

Audit of Member Organisations

1. Introduction

In the interests of public protection COSCA will carry out audits of a percentage of its member organisations.

2. The Audit

When member organisations renew their registration, they need to confirm that they continue to meet COSCA's membership standards by completing the Annual Renewal Application.

From April 2014 audits of member organisations will be carried out twice per annum to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements for membership and that they are compliant with them.

Member organisations that have been members for more than a year are eligible for audit. If selected they will be asked to submit their past year's records regarding the following membership requirements:

2.1 ***Complaints procedures***

When applying for organisational membership, organisations must enclose with their application a copy of their complaints procedure.

On becoming a member of COSCA, all members are required to pass information about COSCA's Complaints Procedure onto all their clients and/or those to whom they provide counselling related services including training and supervision.

If selected for audit member organisations must submit their complaints procedure along with a completed copy of the COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures. All the 'yes' boxes on the standards form should be ticked prior to submission.

Evidence of passing information about COSCA's Complaints Procedure onto clients must be submitted along with members' complaints procedures and their completed standards form. This evidence may comprise, for example, a copy of the client contract that clearly informs all clients of the COSCA Complaints Procedure or an excerpt from a student handbook showing this if the organisational member is a validated training provider.

The submitted complaints procedures will be checked by COSCA against COSCA's standards for complaints procedures. Please see a copy of the standards on www.cosca.org.uk – Complaints - **COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures.**

2.2 Handling of complaints meet COSCA standards/requirements

All organisational members are required to submit to COSCA immediate reports at the conclusion of their complaints proceedings related to counselling and psychotherapy, and notify COSCA of any sanctions applied. COSCA will consider taking appropriate action on receipt of notifications about sanctions.

If selected for audit, member organisations must submit their complaints handling record, including information on outcomes. This must be submitted on the proforma provided or in another format that includes the information requested in the proforma. Please see www.cosca.org.uk – Complaints - **COSCA's Complaints Handling Record**.

3. Websites and Online presence of COSCA Members

COSCA does not require its members to have their own website or online presence. Members who have their own website or online presence are expected to clearly show that they are members of COSCA. The COSCA logo can be used for this purpose. Please see the policy on how to use the logo on the COSCA website under Members Info.

In addition and in accord with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures (see the website under Complaints) all member organisations and individual members with their own complaints procedure must make it accessible online via their website and their own procedure must be compliant with all COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures.

The deadline for meeting the above expectation and requirement was 31 December 2015. Members are asked to contact the COSCA office if they foresee any difficulty with complying with this deadline.

4. Member Organisations Selected for Audit

Member organisations selected for audit will be informed about this in writing and given 28 days from the date on the notification letter to provide the information required. Member organisations that are unable to submit the required information within the stipulated time period should contact COSCA without delay.

If member organisations do not submit the required information within the above timescale, they will be given a further 21 days to do so. Failure to do so will result in the removal of their organisational membership.

On receipt of the requested information, COSCA's Corporate Affairs Group will assess this against the criteria for complaints procedures and complaint handling. It may request further information from member organisations at this stage.

Member organisations will be informed that they must not submit information that would breach client confidentiality.

Information submitted for audit purposes will be safely destroyed on completion of the audit.

5. Outcomes

On completion of the audit, member organisations will be advised of one of following outcomes:

- the information submitted meets the criteria of COSCA complaints procedure and complaint handling
- the information submitted is incomplete and more information is needed
- the information submitted does not meet the standards of COSCA's complaints procedures and/or complaint handling and requires member organisations to re-submit and/or evidence how they meet the outstanding criteria. Failure to do so satisfactorily within the stipulated period will result in the member organisations being removed from membership.

If selected for audit, member organisations that submit information on time will be notified of the audit outcome on average 3 months from the original audit notification.

While the audit is being conducted member organisations can continue in membership of COSCA.

6. Appeals

COSCA's Appeals Procedure provides a means of appealing against the above decisions of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland). Please see a copy of the above procedure under ethics on our website. www.cosca.org.uk

Brian Magee
Chief Executive
COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)