

TREASURER'S REPORT – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, CORK 2019

Membership

The official membership of the Society at the end of 2018 was 520 of which 55 were (free subscription) honorary members and the remainder paid-up members. This represents a decrease since the end of 2017, when there were a total of 573 (60) members.

As noted in previous years, many 'inactive' members remain on our database who continue to contribute to the Society via their Standing Orders to our NatWest account. These payments are received as 'donations' to the Society.

Finances and SSM investments

Overall, the Society's finances remain healthy. At the end of 2018, the Society's bank balance was £87,135. In the last financial year the Society made a small loss of £2,258 (from £89,393 at the end of 2017). We are in a good position financially and so continue with the strategic decision to invest the funds that the Society has accumulated over previous years in the work of the Society and not look to make a profit.

Over the past financial year we saw a drop in membership subscriptions – due to the drop in members noted above, but also an increase in the proportion of members benefitting from free membership in their second year as an ECR.

Despite holding ASM fees at 2017 rates, the Glasgow ASM made a profit of £6443 (£9,683 as reported in the accounts, minus the costs of the BMJ Abstract booklet). A principle of the Society is to break even (while acknowledging that in some years a surplus may be made while in others there may be a loss).

This profit is in part offset by a greater investment in free ASM places for SSM members on low incomes – this was £5,886 in 2018 – a significant increase from the previous year (£3,356). This is due to the earlier start time meaning some recipients required a hotel the night before the ASM, and also the higher accommodation and travel costs associated with Glasgow.

Committee expenses vary depending on locations of members and the committee meetings and were lower (£4285) than in 2017 (£5,994).

Other expenditure during 2018 included the invaluable clerical and administrative support provided by Hg3 to the SSM committee (£13100, which is very similar to the previous year). We anticipate that these costs will increase by around £3000 pa due to an increase in HG3 staffing charges. These had been held at the same level for three years prior.

In 2019, thus far, investments in the Society's work have continued according to the Society's objectives, one aim of which is to invest in our members across their careers. This year we have held an Early Career Researcher Workshop, in Dublin, to increase engagement with our Irish membership and foster new collaborations. We have also offered, for the first time, an ASM Carers Fund, to provide financial support to our membership with caring responsibilities to attend this year's ASM. Although uptake has been lower than expected, we plan for this scheme to continue and grow in the future.

Another aim of the SSM strategy is to support scientific rigour. This year we supported eight members to attend the Leeds causal inference course. The bursary was open to all SSM members and was taken up by a mix of ECRs and MCRs. Given its popularity and success, (free places were also funded for this course in 2017), we have explicitly widened the focus of the annual workshop call to encourage courses and training schemes such as this. This is done in the hope that we can support members to receive rigorous training in a range of skillsets relevant to population health research.

The official change of the Society's name provided an opportunity to invest in changes to the website and the ways in which we communicate with our members. Our Communications Officer has been working tirelessly with Hg3 to launch our new website, which provides an improved platform for communication among the membership and to the outside world.

An aim for 2020 is to revisit the eligibility criteria and set-up of the ASM free place scheme. Currently only those on low incomes are eligible to apply. We would like to open eligibility up to any member not in receipt of conference funding and will examine how to go about this in a practical, pragmatic, fair and transparent way. Thanks, Dr Anna Pearce, Honorary Treasurer (anna.pearce@glasgow.ac.uk). September 2019