

SCIENCE MEDIA CENTRE

England & Wales · Charity number 1140827

Details

Other names	SMC
Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	07560997
Registered	2011-03-18
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	215 Euston Road London NW1 2BE
Phone	0207 611 8300
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Website	www.sciencemediacentre.org

Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING AND ALL THEIR RELATED BRANCHES AND DISCIPLINES, PARTICULARLY BY THE DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH AND INFORMATION ABOUT SCIENCE TO THE MEDIA.

Activities: PROMOTE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC ACCURATE, EVIDENCE-BASED INFORMATION ON SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING IN THE MEDIA, PARTICULARLY ON CONTROVERSIAL NEWS STORIES. ACTIVITIES INCLUDE WORKING WITH SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS, SUPPORTING THEM TO ENGAGE WITH THE MEDIA; WORKING WITH JOURNALISTS, PROVIDING THEM WITH INFORMATION ABOUT SCIENCE; SUPPORTING PRESS OFFICERS WORKING ON DIFFICULT SCIENCE NEWS STORIES

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Acts As An Umbrella Or Resource Body
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science
- **Who:** Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Throughout England And Wales

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£774,832	£867,876	£770,731	12
2024-03-31	£784,201	£796,398	£867,354	11
2023-03-31	£752,419	£730,918	£858,867	10
2022-03-31	£682,047	£661,360	£839,100	10
2021-03-31	£722,170	£595,209	£808,179	10

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Nicholas James Hillier	Chair	2021-10-14
AMANDA BORTON		2022-10-20
Alex Keenlyside		2020-10-08
Alice Claire Henchley		2021-10-14
Ashlee Khan		2025-10-15
James Stephenson		2025-10-15
Joanne Manning		2021-10-14
John Davidson		2019-06-19
Jonathan Bruun		2020-10-08
Prof Azra Catherine Hilary Ghani		2023-10-31
Prof Peter John Morland Openshaw		2024-10-23
Professor Charlotte Summers		2024-10-23
Richard Douglas Fisher		2023-10-31

Accounts

Company number: 07560997

Charity Number: 1140827

Science Media Centre

Report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

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Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2025

Company number 07560997
Country of incorporation United Kingdom

Charity number 1140827
Country of registration England & Wales

Registered office and
operational address 215 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BE

Trustees Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Amanda Borton	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Richard Fisher	
Prof Azra Ghani	
Prof Peter Openshaw	Appointed 23 October 2024
Prof Charlotte Summers	Appointed 23 October 2024
Prof Kevin McConway	Resigned 23 October 2024

Key management personnel	Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
	Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
	Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
	Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2025

Bankers	HSBC Bank PLC 16 King Street Covent Garden London WC2E 8JF
	CCLA Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET
Independent examiner	Fleur Holden Sayer Vincent LLP Chartered Accountants 110 Golden Lane London EC1Y 0TG

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 and 2 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association, the requirements of a directors' report as required under company law, and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The Science Media Centre (SMC) works to promote the views of the scientific community on issues of importance and helps to ensure that their expertise is available to the national news media, and through them policy-makers and the public.

Introduction

The SMC has its roots in the influential House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's third report on Science and Society, which sought to renew public trust in science. The overall goal of the SMC is therefore to help achieve this aim by working to promote more balanced, accurate and measured coverage of the important science, health and environment stories that appear in the media.

The SMC was originally set up in April 2002 as a division of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RIGB, Charity Registration No. 227938), and its financial structure was that of a restricted fund maintained by the RIGB. In April 2011 the SMC became independent and registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The period ended 31 March 2025 is the SMC's fourteenth year as a fully independent organisation, but also its twenty third year of existence.

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that the public values science, with 91% saying health research is either extremely, very, or somewhat beneficial, 66% saying that health research has had a positive impact on their lives, and a large majority (82%) of people report being very or fairly interested in hearing directly from scientists about their research – an increase from 63% in 2015¹. A separate survey suggests that 70% of people think that it's important for the Government to invest in scientific research². The most recent survey of its kind reported high levels of public trust that scientists (79%), engineers (90%), and doctors (88%) tell the truth³. Furthermore, the

¹ Wellcome Monitor 2020, How the British public engage with health research

² CaSE Public Attitudes to R&D and the Government's Missions 2024

³ Veracity Index 2024, Ipsos MORI survey of trust in professions

public are interested in health research, with 82% saying they are very or fairly interested in health research⁴, while other surveys report that the vast majority (74%) agree that science will make people's lives easier, and think that scientists (89%) and engineers (87%) make a valuable contribution to society⁵.

In 2023, the SMC published the results of an Ipsos poll about where the British public gets their information from about science⁶. The results suggested that British adults are more likely to get information about science from traditional news media than from social media (with TV news being the biggest source (52%), and non-newspaper online news outlets such as BBC News, ITN and Sky News also being a significant source (34%). A similar number of participants cited national newspapers and social media as sources of science information (30%). On delving into the origin of science information seen on social media, traditional news media outlets was the most common source (50%), and even some of those who had said they didn't typically get science information from the news media actually went on to cite it as the source of what they were seeing on social media, suggesting news journalism still has significant reach including to many of those people who only look on social media.

As such working with the mainstream news media provides an opportunity for accurate, evidence-based information to reach a mass audience. The SMC's priority is to promote, for the benefit of the public and policymakers, accurate and evidence-based information about science in the media, particularly on controversial and headline news stories as this is when most confusion and misinformation occurs.

The objects of the SMC are as follows:

"To advance the education of the public in science and engineering and all their related branches and disciplines, particularly by the dissemination of research and information about science to the media."

In order to meet its charitable objectives, the SMC's main activities include:

- working with scientists, engineers and other experts from the scientific community, and supporting them to engage with the media;
- working with journalists and providing them with information about science and its related disciplines;
- supporting press officers when they are working on complex and contentious science, health and environment stories that could be misrepresented;
- providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media;
- help raise standards in science reporting and communication.

⁴ Wellcome Trust Monitor Report Wave November 2019, Public interest and engagement with health research

⁵ Public Attitudes to Science 2019, carried out by Kantar, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

⁶ 'Summary report – Ipsos survey on science and the media' 2024, Science Media Centre

There has been no change during the period in the policies adopted in furtherance of the objects, and the Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the SMC should undertake.

Purposes and aims

The SMC's philosophy is:

"The media will do science better when scientists do the media better."

Our main activities allow us to achieve our philosophy and our objectives – by ensuring that the accuracy of science represented by the mainstream media is improved. As an organisation we predominantly work on new research and the breaking news of the day, meaning our long and short-term aims are very similar. For us, the most important thing is that we continue to be able to proactively respond to the next breaking news story or controversial research paper so that the public have access to the best expertise on these issues via the media.

Staff are the main resource of the SMC and five permanent members of staff are dedicated to the press office element of the Centre with the remaining three members of staff providing essential support to the running of the Centre. We also recruited our second trainee press officer, who has joined the SMC on a year traineeship to learn about press work, with the plan for now to continue having a new trainee each year. Additionally, we have continued the Global Coordinator role that is dedicated to working with the global network of SMCs, and forging links with people and scientific societies worldwide to inform other countries about the SMC model.

Volunteers

The SMC continues to benefit from volunteers through our database of expert scientists, who willingly give up their time to help achieve the aims of the SMC through engagement with the media.

Scientists might help with an article for the Guardian on a controversial science subject, give an interview for BBC News on a breaking news story, or speak to a journalist at the Times about a planned exclusive article in their area of expertise. They speak on panels at our press briefings and send written comments in response to breaking stories and in advance of the publication of new research helping journalists to assess the significance of these new stories and papers. Many of these requests to scientists are made at short notice and outside normal working hours. Without their contributions, the SMC would not exist.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who gave up their time to help the SMC achieve its charitable objectives and improve media coverage of science stories.

Public benefit statement

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and those it tries to help are described below. All its activities focus on communicating science to the public and are undertaken to further the Science Media Centre's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Summary

The Science Media Centre exists to respond to complex and often controversial stories in the national news media. When a science story breaks, or new research is published, the SMC encourages appropriate experts to engage with the media to ensure that the resulting coverage is accurate and measured while also providing evidence-based information to the journalists covering the story.

The SMC works on stories across science, health, environment, technology and engineering, with a focus on the potentially messy, controversial or politicised issues that make headlines in the UK national press. This meant providing journalists with regular access to the best experts on infectious diseases, cancer, climate change, dementia, AI and diet among many others, helping to ensure that this scientific evidence and expertise was central to media reporting, and that the public had access to accurate information.

This year we ran 51 press briefings. We sent out 332 roundups and rapid reactions. This is on par with other average years excluding 2019–2020, 2020–21, and 2021–22, which were unusually high due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with scientists, engineers and other experts, and supporting them to engage with the media

Support of scientists is one of the most valued aspects of the SMC's work, and by working with individuals and press officers we encourage them to engage with and help inform the media coverage of their area of expertise.

The SMC provides direct day-to-day support to scientists who want help getting their work into the media, with the SMC press officers frequently advising academics on press matters even when they don't fall directly into our core work. We also help scientists achieve recognition and acknowledgement from their peers and institutions for the work they do to improve public understanding of science, particularly on the most challenging topics. This ranges from writing

citations and supporting nominations to providing personal recommendations based on their media engagement work with us.

Working with journalists and providing them with accurate information about science and its related disciplines

The main services that the SMC provides to journalists are:

Rapid Reactions

When a science or science-related story hits the headlines, the SMC encourages leading scientists in relevant fields to engage rapidly with the story, and offer evidence-based expert comments. The SMC then makes these experts and their comments available to journalists at all major UK news outlets. The media can follow up with further queries or interview requests. This activity helps to inject accurate information and valuable context from experts into the reporting of rapidly-developing news stories, which in turn reduces the likelihood of inaccurate speculation which may mislead or alarm the public. Rapid Reactions therefore satisfy both the desire of journalists for credible experts and appropriate information, and the public's need to hear from the best experts at the time when it is most critical.

Rapid Reactions have once again played a vital role in the accurate media reporting of newly developing stories such as various cases of avian flu in humans and mammals, cases of a new strain of Mpox in the UK, the NICE and MHRA decision on Alzheimer's disease drugs Lecanemab and Donanemab, the mass global IT outage, social media posts about cattle feed additive Bovaer, the launch of AI model Deepseek, the Heathrow airport substation fire, flash floods in Spain, claims heavy rain in Dubai was caused by cloud seeding, deaths in Laos from methanol poisoning, and many more.

Roundups

This service is unique to the SMC and is a key tool for the Centre and for specialist science, health and environment journalists to ensure accurate coverage of new scientific research. The SMC gathers and issues written comments from qualified, relevant experts on embargoed science studies and reports ahead of their publication. These third-party comments offer a critique and valuable insights that science journalists can use to cover the story in an accurate and responsible way. Statements from independent scientists can help reporters identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new study and put it into the context of wider scientific knowledge. These comments can indicate how surprising or important the findings are and describe any implications for policy, patients or the public. Print and broadcast journalists can lift quotes for their reports and follow up for further interviews with the experts.

For example, it may involve gathering independent expert comments on observational studies where it is important that the limitations and caveats of the work be properly understood by the public, such as roundups this year on ultra-processed food consumption and premature deaths,

screen time before 2 years of age and risk of autism at 12 years of age, and air pollution and higher risk of male infertility. It could also involve responding to studies on commonly taken medications or novel tests, where inaccurate reporting could lead to people being misinformed of the benefits and risks of these drugs and tests, such as a roundups on side effects of weight loss drugs such as improved smoking cessation, increased risk of suicidality, and reducing alcohol use disorder, or a new blood test for Parkinson's disease. A roundup may also be done in response to a press release on an abstract being presented at a scientific conference, which has not been through the peer-review process and doesn't have the full data available for scrutinizing, in order to highlight these important caveats, such as on an abstract on red meat intake and risk of dementia or excessive screen time being linked to early physical development.

Briefings

The SMC runs regular press briefings for specialist science journalists at the UK national news outlets. These briefings provide an opportunity for scientists and journalists to meet regularly, and allow scientists to explain their complicated work in a detailed and measured way. This gives journalists the opportunity to get fully to grips with a difficult or significant area of science, with the end result being more accurate media coverage. News briefings allow scientists to explain new findings in a more nuanced way, while background briefings address a wide range of topical issues where experts feel that accurate, evidence-based information has been missing from the media and public debate. SMC briefings have proved to be instrumental in ensuring scientifically-accurate media coverage of many high-profile and ongoing scientific issues. Average attendance at press briefings remains high, especially with the majority of press briefings being online only now (over Zoom), and in-person briefings having a hybrid dial-in option, which has been available since the pandemic. In 2024/2025 we had an average attendance of 14 journalists from national news outlets attend our media briefings.

We have run briefings on significant new reports and papers on the evidence of important headline issues of the day including reports on wastewater and public health, and deepfakes and election misinformation; studies on a new norovirus vaccine, personalised cancer vaccines, and withdrawal effects of antidepressants; and the announcement of the identification of a glyphosate resistant weed on a UK farm. Background briefings we have run- in which we host experts in a field to answer journalists' questions on a topical media issue- include sessions on plastic and microplastic pollution, the MHRA decision and NICE draft guidance on lecanemab, deep sea mining, scientific approaches to reduce methane emissions from farm animals, the future of cell-cultivated products, and many more.

Additional services

In addition to responding to the most important news stories of the day, providing accurate information about the latest developments in science to journalists, and running regular press briefings, the SMC also handles *ad hoc* enquiries from journalists seeking an expert to interview, or background information on a science, health or environment story which they may be working on.

The SMC also organised one 'Introduction to the News Media' event in 2024/2025, which is a seminar devised and refined over our twenty-year history aimed at persuading the best scientists of the case for engaging with the media. The event was held in collaboration with King's College London (KCL) on 5 February 2025, and was attended by 166 scientists and press officers.

Supporting press officers working on complex science, health and environment stories

Many of the SMC's core activities rely on working with and supporting press officers at other organisations, including when they have experts on an issue in the headlines, or when their own institution or scientists are the subject of media interest. Press officers regularly approach the SMC for its guidance and expertise on media stories, particularly when an issue is complex and controversial. This can include advice on drafting accurate and responsible press releases, how best to do responsible press work on preprints, or whether to run an SMC press briefing on a new piece of research.

The SMC also recognises and champions the crucial role press officers play in responsible science communication. SMC staff are often invited to give talks and presentations at scientific organisations and meetings, both aiding the press officers and encouraging their scientists to engage with the media, whilst also raising awareness of the SMC's work.

Providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media

The SMC is often called upon to comment on and provide expertise in relation to its overview and experience of science in the media.

SMC staff members additionally engage and share their expertise with the wider scientific community through their roles on boards and advisory committees of other scientific organisations. Fiona Lethbridge sits on the Advisory Board of the Maria Leptin EMBO Science Journalism Fellowships. Freya Robb and Ed Day are both Stempra committee members.

In June 2024, SMC Chief Executive Fiona Fox participated in the Nature Marsilius Visiting Professorship for Science Communication at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. As a visiting professor, Fiona delivered a series of workshops for students and delivered a public lecture. Fiona's workshops explored the importance of scientists engaging with the media on controversial issues; the changing job responsibilities of science communications professionals; and the question of whether scientists should engage in political matters.

Additionally, this year, Fiona Fox, was invited by the Royal Society to chair a working group to update the 1985 Bodmer report on Public Understanding of Science for its 40th anniversary. Fiona is leading the chapter on media and misinformation, which will produce up to six recommendations to the UK science community on how to best engage with these topics for the public interest. Fiona has appointed a working group composed of journalists, science communications professionals, and scientists heavily involved in public engagement work. The final report will be delivered in September 2025.

Fundraising

The SMC continues to have strong goodwill and support from funders. The planned deficit allowed staff resource to be focused on a review of fundraising approaches.

Donations continue to make up the majority of the income of the SMC and are mostly from organisations which have supported the SMC for many years. Fundraising at the SMC is carried out in-house by two members of staff as part of their roles. The Centre has high levels of retention within those organisations supporting the SMC and continues to be successful in attracting new supporters.

For the second time in September 2024 an event exclusively for funders of the SMC was held. Dame Angela McLean spoke on issues affecting the wider community and Fiona Fox highlighted to funders the activities the SMC had carried out using their funding. We intend this to be an annual event, with plans already underway for autumn 2025.

Impact

The work of the SMC is often difficult to judge through numbers alone. Success can mean a poor study or unpublished conference abstract is not covered in the newspapers, or is on page eight rather than the front page. It might also mean front pages explaining a significant new scientific development or paper with nuance or balance, or standfirsts explaining that leading scientists questioned the latest findings or cautioned against overinterpretation of the results.

Commentary on the objectives as described in last year's trustee report follows:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

This year was quite varied in terms of media stories. Two big stories continued to be the potential health impacts of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), and weight loss drugs and their potential side effects and impacts on other diseases as well as obesity, with the SMC continuing to provide roundup comments from third-party experts on new studies in these fields. Another huge story this year was Alzheimer's drugs, with the first two disease modifying drugs, Lecanemab and Donanemab, being evaluated by NICE and the MHRA. In response, the SMC organised an explainer briefing on the decision around Lecanemab and sent out expert comments on the decision around Donanemab. Other topics of significance included outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza in animals, cases of a new strain of Mpox, artificial intelligence, climate change, vaping, and screentime and mental health. These are all ongoing issues for the SMC and so we are already well acquainted with the top experts in these fields and how to advise scientists engaging with the media.

2. Scientific conferences

The SMC has begun its work on scientific conferences, identifying a group of people with experience in conference communications and organisation, journalists who report on conference proceedings, scientists who have previously been involved in critiquing conference papers, and scientists who specialise in research integrity. We have selected a number of high profile medical and health conferences as case studies where early-stage conference work has been heavily publicised to the media before peer-review and where the accuracy of the science was particularly important for public health/understanding. Work is now starting on interviewing the people in those different groups, identify patterns in approaches and opinions and gather ideas for how the pipeline of conference proceedings to public consumption might be improved.

3. Pilot SMC for Ireland

This year, the UK SMC, in collaboration with Irish charity Airfield Estate, initiated a one-year pilot SMC for Ireland. A Dublin-based senior press manager, line managed by the UK SMC Chief Executive, was appointed to run the yearlong pilot, beginning June 2024. The pilot's activities are limited to two of the core SMC services delivered right to journalists' inboxes: Rapid Reactions — comments by expert scientists or engineers to breaking news related to their fields of study — and Roundups — 3rd party comments on new scientific findings. The senior press manager developed press lists composed of Irish and Northern Irish journalists to receive comments and utilise the SMC as a resource to quickly reach scientists with relevant expertise to their story. They also populated an expert database with a broad range of scientific experts from across Ireland and Northern Ireland who signed up to be contacted for comment.

4. Social sciences project

The SMC met with key organisations within the social sciences including Campbell Collaboration, The British Academy, The Academy of Social Sciences, Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, and UK in a Changing Europe. These meetings helped clarify the role that social scientists can have in the stories the SMC works on. We have and will continue to recruit experts from the social sciences which overlap with the key issues that the SMC works on, such as population science, mental health, vaccination, and AI.

Financial review

Funding

The SMC is funded principally by scientific bodies, trusts and foundations, and other organisations, companies, charities, and government and related agencies. The SMC is independent from its funders who do not gain influence over the SMC's work in return for their financial support.

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2025

To protect the SMC from any undue influence we cap contributions from any one institution at 5% of the SMC's annual income. The cap for 2024–25 was £40,000. The SMC's Trustees and Advisory Group have agreed on two exceptions to the 5% upper limit: the Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI's contribution is over the 5% cap as this represents the consolidated amounts from several Research Councils which is now paid via the umbrella organisation UKRI set up in 2019.

The SMC is open and transparent regarding its funding. All funders are listed on the SMC website under bands for their total amount recognised within a financial year. A list is also included on page 20.

Transactions and financial position

In its fourteenth year of operation as a fully independent organisation, the SMC has continued to maintain a good financial position. The 2024/25 deficit result, in line with the deficit budget planned by the Trustees, is partly due to donations received earlier than expected and therefore recorded in the 2023/24 financial year, and the cost of short term project activities approved by the Trustees.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows that the total income for the year was £774,832 (£784,201 in 2024–25).

Total expenditure for the year was £867,876 (£796,398 in 2023–24) of which 95% (94% in 2023–24) was spent on charitable activities directly carrying out the Charity's key objectives.

The activities for the year therefore resulted in a deficit of £96,623 (£8,487 surplus in 2023–24). This includes £3,579 loss on investments (£20,684 gain in 2023–24).

Investment policy

The SMC has approximately £190,000 invested for growth. It is the intention of the Trustees to keep 12 months' running costs as cash in saving accounts, with lower risk and quicker access. Funds in excess of this are to be invested for the furtherance of the Charity's aims.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the SMC is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate that exposure. These risks are detailed on the Risk Register for the SMC with information on the current practice and strategy used to mitigate the risk. This register is reviewed annually by Trustees in June, with responsibility delegated to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to review the register at each meeting.

The current risk register pays particular attention to the risks around funding, conflicts of interest, cybersecurity, the loss of data, our reputation and staffing.

Risks for loss of funding are mitigated by close monitoring of the finances of the SMC, by seeking new income each year and by having a number of supporting organisations from across the sector. The independence of the Centre from funders is maintained by the current 5% cap and clear communication with new and existing funders on the separation between the funding and editorial activity of the SMC.

Best practice around conflicts of interests of scientists contributing to the media continues to be monitored by staff. Our policy on this was updated in February 2025. A further review of the policy is planned for early in the next period. The Centre clarifies when no competing interests have been received and when there are none to declare. Any criticism received regarding a conflict is met with open discussion and passed on to the scientist in question.

Cybersecurity risks to the SMC are addressed by ensuring the sector best practice is followed. This includes, but is not limited to: firewalls, secure staff passwords, regular upkeep of emails, antivirus software and regular off-site backups. The SMC is supported by an experienced third party supplier.

Reserves policy and going concern

The SMC has agreed that reserves would be used for support during a short, defined period of a deficit budget, allowing for new sources of income or reductions in expenditure to be identified.

It is therefore the policy of the Charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to twelve months' expenditure (approximately £750,000 for this period).

The Charity holds £770,731 in reserves as of 31 March 2025 (2024: £867,354). On this basis the Trustees are satisfied the SMC is a going concern.

Our year end fund position of £770,731 is in excess of our £750,000 reserves target. The Trustees feel that it is prudent to hold a slightly higher level of reserves as a deficit budget has been planned for 2025–26.

Trustees periodically review the reserves policy of the Charity.

Plans for the future

The Trustees feel that the SMC is continuing to operate from a position of strength, in terms of both its core activities and financial security. The expertise of senior management and staff at the SMC will ensure that these future plans are given sufficient resources and achieved.

The following priorities have been identified for the coming year:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

We will continue to monitor the news for developing stories and issues where scientific expertise can help play a role in accurate reporting. On these issues, we will work closely with scientists who can provide third party comments on breaking news and new research as well as host them at press briefings for journalists on important new papers being published to ensure the science at hand is reported on in an accurate and measured way.

2. Social media and changing trends in the media

This year we plan to do a piece of work to get the SMC up-to-date with the latest media trends and changes in where public audiences access information and news about science. The SMC will closely follow the latest media consumption reports and will speak with those organisations that run polls and gather evidence on these sorts of trends to identify where there might be gaps in data specifically about science news. The SMC will also meet with news media outlets about their efforts to get their journalism onto new platforms and to reach younger and different audiences, to explore whether there is a role for the SMC in further supporting science journalism, and in making sure the public continues to have access to accurate information about science, health and environment topics, in the current information landscape.

3. Data journalists project:

The SMC will do some focused work on data stories. This project will include meetings with journalists and press officers who work on data-lead stories to learn how they come about and if/how science, health and environment specialists are involved to work out if there is additional work the SMC can do in supporting accurate and measured reporting in this area.

4. Assisting with the transition of the pilot SMC in Ireland to a fully-fledged SMC.

After the pilot finishes in June 2025, the UK SMC will produce a formal report assessing whether the pilot met the success criteria laid out in the initial consultation report. After that, we will be stepping back from formal involvement – it will be over to the Irish science community to decide whether to establish a fully-fledged SMC in Ireland. However, we are planning on assisting with the transition in an informal capacity, continuing to forward UK SMC roundups and rapid reactions to Irish press lists and sending out Irish expert comments to Irish press lists on an ad-hoc basis.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The SMC is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee (Company Registration No. 7560997, England & Wales; Charity Registration No. 1140827). The Board of Trustees is the major decision-making body and it meets at least three times a year.

The organisation incorporated on 11 March 2011 and registered as a charity on 18 March 2011.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 7 to the accounts.

Trustees are individuals distinguished in the field of science, engineering, medicine, journalism, communications, finance, law and policy. The SMC considers each of the Trustees to be independent in character and judgement, and understands that they have no relationships that are likely to affect, or could appear to affect, their judgements regarding the SMC. Declarations of interest are required from new Trustees upon appointment and are updated annually, whilst every meeting of the Board of Trustees also requires that any new interests are declared.

All Trustees also act as directors of the company, but none has any beneficial interest in the company and no remuneration is provided except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. Policy is determined by the Trustees, on the advice of the Advisory Group (see below) and others, and its implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive who, in conjunction with a team of nine additional staff, the Advisory Group and Trustees as appropriate, undertakes the necessary work.

A Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive, two Senior Press Managers and Head of Operations allows for better distribution of organisational responsibility and both staff and Trustees continue to be happy with the structure.

A review of governance of the charity was carried out in 2022. The previously named Advisory Committee was renamed the Advisory Group to make clear it is not a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees nor does it have delegated authority or decision-making powers. All Trustees are also members of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is an independent, advisory group whose purpose is to provide independent, expert insight on matters concerned with science and engineering reporting in the media. It is a voluntary group of distinguished experts from the fields of science, engineering, medicine, journalism and communications, who provide expertise and advice. The Advisory Group meets three times a year.

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is a principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues such as financial planning, pensions, the annual audit and risk review and management. The

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2025

Committee consists of a minimum of three members, with a majority of Committee members being Trustees, including the Treasurer. The remaining Committee members may be external members. Currently the Committee comprises three Trustees, including the Treasurer, and two external members. The Senior Management Team attend in an observational capacity. The Committee meets three times a year.

The Remuneration Committee is another principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues of staff pay and reward. The Remuneration Committee is comprised of a minimum of three members, all of whom are Trustees. The committee meets once a year and reports directly to the Trustees.

The SMC is very grateful to the members of all committees and groups for their valuable contributions.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the period are:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Amanda Borton	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Richard Fisher	
Prof Azra Ghani	
Prof Peter Openshaw	Appointed 23 October 2024
Prof Charlotte Summers	Appointed 23 October 2024
Prof Kevin McConway	Resigned 23 October 2024

Staff

Trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Key Management Personnel:

Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

The SMC has ten members of staff and the Trustees record their appreciation of the efforts of the staff, who have again made an enormous contribution to the success of the SMC during the year.

