

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Registered charity number 1114742

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2020 - 31 July 2021



Address for official correspondence:

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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 November 2018)
Charitable status:	Registered charity in England & Wales number 1114742
Correspondent:	Ann Hindley Executive Officer VSSN Office 11 Commonside Crowle, North Lincolnshire DN17 4EX
Telephone:	01724 710819
Central e-mail:	execofficer@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) 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 2020 and July 2021. Affiliations are given for information only; all Steering Group members serve as individuals.

Co-Chairs	Jane Cullingworth, University of Glasgow Jon Dean, Sheffield Hallam University
Secretary	Chris Damm, Sheffield Hallam University
Treasurer	Diarmuid McDonnell, University of the West of Scotland Carolyn Cordery, University of Wellington
Membership and Marketing Officer	Jon Dean, Sheffield Hallam University
Annual Conference Officers	Chris Dayson, Sheffield Hallam University Jon Dean, Sheffield Hallam University
Day Conference Liaison Officers	Jurgen Grotz, IVR Carol Jacklin-Jarvis, Open University
Partnership Events	Vita Terry, IVAR
External Affairs & Journal Liaison Officer	Jon Dean, Sheffield Hallam University
New Researchers	Jane Cullingworth, University of Glasgow Vita Terry, IVAR Geoff Nichols, Sheffield University
Ex-officio (VSR)	James Rees, Wolverhampton University
Web Officer	Chris Damm, Sheffield Hallam University
Development Grants	Vita Terry, IVAR

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. A member of the Editorial Management Board 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 2nd 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(s), 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. A member of the EMB is appointed ex-officio to the Steering Group.

The EMB is responsible for assembling the International Advisory Board.

EMB members:

Chair: Féilim Ó Hadhmaill, University College Cork

Jon Dean, Sheffield Hallam University (VSSN SG representative)

Eddy Hogg, University of Kent

Rita Mano, University of Haifa

Joanne Vincett, Liverpool John Moores University (social media lead)

Angela Ellis-Paine, University of Birmingham

Publisher's representative: Julia Mortimer, The Policy Press

Editorial Team:

Main Editors: Carl Milofsky (Managing Editor), James Rees, Daiga Kamerāde

Editorial Assistant: Lina Hinh

Policy and Practice editors: Chris Dayson

Book review editor: Eddy Hogg

For Policy Press: Julia Mortimer (Assistant Director), Edwina Thorn (Journals Executive), Rebecca Megson (Marketing contact) Heather Gibson (Journal Assistant)

Regional Associate Editors: Georg von Schnurbein; Lili Wang

Steering Group Report: activities undertaken for public benefit by the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) during the year ending 31 July 2021

1. Co-Chairs' Report

In the face of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to offer activities online. The most significant undertaking was moving our 2020 conference online; while there were many drawbacks to this, we did reach a much wider audience. The move to online has also broadened our outreach to early career researchers. Our move to online work has resulted in our setting up our own YouTube channel which embeds videos from conferences and events. Some of these can be viewed in the video archive: <https://www.vssn.org.uk/video-archive/>

Despite the challenging context, we have continued to work towards achieving VSSN's four strategic aims, which are summarized in the following diagram.

VSSN's strategic aims



We supported the development of early careers researchers through a series of online peer support events and facilitated networking through the discussion list.

We encouraged knowledge exchange across research, policy and practice, through hosted events with [NCVO](#), [BVSC](#), and the [Institute for Volunteering Research](#). We have contributed to an informal evidence group, which feeds into a network established by NCVO at the outbreak of COVID-19, to bring together national networks of volunteer involving organisations and local volunteer centres and inform volunteering responses. The Development Grants scheme, established in 2019, has proved popular, providing opportunities for our members to develop their own knowledge exchange activities. We have been delighted by the response to the scheme and the excellent initiatives that have been funded. We continue to work in partnership with [Policy Press](#) to support [Voluntary Sector Review](#), which provides a high quality outlet for the sharing of academic and policy and practice articles, with new formats being introduced to increase reach.

