

**VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK**

*Registered charity number 1114742*

## **Annual Report and Accounts**

**1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014**



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

**Address for official correspondence:**

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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:	<a href="mailto:info@vssn.org.uk">info@vssn.org.uk</a>
Website:	<a href="http://www.vssn.org.uk">www.vssn.org.uk</a>
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 knowledge; and (2) the publication of research; and (3) 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	Colin Rochester, Birkbeck London University
Secretary:	Robert Dalziel, Healthwatch Dudley
Treasurer:	Meta Zimmeck, Practical Wisdom R2Z
Vice Chair:	Chris Cornforth, Open University Business School (to December 2013) Vacancy (from December 2013)

Membership and Marketing Officer	Robert Dalziel, Healthwatch, Dudley
Annual Conference Officers	Colin Rochester, Birkbeck, University of London Mike Woolvin, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) (from December 2013)
Day Conference Liaison Officer:	Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham (to June 2014) Meta Zimmeck (from June 2014)
External Affairs & Journal Liaison Officer:	Chris Cornforth, Open University (to December 2013) Peter Maple, London South Bank University (from December 2013)
New Researchers Co-ordinators:	Mike Aiken (Institute for Voluntary Action Research) (to December 2013) Linda Milbourne, Birkbeck, University of London (from December 2013) Anjelica Finnegan, Southampton University
Ex-officio:	Emeritus Prof Peter Halfpenny, University of Manchester
Web Officer:	David Kane, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
Appointment of trustees:	<p>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 <i>Voluntary Sector Review</i> 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.</p> <p>Chris Cornforth, Open University and Mike Aiken (Institute for Voluntary Action Research) stood down as trustees in December 2013. Peter Maple, Linda Milbourne and Mike Woolvin were elected in December 2013.</p>

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, Aston University  
Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham  
Gareth Morgan, Sheffield Hallam University (until December 2103)  
James Rees, University of Birmingham  
Chris Cornforth, Open University (from December 2013)  
Julia Mortimer (The Policy Press) - publisher's representative

Editorial Team:

Peter Halfpenny, Editor  
Pete Alcock, Assistant editor  
Cathy Pharoah, Policy reviews editor  
Colin Rochester, Practice papers editor (until January 2014)  
Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne Practice papers editors (from January 2014)  
Rob Macmillan, Book review 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: activities undertaken for public benefit by the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) during the year ending 31 July 2014

## Chair's Introduction

It has been a satisfactory but not spectacular year for VSSN. Membership has continued to remain stable and, while we need to redouble our efforts to recruit new members, we can take some pride from the fact that we have maintained our numbers despite the very real financial pressures not only on voluntary sector organisations but also higher education institutions. *Voluntary Sector Review*, has continued to publish articles of a high quality on a variety of areas of interest and concern. Once again we have organised two first-rate day conferences and collaborated with NCVO (and, for the first time this year, the Institute for Volunteering Research) to mount the annual research conference. I should like to thank the members of the Steering Group for their hard work and Appleby Ltd for their invaluable administrative support. Key highlights of the year are summarised below under the headings of activities, management and organisation, and financial review.

## 1. The activities of VSSN

### VSSN's journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*

VSSN's interdisciplinary journal, *Voluntary Sector Review* (VSR), published by The Policy Press, is now in its fifth year, with three issues per annum. A print copy is a VSSN membership benefit. VSR is the official journal of the European Research Network on Philanthropy (ERNOP), and it is available at a substantial discount to members of the International Society for Third-Sector Research (ISTR).

The journal is designed to appeal to a wide readership, and each issue, of around 150 pages, includes research articles, practice papers and policy reviews as well as book reviews.

The journal attracts wide attention: in the year to 31 July 2014, the VSR's online abstracts were viewed nearly 40,000 times and full-text articles were downloaded nearly 4,000 times. The most popular article was cited over 100 times. The number of online and print subscriptions continues to grow, albeit slowly, and all VSSN members are strongly encouraged to persuade their institutions to take out (and continue) subscriptions to ensure the financial sustainability of the journal. Free online trial subscriptions for individuals and institutions are available from [http://www.policypress.co.uk/journals\\_vsr\\_trial.asp?](http://www.policypress.co.uk/journals_vsr_trial.asp?)

