

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Registered charity number 1114742

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015



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 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 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 (to December 2014) Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham (from December 2014)
Secretary:	Robert Dalziel, Healthwatch Dudley
Treasurer:	Meta Zimmeck, Practical Wisdom R2Z
Vice Chair:	Angela Ellis Paine, University of Birmingham (from December 2014)

Membership and Marketing Officer	Robert Dalziel, Healthwatch, Dudley
Annual Conference Officers	Colin Rochester, Birkbeck, University of London (to December 2014) Mike Woolvin, Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and now University of Dundee Linda Milbourne, Birkbeck, University of London (from December 2014)
Day Conference Liaison Officer:	Meta Zimmeck, Practical Wisdom R2Z Angela Ellis Paine, University of Birmingham (from December 2014)
External Affairs & Journal Liaison Officer:	Peter Maple, London South Bank University
New Researchers Co-ordinators:	Anjelica Finnegan, National Council for Voluntary Organisations and now of Charity Finance Group
Ex-officio:	Emeritus Prof Peter Halfpenny, University of Manchester (to December 2014) Nick Acheson, University of Ulster (from December 2014)
Web Officer:	David Kane, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
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 <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.
	Colin Rochester, Birkbeck, University of London stood down as a trustee in December 2014. David Kane, National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham were re-elected and Angela Ellis Paine, University of Birmingham was elected in December 2014.

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 to December 2014), University of Birmingham
Nick Acheson, University of Ulster
Margaret Harris, Aston University
Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham (to December 2014)
James Rees, University of Birmingham
Chris Cornforth, Open University (Chair from December 2014)
Angela Benson, University of Brighton (from December 2014)
Julia Mortimer, The Policy Press - publisher's representative
Peter Maple, London South Bank University (ex-officio, from December 2014)

Editorial Team:

Peter Halfpenny, Editor (to December 2014)
Pete Alcock, Assistant editor (to December 2014)
Cathy Pharoah, Policy reviews editor
Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne, Practice papers editors
Nick Acheson, Co-editor (from January 2015)
Bernard Harris, Co-editor (from January 2015)
Rob Macmillan, Book review editor (to December 2014, Co-editor from January 2015)
James Rees, Book review editor (from January 2015)

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 2015

Chair's Introduction

It has been a steady year for VSSN. Membership has continued to remain relatively stable and, while we need to redouble our efforts to recruit new members, we can be pleased that we have been able to maintain our numbers despite continuing financial pressures not only on voluntary sector organisations but also on higher education institutions. Our journal *Voluntary Sector Review* has continued to publish articles of a very high quality on a variety of areas of interest and concern. Once again we have organised two excellent day conferences and collaborated with NCVO and the Institute for Volunteering Research to hold the annual research conference. I would like to thank the members of the Steering Group for their hard work during the year and Appleby Ltd for their solid and 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 sixth year, with three issues per annum. A print copy is a VSSN membership benefit. As part of our international collaborative efforts VSR is also 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 125 pages, includes research articles, practice papers and policy reviews as well as book reviews.

The journal attracts wide attention. The VSR's online abstracts were viewed 48,000 times in the full year 2014 and nearly 40,000 times in the first 9 months of 2015. Eight thousand full-text articles have been downloaded since January 2014. The number of online and print subscriptions continues to grow, albeit slowly. 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 institutions are available from http://www.policypress.co.uk/journals_vsr_trial.asp?

The journal has a twitter account: @vsrjournal. This is used to keep followers informed about forthcoming content and the monthly free access articles. It has 234 followers.

Membership of the Editorial Team rotates; this year, we record our thanks to Peter Halfpenny, Editor, and the two assistant editors, Pete Alcock and Cathy Pharoah, who stood down at the end of 2014 to be replaced by three new co-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. We are particularly grateful for the contribution made by Peter Halfpenny to the establishment of the Journal and to his excellent editorial skills and guidance during the journal's first five years.