To enhance opportunities for inclusive networking, peer support and collaboration, we have focused on both our members and subscribers through publishing newsletters, developing our website, hosting two discussion lists. Unfortunately, the planned academic writing retreat to support members with their writing had to be delayed due to COVID related restrictions. One area of work we have identified for VSSN is in the area of equality, diversity and inclusion.

To promote research on the voluntary sector and volunteering, we have hosted seminars and conferences across disciplinary and academic boundaries, bringing together guest speakers from a range of academic disciplines, policy and practice. Our June event, *Volunteering in a Global Pandemic*, brought together and reached a global audience. We have built our social media presence and developed our website, to help promote voluntary sector research, and the Network, to wider audiences. Through the Editorial Management Board, we have supported *Voluntary Sector Review's* editorial team to extend the international reach of the Journal.

We would like to thank the members of the Steering Group and the Editorial Management Board for their energetic and hard work during the year. We would also like to thank Policy Press for their ongoing support of the journal, and of course the editorial team: James Rees, Carl Milofsky and Daiga Kamerāde. Thanks also to David Kane for his ongoing support for the website, and particularly to Ann Hindley, and her colleagues at Cross Keys Associates who provide our Executive Officer function.

2. VSSN's journal, *Voluntary Sector Review*

In 2020-21 VSSN's international interdisciplinary journal, *Voluntary Sector Review* (VSR), published by The Policy Press, continued into its twelfth year, with three issues per annum. The journal is designed to appeal to a wide readership and each issue traditionally contains over 100 pages of Research Articles, Policy and Practice Papers, as well as Book Reviews. A print copy of each issue is a VSSN membership benefit. During 2020-21 the journal has published its second themed section, on 'Re-reading civil society action for environmental sustainability' guest edited by Will Eadson in July 2020, as well as its first full special issue, on 'Place leadership and the role of the third sector and civil society', guest edited by Oto Potluka, Alessandro Sancino, John Diamond and James Rees in March 2021. Another exciting innovation has been the commencement of Research Notes, designed to present intriguing initial observations, time-sensitive results, advance a new idea, theoretical perspective, or methodological approach. They can also describe new data available for other scholars or publish a brief summary of a study that is usually difficult to publish. This turned out to be particularly timely in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the first Notes appeared in the March 2021 issue.

The increasing quantity and, it seems, quality of papers submitted to the journal allows us to publish a greater number of research articles, and we should soon publish six research papers per issue as the norm. It certainly feels that the journal is becoming more international in flavour, and we published a wide range of papers including on charitable giving in China, third sector housing in Hong Kong, collaborative housing in Germany, and civil society leadership in Italy, amongst many others.

Another section added in recent years has been Comment and Debate. Here authors are encouraged to engage with pressing issues. It provides an outlet for short, critical pieces that respond to topical issues affecting the voluntary sector. We also published an Editorial review of the first ten years of VSR with all of our past editors, a memorial to Duncan Scott, and an open letter from Sarah Young and Kimberley Wiley calling for an end to sexual misconduct in academia. Some years after first agreeing the approach internally, we have fully merged the Policy and Practice sections. That said,

the 'demand' to publish in Comment and Debate perhaps isn't quite there and we would encourage VSSN members to step up, submit pieces, and help spread the word. The book reviews 'pipeline' is also looking really healthy thanks to Eddy Hogg's sterling efforts.

Chris Dayson will retire as Policy and Practice editor at the end of 2021 and we thank him for his huge contribution to the journal. The editorial team and publisher is interviewing for his replacement in autumn 2021, and an EMB panel is also interviewing for a new editor to join Rees and Kamerade when Carl Milofsky steps down in 2021. Again, huge thanks to Carl for his stewardship of the journal in recent years, particularly the massive boost it has brought to our internationalisation efforts – although he will be much missed, he has agreed to stay on in a consultative role.

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://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/journals/voluntary-sector-review>.

