



VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Annual Report and Accounts

1 August 2024 - 31 July 2025

Registered charity:

England and Wales 1197827 (previously 1114742)

Scotland SC052647

ANNUAL REPORT

Legal and Constitutional Details

Name of organisation:	Voluntary Sector Studies Network
Legal form:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed by Constitution
Charitable status:	Registered charity: England & Wales: number 1197827 (previously 1114742) Scotland: number SC052647
Correspondent:	Meg Wright Ver House, Park Estate, Frogmore St Albans AL2 2DR
Central e-mail:	execofficer@vssn.org.uk
Website:	www.vssn.org.uk
Objects:	The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom by: (1) the promotion and diffusion of knowledge; and (2) the publication of research; and (3) encouragement of contact between workers in relevant fields of enquiry; and (4) undertaking such other activities (being charitable in law) as shall be conducive to the attainment of these objects.

Trustees and Other Key Roles

During the year, the Trustees revised the sub-committees acting under the authority of the Board of Trustees. Under the scheme of delegation, each group has Terms of Reference outlining their purpose, delegated responsibilities and membership which have been approved by the Board with a review every two years. The Communications and Membership subcommittee merged:

- Office Bearers (OfficeBearers@vssn.org.uk)
- Communications and membership (Membercommunications@vssn.org.uk)
- Conference (Conference@vssn.org.uk)
- Events (Events@vssn.org.uk)
- Grants (Grants@vssn.org.uk)
- New Researchers (NewResearchers@vssn.org.uk)

Affiliations are given for information only; all Trustee Board members serve as individuals.

Co Chairs	Vita Terry, Black Mountains College Amy Sanders, Aberystwyth University
Vice Chair	James Rees, University of Wolverhampton
Treasurer	Karin Biermann, University of Klagenfurt
Secretary	Heather Fulford
Conference Group	Ellen Bennett, Sheffield Hallam University Daniel Haslam, The Open University Angela Ellis Paine, City St George's, University of London (non-trustee)
Events and Day Conferences Group	Jurgen Grotz, IVR, University of East Anglia Amy Sanders, Aberystwyth University Bethany Sikes, Volunteer Scotland
Communications and Membership Group	Jo Vincett, Liverpool John Moores University Stephen Craker, Communities 1st Ellen Bennett, Sheffield Hallam University Vita Terry, Black Mountains College Meg Wright, Executive Officer (non-trustee) Petra Buresova, Brunel University Daniel Haslam, The Open University
New Researchers Group	Daniel Haslam, The Open University Petra Buresova, Brunel University Helen Abnett, University of Birmingham (non-trustee)

	Chelle Coulton (non-trustee) Olu Adeyemo (non-trustee) Pat Danahey Janin (non-trustee)
Voluntary Sector Review	Caitin McMullin, Roskilde University Heather Fulford (Representing VSSN trustees on editorial management board until May 2025)
Small Grants Group	Heather Fulford James Rees, University of Wolverhampton

Appointment of Trustees

Trustees are recruited from the VSSN membership and may serve for a maximum of nine consecutive years. A third of trustees must retire on a rolling basis each year. A member of the Editorial Management Board of Voluntary Sector Review serves as the VSR representative on the board. VSSN can have a maximum of 15 trustees, inclusive of the EMB representative.

Editorial Management Board (EMB) for the *Voluntary Sector Review*

A sub-committee is elected to act as the Editorial Management Board (EMB) for the journal *Voluntary Sector Review*. With direction from the Trustee Board, the EMB is responsible for the oversight of the journal and the appointment of the Editorial Team, including the Editor(s), in consultation with the publisher, The Policy Press.

Appointment of EMB

VSSN members elect six members of the EMB on a three-year cycle, using the same rules as for the election of Trustees Board members as set out in the amended constitution. One member of the EMB is appointed to the Trustee Board.

The EMB is responsible for assembling the International Advisory Board.

Chair: Angela Ellis Paine, City St George's, University of London

Heather Fulford (VSSN representative on VSR EMB until May 2025)

Cari Bottois, University of Cardiff / University of Exeter

Jo Crotty, Edge Hill University

Liz Bailey, University of York

Caitlin McMullin, Roskilde University, Denmark (VSR representative on VSSN Board)

David Wallace-Hare, University of Exeter (until November 2024)

Policy Press/Publisher's representative: Sarah Bird (until May 2025), Sharon Harris (from May 2025)

Main Editors: James Rees (Managing Editor, until December 2024), Daiga Kamerāde (until December 2024), Lili Wang (Managing Editor), Lindsay Findlay-King (from January 2025), Oto Potluka (from January 2025)

