

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

***Registered charity number 1114742***

**Annual Report and Accounts**

**1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017**



**Address for official correspondence:**  
Executive Officer, Voluntary Sector Studies Network  
VSSN Office, 289 Abbeydale Road, Sheffield S7 1FJ

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

## ANNUAL REPORT

### Legal and Constitutional Details

Name of organisation:	Voluntary Sector Studies Network
Legal form:	Unincorporated charitable association governed by Constitution adopted 21 May 2003 (last amended December 2009)
Charitable status:	Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
Correspondent:	Beth Longstaff Executive Officer VSSN Office 289 Abbeydale Road Sheffield S7 1FJ
Telephone:	07434 680461
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 between August 2016 and July 2017. Affiliations are given for information only; all Steering Group members serve as individuals.

Co-Chairs	Angela Ellis Paine, University of Birmingham Rob Macmillan, University of Birmingham (Sheffield Hallam University from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2017)
Secretary	Angela Ellis Paine, University of Birmingham
Treasurer	Meta Zimmeck, Practical Wisdom R2Z (to November 2016) Carolyn Cordery, Aston University (from November 2016)
Membership and Marketing Officer	Loizos Carserides, Practical Wisdom R2Z (from November 2016)
Annual Conference Officers	Mike Woolvin, Cairngorms National Park Authority Chris Dayson, Sheffield Hallam University
Day Conference Liaison Officer	Linda Milbourne, Birkbeck, University of London
External Affairs & Journal Liaison Officer	Peter Maple, London South Bank University (to November 2016)
New Researchers Co-ordinators	Anjelica Finnegan, Charity Finance Group Jane Cullingworth, University of Glasgow
Ex-officio	Nick Acheson, University of Ulster
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 a maximum of 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 (EMB) 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.

**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>

**EMB members:**

Nick Acheson, University of Ulster (to November 2016)  
 Angela Benson, University of Brighton  
 Tracey Coule, Sheffield Hallam University  
 Chris Cornforth, Open University (Chair, to November 2016)  
 Eddy Hogg, University of Kent (from November 2016)  
 Daiga Kamerade, University of Salford (Chair from November 2016)  
 Feilim O hAdhmaill, University College Cork (from November 2016)  
 Peter Maple, London South Bank University (ex-officio, to November 2016)  
 Julia Mortimer, The Policy Press (publisher's representative)  
 James Rees, Open University

**Editorial Team:**

Nick Acheson, Co-editor  
 Bernard Harris, Co-editor  
 Rob Macmillan, Co-editor  
 Cathy Pharoah, Policy Reviews Editor  
 Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne, Practice Papers Editors  
 James Rees, Book Review Editor

## **Steering Group Report: activities undertaken for public benefit by the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) during the year ending 31 July 2017**

### **Chair's Introduction**

It has been a steady year for VSSN. Membership has continued to remain relatively stable and, while our need to redouble efforts to attract new members continues, 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 to the voluntary sector and volunteering research community. Once again we have organised two excellent day conferences in Birmingham in November 2016 and Glasgow in May 2017, and collaborated with NCVO and the Institute for Volunteering Research to hold the Annual Research Conference in Nottingham in September 2016.

I would like to thank the members of the Steering Group for their hard work during the year and particularly Beth Longstaff and Jane Leathley for solid and invaluable administrative support. Key highlights of the year are summarised below under the headings of activities, organisation and management, and financial review.

## 1. The activities of VSSN

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

In 2016-17 VSSN's international interdisciplinary journal, *Voluntary Sector Review* (VSR), published by The Policy Press, moved into its eighth year, with three issues per annum. A print copy of each issue 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 over 100 pages, includes research articles, practice papers and policy reviews as well as book reviews.

The journal continues to attract wide attention. Over 4,500 full-text articles were downloaded in the year to May 2017 (the date for which latest data is available), up from 3,300 in the preceding 12 months. The number of online and print subscriptions remains steady.

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

<https://policypress.co.uk/journals/subscribe#free-trials>

The journal has a twitter account: @vsrjournal, with a growing constituency of over 530 followers. This is used to keep people informed about forthcoming content and the monthly free access articles.

Membership of the Editorial Team rotates. A team of three co-editors - Nick Acheson (University of Ulster), Bernard Harris (University of Strathclyde) and Rob Macmillan (Sheffield Hallam University) - is responsible for maintaining the journal's direction, content and quality. They are joined in a wider editorial team by Cathy Pharoah (policy reviews editor), Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne (practice section editors) and James Rees (book reviews editor).

VSSN is hugely grateful to The Policy Press for the expertise, enthusiasm and continued practical support it has brought to the journal, and the resources it is devoting to making it a success. An editorial assistant supports the day to day activities of the journal. This post is jointly funded by The Policy Press and VSSN, and we are indebted to Ellie Rivers in this role for her tireless work in supporting the journal.