VSSN, the EMB, and PP agreed in 2020 to set up a joint prize for Best Paper in VSR, to be presented at the VSVR conference in September. The inaugural prize was awarded at VSVR in Birmingham in September 2021, to Yongzheng Yang and Pamala Wiepking, for their paper 'Party membership and charitable giving in China: the mediating role of resources, networks, prosocial values and making compulsory donations'. The winners receive £150 in cash from VSSN and £150 in book vouchers from Policy Press. We're delighted that this prize has commenced and hope it will further drive up interest and critically, submissions, to the journal.

A team of three co-editors is responsible for maintaining the journal's direction, content and quality: Carl Milofsky (Bucknell University, US), James Rees (University of Wolverhampton) and Daiga Kamerāde (University of Salford). Daiga joined the team in January 2020, replacing Rob Macmillan, who stepped down after many years of excellent service in the role of editor, and many other positions for VSR and VSSN. The editors are joined in a wider team by policy and practice editors (Chris Dayson, Sheffield Hallam University, and Alison Body, University of Kent) who also manage the comment and debate section, and the book reviews editor (Eddy Hogg, University of Kent). Bethany Waterhouse-Bradley has stepped down from her role as a Practice Editor and we thank her very much for her contribution. Finally, we would like to thank former Policy Reviews Editor Cathy Pharaoh for all her work. Cathy was one of the original founders of the journal and has been involved in various ways over the years. Two new regional associate editors have also been appointed: Georg von Schnurbein (University of Basel) will focus on representing the journal in Europe, and Lili Wang (Arizona State University) will focus on representing the journal in North America and Asia.

The journal has a twitter account: @vsrjournal, with a growing constituency of over 850 followers. This is used to keep people informed about forthcoming content, and the availability of free access articles. Jo Vincett (Liverpool John Moores University) has taken over as social media lead for the journal and we thank her for her sterling work so far.

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. The day-to-day activities of the journal are supported by an editorial assistant. Many thanks to Ellie Rivers for her work in this role over the years, and we are very pleased to welcome Lelinna Hinh to the role. The post is jointly funded by The Policy Press and VSSN to support the editorial work underpinning the journal, including screening submissions and liaising with authors.

VSR Editorial Management Board

The journal is overseen by an Editorial Management Board (EMB), which meets twice each year – a January gathering to review the journal’s development and consider editorial strategy, followed by a mid-year teleconference. The EMB is a sub-committee of the VSSN Steering Group, chaired by Féilim Ó Hadhmaill (University College Cork), and is made up of elected representatives, representatives from The Policy Press, and the editorial team. During 2019-20, Joanna Vincett (Liverpool John Moores University) joined the EMB as an elected member. We thank Mike Hemmings for his contribution during his term of office, and for Daiga Kamerāde for her work as Chair before becoming a journal editor.

This year the main points of discussion for the EMB included the overall strategy for developing the journal, including enhancing its international reputation and building on its initial journal citation scores, emerging issues around open access, and the development of special issues on critical theory and qualitative data, and Muslim philanthropy, both of which are forthcoming in the years ahead – the first scheduled for March 2022, the second for November 2022.

3. Annual conference, day conferences and other events

For more details of these and previous VSSN events, see <https://www.vssn.org.uk/events/>

VSSN/NCVO Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference, September 2020

For more than 20 years the annual Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference, held in September, has been the key UK gathering of researchers from the UK and around the world. This year, we had hoped to build upon the successful 2019 conference by returning to Aston University in Birmingham. In addition to our long-standing partnership with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), we had also partnered with Birmingham Voluntary Sector Centre for Voluntary Action (BVSC) to help improve our reach into the local voluntary and community sector. However, the COVID 19 pandemic and UK ‘lockdown’ rules meant a face-to-face conference was not possible this year and plans were made for our first ever e-conference instead.

For two days over 7th-8th September the annual Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research (VSVR) Conference was held online. The theme e-conference was *“Times like these’: Researching civil society responses to and recovery from COVID-19’* and we were really pleased at the response from practitioners and academics presenting up-to-date research on the current situation and recovery from the pandemic. The programme comprised two plenaries and two sessions on each of four themes, a session with the Editors of Voluntary Sector Review and two book launches.

