies of young people who have accessed our service offers and made great strides resulting from the support they've received from us. Therefore, we are determined to ensure our services are not here today and gone tomorrow, particularly within these economically uncertain times.

With new investment, partnerships and support we now aim to ensure that our impact can not only be felt by our beneficiaries, but also that we are able to evidence and demonstrate said impact allowing us to increase our capacity and secure the longevity of our services which also means we will be joyfully investing in the development of our Governance and Operational team, through training and upskilling and expanding our workforce over the coming year.

## CONCLUSION

2023 was definitely about turning a corner enroute to live out our mission. We welcome in the possibilities of what we can achieve in 2024 with joyful expectation and full of zeal to make those possibilities a reality.

I'd like to invite you to join us on the journey and connect with us through our newsletter, social media platforms or website to stay up to date with our announcements of new projects, updates on existing offers and expansion of services over the coming year.

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about what we've been up to and we look forward to connecting with you in the new year.

**Open Lens Media CIC.**





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