Editorial Assistant: Jenna Essex

Policy and Practice editors: Ali Body, Iwona Nowakowska

Book review editor: Eddy Hogg

Regional Associate Editors: Georg von Schnurbein

Consulting Editor: Carl Milofsky

Trustee Board Report: activities undertaken for public benefit by the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN) during the year ending 31 July 2024

1. Co-Chairs' Report by Amy Sanders and Vita Terry

We know this period has been an unsettling time for some voluntary sector researchers with the state of flux currently in the world, including the level of precarity in higher education, and because of this, we believe that spaces to come together are ever more important: to pause, reflect, and connect with one another. Reassuringly, VSSN is going strong and 2024-25 was a fantastic year for bringing together those who undertake or are interested in voluntary sector research. The VSVR annual conference was hosted for the first time by the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes Business School in September 2024, welcoming over 120 people. The conference theme explored “Voice of the people? Democracy, representation, and involvement in and through the voluntary sector and volunteering”. We are incredibly grateful to the team at Bayes Business School for their hard work and warm welcome. In partnership with the Centre for Charity Effectiveness, the conference was jointly organised by Voluntary Sector Studies Network, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and Voluntary Action Islington.

This year the board was delighted to be joined by Petra Buresova, Bethany Sykes, James Rees and Caitlin McMullan and welcomed back Jo Vincett to the trustee board. They joined our other incredibly committed trustees, Jurgen Grotz, Daniel Haslam, Ellen Bennett, Stephen Craker, Heather Fulford and Karin Biermann. As new co-chairs, we found the support and confidence of fellow trustees invaluable as we took the helm. We said a fond farewell to Carol Jacklin-Jarvis in November 2024, who had served as chair and vice-chair and Pat Armstrong and Daiga Kamerāde who had served as trustees. We thank all three of them for their dedication and wisdom in collaboratively steering the VSSN ship. The board work hard for the VSSN membership behind the scenes to make VSSN the success it is today, so we are very grateful to all the trustees who served this year, juggling this voluntary role on top of their busy careers. Collegiality and mutual support really is at the centre of the research community that our trustees, volunteers and members help to foster.

Alongside the trustees, we have had some fantastic volunteers working to support the development of early career researchers. Daniel Haslam and Petra Buresova were the trustees leading the New Researchers group over the year, keeping the board abreast of the exceptional contributions from key volunteers including the sustained commitment from Helen Abnett, alongside Olu Adeyemo, Chelle Coulton, and Pat Danahey-Janin. At the VSVR 2024 conference, the dedicated and subsidised days were facilitated by Daniel Haslam and Helen Abnett. Together they have coordinated a series of online peer support events and seminars from experienced VSSN members, and facilitated networking through the discussion lists. Our wider membership (academics, researchers and practitioners) have also had plenty of opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing including through events and our communications. This has included the *Perspectives of Scotland's Voluntary Sector's Impact* conference hosted by Glasgow University and the [Voluntary Sector Archives Summer School in July 2025](#) hosted by City University of London. We especially want to highlight the dedication of Jurgen Grotz, Bethany Sykes and Angela Ellis Paine who worked with us and our partners to make these events possible. This year also saw the launch of the VSSN Newsletter, led by Petra Buresova and a huge thanks to Pat Danahey Janin who has been instrumental in managing and sustaining the VSSN discussion list. Another facet of VSSN has been led by Heather Fulford who has managed the VSSN's Small Grants scheme, which supports members to deliver projects of interest to the whole community and she has been joined by James Rees in this sub-committee.

We are incredibly grateful to the Editorial Management Board (EMB) for the hard work in delivering the Voluntary Sector Review. Particular thanks goes to Angela Ellis Paine, who chairs this board, and the co-editors in chief, including Lindsey Findlay-King, Lili Wang and Oto Potluka, alongside the wider editorial board. They have overseen the publication of Volume 15 Issue 3 and Volume 16 Issues 1 and 2 over the course of

the 2024-2025 financial year. Under their stewardship, we have made the exciting move away from printed copies to digital access of all the volumes for our membership. Particular thanks goes to Caitlin McMullin for being a vital link between the EMB and the trustee board.

In addition to the above achievements, VSSN trustees have been striving to govern our organisation in an exemplary way in accordance with the 5Ss of good governance: Support, Stretch, Stewardship, Scrutiny and Strategy, as described by Julia Unwin. We hold ourselves accountable to our strategic plan through six-monthly reviews with the board, and updates in our Annual Report and at our AGM. Ensuring our strategic aims are embedded in decision-making, this year we have also invested time in developing new mechanisms to strengthen the trustee board sub-committees. Especially important to VSSN is making sure our work and actions fulfil our [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy](#), and its principles are central to all of our work.

