VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Annual Report and Accounts

for the period

21 May 2003 – 31 July 2004

www.vssn.org.uk

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

Charitable status: Excepted charity in England & Wales (body with charitable objects but income below £1000)

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 elected to the Steering Group at the Inaugural Meeting on 21 May 2003 and have served for the full period of this report. (Affiliations are given for information only – all Steering Group members serve as individuals.)

Chair: Prof Peter Halfpenny (University of Manchester)
Secretary: Dr Jill Mordaunt (Open University)
Treasurer: Dr Gareth Morgan (Sheffield Hallam University)
Membership Secretary: Dr Helen Cameron (Oxford Brookes Univ & LSE)
Web Officer: Dr Nick Plant (University of the West of England)
Others trustees: Dr Jeremy Kendall (LSE)
Dr Duncan Scott (University of Manchester)
Dr Meta Zimmeck (Home Office Voluntary and Community Research Section)

There were no changes in the trustees between the dates covered by the Annual Report and the date on which it was signed.

Appointment of trustees: All Steering Group members are elected by the VSSN membership. At 31 July 2004, just over 30 persons were formal members of the Network.

Report of the Steering Group on the Activities of VSSN 21.5.03 – 31.7.04

Since the inaugural meeting in May 2003 that formalised the network, the members of the Steering Group have worked hard to develop an infrastructure that is both sustainable and which will allow the organisation to grow as when resources become available.

We have met face to face three times since May 2003 but despite infrequent meetings much has been achieved. This has been aided by the establishment of an on-line discussion list specifically for the steering group which has enabled us to have access to a record of our discussions and to have a place to store important documents. Each member of the Steering Group has been allocated particular tasks to make most effective use of their volunteer time and this has been effective in creating a number of resources.

From the outset we saw it as important to establish a number of key resources. These are:

1. A clear mission and vision and to associate this with a visual image in the form of a logo
2. A membership and a directory of this
3. A discussion list
4. A website

The work on the mission and vision and by implication the placing of VSSN continues. We want VSSN to be inclusive rather than exclusive and we have therefore extended the network beyond its original academic core to include research practitioners in voluntary and related organisations who are involved in 'academic style' research. We are grateful to Peter Halfpenny and his colleagues at Manchester University for the work they have undertaken in producing a logo for the organisation which also enhances the image of the organisation.

Two resources were established prior to the formalisation of the network, but these are key to its success. The first of these is a membership directory in which Helen Cameron and Gareth Morgan played a significant role. We have now developed a membership leaflet which may be completed electronically on our website. One difficult decision was whether to charge a subscription. For the time being we have decided against this until the organisation can offer more significant benefits to members. However this remains under review. Finances are however being raised by adding a small sum to the cost of network meetings.

Secondly we had established a discussion list in September 2002. This has been a resounding success to date. The decision to have a moderated list has meant additional work for Jill Mordaunt who manages it with assistance from Greg Smith and Peter Halfpenny but it has meant that on the whole unwanted messages have been kept to a minimum. At the time of writing there are 219 people subscribed to the list including a number from Europe, North America and beyond. This represents an increase of 52 since July 2003. We are grateful to Jill for the work she has done on this.

We are now building a website for VSSN which it is planned to launch in 2004 -2005 which will add enormously to what we can offer to members and others interested in

our work. This is to be found at www.vssn.org.uk and we are very grateful to Nick Plant our web-officer for the work he has done on this.

We also wanted to establish the presence of VSSN as a distinctive part of the UK research community. To this end we have sought to build relationships with other networks and in particular wished to begin a partnership with the NCVO and its research conference as we saw this as mutually beneficial to both parties. Initially Duncan Scott and Jeremy Kendall produced a report on the opportunities for and the place of VSSN amongst the other players in the voluntary sector research field. This work has been invaluable developing a firm sense of where we fit in the scheme of things. We are really pleased to have been co-sponsors of the conference with NCVO for the first time in 2004. Gareth Morgan and Jeremy Kendall worked with Karl Wilding of Head of Research at NCVO and his staff to review paper proposals and to stream these for the conference and we are involved making brief presentations to promote VSSN and in chairing sessions. We are grateful to NCVO for all their help and support in making this relationship work and we look forward to a successful future relationship.

We have also placed the network meetings on a slightly more formal basis in that contributors have been asked to submit short abstracts and to produce papers for the meetings. As the website develops, it will be possible to post papers and abstracts from the meetings for wider dissemination. All of these activities we believe have begun the process of increasing the quality of our meetings and have strengthened the network by increasing contacts and facilitating communication between researchers in the UK and beyond.

Financial Review

Starting from nil in May 2003, the Steering Group has sought to build a small working balance to support the development of the Network through (a) the contributions paid by attendees at the twice-yearly VSSN seminars, and (b) invitations to members to make donations. From this, it has been possible to meet some expenses beyond the seminars – as shown in the accounts, these include the hosting of the web site and the representation of VSSN at the conference of the equivalent Canadian organisation. However, substantial further resources will be needed in the coming years to develop the strategic aims of the Network.

The Steering Group wishes to acknowledge the generosity of all those who have made donations in this initial year. They also wish to acknowledge gifts in kind from some of the universities to which Steering Group members belong in meeting travel and accommodation expenses for Steering Group meetings, and to some Steering Group members who have not claimed expenses in order to help further the work.

Approval

This Annual Report was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 17 September 2004 and signed on their behalf by:

JILL MORDAUNT   *GARETH G MORGAN*

Jill Mordaunt (Secretary)   Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT 21 May 03 TO 31 Jul 04

£

Receipts

Donations	193.50
Attendance Fees for Events	740.00

TOTAL RECEIPTS	933.50

Payments

Expenses of VSSN Events	526.57
Canadian NVSN/COI Conf Fee	72.20
Website Expenses	69.63
Post and Telephone Expenses	5.25
Trustees Travel Expenses	38.00

TOTAL PAYMENTS	711.65

SURPLUS	221.85

Balance brought forward 21 May 03	0.00

Balance carried forward 31 Jul 04	221.85
	==========

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AT 31 JUL 04

Monetary Assets

21 May 2003 £		31 July 2004 £
	Cash At Bank:	
0.00	Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	221.85
====		======

Represented by Funds

0.00	General Fund (Unrestricted)	221.85
====		======

All funds are unrestricted. VSSN has no assets or liabilities of a non-monetary nature.

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 those parts of the Charities SORP (October 2000) applicable to 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.

These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 17 September 2004 and signed on their behalf by:

JILL MORDAUNT   *GARETH G MORGAN*

Jill Mordaunt (Secretary)   Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)