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2025

During the year the SMC also benefited greatly from ten interns who each spent five weeks assisting with administrative duties and experiencing life within a busy press office.

Trustees would also like to record their appreciation for the efforts of the interns, and are pleased to note that many previous interns go on to obtain full time permanent roles within the science communication field.

Pay and remuneration

The following principles of the pay system are agreed by Trustees

- The SMC should not have a system which the charity cannot afford
- The system should not reward staff who are underperforming
- The system should have some built-in mechanism to monitor the competition and react to changes in the job market
- The system should recognise the developmental nature of the roles at the SMC

All permanent staff are appointed into salary bands, dependent on the role and its responsibilities. Reflecting the developmental nature of the roles, these salary bands each have room for progression. Benchmarking is conducted every two years to ensure the salary bands are comparable to similar roles outside the SMC. The Remuneration Committee recommends changes to salary bands based on affordability, wider economic circumstances and the financial performance of the SMC. The Board of Trustees considers salary band recommendations and makes final decisions on updating salary bands. Managers decide staff progression through salary bands based on annual performance reviews. The Remuneration Committee acts as a sounding board for the Chief Executive to discuss staff performance.

The salary of the Chief Executive is considered separately by the Remuneration Committee who will consider the wider economic circumstances and any benchmarking before making recommendations to the Trustees.

Benefits provided to staff currently include income protection insurance, health and dental insurance, ability to buy or sell leave, gym membership and membership of professional-body Stempra.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

In 2022 a new policy on trustee recruitment and induction was adopted, bringing the SMC in line with current practice. Trustees and staff consider the skills gaps formed by departing Trustees, and advertise for potential Trustees with skills to match. Applications are reviewed and interviewed as necessary by current Trustees and staff. Consideration is given to the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a

contribution to the pursuit of the objects or the management of the Charity. Prospective trustees are then proposed and appointed at October meeting each year.

Trustee induction and training

The SMC undertakes a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, which includes induction materials relating to its purposes and finances, the powers of the Trustees and information about day-to-day running of the SMC. Key documents are provided, such as the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and terms of reference, the Charity Commission's Essential Trustee guide, up-to-date accounts, and minutes of the most recent Trustee meetings. New trustees may also attend a Trustee meeting in the summer before their formal appointment at the October meeting as an observer as part of the induction process. Trustees continue to be supported through on-going training, with skills requirements regularly reviewed.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

Related party transactions are detailed in Note 9 in the financial statements.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of Science Media Centre for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2025

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2025 was 11 (2024:10). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 15 October 2025 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2025

£2,000 and under

Association of Medical Research Charities
Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
Keele University
National Nuclear Laboratory
National Oceanography Centre
New England Journal of Medicine
Society for Radiological Protection
The Times
UK Cleaning Products Industry Association
University of Exeter
University of Portsmouth
University of Reading
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
University of York

£2,001 – £4,999

Alan Turing Institute
Alzheimer's Research UK
Biochemical Society
British Ecological Society
British Pharmacological Society
British Society of Immunology
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Durham University
Earlham Institute
Food & Drink Federation
FoodDrinkEurope
Health Data Research UK (HDRUK)
Institute of Cancer Research
Institute of Physics
John Innes Centre
London School of Hygiene & Tropical
Medicine
Medicines and Healthcare Products
Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
Microbiology Society
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Newcastle University
Nuclear Industry Association
Queen Mary, University of London
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Sainsbury Laboratory
Taylor & Francis
UK Dementia Research Institute
University of Birmingham
University of East Anglia
University of Glasgow
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Manchester
University of Nottingham
University of Warwick
Wellcome Sanger Institute

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2025

£5,000 – £9,999

Abbvie Ltd
Academy of Medical Sciences
Applied Microbiology International
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
BP International
Bristol University
British Heart Foundation
Cancer Research UK
Chemical Industries Association
Cochrane Collaboration
Francis Crick Institute
Genomics England
Gilead Sciences
Institution of Engineering and Technology
John Wiley & Sons
King's College London
LifeArc
Met Office
Moderna Biotech
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
National Institute for Health Research
National Physical Laboratory
Nestle UK Ltd
Nutrition Society
Office for National Statistics
Quadram Institute Bioscience
Rolls-Royce Plc
Royal Academy of Engineering
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Royal Society of Biology
Shionogi
UK Biobank
UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology
Ulster University
University College London
University of Cambridge
University of Edinburgh
University of Oxford

£10,000 – £19,999

AstraZeneca
Cambridge University Press
CropLife International
Ellison Institute of Technology
Elsevier
Food Standards Agency
Government Office for Science
Imperial College London
Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD)
Orsted (UK) Limited
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Royal Society
Sanofi Aventis

£20,000 – £40,000

Diageo Plc
DMG Media
Gatsby Charitable Foundation
GlaxoSmithKline
Springer Nature Ltd

Over £40,000

UK Research & Innovation

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Science Media Centre for the year ended 31 March 2025.

This report is made solely to the trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. My examination has been undertaken so that I might state to the trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Company you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')/Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3 The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Fleur Holden FCA

Address: Sayer Vincent LLP, 110 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TG

Date: 24 October 2025

Science Media Centre

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2025

		2025			2024		
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Income from:							
Donations	2	720,926	–	720,926	751,749	–	751,749
Charitable activities	3	–	41,000	41,000	–	21,500	21,500
Investments	4	12,906	–	12,906	10,952	–	10,952
Total income		733,832	41,000	774,832	762,701	21,500	784,201
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	5	41,486	–	41,486	48,596	–	48,596
Charitable activities	5	785,390	41,000	826,390	723,019	24,783	747,802
Total expenditure		826,876	41,000	867,876	771,615	24,783	796,398
Net income / (expenditure) before net gains / (losses) on investments		(93,044)	–	(93,044)	(8,914)	(3,283)	(12,197)
Net gains / (losses) on investments		(3,579)	–	(3,579)	20,684	–	20,684
Net income / (expenditure) for the year	6	(96,623)	–	(96,623)	11,770	(3,283)	8,487
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		867,354	–	867,354	855,584	3,283	858,867
Total funds carried forward		770,731	–	770,731	867,354	–	867,354

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 15a to the financial statements.

Science Media Centre

Balance sheet

Company no. 07560997

As at 31 March 2025

	Note	£	2025 £	£	2024 £
Fixed assets:					
Investments	11		186,823		190,402
			<u>186,823</u>		<u>190,402</u>
Current assets:					
Debtors	12	171,045		96,100	
Cash at bank and in hand		461,540		621,532	
		<u>632,585</u>		<u>717,632</u>	
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(48,677)		(40,680)	
				<u></u>	
Net current assets			<u>583,908</u>		<u>676,952</u>
Total net assets			<u><u>770,731</u></u>		<u><u>867,354</u></u>
The funds of the charity:	15a				
Restricted income funds			-		-
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds		770,731		867,354	
		<u></u>		<u></u>	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>770,731</u>		<u>867,354</u>
Total charity funds			<u><u>770,731</u></u>		<u><u>867,354</u></u>

The opinion of the directors is that the company is entitled to the exemptions conferred by Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The directors acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

Approved by the trustees on 15 October 2025 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2025

	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net (expenditure)/income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	(96,623)		8,487	
Loss/(gain) on investments	3,579		(20,684)	
Interest from investments	(12,906)		(10,952)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(74,945)		41,459	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	7,997		(3,540)	
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	(172,898)		14,770	
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Interest from investments	12,906		10,952	
Net cash provided by investing activities	12,906		10,952	
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	(159,992)		25,722	
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	621,532		595,810	
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	461,540		621,532	

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

Science Media Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office address, which is also the operational address, is 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The year end funds position is £770,731 (2024: £867,354) which is in excess of our reserves target.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charity in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

1 Accounting policies (continued)

h) Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £2,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

- Fixtures, fittings & equipment 4 years

i) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

k) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

m) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

2 Income from donations

	2025 £	2024 £
Donations and gifts	500,426	494,249
Grants receivable for core activities	53,000	103,000
Government grants:		
British Antarctic Survey	–	1,000
Food Standards Agency	10,000	10,000
Genomics England	6,000	6,000
Government Office for Science	10,000	10,000
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency	3,000	3,000
Met Office	5,000	–
National Institute for Clinical Excellence	5,000	5,000
National Institute for Health Research	8,000	10,000
National Nuclear Laboratory	2,000	2,000
National Physical Laboratory	5,000	5,000
Office for National Statistics	6,000	–
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	12,500	7,500
UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)	95,000	95,000
	720,926	751,749

All income from donations is unrestricted.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

3 Income from charitable activities

	2025	2024
	£	£
Global SMCs Coordinator	36,000	15,000
Pilot SMC for Ireland	5,000	6,500
Total income from charitable activities	41,000	21,500

All income from charitable activities is restricted.

4 Income from investments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Interest	12,906	10,952
	12,906	10,952

All income from investments is unrestricted.

5a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	31,886	608,844	–	–	640,730	588,800
Event costs	–	23,797	–	–	23,797	23,513
Premises costs	–	–	–	43,465	43,465	43,065
Office costs	–	–	–	72,686	72,686	59,201
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	405	39,005	39,410	12,970
Insurance	–	–	–	13,806	13,806	13,586
Professional fees	–	11,336	–	–	11,336	33,957
Accountancy	–	–	1,602	15,926	17,528	16,588
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,620	–	4,620	4,440
Bank charges	–	–	–	498	498	278
	31,886	643,977	6,627	185,386	867,876	796,398
Governance costs	331	6,296	(6,627)	–	–	–
Support costs	9,269	176,117	–	(185,386)	–	–
Total expenditure 2025	41,486	826,390	–	–	867,876	

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

5b Analysis of expenditure (prior year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2024 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	41,090	547,710	–	–	588,800
Event costs	–	23,513	–	–	23,513
Premises costs	–	–	–	43,065	43,065
Office costs	–	–	13	59,188	59,201
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	351	12,619	12,970
Insurance	–	–	–	13,586	13,586
Professional fees	–	33,957	–	–	33,957
Accountancy	–	–	1,434	15,154	16,588
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,440	–	4,440
Bank charges	–	–	–	278	278
	41,090	605,180	6,238	143,890	796,398
Governance costs	312	5,926	(6,238)	–	–
Support costs	7,195	136,696	–	(143,890)	–
Total expenditure 2024	48,596	747,802	–	–	796,398

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

6 Net income / (expenditure) for the year

	2025 £	2024 £
Independent Examiner's Fee (excluding VAT):		
Independent Examination	3,850	3,700
Other services	–	1,850
	<u>3,850</u>	<u>5,550</u>

7 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Salaries and wages	494,628	496,694
Social security costs	53,885	53,923
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	92,217	38,183
	<u>640,730</u>	<u>588,800</u>

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2025 No.	2024 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	–	1
£110,000–£119,999	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £373,987 (2024: £347,679).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2024: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2024: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £405 (2024: £351) incurred by 4 (2024: 4) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

8 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 12 (2024: 11).

9 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year (2024: £nil).

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2025

10 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

11 Listed investments

	2025 £	2024 £
Fair value at the start of the year	190,402	169,718
Additions at cost	–	–
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	(3,579)	20,684
Fair value at the end of the year	<u>186,823</u>	<u>190,402</u>

Investments comprise:

	2025 £	2024 £
UK Common investment funds	186,823	190,402
	<u>186,823</u>	<u>190,402</u>

12 Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade debtors	106,941	75,326
Other debtors	47,440	4,993
Prepayments	16,664	15,781
	<u>171,045</u>	<u>96,100</u>

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	2024 £
Trade creditors	4,795	8,731
Taxation and social security	13,599	14,369
Accruals	30,283	17,580
	<u>48,677</u>	<u>40,680</u>

14a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Investments	186,823	–	186,823
Net current assets	583,908	–	583,908
Net assets at 31 March 2025	770,731	–	770,731

14b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	190,402	–	190,402
Net current assets	676,952	–	676,952
Net assets at 31 March 2024	867,354	–	867,354

15a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2024 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2025 £
Restricted funds:					
Global SMCs Coordinator	–	36,000	(36,000)	–	–
Pilot SMC for Ireland	–	5,000	(5,000)	–	–
Total restricted funds	–	41,000	(41,000)	–	–
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	867,354	733,832	(830,455)	–	770,731
Total unrestricted funds	867,354	733,832	(830,455)	–	770,731
Total funds	867,354	774,832	(871,455)	–	770,731

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

15b Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2024 £
Restricted funds:					
Global SMCs Coordinator	3,283	15,000	(18,283)	–	–
Pilot SMC for Ireland	–	6,500	(6,500)	–	–
Total restricted funds	3,283	21,500	(24,783)	–	–
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	855,584	783,385	(771,615)	–	867,354
Total unrestricted funds	855,584	783,385	(771,615)	–	867,354
Total funds	858,867	804,885	(796,398)	–	867,354

Purposes of restricted funds

Global SMCs Coordinator

To fund the post Global Coordinator to support the network of Science Media Centres around the world.

Pilot SMC for Ireland

To investigate the feasibility of a Science Media Centre for Ireland, together with Airfield Estate Dublin.

16 Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.

Accounts

Company number: 07560997

Charity Number: 1140827

Science Media Centre

Report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Contents

For the year ended 31 March 2024

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Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Company number 07560997
Country of incorporation United Kingdom

Charity number 1140827
Country of registration England & Wales

Registered office and operational address 215 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BE

Trustees Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Amanda Borton	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Richard Fisher	Appointed 31 October 2023
Prof Azra Ghani	Appointed 31 October 2023
Karen Chadwick	Resigned 31 October 2023

Key management personnel	Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
	Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
	Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
	Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Bankers	HSBC Bank PLC 16 King Street Covent Garden London WC2E 8JF
	CCLA Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET
Solicitors	Bristows LLP 100 Victoria Embankment London EC4Y 0DH
Independent examiner	Fleur Holden Sayer Vincent LLP Chartered Accountants 110 Golden Lane LONDON EC1Y 0TG

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association, the requirements of a directors' report as required under company law, and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The SMC works to promote the views of the scientific community on issues of importance and helps to ensure that their expertise is available to the national news media, and through them policy-makers and the public.

Introduction

The Science Media Centre (SMC) has its roots in the influential House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's third report on Science and Society, which sought to renew public trust in science. The overall goal of the SMC is therefore to help achieve this aim by working to promote more balanced, accurate and measured coverage of the important science, health and environment stories that appear in the media.

The SMC was originally set up in April 2002 as a division of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RIGB, Charity Registration No. 227938), and its financial structure was that of a restricted fund maintained by the RIGB. In April 2011 the SMC became independent and registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The period ended 31 March 2024 is the SMC's thirteenth year as a fully independent organisation, but also its twenty second year of existence.

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that the public values science, with 82% saying they are very or fairly interested in health research¹, while other surveys report that the vast majority (74%) agree that science will make people's lives easier, and think that scientists (89%) and engineers (87%) make a valuable contribution to society². A large majority (82%) of people report being very or fairly interested in hearing directly from scientists about their research – an increase from 63% in

¹ Wellcome Trust Monitor Report Wave November 2019, Public interest and engagement with health research

² Public Attitudes to Science 2019, carried out by Kantar, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

2015³. The most recent survey of its kind reported high levels of public trust that scientists (74%), engineers (85%), and doctors (85%) tell the truth⁴.

The Science Media Centre recently commissioned Ipsos to conduct a poll about where the British public gets their information from about science⁵. The results suggested that British adults are more likely to get information about science from traditional news media than from social media (with TV news being the biggest source (52%), and non-newspaper online news outlets such as BBC News, ITN and Sky News also being a significant source (34%)). A similar number of participants cited national newspapers and social media as sources of science information (30%). On delving into the origin of science information seen on social media, traditional news media outlets was the most common source (50%), and even some of those who had said they didn't typically get science information from the news media actually went on to cite it as the source of what they were seeing on social media, suggesting news journalism still has significant reach including to many of those people who only look on social media.

As such working with the mainstream news media provides an opportunity for accurate, evidence-based information to reach a mass audience. The SMC's priority is to promote, for the benefit of the public and policymakers, accurate and evidence-based information about science in the media, particularly on controversial and headline news stories as this is when most confusion and misinformation occurs.

The objects of the SMC are as follows:

"To advance the education of the public in science and engineering and all their related branches and disciplines, particularly by the dissemination of research and information about science to the media."

In order to meet its charitable objectives, the SMC's main activities include:

- working with scientists, engineers and other experts from the scientific community, and supporting them to engage with the media;
- working with journalists and providing them with information about science and its related disciplines;
- supporting press officers when they are working on complex and contentious science, health and environment stories that could be misrepresented;
- providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media.

There has been no change during the period in the policies adopted in furtherance of the objects, and the Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the SMC should undertake.

³ Wellcome Monitor 2020, How the British public engage with health research

⁴ Veracity Index 2023, Ipsos MORI survey of trust in professions

⁵ 'Summary report – Ipsos survey on science and the media' 2024, Science Media Centre

Purposes and aims

The SMC's philosophy is:

"The media will do science better when scientists do the media better."

Our main activities allow us to achieve our philosophy and our objectives – by ensuring that the accuracy of science represented by the mainstream media is improved. As an organisation we predominantly work on new research and the breaking news of the day, meaning our long and short-term aims are very similar. For us, the most important thing is that we continue to be able to proactively respond to the next breaking news story or controversial research paper so that the public have access to the best expertise on these issues via the media.

Staff are the main resource of the SMC and five permanent members of staff are dedicated to the press office element of the Centre with the remaining three members of staff providing essential support to the running of the Centre. This year we have also created a new role, for a trainee press officer, who will join the SMC on a year traineeship to learn about press work, with the idea being to have a new trainee each year. Additionally, we have continued the Global Coordinator role that is dedicated to working with the global network of SMCs, and forging links with people and scientific societies worldwide to inform other countries about the SMC model.

Volunteers

The Centre continues to benefit from volunteers through our database of expert scientists, who willingly give up their time to help achieve the aims of the SMC through engagement with the media.

Scientists might help with an article for the Telegraph on a controversial science subject, give an interview for ITV news on a breaking news story, or speak to a journalist at the Mail on Sunday about a planned exclusive article in their area of expertise. They speak on panels at our press briefings and send written comments in response to breaking stories and in advance of the publication of new research helping journalists to assess the significance of these new stories and papers. Many of these requests to scientists are made at short notice and outside normal working hours. Without their contributions, the SMC would not exist.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who gave up their time to help the SMC achieve its charitable objectives and improve media coverage of science stories.

Public benefit statement

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and those it tries to help are described below. All its activities focus on communicating science to the public and are undertaken to further the Science Media Centre's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Summary

The Science Media Centre exists to respond to complex and often controversial stories in the national news media. When a science story breaks, or new research is published, the SMC encourages appropriate experts to engage with the media to ensure that the resulting coverage is accurate and measured while also providing evidence-based information to the journalists covering the story.

The SMC works on stories across science, health, environment, and engineering, with a focus on the potentially messy, controversial or politicised issues that make headlines in the UK national press. This meant providing journalists with regular access to the best experts on infectious diseases, vaccines, climate, dementia, pharmacology and diet among many others, helping to ensure that this scientific evidence and expertise was central to media reporting, and that the public had access to accurate information.

This year we ran 47 press briefings. We sent out 378 roundups and rapid reactions. This is on par with other average years excluding 2019–2020, 2020–21, and 2021–22, which were unusually high due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with scientists, engineers and other experts, and supporting them to engage with the media

Support of scientists is one of the most valued aspects of the SMC's work, and by working with individuals and press officers we encourage them to engage with and help inform the media coverage of their area of expertise.

The SMC provides direct day-to-day support to scientists who want help getting their work into the media, with the SMC press officers frequently advising academics on press matters even when they don't fall directly into our core work. We also help scientists achieve recognition and acknowledgement from their peers and institutions for the work they do to improve public understanding of science, particularly on the most challenging topics. This ranges from writing citations and supporting nominations to providing personal recommendations based on their media engagement work with us.

Working with journalists and providing them with accurate information about science and its related disciplines

The main services that the SMC provides to journalists are:

Rapid Reactions

When a science or science-related story hits the headlines, the SMC encourages leading scientists in relevant fields to engage rapidly with the story, and offer evidence-based expert comments. The SMC then makes these experts and their comments available to journalists at all major UK news outlets. The media can follow up with further queries or interview requests. This activity helps to inject accurate information and valuable context from experts into the reporting of rapidly-developing news stories, which in turn reduces the likelihood of inaccurate speculation which may mislead or alarm the public. Rapid Reactions therefore satisfy both the desire of journalists for credible experts and appropriate information, and the public's need to hear from the best experts at the time when it is most critical.

Rapid Reactions have once again played a vital role in the accurate media reporting of newly developing stories such as the Baltimore bridge collapse, a measles outbreak in the UK in early 2024, various outbreaks of bird flu globally, the volcanic eruption in Iceland, the bed bug situation in London and Paris in 2023, government announcements on a phased ban of smoking and plans to rejoin the HORIZON research programme, the heatwaves and wildfires in summer 2023, news reports that the first baby was born using mitochondrial replacement therapy, new drug trial announcements for Alzheimer's disease, and many more.

Roundups

This service is unique to the SMC and is a key tool for the Centre and for specialist science, health and environment journalists to ensure accurate coverage of new scientific research. The SMC gathers and issues written comments from qualified, relevant experts on embargoed science studies and reports ahead of their publication. These third party comments offer a critique and valuable insights that science journalists can use to cover the story in an accurate and responsible way. Statements from independent scientists can help reporters identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new study and put it into the context of wider scientific knowledge. These comments can indicate how surprising or important the findings are and describe any implications for policy, patients or the public. Print and broadcast journalists can lift quotes for their reports and follow up for further interviews with the experts.

For example, it may involve gathering independent expert comments on observational studies where it is important that the limitations and caveats of the work be properly understood by the public, such as roundups this year on the association between progestogen hormones and brain tumour risk, or erectile dysfunction drugs and Alzheimer's disease, and epigenetic changes in smokers and vapers and cancer risk. It could also involve responding to studies on commonly taken medications or novel tests, where inaccurate reporting could lead to people being

misinformed of the benefits and risks of these drugs and tests, such as a roundup on a biomarker test for Alzheimer's disease, a preventative antibody for RSV in infants, or off-target effects in mRNA vaccines. A roundup may also be done in response to a study where it's important to recognise the limits of real-world interpretation or implications, and expert commentary can help achieve this, such as roundups this year on sea sponge data reporting that we've passed 1.5 degrees of industrial-era warming, or a modelling study suggesting the Atlantic Ocean Circulation (AMOC) could be on course to collapse.

Briefings

The SMC runs regular press briefings for specialist science journalists at the UK national news outlets. These briefings provide an opportunity for scientists and journalists to meet regularly, and allow scientists to explain their complicated work in a detailed and measured way. This gives journalists the opportunity to get fully to grips with a difficult or significant area of science, with the end result being more accurate media coverage. News briefings allow scientists to explain new findings in a more nuanced way, while background briefings address a wide range of topical issues where experts feel that accurate, evidence-based information has been missing from the media and public debate. SMC briefings have proved to be instrumental in ensuring scientifically-accurate media coverage of many high-profile and ongoing scientific issues. Average attendance at press briefings remains high, especially with the hybrid dial-in option which has been available since the pandemic. In 2023/2024 we had an average attendance of 17 journalists from national news outlets attend our media briefings.

We have run briefings on significant new reports and papers on the evidence of important headline issues of the day such as a report on blood tests for Alzheimer's disease, invasive alien species, a new study on how air pollution causes lung cancer, an independent review into equity in medical devices, and the Chief Medical Officers' report on air 'health in an ageing society'. Background briefings we have run – in which we host experts in a field to answer journalists' questions on a topical media issue – include sessions on avian influenza, weight loss drugs, ultra-processed foods, carbon capture & storage and carbon dioxide removal, and wastewater release from the Fukushima power plant.

Additional services

In addition to responding to the most important news stories of the day, providing accurate information about the latest developments in science to journalists, and running regular press briefings, the SMC also handles *ad hoc* enquiries from journalists seeking an expert to interview, or background information on a science, health or environment story which they may be working on.

The SMC also organised two Introduction to the News Media events in 2023/2024, which are seminars devised and refined over our twenty year history aimed at persuading the best scientists of the case for engaging with the media. The first event in 2023/24 was held in collaboration with University College London (UCL) on 20 September 2023, and was attended by 117 scientists and

press officers. The second event was held in collaboration with the University of Sheffield on 5 March 2024, and was attended by 150 scientists and press officers.

On Wednesday 17 January 2024 the SMC hosted a two-hour session on statistics for science, health and environment journalists. The session was conceived and organised by the SMC and delivered by Prof Sir David Spiegelhalter – covering common statistical concepts science journalists come across day-to-day in press releases and scientific papers such as statistical significance, p-values, confidence intervals, odds ratios, confounding factors, and association versus causation. The session was attended by over 40 news journalists, and feedback was positive – we intend to run this session again in 2024/25.

Supporting press officers when they are working on complex science, health and environment stories

Many of the SMC's core activities rely on working with and supporting press officers at other organisations, including when they have experts on an issue in the headlines, or when their own institution or scientists are the subject of media interest. Press officers regularly approach the SMC for its guidance and expertise on media stories, particularly when an issue is complex and controversial. This can include advice on drafting accurate and responsible press releases, how best to do responsible press work on preprints, or whether to run an SMC press briefing on a new piece of research.

The SMC also recognises and champions the crucial role press officers play in responsible science communication. SMC staff are often invited to give talks and presentations at scientific organisations and meetings, both aiding the press officers and encouraging their scientists to engage with the media, whilst also raising awareness of the SMC's work. The SMC also carried out an update of the labelling system for press releases for health and medical research, which the SMC developed back in 2018 with the Academy of Medical Sciences. The aim of the labelling system is to help journalists see at a glance the nature and significance of the new study, and to help press officers who sometimes find themselves dealing with scientists who are a little 'over-excited' about their findings – with the aim of being a nudge in the direction of proportionate and accurate coverage.

Providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media

The SMC is often called upon to comment on and provide expertise in relation to its overview and experience of science in the media.

SMC staff members additionally engage and share their expertise with the wider scientific community through their roles on boards and advisory committees of other scientific organisations. Fiona Fox is on the advisory committee for the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response. Fiona Lethbridge is sitting on the Advisory Board of the Maria Leptin EMBO Science Journalism Fellowships. Freya Robb and Ed Day are both Stempra committee members.

The SMC commissioned Ipsos to conduct a poll about where the British public get their information about science, which was published by the SMC in November 2023. This was partly to ask again some questions we'd asked in 2002 when we opened (to keep abreast of changes in where the public accesses science information), as well as to explore what it means when people say they get information from social media (what the sources actually are), and to explore whether and why the public trusts scientists. Details of the results of the survey can be seen in the SMC's press release⁶ and summary report⁷.

