

# **VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK**

*Registered charity number 1114742*

**Annual Report and Accounts**

**1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006**



**[www.vssn.org.uk](http://www.vssn.org.uk)**

**Address for official correspondence:**

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## ANNUAL REPORT

### Legal and Constitutional Details

- Name of organisation: Voluntary Sector Studies Network
- Legal form: Unincorporated charitable association governed by Constitution adopted 21 May 2003 (last amended 27 October 2004).
- Charitable status: Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
- Correspondent: Dr Angela Ellis Paine  
VSSN Secretary  
c/o IVR, Regents Wharf  
8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL
- Objects: The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom:
- (1) by the promotion and diffusion of knowledge; and
  - (2) by the publication of research; and
  - (3) by the encouragement of contact between workers in relevant fields of enquiry; and
  - (4) by undertaking such other activities (being charitable in law) as shall be conducive to the attainment of these objects.
- Trustees: The trustees of VSSN are the Steering Group. The following persons were trustees at 31 July 2006 (all served for the full year unless otherwise indicated). Positions shown are as at 31 July 2006. There were no changes in the trustees between 31 July 2006 and the date of approval of this Annual Report. (Affiliations are given for information only – all Steering Group members serve as individuals.)
- Chair: Prof Peter Halfpenny (University of Manchester)
- Secretary: Dr Angela Ellis Paine (Institute for Volunteering Research)
- Treasurer/Membership: Dr Gareth Morgan (Sheffield Hallam University)
- Web Officer: Dr Nick Plant (University of the West of England)
- Other trustees: Dr Jeremy Kendall (LSE)  
Dr Rob Macmillan (Sheffield Hallam University)  
*from 30 Nov 2005*  
Dr Jill Mordaunt (Open University)  
Dr Duncan Scott (Manchester University).
- Other trustees who served during the year:  
Dr Helen Cameron, Meta Zimmeck (*both served until 30 Nov 2005*).

Appointment of trustees:

The Constitution allows for up to 10 trustees, up to 8 of whom are elected by the VSSN members at the Annual General Meeting, and two may be co-opted. All trustees stand down at the AGM but are eligible for reappointment. All of the trustees at 31 July 2006 were elected (or re-elected) at the AGM in November 2005.

## **Report of the Steering Group on the Activities of VSSN 1.08.05 – 31.07.06**

2005-6 saw VSSN achieve charity registration. This marks the completion of quite a few steps begun in 2002/03 to move VSSN on from being an informal un-constituted network to a fully recognised body with clear governance.

### Membership

VSSN membership has continued to grow throughout the year. As of 31 July 2006 there were 133 formal members of VSSN (entitled to vote). Many more are members of the discussion list (see below).

### 2005 annual conference

For the second year running VSSN co-hosted the highly successful annual research conference with NCVO. The conference was held at the University of Warwick on 31st August and 1st September 2005, providing a unique meeting place for both researchers and users of research to discuss current findings and areas of investigation, and their implications for the voluntary and community sector. We are grateful to NCVO for continuing to work in partnership with us on the conference, and particularly for leading on the administration of the event and for bearing the financial risk. Both organisations were involved in planning the conference programme, identifying plenary speakers and refereeing papers. On the day, the sun shone, the venue and food were good and even an almighty thunderstorm before the conference dinner failed to dent the productive but relaxed spirit of the event – another great success!

### Day seminars

There have been two one-day seminars during the year, providing learning and networking opportunities for members. The first was held in London, hosted by the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics, in November 2005. This included four papers, and was attended by 33 people. The day also included the second Annual General Meeting, during which the annual report was accepted and the steering group members elected. The second event was hosted by Sheffield Hallam University in Sheffield on 17 May 2006. Five presentations were made, including a keynote paper on faith and social capital. Thirty-six people attended. Both days provided insights into quite separate dimensions of voluntary sector research but with many interesting links and opportunities for discussion.

### Discussion list

The VSSN e-mail discussion list continues to grow, with a total of 258 persons registered as subscribers, including a number of international colleagues. The discussion list acts as an effective mechanism to disseminate research information and to stimulate debate on different aspect of voluntary sector research.

### Website

The [www.vssn.org.uk](http://www.vssn.org.uk) website has been added to throughout the year, including the establishment of monthly featured updates. Reports and abstracts from the annual

research conference and the day seminars have been posted, and a new section to the website targeted specifically at new researchers has been added.

#### Work of the steering group

Two Steering Group meetings have been held during the year, coinciding with the day seminars. The Steering Group has also met virtually via an email discussion list throughout the year, effectively maintaining dialogue among members between meetings.

Following on from last year's review of VSSN's mission and strategy, this year has seen the Steering Group consider the option of introducing a subscription fee for members. To date, this has included internal discussion and consultation with members. A decision has yet to be formally reached, but it is likely that a subscription fee will be introduced in 2006/7. The fee would provide a more sustainable income stream for VSSN, as opposed to that currently provided through the voluntary donations system.

Following an approach by NCVO, the Steering Group entered into discussion on the possibilities of submitting a partnership bid to the Big Lottery's BASIS fund for the development of the network and other aspects of voluntary sector research development and dissemination. Given the short timeframe and a number of issues around sustainability, it was decided not to become an official partner in the bid, although it is likely that if the bid is successful discussions with NCVO will resume.

