



THE COMMON SENSE NETWORK

IMPACT

REPORT

2021-2023



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A group of projects on a mission to make **democracy healthier** by harnessing the power of togetherness.

While the years have brought many challenges including a changing media landscape. We have sought to be innovative and have seen year on year growth over the last three years





HEALTHIER DEMOCRACY?

In developing our healthy democracy framework, we built our work on the Democracy Fund and identified six elements that comprise a healthy democracy:

- Energised civic participation,
- Vibrant news and media,
- Independent civil society,
- Effective governing institutions,
- Free and fair elections,
- Impartial rule of law and equal civil rights.

At Common Sense we advocate a systems approach. This means we believe that the people, institutions, and organisations that make up our democracy are deeply interconnected and influenced by countless external factors.

Given this approach, our process also included the identification of critical influences that affect a democracy's essential elements and shape the degree to which any or all of them are able to function

Our work is channeled through three broad tranches that help to make democracy healthier

Common Sense, a multimedia news network and content channel

Common Sense +, a specialist youth marketing and research agency

Common Sense Studios, a video/podcast recording studio in the heart of south London

These projects work together in tandem to contribute to a healthier democracy.



I now feel more confident spotting fake news when I'm on social media thanks to this workshop

Young person at *Be Digital fit Workshop*

2 million

reached through our videos articles and online content

1300

taken through workshops of news literacy

80

podcasts and shows
Incubated and launched through by Common Sense Studios

Projects

Problem

Solution

Common Sense

Echo chambers, lack of diversity and access for range of perspectives in the mainstream media

A multimedia news network and content channel dedicated to creating space for different views to interact.

Common Sense +

More organisations need to be committed to Common Sense ethos for us to make democracy healthier

A specialist youth marketing and research agency that helps forward thinking brands devise campaigns that bring people together.

Common Sense Studios

Lack of diversity in journalism and news media.

A video/podcast recording studio in the heart of south London which amplifies the voices of diverse creatives

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It is a very challenging time to be in the news media business. Falling ad revenues combined with a fast changing industry means many news outlets have had to innovate or simply no longer exist.

The changes have affected large outlets like Talk TV and smaller ones like GALDEM. In the last 3 years, both these outlets and many in between have closed down due to financial viability.

Following the global lockdowns in 2020, The Common Sense Network had its own challenges and was asked similar questions. We had to find ways to be profitable whilst still delivering on impact and the reason we were set up.

Our coming out of Covid strategy was simple; we would attempt to grow our network through partnerships, growing our audience so we can advertise and sharing our studio space with other organisations.

In this impact report, I'm glad to share that over the past three years we have been profitable, have built some long lasting partnerships with bigger organisation and are poised for growth.

We saw an opportunity to make great impact in the market by creating strong workshops and delivering them to young people up and down the country. Over the last three years we have developed are flagship 'Be Digital Fit' programme.

Funded by The Queens Commonwealth Trust, trained up over 1500 people to spot fake news, echo chambers and more. Over 97% of them said they enjoyed the workshop and learnt new skills they could use when on social media.



M.T. Omoniyi

We have also been growing our content platform, creating shows and articles that are platforming views across the political platform. Over the past 3 years, We have reached over 2 million people with our shows. Our youtube channel went from a standing start to over 3,000 people and is forecasted to grow to over 10,000 in the next 7 months. This would mean our online community will sit at around 60,000 people.

Our internal community has grown to over 5000. This means every week we speak directly to over 5000 people who joins our mailing list and so believe in the Common Sense ethos.

it has been very difficult, however with bootstrapping we have grown despite a very tumultuous media landscape. With our new strategy of partnerships we will attempt to grow even more aggressively in the future.

One of the most important changes we've made is dividing our work into three broad tranches Common Sense, Common Sense plus and Common Sense Studios

At Common Sense, we focus on our news output and over the last three years we've professionalised our articles our videos are Podcast and our production process

With Common Sense plus we've taken on new clients and have spread our Common Sense Common Sense ethos to campaign for other organisations that are mission driven.

I'm very proud of what we've seen Common Sense Studios do over the past three years we've helped start 80 different Podcast amplifying the voice of diverse creatives and adding richness, to the national conversation we are for growth and looking forward to the future

M.J. Omoniyi





COMMON SENSE SO FAR

OUR IMPACT

Over the past three years, we have published over 800 news articles and opinions pieces showing perspectives across the political spectrum.

The average read on our narticles over 1 week is 1400

We published 5 digital magazines called The Detail which were read and downloaded over 130,000 times.

Videos and Podcast

Over the last 3 years, we have published over 150 videos and grown our audience by over 3000 people.

Our podcast has attracted guests like Chris Williamson, Lord Hastings, Rory Sutherland, ZUBY and has been featured on national news outlets like BBC News and GB News.

Our videos have been watched over 2 million times and our average views are fastly growing.



80%
GROWTH IN THE SIZE
OUR OUR AUDIENCE
OVER THE LAST
3 YEARS

WORKSHOPS

Political engagement in the UK has been declining for the last 20 years. The gap in electoral turnout levels between 18–24-year-olds and those aged over 55 is higher in the UK than in any other liberal democracy.

Importantly, the Electoral Commission notes that ‘misleading content and presentation techniques’ have eroded public trust in election campaigns, something that continued to be an issue also in the 2019 General Election.