We are enormously appreciative of the expertise and hard work of Meg Wright Consultancy to inform these developments. We have been fortunate to draw on the support and expertise of both Meg Wright and Dez Innocent this year. Thank you to Heather Fulford for working in partnership with Meg in carving out the secretary role and considering due processes. Furthermore, in addition to her Treasurer duties, Karin Biermann has not only led in developing our use of the Google Space platform for better and safer communication systems but has also instigated a risk auditing process. We have also introduced a policy review process. Thanks, should also be given to David Kane for his ongoing IT support.

VSSN is proud to continue to act as a hub through which to communicate voluntary sector research and to offer a space for new partnerships to be forged. We also want to highlight the friendship and support that we have gained from each other through the course of the year, including when we have faced our own life and work crunch points. We very much appreciate and enjoy working together to jointly deliver the chairing role. Finally, we would like to say one final thank you to the Trustee Board, the Editorial Management Board, our volunteers, our partner organisations and our membership for their energy and enthusiasm during the year, which has been a true inspiration. It's an honour to stand alongside you all.

We also want to reiterate a wider message to the network. VSSN aspires to be a network that is welcoming and supportive. At a time when things can feel dispersed, we hope the voluntary sector and volunteering researchers can continue to find a nurturing space within the network. Inclusion is important to us. VSSN prides itself in the journey that our members take from their initial experiences at one of our many events, to becoming regular contributors and friends in our research community. We look forward to even more of this in the years that follow.

2. VSSN's Journal, Voluntary Sector Review

In 2024-25, VSSN's international interdisciplinary journal, Voluntary Sector Review (VSR), published by Policy Press, continued into its sixteenth year, with three issues per annum. The journal is designed to appeal to a wide readership, and each issue traditionally contains over 100 pages of Research Articles, Policy and Practice Papers, as well as Book Reviews, Debates and Research Notes. The decision was made by the board in May 2025 to transition from offering all VSSN members print copies of each issue to enabling online access, thus increasing the accessibility of the Journal content whilst also reducing its environmental footprint.

The journal continues to attract a wide readership and submissions from across the globe. While overall submissions declined in 2024 compared to previous years (46 submissions, down from 68 in 2023), the first half of 2025 has seen 29 submissions, suggesting a potential reversal of this trend. The acceptance rate remains steady at around 50%. The March 2025 issue featured a range of research articles and policy papers, and work is underway on a special issue entitled "Unravelling Smaller Organisations: Building a Research-Based Understanding of a Critical Part of the Voluntary Sector", guest edited by Katy Adams and Ellen Bennett (from Hull University and Sheffield Hallam University, UK, respectively), scheduled for March 2026. Planning has also begun for a future special issue on "Evaluations for Better Philanthropy" and a virtual special issue on voluntary action in health care.

During the year, three of our long-standing editors came to the end of their terms of office, triggering a recruitment process for new editors. We are incredibly grateful to James Rees (co-editor, University of Wolverhampton, UK), Daiga Kamerāde (co-editor, University of Salford, UK) and Eddy Hogg (book review editor, University of Kent) for all their years of service. Lindsay Findlay-King (University of Northumbria) and Oto Potluka (Basel University) join Lili Wang (Arizona State University) as our new co-editorial team; whilst Alison Body (University of Kent, UK), and Iwona Nowakowska (Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, Poland) continue as policy and practice editors, Carl Milofsky (Bucknell University, USA) as Consulting Editor, and Georg von Schnurbein (Universität Basel, Switzerland) as Regional Associate Editor. Ala Bakir Hamoudi joined us as book review editor. We are incredibly grateful to the whole team for all their efforts.

All VSSN members are strongly encouraged to persuade their institutions to take out (and continue) subscriptions to ensure the financial sustainability of the journal. Free online trial subscriptions for institutions are available from Voluntary Sector Review, Policy Press. We continue to invite submissions to the Research articles, Comment and Debate, Research Notes, Policy and Practice and Book Review sections of the journal.

VSSN is hugely grateful to The Policy Press for the expertise, enthusiasm and continued practical support it has brought to the journal, and the resources it is

devoting to making it a success. Particular thanks go to Sarah Bird who played a significant role in the development of VSR before taking redundancy from Policy Press during the year, and to Sharon Harris who has stepped into the role as VSR's main point of contact within Policy Press. The day-to-day activities of the journal are supported by an editorial assistant - Jenna Essex, to whom we are incredibly grateful for all the excellent support that she provides. The post is jointly funded by The Policy Press and VSSN to support the editorial work underpinning the journal, including screening submissions and liaising with editors.

