

OPEN SMILE

films and filmmaking for homeless people since 2005



What is Open Cinema?

Open Cinema is a national network of film clubs programmed by and for homeless and socially excluded people. Each week participants watch the best in classic and contemporary cinema and work with professional filmmakers to create films of their own. Open Cinema is unique in providing participants the chance to programme the films they would like to see, meet the professional filmmakers that inspire them, and make films based on their own ideas and experiences. This allows participants the opportunity to contribute to the creation and development of their service, and to present resulting work to peers and to film professionals.

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“It’s a very good event for people to come off the streets. There’s somewhere warm to sit in the evening and when it finishes people can think about going to sleep rather than just walking the streets.”

– STUART (OC MEMBER)

How did it begin?

Open Cinema began in 2005, when OC founder Christoph Warrack was coordinating a soup kitchen in London. A request came from guests asking for some kind of entertainment. Working as a filmmaker, Christoph had noticed the coincidence of London’s West End being a centre of the film industry as well as homelessness in the capital, and used his contacts to bring the best classic and contemporary films, together with their makers, into the environment of social outreach. The film screenings quickly became popular and expanded to other venues. And Open Cinema began.

Who comes to Open Cinema?

Open Cinema is open to all individuals excluded from society, arts and culture. The current age of members varies between 14-85 and includes rough sleepers, individuals recovering from drug and alcohol dependence, displaced people in temporary accommodation, ex-service personnel, vulnerable youths and migrant workers. Many participants are looking to better their situations and choose to take part in Open Cinema and the Filmmaking programme as a way of developing their interest and skills.

How does it work?

Open Cinema is free to attend. Films are programmed into 12-week seasons exploring particular themes, issues or genres, based on requests from members. Professionally designed and printed flyers and posters are distributed throughout venues and shelters to advertise cinema schedules. These weekly events regularly see local and renowned filmmakers presenting their work and speaking with the audience about their films, the filmmaking process, and discussing the issues raised. Members are offered the chance to make a short film connected to the theme of the season, which is presented in a ‘mini-gala’ at the culmination of the season.

Why is there a need for Open Cinema?

People suffering from homelessness and deprivation urgently need the benefits of culture, as well as advice and food. Entertainment and culture are another kind of nourishment, and have been proven by research to contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of socially excluded people.

Our work is supported by pioneering research carried out by Broadway, one of London's leading homelessness charities, together with Westminster Primary Care Trust. It revealed that taking part in social and cultural activities provided significant benefits in relation to mental health, including alleviating isolation, reducing anxiety and depression and promoting relaxation and good sleep patterns. A study carried out by the Salvation Army showed that 51% of their clients spent most of their time alone, lacking support networks and beneficial relationships.

OPEN CINEMA “You need a bit of laughter and comedy in your life. People get down in the dumps and this cheers you up. It’s a good meeting point. Some people come here because they have nowhere else to go.”
– JOHN (OC MEMBER AT ST. PATRICK’S)

Open Cinema offers an attractive and safe alternative to the streets, and to the dangers of drugs and criminal pathways, every week. The regularity of the service is itself an important source of stability for those often without any other form of routine. Since 2005, Open Cinema has seen more than 3,000 admissions through its doors.

Open Cinema is at the forefront of a growing movement of cultural outreach in the third sector. We provide for and focus public attention on the increasing needs of excluded individuals in a society yet to achieve the fairness it strives for. Open Cinema offers the chance for people to belong to a unique service, and to be given ownership in a growing initiative, which offers them a say in how it develops.



What can Open Cinema do for my service?

Open Cinema is unique in offering structured engagement for homeless people through film-related activities. Participating agencies benefit from belonging to a nationwide community of best practice and innovation. OC can raise an agency's external profile and internal sense of prestige, though hosting a cutting edge cultural service with regular visits from esteemed professionals in the UK film industry. The model is designed to offer manifold benefits to clients, including increased confidence, sociability, cultural and linguistic literacy, sense of purpose and aptitude towards engagement in further activities and services.

Participation in the filmmaking workshops increases hard and soft skills, and therefore employability: what looks more impressive on an online CV than a short film?