### **VSR Editorial Management Board**

The VSR Editorial Management Board (EMB) meets together once annually, but much of its work is done through email. Chaired by Chris Cornforth (Open University, to November 2016) and Daiga Kamerade (University of Salford, from November 2016), the main business of the EMB's annual meeting is to discuss reports from the editorial team and the publisher and to consider marketing plans for the future. The EMB is also responsible for arranging the replacement of editorial roles in rotation, and maintaining the link between VSSN and

the journal. During 2016-17 the EMB successfully recruited four new editors to join the existing team and replace departing members: Carl Milofsky (Bucknell University) will be joining as co-editor from January 2018 (replacing Bernard Harris) and James Rees (Open University) will become co-editor from January 2019 (replacing Nick Acheson). Chris Dayson (Sheffield Hallam University) and Anna Visser (University College, Dublin) become joint practice editors in September 2017, replacing Mike Aiken and Linda Milbourne.

### **Website**

The VSSN website continues to play an important role in communicating with members and facilitating the booking of events and membership payments. Regular updates are posted by the executive officers, and various small tweaks have been made to website functionality. The steering group continues to look for ways to improve the site, and welcomes suggestions and comments from members.

### **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.

#### **Youth Social Action: What do we know about young people's participation?**

This day conference was hosted in November 2016 by the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) in association with the #iwill campaign as part of #iwill week, and was held at the University of Birmingham. The day attracted diverse papers and led to extended discussion. Papers included research on the National Citizen Service (NCS) highlighting the costs of participating, which create barriers for disadvantaged young people; young people's recent volunteering experiences; two papers related to experiences of housing association charities, including follow up after ten years; and effects of board participation on increased political and community engagement. The final paper focused on the emotional labour costs for young women involved in online activism, coupled with social expectations surrounding young women's roles. In summarising the day, a vInspired representative indicated how the day's research could contribute to #iwill's evidence base. Further details including papers and presentations can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/nov-16-youth-social-action/>.

#### **Border Crossings: Implications for Civil Society in a 'Dis'-United Kingdom**

In May 2017 this day conference was hosted by Jane Cullingworth and Laura Lebec from the University of Glasgow. From an introduction exploring Govan's industrial history to diverse papers focused on civic and civil participation and community empowerment across neighbourhoods, regions and the UK, this conference in Glasgow drew considerable interest and discussion. It attracted research based on ethnography and broad survey data, exploring insights into the changing nature of collective identity and community participation, and UK-wide comparisons of community policing and charity regulation. The day raised questions around the extent of difference and continued independence among Scottish TSOs in an austere climate, and concluded with a panel discussion on the nature and complexity of community engagement and inclusion or exclusion, reflecting on future border

crossings. Further details including abstracts and presentations can be found at <http://www.vssn.org.uk/events/border-crossings-may-2017/>

### **VSSN/NCVO/IVR Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, 2016**

Once again this year VSSN partnered with NCVO and the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) to host the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Conference, the UK's most prominent annual gathering of researchers, practitioners and policy makers carrying out research in our field. In September 2016 more than 100 delegates attended the conference, held at the excellent Nottingham Conference Centre, to take part in scholarly debate and discussion about some of the key issues affecting the voluntary sector at this time.

Highlights included:

- A keynote speech from Shelter CEO Campbell Robb, who discussed the different ways the charity uses research and evidence.
- The annual Campbell Adamson Prize for best paper being awarded to Ali Body from Canterbury Christ Church University for her work on the importance of 'social skill' in voluntary organisations involved in public services
- More than 60 papers across five sessions covering many of the key issues affecting the sector at the current time
- A vibrant New Researchers session, with thought provoking papers from our community of emerging scholars

We look forward to returning to Nottingham again for the conference in 2017 and continuing our partnership with NCVO and IVR for this important event.

### **New Researchers**

The New Researchers Sessions (NRS) ran as a single stream in the Annual Voluntary Sector 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 is supported by financial support from two prior grants, one from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and one from NCVO. A plan to use these funds to further encourage and support new researchers will be developed in the coming year.

As part of the New Researchers stream at the conference, a New Researchers Prize of £100 is awarded for the best paper in this part of the conference. At the 2016 conference this was awarded to Liz Dixon for her paper *'Use of LEGO® Serious Play®: a novel research method for exploring the lived experience of volunteers and paid staff within a professional workplace'*.

The event was organised with the support of Andy Curtis (IVR) who worked alongside a VSSN steering group member, Anjelica Finnegan.



## **Membership**

At 31 July 2017 VSSN had a total of 152 members, comprising 132 individual members and 4 organisational members covering 20 individuals. This is just a small decrease from the same point in 2016, when we had 170 members (145 individual members and 5 organisations covering 25 people). The geographical makeup of the membership remains largely unchanged, including a small number of people from outside the UK, including the USA, Israel and Armenia.