VSR Editorial Management Board

The journal is overseen by an Editorial Management Board (EMB), which meets twice each year – a January gathering to review the journal's development and consider editorial strategy, followed by a mid-year meeting to review progress. The EMB is a sub-committee of the VSSN Trustee Board; it is made up of members elected by VSSN, representatives of The Policy Press, and the Editorial Team. Current EMB elected members include Angela Ellis Paine (Chair, City St George's, University of London), Elizabeth Cookingham Bailey (University of York), Jo Crotty (University of Sunderland), Cari Bottois (Cardiff University), and Caitlin McMullin (Roskilde University, Denmark). Also members during the year were David Wallace-Hare (University of Exeter) and Heather Fulford (as the VSSN trustee representative on the EMB until May 2025). We are very grateful to each of them for their significant contributions to VSR. The Journal also benefits from the support of our International Advisory Group (IAG) members, who join the mid-year EMB meeting to feed into the development of our strategy.

This year the main points of discussion for the EMB included the recruitment of the new editorial team, overall strategy for enhancing the quality and reputation of the journal, including building its international reach, and more generally how to keep building VSR's submissions pipeline, its pool of reviewers, and subscribers. We are grateful to the editorial team for all the work that has gone into producing the Journal, to Policy Press for its ongoing support, the EMB and IAG members, and to all our authors and reviewers whose contributions are essential.

3. VSSN Annual Voluntary Sector Research Annual Conference, September 2024

The annual Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Research Conference was held for the first time at Bayes Business School in London, on the 11th and 12th September 2024. The conference was hosted in partnership with NCVO and Voluntary Action

Islington and we were pleased to continue these important partnerships. The conference was preceded by a successful day for new researchers (which is reported on below), offering a supportive environment for new scholars to present their work and receive detailed feedback.

The conference theme explored ‘Voice of the people? Democracy, representation, and involvement in and through the voluntary sector and volunteering’. Over sixty papers were delivered, plus workshops, panel and plenary sessions, with over 120 attendees in total from across the UK and beyond. Plenary speakers included Prof Clare Saunders (University of Exeter), with Sarah Elliott (NCVO); Lela Kogbara (Place Matters); Will McCallum (Greenpeace); and Polly Neate (Shelter). A panel of local organisations provided insight on democracy, representation and involvement

We are thankful to the organising committee, especially Angela Ellis Paine and the Bayes Business School team for a successful conference. We were also pleased that the conference generated a significant surplus which contributes to VSSN's capacity to deliver events during the year at no or limited cost.

4. Day Conferences and Other Events

Perspectives on Scotland's Third Sector Impact, June 2025, Glasgow

The Day Events sub-committee held a day conference in June 2025 in Glasgow in partnership with the University of Glasgow and the Third Sector Research Forum. The event was titled, ‘Perspectives on Scotland's Third Sector Impact’. VSSN led the organisation of the event and were supported by a committed steering group, with representatives from the Scottish Third Sector Research Forum, YouthLink Scotland, Volunteer Scotland, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, Evaluation Support Scotland and the University of Glasgow. Over 70 people from practitioner and academic backgrounds came together to explore the impact of volunteering and the third sector and the role and impact of researchers in the sector.

Adam Lang (Carnegie UK) examined the role of civil society in helping address shared challenges across the UK in the event's keynote speech. The morning session focused on the benefits and challenges of measuring impact in the third sector, with presentations from Bethany Sikes (Volunteer Scotland), Professor Alasdair Rutherford (University of Stirling) and Gary Walsh (Evaluation Support Scotland), which were followed by table discussions among attendees. The afternoon session of ‘Meet the sector, meet the researcher’ gave attendees the opportunity to interact with researchers working in the Scottish third sector, with a carousel of eight stations. The final session was facilitated by Lewis Hou (Science Ceilidh) with short lightning talks from Andrew Paterson (Scottish Community Development Centre) and Emma

Davidson (University of Edinburgh) which reflected on our role as researchers, the place of communities and the politics of evidence.

Overall, the event was a great success, with positive feedback from many attendees who enjoyed the interactive nature of the conference and the opportunity to discuss third sector research with practitioners and academics. You can read more about the event [here](#).

Voluntary Sector Archive Summer School, July 2025, London

This interdisciplinary summer school was aimed for doctoral and early career researchers at University College London on 15 and 16 July 2025. It was supported by the British Academy Research Project (ARP) 'Archiving the Mixed Economy of Welfare' and led by Georgina Brewis and Angela Ellis Paine. It was co-organised in partnership with Helen Abnett from VSSN and Marta Starostina from Voluntary Action History Society (VAHS).