Professor Tracey Coule and Associate Professor Chris Dayson launched the conference by considering theoretical frames to consider civil society’s responses to Covid-19. Themes that emerged included the way we frame civil society-government relationships and mutual aid groups, which indeed became recurring themes throughout the conference. These themes, as well as how civil society organisations have reformed and changed their practice, were also carried forward to the plenary on Day 2 with presentations by Karl Wilding (NCVO) Anna Fowlie (Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations) Brian Carr (BVSC) & Affan Cheema (Islamic Relief Worldwide).

Overall, 40 research papers were presented across eight parallel sessions on themed topics including volunteer mobilisation to respond to the pandemic; the experience of volunteering during the pandemic, from volunteer and organisational perspectives; philanthropy, fundraising and funding issues; micro, meso and macro perspectives on voluntary organisations during the pandemic; and the revitalised phenomenon of mutual aid. Although a large number of presenters and attendees

were from the UK, people were also beamed in to the conference from across the globe, including the USA, Canada, Europe. More than 500 people registered for the conference, and sessions regularly included over 200 attendees.

While we missed being able to chat to each other and presenters physically, as we would have done in a physical conference, the e-conference was a great experience and opportunity to share cutting edge research with a wider range of people than would otherwise have been possible, both engaging people who are physically distant from the UK and through social media. The sessions were recorded and can be found at: <https://www.vssn.org.uk/2020-vsvr-online-conference-session-videos/>. The next VSVR Conference is scheduled for 6th-7th September 2021 in Birmingham once again. Despite the success of the e-Conference we hope to be able to return to a face-to-face conference in as close to normal circumstances as possible.

Volunteering in Health and Social Care in the context of COVID-19: making a difference in a complex landscape of rising demand, November 2020

Due to COVID-19 restrictions our Autumn day conference on 20th November 2020 was offered online and free. It was hosted by the Institute for Volunteering Research at University of East Anglia in Norwich and explored volunteering in health and social care in the context of COVID-19, considering the opportunities and challenges encountered in a complex landscape of rising demand and the difference volunteering makes as pressures are growing on volunteer-involving organisations, locally based community organisations and social enterprises to respond to increasing and diverse demands for volunteers to provide health and social care services in the context of COVID-19. The contributions of speakers from Newman University, Leeds Beckett University, UEA and from volunteer involving organisations in Norwich were recorded and are available open access online: [session one](#) and [session two](#).

VSSN 25th Anniversary Event, March 2021

VSSN held an informal online celebration of the development of the Network over the past 25 years. We asked some of the key founding members to reflect back on the founding of VSSN, its development over time, and where it might look to go in the future. We also asked them to consider the state of the field of voluntary sector research, what we have collectively learnt, and what remains unanswered. The event was chaired by Rob Macmillan with support from Angela Ellis Paine. Panelists included: Peter Halfpenny; Pete Alcock; Margaret Harris; Chris Cornforth; Cathy Pharoah; Colin Rochester; Meta Zimmeck; Gareth Morgan; Mike Aiken; Helen Cameron; Marilyn Taylor and Jane Cullingworth. The event was a wonderful opportunity to bring our community together and to reflect on and celebrate our network. You can watch the event [here](#).

Volunteering in a Global Pandemic, June 2021

Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions our Spring day event was again online, free and hosted by the Institute for Volunteering Research at University of East Anglia in Norwich, this time in collaboration with the [International Association for Volunteer Effort \(IAVE\)](#) and the [International Forum for Volunteering in Development \(FORUM\)](#) and the [Third Sector Research Centre \(TSRC\)](#). In three sessions fifteen panelists from around the globe, including the Americas, Asia and the Pacific region, Africa and Europe, shared views and experiences about the difference voluntary action made during the COVID-19 pandemic. We heard from India about the role volunteers played in supplying oxygen; from Peru about volunteer psychologists supporting women in domestic abuse situations; and from Trinidad and Tobago about moving volunteer mentoring online. The discussions that followed explored the significance of both formal infrastructure and informal 'tendrils of association' in enabling this powerful voluntary action. Participants also reflected on the significant role played by digital technology, connecting people in new ways, as our global discussion showed, but also potentially excluding further those who are already marginalised. They shared great examples of

collaborative working, whilst also reflecting on failures to collaborate, including absence of government support and information-sharing in some contexts. It was an inspirational day and gave us all an opportunity to reflect on the generosity and impact of volunteers across the globe during the Covid crisis, whilst also raising important questions for future research. Panelists' pre-recorded position statements are again available open access online: [position statements](#).