The journal now has a twitter account: @vsrjournal. This is used to keep followers informed about forthcoming content and the monthly free access articles.

Membership of the Editorial Team rotates; this year, we record our thanks to Colin Rochester, whose term as practice paper section editor came to an end; he was replaced by Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne. The current editor, Peter Halfpenny, and the two assistant editors, Pete Alcock and Cathy Pharoah, are standing down at the end of 2014 to be replaced by three new editors: Nick Acheson, University of Ulster, Bernard Harris, University

of Strathclyde, and Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham. Cathy Pharoah will continue as editor of the policy review section.

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

### **VSR Editorial Management Board**

The VSR EMB meets once annually in the autumn. As the journal is well established and the editorial processes are running smoothly, much of the work of the EMB is done through via email.

The main business of the autumn meeting is to discuss reports from the editorial team and the publisher, and consider the marketing plans for the future. The EMB is also responsible for arranging the replacement of editorial roles in rotation.

### **Website**

The VSSN website has an important role to play in communicating information about VSSN's activities and in facilitating their administration. Appleby Ltd has continued regularly to update the site with the latest content while online payments are working well and making the process of booking events and paying for membership easier for members and VSSN staff.

The Steering Group also believes that the website can also make an important contribution to achieving our aim of providing VSSN members with opportunities to network, share information and exchange experiences, and David Kane and Appleby Ltd have been working on a complete overhaul and upgrade of the site. The new site will be launched during August 2014. At its heart will be a revamped members' directory designed to promote networking and there will be easy access to conference papers as well as news of events and activities and a VSSN blog.

### **Day Conferences**

Two successful day conferences were held during the year, the second in collaboration with other organisations. The conferences continue to provide an important showcase for new research findings and reflections and to provide opportunities for networking amongst participants.

The Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO) hosted the November 2013 Day Conference at the organisation's St Thomas Conference Centre. There were four papers which in different ways reflected on the dilemmas and opportunities facing voluntary sector organisations in the current climate. These included a theoretical account of the way the sector was being analysed in a period of austerity and more empirically-focused papers on working as part of alliances around economic regeneration, boundary spanning, and being commissioned to provide services. Further details can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conference-november-2013/> including links to the abstracts of the papers and the presentations.

In June 2014 our day event was held at Sheffield University Management School (which supported the event) and co-organised with the Leisure Studies Association and the Voluntary Action History Society. The theme was 'Volunteering as Leisure: Leisure as Volunteering'. As suggested by this theme, many of the papers looked at the overlaps between hobbies and other leisure activities and volunteering. There was a keynote paper by Bob Snape with a broad historical account of the links between leisure and volunteering. This was followed by four papers looking at the National Trust, student volunteering, and volunteering associated with sports clubs. Geoff Nichols closed the day by raising research questions which bridged the fields of volunteering and leisure. Further details including abstracts and presentations can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conference-june-2014-volunteering-as-leisure-leisure-as-volunteering/>.

Additionally, this year, VSSN co-organised a New Researchers' event in Manchester in April to support those who were new to presenting their research to academic audiences.

### **VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, 2013**

The Annual Research Conference, which is jointly organised by VSSN with NCVO – joined for the first time by the Institute for Volunteering Research – took place on 10 and 11 September 2013 at Sheffield Hallam University. It brought together academics, practitioners and policymakers with a shared interest in voluntary sector research and provided an opportunity for them to discuss new research and network.

The opening address was given by Emeritus Professor Marilyn Taylor, University of the West of England and Chair of Institute for Volunteering Research Advisory Group. In 'Shifting Sands – voluntary action in challenging times' she reflected on the changes there had been in views of poverty, the poor, and the public sphere since the 1960s. She also set some challenges for the participants at the conference and those researching in the sector more widely including learning from past research.

The conference had a wide range of research papers and panels on themes including: understanding volunteering; quantifying the voluntary sector; life at the top – government, the voluntary sector, governance and leadership; new and changing research methodologies; thinking about the structure of the voluntary sector; involving people – improving outcomes; networking and collaboration; strategic and local – learning from the Department of Health's health and social care volunteering fund; grassroots voluntary action; additionality or substitution – volunteering and public service delivery; new approaches to giving money; volunteering and employability; participation – past, present and future; infrastructure organisations in a changing world; voluntary action and public service delivery; regulation and accountability; and the state and the voluntary sector in times of austerity.