The two-day summer school featured a series of workshops and panel sessions on different aspects of documentary and archival research, thanks to Helen Abnett, Jayne Lacny, Ellie Munro, and Kathryn Hannan. Peter Grant led an insightful historical walking talk around Bloomsbury. Participants were able to present their own research, with a focus on sharing and working through the delights and dilemmas of documentary and archival research whilst also receiving feedback from established academics. Key topics included issues of accessing the private records of charities; how to navigate gaps in archives; working in partnership with archive owners; questions of voice and power; ethics; and experiences of integrating social theory and history through archival research. The aim was to build a community of researchers working in this area to enable ongoing peer support and development and attendees reported that the sense of the community was palpable as a result.

5. New Researchers

A new researchers coordinating group oversees the strategy for supporting new researchers and organises support sessions. VSSN trustees Daniel Haslam and Petra Buresova sit on the New Researchers sub-group.

Our online support sessions continued in 2024-25 providing an informal space for new researchers to engage with others, develop and maintain relationships, and share the ups and downs of the research process. These were primarily facilitated by Chelle Coulton and Olu Adeyemo with support from Helen Abnett. We have also used these sessions to provide more structured support and information, such as the development of research skills and we extend our thanks to all of the presenters:

- Angela Ellis Paine

- Rob Macmillan
- Ellen Bennet

To enable new researchers to participate fully in the VSSN research community, this year's New Researchers stream took place on the day before the main conference. This separate New Researchers Day was well attended and involved two sessions of paper presentations and a workshop on 'building impact' delivered by Alex Skailes and Justin Davis-Smith from the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at Bayes Business School. Helen Abnett and Daniel Haslam facilitated the 2024 New Researchers Day.

Feedback from the New Researchers Day was largely positive and our intention is to continue this way of supporting new researchers at the conference for the 2025 iteration.

Our discussion list designed specifically for new researchers (VOL-SECTOR-NEW-RESEARCHERS) continues to provide a forum for information sharing, networking and support and currently has over 100 subscribers.

The work with new researchers provides a route for emerging scholars and practitioners in the field to share their work in a supportive environment, develop a network of peers, and engage fully with the annual conference. For suggestions on our support of early career researchers or to get involved, please email NewResearchers@vssn.org.uk.

Many thanks to Petra Buresova, Daniel Haslam, Helen Abnett, Chelle Coulton, Olu Adeyemo, and Pat Danahey-Janin for their contributions over the past year.

6. Membership

At the end of the financial year, we had 111 individual members of those 28 are new members. We had four organisation members. Most members are based in the UK, but there are also memberships from Austria, France, Portugal and Spain.

7. Small Grants Scheme

Through the annual call for Small Grant proposals, VSSN funds projects which support the development of an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK. Typically, the grants are used to fund seminars, workshops, roundtables, webinars, or the production of a podcast, animation or short film.

The funded projects are proving to be an important vehicle for bringing together researchers, practitioners and/or policymakers to open-up a dialogue on a voluntary sector or volunteering-related issue. These dialogues can lead to fruitful longer-term collaborations and discussions that help to advance thinking and understanding in

voluntary sector studies. Some projects funded through the VSSN Small Grant Scheme have also led to project partners securing further funding from other organisations, enabling them to extend their work beyond the VSSN project.

During the current reporting period, the two projects that were awarded funding in the 2023-2024 call were successfully completed:

- John Picton (University of Manchester) and Tilly Clough (Queens University Belfast) explored the legal framework surrounding charitable campaigning which can hinder Third Sector organisations fulfilling their campaigning missions. A workshop was held to bring together Third-Sector practitioners, academics and legal professionals to share experiences relating to regulatory compliance, navigating campaign neutrality and managing financial reporting requirements.
- Jennifer Raschbauer (Derbyshire Voluntary Action) worked with Amelia Woodward (University of Derby) to explore new ways of demonstrating and managing social impact in voluntary and community organisations. Findings from the project were presented at the VSVR Conference in 2024. Plans were put in place to develop the collaboration further beyond the VSSN project, with the intention to develop a digital tool to support impact management and evaluation.

Three projects were funded in the 2024-2025 call:

- Helen Abnett (University of Hertfordshire) is working on a project to scope the potential for a research network for music education & the voluntary sector.
- Katy Adams (University of Hull) is working on a project designed to encourage and enable conversations about smaller voluntary organisations.
- Kris Southby (Leeds Beckett University) and Nicky Lines (Leeds City Council) are collaborating on a project exploring learning disabilities, digital exclusion and the role of the voluntary sector with the intention of establishing priorities and co-developing a research agenda with local and national stakeholders.