The SMC also submitted written evidence focussing on public understanding and scientists engaging with the media, to the House of Lords Committee on Food, Diet and Obesity's inquiry, Food, Diet and Obesity, which was subsequently published⁸ in May 2024.

Fundraising

The year 2023–24 ended with a surplus of £8,487 (2023: £19,767). The SMC feels its fundraising is still very effective and there is no reduction in the goodwill or support from funders.

Donations continue to make up the majority of the income of the SMC and are mostly from organisations which have supported the SMC for many years. Fundraising at the SMC is carried out in-house by two members of staff as part of their roles. The Centre has high levels of retention within those organisations supporting the SMC and continues to be successful in attracting new supporters.

For the first time in September 2023 an event exclusively for funders of the SMC was held. Sir Patrick Vallance spoke on issues affecting the wider community and Fiona Fox highlighted to funders the activities the SMC had carried out using their funding. Feedback was positive and we intend to repeat the event in 2024.

Impact

The work of the SMC is often difficult to judge through numbers alone. Success can mean a poor study or unpublished conference abstract isn't covered in the newspapers, or is on page eight rather than the front page. It might also mean front pages explaining a significant new scientific development or paper with nuance or balance, or standfirsts explaining that leading scientists questioned the latest findings or cautioned against overinterpretation of the results.

Commentary on the objectives as described in last year's trustee report follows:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

⁶ 'News media a bigger source of science information than social media', Science Media Centre press release

⁷ 'Summary report – Ipsos survey on science and the media', Science Media Centre

⁸ Science Media Centre – Written Evidence (FDO0025)

This year felt like a full 'return to normal' after the COVID-19 pandemic, with lingering media interest in the big studies on longer-term consequences of the virus and the pandemic, such as long COVID, but at lower levels of coverage than seen previously. There has been a continued appetite for other stories, and two of the big topics of the year have been the debate around the potential health impacts of ultra-processed foods (UPFs), and the effects of weight loss drugs for obesity, both of which the SMC organised background briefings on, with some top experts in these fields giving the journalists an overview on the state of research. Other topics of significance have been outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza in animals, artificial intelligence, climate change, vaping, and mental health. These are all ongoing issues for the SMC and so we are already well acquainted with the top experts in these fields and how to advise scientists engaging with the media.

2. Refresh of the Science Media Centre's expert database

Having come out of the pandemic with our expert database refreshed with many new top experts in infectious diseases, vaccine development and immunology, we have now begun refreshing our expert database with scientists and engineers across a range of key topic areas for the SMC, including mental health, dementia, diet and nutrition, climate, cancer and energy. We have sought out those researchers doing impressive work at some of the best universities and research institutions who will be the scientific leaders of the future. This is an important ongoing process which will ensure our database does not become stale and reflects a true diversity of scientists who are among the very best of the mainstream scientific community.

3. Conferences

We have begun to look more closely at media reporting of scientific conferences. It is common that work presented at scientific conferences is at a very early stage and typically pre-publication. It is also common for this work to be heavily publicised to the media, without data being made available for journalists and 3rd party scientists to properly scrutinise the claims. While conferences provide an important part of scientific discussion and debate for scientists in attendance, there are potential risks to public understanding. The SMC has begun a project to speak with those involved in press work on conferences, conference organisers, journalists and scientists to seek their views on conference comms. The SMC will use this information to guide our activity in supporting accurate coverage of scientific conferences.

4. Improve the Science Media Centre's work on artificial intelligence

This year we stepped up our work on AI in response to the increased media interest following the launch of ChatGPT. We have developed relationships with press officers in key research organizations including The Alan Turing Institute and The Ada Lovelace Institute, and AI-focused university departments, recruiting many of their top experts to our database. We have used these contacts to secure speaking arrangements at AI events such as the UK AI conference, and at departmental meetings such as the Surrey Institute for People-Centred Artificial Intelligence, further increasing our connections with the top AI scientists and encouraging them to engage with the media. We subsequently used these connections to organize a meeting with relevant press

officers, scientists, and other interested contacts, to discuss/learn more about the state of AI research, the media coverage of AI, and future points of potential contention.

This work has put the SMC in better stead to respond to new studies and breaking developments on AI, with examples in the past year being AI in the health space: for diagnosing heart attacks, mammography screening, and answering patient questions, and reactions to various statements on the potential existential risks of AI. We also organized a media briefing with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) on their announcement of £50 million of funding to develop trustworthy and secure AI, with four of the recipients of the funding explaining the research they intend to perform.

Financial review

Funding

The SMC is funded principally by scientific bodies, trusts and foundations, and other organisations, companies, charities, and government and related agencies. The SMC is independent from its funders who do not gain influence over the SMC's work in return for their financial support.

To protect the SMC from any undue influence we cap contributions from any one institution at 5% of the SMC's annual income. The cap for 2023–24 was £35,000. The SMC's Trustees and Advisory Group have agreed on two exceptions to the 5% upper limit: the Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI's contribution is over the 5% cap as this represents the consolidated amounts from several Research Councils which is now paid via the umbrella organisation set up in 2019.

The SMC is open and transparent with regard to its funding. All funders are listed on the SMC website under bands for their total amount recognised within a financial year. A list is also included on page 21.

Transactions and financial position

In its thirteenth year of operation as a fully independent organisation, the SMC has continued to maintain a good financial position.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows that the total income for the year was £804,885 (£752,419 in 2022–23).

Total expenditure for the year was £796,398 (£730,918 in 2022–23) of which 94% (94% in 2022–23) was spent on charitable activities directly carrying out the Charity's key objectives.

The activities for the year therefore resulted in a surplus of £8,487 (£19,767 surplus in 2022–23). This includes £20,684 gain (£1,734 loss in 2022–23) on investments.

Investment policy

As at 31 March 2024, the SMC has approximately £190,000 invested for growth. This level is kept under review by the board of trustees.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the SMC is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate that exposure. These risks are detailed on the Risk Register for the SMC with information on the current practice and strategy used to mitigate the risk. This register is reviewed annually by Trustees, with responsibility delegated to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to review the register at each meeting.

The current risk register pays particular attention to the risks around funding, conflicts of interest, cybersecurity, the loss of data, our reputation, staffing and the impact of inflation.

Risks for loss of funding are mitigated by close monitoring of the finances of the SMC, by seeking new income each year and by having a number of supporting organisations from across the sector. The independence of the Centre from funders is maintained by the current 5% cap and clear communication with new and existing funders on the separation between the funding and editorial activity of the SMC.

Best practice around conflicts of interests of scientists contributing to the media continues to be monitored by staff. Our policy on this was updated in June 2022. A further review of the policy is planned for early in the next period. The Centre clarifies when no competing interests have been received and when there are none to declare. Any criticism received regarding a conflict is met with open discussion and passed on to the scientist in question.

Cybersecurity risks to the SMC are addressed by ensuring the sector best practice is followed. This includes, but is not limited to: firewalls, secure staff passwords, regular upkeep of emails, antivirus software and regular off-site backups.

Reserves policy and going concern

The SMC has agreed that reserves would be used for support during a short, defined period of a deficit budget, allowing for new sources of income or reductions in expenditure to be identified.

It is therefore the policy of the Charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to twelve months' expenditure (approximately £750,000 for this period).

The Charity holds £867,354 in reserves as of 31 March 2024 (2023: £858,867). On this basis the Trustees are satisfied the SMC is a going concern.

Our year end fund position is in excess of our £750,000 reserves target. The Trustees feel that it is prudent to hold a slightly higher level of reserves as a deficit budget has been planned for 2024–25.

Trustees periodically review the reserves policy of the Charity.

Plans for the future

The current period has seen the SMC's thirteenth year as a fully independent charity.

The Trustees feel that the SMC is continuing to operate from a position of strength, in terms of both its core activities and financial security. The expertise of senior management and staff at the SMC will ensure that these future plans are given sufficient resources and achieved.

The following priorities have been identified for the coming year:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

We will continue to monitor the news for developing stories and issues where scientific expertise can help play a role in accurate reporting. On these issues, we will work closely with scientists who can provide third party comments on breaking news and new research as well as host them at press briefings for journalists on important new papers being published to ensure the science at hand is reported on in an accurate and measured way.

2. Conferences

This year we will continue to look more closely at media reporting of scientific conferences. The SMC will speak with those involved in press work on conferences, and conference organisers, to seek their views on whether any changes should be considered and to see whether there is any additional role for the SMC in supporting accurate coverage from these events.

3. Pilot SMC for Ireland

As part of the development of a global network of Science Media Centres, the Global SMCs Coordinator and UK SMC Chief Executive initiated a project to explore the appetite for an All-Ireland Science Media Centre. This took the form of a consultation with key representatives of the science and media community in Ireland. The consultation⁹ provided general support and enthusiasm for such a project and resulted in a plan for a one-year pilot SMC for Ireland – a feasibility project – to start work in June 2024. As such, this year the UK SMC will be heavily

⁹ 'An All-Ireland SMC – Consultation Report', Science Media Centre

involved in and support the running and success of the pilot, including in the training of the member of staff recruited to run the pilot SMC for Ireland.

4. Social sciences project

The SMC will do some focused work on how we work with social scientists and how social scientists are used in the media on topics that we work on. This work will include meetings with key organisations within the social sciences such as the Campbell Collaboration, The British Academy, The Academy of Social Sciences, Leverhulme Centre for Demographic Science, and UK in a Changing Europe to understand more about the different disciplines that make up the social sciences and discuss if the SMC should try and recruit these experts to the expert database and seek their commentary on new research and as experts on media panels. The purpose of this project is not to change the stories or research that the SMC works on but in those stories where social science expertise can really help a journalist cover a story accurately, and seek their expertise in addition to experts in the medical, engineering and natural sciences.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The SMC is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee (Company Registration No. 7560997, England & Wales; Charity Registration No. 1140827). The Board of Trustees is the major decision-making body and it meets at least three times a year.

Trustees are individuals distinguished in the field of science, engineering, medicine, journalism, communications, finance, law and policy. The SMC considers each of the Trustees to be independent in character and judgement, and understands that they have no relationships that are likely to affect, or could appear to affect, their judgements with regard to the SMC. Declarations of interest are required from new Trustees upon appointment and are updated annually, whilst every meeting of the Board also requires that any new interests are declared.

All of the Trustees also act as directors of the company, but none has any beneficial interest in the company and no remuneration is provided except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. Policy is determined by the Trustees, on the advice of the Advisory Group and others, and its implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive who, in conjunction with a team of nine additional staff, the Advisory Group and Trustees as appropriate, undertakes the necessary work.

A Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive, two Senior Press Managers and Head of Operations allows for better distribution of organisational responsibility and both staff and Trustees continue to be happy with the structure.

A review of governance of the charity was carried out in 2022. The previously named Advisory Committee was renamed the Advisory Group to make clear it is not a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees nor does it have delegated authority or decision making powers. All Trustees are also

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2024

members of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is an independent, advisory group whose purpose is to provide independent, expert insight on matters concerned with science and engineering reporting in the media. It is a voluntary group of distinguished experts from the fields of science, engineering, medicine, journalism and communications, who provide expertise and advice. The Advisory Group meets three times a year.

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is a principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues such as financial planning, pensions, the annual audit and risk review and management. The Committee consists of a minimum of three members, with a majority of Committee members being Trustees, including the Treasurer. The remaining Committee members may be external members. Currently the Committee comprises three Trustees, including Treasurer, and two external members. The Senior Management Team attend in an observational capacity. The Committee meets three times a year.

The Remuneration Committee is another principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues of staff pay and reward. The Remuneration Committee is comprised of a minimum of three members, all of whom are Trustees. The committee meets once a year and reports directly to the Trustees.

The SMC is very grateful to the members of all committees and groups for their valuable contributions.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the period are:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Amanda Borton	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Richard Fisher	Appointed 31 October 2023
Prof Azra Ghani	Appointed 31 October 2023
Karen Chadwick	Resigned 31 October 2023

Staff

Trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Key Management Personnel:

Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2024

The SMC has ten established members of staff and the Trustees record their appreciation of the efforts of the staff, who have again made an enormous contribution to the success of the SMC during the year.

During the year the SMC also benefited greatly from ten interns who each spent five weeks assisting with administrative duties and experiencing life within a busy press office.

Trustees would also like to record their appreciation for the efforts of the interns, and are pleased to note that many previous interns go on to obtain full time permanent roles within the science communication field.

Pay and remuneration

The following principles of the pay system are agreed by Trustees

- The SMC should not have a system which the charity cannot afford
- The system should not reward staff who are underperforming
- The system should have some built-in mechanism to monitor the competition and react to changes in the job market
- The system should recognise the developmental nature of the roles at the SMC

All permanent staff are appointed into salary bands, dependent on the role and its responsibilities. Reflecting the developmental nature of the roles, these salary bands each have room for progression. Benchmarking is conducted every two years to ensure the salary bands are comparable to similar roles outside the SMC. The Remuneration Committee recommends changes to salary bands based on affordability, wider economic circumstances and the financial performance of the SMC. The Board of Trustees considers salary band recommendations and makes final decisions on updating salary bands. Managers decide staff progression through salary bands based on annual performance reviews. The Remuneration Committee acts as a sounding board for the Chief Executive to discuss staff performance.

The salary of the Chief Executive is considered separately by the Remuneration Committee who will consider the wider economic circumstances and any benchmarking before making recommendations to the Trustees.

Benefits provided to staff currently include income protection insurance, health and dental insurance, ability to buy or sell leave, gym membership and membership of professional-body Stempra.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 11 March 2011 and registered as a charity on 18 March 2021.

The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 7 to the accounts.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association. Taking into account the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a contribution to the pursuit of the objects or the management of the Charity.

In 2022 a new policy on trustee recruitment and induction was adopted, bringing the SMC in line with current practice. Trustees and staff consider the skills gaps formed by departing Trustees, and advertise for potential Trustees with skills to match. Applications are reviewed and interviewed as necessary by current Trustees and staff. Prospective trustees are then proposed and appointed at October meeting each year.

Trustee induction and training

The SMC undertakes a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, which includes induction materials relating to its purposes and finances, the powers of the Trustees and information about day-to-day running of the SMC. Key documents are provided, such as the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and terms of reference, the Charity Commission's Essential Trustee guide, up-to-date accounts, and minutes of the most recent Trustee meetings. Prospective trustees may also attend relevant Trustee meetings as an observer as part of the induction process. Trustees continue to be supported through on-going training, with skills requirements regularly reviewed.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

Related party transactions are detailed in Note 9 in the financial statements.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of Science Media Centre for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2024

- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2024 was 10 (2022:9). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 23 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2024

£2,000 and under

Association of Medical Research Charities
Bipolar UK
British Antarctic Survey
British Ecological Society
British Soft Drinks Association
Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
Kainos
Keele University
Lancaster University
National Nuclear Laboratory
New England Journal of Medicine
Society for Radiological Protection
The Times
University of Exeter
University of Portsmouth
University of Reading
University of Surrey
University of York

£2,001 – £4,999

Alan Turing Institute
Alzheimer's Research UK
BASF
Biochemical Society
Biogen
British Pharmacological Society
British Society of Immunology
Covestro UK Ltd
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
Earlham Institute
European College of Neuropsychopharmacology
Food & Drink Federation
FoodDrinkEurope
Health Data Research UK (HDRUK)
Institute of Cancer Research
Institute of Physics
John Innes Centre
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency
Microbiology Society
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Nuclear Industry Association
Quadram Institute Bioscience
Queen Mary University of London
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal Society
Sainsbury Laboratory
Taylor & Francis
UK Biobank
UK Dementia Research Institute
University of East Anglia
University of Glasgow
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Manchester
University of Sheffield
University of Nottingham
Wellcome Sanger Institute

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2024

£5,000 – £9,999

AbbVie Ltd
Academy of Medical Sciences
Applied Microbiology International
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
BioIndustry Association
BP International
Chemical Industries Association
Cochrane Collaboration
Durham University
Genomics England
Gilead Sciences
Institution of Engineering and Technology
King's College London
LifeArc
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
National Physical Laboratory
Nestle UK Ltd
Nutrition Society
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Queen's University Belfast
Rolls-Royce plc
Royal Academy of Engineering
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Shionogi
UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology
University of Birmingham
University of Cambridge
University of Edinburgh
University of Oxford

£10,000 – £19,999

Abbott
British Heart Foundation
Cancer Research UK
Elsevier
Financial Times
Food Standards Agency
Government Office for Science
Imperial College London
Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD)
Moderna
National Institute for Health Research
Orsted (UK) Ltd
Pfizer
University College London

£20,000 – £35,000

Gatsby Charitable Foundation
GlaxoSmithKline
Springer Nature Ltd

Over £35,000

UK Research & Innovation
Wellcome Trust

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Science Media Centre for the year ended 31 March 2024.

This report is made solely to the trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. My examination has been undertaken so that I might state to the trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Company you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')/Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3 The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Fleur Holden FCA

Address: Sayer Vincent LLP, 110 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TG

Date: 30 October 2024

Science Media Centre

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2024

		2024			2023		
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Income from:							
Donations	2	751,749	–	751,749	724,327	–	724,327
Charitable activities	3	–	21,500	21,500	–	25,000	25,000
Investments	4	10,952	–	10,952	3,092	–	3,092
Total income		762,701	21,500	784,201	727,419	25,000	752,419
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	5	48,596	–	48,596	46,865	–	46,865
Charitable activities	5	723,019	24,783	747,802	652,336	31,717	684,053
Total expenditure		771,615	24,783	796,398	699,201	31,717	730,918
Net income / (expenditure) before net gains / (losses) on investments		(8,914)	(3,283)	(12,197)	28,218	(6,717)	21,501
Net gains / (losses) on investments		20,684	–	20,684	(1,734)	–	(1,734)
Net income / (expenditure) for the year	6	11,770	(3,283)	8,487	26,484	(6,717)	19,767
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		855,584	3,283	858,867	829,100	10,000	839,100
Total funds carried forward		867,354	–	867,354	855,584	3,283	858,867

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 15a to the financial statements.

As at 31 March 2024

	Note	£	2024 £	£	2023 £
Fixed assets:					
Investments	11		190,402		169,718
			<u>190,402</u>		<u>169,718</u>
Current assets:					
Debtors	12	96,100		137,559	
Cash at bank and in hand		621,532		595,810	
		<u>717,632</u>		<u>733,369</u>	
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(40,680)		(44,220)	
		<u>(40,680)</u>		<u>(44,220)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>676,952</u>		<u>689,149</u>
Total net assets			<u><u>867,354</u></u>		<u><u>858,867</u></u>
The funds of the charity:	15a				
Restricted income funds			–		3,283
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds		867,354		855,584	
		<u>867,354</u>		<u>855,584</u>	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>867,354</u>		<u>855,584</u>
Total charity funds			<u><u>867,354</u></u>		<u><u>858,867</u></u>

The opinion of the directors is that the company is entitled to the exemptions conferred by Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The directors acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

Approved by the trustees on 23 October 2024 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Science Media Centre

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2024

	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net (expenditure)/income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	8,487		19,767	
(Gain)/loss on investments	(20,684)		1,734	
Interest from investments	(10,952)		(3,092)	
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	41,459		(68,200)	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	(3,540)		(23,914)	
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		14,770		(73,705)
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Interest from investments	10,952		3,092	
Net cash provided by investing activities		10,952		3,092
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		25,722		(70,613)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		595,810		666,423
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		621,532		595,810

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

Science Media Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office address, which is also the operational address, is 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The year end funds position is £867,354 (2023: £858,867) which is in excess of our reserves target.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charity in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

h) Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £2,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

- Fixtures, fittings & equipment 4 years

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

1 Accounting policies (continued)**i) Listed investments**

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

k) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

m) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

2 Income from donations

	2024 £	2023 £
Donations and gifts	494,249	492,847
Grants receivable for core activities	103,000	93,000
Government grants:		
UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)	95,000	95,000
Food Standards Agency	10,000	10,000
National Institute for Clinical Excellence	5,000	5,000
National Institute for Health Research	10,000	10,000
Sellafield Sites	–	5,000
Genomics England	6,000	6,000
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency	3,000	–
National Nuclear Laboratory	2,000	–
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	7,500	7,500
Government Office for Science	10,000	–
British Antarctic Survey	1,000	–
National Physical Laboratory	5,000	–
	751,749	724,327

All income from donations is unrestricted.

3 Income from charitable activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Global SMCs Coordinator	15,000	25,000
Pilot SMC for Ireland	6,500	–
Total income from charitable activities	21,500	25,000

All income from charitable activities is restricted.

4 Income from investments

	2024 £	2023 £
Interest	10,952	3,092
	10,952	3,092

All income from investments is unrestricted.

5a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	41,090	547,710	–	–	588,800	513,101
Event costs	–	23,513	–	–	23,513	31,595
Premises costs	–	–	–	43,065	43,065	42,778
Office costs	–	–	13	59,188	59,201	53,619
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	351	12,619	12,970	38,530
Insurance	–	–	–	13,586	13,586	12,243
Professional fees	–	33,957	–	–	33,957	19,013
Accountancy	–	–	1,434	15,154	16,588	15,713
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,440	–	4,440	4,140
Bank charges	–	–	–	278	278	186
	41,090	605,180	6,238	143,890	796,398	730,918
Governance costs	312	5,926	(6,238)	–	–	–
Support costs	7,195	136,696	–	(143,890)	–	–
Total expenditure 2024	48,596	747,802	–	–	796,398	

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

5b Analysis of expenditure (previous year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs £	2023 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	38,505	474,596	–	–	513,101
Event costs	–	31,595	–	–	31,595
Premises costs	–	–	–	42,778	42,778
Office costs	–	–	13	53,606	53,619
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	178	38,352	38,530
Insurance	–	–	–	12,243	12,243
Professional fees	–	19,013	–	–	19,013
Accountancy	–	–	3,426	12,287	15,713
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,140	–	4,140
Bank charges	–	–	–	186	186
	<u>38,505</u>	<u>525,204</u>	<u>7,757</u>	<u>159,452</u>	<u>730,918</u>
Governance costs	388	7,369	(7,757)	–	–
Support costs	7,973	151,479	–	(159,452)	–
	<u>46,865</u>	<u>684,053</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>730,918</u>

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

6 Net income / (expenditure) for the year

	2024 £	2023 £
Independent Examiner's Fee (excluding VAT):		
Independent Examination	3,700	3,450
Other services	1,850	1,750
	<u>5,550</u>	<u>5,200</u>

7 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries and wages	496,694	433,007
Social security costs	53,923	45,170
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	38,183	34,924
	<u>588,800</u>	<u>513,101</u>

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2024 No.	2023 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	1	1
£100,000–£109,999	–	1
£110,000–£119,999	1	–
	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £347,679 (2023: £321,192).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2023: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2023: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £351 (2023: £178) incurred by 4 (2023: 4) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

8 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 11 (2023: 10).

9 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year (2023: £nil).

10 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2024

11 Listed investments

	2024 £	2023 £
Fair value at the start of the year	169,718	171,452
Additions at cost	–	–
Net gain/(loss) on change in fair value	20,684	(1,734)
Fair value at the end of the year	190,402	169,718

Investments comprise:

	2024 £	2023 £
UK Common investment funds	190,402	169,718
	190,402	169,718

12 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	75,326	118,084
Other debtors	4,993	4,715
Prepayments	15,781	14,760
	96,100	137,559

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	8,731	9,731
Taxation and social security	14,369	12,643
Accruals	17,580	21,846
	40,680	44,220

14a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Investments	190,402	–	190,402
Net current assets	676,952	–	676,952
Net assets at 31 March 2024	867,354	–	867,354

14b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	169,718	–	169,718
Net current assets	685,866	3,283	689,149
Net assets at 31 March 2023	855,584	3,283	858,867

15a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2023 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2024 £
Restricted funds:					
Global SMCs Coordinator	3,283	15,000	(18,283)	–	–
Pilot SMC for Ireland	–	6,500	(6,500)	–	–
Total restricted funds	3,283	21,500	(24,783)	–	–
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	855,584	783,385	(771,615)	–	867,354
Total unrestricted funds	855,584	783,385	(771,615)	–	867,354
Total funds	858,867	804,885	(796,398)	–	867,354

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

15b Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 1 April 2022 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 1 April 2023 £
Restricted funds:					
Global SMCs Coordinator	–	25,000	(21,717)	–	3,283
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	10,000	–	(10,000)	–	–
Total restricted funds	10,000	25,000	(31,717)	–	3,283
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	829,100	727,419	(700,935)	–	855,584
Total unrestricted funds	829,100	727,419	(700,935)	–	855,584
Total funds	839,100	752,419	(732,652)	–	858,867

Purposes of restricted funds**Global SMCs Coordinator**

To fund the post Global Coordinator to support the network of Science Media Centres around the world.

Pilot SMC for Ireland

To investigate the feasibility of a Science Media Centre for Ireland, together with Airfield Estate Dublin.

Changing roles of Science Press Officers–Market Research

To carry out focus groups with scientists on their media experience as part of the Changing Roles of Science Press Officers project.

16 Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.

Accounts

Company number: 07560997

Charity Number: 1140827

Science Media Centre

Report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

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For the year ended 31 March 2023

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Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2023

Company number 07560997
Country of incorporation United Kingdom

Charity number 1140827
Country of registration England & Wales

Registered office and operational address 215 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BE

Trustees Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Amanda Borton	Appointed 20 October 2022
Jonathan Baker	Resigned 20 October 2022
Paul Brooker	Resigned 20 October 2022

Key management personnel	Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
	Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
	Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
	Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2023

Bankers	HSBC Bank PLC 16 King Street Covent Garden London WC2E 8JF
	CCLA Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET
Independent examiner	Fleur Holden Sayer Vincent LLP Chartered Accountants Invicta House 108–114 Golden Lane LONDON EC1Y 0TL

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Reference and administrative information set out on pages 1 and 2 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association, the requirements of a directors' report as required under company law, and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The SMC works to promote the views of the scientific community on issues of importance and helps to ensure that their expertise is available to the national news media, and through them policy-makers and the public.

Introduction

The Science Media Centre (SMC) has its roots in the influential House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's third report on Science and Society, which sought to renew public trust in science. The overall goal of the SMC is therefore to help achieve this aim by working to promote more balanced, accurate and measured coverage of the important science, health and environment stories that appear in the media.

The SMC was originally set up in April 2002 as a division of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RIGB, Charity Registration No. 227938), and its financial structure was that of a restricted fund maintained by the RIGB. In April 2011 the SMC became independent and registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The period ended 31 March 2023 is the SMC's twelfth year as a fully independent organisation, but also its twenty first year of existence.

