

# VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

*Registered charity number 1114742*

**Annual Report and Accounts**

**1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012**



**[www.vssn.org.uk](http://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 December 2009).
Charitable status:	Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
Correspondent:	Sonia Liff Executive Officer PO Box 7917 Swadlincote DE11 1ET
Telephone:	07902 274161
Central e-mail:	info@vssn.org.uk
Website:	www.vssn.org.uk
Objects:	The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom by: (1) the promotion and diffusion of knowledge; and (2) the publication of research; and (3) the encouragement of contact between workers in relevant fields of enquiry; and (4) 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
Secretary:	Dr Andri Soteri-Proctor, University of Birmingham
Treasurer (co-opted):	Prof Cathy Pharoah, CASS Business School, City University
Vice Chair & Annual Conference Officer:	Colin Rochester
Marketing officer:	Dr Rob Dalziel
Day conference liaison officer:	Dr Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham
External Affairs & Journal Liaison Officer:	Prof Pete Alcock, University of Birmingham
New Researchers:	Dr Mike Aiken
Ex-officio VSSN member:	Emeritus Prof Peter Halfpenny, University of Manchester
Web Officer:	Dave Kane, National Council for Voluntary Organizations (from Dec 2011)
Co-opted member	Meta Zimmeck (from Dec 2011)

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.

Véronique Jochum and Dr Mary Corcoran stood down as trustees in December 2011.

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, Assistant editor

Julie Charlesworth, Policy review editor

Peter Halfpenny, Editor

Rob Macmillan, Book review editor

Cathy Pharoah, Assistant editor

Colin Rochester, Practice papers editor

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 2012**

VSSN has continued to make steady progress throughout the year. Membership numbers have held up well despite the very challenging economic circumstances. Behind the scenes work has continued to streamline our administration with the introduction of an online payments system. Our new journal *Voluntary Sector Review* has been very well received and goes from strength to strength. Key highlights are summarised below:

### VSSN's journal, Voluntary Sector Review

VSSN's interdisciplinary journal *Voluntary Sector Review*, published by The Policy Press (TPP), is now in its third year, with three issues per annum in March, July and November. A print copy is a VSSN membership benefit.

The journal is designed to appeal to a wide readership and includes research articles, practice papers and policy reviews as well as a book review section.

In the year to August 2012, the VSR's online abstracts were viewed nearly 20,000 times and full-text articles were downloaded over 3,500 times. The journal is therefore a very good route for contributors to showcase their work on the voluntary sector to a wide audience. The number of subscriptions has increased, though all members are still strongly encouraged to persuade their institutions to take out (and continue) subscriptions to ensure the financial 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, 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.

### Website

Nick Plant stood down as e-service advisor in January 2012. We are grateful for all his hard work over recent years. Responsibility for the new website and the online Directory was taken over by a VSSN web sub-group consisting of David Kane and Appleby staff. The group has implemented on-line payments for day conferences and new members via the website which should make payments more straightforward for people.

Appleby has taken over routine updates to the website, David Kane provides technical support and has implemented developments to the site. The group are reviewing other features and considering the future of the website.

Robert Dalziel updated the Courses section of the website to reflect those currently being offered in the UK. As a result, this part of the website has been made more comprehensive and relevant.

### VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, 2011

The annual research conference, which is jointly organized by VSSN and NCVO, took place on 7 and 8 September 2011. It brought together academics, practitioners and policymakers

with a shared interest in the voluntary sector and voluntary action. Prof Adalbert Evers gave the opening keynote address at the conference, we are particularly thankful to Institute for Voluntary Action Research as they kindly agreed to pay for Adalbert's travel and subsistence. There were over 50 research papers presented at the conference. The papers covered a wide variety of topics and themes including: challenges for governance and management; volunteering; resourcing the sector; aspects of philanthropy; and social enterprise and knowledge transfer, among many others. The conference also included a session specifically designed for new researchers. The session (which has now run for the last eight years) is aimed at early career voluntary sector researchers, whether postgraduate students or researchers in the sector.

