

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Registered charity number 1114742

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011



www.vssn.org.uk

Address for official correspondence:

Executive Office, Voluntary Sector Studies Network, VSSN Office
PO Box 7917, Swadlincote, DE11 1ET

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 2 December 2009).
Charitable status:	Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
Correspondent:	Sonia Liff Executive Officer Voluntary Sector Studies Network PO Box 7917 Swadlincote DE11 1ET
Telephone:	07902 274161
Central e-mail:	info@vssn.org.uk
Website:	www.vssn.org.uk
Objects:	<p>The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(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 following people served as trustees of VSSN and members of the Steering Group (affiliations are given for information only – all Steering Group members serve as individuals):
Chair:	Prof Chris Cornforth, Open University Business School (Chair from 2 Dec. 09)
Secretary:	Dr Andri Soteri-Proctor, University of Birmingham (from 2 Dec. 09)

Treasurer: Prof Cathy Pharoah, CASS Business School,
City University
Web Officer: Véronique Jochum, National Council for
Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
Marketing Officer: Dr Rob Dalziel, University of Birmingham (from 2
Dec. 09)
External Affairs Officer &
Journal Liaison Officer: Prof Pete Alcock, University of Birmingham
Annual Conference Officer: Colin Rochester
(and Vice Chair)
Directories Officer: Dr Mary Corcoran, Keele University
Ex-officio VSSN member: Emeritus Prof Peter Halfpenny, University of
Manchester
(VSR Editor – from 2 Dec '09)

Appointment of trustees: As of 14 May 2008, VSSN members elect up to nine trustees to serve a three-year term of office on a rolling basis, with three elected at each Annual General Meeting. The editor of *Voluntary Sector Review* serves as an ex-officio member. An additional two trustees may be co-opted. The initial terms of office are set according to the results of the Single Transferable Vote on the annual cycle of three members to be elected each year. Trustees may serve for a maximum of six consecutive years.

Sub-committee:

Editorial Management Board for the *Voluntary Sector Review*

As of 2 December 2009 a sub-committee was elected to act as the Editorial Management Board (EMB) for the journal *Voluntary Sector Review*. With direction from the Steering Group, the EMB is responsible for the oversight of the journal and the appointment of the Editorial Team, including the Editor, in consultation with the publisher, The Policy Press.

EMB members:

Pete Alcock, (Chair) University of Birmingham
Nick Acheson (University of Ulster)
Margaret Harris, Institute for Voluntary Action
Research
Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham
Gareth Morgan, Sheffield Hallam University
Cathy Pharoah, Cass Business School, City
University

Editorial Team: Pete Alcock, University of Birmingham
Julie Charlesworth, Open University Business School
Peter Halfpenny, University of Manchester
Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham
Cathy Pharoah, Cass Business School, City University
Colin Rochester, Birkbeck, University of London

Appointment of EMB: VSSN members elect six members of the EMB on a three-year cycle, using the same rules as for the election of Steering Group members as set out in the amended constitution. The Editor, if not already an elected Steering Group member, will be appointed ex-officio to the Steering Group.

The EMB is responsible for assembling the International Advisory Board. For further information, see:

<http://www.vssn.org.uk/journal/index.htm>

Steering Group Report: VSSN activities undertaken for public benefit during the year ending 31 July 2011

This has been a year of steady progress for VSSN. Perhaps the most visible development has been the launch of the first phase of our new improved website. Behind the scenes our new executive officer has been making important improvements to streamline our administration. Our new journal *Voluntary Sector Review* has made a very promising start. Key highlights are summarised below.

Website:

We launched the new website on 19 July 2011. It was designed by web agency Joomkit with Nick Plant, our e-services advisor, and the support of Veronique Jochum and Mike Aiken. It is the outcome of phase one of a long-term project to develop a second generation website. Details on phase two can be found here: www.vssn.org.uk/about/about-our-site. Regular updates, conference reports, member contact details and links have been added to the website (www.vssn.org.uk/) throughout the year. Between the 1 August 2010 and 31 July 2011 the site received an average of 430 unique visitors per month compared with 450 the previous year.

A particular thanks goes to Nick Plant for all the work he has put in to the development of the new website.

VSSN's journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*

VSSN's interdisciplinary journal *Voluntary Sector Review*, published by The Policy Press (TPP), has made a successful start. By the time of the 2011 December VSSN AGM, members will have received two full volumes, comprising issues in March, July and November each year. The journal is designed to appeal to a wide readership and includes research articles, practice pieces and policy reviews as well as a new book review section.

In the year to July 2011, the *VSR's* online abstracts were viewed over 12,000 times and full-text articles were downloaded nearly 3,500 times; making this a very good route for contributors to expose their work on the voluntary sector to a wide audience. Library subscriptions have achieved an acceptable level, though all members are still being strongly encouraged to persuade their institutions to take out (and continue) subscriptions to ensure the sustainability of the journal.