It is particularly heartening to see that these latter projects support new collaborative research by early career researchers in our community.

The Board's adoption of Google workspace in 2024 has proved an extremely useful tool for enabling the Small Grants Sub-Group to process applications, keep track of the funded projects, and communicate with grant holders.

8. Communications and Information Technology

The website is an important element of how we communicate with members. VSSN includes videos, blogs and reports of day events, the conference and the new

researchers' meetings. The website offers the ability to join VSSN online, apply for development grants and submit abstracts.

VSSN uses Linked In with good effect and is now using the Blue Sky platform to communicate messages.

VSSN has produced a newsletter to keep members informed. The intention is to produce a newsletter twice a year and we thank Petra Buresova for leading on this work and producing a high quality and informative newsletter. Huge thanks to Pat Danahey Janin who has been fundamental in keeping the VSSN discussion list going over the past year. (vol-sector-studies-network@jiscmail.ac.uk).

Google Workspace is in place which allows an efficient and secure method of information sharing, communicating and storing data in line with GDPR regulations.

Across all these initiatives, the contribution by way of hands-on support and expert advice made by David Kane is greatly appreciated.

9. The Organisation and Management of VSSN

Trustee Board Meetings

The full Trustee Board meets six times during the year. Our early-year strategic planning meeting was held online which involved reviewing VSSN's strategic plan and discussing future priorities; training on equality, diversity and inclusion and what this means for VSSN's approach and practice. Meeting online is beneficial as a mechanism for enabling participation in the midst of busy lives and to accommodate a geographically diverse board. However, it was noted by the board that although the online format was practical it missed informal interactions to build rapport and strong communications between board members. Suggestion was made to alternate between in-person and online formats for future meetings.

The Trustee Board works through a number of sub-groups and we have clarified the terms of responsibility for sub-groups and related policy documents, in part as a way of managing board turn-over, as well as ensuring we fulfil board responsibilities. We have continued to work to the strategy developed in 2023, with a 6 monthly review process, and particularly endeavoured to align our activities with VSSN's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. These EDI principles are central to all our work. EDI work is never complete, and so we are continually reviewing issues of access to VSSN's activities at all tiers of engagement and assessing access for new researchers, practitioner organisations and from representatives from across the four nations, as well as for people across the intersectional spectrum of protected characteristics. This year our trustees have undertaken some thought-provoking EDI

training session led by [Gamiel from Diversity Market Place](#) and, for the first time, we have conducted a Diversity Audit to assess representation in senior roles of VSSN, which sat alongside a skills audit.

Public Benefit

One of the Trustee Board's main responsibilities is to ensure that VSSN pursues its stated aim as a charity of advancing education and research concerning the voluntary sector, in ways that provide a benefit to the wider public. All VSSN events are widely publicised and open to all, with either modest or no fees to attend. Similarly, our online discussion lists are open to all. Furthermore, the *Voluntary Sector Review* is an integral part of the VSSN's work and is an important vehicle in enabling research work on the voluntary sector to reach as many people as possible. Policy and Practice papers in the journal, many of which are written by practitioners and seek to advance practice-based knowledge, are now Open Access and free to view by anyone. We continued to offer Small Grants, encouraging and enabling members to develop proposals to support and develop an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK.

Executive Office

The Executive Officer plays a key role in the smooth running of the Network, particularly membership services and governance support. We would like to express our gratitude to Meg Wright and Dez Innocent of Meg Wright Consultancy which runs back-office functions, working with members, and getting involved in all aspects of VSSN's work, including providing guidance from her expertise in governance. We have found Meg and Dez's support invaluable and would like to share our huge gratitude to them for their work over the past year.

Financial Report and Accounts

The Trustees have prepared the accounts using a receipts and payments basis permitted by the Charities Act 2011 and following the recommendations issued by the Charity Commission to present accounts.

The income of VSSN is insufficient to require an audit or independent examination of the accounts by the Charity Commission of England and Wales. However, since registering with the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the Board is required to arrange for an independent examination by a person with requisite skills. The examiner's report is attached to the accounts.

Receipts and Payments

Membership subscriptions totaled £7,005 for individuals and £840 for organisations. VSSN's membership year previously commenced on 1 November. The trial of using members' anniversary date of joining VSSN as the renewal date was successful. It achieved the aims of better reflecting how members make their payments, reduces confusion between financial, anniversary, and membership years, and spreads the administrative workload.

Membership benefits include VSSN's journal, Voluntary Sector Review (VSR), a preferential registration rate for day and annual conferences, and the ability to apply for a funding grant. Applicants (the lead applicant must be a VSSN member) for a Small Grant may receive up to £750 for projects that support or develop an idea or activity that will benefit voluntary sector studies in the UK. Three Grants were awarded in February 2025, but projects were incomplete at balance date (see Note7).

