ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

6th JANUARY 2026 HELD ONLINE

In attendance: Katy Adams, Ellen Bennett, Karin Biermann, Kate Burns, Chelle Coulton, Stephen Craker, Jane Cullingworth, Bruce Davenport, Jon Dean, Angela Ellis-Paine, Heather Fulford, Jurgen Grotz, Clare Harewood, Daniel Haslam, Ann Hindley, Peter Horner, Dez Innocent, Rob McMillan, Shirley Otto, Amy Sanders, Bethany Sikes, Vita Terry, Philine van Overbeeke, Jo Vincett, Meg Wright

Apologies: Nicky Adams, Adrian Ashton, Helen Crawley, Helen Fleming, Peter Halfpenny, Simone Hensby, Carol Jackin-Jarvis, Hannah Kowszun, Caitlin McMullin, Linda Milbourne, Victoria Nunn, Fiona Reid, Mike Rigby, Susannah Wilson

Welcome and Apologies:

The Annual General Meeting was opened by Amy Sanders, co-chair and all members were welcomed. Apologies were notes.

Minute of the previous Annual General Meeting

The minute was accepted with the following amendments

1. Paragraph 10 'Staff costs' should be changed to 'staffing costs'.
2. Jo Vincett was noted as being present and sending apologies. Jo was not in attendance at the AGM 2024.

The minute was proposed as accepted by Amy Sanders and seconded by Jane Cullingworth.

Review of VSSN 2024-25

I. Overall Strategy

Vita Terry, co-chair, provided the chair's remarks which emphasised that despite external pressures affecting voluntary sector researchers, VSSN remains strong and continues to provide spaces for connection, reflection, and collaboration. VSSN aspires to be a network that is welcoming and underpinned by values including being collaborative, inquisitive, supportive and inclusive, guided by a strategy developed in 2023. Key priorities include nurturing new researchers and supporting career development through events and initiatives like the new researchers stream.

The annual report highlights achievements across sub committees such as conferences, small grants, one day events, new researchers, membership and communications, reflecting VSSN's collaborative approach.

VSSN said a fond farewell and huge thanks to Carol Jacklin-Jarvis who had served as chair and vice-chair and Pat Armstrong and Daiga Kamerāde in their trustee roles.

Significant thanks were extended to current trustees, including new members Petra Buresova, Bethany Sikes, James Rees, and Caitlin McMullin, and to those stepping down, notably Heather Fulford and Karin Biermann, for their contributions in the roles of Secretary and Treasurer.

Appreciation was also given to volunteers supporting early career researchers including Helen Abnett, alongside Olu Adeyemo, Chelle Coulton, and Pat Danahey-Janin. Thank you to David Kane for all the ongoing IT support he provides to the board and to Pat Danahey-Janin support monitoring the VSSN Jiscmail.

VSSN are enormously appreciative of the expertise and hard work of Meg Wright Consultancy to inform these developments. We have been fortunate to draw on the support and expertise of both Meg Wright and Dez Innocent this year who have brought a wealth of expertise and experience.

The closing remarks expressed gratitude to the Trustee Board, Editorial Management Board, volunteers, partners, and members for their energy and enthusiasm, and looked forward to continued collaboration and achievements in 2026.

II. Annual Conference

Angela Ellis-Paine presented an update on the September 2024 Annual Conference at the Bayes Business School in London, held in partnership with NCVO and Voluntary Action Islington. The theme was Research in Policy and Practice. Attendees came from across the UK and overseas and 60 papers were presented. . The whole event was deemed a great success, and thanks were given to all involved.

III. Voluntary Sector Review

Angela also presented an update on the year at the Voluntary Sector Review. Three editions were published during the year. Thanks were extended to the retiring editors (James Rees, Eddie Hogg and Daiga Kamerade) and members of the editorial management board, the continuing editors, and a welcome extended to those newly joined. In July 2025 VSR moved to digital, a process which also allowed members access to all back issues. Special thanks were extended to Policy Press who made all of their Policy and Practice articles free to view. Angela also welcomed the new partnership with ERNOP [European Research Network On Philanthropy].