Oversight of the journal is the responsibility of an Editorial Management Board. Elections to this body take place annually in November, with nominations sought from across VSSN's membership. The EMB, in consultation with the publishers, The Policy Press, appoints the editorial team, which is responsible for the content of the journal.

VSSN is grateful to The Policy Press for the enthusiasm and expertise they have brought to this venture, and the resources they are devoting to making it a success.

VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, 2010

The seventh VSSN/NCVO annual research conference held in September 2010 at Leeds University brought together 140 participants with an interest in the voluntary sector. This drew in researchers, policy makers and practitioners from the UK and overseas, such as Canada.

By offering eight panels and four parallel sessions with multiple presenters, the conference offered attendees the opportunity to share their ideas and research. NCVO's Head of Research, Karl Wilding, described the event as 'geek heaven' with papers covering a vast range of topics and perspectives on voluntary organisations and public service delivery, such as criminal justice and unemployment services, charitable giving, social capital and volunteering (see posting on: <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/networking-discussions/blogs/209/10/09/07/uk-academic-research-voluntary-sector>).

These were topped and tailed by an opening plenary from Martin Brookes on impact measurement and a closing discussant plenary expert panel on the 'Big Society'.

We are grateful to colleagues at NCVO for their work on the conference. We are also very grateful to Matt Hill, Institute for Volunteer Research, for the voluntary efforts he has put into organising the New Researchers' element within the conference, which continues to grow in popularity.

Day seminars

Two successful day conferences were held during the course of the year, continuing to provide learning and networking opportunities. The Institute for Voluntary Action Research hosted the December 2010 Day Conference at the Esmee Fairburn Trust in London. Despite arctic conditions the event was extremely well attended by over 50 people. There were seven presentations including ones by researchers from New Zealand and Bulgaria, and a lively panel on the Big Society agenda. The May 2010 Day Conference took place at the Open University in Milton Keynes. This included stimulating presentations about reconceptualising civil society, the compact and new forms of voluntary action.

We are grateful to the host organisations and our colleagues therein for organising these events.

Membership:

VSSN's membership has held up well during what has been a difficult year for funding and employment in both the voluntary sector and higher education. At 31st July 2011 there were 121 individual (2010: 111) and 9 organisational members (2010: 13) covering 41 individuals, giving a total of 162 VSSN formal members (entitled to vote) compared with 171 in 2010. The decline in organisational membership was affected by a Steering Group decision to restrict this category of membership only to smaller voluntary and community

sector groups. This led to a number of organisations (mainly academic departments) no longer being eligible to renew on this basis. Those previously covered by such membership were encouraged to join VSSN as individuals. New members continue to be attracted to VSSN (with over 20% of membership at 31st July 2011 having joined that year) and VSSN's reach is extending overseas with members now in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the Irish Republic. A new membership leaflet has been developed and a more proactive approach to recruitment is underway.

Online directory

The Members Directory remains an important element of VSSN's work within the upgraded website. It is in line with the new website's more interactive approach and a resource for members on each other's activities. We encourage all members to join and update their details regularly.

E-mail discussion List:

Subscriptions to our VSSN e-discussion list have continued to grow. As of 02 November 2011 the list had 509 subscribers, up 6 per cent from the same time last year. The list attracts both members and non-members, providing a forum for lively debate and information sharing among colleagues. Recent discussion topics have included the distinctiveness of faith-based organisations and the replacement of paid staff by volunteers.

We are especially thankful to Jill Mordaunt, who after several years of providing excellent support as the role of discussion list moderator, has now retired. A warm welcome back to Angela Ellis-Paine who has kindly returned as a volunteer to take on the role.

Building partnerships:

Our successful partnership with NCVO continues, particularly through our collaboration around the Annual Research Conference. Additional networks are being established and maintained with a range of other organisations, both in the UK and overseas, though this has not been a particularly active area of development for this year.

Steering Group meetings:

The Steering Group met two times during the year, after each VSSN Day Conference. In addition, the Steering Group continues to discuss business matters virtually via its email discussion, ensuring that communication and work continues effectively between meetings.

The Steering Group has taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in planning the charity's activities. Throughout this process, the Steering Group has been mindful that VSSN is seeking to advance education and research concerning the voluntary sector for the benefit of the wider public. All VSSN events are widely publicised and open to anyone interested, with only modest fees to attend. Our discussion list is

open to anyone to join. In addition, the *Voluntary Sector Review* is now an integral part of the VSSN's work and is an important vehicle in enabling research work on the voluntary sector to reach as many people as possible.

VSR Editorial Management Board:

The VSR EMB now has an annual meeting in November, which is linked to TPP's planning timetable. There was also an informal meeting at the annual Research Conference in September, although this did not cover all business. As the journal is established and the editorial processes are now running smoothly, much of the work of the EMB can be done through virtual consultation via the email list.

