



Scotland's  
Professional Body  
for Counselling &  
Psychotherapy

**COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)**  
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## **Board of COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)**

### **1. Membership of COSCA Board**

Members of COSCA's Board make up COSCA's governing body and have the general control and management of COSCA. They represent an area of interest linked to COSCA's Development Plan, including all the various kinds of counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland. The remit of the member is to assemble a broad overview of his/her area of interest and keep abreast of developments, as well as carrying out their general governance roles and activities.

COSCA members are encouraged to contact specific members of the Board to pass on information related to his/her area of interest and/or to request advice/assistance with respect to that area of interest.

The table below contains the names of COSCA's Board and provides information on their respective area(s) of interest.

You may contact the COSCA Board members at [info@cosca.org.uk](mailto:info@cosca.org.uk)

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area of Interest</b>
Jan Kerr	Chair/ Training; Recognition Scheme
Birgit Schroeter	Vice Chair/ Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers
Tatjana Hine	COSCA Treasurer/ Funding: income generation; financial management
Stuart Valentine	Specialist Counselling Area – Relationships
Linda McLachlan	Specialist Counselling Area – Alcohol/Drugs; Bereavement
Jill Whitfield	Rurality
Caron Westmoreland	Statutory Agencies
Linda MacLeod	Criminal Justice
Mary Maccallum Sullivan	Ethics
Alison Shoemark	Research

<b>Name</b>	<b>Co-Optees</b>
Daniel Reilly	Co-optee Lay Representative
Vacant	Co-optee Lay Representative

## **2. Guidance on Public Attendance at COSCA Board Meetings**

- The public may attend meetings of COSCA's Board as an observer only. Due to space restrictions, the number of attendees is limited to 10.
- No Board papers will be issued to the public attending as observers.
- Those wishing to attend must apply in writing to COSCA's office in Stirling two weeks in advance of the date of the Board meeting. Places will be allocated in the order that requests are received. Applicants will be informed about the outcome of their request prior to the meeting date.
- Those members of the public attending Board meetings are required to respect that the meeting is a Board meeting to conduct the business of COSCA and as such members of the public must not interrupt the discussion of the Board.
- COSCA reserves the right to discuss confidential matters at Board meetings in private
- No cameras or any recording equipment are allowed unless prior approval has been granted.
- Members of the public who attend Board meetings are not entitled to claim expenses for attending. They are also not entitled to any catering that may be provided for Board members.

## **3. Dates of COSCA Board Meetings**

Monday      7 November 2022

## **4. COSCA Board Minutes**

Approved minutes of COSCA Board meetings are posted on COSCA's website under About Us, [www.cosca.org.uk](http://www.cosca.org.uk).

Brian Magee

Chief Executive

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)



A meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2022 from 11 am to 1pm via Zoom

## **MINUTES OF MEETING**

### **1. PRESENT**

Jan Kerr	Chair/Training & Recognition Scheme
Birgit Schroeter	Vice Chair/Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers
Caron Westmorland	Statutory Agencies
Mary Maccallum Sullivan	Ethics
Stuart Valentine	Relationships
Linda MacLeod	Criminal Justice
Tatjana Hine	Treasurer
Brian Magee	(in attendance)
Ashleigh Greechan	(Minute Recorder)

### **2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed the Board.

**Apologies:** Linda McLachlan, Jill Whitfield and Danny Reilly.

### **3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no conflicts of interest reported.

### **4. INFORMATION AGENDA ITEMS**

#### **Overview**

#### **4.1 Information on items 4.5, 4.9.1, 5.5, 8.1 and 9.1**

The Chair thanked COSCA staff for putting together the reports for the Board meeting and that the Overview paper was helpful.

The Chair stated that each information item will be mentioned, but that there will be no discussion around them as they are for information only.

#### **Developing, Communicating and Marketing COSCA**

#### **4.2 Board Member's Area of Interest**

The Chair stated she really appreciated the report by Linda McLeod and thanked Linda for the work she put into the report.