### **Day Conferences**

Two successful day conferences were held during the year, continuing to highlight new research and reflections and to provide opportunities for networking amongst participants. The University of Southampton hosted the December 2011 Day Conference, with papers on measuring effective governance in faith settings, volunteering and the Big Society using panel survey data, and the policy agenda for the third sector and the environment. Full details at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conferences/item/293-day-conference-1-december-2011>

The May 2012 Day Conference took place at the Third Sector Research Centre at Birmingham University. This included some excellent presentations on volunteering and religiosity, routes into employment in the voluntary sector, and state-sector relationships in public service delivery. Full details at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conferences/item/315-day-conference-23-may-2012>

### **Membership**

At 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012 there were 140 individual (2011: 121) and 7 organisational members (2011: 9) covering 30 individuals, giving a total of 170 VSSN members (2011: 162). VSSN has a small number of non-UK members including from Eire, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Italy and Israel. It is hoped that the new online payment system will make it easier for people outside the UK to join.

We do not have complete data but it appears that slightly more than half the members are in academic institutions (as either staff or students) with the rest either within voluntary or community organisations or in consultancy positions.

The May Steering Group meeting reviewed trends in membership over the last couple of years. The data shows that while overall membership is holding up there is quite a lot of turnover of actual members. Just less than 30% of current members first joined VSSN in 2006 or earlier whereas more than a quarter of current members first joined in 2011. Current economic circumstances are difficult for the sector with many people losing their job or getting less work as consultants. Students also move on to different areas and members retire. For these reasons actively recruiting new members will always need to be part of maintaining membership.

The Steering Group discussed various options for growing membership and are developing ways of raising VSSN's profile among potential members. For example VSSN had a joint table with Voluntary Sector Review at the Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research in Italy in July to promote the organisation and journal. A separate

membership drive with personal messages sent to those who might be expected to have an interest in VSSN led to a number of new members and to some whose membership had lapsed, rejoining.

#### New Researchers

With the support of Matthew Hill from the Institute for Volunteering Research, VSSN offered a free New Researcher Event alongside the VSSN/ NCVO research conference in September 2011. This is a place for new researchers to present their work in a supportive environment. VSSN also provides a New Researcher Prize for the best paper consisting of a year's free membership to the Network.

In addition, during Spring 2012 text was developed to set out the role and remit of the VSSN New Researchers Network. This aims to provide a streamlined description of the aims and remit of the group, which ties it closer to the general aims of VSSN and now appears as a general description on the VSSN website. On request, Mike Aiken and Matthew Hill (IVR) worked extensively to set up a 'Yammer' on-line discussion group. For now, this is on an external site <https://www.yammer.com/login>.

Thanks are due to IVR for the support it has offered to make the event a success and, in particular, the contribution of Matthew.

#### Email discussion list

Subscriptions to our VSSN e-discussion list have continued to grow, albeit at a slower pace than last year. As of 17 September the list had 522 subscribers, up nearly 3 per cent from the time of reporting 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 extent to which voluntary organisations are being 'forced' to change business models due to funding requirements, and a search for an evidence base on the Occupy movement. We are grateful to all our contributors for their ongoing input and commitment.

We are also very grateful to Angela Ellis Paine who continues to oversee the listserve.

#### Building partnerships

Our successful partnership with NCVO continues, particularly through our collaboration around the Annual Research Conference. Formal links are maintained with a range of other organisations, through our website, though this has not been a particularly active area of development for this year.

#### Steering Group meetings

The Steering Group met three times during the year, after each VSSN Day Conference and the Annual Conference. In addition, the Steering Group uses its email discussion list to progress business between meetings.

The Steering Group has taken into account the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit in planning the charity's activities. The Steering Group is mindful that VSSN mission is 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. Similarly our online 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 The Policy Press' planning timetable. 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 Policy Editor will need to be replaced in 2013, and we will also seek a replacement Editor (or Editors) this year so that there can be a period of handover with the current Editor, who will retire in 2014. The publishers are working with the Editor and Editorial Assistant to introduce an online submission and review service, which will be implemented this autumn. The role of the Editorial Assistant is being reviewed in the light of this, and the EMB will shortly make a recommendation.

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 are encouraged to ensure that their institutions subscribe. Contributions are also welcome from researchers to maintain a good flow of quality articles to the journal.

#### Executive Office

Appleby continues to provide the Executive Office for VSSN. The range of tasks undertaken has gradually increased and this situation was formalised with a revised task list and contract during the year.

A major development during the year was the introduction of on-line payments that are expected to reduce the number of cheques that need to be processed and as such speed up payment processing and reduce administrative work.

## Financial Review

The trustees have continued to prepare the accounts on a receipts and payments basis as permitted by the Charities Act 2011, and have taken account of recommendations issued by the Charity Commission for presentation of accounts on this basis.