Three of the Steering Group members participated in a day seminar on qualitative methods in Manchester, organised by GMCVO (Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation), providing an opportunity to market the work of VSSN. Other marketing activities have included the design and purchase of a new pop up banner to be used at conferences and events (although it should be noted that this purchase was made after the 2005/6 year end).

#### **Charitable Status**

At the start of the year VSSN had been recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue, but the trustees operated on the basis that it was excepted under s3(5)(c) of the Charities Act 1993 from the requirement to register with the Charity Commission. However, the income for the year ended 31 July 2005 slightly exceeded the £1000 limit for excepted status and as such the trustees agreed in November 2005 to make an application for charity registration.

The constitution states that VSSN is subject to the Charities Act 1993 and registration was thus required with the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales. An application was made in spring 2006 and VSSN became a registered charity (number 1114742) with effect from 19 June 2006.

The operation of VSSN is as a UK-wide charity. However, VSSN is not required to register in addition with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, as VSSN meets the criteria in s14 – i.e. it does not occupy land or premises in Scotland, nor carry out activities in offices or shops in Scotland, and makes clear in all literature that it is registered with the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales.

## **Financial Review**

The trustees have elected to prepare the accounts on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with s42(3) of the Charities Act 1993 and applying relevant recommendations issued by the Charity Commission in relation to the presentation of receipts and payments accounts.

The income of VSSN is not sufficient to require audit or independent examination of the accounts, but the trustees have conducted individual checks on the figures before approving the accounts.

The accounts show that the charity has again achieved an encouraging surplus of receipts over payments, though the surplus is larger than what would be expected in a "normal" year due to (a) two gift aid tax refunds received in one year (due to delays at HMRC with the 2005 claim); (b) no directory printing expenses this year as the Steering Group has decided that a printed directory would not be produced more than every other year; (c) catering expenses for the November seminar were considerably less than initially quoted.

Including amounts brought forward from previous years, this has given a year-end balance of £1299. As explained above, the Steering Group has recognised that VSSN is now at the limit of what can be done purely by the voluntary work of Steering Group members and it is expected that in 2006/07 VSSN will start to incur more substantial costs for the co-ordination of its work. In addition, the Steering Group has agreed to commit funds to promotional expenses for the Network. The Steering Group therefore considers that this represents an appropriate level of reserves at the present time.

Both income and expenditure for VSSN seminars are higher than in previous years, due mainly to higher attendance figures and the decision to invest in slightly more extensive catering arrangements given that many participants have travelled a considerable distance. Fees for seminars were increased slightly to reflect this, but still well below typical fees charged for seminars, even in the voluntary sector. The Steering Group is determined that prices should remain low enough so that voluntary sector researchers are not deterred from attending on grounds of affordability and VSSN continues to offer a reduced seminar charge for full time students and other unwaged participants. The Steering Group is once again grateful to host universities which have generally waived any fee for room hire for seminars.

The Steering Group is also very grateful to members who have made donations during the year. However, donations are lower than in the previous year, and many members who joined during the year did not elect to make a donation.

## **Approval**

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for keeping proper accounting records for the charity, for safeguarding the charity's funds from loss, and for preparing an Annual Report and Annual Accounts to comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993.

This Annual Report has been prepared to comply with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2005, taking advantage of simplifications available to non-auditable charities. It was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 18 September 2006 and signed on their behalf by:

*Angela Ellis Paine*

*Gareth Morgan*

Angela Ellis Paine (Secretary)

Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

### RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

01 Aug 04 - 31 Jul 05 £		01 Aug 05 - 31 Jul 06 £
	<b>Receipts</b>	
322.50	Donations	140.00
767.50	Attendance Fees for Events	1281.00
11.28	Gift Aid Tax Refunds	95.19
0.00	Interest Received	1.10
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1101.28	TOTAL RECEIPTS	1517.29
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	<b>Payments</b>	
557.61	Expenses of VSSN Events	676.82
180.31	Publications Expenses	0.00
51.79	Website Expenses	58.58
9.35	Post and Telephone Expenses	6.80
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799.06	TOTAL PAYMENTS	742.20
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302.22	SURPLUS	775.09
221.85	Balance brought forward 01 Aug 05	524.07
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524.07	Balance carried forward 31 Jul 06	1299.16
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### STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

31 Jul 05 £		31 Jul 06 £
	<b>Monetary Assets</b>	
524.07	Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	1299.16
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524.07	TOTAL MONETARY ASSETS	1299.16
=====		=====
	<b>Represented by Funds</b>	
524.07	General Fund (Unrestricted)	1299.16
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524.07	TOTAL FUNDS	1299.16
=====		=====
	<b>Non-Monetary Assets &amp; Liabilities</b>	
79.68	Debtor (2005): Tax Refund due from Inland Rev	0.00
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79.68	TOTAL NON-MONETARY ASSETS	0.00
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These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 18 September 2006 and signed on their behalf by:

*Angela Ellis Paine*

Angela Ellis Paine (Secretary)

*Gareth Morgan*

Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)