The VSSN Annual Voluntary Sector Research Conference was held in September 2024 in London, generating a surplus of £8,743 including the costs of the associated conference dinner. Sponsorship of the Best Paper Prizes was paid directly to winners with VSSN's contribution totaling £250.

VSSN contributes to the publication of VSR according to the number and income banding of members. The amount paid was £2,850 including the minimum contribution of £2,600.

No trustee receives remuneration or benefits from VSSN. In this financial year, the following trustee expenses were paid or reimbursed:

Number of Trustees Paid or Reimbursed: 0

Total Amount Paid or Reimbursed: 0

Nature of the Expenses Paid or Reimbursed: n/a

Current and Future Assets and Liabilities

The cash surplus in 2024-25 is £1,986 (2023-24 £4,608) resulting in accumulated cash funds of £30,371 held with Unity Trust Bank. There remains £280 in restricted funds. Further details are in notes 2 to the accounts.

The net asset balance at 31.07.2024 is £13,840 (31.07.2023 £16,419) after taking future obligations and reserves of £16,531 (2022-23 £9,758) into account.

Future Obligations and Reserves Policy

The Trustees reviewed and revised VSSN's reserves policy for the 2024-25 financial year on 14 October 2025.

A summary of the resulting provisions included in the financial accounts (see Note 8) are:

Purpose	Calculation	Amount
Operations		
Executive Officer's contract	Minimum notice of Contract termination: 3 months	£1,458
EO reimbursable expenses	Known or contingent amount	£200
Registered Office	Annual payment to Communities 1 st for hosting VSSN's registered mailing address	£30
Website Costs	Annual Hosting fees: currently £240 annually +VAT	£274
	Anticipated Changes to Add-on Fees and Email hosting pa, say	£100
Evalon Financial Services DAC	Direct debit processing fee: cancellable anytime	£2
	one month's fee, say	
Opayo Credit Card Services	Credit card processing fee:	£2
	one month's fee, say	
Unity Trust Bank	Monthly bank fee £6 pm: say, 6 months	£36

Small Grants

Yearly Round of Calls for Applications	Three grants were awarded in February 2025. At balance date, the projects were incomplete and the awards outstanding.	£1979
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Conference and Other Events

Annual Conference	To reflect purchase orders/contracts issued after allowing for cancellation clauses.	
	Bayes, City University 2025 Conference: say 50%	£2,000
	Up to 90 days prior to the Event, no charge; 90 – 31 days prior to the Event, 50% cancellation fee; 30 –15 days prior to the Event, 75% cancellation fee; 14 days or fewer prior to the Event, 100% cancellation fee.	£500
	Other catering and venue services, say	

Voluntary Sector Review

VSR Editorial Fees	Annual renewal unless terminated: 12 months = (100% to cover the contingency of default/delayed reimbursement of 50% by Policy Press)	£2,200
VSR Publication Agreement	The agreement expired on 31.07.2025. With no successive agreement in place at balance date, the previous terms form the basis for the provision. 01.08.2025 to 31.07.2030 minimum payment of £2,600 pa. With the current accumulated cash funds, a contingency of 50% of (£2600 x 5 =) £13,000 is sufficient to cover the obligation.	£6,500
VSR Printing Contribution	Estimation: number and banding of members less the minimum contribution; calculated at 30.06.2025 (basis for VSR fees)	£250

Voluntary Sector Review

VSR Editorial Fees	Annual renewal unless terminated: 12 months =	£2,200
	(100% to cover the contingency of default/delayed reimbursement of 50% by Policy Press)	

Future Outlook

The accumulated cash funds increased over the past three years largely due to better than expected returns from the annual conference. This situation is not expected or planned to continue. Future year's operations will breakeven or incur deficits as the funds become invested in day events, small grants, new researcher and practitioner-partnership initiatives. Further, the inaugural Risk Assessment and Management review currently being undertaken by the Board has identified areas for improvement and potential expense, such as trustee resources and training, technical services and insurance.

Approval

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for keeping proper accounting records for the charity, safeguarding the charity's funds from loss and preparing an Annual Report and Annual Accounts to comply with the Charities Act 2011. This Annual Report is prepared to comply with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008, taking advantage of simplifications available to non-auditable charities.