VSSN is grateful to The Policy Press for the expertise, enthusiasm and continued support it has brought to the journal, 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 email. The main business of the autumn meeting is to discuss reports from the editorial team and the publisher and to 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 to update the site regularly 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. This year David Kane and Appleby Ltd completed an overhaul and upgrade of the site, launched towards the end of 2014. At its heart is a revamped members' directory designed to promote networking, with 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 conferences continue to provide an important showcase for new research findings and reflections and to provide opportunities for networking amongst participants.

The November 2014 Day Conference was held at the Directory of Social Change in London and chaired by Meta Zimmeck of Practical Wisdom R2Z (and a member of the VSSN Steering Group). There were five papers which in different ways reflected on the topic 'Money, money, money! Getting and spending in the voluntary sector'. These included papers on new ways of giving; the role of philanthropy and on grant giving bodies as increasingly important funding sources for the voluntary sector; the impact of reduced funding on infrastructure bodies and voluntary organisations providing services on an outsourced basis. Further details can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conference-november-2014/> including links to the abstracts of the papers and the presentations.

In May 2015 our day seminar was held in Manchester and chaired by John Diamond of Edge Hill University. The theme was 'Time, time, time? Volunteering in a challenging environment'. The day started with a debate between contrasting optimistic and pessimistic views on the likely future for volunteering. There followed four papers drawing on empirical studies of the informal recruitment routes for young volunteers in deprived areas; the breadth and multiplicity of roles of church volunteers; the tensions created by disasters such as flooding which both generate offers of volunteer help and create difficulty in utilising these offers; and the problems of involving and retaining volunteers in community sports projects. Further details including abstracts and presentations can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/day-conference-edge-hill-university-time-time-time-volunteering-in-a-challenging-environment/>.

VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, 2014

The Annual Research Conference, which is jointly organised by VSSN with NCVO – joined for the second time by the Institute for Volunteering Research – took place on 10 and 11 September 2014 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 Julia Unwin of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. Her talk focussed on the role of different kinds of evidence and social action in achieving social change. She discussed the changing nature of evidence, and the disruption to some traditional forms of evidence but also stressed that presenting evidence to policy makers was insufficient to achieve change. She discussed the importance of additionally turning areas of concern into something which can be acted on through social action, narratives and alliance building.

The conference had a wide range of research papers and panels on themes including: various dimensions of volunteering such as the lived experience of volunteering, evidence from longitudinal studies, motivation participation and impact, new opportunities to volunteer, local and grassroots activity, volunteering in care homes, and volunteering infrastructure; the characteristics of the voluntary sector such as pay and employment, operating like a business, the marketization of the sector and relationships with government; and sessions on philanthropy and on networking.

The Campbell Adamson Memorial Prize of £500 was awarded by NCVO for the best paper to the conference. The winning paper was 'Asset transfer in libraries' written by Deborah Forbes (Newcastle University) who received the prize and by Geoff Nichols (Sheffield University Management School), Lindsay Findlay-King (Northumbria University) and Gordon Macfadyen (Northumbria University).

New Researchers

The New Researchers Sessions (NRS) ran as a single stream in the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research conference. This important part of the conference provides a route

for emerging scholars and researchers in the field to share their work, develop a support network of their peers, and network with delegates across the conference.

This critical aspect of our work was given added impetus by the generous financial support we received from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in 2013 which enabled us to provide a specific channel for encouraging emerging scholars and researchers to join our community.

VSSN and NCVO also provide a New Researchers Prize of £100 for the best paper in this part of the conference. This was awarded to Palmela Witter for her paper 'Marginalising diverse voices? Working with minority interests against the tide of mainstreaming'

The event was organised with the support of Joni Browne (IVR) who worked alongside one VSSN steering group member, Anjelica Finnegan.