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that the public values science, with 82% saying they are very or fairly interested in health research¹, while other surveys report that the vast majority (74%) agree that science will make people's lives easier, and think that scientists (89%) and engineers (87%) make a valuable contribution to society². A large majority (82%) of people report being very or fairly interested in hearing directly from scientists about their research – an increase from 63% in 2015³. The most recent survey of its kind reported high levels of public trust that scientists (83%),

¹ Wellcome Trust Monitor Report Wave 4 November 2019, Public interest and engagement with health research

² Public Attitudes to Science 2019, carried out by Kantar, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

³ Wellcome Monitor 2020, How the British public engage with health research

engineers (87%), and doctors (85%) tell the truth⁴. Mainstream media such as television and newspapers (online) continue to be some of the most common and significant sources of science news that people access, and even on social media platforms, the source of science news is frequently from mainstream news sources originally^{5,6}. Working with the mainstream news media therefore provides an opportunity for accurate, evidence-based information to reach a mass audience. The SMC's priority is to promote, for the benefit of the public and policymakers, accurate and evidence-based information about science in the media, particularly on controversial and headline news stories as this is when most confusion and misinformation occurs.

The objects of the SMC are as follows:

"To advance the education of the public in science and engineering and all their related branches and disciplines, particularly by the dissemination of research and information about science to the media."

In order to meet its charitable objectives, the SMC's main activities include:

- working with scientists, engineers and other experts from the scientific community, and supporting them to engage with the media;
- working with journalists and providing them with information about science and its related disciplines;
- supporting press officers when they are working on complex and contentious science, health and environment stories that could be misrepresented;
- providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media.

During the period a governance review was carried out. The articles of association, terms of reference and other the policies were updated. This has allowed us to be more efficient in furtherance of the objects. The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the SMC should undertake.

Purposes and aims

The SMC's philosophy is:

"The media will do science better when scientists do the media better."

Our main activities allow us to achieve our philosophy and our objectives – by ensuring that the accuracy of science represented by the mainstream media is improved. As an organisation we predominantly work on new research and the breaking news of the day, meaning our long and short-term aims are very similar. For us, the most important thing is that we continue to be able to proactively respond to the next breaking news story or controversial research paper so that the public have access to the best expertise on these issues via the media.

⁴ Veracity Index 2022, Ipsos MORI survey of trust in professions

⁵ Reuters institute Digital News Report 2021

⁶ Science and the media in Great Britain – survey results, IPOS poll

Staff are the main resource of the SMC and five members of staff are dedicated to the press office element of the Centre with the remaining three members of staff providing essential support to the running of the Centre. During the period we took on a part-time member of staff for the Global Co-ordinator role.

Volunteers

The Centre continues to benefit from volunteers through our database of expert scientists, who willingly give up their time to help achieve the aims of the SMC through engagement with the media.

Scientists might help with an article for the Sun on a controversial science subject, give an interview for BBC News on a breaking news story, or speak to a journalist at The Guardian about a planned exclusive article in their area of expertise. They speak on panels at our press briefings and send written comments in response to breaking stories and in advance of the publication of new research helping journalists to assess the significance of these new stories and papers. Many of these requests to scientists are made at short notice and outside normal working hours. Without their contributions, the SMC would not exist.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who gave up their time to help the SMC achieve its charitable objectives and improve media coverage of science stories.

Public benefit statement

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and those it tries to help are described below. All its activities focus on communicating science to the public and are undertaken to further the Science Media Centre's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Summary

The Science Media Centre exists to respond to complex and often controversial stories in the national news media. When a science story breaks, or new research is published, the SMC encourages appropriate experts to engage with the media to ensure that the resulting coverage is accurate and measured while also providing evidence-based information to the journalists covering the story.

The SMC works on stories across science, health, environment, and engineering, with a focus on the potentially messy, controversial or politicised issues that make headlines in the UK national

press. This meant providing journalists with regular access to the best experts on infectious diseases, vaccines, climate, dementia, pharmacology and diet among many others, helping to ensure that this scientific evidence and expertise was central to media reporting, and that the public had access to accurate information.

This year we ran 69 press briefings. We sent out 394 roundups and rapid reactions. This is on a par with other average years (excluding 2019–2020, 2020–21, 2021–22), suggesting that workload has shifted to more regular levels since the COVID–19 pandemic.

Working with scientists, engineers and other experts, and supporting them to engage with the media

Support of scientists is one of the most valued aspects of the SMC's work, and by working with individuals and press officers we encourage them to engage with and help inform the media coverage of their area of expertise.

The SMC provides direct day-to-day support to scientists who want help getting their work into the media, with the SMC press officers frequently advising academics on press matters even when they don't fall directly into our core work. We also help scientists achieve recognition and acknowledgement from their peers and institutions for the work they do to improve public understanding of science, particularly on the most challenging topics. This ranges from writing citations and supporting nominations to providing personal recommendations based on their media engagement work with us.

Working with journalists and providing them with accurate information about science and its related disciplines

The main services that the SMC provides to journalists are:

Rapid Reactions

When a science or science-related story hits the headlines, the SMC encourages leading scientists in relevant fields to engage rapidly with the story, and offer evidence-based expert comments. The SMC then makes these experts and their comments available to journalists at all major UK news outlets. The media can follow up with further queries or interview requests. This activity helps to inject accurate information and valuable context from experts into the reporting of rapidly-developing news stories, which in turn reduces the likelihood of inaccurate speculation which may mislead or alarm the public. Rapid Reactions therefore satisfy both the desire of journalists for credible experts and appropriate information, and the public's need to hear from the best experts at the time when it is most critical.

Rapid Reactions have once again played a vital role in the accurate media reporting of newly developing stories such as cases of hepatitis in children of unknown cause, a large monkeypox outbreak over the summer of 2022, poliovirus detected in North East London, the extreme heatwave in the UK, updates to the COVID vaccination programme, advances in nuclear fusion

technology, new drug trial announcements for Alzheimer's disease, government announcements on fracking and many more.

Roundups

This service is unique to the SMC and is a key tool for the Centre and for specialist science, health and environment journalists to ensure accurate coverage of new scientific research. The SMC gathers and issues written comments from leading, relevant experts on embargoed science studies and reports ahead of their publication. These third party comments offer a critique and valuable insights that science journalists can use to cover the story in an accurate and responsible way. Statements from independent scientists can help reporters identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new study and put it into the context of wider scientific knowledge. These comments can indicate how surprising or important the findings are and describe any implications for policy, patients or the public. Print and broadcast journalists can lift quotes for their reports and follow up for further interviews with the experts.

For example, it may involve gathering independent expert comments on observational studies where it is important that the limitations and caveats of the work be properly understood by the public, such as roundups this year on ultra processed food and cancer risk, Mediterranean diet and dementia, or sleep quality in adolescence and multiple sclerosis. It could also involve responding to studies on commonly taken medications, where inaccurate reporting could lead to people being misinformed of the benefits and risks of these drugs, such as a roundup on a study of aspirin use and risk of ovarian cancer or on a study on paracetamol use in pregnancy and attentional issues in children. A roundup may also be done in response to a study where it's important to recognise the limits of real world interpretation or implications, and expert commentary can help achieve this, such as roundups this year on an umbrella analysis of the 'serotonin theory of depression', a study on noradrenergic drugs and Alzheimer's disease, and a study on the effects of e-cigarette vapour on mice.

Briefings

The SMC runs regular press briefings for specialist science journalists at the UK national news outlets. These briefings provide an opportunity for scientists and journalists to meet regularly, and allow scientists to explain their complicated work in a detailed and measured way. This gives journalists the opportunity to get fully to grips with a difficult or significant area of science, with the end result being more accurate media coverage. News briefings allow scientists to explain new findings in a more nuanced way, while background briefings address a wide range of topical issues where experts feel that accurate, evidence-based information has been missing from the media and public debate. SMC briefings have proved to be instrumental in ensuring scientifically-accurate media coverage of many high-profile and ongoing scientific issues. Average attendance at press briefings remains high, especially with the hybrid dial-in option which has been available since the pandemic.

We have run briefings on significant new reports and papers on the evidence of important headline issues of the day such as the efficacy of insomnia drugs, mindfulness in schools, vaping benefits and risks, and the Chief Medical Officers' report on air pollution. Background briefings we have run – in which we host experts in a field to answer journalists' questions on a topical media issue – include sessions on avian flu, seasonal flu, the impact of social media, maintaining brain health, ChatGPT, droughts, and heatwaves.

Additional services

In addition to responding to the most important news stories of the day, providing accurate information about the latest developments in science to journalists, and running regular press briefings, the SMC also handles *ad hoc* enquiries from journalists seeking an expert to interview, or background information on a science, health or environment story which they may be working on.

Supporting press officers when they are working on complex science, health and environment stories

Many of the SMC's core activities rely on working with and supporting press officers at other organisations, including when they have experts on an issue in the headlines, or when their own institution or scientists are the subject of media interest. Press officers regularly approach the SMC for its guidance and expertise on media stories, particularly when an issue is complex and controversial. This can include advice on drafting accurate and responsible press releases, how best to do responsible press work on preprints, or whether to run an SMC press briefing on a new piece of research.

The SMC also recognises and champions the crucial role press officers play in responsible science communication, something highlighted in this year's Changing Role of Science Press Officers report. SMC staff are often invited to give talks and presentations at scientific organisations and meetings, both aiding the press officers and encouraging their scientists to engage with the media, whilst also raising awareness of the SMC's work.

Providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media

The SMC is often called upon to comment on and provide expertise in relation to its overview and experience of science in the media.

SMC staff members additionally engage and share their expertise with the wider scientific community through their roles on boards and advisory committees of other scientific organisations. Fiona Fox is on the advisory committee for the Roslin Institute and the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response. Freya Robb is a Stempra committee member.

Fundraising

The year 2022–23 ended with a surplus of £19,767 (2022: £30,921), representing another good year of fundraising for the SMC.

Donations continue to make up the majority of the income of the SMC and are mostly from organisations which have supported the SMC for many years. Fundraising at the SMC is carried out in-house by two members of staff as part of their roles. The Centre has high levels of retention within those organisations supporting the SMC and continues to be successful in attracting new supporters.

As part of a programme of activities to mark the 20th anniversary of the SMC in April 2022 the SMC carried out a fundraising drive. Through this we raised £48,550.

Impact

The work of the SMC is often difficult to judge through numbers alone. Success can mean a poor study or unpublished conference abstract isn't covered in the newspapers, or is on page eight rather than the front page. It might also mean front pages explaining a significant new scientific development or paper with nuance or balance, or standfirsts explaining that leading scientists questioned the latest findings or cautioned against overinterpretation of the results.

Commentary on the objectives as described in last year's trustee report follows:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

In the first half of this year there was still reasonable media interest in COVID-19, mainly on updates to the vaccine data efficacy, next generation vaccines, and the longer term consequences of the virus and pandemic itself. There was also sporadic interest in the COVID infection figures from surveillance surveys such as ONS and REACT. We continued to host briefings and collate third party commentary on research in these areas.

This year there was also significantly more media appetite for stories beyond COVID-19. Some of these stories included outbreaks of other infectious diseases both human and animal, vaping, antidepressants, artificial intelligence, energy and climate change. These are many of the same issues that kept us busy before the pandemic and therefore already knew many of the key experts and how best to advise scientists on engaging with the media.

2. Work on a piece of work evaluating the changing role of press officers in universities

The SMC employed Dr Helen Jamison and Dr Claire Bithell to carry out the Changing Role of Science Press Officers project as part of the work around the Science Media Centre's 20th anniversary. There was a particular focus on research communications within universities,

examining if and how the role of a UK science press officer has changed over the last 20 years. The project involved in depth interviews with press and communications professionals at all career stages, an online survey of press officers and focus groups run with Ipsos. The report produced seven recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Universities should prioritise research communications and ensure it is adequately resourced.
- Recommendation 2: Universities should value and invest in media relations skills within their communications teams.
- Recommendation 3: The SMC should encourage universities to engage with the news media when science is in the headlines, highlighting the value and impact.
- Recommendation 4: The SMC should champion the role of specialist science press officers in the same way it does specialist science journalists.
- Recommendation 5: The science community should explore improving career development and progression opportunities for science press and communications officers.
- Recommendation 6: The science community should explore and address the challenges caused by the harassment of scientists who engage with the media.
- Recommendation 7: Those conducting 'lessons learned' inquiries into the pandemic and beyond should include consideration of the role played by university communications teams.

This report was endorsed by many senior figures in the science and the university sector including Sir Patrick Vallance (ex-Chief Scientific Advisor), Prof Dame Anne Johnson (President, The Academy of Medical Sciences), Prof Dame Nancy Rothwell (President and Vice-Chancellor, The University of Manchester), Professor Liam Smeeth (Director, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) and Professor Sir Malcolm Grant (Chancellor, University of York).

The report was widely publicised with articles in Times Higher Education⁷, Research Fortnight⁸, University World News⁹ and international coverage in Wissenschaftskommunikation.de¹⁰.

The CROSPO report was also presented at a Stempra session, an online event run by Japan SciCom Forum, a Working Group on Science Communications convened by Science Europe, The Russell Group Communications Network and Universities UK.

⁷ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/science-press-officers-work-life-balance-disappearing>

⁸ <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-views-of-the-uk-2022-7-pressure-on-press-offices-puts-trust-in-science-at-risk/>

⁹ <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2022082215344612>

¹⁰ <https://www.wissenschaftskommunikation.de/mehr-anerkennung-erfolgsdruck-frustration-61113/> and <https://www.wissenschaftskommunikation.de/we-want-this-project-to-be-the-start-of-a-discussion-61171/>

3. Organise and host a meeting for the global SMC's network

The UK Science Media Centre hosted a three day meeting of the international Science Media Centre network in September 2022. The Chief Executives and representatives from the Australian, New Zealand, German, Taiwan, Spanish and African Science Media Centres were in attendance. This was also the first global in person meeting with the new Global Co-ordinator role. Topics of discussion included how each country, their scientists and media responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of preprints in the dissemination and communication of scientific research, and a discussion on the key core principles and functions that make a Science Media Centre.

4. 20th Anniversary of the Science Media Centre

2022 marked the 20th anniversary of the Science Media Centre and a number of projects and events took place to mark this occasion.

Chief Executive, Fiona Fox, published her book 'Beyond the Hype: The Inside Story of Science's Biggest Media Controversies' in April 2022. The book covered the creation of the SMC and an insight into some of the biggest science stories in the media over that time, and the role the SMC played. Publicity for the book enabled reviews and commentaries on the key themes of the book to feature in national news outlets such as the Observer¹¹, Times Higher Education¹² and New Scientist¹³. Fiona also spoke on a podcast with the Royal Society of Arts and at an event with the Royal Institute discussing the history of the SMC and the stories in the book.

A series of podcasts was created by the SMC which focussed on the creation of and key stories from the 20 years of the SMC. It was hosted by Fiona Fox and invited key individuals who worked alongside the SMC on big media stories to speak about and reflect on the events, such as the sacking of David Nutt, human animal hybrids and Climategate.

We also commissioned an IPSOS survey – Science and the media in Great Britain. The results of this survey covered sources of information about science and health (both traditional and social media), trust in these sources and attitudes towards science and scientists. This piece of work was incredibly useful and in part replicated some aspects of an IPSOS survey commissioned by the SMC in 2002 so we could look at trends over the time the SMC has been in existence and use this to help guide discussions around the focus of our press work and target audiences in the future. A residential away day was organised for all staff and trustees to discuss the past ten years of work of the SMC and what the aims and objectives should be for the next ten years, creating the

¹¹ Observer - Scientists must be free to communicate without politicians' spin
<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/apr/03/scientists-must-be-free-to-communicate-without-politicians-spin>

¹² Times Higher Education - Pandemic was a missed opportunity for science advocacy
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/pandemic-was-missed-opportunity-science-advocacy>

¹³ New Scientist - Say it loud and clear <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg25433840-100-we-need-to-stop-political-spin-from-polluting-public-trust-in-science/>

SMC strategy for 2022–2032¹⁴. This also included the start of a governance review of the advisory group and trustees.

The CROPSO report also formed part of the 20th anniversary projects (as discussed earlier in the report).

5. Write up and roll out SMC's lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and submit to relevant enquiries

Through discussions within the team, along with some key scientists and journalists we worked with closely throughout the pandemic, the SMC drafted and published 'The Science Media Centre's recommendations on science and the media, based on our experience during the COVID-19 pandemic'. Fiona Lethbridge, who led this work, also wrote a blog on the SMC website to accompany the recommendations, "Could science be communicated better during the next pandemic?". We have publicised this work at numerous talks and events and shared with our network of press officers and scientists.

Financial review

Funding

The SMC is funded principally by scientific bodies, trusts and foundations, and other organisations, companies, charities, and government and related agencies. The SMC is independent from its funders who do not gain influence over the SMC's work in return for their financial support.

To protect the SMC from any undue influence we cap contributions from any one institution at 5% of the SMC's annual income. The cap for 2022–23 was £35,000. The SMC's Trustees and Advisory Group have agreed on two exceptions to the 5% upper limit: the Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI's contribution is over the 5% cap as this represents the consolidated amounts from several Research Councils which is now paid via the umbrella organisation set up in 2019.

The SMC is open and transparent with regard to its funding. All funders are listed on the SMC website under bands for their total amount recognised within a financial year. A list is also included on page 21.

¹⁴ SMC Strategy 2022-2032 <https://www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SMC-Strategy-2022-2032-1.pdf>

Transactions and financial position

In its twelfth year of operation as a fully independent organisation, the SMC has again continued to maintain a good financial position, having ended the year in surplus and built up an appropriate level of reserves by year end.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows that the total income for the year was £752,419 (£682,047 in 2021–22).

Total expenditure for the year was £730,918 (£661,360 in 2021–22) of which 94% (94% in 2021–22) was spent on charitable activities directly carrying out the Charity's key objectives.

The activities for the year therefore resulted in a surplus of £19,767 (£30,921 in 2021–22). This includes a £1,734 loss (£10,234 gain in 2021–22) on investments.

Investment policy

The SMC has approximately £169,000 invested for growth. It is the intention of the Trustees to keep 12 months' running costs as cash in saving accounts, with lower risk and quicker access. Funds in excess of this are to be invested for the furtherance of the Charity's aims.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the SMC is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate that exposure. These risks are detailed on the Risk Register for the SMC with information on the current practice and strategy used to mitigate the risk. This register is reviewed annually by Trustees, with responsibility delegated to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to review the register at each meeting.

The current risk register pays particular attention to the risks around funding, a major incident closing our office, staff welfare, cybersecurity, the loss of data and the impact of inflation.

Risks for loss of funding are mitigated by close monitoring of the finances of the SMC, by seeking new income each year and by having a number of supporting organisations from across the sector. The independence of the Centre from funders is maintained by the current 5% cap and clear communication with new and existing funders on the separation between the funding and activity of the SMC.

Best practice around conflicts of interests of scientists contributing to the media continues to be monitored by staff. Our policy on this was updated in June 2022 to include following up with any scientists who omit to respond to our first request. The Centre clarifies when no competing interests have been received and when there are none to declare. Any criticism received regarding a conflict is met with open discussion and passed on to the scientist in question.

Cybersecurity risks to the SMC are addressed by ensuring the sector best practice is followed. This includes, but is not limited to: firewalls, secure staff passwords, regular deletion of emails, antivirus software and regular off-site backups.

Reserves policy and going concern

The SMC has agreed that reserves would be used for support during a short, defined period of a deficit budget, allowing for new sources of income or reductions in expenditure to be identified.

It is therefore the policy of the Charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to twelve months' expenditure (approximately £600,000 for this period).

This level of reserves has been built up and maintained throughout the period; the Charity holds £858,867 in reserves, of which £3,283 are restricted, as of 31 March 2023 (2022: £839,100). On this basis we are satisfied we are a going concern.

Our year end fund position of £858,867 is comfortably in excess of our £600,000 reserves target. The Trustees feel that in the current uncertain economic climate and high inflation it is prudent to hold a higher level of reserves. Furthermore a deficit budget has been planned for 2023–24.

Trustees periodically review the reserves policy of the Charity.

Plans for the future

The current period has seen the SMC's twelfth year as a fully independent charity.

The Trustees feel that the SMC is continuing to operate from a position of strength, in terms of both its core activities and financial security. The expertise of senior management and staff at the SMC will ensure that these future plans are given sufficient resources and achieved.

The following priorities have been identified for the coming year:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

We will continue to monitor the news for developing stories and issues where scientific expertise can help play a role in accurate reporting. On these issues, we will work closely with scientists who can provide third party comments on breaking news and new research as well as host them at press briefings for journalists on important new papers being published to ensure the science at hand is reported on in an accurate and measured way.

2. Refresh of the Science Media Centre's expert database

Having come out of the pandemic with our expert database refreshed with many new top experts in infectious diseases, vaccine development and immunology, we will spend the next year proactively recruiting experts in other key topic areas for the SMC, such as mental health, dementia, diet and nutrition, climate, cancer and energy. There will be a particular focus on up and coming researchers who are becoming leaders in their field to ensure we are continuing to reflect the very best of the mainstream scientific community in our expert database, and make these experts available to journalists when their area of expertise hits the headlines.

We will recruit the best experts on these topics which regularly make the news by going and giving talks at universities and institutions, working with press officers and will run at least one Introduction to the News Media Event.

3. Conferences

This year we will look more closely at media reporting of scientific conferences. It is common that work presented at scientific conferences is at a very early stage, often pre publication. While this provides an important part of scientific discussion and debate for scientists in attendance, it is common that journalists may attend these events and/ or receive press releases about some of the work being presented. There are some potential risks here around accurate communication of the science which can include a lack of peer review of the work in question and a lack of full data available to independent experts to scrutinise. The SMC will therefore speak with those involved in press work on conferences, and conference organisers, to seek their views on whether any changes should be considered and to see whether there is any additional role for the SMC in supporting accurate coverage from these events.

4. Improve the Science Media Centre's work on artificial intelligence

As artificial intelligence (AI) gains more traction in mainstream news coverage of science and technology – from uses in health care and diagnosis to opinion pieces on the risks of AI to jobs, safety and security – the SMC thinks it's crucial that we are able to respond to breaking news stories and new research in this discipline and get top experts in the field speaking to journalists. Some previous work we have done on AI has demonstrated that stories tend to reach the press in a different way to many other more 'typical' science stories. This year we will therefore conduct a project where we meet with key individuals and organisations within the field of AI to gain a better understanding of the key issues, how research reaches the media, and recruit top experts, as well as continuing to respond to media requests and breaking news stories. This is essential to ensure that media coverage of this fast developing and often controversial topic, is informed by the best evidence and expertise.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The SMC is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee (Company Registration No. 7560997, England & Wales; Charity Registration No. 1140827). The Board of Trustees is the major decision-making body and it meets at least three times a year.

Trustees are individuals distinguished in the field of science, engineering, medicine, journalism, communications, finance, law and policy. The SMC considers each of the Trustees to be independent in character and judgement, and understands that they have no relationships that are likely to affect, or could appear to affect, their judgements with regard to the SMC. Declarations of interest are required from new Trustees upon appointment and are updated annually, whilst every meeting of the Board also requires that any new interests are declared.

All of the Trustees also act as directors of the company, but none has any beneficial interest in the company and no remuneration is provided except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. Policy is determined by the Trustees, on the advice of the Advisory Group and others, and its implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive who, in conjunction with a team of nine additional staff, the Advisory Group and Trustees as appropriate, undertakes the necessary work.

A Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive, two Senior Press Managers and Head of Operations allows for better distribution of organisational responsibility and both staff and Trustees continue to be happy with the structure.

A review of governance of the charity was carried out during the period. This resulted in a general meeting being held on 30 June 2022 to adopt updated Articles of Association. Further changes to terms of reference and policies were adopted in Oct 2022.

Following the governance review the previously named Advisory Committee was renamed the Advisory Group to make clear it is not a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees nor does it have delegated authority or decision making powers. All Trustees are also members of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group is an independent, advisory group whose purpose is to provide independent, expert insight on matters concerned with science and engineering reporting in the media. It is a voluntary group of distinguished experts from the fields of science, engineering, medicine, journalism and communications, who provide expertise and advice. The group meets three times a year.

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is a principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues such as financial planning, pensions, the annual audit and risk review and management. The Committee's terms of reference were updated in this period as part of the governance review. The Committee consists of a minimum of three members, with a majority of Committee members being Trustees, including the Treasurer. The remaining Committee members may be external members. Currently the Committee comprises four Trustees, including Treasurer and Treasurer-

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2023

Elect, and three external members. The Senior Management Team attend in an observational capacity. The Committee meets three times a year.

The Remuneration Committee is another principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues of staff pay and reward. The terms of reference were also updated in this period as part of the governance review. The Remuneration Committee is comprised of a minimum of three members, all of whom are Trustees. The committee meets once a year and reports directly to the Trustees.

The SMC is very grateful to the members of all committees and groups for their valuable contributions.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the period are:

Nicholas Hillier	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
John Davidson	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	
Joanne Manning	
Amanda Borton	Appointed 20 October 2022
Paul Brooker	Resigned 20 October 2022
Jonathan Baker	Resigned 20 October 2022

Staff

Trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Key Management Personnel:

Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
Selina Kermode	Head of Operations
Fiona Lethbridge	Senior Press Manager

The SMC has nine established members of staff and the Trustees record their appreciation of the efforts of the staff, who have again made an enormous contribution to the success of the SMC during the year.

During the year the SMC also benefited greatly from eleven interns who each spent a month assisting with administrative duties and experiencing life within a busy press office.

Trustees would also like to record their appreciation for the efforts of the interns, and are pleased to note that many previous interns go on to obtain full time permanent roles within the science communication field.

Pay and remuneration

The following principles of the pay system are agreed by Trustees

- The SMC should not have a system which the charity cannot afford
- The system should not reward staff who are underperforming
- The system should have some built-in mechanism to monitor the competition and react to changes in the job market
- The system should recognise the developmental nature of the roles at the SMC

All permanent staff are appointed into salary bands, dependent on the role and its responsibilities. Reflecting the developmental nature of the roles, these salary bands each have 5 or 6 'spine points'. Pay increases are recommended by managers based on performance, and are approved by the Remuneration Committee based on the evidence provided, affordability, wider economic circumstances and the financial performance of the SMC during the year. Benchmarking is conducted every two years to ensure the salary brackets are comparable to similar roles outside the SMC.

The salary of the Chief Executive is considered separately by the Remuneration Committee who will consider the wider economic circumstances and any benchmarking before making recommendations to the Trustees.

Benefits provided to staff currently include income protection insurance, dental insurance, ability to buy or sell leave, gym membership and membership of Stempra.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 11 March 2011 and registered as a charity on 18 March 2021.

The company was established under a memorandum of association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 7 to the accounts.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association. Taking into account the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a contribution to the pursuit of the objects or the management of the Charity.