The trustees approved the Annual Report and Annual Accounts on 14 October 2025, which are signed on their behalf by:

Secretary

Heather Fulford

Co-Chair

Amy Sanders

VSSN Annual Accounts 2024 - 2025

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES as at 31 July 2025 [Note 1]

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
CURRENT ASSETS		
Monetary assets		
Unity Trust Bank current account [Note 1]	30,370.96	28,384.99
Total monetary assets	30,370.96	28,384.99
<i>Represented by monetary funds</i>		
Unrestricted funds	30,090.96	28,104.99
Restricted funds [Note 2]	280.00	280.00
Total monetary funds [Note 3]	30,370.96	28,384.99
 Non-monetary assets and liabilities		
Physical Assets [Note 4]		
Receivables [Note 5, 6]	0.00	0.00
Total monetary and non-monetary assets	0.00	0.00
 CURRENT LIABILITIES		
<i>Miscellaneous creditors and liabilities at year-end</i>		
Sundry Creditors and Executive Officer services [Note 7]	0.00	2,207.50
Total miscellaneous creditors	0.00	2,207.50
 OTHER BINDING COMMITMENTS AT YEAR END [Note 8]		
Executive Office contract	1,458.00	1,458.00
Office and other executive officer expenses contingency	230.00	230.00
Web expenditure contingency	374.00	250.00
Bank and Financial Services contingency	40.00	40.00
Conference contingency	2,500.00	2,500.00
VSR Editorial Assistant services [Note 6]	2,200.00	2,000.00
Minimum VSR obligation	6,500.00	2,600.00
Additional VSR obligation	250.00	680.00
Small Grants	1,979.00	0.00
Total other commitments	15,531.00	9,758.00
 Total current liabilities and provisions	15,531.00	11,965.50
 NET MONETARY AND NON-MONETARY ASSETS	14,839.96	16,419.49

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENSES for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024 [Note 1]

	2024-25	2023-24
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Conference surplus	8,743.05	13,572.40
Member subscriptions	7,005.50	6,520.00
Organisational member subscriptions	840.00	840.00
Contrib. VSR Editorial assistance (50%)	1,050.00	1,000.00
Sponsorship - Best Paper Prize/s	0.00	400.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	17,638.05	22,332.40
PAYMENTS		
Conference costs	0.00	4,036.33
Best Paper Awards	250.00	546.00
VSSN event expenses - Scotland	165.50	2,110.33
Publications expenses (VSR for members)	250.00	680.00
Publications supplement (minimum fee)	2600.00	2,600.00
VSR Editorial assistant services	2100.00	1,500.00
Board Expenses	175.00	602.17
Executive officer - fees	8063.50	4,260.00
Office and other executive officer expenses	399.91	30.00
Development Grants	967.30	750.00
Website dev/hosting & database/software	474.14	412.70
Credit Card Fees	129.33	124.69
Other Bank Fees	77.40	72.00
TOTAL PAYMENTS	15,652.08	17,724.22
SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	1,985.97	4,608.18
Balance b/fwd from previous year	28,384.99	23,776.81
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR	30,370.96	28,384.99

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

1. These accounts show revenue and expenses on a cash basis, recognised at the time of receipt and payment. Non-monetary assets and liabilities are shown at estimated values at year end. No cash is kept on hand: VSSN does not accept cash receipts nor make cheque payments. All receipts and payments are processed through the bank account.

Bank Reconciliation 2024-25	£	
Opening Balance at 1 August 2024		28,384.99
Add Receipts		17,638.05
Less Payments		15,652.08
Balance Per Ledger		30,370.96
Less Receipts not Banked	n/a	
Add Unpresented Payments	n/a	
Unity Trust Bank Balance at 31 July 2025		30,370.96

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2. VSSN holds restricted funds for furthering the activities of New Researchers £280 (£280 in 2023-24). These funds are from a prior NCVO grant and specifically relate to VSVR Conference support for new researchers. VSSN funded the New Researchers' Prize awarded at the annual conference but did not draw down the restricted funds.
3. Apart from the new researchers' fund (Note 2), VSSN's funds are unrestricted.
4. VSSN has some fixed assets in the form of banner stands and table stands, but these are personalised to VSSN and, therefore, do not have any disposal value to show on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.
5. Prior year receivable was an amount owing by The Policy Press. No receipts are outstanding in the current year.
6. The contract with The Policy Press for publishing and printing Voluntary Sector Review includes providing Editorial Assistance Fees. The fees are shared equally, from February 2022, £2,000 pa and from February 2025, £2,200 pa (paid quarterly) with the accounts disclosing VSSN's commitment and reimbursement for the coming 12 months.
7. The liability are amounts incurred but not settled at balance date. Three Small Grants have been awarded but they are incomplete and therefore, reported as a contingent binding commitment.
8. The Other Binding Commitments at Year End line items reflect the Reserves Policy and calculations at the balance date agreed upon by Trustees noted in the preceding