Although the 2010/11 report included a proposal to move to the SORP format for the first time this year the trustees concluded after discussion that for a charity of this size the effort of using SORP presentation was not justified. However, they would draw attention to the significant liabilities at year end as shown on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

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

### Receipts and Payments

During the year VSSN saw a continuing increase in member subscriptions for a membership package which includes its journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*. VSSN funds were also considerably augmented with a grant of £2,000 from NCVO towards the organisation of the joint VSSN/ NCVO research conference in 2011. (A further grant of £2,000 has been received after year end towards the 2012 conference.)

Income from seminar fees was down slightly from £2,750 to £2,499 (the total is now split between members and non-members) but the value of member subscriptions increased considerably from £5,990 to £7,090. Income from organisational memberships remained at the same level.

As a result of the NCVO grant, and increased membership, income to VSSN saw a healthy increase in 2011/12. The accounts show that the charity had a surplus of receipts over payments of £3,094 in 2011/2012.

### Obligations at year end

A number of other items of expenditure were agreed during the year which had not been paid out by the end of VSSN financial year in July; these are described in the notes and accounted for in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. These payments amounted to £4,733, and included the payment due to Policy Press for 2011/12. The 2011/12 supplement payable to Policy Press over the mandatory contribution of £2,600 was estimated at £1,110 at 31.7.2011 (the final payment came in slightly less than this and will be appear in the 2012/13 accounts).

A further £6,560 of longer term commitments existed at year end, which are also show in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities under 'Other Binding Commitments in existence at the year end'. This includes the following three items.

(a) 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. It is estimated that allowing for additional activity due to member numbers and the increased level of fees awarded in 2011, this should be set at £2,360.



(b) VSSN is also obliged to meet Executive Officer travel expenses and web-hosting for the coming year, which are estimated at £500. Attendance of the Executive Officer at VSSN events is enabling greatly improved efficiency, accuracy and timeliness in collecting membership, away-day and conference fees.

(c) The costs of Voluntary Sector Review for the year ahead are also included. The minimum obligation to Policy Press for VSR is £2600 per annum, and at this relatively early 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 together with an estimated further £1,100 likely to be payable to Policy Press.

In addition to the liabilities and provisions discussed above, it is estimated that VSSN should allow £1,000 for other expenses such as possible venue hire costs or any shortfall in revenue taken to cover the costs of day seminars etc, in its Reserves.

#### Reserves policy

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

As at 31.7.2012, the total balance of the General Fund was £18,401 in monetary terms, but as shown in the Accounts, £11,353 is liable after the year end, leaving an effective balance of £7,047. In addition to this balance, VSSN has received a further grant of £2,000 since year end. There is no direct cost to set against this figure, as VSSN's contribution to the conference organisation is voluntary.

It should be noted that these sums are in addition to allowing for all commitments for 2012/2013 except for two quarters of the Executive Officer's fees (£2,360). This means that VSSN has sufficient reserves to cover the items listed in the Reserves Policy.

Taken together these figures mean that VSSN's current financial position is comfortable, and that it continues to be in a position to consider small amounts of further investment, if appropriate. It is recommended, however, that any further new expenditure be considered in line with any further financial needs which might arise in relation to ongoing executive support for increased web activity, editorial support for the journal, examination of accounts or any potential impact of the current economic climate on future member income. 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.

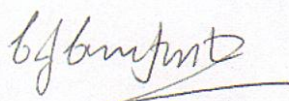
We would like to record our thanks to Sonia Liff and her colleagues at Appleby for continuing to develop VSSN's financial recording and payment systems, and for the high quality of financial reporting now received. This has been invaluable in helping the organisation provide a higher level of member 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.

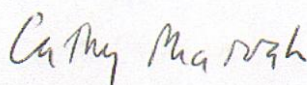
## Approval

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 2011.

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 22 November 2012 and signed on their behalf by:



**Chris Cornforth (Chair)**



**Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)**

Date:

7/12/12

## VSSN ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2011/2012

### RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	01/08/11 - 31/07/12 (£)	01/08/10 -31/07/11 (£)
<b>Receipts</b>		
Grants and donations	2,750.00	1,125.00
Seminar fees -members	1,540.00	2,750.00
Seminar fees-non/members	959.00	
Member Subscriptions	7,089.57	5,990.00
Orgn Member Subs	1,260.00	1,260.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>13,598.57</b>	<b>11,125.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Expenses of VSSN Events	665.88	1,087.18
Publications Expenses	2,600.00	2,600.00
Publication Supplement	1,010.00	650.00
Website (Devt and Hosting) [Note 1]	1,296.61	12.92
Travel Expenses (Trustee) [Note 2]	59.10	27.37
Exec Officer -Fees [Note 3]	4,500.00	3,055.00
Expenses - Exec Officer [Note 2]	200.90	81.08
Database and software	24.00	19.95
Equipment (New table banner)	75.00	
WorldPay	72.64	
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>10,504.13</b>	<b>7,533.50</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>3,094.44</b>	<b>3,591.50</b>
Balance brought forward	<b>15,306.08</b>	<b>11,714.58</b>
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>18,400.52</b>	<b>15,306.08</b>

*All funds are unrestricted in both years.*

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

	31/07/12 (£)	31/07/11 (£)
<b>Monetary Assets</b>		
Unity Trust Bank Current Account	18,400.52	15,306.08
<b>Total Monetary Assets</b>	<b>18,400.52</b>	<b>15,306.08</b>
<b>Represented by Monetary Funds</b>		
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>18,400.52</b>	<b>15,306.08</b>
<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Total Monetary Funds</b>	<b>18,400.52</b>	<b>15,306.08</b>
<b>Non-Monetary Assets and Liabilities</b>		
NON-MONETARY ASSETS [Note 4]	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
<i>Misc Creditors at year end:</i>		
Expenses payable at year end	<b>-103.07</b>	
Executive Office Service payable for June-Aug	<b>-1,180.25</b>	-750.00
Amounts due to Policy Press for VSR	<b>-3,450.00</b>	-3,610.00
Website costs payable at year end		-1,284.00
<i>Total Misc Creditors:</i>	<b>-4,733.32</b>	-5,644.00
<i>Deferred Income: Subs received in advance:</i>	<b>-60.00</b>	-120.00
<b>OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END</b>		
Exec Officer contract commitments [Note 3]	<b>-2,360.00</b>	-1,500.00
Minimum obligation for VSR	<b>-2,600.00</b>	-2,600.00
Estimated supplementary obligation for VSR	<b>-1,100.00</b>	-1,100.00
Web expenditure	<b>-300.00</b>	-300.00
Exec Officer Expenses (travel, members)	<b>-200.00</b>	-200.00
<i>Total other commitments:</i>	<b>-6,560.00</b>	-5,700.00
<b>Total Current Liabilities and Provisions</b>	<b>-11,353.32</b>	<b>-11,464.00</b>

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**NET ASSETS (MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY)**

**7,047.20**

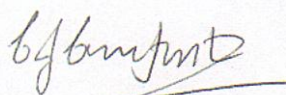
**3,842.08**

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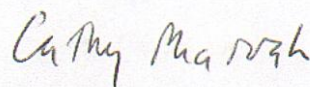
**Notes to the Accounts**

1. The figure for 2011/12 includes final instalment for web development work.
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. Executive Officer travel expenses to seminars are supported by VSSN in view of the administrative services provided by the EO on the day.
3. The role of Executive Officer is provided by a contract between VSSN and Appleby Ltd at a total fee (including VAT) which was increased to £4,500 per annum in February 2012, and backdated from June 2011. The contract is for three years from June 2010 to July 2013 (subject to 3 months notice by either party). The figure for 2011/12 includes the back-dated fee increase.
4. VSSN has some fixed assets in the form of banner stands and a table stand, but as these are personalised to VSSN they are not considered to have any disposal value to show on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities. VSSN had no known debtors at year end.
5. The general 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 simply include a grant from NCVO towards VSSN's involvement in the conference, as explained in the financial review in the Trustees Report.
6. A prior year adjustment has been made to the figures for 2010/11 to allow for a cheque for £2,600 for publication expenses which was written in July 2010 but failed to clear and was re-issued after year end. Originally this payment was omitted from the 2010/11 accounts as it had been included in the 2009/10 payments. However, as the payment was in reality only made in 2010/11 the trustees considered that it is more accurate on a receipts and payments basis to show it in the 2010/11 Receipts and Payments Account. As a result, the figures for opening balance at 1.8.2010, total payments for 2010/11 and net surplus for 2010/11 have all been adjusted accordingly. There is no change to the closing monetary balance of £15,306 at 31.7.2011 (which is the opening balance for the current year).

**These Accounts were approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 22 November 2012 and signed on their behalf by:**



**Chris Cornforth (Chair)**



**Cathy Pharoah (Treasurer)**

Date: 21/12/12