The conference again provided an opportunity for those who were relatively new to the research or the field to present their work in a supportive environment. These New Researchers Sessions are an established part of the event: this year was the tenth time it has been included and is described below.



## **New Researchers**

The free New Researchers Sessions once again took place alongside the VSSN/NCVO Research Conference in September 2013. They provide a route for emerging scholars or new researchers in the field to share their work and mingle with delegates from the main event. VSSN and NCVO also provide a New Researchers Prize for the best paper, which consists of £100 plus a year's free membership of VSSN. The event was organised with the support of Matthew Hill from the Institute for Volunteering Research, who worked alongside two VSSN committee members in developing the work.

This important aspect of our work was given added impetus by the generous financial support we received from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) which enabled us to meet the costs of providing this rare opportunity for the future scholars in our field to get involved in our community.

## **Membership**

At 31 July 2014 VSSN had 137 individual and 5 organisation members covering 23 individuals (compared to 137 individual and 7 organisation members covering 28 individuals in 2013), giving a total of 160 members (compared with 165 members in 2013). There is a small, number of non-UK members. These are primarily from outside Europe. Members continue to be positive about membership in terms both of specific benefits such as the *Voluntary Sector Review* and in the wider sense of being part of a community of people with similar interests.

The VSSN Steering Group is concerned to find ways to grow membership which has shown a slight decline over the last two years. There continues to be a high turnover of members with around a quarter leaving over the past year. While this year has seen a growth in new individual members of 35 in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014 (compared with 29 in the comparable year to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013) this has not been matched by organisational members where there has been new ones joining. This may reflect increasingly difficult financial times for voluntary sector organisations as well as mergers within the sector. So the challenge is both to attract new members and to retain existing ones. Membership fees were not increased in this period but a decision was taken that they would need to be raised effective from September 2014.

## **Email Discussion List**

As of 31 July 2014 the VSSN discussion list had 486 subscribers. For the second year running, this represents a slight dip in the number of subscribers – from 505 on 15 August 2013. The list, however, continues to attract both members and non-members and to provide a lively forum for debate and information sharing. Recent discussion topics have included theoretical frameworks for understanding the transfer of public leisure facilities to volunteers and measures of independence within voluntary organisations. The list also serves as a useful resource for colleagues seeking out existing research evidence and references; contacting potential research participants, promoting events, publications, jobs

and studentships; and building networks of colleagues researching or teaching similar topics. We are grateful to all our contributors for their ongoing input and commitment.

## **2. The Organisation and Management of VSSN**

### **Building Partnerships**

The successful partnership with NCVO continues, particularly through VSSN's collaboration around the Annual Research Conference. Formal links are maintained with a range of other organisations, through our website, and this is an area to which more attention will be given in the future. A new development during the year was the collaboration with the Leisure Studies Association and the Voluntary Action History Society to organise the Day Conference held in May 2014.

### **Steering Group meetings**

The Steering Group met twice during the year - immediately after the AGM and day conference in November 2013 and for a more extended session in May 2014. In addition, the Steering Group uses its email discussion list to progress business between meetings. During the year the Steering Group:

- Adopted a new mission statement that has been posted on the website;
- Contributed to the NCVO's consultation on its future priorities;
- Adopted the recommendations of a working party led by Gareth Morgan for a VSSN response to the consultation on a new Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP);
- Agreed that reasonable travel expenses should be paid to members of the Steering Group who did not have institutional support to enable them to take part in Steering Group Meetings; and
- Reluctantly decided that it was necessary to increase the costs of membership subscriptions with effect from August 2014.

### **Public Benefit**

One of the Steering Group's main responsibilities is to ensure that VSSN pursues its stated aim as a charity of advancing education and research concerning the voluntary sector in ways that provide a benefit to the wider public. All VSSN events are widely publicised and open to all, with only modest fees to attend. Similarly our online discussion list is open to anyone to join. Furthermore, 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.