During the period a new policy on trustee recruitment and induction was adopted, bringing the SMC in line with current practice. Trustees and staff consider the skills gaps formed by departing Trustees, and advertise for potential Trustees with skills to match. Applications are reviewed and

interviewed as necessary by current Trustees and staff. Prospective trustees are then proposed and appointed at October meeting each year.

Trustee induction and training

The SMC undertakes a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, which includes induction materials relating to its purposes and finances, the powers of the Trustees and information about day-to-day running of the SMC. Key documents are provided, such as the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and terms of reference, the Charity Commission's Essential Trustee guide, up-to-date accounts, and minutes of the most recent Trustee meetings. Prospective trustees may also attend relevant Trustee meetings as an observer as part of the induction process. Trustees continue to be supported through on-going training, with skills requirements regularly reviewed.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

Related party transactions are detailed in Note 9 in the financial statements.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of Science Media Centre for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2023

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2023 was 9 (2022:10). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 31 October 2023 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Science Media Centre Funders, April 2022 – March 2023

£2,000 and under

Personal donation from one individual
Association of Medical Research Charities
British Society of Immunology
British Soft Drinks Association
Envigo
Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
National Oceanography Centre
Science Museum Group (SMG)
UK Cleaning Products Industry Association
University of Birmingham
University of Exeter
University of Leeds
University of Portsmouth
University of Reading
University of Sheffield
University of York
Wellcome Sanger Institute

£2,001 – £4,999

Alzheimer's Research UK
Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd
BASF
Biochemical Society
British Pharmacological Society
Covestro UK Limited
Cystic Fibrosis Trust
FoodDrinkEurope
Health Data Research UK (HDRUK)
Institute of Cancer Research
John Innes Centre
Keele University
London School of Hygiene & Tropical
Medicine
Met Office
Microbiology Society
Mobile UK
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Newcastle University
Nuclear Industry Association
Physiological Society
Quadram Institute Bioscience
Queen Mary, University of London
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal Society
Royal Society of Biology
Sainsbury Laboratory
Taylor & Francis
University of East Anglia
University of Glasgow
University of Leicester
University of Manchester
University of Nottingham
University of Surrey

Science Media Centre

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2023

£5,000 – £9,999

Abbvie Ltd
Academy of Medical Sciences
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
Bayer plc
BioIndustry Association
BP International
Bristol University
Cancer Research UK
Chemical Industries Association
Cochrane Collaboration
Francis Crick Institute
Genomics England
Institute of Physics
Institution of Engineering and Technology
Janssen–Cilag Ltd
John Wiley & Sons
King's College London
LifeArc
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
Nestle UK Ltd
News UK Ltd
Nutrition Society
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Rolls–Royce Plc
Royal Academy of Engineering
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Sellafield Sites
Sequirus UK Limited
Shionogi & Co Ltd
Society for Applied Microbiology

UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH)
University of Cambridge
University of Edinburgh
University of Oxford

£10,000 – £19,999

Abbott
AstraZeneca
British Heart Foundation
CropLife International
DeepMind Technologies Limited
Diageo Plc
Elsevier
Financial Times
Food Standards Agency
Gilead Sciences
Google
Government Office for Science
Imperial College London
National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Roche Products Ltd
Sanofi Aventis

£20,000 – £30,000

DMG Media Ltd
GlaxoSmithKline

Over £30,000

Gatsby Charitable Foundation
Springer Nature Ltd
UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)
Wellcome Trust

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Science Media Centre for the year ended 31 March 2023.

This report is made solely to the trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. My examination has been undertaken so that I might state to the trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Company you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')/ Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accounts in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3 The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Fleur Holden FCA

Address: Sayer Vincent LLP, Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TL

Date: 15 November 2023

Science Media Centre

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2023

		2023			2022		
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Income from:							
Donations	2	724,327	–	724,327	643,308	–	643,308
Charitable activities	3	–	25,000	25,000	–	38,657	38,657
Investments	4	3,092	–	3,092	82	–	82
Total income		727,419	25,000	752,419	643,390	38,657	682,047
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	5	46,865	–	46,865	42,558	–	42,558
Charitable activities	5	652,336	31,717	684,053	590,145	28,657	618,802
Total expenditure		699,201	31,717	730,918	632,703	28,657	661,360
Net income / (expenditure) before net gains / (losses) on investments		28,218	(6,717)	21,501	10,687	10,000	20,687
Net gains / (losses) on investments		(1,734)	–	(1,734)	10,234	–	10,234
Net income / (expenditure) for the year	6	26,484	(6,717)	19,767	20,921	10,000	30,921
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		829,100	10,000	839,100	808,179	–	808,179
Total funds carried forward		855,584	3,283	858,867	829,100	10,000	839,100

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 16a to the financial statements.

As at 31 March 2023

	Note	£	2023 £	£	2022 £
Fixed assets:					
Investments	11		169,718		171,452
			<u>169,718</u>		<u>171,452</u>
Current assets:					
Debtors	12	137,559		69,359	
Cash at bank and in hand		595,810		666,423	
		<u>733,369</u>		<u>735,782</u>	
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(44,220)		(68,134)	
		<u></u>		<u></u>	
Net current assets			<u>689,149</u>		<u>667,648</u>
Total net assets			<u><u>858,867</u></u>		<u><u>839,100</u></u>
The funds of the charity:	16a				
Restricted income funds			3,283		10,000
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds		855,584		829,100	
		<u></u>		<u></u>	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>855,584</u>		<u>829,100</u>
Total charity funds			<u><u>858,867</u></u>		<u><u>839,100</u></u>

The opinion of the directors is that the company is entitled to the exemptions conferred by Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The directors acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

Approved by the trustees on 31 October 2023 and signed on their behalf by

Nicholas Hillier
Chair of Trustees

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	19,767		30,921	
Loss/(Gain) on investments	1,734		(10,234)	
Interest from investments	(3,092)		(82)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(68,200)		11,981	
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(23,914)		15,828	
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities		(73,705)		48,414
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Interest from investments	3,092		82	
Purchase of investments	–		(100,000)	
Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities		3,092		(99,918)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(70,613)		(51,504)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		666,423		717,927
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year		595,810		666,423

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

Science Media Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office address, which is also the operational address, is 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The year end funds position is £859,094 which is in excess of our reserves target.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

h) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

1 Accounting policies (continued)

i) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

j) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

k) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

l) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

2 Income from donations

	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Donations and gifts	492,847	408,308
Grants receivable for core activities	93,000	75,000
Government grants:		
UK Research & Innovation	95,000	95,000
Food Standards Agency	10,000	10,000
National Institute for Clinical Excellence	5,000	5,000
National Institute for Health Research	10,000	9,000
Sellafield Sites	5,000	5,000
Genomics England	6,000	4,000
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency	–	5,000
National Nuclear Laboratory	–	2,500
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	7,500	7,500
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	–	4,000
Met Office	–	3,000
Donated services	–	10,000
	724,327	643,308

All income from donations is unrestricted.

3 Income from charitable activities

	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	–	28,657
Global SMCs Coordinator	25,000	–
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	–	10,000
Total income from charitable activities	25,000	38,657

All income from charitable activities is restricted.

4 Income from investments

	2023 £	2022 £
Interest	3,092	82
	3,092	82

All income from investments is unrestricted.

5a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	38,505	474,596	–	–	513,101	512,344
Event costs	–	31,595	–	–	31,595	11,297
Premises costs	–	–	–	42,778	42,778	36,998
Office costs	–	–	13	53,606	53,619	38,929
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	178	38,352	38,530	3,897
Insurance	–	–	–	12,243	12,243	10,916
Professional fees	–	19,013	–	–	19,013	28,155
Accountancy	–	–	3,426	12,287	15,713	14,816
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,140	–	4,140	3,780
Bank charges	–	–	–	186	186	228
	38,505	525,204	7,757	159,452	730,918	661,360
Governance costs	388	7,369	(7,757)	–	–	–
Support costs	7,973	151,479	–	(159,452)	–	–
Total expenditure 2022	46,865	684,053	–	–	730,918	

Science Media Centre

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

5b Analysis of expenditure (prior year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2022 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	36,580	475,764	–	–	512,344
Event costs	–	11,297	–	–	11,297
Premises costs	–	–	–	36,998	36,998
Office costs	–	–	13	38,916	38,929
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	237	3,660	3,897
Insurance	–	–	–	10,916	10,916
Professional fees	–	18,155	10,000	–	28,155
Accountancy	–	–	1,890	12,926	14,816
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	3,780	–	3,780
Bank charges	–	–	–	228	228
	36,580	505,216	15,920	103,644	661,360
Governance costs	796	15,124	(15,920)	–	–
Support costs	5,182	98,462	–	(103,644)	–
Total expenditure 2022	42,558	618,802	–	–	661,360

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

6 Net income / (expenditure) for the year

Independent Examiner's Fee (excluding VAT):

Independent Examination

Other services

3,450

1,750

3,150

1,575

7 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries and wages	433,007	435,585
Social security costs	45,170	44,180
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	34,924	32,579
	513,101	512,344

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	1	1
£100,000–£109,999	1	1

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £321,192 (2022: £255,217).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2022: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2022: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £178 (2022: £237) incurred by 4 (2022: 2) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

8 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 10 (2022: 10).

9 Related party transactions

There were no related party transactions in the year (2022: £10,000)

10 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2023

11 Listed investments

	2023 £	2022 £
Fair value at the start of the year	171,452	61,218
Additions at cost	–	100,000
Net (loss)/gain on change in fair value	(1,734)	10,234
Fair value at the end of the year	<u>169,718</u>	<u>171,452</u>

Investments comprise:

	2023 £	2022 £
UK Common investment funds	169,718	171,452
	<u>169,718</u>	<u>171,452</u>

12 Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	118,084	52,501
Other debtors	4,715	4,894
Prepayments	14,760	11,964
	<u>137,559</u>	<u>69,359</u>

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	9,731	15,791
Taxation and social security	12,643	19,030
Accruals	21,846	33,313
	<u>44,220</u>	<u>68,134</u>

14 Deferred income

Deferred income comprises a grant for the COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub Project related to future periods.

	2023 £	2022 £
Balance at the beginning of the year	–	28,657
Amount released to income in the year	–	(28,657)
Amount deferred in the year	–	–
Balance at the end of the year	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>

15a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Investments	169,718	–	169,718
Net current assets	685,866	3,283	689,149
Net assets at 31 March 2023	855,584	3,283	858,867

15b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	171,452	–	171,452
Net current assets	657,648	10,000	667,648
Net assets at 31 March 2022	829,100	10,000	839,100

16a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2022 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2023 £
Restricted funds:					
Global SMCs Coordinator	–	25,000	(21,717)	–	3,283
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	10,000	–	(10,000)	–	–
Total restricted funds	10,000	25,000	(31,717)	–	3,283
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	829,100	727,419	(700,935)	–	855,584
Total unrestricted funds	829,100	727,419	(700,935)	–	855,584
Total funds	839,100	752,419	(732,652)	–	858,867

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

16b Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 1 April 2021 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2022 £
Restricted funds:					
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	–	28,657	(28,657)	–	–
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	–	10,000	–	–	10,000
Total restricted funds	–	38,657	(28,657)	–	10,000
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	808,179	643,624	(622,703)	–	829,100
Total unrestricted funds	808,179	643,624	(622,703)	–	829,100
Total funds	808,179	682,281	(651,360)	–	839,100

Purposes of restricted funds

Global SMCs Coordinator

To fund the post Global Coordinator to support the network of Science Media Centres around the world.

COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub

To contribute to a global web resource providing information for journalists and fact-checkers worldwide on COVID-19 vaccines and other relevant matters.

Changing roles of Science Press Officers–Market Research

To carry out focus groups with scientists on their media experience as part of the Changing Roles of Science Press Officers project.

17 Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.

Accounts

Company number: 07560997

Charity Number: 1140827

Science Media Centre

Report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2022

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For the year ended 31 March 2022

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Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2022

Company number 07560997
Country of incorporation United Kingdom

Charity number 1140827
Country of registration England & Wales

Registered office and operational address 215 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BE

Trustees Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Jonathan Baker	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
Dr Paul Brooker	
Adrian Bull MBE	Resigned 14 Oct 2021
John Davidson	
Prof Ann Jacqueline Hunter	Resigned 3 Feb 2022
Prof Kevin McConway	
Gavin Allen	Resigned 24 Nov 2021
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	Appointed 14 Oct 2021
Nick Hillier	Appointed 14 Oct 2021
Joanne Manning	Appointed 14 Oct 2021

Key management personnel	Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
	Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
	Selina Kermode	Head of Operations

Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2022

Bankers	HSBC Bank PLC 16 King Street Covent Garden London WC2E 8JF
	CCLA Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET
Solicitors	Bristows LLP 100 Victoria Embankment London EC4Y 0DH
Independent examiner	Fleur Holden Sayer Vincent LLP Chartered Accountants Invicta House 108-114 Golden Lane LONDON EC1Y 0TL

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association, the requirements of a directors' report as required under company law, and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The SMC also works to promote the views of the scientific community on issues of importance and helps to ensure that their expertise is available to the national news media, and through them policy-makers and the public.

Introduction

The Science Media Centre (SMC) has its roots in the influential House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's third report on Science and Society, which sought to renew public trust in science. The overall goal of the SMC is therefore to help achieve this aim by working to promote more balanced, accurate and measured coverage of the important science, health and environment stories that appear in the media.

The SMC was originally set up in April 2002 as a division of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RIGB, Charity Registration No. 227938), and its financial structure was that of a restricted fund maintained by the RIGB. In April 2011 the SMC became independent and registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The period ended 31 March 2022 is the SMC's eleventh year as a fully independent organisation, but also its twentieth year of existence.

Public opinion surveys demonstrate that the public values science, with 82% saying they are very or fairly interested in health research¹, while other surveys report that the vast majority (74%) agree that science will make people's lives easier, and think that scientists (89%) and engineers (87%) make a valuable contribution to society². A large majority (82%) of people report being very or

¹ Wellcome Trust Monitor Report Wave 4 November 2019, Public interest and engagement with health research

² Public Attitudes to Science 2019, carried out by Kantar, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

fairly interested in hearing directly from scientists about their research – an increase from 63% in 2015³.

The most recent survey of its kind reported high levels of public trust that scientists (82%), engineers (83%), and doctors (91%) tell the truth⁴. Mainstream media such as television and newspapers (online) continue to be some of the most common and significant sources of science news that people access⁵, providing an opportunity for accurate, evidence-based information to reach a mass audience.

The SMC's priority is to promote, for the benefit of the public and policymakers, accurate and evidence-based information about science in the media, particularly on controversial and headline news stories as this is when most confusion and misinformation occurs.

The objects of the SMC are as follows:

"To advance the education of the public in science and engineering and all their related branches and disciplines, particularly by the dissemination of research and information about science to the media."

In order to meet its charitable objectives, the SMC's main activities include:

- working with scientists, engineers and other experts from the scientific community, and supporting them to engage with the media;
- working with journalists and providing them with information about science and its related disciplines;
- supporting press officers when they are working on complex and contentious science, health and environment stories that could be misrepresented;
- providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media.

There has been no change during the period in the policies adopted in furtherance of the objects, and the Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the SMC should undertake.

Purposes and aims

The SMC's philosophy is:

"The media will do science better when scientists do the media better."

Our main activities allow us to achieve our philosophy and our objectives – by ensuring that the accuracy and balance of science represented by the mainstream media is improved. As an organisation we predominantly work on new research and the breaking news of the day, meaning

³ Wellcome Monitor 2020, How the British public engage with health research

⁴ Veracity Index 2021, Ipsos MORI survey of trust in professions

⁵ Reuters institute Digital News Report 2021

our long and short-term aims are very similar. For us, the most important thing is that we continue to be able to proactively respond to the next breaking news story or controversial research paper.

Staff are the main resource of the SMC and six members of staff are dedicated to the press office element of the Centre with the remaining four members of staff providing essential support to the running of the Centre.

Volunteers

The Centre continues to benefit from volunteers through our database of expert scientists, who willingly give up their time to help achieve the aims of the SMC through engagement with the media.

Scientists might help with an article for the Daily Mail on a controversial science subject, give an interview for Sky News on a breaking news story, or speak to a journalist at The Mirror about a planned exclusive article in their area of expertise. They speak on panels at our press briefings and send written comments in response to breaking stories and in advance of the publication of new research helping journalists to assess the significance of these new stories and papers. Scientists and journalists also willingly give up their time to speak at our Introduction to the News Media Events.

Many of these requests to scientists are made at short notice and outside normal working hours. Without their contributions, the SMC would not exist.

The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who gave up their time to help the SMC achieve its charitable objectives and improve media coverage of science stories.

Public benefit statement

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and those it tries to help are described below. All its activities focus on communicating science to the public and are undertaken to further the Science Media Centre's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Summary

The Science Media Centre exists to respond to complex and often controversial stories in the national news media. When a science story breaks, or new research is published, the SMC encourages appropriate experts to engage with the media to ensure that the resulting coverage is accurate and measured while also providing evidence-based information to the journalists covering the story.

The SMC works on stories across science, health, environment, and engineering. For a second year, the COVID-19 pandemic was a key focus of our work. This meant providing journalists with regular access to the best experts on topics such as variants, vaccines, treatments, and modelling, helping to ensure that this scientific evidence and expertise was central to media reporting, and that the public had access to accurate information. Beyond COVID we have continued to work across ongoing developments in research on climate and biodiversity, mental health, dementia, nutrition, pollution, and fertility.

This year we ran 149 press briefings (106 of those on COVID-19) which is **nearly double the number of briefings** we'd run in an average (non-pandemic) year. We sent out 782 roundups and rapid reactions (560 of those on COVID-19) of expert commentary, which is nearly **3 times the number** sent out in an average year.

Working with scientists, engineers and other experts, and supporting them to engage with the media

Support of scientists is one of the most valued aspects of the SMC's work, and by working with individuals and press officers we encourage them to engage with and help inform the media coverage of their area of expertise.

The SMC has continued to support RNA Media (two former science and health journalists now working as media trainers) in running 'Impact: Women scientists in the media' communications workshops. They have been funded by the NIHR. The SMC was responsible for recruiting the participants, who attend these sessions for free. The SMC also gave a talk at each of these sessions and recruited these experts to the database afterwards. There have been 12 sessions, training 44 researchers from 24 different institutions. Feedback from the Impact session attendees was very positive and many have gone on to engage with the media when their particular area of expertise hits the headlines.

The SMC worked with the journal *Nature* on a survey of scientists who had taken part in media work during the pandemic, where it was reported that harassment as a result of media engagement was common. This survey led to the SMC running an event in February 2022 on the issue of the harassment of scientists. While this event was not designed to provide any easy answers to this issue, it was an opportunity for researchers to hear about the experiences of the panellists and other attendees, along with providing some practical advice for scientists and their press officers of how best to respond to harassment. We had a turnout of 177 attendees with people dialling in from 8 different countries.

On a more informal level, the SMC provides direct day-to-day support to scientists who want help getting their work into the media, with the SMC press officers frequently advising academics on press matters even when they don't fall directly into our core work. We also help scientists achieve recognition and acknowledgement from their peers and institutions for the work they do to improve public understanding of science, particularly on the most challenging topics. This ranges from writing citations and supporting nominations to providing personal recommendations when appropriate.

Working with journalists and providing them with accurate information about science and its related disciplines

The main services that the SMC provides to journalists are:

Rapid Reactions

When a science or science-related story hits the headlines, the SMC encourages leading scientists in relevant fields to engage rapidly with the story, and offer evidence-based expert comments. The SMC then makes these experts and their comments available to journalists at all major UK news outlets. The media can follow up with further queries or interview requests. This activity helps to inject accurate information and valuable context from experts into the reporting of rapidly-developing news stories, which in turn reduces the likelihood of inaccurate speculation which may mislead or alarm the public. Rapid Reactions therefore satisfy both the desire of journalists for credible experts and appropriate information, and the public's need to hear from the best experts at the time when it is most critical.

Rapid Reactions have once again played a vital role in the media reporting of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have been through experts assessing the scientific evidence base and providing context when new government policies are announced on the introduction or removal of restrictions, on updates on the licencing of new vaccines or the plans for vaccination roll out, or the COVID-19 deaths statistics.

Beyond COVID-19, this work has included gathering comments from scientists in responding to stories such as the new WHO air quality guidelines, changes to the UK legal time limit on egg freezing, a case of bird flu in a person in the UK, news of a pig heart transplanted into a human, or the loss of power to Chernobyl during the war in Ukraine.

Roundups

This service is unique to the SMC and is a key tool for the Centre and for specialist science, health and environment journalists to ensure accurate coverage of new scientific research. The SMC gathers and issues written comments from leading, relevant experts on embargoed science studies and reports ahead of their publication. These third party comments offer a critique and

valuable insights that science journalists can use to cover the story in an accurate and responsible way. Statements from independent scientists can help reporters identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new study and put it into the context of wider scientific knowledge. These comments can indicate how surprising or important the findings are and describe any implications for policy, patients or the public. Print and broadcast journalists can lift quotes for their reports and follow up for further interviews with the experts.

For example, it may involve gathering independent expert comments on observational studies where it is important that the limitations and caveats of the work be properly understood by the public, such as roundups this year on drinking coffee and dementia, eating dairy and cancer risk, or meat consumption and all-cause mortality. It could also involve responding to studies on commonly taken medications, where inaccurate reporting could lead to people being misinformed of the benefits and risks of these drugs. A roundup may also be done in response to a study where it's important to recognise the limits of real world implications when carried out in cells or animal models, and expert commentary can help achieve this.

On COVID, we collated third party expert commentary on studies on new variants and their characteristics, how well the vaccines protect against infection, hospitalisation and death, modelling studies on the role and impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions and vaccination on infections, papers on the prevalence and symptom profile of long covid, and testing protocols.

We have continued to do roundups on preprints as well, where third party comments could be regarded as even more critical as these studies have not yet been through any external review by other scientists, and therefore roundups provide the first instance of independent expert scrutiny.

Briefings

The SMC runs regular press briefings for specialist science journalists at the UK national news outlets. These briefings provide an opportunity for scientists and journalists to meet regularly, and allow scientists to explain their complicated work in a detailed and measured way. This gives journalists the opportunity to get fully to grips with a difficult or significant area of science, with the end result being more accurate media coverage. News briefings allow scientists to explain new findings in a more nuanced way, while background briefings address a wide range of topical issues where experts feel that accurate, evidence-based information has been missing from the media and public debate. SMC briefings have proved to be instrumental in ensuring scientifically-accurate media coverage of many high-profile and ongoing scientific issues.

During the pandemic press briefings moved online and are now hybrid, with a combined overall increase in attendees.

On COVID-19, we ran press briefings on new results on treatments, the epidemiology of the pandemic in the UK, modelling of the roadmap out of lockdown, health disparities, the neurological and mental health problems in those recovering from the disease, the risk of severe

disease in children, and the prevalence and symptoms of long covid. We have also hosted the launch of the human challenge trial to study immune responses in those previously infected and the launch and results of the events research programme.

As the vaccine roll out continued we ran briefings on the real world data as it accumulated, including on how the vaccines protected against severe disease, hospitalisation and death, how they dealt with new variants of concern, the detailed immunological responses to primary and booster vaccination, and the evidence around vaccinating children. When there were initial concerns that the AstraZeneca vaccine could be linked to rare but serious blood clots, we ran Q&A briefings with key experts in the area to help explain how the evidence to find a causal link would be collected and examined, and when further evidence was available, the authors of new papers presented their findings to the journalists.

On environmental issues, we ran press briefings on; the IPCC Sixth Assessment reports from Working Groups 1 and 2, the Global Carbon Budget, the IPBES report on biodiversity and climate change, nature based solutions for climate change which could be done in the UK, a study on melting land ice and sea level rises, and background briefings on nitrogen air pollution and the role trees can play in tackling climate change.

On the regulation of science, we hosted briefings on genetically altered food and the use of stem cells in research.

We ran briefings on depression and inflammation, psilocybin as a treatment for depression, the long term use of antidepressants, and social media use in adolescence and wellbeing.

We also hosted the results of a large ovarian cancer screening trial and the work of Genomics England's 100,000 Genomes pilot on diagnosing rare disease.

Additional services

In addition to responding to the most important news stories of the day, providing accurate information about the latest developments in science to journalists, and running regular press briefings, the SMC also handles *ad hoc* enquiries from journalists seeking an expert to interview, or background information on a science, health or environment story which they may be working on.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub is a collaborative project between the Global SMC Network, the fact checking organisation Meedan, and other SMC like or developing SMC organisations. Funding for the project has come from the Google News Initiative (GNI). The aim of the project is to increase access for global factcheckers and journalists to the best evidence on COVID-19 vaccines, including the translation of materials into regional and local dialects that are often under represented. The UK SMC has contributed heavily to the content of the site and has also helped in the planning and direction of the project. <https://covidvaccinehub.org/>

Supporting press officers when they are working on complex science, health and environment stories

Many of the SMC's core activities rely on working with and supporting press officers at other organisations, including when they have experts on an issue in the headlines, or when their own institution or scientists are the subject of media interest. Press officers regularly approach the SMC for its guidance and expertise on media stories, particularly when an issue is complex and controversial. This can include advice on drafting accurate and responsible press releases, how best to do responsible press work on preprints, or whether to run a press briefing on a new piece of research.

The SMC also recognises and champions the crucial role press officers play in responsible science communication. SMC staff are often invited to give talks and presentations at scientific organisations and meetings, both aiding the press officers and encouraging their scientists to engage with the media, whilst also raising awareness of the SMC's work.

Providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media

The SMC is often called upon to comment on and provide expertise in relation to its overview and experience of science in the media. Aside from Fiona Fox's blog hosted on the SMC website which features three new blogposts, in the last year SMC staff have been featured in articles and comment pieces published in Press Gazette, PR week, The Sun, Research Fortnight, The Observer, BBC, The Guardian, Politico, Medscape, Nature and Times Higher Education. Fiona Fox has also spoken at; an event at the Jameel Institute at Imperial College London on the role of data analytics during COVID, on Matt Chorley's Red Box Politics Podcast about scientists and the media during the pandemic, at the BBSRC Annual Strategic Workshop panel – "The Age of Bioscience", at the HDRUK National Core Studies panel – "UK COVID Science – the perspective of the public, the media and the NHS", at the Frankfurt Book Fair panel – "How has Covid-19 changed the way we communicate science?", and chaired a panel discussion at the Progress Education Trust Conference on "New Frontiers: Futureproofing Fertility and Embryo Law".

Staff have also spoken to the journalism school at Cardiff University, IPSO, The British Science Association, the British Embassy in Rome, the British Embassy in Prague, and at a joint panel held by the Royal Society and Imperial College London on Science Communication to Policymakers, speaking about our work.

