

NCVO'S 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) MINUTES

Wednesday 15 October 2025 (online)

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1. Introduction

The AGM began at 10.00. Priya Singh, chair of NCVO's board of trustees, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Priya was joined by:

- Philippe Lintern, honorary treasurer
- Kate Lee, chief executive officer
- Saskia Konynenburg, executive director

2. Review of 2024/2025

Priya Singh, chair

As Chair of NCVO, it is always a privilege to spend time with our members and to witness the passion and commitment that drives the voluntary sector. Every conversation with you further strengthens my understanding of both the challenges you face and the difference you make.

The past year has been a balance of both pressure and possibility. Charities have continued to shoulder rising costs, growing demand and ongoing funding uncertainty. At the same time, the general election created a new opportunity to reset the relationship between government and civil society.

In this context, NCVO's role in supporting, representing and championing the sector was never more important.

Looking to the future

The past year brought both challenges and achievements. From record membership retention to high-profile advocacy, NCVO worked hard to be a trusted ally to the sector. As trustees, we are proud of that progress – and now our focus is firmly on the future.

We know the pressures our members face are real. Financial insecurity continues to undermine sustainability, especially for smaller organisations, and we must keep pressing for the right conditions for the sector to thrive.

The Civil Society Covenant offers a chance to reset the relationship with government. The task ahead is to turn that promise into meaningful change in policy and practice.

We also know that the challenges are not only financial. At a time when some organisations are facing hostility and intimidation, NCVO must remain steadfast in defending the values of compassion, fairness and inclusion. To members affected, we say clearly: NCVO stands with you.

This is also a year of leadership transition for NCVO itself. We thank Sarah Elliott for her leadership as Chief Executive and acknowledge the commitment Saskia Konynenburg has shown while stewarding the organisation through transition to a new CEO. We are delighted to welcome Kate Lee as our new Chief Executive and look forward to working with her as NCVO develops its new long-term strategy.

Looking ahead, NCVO is well positioned to strengthen support for small charities, making sure they can access the tools, funding and visibility they need. While also investing in digital and data so that our services are relevant and accessible.

It's essential we continue to work with government through the Civil Society Covenant to secure a stronger role for civil society. And lastly, embed sustainability in every sense: financial, organisational and environmental, so that both NCVO and our members can plan for the long term

Conclusion

At its heart, NCVO exists to champion and support you, its members. We will continue to listen carefully, to act on what we hear, and to stand alongside you in difficult times.

The values that guide us, openness, collaboration, inclusion and ambition, remain our compass. Together, we can shape a future where civil society is not only resilient in the face of challenge but confident, creative and leading change in communities across the UK.

3. Financial review of 2024/2025

Philippe Lintern, honorary treasurer (video).

Over the next few minutes, I'll give you a clear picture of our finances over the past year, explain the story behind the numbers, and share how we're using resources to support members and strengthen the wider voluntary sector.

Headlines

Our total income for 2024/25 was £9.5 million. That compares with £12.3 million last year and £7.1 million the year before. The 2024 figure was unusually high because of a back payment of £5 million from CAF, the Charities Aid Foundation. This year we received £2 million from CAF, bringing annual payments back to pre-2020 levels.

Our general reserves now stand at £3.9 million. That's above the level we are required to hold and gives us the flexibility to invest in our future and in the services our members rely on.

Membership remains strong. Income from membership rose by 18%, showing the value that charities and voluntary organisations continue to place in being part of NCVO

Alongside membership, training, consultancy, and our conference and room hire facilities all performed well. These areas matter because they fund our core mission: representing, supporting, and championing charities of all sizes.

The future

Looking ahead, trustees' aim is to keep us broadly at break-even while using our financial strength to invest where it matters most. Three priorities stand out:

Improving Society Building

We're investing in sustainability upgrades, such as new windows and doors, to make the building more energy efficient. This not only cuts our environmental impact but also ensures we can continue to welcome members, tenants, and thousands of visitors into a modern, sustainable space.

Delivery of our new strategy

As we move from one strategy to the next, we're making targeted investments that reduce risk and build capacity. This ensures NCVO is ready for the future and provides a strong platform for our new CEO, Kate Lee, to build on.

Investing in digital and technology

Strengthening our systems and tools so that members can access our services more easily, and so we can be more effective in supporting and representing the sector.

These priorities show that we're not just focused on NCVO's finances, but on long-term sustainability for the whole sector.

Closing remarks

To close, I want to thank you. The progress we've made in stabilising NCVO's position is a shared achievement. It means we can continue to invest responsibly, use every pound wisely, and focus on what matters most: ensuring charities and voluntary organisations have the support they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to seeing how NCVO continues to build on this solid foundation in the year ahead.

4. Successes and achievements

Saskia Konynenburg, executive director

It is a privilege to have the opportunity today to reflect on the past year and to share some of the highlights of NCVO's work with you.

The context for charities and voluntary organisations has been difficult. Yet throughout 2024/25 we saw resilience, creativity and determination across the sector, and NCVO has worked hard to be both a voice and a partner in those challenges. There is much to be proud of.

Membership grew to more than 17,000 organisations, with a retention rate of over 92%. Nearly 200 organisations re-joined after a break, reflecting the value of the support and connections NCVO offers.