IV. New Researchers

Daniel Haslam presented an update on the activities of the New Researchers' Group. He thanked Angela who'd covered the New Researchers Day at the conference and welcomed Jane Cullingworth to the volunteer team. Daniel reflected that many people who started their journey as new researchers progressed to

volunteering activities at VSSN and some became board members. He thanked everyone involved in the new researchers' online sessions.

V. Small Grants Scheme

Amy Sanders covered the Small Grants update since Heather Fulford was experiencing difficulties with her internet connection. The three projects given grants this year were Helen Abnett's work on music education and the voluntary sector, Katy Adams' on small voluntary organisations, and Kris Southby and Nikki Lyons on learning disabilities, digital exclusion, and the role of the voluntary sector.

VI. Membership and Communications

Meg Wright, Executive Officer, reported that membership numbers are steady at around the 100 mark for individual members. Organisation membership was reducing. Meg encouraged members to provide feedback on membership processes and provide any suggestions for improvement. Meg noted that Dez Innocent supports the Executive Officer role and membership emails will come from Dez. Communications include the VSSN website, the LinkedIn page, JiscMail, a BlueSky account and the newsletter. Petra Buresova noted that an occasional VSSN newsletter has been launched, helping VSSN to share key updates, deadlines, and community news more consistently. The plan is to continue to distribute the newsletter in the coming year. VSSN also expanded the online presence and joined Bluesky. This was used actively during the annual conference to share updates, highlight sessions, and connect with participants in real time. VSSN's follower base there is still growing, but it's been a positive step in widening where and how VSSN engages.

VII. Day Events

Bethany Sikes presented an update on one day events. There were two in the period. One was in June at the University of Glasgow and was called Perspectives on Scotland's Third Sector Impact. It was a Collaboration between VSSN, Glasgow University, and the Third Sector Research Forum and was attended by more than 70 people from academic and practitioner backgrounds. The second was in July at University College, London. It was an interdisciplinary summer school aimed at doctoral and early career researchers.

Special Resolution

Amy Sanders introduced a Special Resolution to amend the constitution, thanking Heather Fulford for her work on the constitution.

Firstly clause 13 (12/2) states that the editor of VSR will be appointed to the VSSN board. This should be changed to a member of the Editorial Management Board which represents practice. This change was passed unanimously.

Secondly, clause 11 (10) refers to a 'steering group' instead of a trustee board and makes a reference to electronic voting. The motion was to remove this clause altogether. Ann Hindley and Shirley Otto both advised against this. The former was concerned that removing the clause would remove the right to electronic voting. The latter stated that it's wise to explicitly state what VSSN can do, and that there is no

harm in overdoing it for clarity. Ann suggested that the clause remains but be reworded.

A vote was taken, and it was decided to leave the clause, bit to change the reference to steering group to trustee board.

Receipt of Annual Report and Accounts

Karin Biermann gave the Treasurer's Report. The way of presenting annual accounts has been changed to provide more detail. Unrestricted reserves stand at £15,000. Karin pointed out the anomaly that no conference costs were incurred in 2024/25 as opposed to the costs of two in 2023/24. She also mentioned the successful transition to Google Workspace. There were no comments or questions from attendees.

Retiring Trustees
Vita Terry gave thanks to the retiring board members Karin Biermann and Heather Fulford.

Ratification of New Trustees
The recruitment and election process for new trustees took place in October/ November 2025. The outcome was that Clare Harewood, Peter Horner and Kate Burns were elected by members to serve on the board of trustees. Ratification was proposed by Vita Terry and seconded by Amy Sanders.

Editorial Management Board
Angela continued by thanking all involved with VSR, including editorial assistant Joanna Essex.

Looking Ahead
Amy Sanders noted that the conference in 2026 will be held at the University of Wolverhampton. She thanked James Rees for making it possible.

Kate Burns informed the AGM that there is an in-person writing retreat held at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire every month.

Rob McMillan mentioned a Sheffield Hallam University online seminar on Community Level Variations in Voluntary Action. with John Mohan and Jon Dean on Wednesday 14th January.

Close of meeting

Vita Terry thanked everyone involved in the work of VSSN and closed the AGM.