SMC staff members additionally engage and share their expertise with the wider scientific community through their roles on boards and advisory committees of other scientific organisations. Fiona Fox is on the advisory committee for the Roslin Institute and the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response. Hannah Taylor Lewis is a Stempra committee member.

Fundraising

The year 2021–22 ended with a surplus of £30,921 (£127,95 in 2020–21). This represents a return to more normal levels of income after additional income was received in the prior year related to the Covid pandemic.

Donations continue to make up the majority of the income of the SMC and are mostly from organisations which have supported the SMC for many years. Fundraising at the SMC is carried out by two members of staff as part of their roles.

The Centre has high levels of retention within those organisations supporting the SMC and continues to be successful in attracting new supporters.

Impact

The work of the SMC is often difficult to judge through numbers alone. Success can mean a poor study or unpublished conference abstract isn't covered in the newspapers, or is on page eight rather than the front page. It might also mean front pages explaining a revolutionary science technique with nuance or balance, or standfirsts explaining that leading scientists questioned the latest findings or cautioned against overinterpretation of the results.

As the COVID–19 pandemic continued, it was clear how important it was that top quality scientific evidence and expertise was made readily and widely available to the public via the news media. The appetite for expert comments, broadcast interviews and press briefings remained exceptionally high and impact of the efforts of the team at the SMC – alongside the scientists and press officers they worked with – on the quality of science journalism in the UK has been strong and measurable.

During the past twelve months, we held 149 press conferences with an average attendance of 22 journalists from the national news. Together these briefings produced over 1819 pieces of coverage in the national news media. We also sent out 782 rapid reactions and round ups on breaking news stories or new scientific studies and reports – providing the public with accurate and measured scientific expertise.

Commentary on the objectives as described in last year's trustee report follows:

1. Continue to work on helping journalists report the evidence and new research on COVID–19, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

We continued to run press briefings on important new research such as real world data on the effectiveness of COVID–19 vaccines, studies on the characteristics of new variants, work on the complex immunological responses of both natural infection and vaccination, the side effects from

vaccination such a rare but serious blood clotting events, modelling of different non-pharmaceutical interventions, and long COVID.

A large part of our work on COVID remained gathering expert comments on newly published research, including that disseminated via preprint server, where it was crucial that journalists had rapid access to independent experts' assessment on this rapidly published work to help gauge how robust the science was, its significance, and any real world implications.

We continued to work with RNA media in providing media training for women scientists carrying out research into COVID, to help those with little prior media experience learn practical tips on how to most effectively engage with the news media when their area of research on COVID-19 hit the headlines.

Fiona Lethbridge gave a talk about the work of the SMC during Covid and some of the SMC's recommendations on science and the media at the Royal Society Science of COVID conference; which was attended and discussed with many senior scientists who had been involved in the UK's Covid response and media work.

2. Continue to carry out media work on important non-COVID issues so that researchers working on other important and contentious scientific issues have their voices heard in the mainstream media

One key media story this year was the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), held in the UK in November 2021. In the lead up to COP26, we ran briefings on whether it is possible to meet the Paris pledges, whether the world can get to net zero, the decarbonisation of construction, the role of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in climate change, a joint statement on COP26 from Patrick Vallance and other scientific advisors to governments around the world, a report from the Academy of Medical Sciences and Royal Society on climate change and health, and the Global Carbon Budget. This helped ensure that in the lead up to the event, science and environment journalists were well-informed of the key issues that would be discussed at the meeting and the evidence behind them. During COP26, we gathered comments on the negotiations, draft agreement and final agreement, again helping journalists navigate this important policy event and what the scientific evidence could tell us about the impact of certain policies.

We also continued to work on many of the key issues that are common to our work, including treatments for mental health, claims made around the health impacts of diet and nutrition, work on the potential mechanisms and treatment of dementia, e-cigarettes, biodiversity and cancer. This involved running press briefings on important new studies in the field, gathering third party expert comments on new research and responding to breaking news developments.

We have continued to engage with the research community about how best to communicate their research and expertise, explaining how the SMC is able to help and support them in doing so. This has included staff giving talks to researchers at the Institute of Metabolism and Systems Research,

Imperial College London, the MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences, Alzheimer's Scotland, King's College London, the Society for the Study of Addiction, the MRC Human Genetics Unit, Newcastle University, the Welsh Crucible (a development programme for leading researchers across Wales), the Engineering Professors' Council meeting, a media skills training session for academic GPs, and the British Toxicology Society.

3. Investigate future working of the SMC and press briefings once people start returning to the office and ensure our work is accessible and most useful for the journalists and scientists

The SMC has kept in close touch with the journalists throughout the pandemic to get their thoughts on the future of in person press briefings. There was a consensus that there remains an appetite for an in-person option for journalists to attend although a dial in option should always be available due to the changes in flexible working that are likely to extend beyond the pandemic. Work was carried out looking into the equipment and staffing requirements to make this possible. New equipment was purchased in order to set up hybrid press briefings from our office.

We have hosted our first hybrid briefing with journalists attending both in person and dialled in. It was a success and over the next year, more work will take place on ensuring hybrid briefings can run smoothly and work well for both the scientists and the journalists. As we run more hybrid briefings, this will guide discussions as to the best format for SMC press briefings in the future.

Work was also carried out to begin assessing how best staff can work from home, should it be necessary due to the pandemic where working from home is advised or due to staff being infectious but well enough to work. This project has led to changes in desktop set ups where all staff will now have a work laptop and laptop dock in the office. This update to staff equipment will be carried out over the next year.

4. 20th Anniversary of the Science Media Centre

In preparation for the 20th anniversary of the SMC, the team set up a list of projects that would both celebrate and reflect on the work that has been achieved so far. These projects will take up a considerable amount of staff time so planning is in place to ensure they can all be done whilst keeping up with the day to day work of the SMC. The projects will include; a series of podcasts looking back at big stories and events over the past 20 years of the SMC, the publications of Fiona Fox's book, a residential trustees away day, a piece of work on the changing role of press officers, and hosting the global network of SMC's at a meeting in the UK.

Financial review

Funding

The SMC is funded principally by trusts and foundations, scientific bodies and other organisations, companies, charities, and government and related agencies. The SMC is independent from its funders who do not gain influence over the SMC's work in return for their financial support.

To protect the SMC from any undue influence we cap contributions from any one institution at 5% of the SMC's annual income. The cap for 2021–22 was £35,000. The SMC's Trustees and Advisory Committee have agreed on two exceptions to the 5% upper limit: the Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI's contribution is over the 5% cap as this represents the consolidated amounts from several Research Councils which is now paid via the umbrella organisation set up in 2019.

The SMC is open and transparent with regard to its funding. All funders are listed on the SMC website under bands for their total amount recognised within a financial year. A list is also included on page 22

Transactions and financial position

In its eleventh year of operation as a fully independent organisation, the SMC has again continued to maintain a good financial position, having ended the year in surplus and built up an appropriate level of reserves by year end.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows that the total income for the year was £682,047 (£722,170 in 2020–21).

Total expenditure for the year was £661,360 (£595,209 in 2020–21) of which 96% (96% in 2020–21) was spent on charitable activities directly carrying out the Charity's key objectives.

The activities for the year therefore resulted in a surplus of £30,921 (£127,955 in 2020–21). This includes £10,234 (£994 in 2021–21) gains on investments.

Investment policy

During this period the SMC placed an additional £100,000 into an investment fund. It is the intention of the Trustees to keep 12 months' running costs as cash in saving accounts, with lower risk and quicker access. Funds in excess of this are to be invested for the furtherance of the Charity's aims.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the SMC is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate that exposure. These risks are detailed on the Risk Register for the SMC with information on the current practice and strategy used to mitigate the risk. This register is reviewed annually by Trustees, with responsibility delegated to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to review the register at each meeting.

The current risk register pays particular attention to the risks around funding, a major incident closing our office, staff welfare, cybersecurity, and the loss of data.

Risks for loss of funding are mitigated by close monitoring of the finances of the SMC, by seeking new income each year and by having a number of supporting organisations from across the sector. The independence of the Centre from funders is maintained by the current 5% cap and clear communication with new and existing funders on the separation between the funding and activity of the SMC.

Best practice around conflicts of interests continues to be monitored by staff and compared with our current policy to identify any improvements that could be made. The Centre clarifies when no competing interests have been received and when there are none to declare. Any criticism received regarding a conflict is met with open discussion and passed on to the scientist in question.

Cybersecurity risks to the SMC are addressed by ensuring the sector best practice is followed. This includes, but is not limited to: firewalls, secure staff passwords, regular deletion of emails, antivirus software and regular off-site backups.

Reserves policy and going concern

The SMC has agreed that reserves would be used for support during a short, defined period of a deficit budget, allowing for new sources of income or reductions in expenditure to be identified.

It is therefore the policy of the Charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to twelve months' expenditure (approximately £600,000 for this period).

This level of reserves has been built up and maintained throughout the period; the Charity holds £839,100 in reserves, of which £10,000 are restricted, as of 31 March 2022 (£808,179 in 2020–21). On this basis we are satisfied we are a going concern.

Our year end fund position of £839,100 is comfortably in excess of our £600,000 reserves target. The Trustees feel that in the current uncertain economic climate and period of rapid change post-pandemic it is prudent to hold a higher level of reserves.

Trustees periodically review the reserves policy of the Charity.

Plans for the future

The current period has seen the SMC's eleventh year as a fully independent charity.

The Trustees feel that the SMC is continuing to operate from a position of strength, in terms of both its core activities and financial security. The expertise of senior management and staff at the SMC will ensure that these future plans are given sufficient resources and achieved.

The following priorities have been identified for the coming year:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues in the media, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

While COVID is likely to remain a significant story for the next year, there has already been noticeably more space and appetite for other science, health and environment stories in the media. We will continue to monitor the news for developing stories and issues where scientific expertise can help play a role in accurate reporting.

We will work closely with scientists who are providing third party comments on roundups and speaking at press briefings about new published research to help ensure new research is reported on in an accurate and measured way.

We will continue to recruit the best experts on topics which regularly make the news by going and giving talks at universities and institutions, working with press officers and will run at least one Introduction to the News Media Event.

2. Work on a piece of work evaluating the changing role of press officers in universities

The SMC will work with Helen Jamison and Claire Bithell, along with members of our advisory committee and trustees to set up an evaluation of the state of research communications and the aims and objectives of communications teams within universities. This work will involve a survey of Stempra members, workshops with scientists (organised by Ipsos), and interviewing communication professionals at universities around the country. This report will help guide discussions as to the future direction of the work of the SMC, as well as provide a useful resource for communications professionals across universities. Once published, the report will be rolled out through a series of round tables in collaboration with Research England and Universities UK.

The SMC will work on promoting and discussing the outcomes and recommendations from this report, engaging with key organisations and individuals in the university sector.

3. Organise and host a meeting for the global SMC's network

The UK SMC will host the global networks of SMC's in September 2022. This will be an opportunity to discuss key issues that impact the work of all SMC's, such as the role of preprints in dissemination and communication of research, a discussion on the media coverage of the pandemic in each of the countries represented, and describing the key functions of what makes a Science Media Centre.

We are also looking to work more closely with the international centres in the future, with a new role funded by Springer Nature in development that will help orchestrate greater collaboration, either on day to day media work or distinct projects.

4. 20th Anniversary of the Science Media Centre

2022 marks the 20th anniversary of the SMC and a range of projects have been planned or are already in place to commemorate and reflect on this work. There will be a strategy away day for all staff and trustees to discuss the future of the SMC. This will include reflecting on findings from the 'changing role of science press officers' work, and form part of a governance review. The team will work on a series of podcasts which look back on the biggest stories in the SMC's history, speaking with key scientists, press officers and journalists involved. Fiona Fox's book will be published in April 2022. Promotion of the book will be used to prompt discussion on its key themes.

5. Write up and roll out SMC's lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and submit to relevant enquiries

Having been one of the busiest science press offices throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the SMC is in a key position to help assess what went well and what could be improved in communication of scientific research to the public in emergencies, such as during pandemics. From discussions within the team, along with getting feedback from scientists and journalists we have worked with closely, the SMC will create a summary of lessons learned which can help guide media work in the future. This work will be fed into the public enquiry as required.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The SMC is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee (Company Registration No. 7560997, England & Wales; Charity Registration No. 1140827). The Board of Trustees is the major decision-making body and it meets at least three times a year.

Trustees are individuals distinguished in the field of science, engineering, medicine, journalism, communications, finance, law and policy. The SMC considers each of the Trustees to be independent in character and judgement, and understands that they have no relationships that are likely to affect, or could appear to affect, their judgements with regard to the SMC. Declarations of interest are required from new Trustees upon appointment and are updated annually, whilst every meeting of the Board also requires that any new interests are declared.

All of the Trustees also act as directors of the company, but none has any beneficial interest in the company and no remuneration is provided except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs. Policy is determined by the Trustees, on the advice of the Advisory Committee and others, and its implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive who, in conjunction with a team of nine

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2022

additional staff, the Advisory Committee and Trustees as appropriate, undertakes the necessary work.

A Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive, the Senior Press Manager and Head of Operations allows for better distribution of organisational responsibility and both staff and Trustees continue to be happy with the structure.

The Advisory Committee is a principal advisory committee to the Trustees and is a voluntary group of distinguished experts from the fields of science, engineering, medicine, journalism and communications, who provide expertise and advice. The group meets three times a year.

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is another principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues such as financial planning, pensions, the annual audit and risk review and management. The group consists of the chair, two Trustees and two external members, with the Treasurer and members of senior management in an observational capacity. The Committee meets three times a year.

The Remuneration Committee meets once a year. This committee reports directly to the Trustees. The SMC is very grateful to the members of all committees for their valuable contributions.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the period are:

Jonathan Baker	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
Dr Paul Brooker	
Adrian Bull MBE	Resigned 14 Oct 2021
John Davidson	
Prof Ann Jacqueline Hunter	Resigned 3 Feb 2022
Prof Kevin McConway	
Gavin Allen	Resigned 24 Nov 2021
Jonathan Brüün	
Alex Keenlyside	
Alice Henchley	Appointed 14 Oct 2021
Nick Hillier	Appointed 14 Oct 2021
Joanne Manning	Appointed 14 Oct 2021

Staff

Trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Key Management Personnel:

Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
Selina Kermode	Head of Operations

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2022

The SMC has nine established members of staff and the Trustees record their appreciation of the efforts of the staff, who have again made an enormous contribution to the success of the SMC during the year.

During the year the SMC also benefited greatly from eleven interns who each spent a month assisting with administrative duties and experiencing life within a busy press office.

Trustees would also like to record their appreciation for the efforts of the interns, and are pleased to note that many previous interns go on to obtain full time permanent roles within the science communication field.

Pay and remuneration

The following principles of the pay system are agreed by Trustees

- The SMC should not have a system which the charity cannot afford
- The system should not reward staff who are underperforming
- The system should have some built-in mechanism to monitor the competition and react to changes in the job market
- The system should recognise the developmental nature of the roles at the SMC

All permanent staff are appointed into salary bands, dependent on the role and its responsibilities. Reflecting the developmental nature of the roles, these salary bands each have 5 or 6 'spine points'. Pay increases are recommended by managers based on performance, and are approved by the Remuneration Committee based on the evidence provided, affordability, wider economic circumstances and the financial performance of the SMC during the year. Benchmarking is conducted every two years to ensure the salary brackets are comparable to similar roles outside the SMC.

The salary of the Chief Executive is considered separately by the Remuneration Committee who will consider the wider economic circumstances and any benchmarking before making recommendations to the Trustees.

Benefits currently provided to staff currently include a newspaper subscription, income protection insurance, gym membership and membership of Stempra.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 11 March 2011 and registered as a charity on 18 March 2021.

The company was established under a memorandum of association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 7 to the accounts.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations, taking into account the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a contribution to the pursuit of the objects or the management of the Charity.

Trustees and staff consider the skills gaps formed by departing Trustees, and nominate appropriate individuals with skills to match. These individuals are then approached, and if willing, meet with current Trustees and staff to learn more about the SMC and what it means to be a Trustee. Prospective trustees are then proposed and appointed at the AGM.

Trustee induction and training

The SMC undertakes a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, which includes induction materials relating to its purposes and finances, the powers of the Trustees and information about day-to-day running of the SMC. Key documents are provided, such as the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations, the Charity Commission's Essential Trustee guide, up-to-date accounts, and minutes of the most recent Trustee meetings. Prospective trustees may also attend relevant Trustee meetings as an observer as part of the induction process. Trustees continue to be supported through on-going training, with skills requirements regularly reviewed.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

Related party transactions are detailed in Note 9 in the financial statements.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of Science Media Centre for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2022

- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2022 was 10 (2021:10). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 20 October 2022 and signed on their behalf by

Jonathan Baker
Chair of Trustee

Funders list

April 2021 – 31 March 2022

£2,000 AND UNDER

Personal donation from one individual

Association for Clinical Biochemistry & Laboratory Medicine

Association of Medical Research Charities

British Ecological Society

Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers

Cochrane Collaboration

Cystic Fibrosis Trust

ESHRE

Health Data Research UK (HDRUK)

Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine

John Innes Centre

Keele University

Lancaster University

National Oceanography Centre

Nuclear Industry Association

Quadram Institute Bioscience

Sainsbury Laboratory

University of Exeter

University of Portsmouth

University of Reading

University of Warwick

University of York

£2,001 – £4,999

Alzheimer's Research UK

BASF

Biochemical Society

Biogen Ltd

British Pharmacological Society

British Society of Immunology

Covestro UK Limited

FoodDrinkEurope

Francis Crick Institute

Genomics England

Institute of Cancer Research

Johnson & Johnson Ltd

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Met Office

Microbiology Society

National Nuclear Laboratory

Newcastle University

Physiological Society

Funders list

April 2021 – 31 March 2022

Procter & Gamble UK
Queen Mary, University of London
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal Society
Royal Society of Biology
Society for Endocrinology
Society for Radiological Protection
Taylor & Francis
UK Dementia Research Institute
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
University of East Anglia
University of Leeds
University of Manchester
University of Nottingham

£5,000 – £9,999

Abbvie Ltd
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
BioIndustry Association
BP International
British Heart Foundation
Cancer Research UK
Chemical Industries Association
Durham University
GE Healthcare
Institution of Engineering and Technology (The IET)
John Wiley & Sons
King's College London
LifeArc
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)
Nestle UK Ltd
News UK Ltd
Nutrition Society
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Rolls-Royce Plc
Royal Academy of Engineering
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Sellafield Sites
Society for Applied Microbiology
UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology
University College London

Funders list

April 2021 – 31 March 2022

University of Cambridge
University of Edinburgh

£10,000 – £19,999

Bristows LLP – *pro bono support*
DeepMind Technologies Limited
Diageo Plc
Elsevier
Financial Times
Food Standards Agency
Imperial College London
Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD)
Roche Products Ltd
Sanofi Aventis
Springer Nature Ltd
Academy of Medical Sciences
University of Oxford

£20,000 – £30,000

Grant from Global SMC Initiative (wholly-owned subsidiary of AusSMC) for [COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub](#) project
AstraZeneca
GlaxoSmithKline
Gatsby Charitable Foundation

OVER £30,000

UK Research & Innovation
Wellcome Trust

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Science Media Centre for the year ended 31 March 2022.

This report is made solely to the trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. My examination has been undertaken so that I might state to the trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Company you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')/ Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accounts in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3 The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Fleur Holden FCA

Address: Sayer Vincent LLP, Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TL

Date: 11 November 2022

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2022

		2022			2021		
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £
Income from:							
Donations	2	643,308	–	643,308	708,567	–	708,567
Charitable activities	3	–	38,657	38,657	–	13,184	13,184
Investments	4	82	–	82	419	–	419
Total income		643,390	38,657	682,047	708,986	13,184	722,170
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	5	42,558	–	42,558	29,627	–	29,627
Charitable activities	5	590,145	28,657	618,802	552,398	13,184	565,582
Total expenditure		632,703	28,657	661,360	582,025	13,184	595,209
Net income before net gains on investments		10,687	10,000	20,687	126,961	–	126,961
Net gains on investments		10,234	–	10,234	994	–	994
Net income for the year	6	20,921	10,000	30,921	127,955	–	127,955
Reconciliation of funds:							
Total funds brought forward		808,179	–	808,179	680,224	–	680,224
Total funds carried forward		829,100	10,000	839,100	808,179	–	808,179

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 16a to the financial statements.

Balance sheet

Company no. 07560997

As at 31 March 2022

	Note	£	2022 £	£	2021 £
Fixed assets:					
Investments	11		171,452		61,218
			<u>171,452</u>		<u>61,218</u>
Current assets:					
Debtors	12	69,359		81,340	
Cash at bank and in hand		666,423		717,927	
		<u>735,782</u>		<u>799,267</u>	
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(68,134)		(52,306)	
		<u>(68,134)</u>		<u>(52,306)</u>	
Net current assets			<u>667,648</u>		<u>746,961</u>
Total net assets			<u><u>839,100</u></u>		<u><u>808,179</u></u>
The funds of the charity:	16a				
Restricted income funds			10,000		–
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds		829,100		808,179	
		<u>829,100</u>		<u>808,179</u>	
Total unrestricted funds			<u>829,100</u>		<u>808,179</u>
Total charity funds			<u><u>839,100</u></u>		<u><u>808,179</u></u>

The opinion of the directors is that the company is entitled to the exemptions conferred by Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The directors acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

Approved by the trustees on 20 October 2022 and signed on their behalf by

Jonathan Baker
Chair of Trustees

Science Media Centre

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2022

	2022 £	£	2021 £	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	30,921		127,955	
Depreciation charges	–		267	
(Gains) on investments	(10,234)		(994)	
Interest from investments	(82)		(419)	
Loss on the disposal of fixed assets	–		575	
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors	11,981		(35,215)	
Increase in creditors	15,828		20,793	
Net cash provided by operating activities	48,414		112,962	
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Interest from investments	82		419	
Purchase of investments	(100,000)		(60,224)	
Net cash used in investing activities	(99,918)		(59,805)	
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	(51,504)		53,157	
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	717,927		664,770	
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	666,423		717,927	

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

Science Media Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office address, which is also the operational address, is 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The year end funds position is £839,100 which is in excess of our reserves target.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

f) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charity in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

h) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2022

1 Accounting policies (continued)

i) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

j) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

k) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

l) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

2 Income from donations

	£	2022 Total £	£	2021 Total £
Donations and gifts	408,308	408,308	471,117	471,117
Grants receivable for core activities	75,000	75,000	70,000	70,000
Government grants:				
UK Research & Innovation	95,000	95,000	95,000	95,000
Food Standards Agency	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
National Institute for Clinical Excellence	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
National Institute for Health Research	9,000	9,000	15,000	15,000
Sellafield Sites	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Genomics England	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
National Nuclear Laboratory	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	7,500	7,500	4,950	4,950
Department for Health and Social Care	–	–	10,000	10,000
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board	–	–	3,000	3,000
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority	4,000	4,000	–	–
Met Office	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Donated services	10,000	10,000	5,000	5,000
	643,308	643,308	708,567	708,567

All income from donations is unrestricted.

3 Income from charitable activities

	£	2022 Total £	£	2021 Total £
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	28,657	28,657	3,184	3,184
National Institute for Health Research	–	–	10,000	10,000
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	10,000	10,000	–	–
Total income from charitable activities	38,657	38,657	13,184	13,184

All income from charitable activities is restricted.

4 Income from investments

	2022 £	2021 £
Interest	82	419
	82	419

All income from investments is unrestricted.

Science Media Centre

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2022

5a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2022 Total £	2021 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	36,580	475,764	-	-	512,344	455,590
Event costs	-	11,297	-	-	11,297	14,157
Premises costs	-	-	-	36,998	36,998	36,043
Office costs	-	-	13	38,916	38,929	46,137
Travel, meetings and subsistence	-	-	237	3,660	3,897	237
Insurance	-	-	-	10,916	10,916	7,891
Professional fees	-	18,155	10,000	-	28,155	13,744
Accountancy	-	-	1,890	12,926	14,816	17,321
Independent examiner's fee	-	-	3,780	-	3,780	3,600
Bank charges	-	-	-	228	228	222
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	267
	36,580	505,216	15,920	103,644	661,360	595,209
Governance costs	796	15,124	(15,920)	-	-	-
Support costs	5,182	98,462	-	(103,644)	-	-
Total expenditure 2022	42,558	618,802	-	-	661,360	
Total expenditure 2021	29,627	565,582	-	-		595,209

Science Media Centre

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2022

5b Analysis of expenditure (prior year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2021 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	23,791	431,799	-	-	455,590
Event costs	-	14,157	-	-	14,157
Premises costs	-	-	-	36,043	36,043
Office costs	-	-	13	46,124	46,137
Travel, meetings and subsistence	-	-	-	237	237
Insurance	-	-	428	7,463	7,891
Professional fees	-	8,744	5,000	-	13,744
Accountancy	-	-	1,800	15,521	17,321
Independent examiner's fee	-	-	3,600	-	3,600
Bank charges	-	-	-	222	222
Depreciation	-	-	-	267	267
	23,791	454,700	10,841	105,877	595,209
Governance costs	542	10,299	(10,841)	-	-
Support costs	5,294	100,583	-	(105,877)	-
Total expenditure 2021	29,627	565,582	-	-	595,209
Total expenditure 2020	42,522	502,592	-	-	

6 Net income for the year

This is stated after charging:

	2022 £	2021 £
Depreciation	–	267
Independent Examiner's Fee (excluding VAT):		
Independent Examination	3,150	3,000
Other services	1,575	1,500
	<u>3,150</u>	<u>3,000</u>
	<u>1,575</u>	<u>1,500</u>

7 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management personnel

Staff costs were as follows:

	2022 £	2021 £
Salaries and wages	435,585	395,774
Social security costs	44,180	38,147
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	32,579	21,669
	<u>512,344</u>	<u>455,590</u>

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2022 No.	2021 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	1	1
£90,000 – £99,999	–	1
£100,000–£109,999	1	–

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £255,217 (2021: £233,371).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2021: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2021: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £237 (2021: £nil) incurred by 2 (2021: 0) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

8 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 10

9 Related party transactions

Science Media Centre received pro bono solicitors advice from Bristows LLP with a value of £10,000 in 2021/22 (2020/21: £5,000). Alex Keenlyside is a trustee of Science Media Centre and a partner at Bristows LLP.

10 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

11 Listed investments

	2022 £	2021 £
Fair value at the start of the year	61,218	–
Additions at cost	100,000	60,224
Net gain on change in fair value	10,234	994
Fair value at the end of the year	<u>171,452</u>	<u>61,218</u>

Investments comprise:

	2022 £	2021 £
UK Common investment funds	171,452	61,218
	<u>171,452</u>	<u>61,218</u>

12 Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	52,501	79,201
Other debtors	4,894	1,239
Prepayments	11,964	900
	<u>69,359</u>	<u>81,340</u>

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	15,791	18,249
Taxation and social security	19,030	–
Accruals	33,313	5,400
Deferred income (note 14)	–	28,657
	<u>68,134</u>	<u>52,306</u>

14 Deferred income

Deferred income comprises a grant for the COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub Project related to future periods.