Membership rates remained unchanged for a second year, in an effort to help keep the network accessible, and the Steering Group decided in May 2017 to hold the rates steady again for the 2017/18 membership year.

We continue to receive positive feedback from members about our Day Conferences and the Annual Research Conference, as well as our journal *Voluntary Sector Review*. Debates at events are always lively, suggesting participants value the benefits of being part of a community of researchers, policy makers and practitioners with shared interests.

In 2017 we undertook a survey of members to find out what they value about the network and how better we can support them. The findings from the survey will inform future VSSN developments.

## **E-mail Discussion List**

As of 31 July 2017 the VSSN discussion list had 442 subscribers, which represents a slight decrease compared to the same time last year when there were 478. The list continues to attract both members and non-members and to provide a forum for debate and information sharing. This list this year has, however, been relatively quiet in terms of debate and discussion, being more commonly used as a valuable resource for colleagues seeking existing research evidence and references, contacting potential research participants, promoting events, publications, jobs, research contracts 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; we warmly welcome further contributions and are keen to restore its use as a platform for discussion and debate.

## **2. The organisation and management of VSSN**

### **Building partnerships**

The successful partnership with NCVO continues, particularly through VSSN's contribution to 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 full Steering Group met formally three times during the year: immediately after the AGM and day conference in November 2016, at a meeting scheduled to coincide with the VSR editorial board meeting in January 2017, and the day before the day conference in May 2017. In between meetings, the Steering Group uses its e-mail discussion list to progress business. During the year the Steering Group focused its efforts on: delivering our day seminars and annual conference, liaising with the VSR editorial board, re-doubling our efforts on building and engaging VSSN's membership base including conducting a survey of members and launching a newsletter, strengthening our support for VSR and recruiting and inducting a new treasurer. We would like to express our gratitude to Meta Zimmeck who stepped down from the role of Treasurer after nearly six years in office.

### **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 would like to express our gratitude to our new Executive Officers Beth Longstaff and Jane Leathley who have worked hard to support the Network over the past year. As the lead Executive Officer, Beth in particular has provided the Steering Group with expert advice, strong administrative support, fantastic communications and good humour!

### 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, membership subscriptions were held at the 2015-16 level. Membership benefits include its journal, *Voluntary Sector Review* and a preferential rate of registration for day conferences. Total membership subscriptions were £8,995 (£9,450 in 2015-16). This reflects the loss of one organizational member and additional individual members.

During the financial year, day conference fees received were £3,300 (£3,200 in 2015-16). Both operated at a surplus totaling £2,409.24 (£1,635.80 in 2016-16). The November 2016 day conference held in Birmingham attracted more participants, but the voluntary sector hospitality at the May 2017 day conference in Glasgow and vibrant discussions were also valuable.

During the year VSSN received a grant of £2,000 from NCVO for work in support of the annual VSSN/NCVO/IVR research conference.

VSSN continued to support the work of new researchers. At year end it held restricted funds for use in furthering the activities of new researchers of £1,182.21 (£1,282.81 in 2015-16) after presenting the New Researchers Prize to Liz Dixon (£100). The New Researchers Prize fund stands at £100 for the future, with £542.21 remaining from a prior Economic and Social Research Council grant and £540 from a prior NCVO grant. A plan to use these funds to further support new researchers will be developed in the coming year.

Funds in the bank at year-end were £23,934.22 (£25,133.69 in 2015-16) which reflects the overall deficit on a cash basis of £1,199.47. In 2015-16 the surplus was £6,699.37 as no payments had been made for *Voluntary Sector Review* and therefore the 2016-17 deficit reflects payments for both 2015-16 and 2016-17.

#### Obligations

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

- Current liabilities of £1,325 for the fee of the Executive Officer for June to August 2017.
- Other binding commitments of £7,150: the fee of the Executive Officer for at least one quarter plus an additional quarter's notice period (£2,650); likely expenses of the Executive Officer (£200); one-half of the fee of the Editorial Assistant (£500);

- payments to Policy Press for publication of *Voluntary Sector Review* (estimated £3,700); and expenditure on the website (estimated £100).

### **Reserves policy**

VSSN has a reserves policy. This takes account of obligations arising from VSSN's commitment to the Policy Press for supporting Voluntary Sector Review and its contract for services as Executive Officer with Beth Longstaff and Jane Leathley in the current and future financial years.

As at 31 July 2017 VSSN's total balance at bank was £23,934.22 (£25,133.69 in 2015-16) of which £22,752.01 was unrestricted and £1,182.21 restricted (see above). Allowing for current liabilities and other long-term commitments the effective balance was £15,459.22. This is £3,156.83 higher than 2015-16.

