



DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

A meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 27th of November 2023 from 11 am to 1pm at The Barracks, Stirling.

1. PRESENT

Jan Kerr	Chair
Birgit Schroeter	Vice Chair/Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers
Jill Whitfield	Rurality
Stuart Valentine	Relationships
Eleni Kepelian	Lay Representative Co-optee
Craig Ferguson	Criminal Justice Co-optee
Tatjana Hine	Treasurer/Funding
Martha Pollard	Research
Daniel Reilly	Lay Representative Co-optee
Brian Magee	(in attendance)
Christina Oliver	(Minute Recorder)

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The chair welcomed Board members and invited each member of the Board to introduce themselves.

Apologies: Caron Westmorland & Lisa McGilvray.

Linda McLachlan was not present.

3. CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

No conflicts of interest.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING

4.1 Board Meeting of 21st August 2023

Paper previously circulated.

Decision: Consent granted for minutes.

4.2 Redactions of Minutes: 21st August 2023

No redactions were suggested.

4.3 Matters Arising: 21st August 2023

JK asked the group if there were any matters arising.

BM refers to the August 2023 Board agenda item 7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients where problems regarding Disclosure Scotland forms and information not always being disclosed was discussed. BM states that a risk matrix has been completed and the next time the matrix comes to the Board for review, we will be able to see the changes.

OVERVIEW

5.1 Information on items 5.2, 5.4, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 5.12 5.13, 5.14, 5.15 and 5.16.

Paper previously circulated.

JK reminded Board members that it had been previously agreed that any questions or queries relating to these items should be raised, and that BM to be contacted prior to the meeting, so that it can be incorporated into the agenda.

JK thanked BM for preparing a useful and informative overview and states that it gives a good summary of the items.

DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA:

5.2 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK states that there has been two Corporate Affairs Group meetings since the Board last met and from the reports, it shows that there has been a good number of applications submitted in recent months.

5.3 Board Members Area of Interest Report

Paper previously circulated.

JK thanked BS for her very interesting and informative report, which focuses on the accreditation of counsellors and trainers. JK comments that it is gratifying to know that there has been an overall increase of 3.5% in the number of registrants on the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists, and that it is encouraging to read that nearly all of the trainers have accreditation.

BM added that BS had raised the issue of SCoPEd in the above report, and he confirmed COSCA's position towards this is neutral. However, SCoPEd is not something that we should forget about or not attend to.

5.4 Trustees Report 2022-23: OSCR & Companies House

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK confirms that the Trustee's Report 2022-23 & COSCA'S Annual Report have both been submitted and accepted by OSCR. The Trustee's Report has also been submitted to Companies House.

5.5 Board Meeting Dates 2024

Information in overview document 5.1.

The planned Board Meeting Dates for 2024.

5.6 Board Members Register of Interests 2023-24

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK explains to the group that the members of the Board are invited each year to fill in the Register of Interest form and asks completed forms to be submitted to CO by the end of the week.

5.7 Board Members Annual Review of Performance 2023-24

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK requests that the Annual Review of Performance forms are also submitted to CO by the end of the week.

5.8 Vacancies – Lay Representatives

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK informs the group there is a vacancy within the Corporate Affairs Group and within the Ethics Committee.

JK asks the Board to think if they know of any suitable candidates and for them to please direct applicants to the adverts.

5.9 Co-option onto Board: Criminal Justice Area of Interest

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK points to the overview paper, which gives the background and information about the formal co-option of Craig Ferguson to represent the Criminal Justice Area of Interest.

Developing and Promoting Systems and Standards:

Increasing Access to Services

5.10 Postponement of Ban on Conversion Therapies

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK thanked BM for the clear details in the overview paper, which was noted by the Board.

5.11 'Race is Complicated' Toolkit

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK explained that the Race is Complicated Toolkit was launched in October 2023 by the Coalition for Inclusion and Anti-oppressive Practice, which is a group of organisations with a shared mission to improve diversity within the counselling, psychotherapy and psychological therapy professions. Its focus is to promote inclusive and anti-oppressive professional training, as part of a greater vision to address further barriers to inclusive practice.

BM added that the Toolkit gives a good guide to information and practices that counsellors and especially training providers would benefit from knowing. The Toolkit goes beyond advocating training only on the unconscious biases that students may have, and argues for the need for anti-oppressive training, and it does it in a way that provides reflection time and interactive exercises.

BS adds she likes the tone of voice of the toolkit.

5.12 Recognition Scheme Annual Standards Event 2023

Information in overview document 5.1

JK acknowledged that the event took place and that it was good opportunity to network.

Increasing Access to Training, Knowledge and Information:

5.13 PSA's Accredited Registers Scheme: Good Practice on Complaint Handling

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK acknowledged that PSA is trying to consolidate good practice on complaint handling.

BM added that this is about standardising our expectation of complaints procedures. Once the above guidance is completed, there may be future changes to COSCA's complaints procedures that need to be approved at Board level after the Ethics Committee has completed its review.

5.14 COSCA Register of Counsellors & Psychotherapists: EDI New Standard

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK acknowledged that COSCA's EDI report was submitted to PSA, and that COSCA are now awaiting a response from PSA.

5.15 COSCA Annual Ethics Event

JK stated that COSCA's Annual Ethics Event will be held on the 22nd February 2024 via Zoom and is titled "Creating a safe enough space (online and in-person) for trauma processing".

BS asked if there is way to make presentations available for people who cannot attend on the day. Birgit finds COSCA events very helpful, and if a recording (not the discussions) of the presentation could be made accessible for a fee to those who cannot attend on the day, that would be helpful.

BM added that we will look into the technology behind doing the above, with attendance to GDPR regulations and also obtaining permissions from the presenters.