4. New Researchers

We continued our successful online sessions for new researchers, providing regular opportunities for people to connect, give and receive peer support. A new researchers' coordinating group began meeting in January to shape a strategy for new researchers. Members include Vita Terry, Susanne Martikke, Geoff Nichols, Diarmuid McDonnell and Carol Jacklin-Jarvis, and is chaired by Daniel Haslam.

The format and scale of the 2020 online VSVR conference differed from the in-person experience and consequently did not have a separate stream for new researchers. Planning for the in-person 2021 conference, which was well underway by the end of our fiscal year, included a dedicated New Researchers Sessions (NRS) as a concurrent stream. The NRS provides a route for emerging scholars and researchers in the field to share their work in a supportive environment, develop a support network of peers and network with delegates across the conference.

Our discussion list designed specifically for new researchers (VOL-SECTOR-NEW-RESEARCHERS) continues to provide a forum for information sharing, networking and support and currently has over 60 participants. If you are interested in contributing ideas to our support of early career researchers or want to get involved, please email newresearchers@vssn.org.uk. Many thanks to Daniel Haslam for his leadership with new researchers over the past year.

5. Membership

Two changes have been made to method of membership renewal this year. A standing order form is being sent out with renewal reminders, to encourage people to commit themselves to long term membership, which will aid future sustainability of the network. We have also dispensed with the services of the credit card collection company because of the significant expense.

At the end of the financial year, we had 99 individual members and 7 organisational members, very much reflecting the membership numbers of the previous year. Of these, 91 memberships were renewals and 8 were new members. Most members are based in the UK, but there are also memberships from Japan, Austria, Australia, USA, Israel, Argentina, Poland and New Zealand.

6. Development Opportunities Grants

Following a successful first year of the development grant, we invited applications from members for a second round of applications. The proposals aim to support and develop an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK. The grant can be used to fund seminars, workshops, roundtables, webinars, podcasts, film/animation and other activities linked to research, learning and teaching. The main focus will be to bring individual researchers and/ or practitioners and/or policy makers together to create a dialogue on a voluntary sector and volunteering related issue. In particular, we encourage applications that will provide on-going dialogue.

We were proud to [announce](#) that three proposals were awarded grants. First, GMCVO (proposal led by Susanne Martikke) worked with six members of the Greater Manchester Third Sector Research Network to develop a proposal for an event that aims to start a dialogue between researchers and practitioners about the potential of moving beyond presenting polished accounts of success stories of evaluations towards a nuanced appreciation that every successful project contains elements of potential or real failure. While the current funding environment incentivises a focus on successes, there is reason to believe that real learning not only about what works but how it works will only be unlocked when more attention is paid to the complexity involved in voluntary sector delivery. Doing so may not only benefit VCSE delivery, but also the field of voluntary sector studies. The full-day event, which is currently envisaged as a face-to-face event in spring 2022, will have a Greater Manchester focus and will bring together VCSE practitioners and researchers from frontline organisations and support organisations with funders and commissioners. It will aim to include both VCSE managers and frontline staff, as well as volunteers and people accessing VCSE services.

Second, Dr. Carol Jacklin- Jarvis and Dr. James Rees proposal was successful to hold two exploratory knowledge exchange workshops on the topic of Place Leadership. Rather than following a conventional conference format with separate presentations, these workshops will draw on insights from knowledge exchange theory to model a format that gives equal space to story-telling from the front line and theoretical insights, with the aim of generating new knowledge for practice and academia. They plan to hold these in person events in the East and West Midlands of England in early 2022 (but will move them online if necessary) and aim to attract practitioners to explore their experiences and challenges in shaping place and to reach academics with an interest in bringing a theoretical perspective to the topic. There is potential for the workshops to lead to an edited book.