	2022 £	2021 £
Balance at the beginning of the year	28,657	–
Amount released to income in the year	(28,657)	–
Amount deferred in the year	–	28,657
Balance at the end of the year	–	28,657

15a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Investments	171,452	–	171,452
Net current assets	657,648	10,000	667,648
Net assets at 31 March 2022	829,100	10,000	839,100

15b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	61,218	–	61,218
Net current assets	746,961	–	746,961
Net assets at 31 March 2021	808,179	–	808,179

16a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2021 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2022 £
Restricted funds:					
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	–	28,657	(28,657)	–	–
Changing roles of science press officers – market research	–	10,000	–	–	10,000
Total restricted funds	–	38,657	(28,657)	–	10,000
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	808,179	643,624	(622,703)	–	829,100
Total unrestricted funds	808,179	643,624	(622,703)	–	829,100
Total funds	808,179	682,281	(651,360)	–	839,100

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

16b Movements in funds (prior year)

	At 1 April 2020 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2021 £
Restricted funds:					
Impact: Women Scientists in the Media	–	10,000	(10,000)	–	–
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	–	3,184	(3,184)	–	–
Total restricted funds	–	13,184	(13,184)	–	–
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	680,224	709,980	(582,025)	–	808,179
Total unrestricted funds	680,224	709,980	(582,025)	–	808,179
Total funds	680,224	723,164	(595,209)	–	808,179

Purposes of restricted funds**Impact: Women Scientists in the Media**

To provide media training to female STEM experts, a group which is historically underrepresented in the media.

COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub

To contribute to a global web resource providing information for journalists and fact-checkers worldwide on COVID-19 vaccines and other relevant matters.

Changing roles of Science Press Officers–Market Research

To carry out focus groups with scientists on their media experience as part of the Changing Roles of Science Press Officers project.

17 Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.

Accounts

Company number: 07560997

Charity Number: 1140827

Science Media Centre

Report and financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

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For the year ended 31 March 2021

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Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Company number 07560997
Country of incorporation United Kingdom

Charity number 1140827
Country of registration England & Wales

Registered office and operational address 215 Euston Road
London
NW1 2BE

Trustees Trustees, who are also directors under company law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Jonathan Baker	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
Selina Kermode	Resigned 1 Sep 2020
Julian Hitchcock	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Jo Revill	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Francesca Unsworth	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Dr Paul Brooker	
Adrian Bull MBE	
John Davidson	
Prof Ann Jacqueline Hunter	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Gavin Allen	Appointed 8 Oct 2020
Jonathan Brüün	Appointed 8 Oct 2020
Alex Keenlyside	Appointed 8 Oct 2020

Key management personnel	Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
	Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
	Lara Muth	Operations Manager, until 31 Aug 2020
	Selina Kermode	Head of Operations, from 1 Sep 2020

Reference and administrative information

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Bankers	HSBC Bank PLC 16 King Street Covent Garden London WC2E 8JF
	CCLA Senator House 85 Queen Victoria Street London EC4V 4ET
Solicitors	Bristows LLP 100 Victoria Embankment London EC4Y 0DH
Independent examiner	Fleur Holden Sayer Vincent LLP Chartered Accountants Invicta House 108-114 Golden Lane LONDON EC1Y 0TL

The trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2021.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the memorandum and articles of association, the requirements of a directors' report as required under company law, and the Statement of Recommended Practice – Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

Objectives and activities

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The SMC also works to promote the views of the scientific community on issues of importance and helps to ensure that their expertise is available to the national news media, and through them policy-makers and the public.

Introduction

The Science Media Centre (SMC) has its roots in the influential House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee's third report on Science and Society, which sought to renew public trust in science. The overall goal of the SMC is therefore to help achieve this aim by working to promote more balanced, accurate and measured coverage of the important science, health and environment stories that appear in the media.

The SMC was originally set up in April 2002 as a division of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RIGB, Charity Registration No. 227938), and its financial structure was that of a restricted fund maintained by the RIGB. In April 2011 the SMC became independent and registered as a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The period ended 31 March 2021 is the SMC's tenth year as a fully independent organisation, but also its nineteenth year of existence.

Public opinion surveys continue to demonstrate the public values science, with 82% saying they are very or fairly interested in health research^[1], while other surveys report that the vast majority (74%) agree that science will make people's lives easier, and think that scientists (89%) and engineers (87%) make a valuable contribution to society^[2]. The most recent survey of its kind reported high levels of public trust that scientists (87%) and doctors (95%) tell the truth^[3]. Mainstream media

^[1] Wellcome Trust Monitor Report Wave 4 November 2019, Public interest and engagement with health research

^[2] Public Attitudes to Science 2019, carried out by Kantar, on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

^[3] Veracity Index 2020, Ipsos MORI survey of trust in professions

such as television and newspapers (online) continue to be some of the most common and significant sources of science news that people access^[4], providing an opportunity for accurate, evidence-based information to reach a mass audience.

The SMC's priority is to promote, for the benefit of the public and policymakers, accurate and evidence-based information about science in the media, particularly on controversial and headline news stories as this is when most confusion and misinformation occurs.

The objects of the SMC are as follows:

"To advance the education of the public in science and engineering and all their related branches and disciplines, particularly by the dissemination of research and information about science to the media."

In order to meet its charitable objectives, the SMC's main activities include:

- working with scientists, engineers and other experts from the scientific community, and supporting them to engage with the media;
- working with journalists and providing them with information about science and its related disciplines;
- supporting press officers when they are working on complex and contentious science, health and environment stories that could be misrepresented;
- providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media.

There has been no change during the period in the policies adopted in furtherance of the objects, and the Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the SMC should undertake.

Purposes and aims

The SMC's philosophy is:

"The media will do science better when scientists do the media better."

Our main activities allow us to achieve our philosophy and our objectives – by ensuring that the accuracy and balance of science represented by the mainstream media is improved. As an organisation we predominantly work on new research and the breaking news of the day, meaning our long and short-term aims are very similar. For us, the most important thing is that we continue to be able to proactively respond to the next breaking news story or controversial research paper.

Staff are the main resource of the SMC and six members of staff are dedicated to the press office element of the Centre with the remaining three members of staff providing essential support to the running of the Centre.

^[4] Reuters institute Digital News Report 2020

Volunteers

The Centre continues to benefit from volunteers through our database of expert scientists, who willingly give up their time to help achieve the aims of the SMC through engagement with the media.

Scientists might help with an article for the Sun on a controversial science subject, give an interview for Sky News on a breaking news story, or speak to a journalist at The Guardian about a planned exclusive article in their area of expertise. They speak on panels at our press briefings and send written comments in response to breaking stories and in advance of the publication of new research. Scientists and journalists also willingly give up their time to speak at our Introduction to the News Media Events.

Many of these requests to scientists are made at short notice and outside normal working hours. Without their contributions, the SMC would not exist. COVID-19 and the unprecedented level of media interest in hearing from experts have put a particular spotlight on the role of researchers. Those researchers on our database stepped up to meet this demand, helping field up to dozens of media enquiries and multiple requests for comments each day. The Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to all those who gave up their time to help the SMC achieve its charitable objectives and improve media coverage of science stories.

Public benefit statement

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and those it tries to help are described below. All its activities focus on communicating science to the public and are undertaken to further the Science Media Centre's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

Summary

The Science Media Centre exists to respond to complex and often controversial stories in the national news media. When a science story breaks, or new research is published, the SMC encourages appropriate experts to engage with the media to ensure that the resulting coverage is accurate and measured while also providing evidence-based information to the journalists covering the story.

The SMC works on stories across science, health, environment, and engineering. The main focus of our work in 2020–21 was COVID-19. The SMC helped journalists cover what was happening both

globally and within the UK, and helped ensure that up to date evidence and the best quality expertise was central to media reporting. This was far and away the largest element of our work during the period under review. Beyond COVID we have continued to work across ongoing developments in the areas of diet and nutrition, dementia, climate change, biodiversity, and genome editing.

This year we ran 156 online press briefing (142 of those on COVID-19) which is **over double the number of briefings** we'd run in an average year. We sent out 1223 roundups and rapid reactions (1069 of those on COVID-19) of expert commentary, which is **3 times the number** sent out in an average year. During the first wave of the pandemic (April and May 2020) our output was approximately **5 times our usual**.

Working with scientists, engineers and other experts, and supporting them to engage with the media

Support of scientists is one of the most valued aspects of the SMC's work, and by working with individuals and press officers we encourage them to engage with and inform the media.

The SMC runs events each year where the purpose is to introduce scientists, clinicians, and engineers to the importance of working with media, and to encourage and support them to get involved with doing so. These events are aimed at experts who have little to no experience of dealing with the media. These 'Introduction to the News Media' events include talks and panel sessions with press officers, media-experienced scientists and journalists who provide insights into how the media works, what journalists want and need from scientists, and how scientists can best help journalists accurately cover science for the benefit of the public.

In the past year, the SMC has run one 'Introduction to the News Media' event, which was hosted online in July 2021. Over 120 research active scientists and associated press officers attended the event. Feedback was very positive. All respondents to the post-event survey rated all aspects of the event (organisation, content, format and speakers) as either 'good' (~30%) or 'very good' (~70%) and all said they would recommend the event to others. The SMC was also able to recruit top scientists to our expert database post-event. This important follow up activity means that we are able to capitalise on their improved perception and understanding of how science is reported in the UK and work with them in future to help improve accurate coverage in their area of expertise even further.

The SMC has supported RNA Media (two former science and health journalists now working as media trainers) in running 'Impact: Women scientists in the media' communications workshops. They have been funded by the MRC and NIHR. The SMC was responsible for recruiting the participants, who attend these sessions for free. This year participants were selected for their work on COVID-19. Focusing on COVID-19 meant their area of expertise was guaranteed to be in demand from journalists so giving them the skills and confidence to engage with the media was key in bringing more top women scientists to the forefront of media reporting. The SMC also gave a talk at each of these sessions and recruited these experts to the database afterwards. There have

been 9 sessions training 37 researchers from 18 different institutions. Feedback from the Impact session attendees was very positive and many have gone on to engage with the media when their particular area of expertise hits the headlines.

"Going over other people's interviews also gave us a very good idea of best and not so good practice. How to bridge and bring the interviewer to our playing field. Tips on background, light, etc. were very useful too – this is not what we learn about in our careers and it is difficult to know where to start."

"The facilitators were really helpful and knowledgeable and very happy to share their expertise with us to be able to help us to develop and feel more confident in this area."

"It's a wonderful course and I will be vastly more confident engaging with the media going forward."

Finally, on a more informal level, the SMC provides direct day-to-day support to scientists who want help getting their work into the media, with the SMC press officers frequently advising academics on press matters even when they don't fall directly into our core work. We also help scientists achieve recognition and acknowledgement from their peers and institutions for the work they do to improve public understanding of science, particularly on the most challenging topics. This ranges from writing citations and supporting nominations to providing personal recommendations when appropriate.

Working with journalists and providing them with accurate information about science and its related disciplines

The main services that the SMC provides to journalists are:

Rapid Reactions

When a science or science-related story hits the headlines, the SMC encourages leading scientists in relevant fields to engage rapidly with the story, and offer evidence-based expert comments. The SMC then makes these experts and their comments available to journalists at all major UK news outlets. The media can follow up with further queries or interview requests. This activity helps to inject accurate information and valuable context from experts into the reporting of rapidly-developing news stories, which in turn reduces the likelihood of inaccurate speculation which may mislead or alarm the public. Rapid Reactions therefore satisfy both the desire of journalists for credible experts and appropriate information, and the public's need to hear from the best experts at the time when it is most critical.

Rapid Reactions have played a vital role in the media reporting of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example collating expert comments on government announcements on changes to policy including the use of facemasks, introduction of the tier system or new local restrictions, the steps

for leaving lockdown, new variants, and travel policies, along with the daily case numbers, weekly R number and growth rates, and hospitalisations and death figures.

We've also gathered responses on developing news around the COVID-19 vaccine development and roll out, including the MHRA approval of vaccines, the JCVI advice on priority for vaccination, and the early concerns around the possibility of a link between the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine and rare blood clots.

While COVID-19 dominated the news agenda, other examples of rapid reactions included gathering expert comments on; the poisoning of Alexi Navalny with the nerve agent Novichok, the UK's 2030 emissions targets, the government's 'ten point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', the Dasgupta review on the economics of biodiversity, and the explosion at a waste water treatment works in Avonmouth.

Roundups

This service is unique to the SMC and has become a key tool for the Centre and for specialist science journalists to ensure accurate coverage of new scientific research. The SMC gathers and issues written comments from leading, relevant experts on embargoed science studies and reports ahead of their publication. These third party comments offer a critique and valuable insights that science journalists can use to cover the story in an accurate and responsible way. Statements from independent scientists can help reporters identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new study and put it into the context of wider scientific knowledge. These comments can indicate how surprising or important the findings are and describe any implications. Print and broadcast journalists can lift quotes for their reports and follow up for further interviews with the experts.

With the sheer volume of research coming out on COVID-19, it was even more important to help journalists navigate this information overload and work out which papers represented significant new developments in our understanding of the pandemic, which were replications of already known data and which were of poor quality or with serious flaws or limitations where one could not be confident in the conclusions. A newer aspect of our Roundups this year has been a much greater focus on academic work in its preprint form before it has been published in a journal and peer reviewed.

While working on COVID-19, some examples of roundups included getting comments on phase 1,2 and 3 results of the vaccine trials and real world vaccine efficacy data, research looking at who is most at risk from catching the disease, clinical data for risk factors for disease severity and mortality, modelling work on the impact of non-pharmaceutical interventions on the number of cases, surveys on wellbeing and mental health of different demographics during the pandemic, and studies investigating the characteristics of new variants of concern.

Examples of non-COVID roundups included studies on air pollution and macular degeneration, egg consumption and health, consumption of red meat and plant based foods and risk of heart

disease, a potential drug for treating obesity, data on alcohol specific deaths in the UK, and a study on changes to the Gulf Stream System.

Briefings

The SMC runs regular press briefings for specialist science journalists at the UK national news outlets. These briefings provide an opportunity for scientists and journalists to meet regularly, and allow scientists to explain their complicated work in a detailed and measured way. This gives journalists the opportunity to get fully to grips with a difficult or significant area of science, with the end result being more accurate media coverage. News briefings allow scientists to explain new findings in a more nuanced way, while background briefings address a wide range of topical issues where experts feel that accurate, evidence-based information has been missing from the media and public debate. SMC briefings have proved to be instrumental in ensuring scientifically-accurate media coverage of many high-profile and ongoing scientific issues.

Our work on COVID-19 has included the launches and results of many major studies and projects, such as the (PHOSP) Post-Hospitalisation COVID-19 Study, the Com-COV study looking into mixing different vaccine schedules, COG-UK and the 'G2P-UK' National Virology Consortium which investigate and monitor the genomics of the virus and new variants, the RECOVERY and REMAP-CAP trials into treatments for COVID-19, human challenge trials, the SIREN study looking at rates of reinfection among healthcare workers, ISARIC4C looking at the clinical disease and risk factors for severe illness, the REACT programs monitoring both prevalence and previous exposure in the general population, and PHE data on transmission in schools.

We have hosted several of the vaccine development groups discussing their results of phase 1,2 and 3 trials and approvals by the medical regulators, including the Oxford AstraZeneca, Novavax, Pfizer BioNTech, and Janssen teams, along with briefings on the immunological and real world data on vaccine effectiveness such as through the work of the UK Coronavirus Immunology Consortium.

We've run briefings on the subjects of psychiatric and neurological consequences of COVID-19, explaining the process of SAGE, the Academy of Medical Sciences Winter Report, the severity of disease in children, and discussing the impact the pandemic has had on cancer research and treatment. We have also hosted regular Q&As on big topical areas such as the emergence of new variants of concern, and a background briefing on how to report on modelling studies.

Examples of non-COVID briefings include the report launch from the International Commission on the Clinical Use of Human Germline Genome Editing, the Global Carbon Budget, a response from the scientific community to multi billion pound funding cuts to science research, and research by the Royal Society into ethnicity in STEM higher education in the UK.

Additional services

In addition to responding to the most important news stories of the day, providing accurate information about the latest developments in science to journalists, and running regular press

briefings, the SMC also handles *ad hoc* enquiries from journalists seeking an expert to interview, or background information on a science, health or environment story which they may be working on.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub is a collaborative project between the Global SMC Network, the fact checking organisation Meedan, and other SMC like or developing SMC organisations. Funding for the project has come from the Google News Initiative (GNI). The aim of the project is to increase access for global factcheckers and journalists to the best evidence on COVID-19 vaccines, including the translation of materials into regional and local dialects that are often under represented. The UK SMC has contributed heavily to the content of the site and have also helped in the planning and direction of the project. <https://covidvaccinehub.org/>

Supporting press officers when they are working on complex science, health and environment stories

Many of the SMC's core activities rely on working with and supporting press officers at other organisations, including when they have experts on an issue in the headlines, or when their own institution or scientists are the subject of media interest. Press officers regularly approach the SMC for its guidance and expertise on media stories, particularly when an issue is complex and controversial. This can include advice on drafting accurate and responsible press releases, or whether to run a press briefing.

The SMC also recognises and champions the crucial role press officers play in responsible science communication. SMC staff are often invited to give talks and presentations at scientific organisations and meetings, both aiding the press officers and encouraging their scientists to engage with the media, whilst also raising awareness of the SMC's work.

Providing expertise and advice on issues relating to science and the media

The SMC is often called upon to comment on and provide expertise in relation to its overview and experience of science in the media. Aside from Fiona Fox's blog hosted on the SMC website which features six new blogposts, in the last year SMC staff have been featured in articles and comment pieces published in Press Gazette, Research Fortnight, Nature, The Times, PR Week, BMJ and Times Higher Education. Fiona Fox has also done interviews with Society for Applied Microbiology, The Biologist and Brunswick about the media coverage of the pandemic and role scientists have played. Fiona Fox sat on a panel arranged by the Association of British Science Writers titled 'Political vs science correspondents covering Covid-19: conflict or cooperation?', spoke in conversation with Tom Feilden (Science Editor of BCB Radio 4 Today Programme) & Prof Sir Charles Godfray (Director of the Oxford Martin School) on the topic of "Science communication in times of emergency" and appears as a guest on BBC Radio 4's 'Scientists in the Spotlight' programme.

The SMC has also spoken at webinars for the National Council for the Training of Journalists and on the QUEST (Quality and Effectiveness in Science and Technology communication) podcast series.

SMC staff members additionally engage and share their expertise with the wider scientific community through their roles on boards and advisory committees of other scientific organisations. Fiona Fox is on the advisory committee for the Roslin Institute and the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Unit in Emergency Preparedness and Response. Hannah Taylor Lewis is a Stemptra committee member.

Fundraising

The year 2020–21 exceeded the fundraising expectations of the Centre and ended with a surplus of £127,955 (£59,794 in 2019–20). In part this was due to a successful fundraising drive carried out in summer 2020 and in part due to timing of donations. The SMC anticipates its income returning to levels more akin to 2019–20 in future periods.

Donations continue to make up the majority of the income of the SMC, and are mostly from organisations which have supported the SMC for many years. Fundraising at the SMC is carried out by two members of staff as part of their roles.

The Centre has high levels of retention within those organisations supporting the SMC, and continues to be successful in attracting new supporters.

Impact

The work of the SMC is often difficult to judge through numbers alone. Success can mean a poor study or unpublished conference abstract isn't covered in the newspapers, or is on page eight rather than the front page. It might also mean front pages explaining a revolutionary science technique with nuance or balance, or standfirsts explaining that leading scientists questioned the latest findings or cautioned against overinterpretation of the results.

The COVID–19 pandemic could not have shown more clearly the importance of providing the public access to the best quality research and expertise via the national news media. The appetite for expertise from journalists has never been higher in the history of the SMC and staff have continued to show incredible commitment to the mission of the SMC. The impact of this work in ensuring more accurate, balanced and rational coverage of science in the UK media has been strong and measurable.

During the past twelve months, we held 156 press conferences with an average attendance of 33 journalists from the national news media for COVID–19 briefings and an average attendance of 16 for non–COVID briefings. Together these briefings produced over 2400 pieces of coverage in the national news media. We also released over 1223 rapid reactions and round ups on breaking news stories or new scientific studies and reports – providing the public with accurate and measured scientific expertise.

Commentary on the objectives as described in last year's trustee report follows:

1. Continue to keep up to date with new contentious issues, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

COVID-19 dominated the news media this year and the SMC response has been phenomenal. We have expanded our list of experts in the relevant fields of infectious diseases, virology, modelling, clinical trials, intensive care, vaccinology, and immunology and worked closely with them to stay up to date with upcoming research and reports on COVID-19. These experts have sat on many SMC briefing panels, provided expert commentary via roundups and rapid reactions, and spoken to journalists, ensuring that scientific expertise and the evidence was prominent in the UK's national news coverage of the pandemic.

We have continued to engage with the research community about how best to communicate research and expertise. In the past year SMC staff have given talks at Imperial College London, King's College London, UCL Institute of Clinical Trials and Methodology, the Department of Statistics at the University of Oxford, and spoken at a Russell Group communications network event, an IGEM (Institute of Gas Engineers & Managers) workshop, the Sabri Ülker Foundation Science Communication Conference, an early career researcher webinar session for the Violence, Abuse and Mental Health Network, a Royal Society roundtable on climate misinformation, a session at the Universities UK Marketing and Communications conference, a roundtable discussion for the Media Workshop run by the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Post-Covid Futures Commission, and at a conference session for EARA (European Animal Research Association) on improving openness in animal research within the European Neuroscience community.

2. Continue to look into the changing role of science press officers

The SMC became one of the main press offices used by national news journalists throughout the pandemic as many universities and research institutes had moved away from direct science media relations, especially when it came to sourcing individual experts for interviews and comments rapidly on a day to day basis.

Fiona Fox has also written about this change of focus within communications teams in PR Week with a spotlight on communications around the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of moving away from providing experts for journalists to instead focus on corporate communications, social media and content creation – that these press offices were poorly equipped to deal with a story of this scale and nature.

The SMC has also blogged on the role of political interference in communications around COVID-19 research and pushed for research to be communicated independently of government communications.

3. Look to adapt our work to ensure that the SMC is able to continue to support journalists and help experts engage with the news media on COVID-19, despite changes and restrictions to office working and staff, scientists and journalists working from home.

The SMC staff have been working remotely for the entirety of this financial year. In order to facilitate this we had to transition each member of staff to a work from home set up, had to significantly alter our internship programme, and accelerate work to make our systems and files more accessible remotely. We also had to develop a system for hosting online briefings for journalists (something which prior to the pandemic were almost exclusively in person), through the use of a video conferencing platform we have developed a very efficient process that enabled us to run more briefings than any other year. We have also provided advice in running online press briefings to other scientific organisations.

During the busiest times, we also brought in additional staff to help support the press team.

4. Discuss and engage with researchers and press officers about the changing ways research is publicised and communicated during the COVID-19 pandemic and advice on how best to ensure accurate and measured coverage

One of the major shifts in communication of scientific research over the COVID-19 pandemic was the prominence of preprints and the level of media attention they attract. Before COVID-19 the SMC had written up guidance to researchers and press officers about press work on preprints, essentially cautioning against promoting them before journal publication.

However, when it came to the pandemic, knowledge was accumulating very quickly and research was being shared rapidly on preprint servers and journalists were beginning to pick this up. At times it was the only source available for the latest research on the developing science on COVID-19. Tom Sheldon has worked on specific guidance for scientists and press officers around the risk and benefits of media work on preprints on COVID-19, still urging caution, while acknowledging there are circumstances where it's very clear that the findings are significant and need to be in the public domain urgently.

We have shared this guidance widely and discussed these issues in depth on the SMC blog. We also regularly offered advice and support to other press offices looking into whether it is appropriate to do media work on a new preprint. Tom Sheldon has run sessions on the role of preprints with ASAPbio.

The SMC has contributed to the Vaccine Media Hub project, along with the other global SMCs and Meedan to help share COVID-19 vaccine expertise to journalists beyond the UK.

Financial review

Funding

The SMC is funded principally by trusts and foundations, scientific bodies and other organisations, companies, charities, and government and related agencies. The SMC is independent from its funders who do not gain influence over the SMC's work in return for their financial support.

To protect the SMC from any undue influence we cap contributions from any one institution at 5% of the SMC's annual income. The cap for 2020–21 was £30,000. The SMC's Trustees and Advisory Committee have agreed on two exceptions to the 5% upper limit: the Wellcome Trust and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). UKRI's contribution is over the 5% cap as this represents the consolidated amounts from several Research Councils which is now paid via the umbrella organisation set up in 2019.

The SMC is open and transparent with regard to its funding. All funders are listed on the SMC website under bands for their total amount recognised within a financial year. A list is also included on page 22

Transactions and financial position

In its ten years of operation as a fully independent organisation, the SMC has again continued to maintain a good financial position, having ended the year in surplus and built up an appropriate level of reserves by year end.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows that the total income for the year was £722,170 (£604,908 in 2019–20).

Total expenditure for the year was £595,209 (£545,114 in 2019–20) of which 96% (94% in 2019–20) was spent on charitable activities directly carrying out the Charity's key objectives.

The activities for the year therefore resulted in a surplus of £127,955 (£59,794 in 2019–20).

Investment policy

During this period the SMC placed £60,224 into an investment fund. It is the intention of the Trustees to keep 12 months' running costs in high interest saving accounts, with lower risk and quicker access. Funds in excess of this are to be invested for the furtherance of the Charity's aims.

Principal risks and uncertainties

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the SMC is exposed and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate that exposure. These risks are detailed on the Risk Register for the SMC with information on the current practice and strategy used to mitigate the risk. This register is reviewed annually by Trustees, with responsibility delegated to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to review the register at each meeting.

The current risk register pays particular attention to the risks around funding, a major incident closing our office, staff welfare, cybersecurity, and the loss of data.

Risks for loss of funding are mitigated by close monitoring of the finances of the SMC, by seeking new income each year and by having a number of supporting organisations from across the sector. The independence of the Centre from funders is maintained by the current 5% cap and clear communication with new and existing funders on the separation between the funding and activity of the SMC.

Best practice around conflicts of interests continues to be monitored by staff and compared with our current policy to identify any improvements that could be made. The Centre clarifies when no competing interests have been received and when there are none to declare. Any criticism received regarding a conflict is met with open discussion and passed on to the scientist in question.