### **Executive Office**

In May Appleby Ltd completed its three-year contract with VSSN for the provision of the Executive Office. A new contract is now in place for the next three years. Appleby Ltd has continued to carry out a wide range of activities including those related to membership,

finances, website updates and day conferences. It also supports the VSSN Steering Group in taking forward new developments.

### **3. VSSN's 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 done so in accordance with the recommendations issued by the Charity Commission for presentation of accounts on this basis.

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 income from subscriptions for VSSN's membership package, which includes its journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*, and a preferential rate of registration for day seminars, declined slightly from £8,150.00 to £7,590.00. The proportion of subscriptions paid on an organisational basis decreased from 18% to 9%, which is a matter of some concern.

During the year income from day seminars decreased by around a third from £2,050.00 to £1,430.00, although this figure does not include VSSN's share of the surplus from the day seminar carried out jointly with the Leisure Studies Association and the Voluntary Action History Society, which was received after the close of the accounting period. The surplus generated by day seminars decreased by around a half (from £807.17 to £442.17), mainly due to lower than anticipated levels of attendance and increased costs of accommodation and catering. The proportion of fees paid by non-members increased slightly from 32% to 34%.

During the year VSSN received a grant of £2,400.00 from NCVO for work in support of the annual VSSN/NCVO/IVR research conference. VSSN continued to support the work of the New Researchers' Group and spent £2,323.79 from restricted funds (grant from the Economic History Society) for this purpose (with a total of £1,946.21 remaining).

#### **Obligations at year end**

There were a number of obligations at year end. These consisted of:

- Current liabilities of £3,425.05. These included sums owed for financial year 2013-14 but not paid out before the end of that year: the quarterly fees and expenses payable to the Executive Officer for March to August 2013 (£2,925.05); and the annual fee payable to the Editorial Assistant for the *Voluntary Sector Review* (£500.00).
- Other binding long-term commitments of £7,442.50. These included the fees of the Executive Officer for at least one quarter plus an additional quarter's notice period;

(£2,575.00); likely expenses of the Executive Officer (£200.00); the fee payable to the Editorial Assistant for the *Voluntary Sector Review* (£500.00); payments to the Policy Press for the *Voluntary Sector Review* (estimated) (£3,690.00); a contingency for maintaining and upgrading VSSN's website (£300.00); and the final payment for room hire for the November day seminar (£177.50).

- Deferred income of £60.00. This included subscriptions for financial year 2014-15 paid in advance.

### **Reserves policy**

VSSN has a formal reserves policy. This takes account of obligations arising from VSSN's commitment to the Policy Press for supporting the *Voluntary Sector Review* and its contract with Appleby Ltd for the services of the Executive Officer.

As at 31 July 2014 VSSN's total balance at bank was £24,619.28 of which £22,273.07 was unrestricted and £2,346.21 was restricted (grant from the Economic History Society to support new researchers' participation in the annual conference and generally; and grant from NCVO for prizes for New Researchers at the annual conference). Allowing for current liabilities at year's end of £3,485.05, the effective balance was £21,134.23.

Allowing for other binding commitments as per VSSN's reserves policy (£7,442.50), the effective available balance at year's end was £13,691.73.

These figures mean that VSSN's current financial position is comfortable.

However, VSSN's financial position is determined by its capacity to attract members and to encourage attendance at its day seminars. There is, therefore, a need to continue vigorously to promote memberships (especially from among the large number of those on its web-based mailing list) and to encourage attendance at day seminars and, where possible, to seek additional funding and lower costs for those seminars.

We would like to record our thanks to Sonia Liff and Marilyn Dunkelman at Appleby Ltd for continuing to develop VSSN's financial recording and payments systems and for the high quality of financial reporting they produce. This has been invaluable in helping VSSN increase the effectiveness of its financial planning and provide better services to members.