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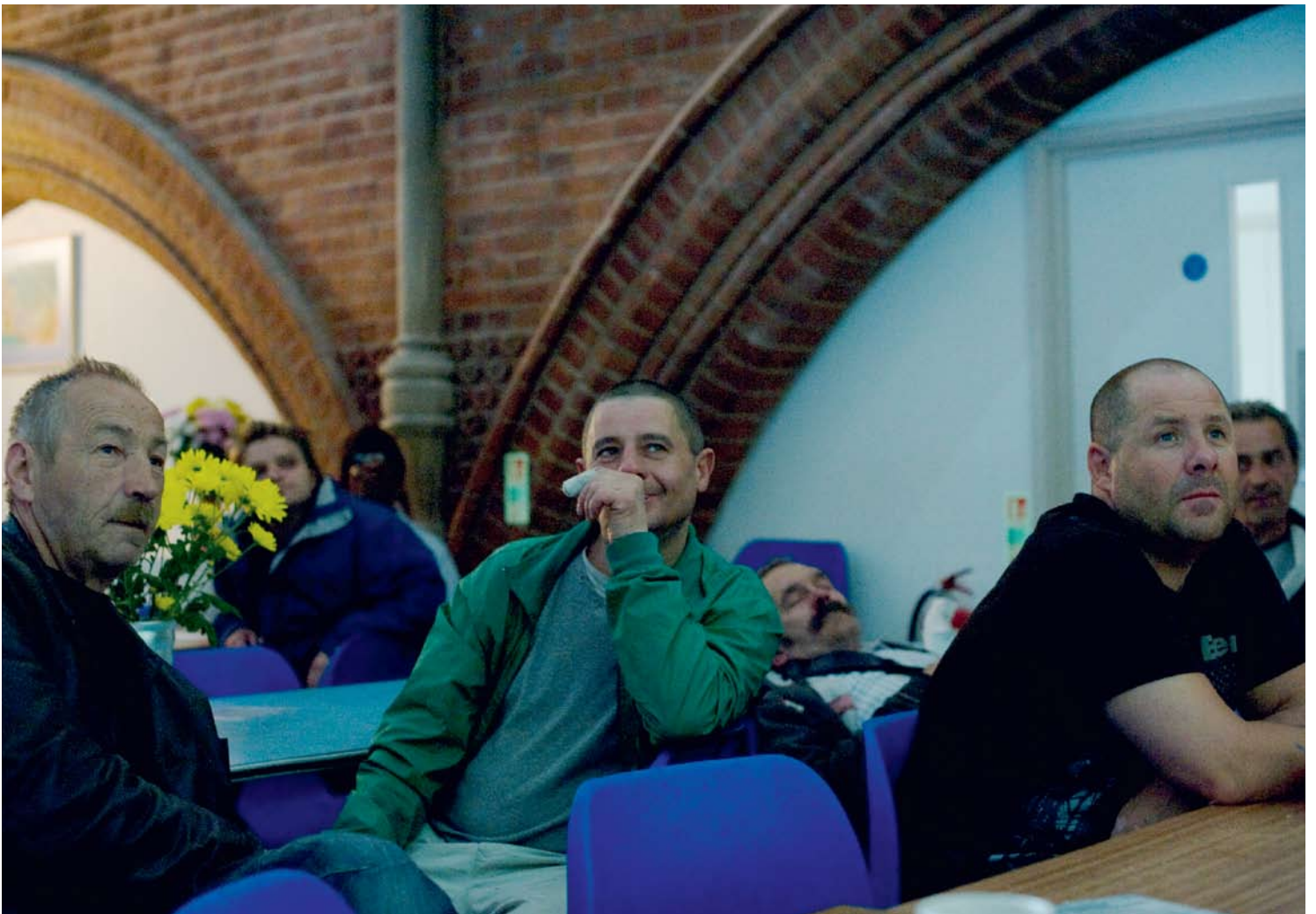
“Open Cinema is a very inventive way of reaching and helping the homeless.”
— MIKE HODGES
[DIRECTOR: GET CARTER, FLASH GORDON]

What does my organisation need to do?