The EMB has reviewed the timetable for replacement of editorial roles in the future and is developing a strategy for replacing current editors when their terms of office come to an end. The publishers are working with the Editor and Editorial Assistant to introduce an online submission and review service. This is likely to be implemented some time in 2012.

Subscriptions for VSR are growing slowly. It is critically important that university libraries and other public bodies take out subscriptions to ensure that the journal is financially viable. All VSSN members must be encouraged to ensure that their institutions subscribe.

Executive Officer:

Appleby completed their first year as providers of the VSSN Executive Officer function in May. They have instituted a number of much needed changes including online voting for VSSN elections and payments by direct transfer. They have also become involved in a wider range of VSSN activities, including managing the bookings for the day conferences, maintaining the members' directory and updating parts of the website. We are extremely grateful for all their support, particularly Sonia Liff, for doing this.

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. However, the trustees recognise that in a charity with significant liabilities at year end there would be benefits in using SORP format even for an organisation of this size. It is planned to present the accounts on a SORP basis for 2011/12, and work on this has started.

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.

During the year VSSN saw a continuing increase in member subscriptions for the new package which includes the journal. Organisational membership fees were down somewhat.

The level of VSSN membership subscriptions attracted during the year increased to cover the costs of the additional benefit of *Voluntary Sector Review*, the new VSSN journal, and exceeded minimum expectations.

The accounts show that the charity had a surplus of receipts over payments of £6191.50, in 2010/2011.

A number of other payments were agreed during the year but had not been paid by the end of July, and these are described in the notes and accounted for in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. These payments amounted to £5,644, and included web development, payments to Policy Press. A further £5,820 of longer term commitments existed at year end, which are also shown in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

Increased journal activities saw the supplement payable to Policy Press over the mandatory contribution of £2,600 increase from £640 (amount for 2009/10 - paid in 2010/11) to £1010 (expected amount for 2010/11 which will be paid in 2011/12).

Reserves policy

VSSN has a formal *reserves policy*. This needs to take account of increased obligations arising from VSSN's commitment to Policy Press for supporting the *Voluntary Sector Review*, and its continuing annual contracted Executive Officer services.

Subscriptions are received mainly at the start of the year, but the obligations for the Executive Officer (EO) role arise quarterly and are subject to 3 months' notice, so the Steering Group considers that at any time VSSN must have sufficient funds in hand to cover both the current and next quarter for the EO contract. This amounts to £1,500 and is included on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. The additional minimum obligation for VSR is £2600, and at this developmental stage in the life of the Journal, the Committee would prefer to allow for the whole of this amount as a creditor on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. A further £1010 for possible supplementary payment to Policy Press has also been included in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. Finally, it is estimated that VSSN should additionally allow £1000 for other expenses such as possible venue hire costs or any shortfall in

revenue taken to cover the costs of day seminars etc, in the Reserves, This has also been included in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

As at 31.7.2010 the total balance of the General Fund was £9,662 in monetary terms, but as shown on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities, £5,820 is liable after the year end, leaving an effective balance of £3, 842.

In 2010/11 VSSN has additionally received a one-off payment of £2000 from NCVO as a grant towards the expenses of its annual conference.

Taken together these figures mean that VSSN's current financial position is comfortable, and it is in a position to consider a small amount of further investment, possibly in web functionality. This would probably need to be considered in line with any further financial needs which might arise in relation to ongoing executive support for increased web activity. The current Executive Officer contract runs till June 2013.

Also, the future of the way in which the annual research conference is handled is currently under review, and the organisation needs to consider how the management of the conference will be handled and resourced in the future.

Regular income has not increased notably, and so the organisation still needs to be cautious about any additional long-term commitment unless aligned to increased subscriptions.

We would like to record our thanks to Sonia Liff of Appleby for revising VSSN's financial recording systems, and for the high quality of financial reports now received. This has been invaluable in helping the organisation provide a higher level of member services.

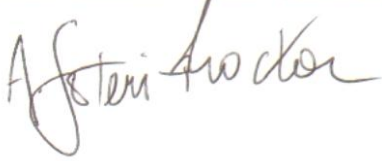
We are very grateful to Gareth Morgan for his continued informal review of the presentation of our financial reporting, but we stress that he is *not* acting as independent examiner for VSSN.

Approval

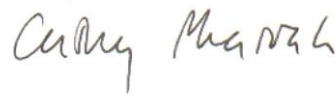
The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for keeping proper accounting records for the charity, for safeguarding the charity's funds from loss, and for preparing an Annual Report and Annual Accounts to comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993.