Third, Emily Lau was successful with her proposal to create a short documentary on the value of place leadership in small communities by Food Friends. During the pandemic, Food Friends a small project tackling poverty and isolation was able to pivot its operations to work with other food projects, secure emergency funding and work with some of those most vulnerable in their community. Lessons learned from the way local project leaders and small organisations responded during the crisis are important for planning and funding projects into the future.

Many thanks to the members of the Development Opportunities Grants committee – Vita Terry, James Rees, Caroline Walsh and Diarmuid McDonnell.

7. The organisation and management of VSSN

Converting VSSN to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

The Steering Group discussed the issue of liability, particularly pertinent now that VSSN bears the financial risk for the annual conference. A decision was made to establish a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and transfer the assets of the current charity. A model constitution has been adapted for approval at the 2021 AGM in preparation for submission to the Charity Commission.

Steering Group meetings

The full Steering Group met formally six times during the year. Due to the pandemic, we held our early-year strategic planning meeting online over two sessions. Meeting online has proved very beneficial as it is a platform that everyone can easily participate in.

During the year, the Steering Group focused its efforts on: moving our key events online (our two

day seminars and the annual conference); continuing our support for early career researchers through regular online sessions; liaising with the VSR editorial board and strengthening our support for VSR; promoting our online repository related to COVID-19 research and voluntary action research; developing our membership base; and publishing a newsletter.

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 either modest or no fees to attend. Similarly, our online discussion lists are open to all and is the COVID-19 research repository. 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. We continued to offer Development Opportunity Grants, encouraging and enabling members to develop proposals to support and develop an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK.

Executive Office

We would like to express our gratitude to our Executive Officer, Ann Hindley of Cross Keys Associates. The Executive Officer plays a key role in the smooth running of the Network, particularly membership services. We are most grateful to Ann for her work over the past year.

8. 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 remained steady compared to 2019-20. Membership benefits include its journal, *Voluntary Sector Review* and a preferential rate of registration for day conferences. Total membership subscriptions were £7,347 (£8,235 in 2019-20). This reflects the loss of some individual members.

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted much of VSSN's seminar and conference activities online, and the decision was taken to waive fees for these events. Hence no income was generated by these activities.

VSSN continued to support the work of new researchers, including the granting of three 'Development Grants'. At year end, it held restricted funds for use in furthering the activities of new researchers of £280.00 (£280 in 2019-20). These funds are from a prior NCVO grant and specifically relate to VSVR Conference. Further support of new researchers will continue in the coming year.

The overall deficit in 2020-21 on a cash basis was £3,287.40. In 2019-20 the surplus was £591.25.

Obligations

There were a number of obligations at year end. These consisted of binding commitments of £9,814.67: the fee of the Executive Officer for at least one quarter plus an additional quarter's notice period (£2,648); likely expenses of the Executive Officer (£200); one-half of the fee of the Editorial Assistant (£1,000); payments to Policy Press for publication of *Voluntary Sector Review* (estimated £3,000 – being the minimum of £2,600 plus a proportion of membership fees); expenditure on the website (estimated £300) and our commitment to three Development Grants (£2,500).

Reserves Policy

The trustees have set a policy of maintaining unrestricted reserves equivalent to twelve months' expenditure. This takes account of obligations arising from VSSN's commitment to the Policy Press for supporting *Voluntary Sector Review*, its contract for services as Executive Officer to Cross Keys Associates, and associated risks with hosting the VSVR conference. At the end of the 2020-21 financial year, the reserves amount to just over one years' expenditure, however we anticipate 2021-22 to remain a challenging financial year and for revenue from conferences and seminars to be low.

Funds in the bank at year-end were £23,312.82 (£26,600.22 in 2019-20) of which £23,032.82 was unrestricted and £280 restricted (see above). Allowing for current liabilities and long-term commitments, the effective balance was £13,498.15. This was £3,291.07 lower than 2019-20.