Before launching, Open Cinema will help you procure and install high definition screening equipment – negotiated at preferential rates with our partners – tailored to fit the communal space selected for the cinema. Before the start of each new season, Open Cinema will deliver to you a package containing everything you need for the coming season including professionally designed and printed flyers and posters, DVDs, a film exhibition license negotiated for agencies at a greatly reduced rate, and membership cards for your clients.

All you need to do is select the scheduling for the weekly screenings to suit your existing arrangements. Open Cinema can help find suitable volunteers from local film or outreach communities. The service can either be coordinated in-house, or, at additional cost, OC can provide a trained coordinator.





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“I’m very pleased to support Open Cinema. It is a very good idea to offer films to those who are maybe having a hard time.”

— **KEN LOACH**
[DIRECTOR: CATHY COME HOME,
THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY]

How does my organisation become part of the Open Cinema Network?

To be part of the Open Cinema Network you must be able to provide the following:

- A space in your building which can accommodate your regular visitors, incorporating a screen or wall that can be projected onto (the larger the better)
- Funds to support the procurement and installation of the projection equipment
- Funding to maintain the membership subscription to Open Cinema

It is very important for Open Cinema to maintain a high standard of quality across its network and to present the fundamentals of what certifies a venue as an Open Cinema. However, we do understand that there may be some organisations that would like to be involved but lack various aspects of equipment to meet these standards. Open Cinema can help your organisation to meet these requirements through partner services offering discounts to the Open Cinema Network. Please inquire for more details.

Facts & figures



- Open Cinema has seen more than **3,000 admissions** through its network of film clubs since 2005

- Participants across the network have produced **8 short films** since the launch of the Open Cinema Filmmaking Programme in Autumn 2009

- Since 2005 Open Cinema has grown to **over 16 clubs and venues** across the UK

- **6 Academy Award winners and Nominees** and **2 Cannes Palme d'Or winners** have attended Open Cinema as guest speakers

- Since 2005 Open Cinema has screened **over 300 feature films and 300 shorts**

- In 2010, Open Cinema will see over **1,200 film screenings** across the UK, with an average expected attendance of **20,000**.

- Clients **made a film** as part of the 'Scene of the Crime' season culminating in an event with the **Metropolitan Police's** head of anti-corruption

- Clients at **Providence Row** helped **design** a 'History Wasn't All Bad' season taking them from 10,000BC to the 1980s while working on a film for their service's 150th anniversary

- **Stuart Holmes at St Patrick's**, who has been arrested over 50 times for public protests, **made his first film** on the subject of 'The Future', and declared at the premiere, in the presence of **Stephen Frears**, that film was a more powerful means of protest than public demonstrations

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“David was a pleasure to work with. He has a gift for noticing things in his environment that pass the most observant of us by. The filmmaking project is a perfect outlet for those marginalised by society to get their ideas, thoughts and observations out into the world.” – TESSA MORGAN [TUTOR]

A note from founder Christoph Warrack

Open Cinema began with the idea of opening a door between those outside and inside the world of film. We were inspired by the combined desires of homeless people to participate in culture, and those at the centre of culture to do something radical to tackle injustice and exclusion.

Meanwhile at the start of the new century several major trends were on the rise: a widening gap between rich and poor, an increase in vulnerable people leaving the armed forces, a surge in interest in volunteering amongst generation 'Y', and the failure of high street cinema to reach everyone, or meet their own interests and talents. At the same time, a digital revolution was making the tools for making and showing films available to anyone.

The model the team has built gives previously excluded people a voice: using the most powerful tools for expression, offering knowledge-transmission between previously separated areas of society, and an attractive first step to further engagement in community, skills and education, for people intimidated by conventional approaches. We also seek to focus debate around pivotal issues through public events, and to help integrate supported housing tenants into their surrounding communities through the medium of cinema.

Most importantly, our work is participant-led, where every member has a voice in the development of the service, and the means to contribute their best to their society.



CHRISTOPH WARRACK
Open Cinema

Contact us

"It helps to keep in touch."
– OC MEMBER AT ST. PATRICK'S

For more information on how your organisation can become an Open Cinema please get in touch with us:

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