Cybersecurity risks to the SMC are addressed by ensuring the sector best practice is followed. This includes, but is not limited to: firewalls, secure staff passwords, regular deletion of emails, antivirus software and regular off-site backups.

Reserves policy and going concern

The SMC has agreed that reserves would be used for support during a short, defined period of a deficit budget, allowing for new sources of income or reductions in expenditure to be identified.

It is therefore the policy of the Charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to twelve months' expenditure (approximately £600,000 for this period).

This level of reserves has been built up and maintained throughout the period; the Charity holds £808,179 in reserves, all of which are unrestricted, as of 31 March 2021 (£680,224 in 2019–20).

Our year end fund position of £808,179 is comfortably in excess of our £600,000 reserves target. On this basis we are satisfied we are a going concern.

Trustees periodically review the reserves policy of the Charity.

Plans for the future

The current period has seen the SMC's tenth year as a fully independent charity.

The Trustees feel that the SMC is continuing to operate from a position of strength, in terms of both its core activities and financial security. The expertise of senior management and staff at the SMC will ensure that these future plans are given sufficient resources and achieved.

The following priorities have been identified for the coming year:

1. Continue to work on helping journalists report the evidence and new research on COVID-19, responding with expert comment, media briefings and supporting the scientists working in these areas to speak out about their research.

Because of the nature of this pandemic, it's impossible to fully predict how much COVID-19 will dominate our work for the next year but we will continue to host briefings on important new research on the pandemic, including on treatments, vaccine developments, future modelling of the roadmap and exit from lockdown, immunity, and variants of concern. We will gather third party expert comments on new policy announcements and new research papers to support journalists in their reporting and help reflect the most up to date state of evidence.

Part of our work on COVID-19 will also be adjusting the output on the subject so that it remains useful for journalists and covers the right topics and issues so we will continue to speak with journalists to get the balance right.

We will also continue to work with RNA Media on their media training of women scientists working on COVID-19 research.

2. Continue to carry out media work on important non-COVID issues so that researchers working on other important and contentious scientific issues have their voices heard in the mainstream media

For the last year, the work of the SMC has been almost exclusively on COVID-19 with very little space in the media for coverage of other stories. As dominance of COVID-19 across the news media is likely to decrease, there will be more scope for other areas of science, health and environment research and news to be reported on, and the SMC will ensure that we keep up to date with these upcoming stories and respond appropriately.

The SMC will ensure that on anticipated stories such as COP-26 and the Defra consultation on the regulation of genetic technologies, we will be in contact with the best scientists in these areas to stay abreast of future relevant research and policy announcements so we are ready to respond with briefings, rapid reactions and roundups.

We will continue to monitor the media for any potential stories where input from expert commentary would be important to ensure accurate reporting and help researchers in these areas provide written comments to the media, present at press briefings and speak directly with journalists.

3. Investigate future working of the SMC and press briefings once people start returning to the office and ensure our work is accessible and most useful for the journalists and scientists

As the SMC looks to return to office working we will have to consider the future of our press briefings for journalists. Currently we offer our briefings entirely online, however we aim to have the flexibility to have a hybrid in-person and online system. This will require research and investment into new audio visual technology to ensure the standard of our briefings is not impacted by the change.

We will continue to have discussions with journalists, press officers and scientists on what is both feasible and practical in terms of returning to in person meetings and briefings.

4. 20th Anniversary of the Science Media Centre

2022 will be the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Science Media Centre. To mark this, the SMC will examine ways we can assess the impact the SMC has had on media coverage of contentious scientific issues in the UK, and celebrate the achievements of the SMC and all those who have been involved. This work will include discussions with key figures in science communications and journalism with the possibility of commissioning research into topics of interest.

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The SMC is an independent charity and company limited by guarantee (Company Registration No. 7560997, England & Wales; Charity Registration No. 1140827). The Board of Trustees is the major decision-making body and it meets at least three times a year.

Trustees are individuals distinguished in the field of science, engineering, medicine, journalism, communications, finance, law and policy. The SMC considers each of the Trustees to be independent in character and judgement, and understands that they have no relationships that are likely to affect, or could appear to affect, their judgements with regard to the SMC. Declarations of interest are required from new Trustees upon appointment and are updated annually, whilst every meeting of the Board also requires that any new interests are declared.

All of the Trustees also act as directors of the company, but none has any beneficial interest in the company and no remuneration is provided except for reasonable travel and subsistence costs.

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Policy is determined by the Trustees, on the advice of the Advisory Committee and others, and its implementation is delegated to the Chief Executive who, in conjunction with a team of eight additional staff, the Advisory Committee and Trustees as appropriate, undertakes the necessary work.

A Senior Management Team comprising of the Chief Executive, the Senior Press Manager and Head of Operations allows for better distribution of organisational responsibility and both staff and Trustees continue to be happy with the structure.

The Advisory Committee is a principal advisory committee to the Trustees and is a voluntary group of distinguished experts from the fields of science, engineering, medicine, journalism and communications, who provide expertise and advice. The group meets three times a year.

The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee is another principal committee of the SMC and deals with issues such as financial planning, pensions, the annual audit and risk review and management. The group consists of the chair, two Trustees and two external members, with the Treasurer and members of senior management in an observational capacity. The Committee meets three times a year.

The Remuneration Committee meets once a year. This committee reports directly to the Trustees. The SMC is very grateful to the members of all committees for their valuable contributions.

The Trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the period are:

Jonathan Baker	Chair
Karen Chadwick	Treasurer
Selina Kermode	Resigned 1 Sep 2020
Julian Hitchcock	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Jo Revill	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Francesca Unsworth	Resigned 8 Oct 2020
Dr Paul Brooker	
Adrian Bull MBE	
John Davidson	
Prof Ann Jacqueline Hunter	
Prof Kevin McConway	
Gavin Allen	Appointed 8 Oct 2020
Jonathan Brüün	Appointed 8 Oct 2020
Alex Keenlyside	Appointed 8 Oct 2020

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Staff

Trustees delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Key Management Personnel:

Fiona Fox OBE	Chief Executive
Tom Sheldon	Senior Press Manager
Lara Muth	Operations Manager, until 31 Aug 2020
Selina Kermode	Head of Operations, from 1 Sep 2020

The SMC has nine established members of staff and the Trustees record their appreciation of the efforts of the staff, who have again made an enormous contribution to the success of the SMC during the year.

During the year the SMC also benefited greatly from eight interns who each spent a month assisting with administrative duties and experiencing life within a busy press office.

Trustees would also like to record their appreciation for the efforts of the interns, and are pleased to note that many previous interns go on to obtain full time permanent roles within the science communication field.

Pay and remuneration

The following principles of the pay system are agreed by Trustees

- The SMC should not have a system which the charity cannot afford
- The system should not reward staff who are underperforming
- The system should have some built-in mechanism to monitor the competition and react to changes in the job market
- The system should recognise the developmental nature of the roles at the SMC

All permanent staff are appointed into salary bands, dependent on the role and its responsibilities. Reflecting the developmental nature of the roles, these salary bands each have 5 or 6 'spine points'. Pay increases are recommended by managers based on performance, and are approved by the Remuneration Committee based on the evidence provided, affordability, wider economic circumstances and the financial performance of the SMC during the year. Benchmarking is conducted every two years to ensure the salary brackets are comparable to similar roles outside the SMC.

The salary of the Chief Executive is considered separately by the Remuneration Committee who will consider the wider economic circumstances and any benchmarking before making recommendations to the Trustees.

Benefits currently provided to staff currently include a newspaper subscription, income protection insurance, gym membership and membership of Stempra.

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on 11 March 2011 and registered as a charity on 18 March 2021.

The company was established under a memorandum of association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its articles of association.

All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefits from the charity. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity are set out in note 7 to the accounts.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are appointed in accordance with the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations, taking into account the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a contribution to the pursuit of the objects or the management of the Charity.

Trustees and staff consider the skills gaps formed by departing Trustees, and nominate appropriate individuals with skills to match. These individuals are then approached, and if willing, meet with current Trustees and staff to learn more about the SMC and what it means to be a Trustee. Prospective trustees are then proposed and appointed at the AGM.

Trustee induction and training

The SMC undertakes a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, which includes induction materials relating to its purposes and finances, the powers of the Trustees and information about day-to-day running of the SMC. Key documents are provided, such as the SMC's Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations, the Charity Commission's Essential Trustee guide, up-to-date accounts, and minutes of the most recent Trustee meetings. Prospective trustees may also attend relevant Trustee meetings as an observer as part of the induction process. Trustees continue to be supported through on-going training, with skills requirements regularly reviewed.

Related parties and relationships with other organisations

Related party transactions are detailed in Note 9 in the financial statements.

Statement of responsibilities of the trustees

The trustees (who are also directors of Science Media Centre for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Trustees' annual report

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £10 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2021 was 10 (2020:11). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

The trustees' annual report has been approved by the trustees on 14 October 2021 and signed on their behalf by

Jonathan Baker
Chair of Trustees

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2021

£2,000 and under

Personal donations from 6 individuals, each donation not exceeding £2,000

Alzheimer's Society
Association for Clinical Biochemistry & Laboratory Medicine
Association of Medical Research Charities
British Society of Immunology
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
Durham University
ESHRE
Health Data Research UK (HDRUK)
Institute of Physics & Engineering in Medicine
Institution of Chemical Engineers
Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers
John Innes Centre
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
National Oceanography Centre
Nuclear Industry Association
Pirbright Institute
Quadram Institute Bioscience
Science Museum
Society for Radiological Protection
The Times
UK Cleaning Products Industry Association
University of Birmingham
University of Exeter
University of Glasgow
University of Leeds
University of Portsmouth
University of Sheffield
University of Warwick
University of York

£2,001 – £4,999

Grant from Global SMC Initiative (wholly-owned subsidiary of AusSMC) for [COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub](#) project

Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board
Alzheimer's Research UK
Biochemical Society
British Ecological Society
British Pharmacological Society
Cochrane Collaboration
Covestro UK Limited
Food & Drink Federation

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Genomics England
Informa (Taylor & Francis)
Institute of Cancer Research
Met Office
Microbiology Society
Mobile UK
National Nuclear Laboratory
Newcastle University
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
Physiological Society
Procter & Gamble UK
Queen Mary, University of London
Queen's University Belfast
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
Royal Society
Royal Society of Biology
Society for Endocrinology
University of East Anglia
University of Manchester
University of Nottingham
University of Reading

£5,000 – £9,999

Abb Vie Ltd
ABPI
Academy of Medical Sciences
BASF
Bayer plc
BioIndustry Association
BP International
Bristol University
Bristows LLP – pro bono support
British Heart Foundation
Cancer Research UK
Chemical Industries Association
Cytiva
Danone Holdings UK
FoodDrinkEurope
Francis Crick Institute
GE Healthcare
Imperial College London
Institution of Engineering and Technology
Institute of Physics

Funders list

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience
John Wiley & Sons
King's College London including Inspire the Mind Blog
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
Nestle UK Ltd
Nutrition Society
Rolls-Royce Plc
Royal Academy of Engineering
Sellafield Sites
UCB Pharma Ltd
UK Centre of Ecology & Hydrology
University of Cambridge including MRC Biostatistics Unit
University of Edinburgh
University of Oxford

£10,000 – £19,999

AstraZeneca
DeepMind Technologies Limited
Dept of Health & Social Care
Elsevier
Food Standards Agency
LifeArc
Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD)
Sanofi Aventis
Society for Applied Microbiology
Springer Nature Ltd
University College London

£20,000 – £30,000

Diageo Plc
DMG Media
Full Fact – from a Google grant *
Gatsby Charitable Foundation
GlaxoSmithKline
National Institute for Health Research

* Full Fact were given a block grant from Google to distribute around Europe. Full Fact made the decision to give money to SMC, but the money was sourced from Google.

Over £30,000

UK Research & Innovation
Wellcome Trust

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Science Media Centre for the year ended 31 March 2021.

This report is made solely to the trustees as a body, in accordance with the Charities Act 2011. My examination has been undertaken so that I might state to the trustees those matters I am required to state to them in an independent examiner's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the trustees as a body, for my examination, for this report, or for the opinions I have formed.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Company you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')/ Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act').

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accounts in England and Wales, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 Accounting records were not kept in respect of the Company as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 The accounts do not accord with those records; or
- 3 The accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 The accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities.

Independent examiner's report

To the trustees of

Science Media Centre

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name: Fleur Holden FCA

Address: Sayer Vincent LLP, Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0TL

Date: 15 November 2021

Science Media Centre

Statement of financial activities (incorporating an income and expenditure account)

For the year ended 31 March 2021

				2021		2020 as
	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	Unrestricted £	Restated Total £
Income from:						
Donations	2	708,567	–	708,567	603,076	603,076
Charitable activities	3	–	13,184	13,184	–	–
Investments	4	419	–	419	1,832	1,832
Total income		708,986	13,184	722,170	604,908	604,908
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds	5	29,627	–	29,627	42,522	42,522
Charitable activities	5	552,398	13,184	565,582	502,592	502,592
Total expenditure		582,025	13,184	595,209	545,114	545,114
Net income before net gains on investments		126,961	–	126,961	59,794	59,794
Net gains on investments		994	–	994	–	–
Net income for the year	6	127,955	–	127,955	59,794	59,794
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward as previously reported		680,224	–	680,224	620,430	620,430
Prior year adjustment	19	–	–	–	20,000	20,000
Total funds brought forward as restated		680,224	–	680,224	640,430	640,430
Total funds carried forward		808,179	–	808,179	680,224	680,224

All of the above results are derived from continuing activities. There were no other recognised gains or losses other than those stated above. Movements in funds are disclosed in Note 17a to the financial statements.

Balance sheet

Company no. 07560997

As at 31 March 2021

	Note	£	2021 £	£	2020 as Restated £
Fixed assets:					
Tangible assets	11		–		842
Investments	12		61,218		–
			61,218		842
Current assets:					
Debtors	13	81,340		46,125	
Cash at bank and in hand		717,927		664,770	
		799,267		710,895	
Liabilities:					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	14	(52,306)		(31,513)	
Net current assets			746,961		679,382
Total net assets			808,179		680,224
The funds of the charity:	17a				
Unrestricted income funds:					
General funds		808,179		680,224	
Total unrestricted funds			808,179		680,224
Total charity funds			808,179		680,224

The opinion of the directors is that the company is entitled to the exemptions conferred by Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The directors acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- (i) The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476
- (ii) The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts

Approved by the trustees on 14 October 2021 and signed on their behalf by

Jonathan Baker
Chair of Trustees

Science Media Centre

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	2021 £	£	2020 as Restated £	£
Cash flows from operating activities				
Net income for the reporting period (as per the statement of financial activities)	127,955		59,794	
Depreciation charges	267		337	
(Gains) on investments	(994)		–	
Dividends, interest and rent from investments	(419)		(1,832)	
Loss on the disposal of fixed assets	575		–	
(Increase) in debtors	(35,215)		(21,841)	
Increase in creditors	20,793		14,026	
Net cash provided by operating activities	112,962		50,484	
Cash flows from investing activities:				
Dividends, interest and rents from investments	419		1,832	
Proceeds from the sale of fixed assets	–		258	
Purchase of fixed assets	–		(1,066)	
Purchase of investments	(60,224)		–	
Net cash (used in) investing activities	(59,805)		1,024	
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	53,157		51,508	
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the	664,770		613,262	
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	717,927		664,770	

1 Accounting policies

a) Statutory information

Science Media Centre is a charitable company limited by guarantee and is incorporated in England and Wales.

The registered office address, which is also the operational address, is 215 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BE.

b) Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) – (Charities SORP FRS 102), The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy or note.

In applying the financial reporting framework, the trustees have made a number of subjective judgements, for example in respect of significant accounting estimates. Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. The nature of the estimation means the actual outcomes could differ from those estimates. Any significant estimates and judgements affecting these financial statements are detailed within the relevant accounting policy below.

c) Public benefit entity

The charity meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

The trustees do not consider that there are any sources of estimation uncertainty at the reporting date that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next reporting period.

d) Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The year end funds position is £808,179 which is in excess of our reserves target.

e) Income

Income is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the income have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and that the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations are recognised once the Charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount.

Income from government and other grants, whether 'capital' grants or 'revenue' grants, is recognised when the charity has entitlement to the funds, any performance conditions attached to the grants have been met, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably and is not deferred.

Income received in advance of the provision of a specified service is deferred until the criteria for income recognition are met.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

1 Accounting policies (continued)

f) Fund accounting

Restricted funds are to be used for specific purposes as laid down by the donor. Expenditure which meets these criteria is charged to the fund.

Unrestricted funds are donations and other incoming resources received or generated for the charitable purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular purposes.

g) Expenditure and irrecoverable VAT

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that settlement will be required and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified under the following activity headings:

- Costs of raising funds relate to the costs incurred by the charity in inducing third parties to make voluntary contributions to it, as well as the cost of any activities with a fundraising purpose
- Expenditure on charitable activities includes the costs of delivering services undertaken to further the purposes of the charity and their associated support costs

Irrecoverable VAT is charged as a cost against the activity for which the expenditure was incurred.

h) Tangible fixed assets

Items of equipment are capitalised where the purchase price exceeds £2,000. Depreciation costs are allocated to activities on the basis of the use of the related assets in those activities. Assets are reviewed for impairment if circumstances indicate their carrying value may exceed their net realisable value and value in use.

Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write down the cost of each asset to its estimated residual value over its expected useful life. The depreciation rates in use are as follows:

- Fixtures, fittings & equipment 4 years

i) Listed investments

Investments are a form of basic financial instrument and are initially recognised at their transaction value and subsequently measured at their fair value as at the balance sheet date using the closing quoted market price. Any change in fair value will be recognised in the statement of financial activities. Investment gains and losses, whether realised or unrealised, are combined and shown in the heading "Net gains/(losses) on investments" in the statement of financial activities. The charity does not acquire put options, derivatives or other complex financial instruments.

j) Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount due after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

k) Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and cash in hand includes cash and short term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

l) Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised where the charity has a present obligation resulting from a past event that will probably result in the transfer of funds to a third party and the amount due to settle the obligation can be measured or estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are normally recognised at their settlement amount after allowing for any trade discounts due.

m) Financial instruments

The charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

2 Income from donations

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2021 Total £	Unrestricted £	2020 Total £
Donations and gifts	471,117		471,117	410,626	410,626
Grants receivable for core activities	70,000	–	70,000	40,000	40,000
Government grants:					
UK Research & Innovation	95,000	–	95,000	71,000	71,000
UK Research & Innovation (Dept. for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy)	–	–	–	40,000	40,000
Food Standards Agency	10,000	–	10,000	10,000	10,000
National Institute for Clinical Excellence	5,000	–	5,000	5,000	5,000
National Institute for Health Research	15,000	–	15,000	5,000	5,000
Sellafield Sites	5,000	–	5,000	5,000	5,000
Genomics England	4,000	–	4,000	4,000	4,000
Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory	5,000	–	5,000	5,000	5,000
National Nuclear Laboratory	2,500	–	2,500	2,500	2,500
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	4,950	–	4,950	4,950	4,950
Department for Health and Social Care	10,000	–	10,000	–	–
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board	3,000	–	3,000	–	–
Met Office	3,000	–	3,000	–	–
Donated services	5,000	–	5,000	–	–
	708,567	–	708,567	603,076	603,076

3 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2021 Total £	Unrestricted £	2020 Total £
COVID-19 Vaccine Media	–	3,184	3,184	–	–
National Institute for Health Research	–	10,000	10,000	–	–
Total income from charitable activities	–	13,184	13,184	–	–

4 Income from investments

	2021 £	2020 £
Interest	419	1,832
	419	1,832

All income from investments is unrestricted.

5a Analysis of expenditure (current year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2021 Total £	2020 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	23,791	431,799	–	–	455,590	427,580
Event costs	–	14,157	–	–	14,157	18,493
Premises costs	–	–	–	36,043	36,043	46,933
Office costs	–	–	13	46,124	46,137	19,288
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	–	237	237	5,218
Insurance	–	–	428	7,463	7,891	7,520
Professional fees	–	8,744	5,000	–	13,744	6,145
Accountancy	–	–	–	15,521	15,521	9,000
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	5,400	–	5,400	4,271
Bank charges	–	–	–	222	222	329
Depreciation	–	–	–	267	267	337
	23,791	454,700	10,841	105,877	595,209	545,114
Governance costs	542	10,299	(10,841)	–	–	–
Support costs	5,294	100,583	–	(105,877)	–	–
Total expenditure 2021	29,627	565,582	–	–	595,209	
Total expenditure 2020	42,522	502,592	–	–		545,114

Science Media Centre

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

5b Analysis of expenditure (prior year)

	Raising funds £	Charitable activities £	Governance costs £	Support costs	2020 Total £
Staff costs (Note 7)	35,090	392,490	–	–	427,580
Event costs	–	18,493	–	–	18,493
Premises costs	–	–	–	46,933	46,933
Office costs	–	–	48	19,240	19,288
Travel, meetings and subsistence	–	–	1,403	3,815	5,218
Insurance	–	–	–	7,520	7,520
Professional fees	–	6,145	–	–	6,145
Accountancy	–	–	–	9,000	9,000
Independent examiner's fee	–	–	4,271	–	4,271
Bank charges	–	–	–	329	329
Depreciation	–	–	–	337	337
	35,090	417,128	5,722	87,174	545,114
Governance costs	458	5,264	(5,722)	–	–
Support costs	6,974	80,200	–	(87,174)	–
Total expenditure 2020	42,522	502,592	–	–	545,114

6 Net income for the year

This is stated after charging / (crediting):

	2021 £	2020 £
Depreciation	267	337
Independent Examiner's Fee (excluding VAT):		
Independent Examination	3,000	3,559
Other services	1,500	-
	4,767	3,896

7 Analysis of staff costs, trustee remuneration and expenses, and the cost of key management

Staff costs were as follows:

	2021 £	2020 £
Salaries and wages	395,774	365,067
Social security costs	38,147	36,768
Employer's contribution to defined contribution pension schemes	21,669	18,310
	455,590	420,145

The following number of employees received employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer's national insurance) during the year between:

	2021 No.	2020 No.
£60,000 – £69,999	1	-
£90,000 – £99,999	1	1

The total employee benefits (including pension contributions and employer's national insurance) of the key management personnel were £233,371 (2020: £235,953).

The charity trustees were neither paid nor received any other benefits from employment with the charity in the year (2020: £nil). No charity trustee received payment for professional or other services supplied to the charity (2020: £nil).

Trustees' expenses represents the payment or reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs totalling £nil (2020: £627) incurred by 0 (2020: 3) members relating to attendance at meetings of the trustees.

8 Staff numbers

The average number of employees (head count based on number of staff employed) during the year was 10 (2020 restated: 9).

9 Related party transactions

Science Media Centre received pro bono solicitors advice from Bristows LLP with a value of £5,000 in 2020/21 (2019/20: none). Alex Keenlyside is a trustee of Science Media Centre and a partner at Bristows LLP.

There were no related party transactions in 2020.

10 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax as all its income is charitable and is applied for charitable purposes.

11 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £	Total £
Cost		
At the start of the year	2,515	2,515
Disposals in year	(2,515)	(2,515)
At the end of the year	-	-
Depreciation		
At the start of the year	1,673	1,673
Charge for the year	267	267
Eliminated on disposal	(1,940)	(1,940)
At the end of the year	-	-
Net book value		
At the end of the year	-	-
At the start of the year	842	842

All of the above assets are used for charitable purposes.

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 31 March 2021

12 Listed investments

	2021 £	2020 £
Fair value at the start of the year	-	-
Additions at cost	60,224	-
Net gain / (loss) on change in fair value	994	-
Fair value at the end of the year	<u>61,218</u>	<u>-</u>

Investments comprise:

	2021 £	2020 £
UK Common investment funds	61,218	-
	<u>61,218</u>	<u>-</u>

13 Debtors

	2021 £	2020 as Restated £
Trade debtors	79,201	20,502
Other debtors	1,239	24,850
Prepayments	900	773
	<u>81,340</u>	<u>46,125</u>

In the prior year accounts £20,502 of trade debtors were shown as prepayments. These balances have been restated to better represent the classification of debtors.

14 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021 £	2020 £
Trade creditors	18,249	295
Taxation and social security	-	10,435
Accruals	5,400	20,783
Deferred income (note 15)	28,657	-
	<u>52,306</u>	<u>31,513</u>

15 Deferred income

Deferred income comprises a grant for the COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub Project related to future periods.

	2021 £	2020 £
Balance at the beginning of the year	–	–
Amount released to income in the year	–	–
Amount deferred in the year	28,657	–
	28,657	–
Balance at the end of the year	28,657	–

16a Analysis of net assets between funds (current year)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Investments	61,218	–	61,218
Net current assets	746,961	–	746,961
	808,179	–	808,179
Net assets at 31 March 2021	808,179	–	808,179

16b Analysis of net assets between funds (prior year as restated)

	General unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total funds £
Tangible fixed assets	842	–	842
Net current assets	679,382	–	679,382
	680,224	–	680,224
Net assets at 31 March 2020	680,224	–	680,224

17a Movements in funds (current year)

	At 1 April 2020 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2021 £
Restricted funds:					
Impact: Women Scientists in the Media	–	10,000	(10,000)	–	–
COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub	–	3,184	(3,184)	–	–
Total restricted funds	–	13,184	(13,184)	–	–
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	680,224	709,980	(582,025)	–	808,179
Total unrestricted funds	680,224	709,980	(582,025)	–	808,179
Total funds	680,224	723,164	(595,209)	–	808,179

The narrative to explain the purpose of each fund is given at the foot of the note below.

17b Movements in funds (prior year as restated)

	At 1 April 2019 £	Income & gains £	Expenditure & losses £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2020 £
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	620,430	604,908	(545,114)	–	680,224
Total unrestricted funds	620,430	604,908	(545,114)	–	680,224
Total funds	620,430	604,908	(545,114)	–	680,224

Purposes of restricted funds

Impact: Women Scientists in the Media

To provide media training to female STEM experts, a group which is historically underrepresented in the media.

COVID-19 Vaccine Media Hub

To contribute to a global web resource providing information for journalists and fact-checkers worldwide on COVID-19 vaccines and other relevant matters.

18 Legal status of the charity

The charity is a company limited by guarantee and has no share capital. The liability of each member in the event of winding up is limited to £10.

19 Prior year adjustment

	Unrestricted 31 March 2020 £	Restricted 31 March 2020 £	Total £
Reserves position			
Funds previously reported	660,224		660,224
Adjustments on restatement			
Movement following review of income recognition policy	20,000		20,000
Funds restated	680,224		680,224
Impact on income and expenditure			
Net income as previously reported	39,794		39,794
Adjustments on restatement			
Movement following review of income recognition policy	20,000		20,000
Net income as restated	59,794		59,794