These figures mean that VSSN's current financial position is relatively comfortable, given recent events. However, its financial position is determined by its capacity to attract members and to encourage attendance at its research days and annual conference. There is, therefore, a need to

continue to promote memberships (especially among the large number utilising its web-based mailing list), encourage attendance at research days and, where possible, to attract additional funding and lower costs for its conferences.

We would like to record our thanks to Ann Hindley and Cross Keys Associates for managing VSSN's financial recording and payments systems. The quality of support has been invaluable in helping VSSN in its financial planning and provision of services to its members. Many thanks also to Carolyn Codery who has been our very able treasurer over the past five years. Carolyn's contribution to VSSN and her careful steering of our finances has been much appreciated by us all.

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 12th August 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Jane Cullingworth
Co-Chair

Chris Damm
Secretary

VSSN Annual Accounts 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT [Note 1]

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
Receipts		
Conference surplus/Grant from NCVO	-	6,115.69
Seminar fees – members	-	730.00
Seminar fees - non-members	-	490.00
Member subscriptions	6,015.44	6,765.00
Organisational member subscriptions	1,331.57	1,470.00
Contrib. towards editorial assistant services	-	750.00
Other	10.00	90.90
Total receipts	7,357.01	16,411.59
Payments		
Conference expenses	297.58	-
VSSN event expenses	-	878.90
Publications supplement	2,760.00	5,740.00
Editorial assistant services	1,416.67	1,000.00
Committee expenses	50.00	702.36
Executive officer – fees	5,296.00	6,622.00
Executive officer – expenses	-	-
Development Grants	525.00	-
Early Career Researchers	-	200.00
GDPR preparation and maintenance	-	-
Equipment (table banner, stand)	-	-
Website development/hosting/database	-	310.02
WorldPay	227.16	295.06
Other (Bank fees)	72.00	72.00
Total payments	10,644.41	15,820.34
Surplus	-3,287.40	591.25
Balance b/fwd from previous year	26,600.22	26,008.97
Balance carried forward to next year	23,312.82	26,600.22

VSSN Annual Accounts 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	2020-21	2019-20
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Monetary assets		
Unity Trust Bank current account	23,312.82	26,600.22
Total monetary assets	23,312.82	26,600.22
Represented by monetary funds		
Unrestricted funds	23,032.82	
Restricted funds	280.00	280.00
Total monetary funds [Note 2]	23,312.82	26,600.22
Non-monetary assets and liabilities		
Membership/day seminar fees owing	-	-
Total non-monetary assets		-
Total monetary and non-monetary assets	23,312.82	26,600.22
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
<i>Miscellaneous creditors at year end</i>		
Expenses payable at year end	-	-
Executive officer services payable at year end	-	441.33
VSR editorial assistant services owing	-	416.67
Amount payable to Policy Press for VSR	-	-
Total miscellaneous creditors	-	858.00
<i>Deferred income: Subs received in advance</i>	-	-215.00
OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END		
Executive Officer contract [Note 3]	2,648.00	2,648.00
Executive Officer expenses	200.00	200.00
VSR editorial assistant services 2020-2021	1000.00	1,000.00
Minimum obligation for VSR [Note 4]	2600.00	2,600.00
Estimated supplementary obligation for VSR	400.00	900.00
Web expenditure	300.00	300.00
Development Grants	2250.00	2,020.00
Deposit for day seminar	416.67	-
Total other commitments	9,814.67	9,168.00
Total current liabilities and provisions	9,814.67	9,811.00
NET ASSETS AND NON-MONETARY	13,498.15	16,789.22

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 two funds: an unrestricted General Fund and a New Researchers' Fund. The latter is a restricted fund supported by a prior NCVO grant. (The New Researchers' Prize is funded by VSSN.)
3. VSSN contracts with Cross Keys Associates to provide the role of Executive Officer from 8 October 2019 to 7 October 2022 (subject to three months' notice by either party) for a fee of £5,248 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 one month (July 2020) is shown as a current liability.
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 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.