**OVER 1500 PEOPLE
TRAINED**

This brings media literacy and political literacy, or lack thereof, to the forefront of the current democratic climate, confirming our belief that media literacy and political literacy go hand in hand and are both essential for the maintenance of a healthy democracy.

In light of the problems we have articulated, the Digital Citizens workshop programme was designed in a collaboration between Google and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) to teach young people important media skills outside of formal education and in a way which is relatable and engaging.



Over the last 3 years, we have been delivering these workshops and also learning from young people. Their feedback in turn contributes to iterations of the workshop.

The feedback from the 1500 students we have trained so far has been encouraging

Our workshops cover themes like fake news, emotional manipulation, polarisation, fake news and hate speech.

We completed these sessions in youth clubs and schools across the country.



97%

OF YOUNG PEOPLE
GAINED NEW
KNOWLEDGE
IN OUR WORKSHOPS

84%

FEEL MORE CONFIDENT
DEALING WITH
FAKE NEWS AND HATE NEWS
WHEN ONLINE



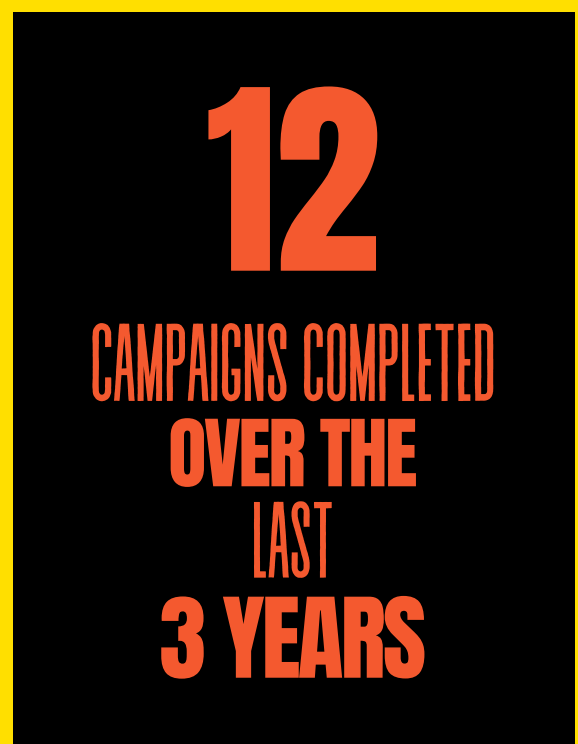
COMMON SENSE + SO FAR

OUR IMPACT

Over the last three years, we were repeatedly approached by other mission led organisations that wanted to learn about our work and partner with us with make democracy healthier. We started Common Sense Plus so that we have a channel for working with organisations that share our values.

We help our clients make democracy more healthy by building powerful coalitions and devising strong campaigns to change the world for good.

- **Intelligence:** We conduct targeted research, and gather insight and youth intel to help our clients make better decisions
- **Marketing campaigns:** We can help you devise effective campaigns which deliver on your goals and ambitions
- **Branded Content:** We work together to create content bursting at the seams with culture, ethics and people.
- **Workshops and events:** We create and deliver workshops around news literacy, media literacy, DNI and More



OUR CLINETS SO FAR

Over the past three years we have worked with

- Manchester City Council
- Hyre Hub
- Purley Baptist Church
- RADEQUAL
- West Midlands Police
- Queens Commonwealth Trust

We have worked with these organisations to devise and deploy campaigns that bring people together and make democracy healthier.





COMMON SENSE STUDIOS SO FAR

OUR IMPACT

With Common Sense Studios our mission is to create and tell stories from across the political spectrum, local stories, stories that hold power to account, that uncover wrongdoing, and that empowers the forgotten and the unheard.

Part of a healthier democracy is allowing for a plurality of perspectives to flourish. The mainstream media has a very narrow set of perspectives we hear. 51% of leading news journalists were privately educated, although this accounts for 7% of the country (Sutton Trust, 2016). This means the mainstream media lead a very narrow conversation where those with multiple disadvantages are repeatedly excluded. On top of this 0.5% of journalists in the UK are black despite black people representing over 3% of the population.

At Common Sense Studios, we prioritise marginalised voices and diverse creatives.



80

PODCASTS HAVE BEEN
INCUBATED
STARTED BY US IN
3 YEARS

CASE STUDIES

The public can book out the space choosing what set design they would like to use. Our aim is not only to be a space but also to nurture interesting projects and to help them grow by exposing them to the Common Sense infrastructure. With only 0.5% of journalists in the UK black, our aim is to amplify the voices of marginalised communities



Tentacles and Bananas

A podcast by black queer creatives that explores the lived experience of Black Queer people in the UK



Unapologetically Neurodiverse

A podcast that shines a light on the journey of receiving a Neurodiverse diagnosis and navigating the world of work



Wempower Podcast

A podcast about working in journalism as a woman. A podcast for women by women.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to say a big thank you to all who have made our growth possible over the last three years. The impact recorded in these pages could not have happened without the support of our team that works tirelessly to move the world towards our mission.

We would like to say a big thank you to

The **writers** behind the impact report

The **designers** of the impact report

Our **partners**

And finally our **community**.

The Common Sense Network

Common Sense Studios, 121, Paynes Wharf 25 Wharf St, London, SE8 3GG, United Kingdom

www.tcsnetwork.co.uk

studio.tcsnetwork.co.uk

commonsenseplus.tcsnetwork.co.uk

hello@tcsnetwork.co.uk

WE THANK YOU
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN
OUR PROGRAMS