Membership

At 31 July 2015 VSSN had 132 individual and 5 organisation members covering 23 individuals (compared to 137 individual and 5 organisation members covering 23 individuals in 2014), giving a total of 155 members (compared with 160 members in 2014). 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. The proportion of members not renewing declined in this year compared with recent years. Membership fees were increased in September 2014 for the first time for some years and so this improved retention rate is reassuring. However the growth in new members has declined in comparison with previous years. The number of organisational members has remained the same.

There are many factors which might underlie these trends including 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.

Email Discussion List

As of 31 July 2015 the VSSN discussion list had 459 subscribers. For the second year running, this represents a slight dip in the number of subscribers – from 486 in 2014 and 505 in 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 a debate about volunteering and workfare schemes and another about campaigning and party politics. The list also serves as a useful resource for colleagues seeking 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 and IVR 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.

Steering Group meetings

The Steering Group met three times during the year – immediately after the AGM and day conference in November 2014, for a more extended session in February 2015 and immediately the day conference in May 2015. In addition, the Steering Group uses its email discussion list to progress business between meetings. During the year the Steering Group focused its efforts on: delivering our day seminars and annual conference; liaising with the VSR editorial board; agreeing to re-double our efforts on building VSSN's membership base.

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

We are two years into a three-year contract with Appleby Ltd for the provision of the Executive Office. 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 prepared 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 financial year, following increases in the rates for VSSN's membership package, which includes its journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*, and a preferential rate of registration for day seminars, subscriptions increased by around a sixth to £8,950.00 (from £7,590.00). The proportion of subscriptions paid on an organisational basis increased from 9% to 12%.

During the financial year fees from day seminars increased from £1,430.00 to £2,201.45 (which figure includes VSSN's share of the surplus from the seminar carried out jointly with the Leisure Studies Association and the Voluntary Action History Society in June 2013). The costs of seminars increased from £987.50 to £1,900.11 (which figure includes the deposit of £725.00 paid for the seminar in November 2015). Overall, then, the surplus generated by seminars decreased from £442.17 to £301.14. However, if the income and costs for the two seminars which took place within the financial year are compared (excluding the surplus from the seminar in 2013-14 and the deposit paid for the seminar in 2015-16), then the surplus generated was £914.89. This was in large part due to Edge Hill University's generous provision of free accommodation for the seminar in May 2015. From a financial point of view there are a number of challenges in continuing the series of seminars, especially in London, where costs are high (and increasing). These include difficulties in securing free or cheap accommodation at universities or indeed anywhere else and the marketization of catering; the decision to price seminars according to anticipated actual costs rather than on a standard basis; and the challenges of balancing increasing registration fees with stable or even decreasing numbers of attendees.

During the year VSSN received a grant of £2,000.00 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 £1,504.00 from restricted funds (with £542.21 from the grant from the Economic History Society and £300.00 from the grant from NCVO remaining for this purpose).

At the end of the financial year the balance at bank was £18,434.32, compared to £24,619.28 in the previous year. A substantial part of the difference between these two figures was due to timing of payments – for two years of the *Voluntary Sector Review* two years of fees for the editorial assistant of the *Voluntary Sector Review*, and five quarters of fees for the executive officer. There have been administrative difficulties in billing arrangements for the *Voluntary Sector Review*, but these have now been resolved.

Obligations at year end

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

- Current liabilities of £1,493.85, in respect of the quarterly fee and expenses payable to the Executive Officer for June to August 2015.
- Other binding long-term commitments of £7,677.00. These included the fees of the Executive Officer for at least one quarter plus an additional quarter's notice period; (£2,652.00); 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) (£3,500.00); a contingency for maintaining and upgrading VSSN's website (£100.00); and the final payment for room hire for the November day seminar (£725.00).

- Deferred income of £565.00. This included subscriptions for financial year 2015-16 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 2015 VSSN's total balance at bank was £18,434.32 of which £17,592.11 was unrestricted and £842.21 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 £2,058.85, the effective balance was £16,375.47.

Allowing for other binding commitments as per VSSN's reserves policy (£7,677.00), the effective available balance at year's end was £8,698.47 (£1,413.26 less than in the previous year).

