



COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

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**The Scottish Voluntary Sector Counselling Practice Research Network
[SVSC PRN]**

Introduction

The Scottish Voluntary Sector Counselling Research Network is a project that was established in 2012 by COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland) and the University of Abertay Dundee. It was funded and supported by both COSCA and the University until September 2014. Since then COSCA has continued to provide support and funding for the Network.

The Network aims to enhance understanding and practice of voluntary sector counselling in Scotland. It seeks to pursue a research agenda that is generated and shaped by the concerns of the Scottish voluntary sector counselling community and derived from issues that emerge from routine counselling practice within voluntary organisations.

A primary function of the Network, therefore, is to facilitate collaboration between practitioners and researchers in order to generate knowledge from practice-based research that is meaningful to individual practitioners, counselling agencies and other stakeholder groups interested in voluntary sector counselling in Scotland.

Further information about the Network and the background to the development can be found in Armstrong (2012) below or at the Network's website: <http://www.svsprn.org.uk>

The role of research in voluntary sector counselling

Voluntary sector counselling agencies make a significant and vital contribution to the overall balance of provision of psychological therapies in Scotland. Consequently, research into voluntary sector counselling can help, among other things, to:

- Demonstrate the value and effectiveness of counselling and ensure ongoing availability and access to voluntary sector counselling services
- Inform initiatives to improve practice, training and the support and supervision of counsellors
- Build our theoretical understanding of factors associated with effective practice and effective practitioners
- Document the contribution of voluntary sector counselling to Scottish society.

Objectives

The key objectives for the Network are to:

- Identify and prioritise a set of research questions on voluntary sector counselling in Scotland
- Design and make available research protocols to facilitate the implementation of its research agenda
- Support voluntary counselling agencies, practitioners, professional and other umbrella bodies in carrying out research that enhances understanding of voluntary sector counselling in Scotland, and generates findings with clear practical implications for counselling practice and policy initiatives
- Identify and disseminate information about sources of funding for research grants
- Foster partnerships and collaboration opportunities between service managers, practitioners, voluntary organisations, professional bodies, researchers, and academics, as well as other stakeholder groups associated with voluntary sector counselling in Scotland
- Make a contribution to advancing the development of voluntary sector counselling in Scotland.

Membership

Membership of the Network is free of charge and open to individual practitioners, counselling agencies and other relevant stakeholder groups with an interest in voluntary sector counselling in Scotland.

Benefits of joining the Network include:

- ✓ Opportunity to learn about and become involved in research relevant to your area of practice
- ✓ Build connections with other network members
- ✓ Access to resources to help implement research studies to help you better understand and improve your practice
- ✓ Receipt of a quarterly newsletter
- ✓ Keep up to date with current developments regarding research into voluntary sector counselling in Scotland.

The Advisory Group

- ❖ Jo Hilton, Network Director and Chair of the Advisory Group.
- ❖ Anne Goldie - COSCA Representative, and Manager Crossreach Counselling/Tom Allan Centre, Glasgow.
- ❖ Kate Smith - Teaching Fellow, University of Abertay Dundee
- ❖ Jacqui Lindsay - Project Manager of Crossreach Counselling: Lothians, Moray & Inverness
- ❖ Patricia Joyce – Counsellor and Supervisor, Moray Council on Addiction
- ❖ Craig Hutchison - Teaching Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Current research activities

Studies currently in preparation/progress:

1. A Survey of Voluntary Sector Counsellors Engagement with Research: A Scottish Perspective.
2. Client-focused evaluation of the outcomes of counselling in a voluntary sector counselling agency.
3. Voluntary Sector Counselling in Britain: A review of the literature.

Further information about these studies is available from the Network Co-ordinator.

References

Armstrong, J. (2012) Introducing the voluntary sector counselling practice research network. *Counselling in Scotland*, Summer/Autumn, pp. 8-11.