Informing and Influencing Policy Making

5.16 Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy: Core Mental Health Quality Standards

JK acknowledged that as part of Scottish Government's wider work to improve mental health services and care, it has developed new core mental health standards for adult secondary mental health services. These standards, published in September 2023, set out clear expectations for what services will provide, and are designed to be aspirational about what good mental health services should look like.

JK addressed the group and asked if anyone had any comments or thoughts on the above Standards. The paper was noted by the Board.

BM added that since these standards were published, the action plan for the work force delivery has been launched, and that there is one reference to psychological therapy but no reference at all to counselling or psychotherapy. BM will report on any further developments at a future meeting.

6. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Developing, Communicating and Marketing COSCA:

6.1 Financial Report to September 2023

Paper previously circulated

JK asked for the Board Consent on this report.

Decision: Consent was given to report.

6.2 Report of the Treasurer to September 2023

Paper previously circulated.

JK highlighted the positive surplus of £13,501 compared to the budget negative of £5,000, and acknowledged that COSCA is in a healthy position at this time in the financial year.

JK thanked TH for her work on preparing these reports.

TH added that we are only in the second quarter and that the variation of accreditation and training that are down does not mean we won't catch up in the next couple of quarters. It is the same with the expenditure, and therefore there is nothing to be concerned about at this stage.

Decision: Consent was given to the report.

7. RISKS

7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients

Verbal report.

JK asks if there was anything, anyone would like to bring up for discussion today.

The Board were happy to move on to the next agenda item.

8. INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES

8.1 Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

Verbal report.

JK asked if there was anything, anyone would like to bring up for discussion today.

EK referred to the discussion at the last Board Meeting on equality, diversity and inclusion in the delivering of counselling services. EK suggested that there are gender biases around about who can be a counsellor, and that the public need to have a better understanding of what counselling is and how to access it.

BM added that counsellors should always be working within their competence, and should not be working with clients whom they are not competent to work with. That is when a referral to another agency or counsellor comes in. The COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice covers this. Our video, Person to Person, was produced to help the public understand what counselling is and whether it is suitable for them, and it is freely available on our website.

8.2 COSCA's EDI Survey of Registrants/Clients

Paper previously circulated.

BM stated that is interesting to have the confirmation of the diversity of our registrants, and the client groups they are working with. It is positive to see that COSCA's registrants are open to working with diverse client groups and are competent to do so.

DR suggested that having a more diverse group of counsellors attracts more clients from different backgrounds, and BM confirms this suggestion.

BM added that having analysed the data, COSCA's aim would be to increase the number of responses and asks the Board for suggestions on how to do this.

It was suggested that new registrants accepted by the Corporate Affairs Group are asked to fill in the survey, and those attending COSCA events.

9. DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING and MARKETING COSCA (3)

9.1 Memorandum & Articles of Association & COSCA General Meeting

Paper previously circulated.

JK moved on to the proposed changes to the M&A and asked Brian if he would like to lead the Board through this.

BM explained that each proposal has a rationale and that each one has been carried over into the new draft Articles of Association which has been work on with Brodie's Solicitors, Edinburgh.

Proposal 1: that the Memorandum page is deleted as this is only used by new companies and not established ones like COSCA.

Consent given to proposal 1.

Proposal 2: that COSCA's Memorandum and Articles of Association permits General Meetings of Members, including Annual General Meetings, and meetings of the Board of COSCA to be held either in person or remotely, or not all.

Consent given to proposal 2.

Proposal 3: that the number of directors on COSCA's Board be reduced to five and no maximum number given.

Consent given to proposal 3.

Proposal 4: that the list of areas of interest be deleted from the Articles of Association and included in Standing Orders.

Consent given to proposal 4.

Proposal 5: that in the list of Areas of Interest 'a minimum of one' to be replaced by 'up to one', and for this article to be deleted from the Articles of Association and included in Standing Orders.

Consent given to proposal 5.

Proposal 6: that the procedures for the election of Board members be deleted from the Articles of Association and included in Standing Orders.

Consent given to proposal 6.

Proposal 7: that the quorum for Board meetings be reduced from 5 to 3.

Consent given to proposal 7.

Proposal 8: that the retirement by rotation articles be deleted from the Articles of Association and replaced with a statement that those appointed by the Board during the year must all offer themselves for re-election.

Consent given to proposal 8.

BM added that COSCA will now arrange to hold a General Meeting in which at least 14 voting members must attend to agree the above Resolutions.

10. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING

Paper previously circulated.

10. 1 Evidence on Counselling in Schools submitted to Children's Commissioner

BM stated that the Children's Commissioner supported young people to do a survey of local authorities and their implementation of the Scottish Governments Counselling in Schools Project. The young people came up with findings, some of the findings critical of what was happening in schools. Things that they spoke about included the qualifications of counsellors, waiting times and supervision of counsellors, in which they uncovered inconsistencies.

This report was initial taken to the Scottish Government Counsellors in Schools network and the Scottish Government said they were initially taking no action on these findings.

However, at the next meeting of the above network, the Children's Commissioner was invited to speak and he asked BM for information of our different categories of membership and qualifications of counsellors, which BM supplied in a written format. BM added that he found it interesting that these findings were brought back to a meeting where they had initially been dismissed.

10. 2 SG's Funding of Counsellors in Colleges/Universities

JK confirmed that money is not going to be awarded any more.

BM added that some Universities have brought money across from other budgets to fund counsellors, and so continue to offer counselling to students.

11. DEVELOPING and PROMOTING SYSTEMS and STANDARDS

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 19th February 2024, 11 am to 1 pm via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 12:50pm.