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

We would like to record our thanks to Beth Longstaff and Jane Leathley for continuing to develop and manage VSSN's financial recording and payments systems and for the high quality of support they provide. 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 the non-auditable charities. It was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 and signed on their behalf by:



**Rob Macmillan**  
Chair



**Angela Ellis-Paine**  
Secretary

## VSSN Annual Accounts 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017

### RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
<b>Receipts</b>		
Grant from NCVO	2,000.00	2,540.00
Seminar fees – members	1,325.00	2,210.00
Seminar fees - non-members	1,975.00	990.00
Member subscriptions	8,155.00	8,400.00
Organisational member subscriptions	840.00	1,050.00
Contrib. towards publications officer fees	500.00	500.00
Other	3.00	-
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>14,798.00</b>	<b>15,690.00</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
VSSN event expenses	890.76	1,564.20
Publications expenses	-	-
Publications supplement	6,980.00	-
Editorial assistant - fees	1,000.00	1,000.00
Website development and hosting	-	-
Committee expenses	774.58	176.45
Executive officer – fees	5,301.00	5,304.00
Executive officer – expenses	468.34	294.20
Database and software	-	148.19
Equipment (table banner, stand)	-	-
Publicity	-	22.80
New Researchers expenses	100.00	100.00
WorldPay	410.79	380.79
Other (Bank fees)	72.00	-
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>15,997.47</b>	<b>8990.63</b>
<b>Surplus/loss</b>	<b>-1,199.47</b>	<b>6,699.37</b>
Balance b/fwd from previous year	5,133.69	8,434.32
<b>Balance carried forward to next year</b>	<b>3,934.22</b>	<b>5,133.69</b>

## STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	2016-17	2015-16
	£	£
<b>Monetary assets</b>		
Unity Trust Bank current account	23,934.22	25,133.69
<b>Total monetary assets</b>	<b>23,934.22</b>	<b>25,133.69</b>
<b>Represented by monetary funds</b>		
Unrestricted funds	22,752.01	23,851.48
Restricted funds	1,182.21	1,282.21
<b>Total monetary funds</b>	<b>23,934.22</b>	<b>25,133.69</b>
<b>Non-monetary assets and liabilities</b>		
NON-MONETARY ASSETS [Note 3]		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
<i>Miscellaneous creditors at year end</i>		
Expenses payable at year end	-	135.30
Executive officer services payable at year end	1,325.00	1,326.00
VSR editorial assistant services owing	-	500.00
Amount payable to Policy Press for VSR	-	3,720.00
<b>Total miscellaneous creditors</b>	<b>1,325.00</b>	<b>5,681.30</b>
Deferred income: Subs received in advance	-	-
OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END		
Executive Office contract [Note X]	2,650.00	2,650.00
Executive Officer expenses	200.00	200.00
VSR editorial assistant services 2017-2018	500.00	500.00
Minimum obligation for VSR	2,600.00	2,600.00
Estimated supplementary obligation for VSR	1,100.00	1,100.00
Web expenditure	100.00	100.00
Deposit for day seminar	-	-
<b>Total other commitments</b>	<b>7,150.00</b>	<b>7,150.00</b>
<b>Total current liabilities and provisions</b>	<b>8,475.00</b>	<b>12,831.30</b>
<b>NET ASSETS AND NON-MONETARY</b>	<b>15,459.22</b>	<b>12,302.39</b>

## Notes to the Accounts

1. These accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis, with all revenue and expenses shown on a cash basis. Non-monetary assets and liabilities are shown at estimates of the value at the end of the year.
2. 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.
3. VSSN has two funds: an unrestricted General Fund and a New Researchers' Fund. The latter is a restricted fund supported by prior grants from a prior Economic and Social Research Council grant, a prior NCVO grant and the New Researcher's Prize. The Prize payment for 2016-17 year of £100 is shown in the accounts.
4. VSSN contracts with Beth Longstaff and Jane Leathley to provide the role of Executive Officer from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2019 (subject to three months' notice by either party) for a fee of £5,300 per annum. This includes costs of travel to the two-day conferences and reasonable costs of posts and printing. Day conference accommodation and extraordinary costs are claimed as additional expenses. The outstanding payment for July to August 2017 is shown as a current liability.
5. 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 per annum ('minimum obligation') and a second payment based on the number and income category of VSSN's members (supplementary obligation'). Due to the timing of invoice by The Policy Press, payments may occur in different financial years than the corresponding membership fee receipts.
6. VSSN has agreed with Policy Press to share the fee (£1,000) per year of the editorial assistant of *Voluntary Sector Review*. The fee is paid by VSSN which invoices The Policy Press for its half of the fee.
7. 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 day conference and the annual conference. However, Steering Group members may be reimbursed for these costs when they do not receive institutional support. Apart from this expense reimbursement, no remuneration was paid to any trustee.