### **Approval**

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for keeping proper accounting records for the charity, safeguarding the charity's funds from loss and 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 27 November 2014 and signed on their behalf by:



Colin Rochester (Chair)



Meta Zimmeck (Treasurer)

## VSSN ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014

### RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	2013-14	2012-13
	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>		
Grants and donations	2,400.00	6,270.00
Seminar fees - members	950.00	1,390.00
Seminar fees - non-members	480.00	660.00
Member subscriptions	6,870.00	6,710.00
Organisational member subscriptions	720.00	1,440.00
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>11,420.00</b>	16,470.00
<b>Payments</b>		
Expenses of VSSN events	987.50	1,242.83
Publications expenses [Note 4]	2,600.00	2,600.00
Publications supplement [Note 4]	970.00	850.00
Website development and hosting	264.00	264.00
Committee expenses [Note 1]	96.07	92.78
Executive officer – fees [Note 2]	3,750.00	4,500.00
Executive officer – expenses [Note 1]	295.77	218.85
Database and software	0.00	0.00
Equipment (table banner, stand, etc.)	0.00	48.02
Publicity	0.00	55.05
New Researchers events costs	2,323.79	0.00
WorldPay (fee processing)	260.62	251.96
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>11,547.75</b>	10,123.49
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>-127.75</b>	6,346.51
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,747.03	18,400.52
<b>Balance carried forward to next year</b>	<b>24,619.28</b>	24,747.03

## STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	2013-14	2012-13
<b>Monetary assets</b>		
Unity Trust Bank current account	24,619.28	24,747.03
Total monetary assets	24,619.28	24,747.03
<b>Represented by monetary funds</b>		
Unrestricted funds	22,273.07	20,477.03
Restricted funds	2,346.21	4,270.00
Total monetary funds	24,619.28	24,747.03
<b>Non-monetary assets and liabilities</b>	<b>0.00</b>	0.00
NON-MONETARY ASSETS [Note 3]		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
<i>Miscellaneous creditors at year end</i>		
Expenses payable at year end	0.00	-96.07
Executive officer services payable at year end	-2,925.05	-1,250.00
VSR editorial assistant services payable at year end	-500.00	
Amounts payable to Policy Press for VSR [Note 4]	0.00	-3,680.00
<i>Total miscellaneous creditors</i>	<b>-3,425.05</b>	-5,026.07
<i>Deferred income: Subscriptions received in advance</i>	<b>-60.00</b>	-490.00
<i>Total current liabilities</i>	<b>-3,485.05</b>	-5,516.07
OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END		
Executive office contract commitments [Note 2]	-2,575.00	-2,500.00
Executive officer expenses	-200.00	-200.00
VSR editorial assistant services	-500.00	
Minimum obligation for VSR [Note 4]	-2,600.00	-2,600.00
Estimated supplementary obligation for VSR [Note 4]	-1,090.00	-1,060.00
Web expenditure	-300.00	-300.00
Venue for day seminar	-177.50	
<i>Total other commitments</i>	<b>-7,442.50</b>	-6,660.00
<b>Total current liabilities and provisions</b>	<b>-10,927.55</b>	-12,176.07
<b>NET ASSETS AND NON-MONETARY</b>	<b>13,691.73</b>	12,570.96

## Notes to the Accounts

1. Members of the Steering Group or their institutions normally meet their own travel expenses when attending meetings of the Steering Group held on the same day as VSSN's day seminars and the annual conference. VSSN pays the travel expenses of the Executive Officer to day seminars and the annual conference.
2. VSSN has contracted with Appleby Ltd to provide the role of Executive Officer. The first contract was for a fee of £4,500.00 per annum for three years between June 2010 to July 2013 (subject to three months' notice by either party). The second contract was for a fee of £5,000.00 from June 2013 to July 2014, £5,150.00 from June 2014 to July 2015 and £5,304 from June 2015 to July 2016 (subject to three months' notice by either party).
3. VSSN has some fixed assets in the form of banner stands and a table stand, but as these personalised to VSSN they do not have any disposal value to show on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.
4. VSSN's contract with the Policy Press for the publication of the *Voluntary Sector Review* specifies two payments, the first a basic payment of £2,600.00 per year ("minimum obligation") and the second a payment based on the number and income category of VSSN's members ("supplementary obligation"). The former is fixed and the second is variable. Payments are made in arrears. In 2013-14 due to an error of calculation the supplementary payment was less (by £120) than it should have been. The payment for 2014-15 will be adjusted accordingly.