This Annual Report has been prepared to comply with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008, taking advantage of simplifications available to non-auditable charities. It was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 01.12.11, and signed on their behalf by:

Andri Soteri-Proctor (Secretary)



Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)



ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments Account

	01 Aug 09 - 31Jul 2010			01 Aug 10 - 31Jul 2011
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
	Unrestricted	Restricted*	Total	
Receipts				
Donations	1,065.00		1,065.00	1,125.00
Seminar fees -members	1,730.00		1,730.00	2,750.00
Member Subscriptions	4,925.00		4,925.00	5,870.00
Seminar fees-non/members	955.00		955.00	
Orgn Member Subs	1,800.00		1,800.00	1,260.00
Advance Subs for next year	830.00		830.00	120.00
Other (Refund) (1)	94.00		94.00	
Total Receipts	11,399.00	0.00	11,399.00	11,125.00
Payments				
VSSN day seminars	1,935.80		1,935.80	1,087.18
Publications Expenses (2)			2600.00	
Publications supplement (3)				650.00
Website (Devt and Hosting)	616.78		616.78	12.92
Post/Tel/Sundry Expenses	6.00		6.00	
Travel Expenses (Trustee)	196.20		196.20	27.37
Executive Officer Fees	1,500.00		1,500.00	3,055.00
Expenses - Exec Officer				81.08
Grants payable		10,000.00	10,000.00	
Database development	1,125.00		1,125.00	19.95
Total payments	7,979.78	10,000.00	17,979.78	4,933.50
SURPLUS (2010:DEFICIT)	3,419.22	-10,000.00	-6,580.78	6191.50
Balance brought forward	5,695.36	10,000.00	15,695.36	9,114.58
Balance carried forward	9,114.58	0.00	9,114.58	15,306.08

*Restricted income relates solely to one-off grants for the development of the *Voluntary Sector Review*, and there was no further restricted income or expenditure in 2010-2011

(1) This relate to an overpayment on the Dec 2009 seminar.

(2) The payment due to Policy Press for 2010/11 is noted in the SOAL.

(3) Supplement over minimum £2600 payment for 2009/10, due to additional subscriptions.

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

31 July 10 [Restated] (£)		31 July 11 (£)
	<u>Monetary Assets</u>	
9,114.58 (4)	Cash at Bank and In Hand: Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	15,306.08
9,114.58	Total Monetary Assets	15,306.08
9,114.58	Total Funds	15,306.08
	<u>Non-Monetary Assets & Liabilities</u>	
	<i>Assets:</i>	
0.00	Debtors	0.00
	<i>Liabilities – (A) Creditors payable shortly after year end</i>	
650.00-	Executive Office Service July-Aug	750.00-
-	Amounts due to Policy Press for previous year	3,610.00-
-	Joomkit - Web development and hosting	1,284.00-
650.00-	Total Creditors	5,644.00-
	<i>Liabilities - (B) Other binding commitments in existence at year end</i>	
830.00-	Subs Received in Advance	120.00-
1,500.00-	Exec. Officer Commitment*	1,500.00-
2,600.00-	Minimum VSR payments	2,600.00-
640.00-	Estimated supplementary VSR**	1,100.00-
1,200.00-	Sundry (Web)	300.00-
	Exec Officer Expenses (Travel, Membership suppl)	200.00-
6,770.00-	Total Other Commitments	5,820.00-
7420.00-	Total Non-Monetary Liabilities	11,464.00-
1,694.58	NET ASSETS (MONETARY & NON-MONETARY)	3,842.08

(4) This is the figure after bank reconciliation allowing for uncleared cheques.

* Three months due to end November 2011, and minimum 3 months notice on the agreement.

**This is an estimated supplement to the agreed minimum payment of £2,600 to Policy Press for 2010/2011, after adjusting upwards for the total journal subscriptions likely to be actually achieved in 2010/2011, based on last year's figures.

Notes to the Accounts

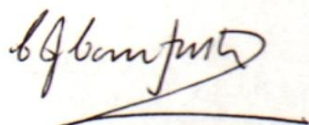
1. The role of Executive Officer is provided by a contract between VSSN and Appleby Ltd at a total fee (including VAT) of £3000 per annum. The contract for three years from June 2010 to July 2013 (subject to 3 months notice by either party).

2. Steering Group members or their institutions normally meet their own travel expenses when Steering Group meetings are held on the same day as VSSN seminars, and VSSN appreciates this support. Executive Officer travel expenses to seminars are supported by VSSN.

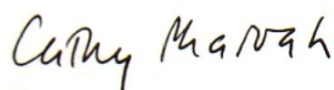
3. All income and expenses of the NCVO/VSSN Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference are handled by NCVO and do not therefore appear in these accounts.

These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 01 December 2011 and signed on their behalf by:

Chris Cornforth (Chair)

Handwritten signature of Chris Cornforth in black ink, featuring a stylized 'C' and 'C'.

Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)

Handwritten signature of Cathy Pharoah in black ink, written in a cursive style.