Advocacy was stronger than ever. Our campaign against employer National Insurance Contributions brought together more than 7,300 voluntary organisations and generated record-breaking media coverage, keeping the sector's financial pressures firmly on the political agenda.

Together with ACEVO, we also launched the Voluntary Sector Manifesto and worked to support the development of the Civil Society Covenant, which launched this July, resetting the relationship between government and civil society.

Small charities remained a central focus. Through the Power of Small project, Small Charity Week and the strengthened Small Charities Advisory Panel, we ensured that smaller organisations, which make up 90% of our members, had their voices heard.

Training and consultancy reached record levels. More than 4,500 people took part in our training programmes, over 200 in-house sessions were delivered, and we launched a new leadership programme for senior leaders.

Inside NCVO, we laid the groundwork for the future so we can keep supporting the sector for years to come.

None of this would be possible without the insights and partnership of our members, and the dedication of NCVO's staff and trustees. On behalf of everyone at NCVO, I want to thank you all.

Finally, this has also been a year of leadership change. We are grateful to Sarah Elliott for her contribution as CEO and for the stability and transformation she delivered during her time at NCVO. I am delighted to now welcome Kate Lee as our new Chief Executive.

Kate brings deep sector experience, energy, and a clear commitment to listening and working alongside members. I know she will be a powerful advocate for you, and for the voluntary sector as a whole. Thank you once again for your support, and for the extraordinary work you do every day in communities across the country. Together, we can show that our sector is not just resilient, but essential, effective and ready for the future.

5. Resolution outcomes

Members voted using the polling function managed by Mi-Voice.

Resolution 1

That the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting be adopted as a true record of the meeting.

The resolution was proposed by NCVO member Heather Chalkley from Rushmoor Voluntary Services. It was seconded by NCVO member Abbie Kendall from Equal Lives (Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People). 50 members voted for the resolution including two proxy votes with 13 members abstaining and one member voting against. The vote was carried in favour of the resolution.

Resolution 2

That NCVO's audited annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 be received and adopted.

The resolution was proposed by NCVO member Allison Howe from the NSPCC. It was seconded by NCVO member Jane Conway from Worcestershire Association of Carers. 55 members voted for the resolution including plus two proxy votes with eight members abstaining and one member voting against. The vote was carried in favour of the resolution.

Resolution 3

That PKF Littlejohn be appointed for the ensuing year and that they be paid for their services a sum to be determined by the NCVO Trustee Board.

The resolution was proposed by NCVO member Peter Bryce from The Pulmonary Fibrosis Trust. It was seconded by NCVO member Asheesh Malhotra as an independent committee member. 64 members voted for the resolution including two proxy votes with five members abstaining and two members voting against. The vote was carried in favour of the resolution.

Resolution 4

That Georgina Carr is re-elected to join the board for a second term of three years.

The resolution was proposed by NCVO member Gill Cleeve from the Voluntary Action Stratford-On-Avon District. It was seconded by NCVO member Stephen Hall from The Makaton Charity. 64 members voted for the resolution including two proxy votes, one member voting against and two members abstaining. The vote was carried in favour of the resolution.

Resolution 5

That the appointed treasurer can join the board. The new treasurer is Philippe Lintern.

The resolution was proposed by NCVO member Bee Holder from LSB. It was seconded by NCVO member Dominique Williams from All Nations Community Centre. 67 members voted for the resolution including two proxy votes, one member voting against and two members abstaining. The vote was carried in favour of the resolution.

6. An intro from our new CEO

Kate Lee OBE, chief executive officer

Before I say anything else, I want to recognise and thank Saskia. Stepping in as interim CEO over the summer was no small task, and the stability, commitment and leadership she brought in that period has been clear to see. On behalf of all of us, members, trustees and staff, thank you, Saskia, for stewarding NCVO with such dedication.

It is a privilege to be here today in my first few weeks as Chief Executive. In this short space of time, I have already been struck by the strength of commitment across this organisation, from our staff team to our trustees, and above all from you, our members. The work you do every day in communities across the country is inspiring, and I look forward to getting to know many of you soon.

I have spent my whole career in the voluntary sector, from local hospices to charities supporting children with cancer to leading the Alzheimer's Society through the pandemic. In every role I have seen the difference charities make, often in the hardest of circumstances. I also know from my own time as a member the value of having NCVO's support and voice alongside you.

I join at a time of real challenge. But there is also opportunity. To innovate, be creative, meet opportunities head on. There's lots we need to be able to do that, not least make sure the role of civil society is recognised and strengthened among people, communities, the private sector, funders, and political decision makers, to name a few.

My priority over the coming weeks and months will be to listen. I want to hear directly from you about what is working, what is difficult, and how NCVO can best support you. That will shape our new long-term strategy and make sure it reflects your experiences and helps you achieve your ambitions.

I believe deeply in the power of civil society to change lives and strengthen communities. My commitment is to bring openness, energy and focus so that NCVO is the ally you need it to be.

Thank you for your warm welcome. I look forward to working alongside you in the months and years ahead.

Priya Singh thanked everyone for attending and closed the formal part of the AGM. This was followed by a panel session led by Kate Lee on civil society ten years from now. Panel members included Danny Sriskandarajah (CEO of New Economics Foundation), Kaddy Thomas (founder of Carers Collective), and Zoe Amar (founder & director of Zoe Amar Digital, chair of the Charity Digital Code of Practice).