These figures mean that VSSN's current financial position is reasonably 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 her colleagues at Appleby Ltd for continuing to develop and manage 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 26 November 2015 and signed on their behalf by:



Rob Macmillan (Chair)



Meta Zimmeck (Treasurer)

VSSN ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	2014-15	2013-14
	£	£
Receipts		
Grants and donations	2,000.00	2,400.00
Share of surplus June 2014 day seminar	111.25	0.00
Seminar fees - members	1,250.00	950.00
Seminar fees - non-members	840.00	480.00
Member subscriptions	7,900.00	6,870.00
Organisational member subscriptions	1,050.00	720.00
Total receipts	13,151.25	11,420.00
Payments		
Expenses of VSSN events	1,900.11	987.50
Publications expenses [Note 4]	5,200.00	2,600.00
Publications supplement [Note 4]	1,970.00	970.00
Editorial assistant – fee [Note 5]	1,100.00	0.00
Website development and hosting	71.86	264.00
Committee expenses [Note 1]	408.69	96.07
Executive officer – fees [Note 2]	6,400.00	3,750.00
Executive officer – expenses [Note 1]	478.10	295.77
Database and software	0.00	0.00
Equipment (table banner, stand, etc.)	0.00	0.00
Publicity	0.00	0.00
New Researchers events costs	1,504.00	2,323.79
WorldPay (fee processing)	303.45	260.63
Total payments	19,336.21	11,547.76
SURPLUS	-6,184.96	-127.75
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,619.28	24,747.03
Balance carried forward to next year	18,434.32	24,619.28

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	2014-15 £	2013-14 £
Monetary assets		
Unity Trust Bank current account	18,434.32	24,619.28
Total monetary assets	18,434.32	24,619.28
Represented by monetary funds		
Unrestricted funds	17,592.11	22,273.07
Restricted funds	842.21	2,346.21
Total monetary funds	18,434.32	24,619.28
Non-monetary assets and liabilities	0.00	0.00
NON-MONETARY ASSETS [Note 3]		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
<i>Miscellaneous creditors at year end</i>		
Expenses payable at year end	0.00	0.00
Executive officer services payable at year end	-1,493.85	-2,925.05
VSR editorial assistant services payable at year end	0.00	-500.00
Amounts payable to Policy Press for VSR [Note 4]	0.00	-3,670.00
<i>Total miscellaneous creditors</i>	-1,493.85	-7,095.05
<i>Deferred income: Subscriptions received in advance</i>	-565.00	-60.00
OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END		
Executive office contract commitments [Note 2]	-2,652.00	-2,575.00
Executive officer expenses	-200.00	-200.00
VSR editorial assistant services	-500.00	-500.00
Minimum obligation for VSR [Note 4]	-2,600.00	-2,600.00
Estimated supplementary obligation for VSR [Note 4]	-900.00	-1,060.00
Web expenditure	-100.00	-300.00
Venue for day seminar	-725.00	-177.50
<i>Total other commitments</i>	-7,677.00	-7,352.50
Total current liabilities and provisions	-9,735.85	-14,507.55
NET ASSETS AND NON-MONETARY	8,698.47	10,111.73

Notes to the Accounts

1. In most cases members of the Steering Group or their institutions meet travel expenses when attending meetings of the Steering Group held on the same day as VSSN's day seminars and the annual conference. However, in some cases VSSN reimburses members without support for such travel. It also 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 are 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 £110) than it should have been. The payment for 2014-15 was adjusted accordingly.
5. VSSN has agreed with the Policy Press to share the fee (£1,000 per year) of the editorial assistant of the *Voluntary Sector Review*. The fee for 2013-14 was paid by the Policy Press, which invoiced VSSN for its half of the fee plus VAT. The fee for 2014-15 was paid by VSSN, which invoiced the Policy Press for its half of the fee. VSSN will continue this arrangement in 2015-16 and subsequent years.