#### **4.3 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group**

The Chair noted the increase in membership numbers conveyed in Corporate Affairs Group's report.

#### **4.4 COSCA E-Bulletin (March 2022)**

The Chair stated that the e-bulletin that had been circulated was a good way of keeping members up to date with information from COSCA.

#### **4.5 COSCA Scottish Government Grant (2022-2023)**

BM stated the payment for last financial year has been made in full. Discussions are ongoing for this financial year and we are hopeful of a good outcome.

#### ***Developing and Promoting Systems and Standards:***

#### **4.6 COSCA Information/Guidance on GDPR**

BM stated that the above guidance had been circulated to members and posted on the COSCA website. This followed on from feedback from the COSCA Ethics event which asked for further guidance from that previously offered to members.

Discussion took place around a new data protection bill that was referred to in the recent Queen's Speech. Although this relates to England, it could affect Scotland at a later date along with other previously European legislation that is being re-drafted for the UK. Therefore, this is an area to be kept under review.

#### **4.7 Recognition Scheme Report 2021-2022**

The Chair stated the Recognition Scheme report covers April 2021 to March 2022 and highlights the work ongoing in this area and gives a clear and detailed account on the work undertaken by Jenna Fraser, our COSCA Recognition Scheme Development Officer. It acknowledges any challenges faced due to Covid and the more supported flexibility that was offered to existing organisations to remain compliant with the standards of the Recognition Scheme.

#### **4.8 Recognition Scheme Plan 2022-2023**

The Chair stated the Recognition Scheme Plan is the business plan which is ongoing for this financial year. It clearly sets out the objectives, tasks targets and performance indicators and Jenna has clearly planned ahead with this.

#### ***Increasing Access to Training, Knowledge and Information:***

#### **4.9 Future Events:**

##### **4.9.1 Recognition Scheme Annual Standards Event**

BM noted in the first instance that it was planned to be a face-to-face event, but it has been reviewed and will now be online, mainly due to the fact that the keynote presenter has opted for online delivery.

##### **4.9.2 COSCA AGM**

BM stated that he sought and received legal advice last year as to whether we could hold the AGM via Zoom or another online format. We were advised against doing this as it would have involved changing our Articles of Association. There is no legal requirement for COSCA to hold an AGM at all. Last year there was no AGM held and instead the Trustees report was circulated to all members.

Discussion took place that although legal restrictions have been lifted, some would be reluctant to attend in person. Additionally, we need to consider the practicalities including having enough space in the room, the cost of living, travel, Covid19, ventilation, appropriate use of venue and limited number of people allowed in venue. There are lots of reasons for not having an AGM and we are not constitutionally required to have it.

Concern was raised around a fall in engagement with COSCA members if the AGM didn't go ahead to which BM stated there was no fall in engagement as attendance at all our other events has increased during the period of the restrictions. It was suggested that an engagement event could be held as an alternative to an AGM to stop any reduction in engagement from occurring in future. It was also suggested by one member that the engagement event could have a focus on environmental therapy and could perhaps be held outside. There was a general agreement that an engagement event that was open to all members would be a good idea in place of an AGM.

**Decision:** The AGM this year will not be held. Instead, BM will take forward the arrangements for the above engagement event to be held online on the same day as the AGM would have been held.

## **5. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

### ***Minutes of Meeting:***

Paper previously circulated.

#### **5.1 Board Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> of February 2022**

Consent was granted for the minutes.

### ***Developing, Communicating and Marketing COSCA:***

#### **5.2 Financial Report to March 2022**

Paper previously circulated.

#### **5.3 Report of the Treasurer to March 2022**

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated that it is great to see the figures looking so healthy and thanked TH for producing the reports, which are very clear.

TH stated that the reports indicated a very positive financial position, and expressed the hope that next year will be as successful.

Consent was given to the Treasurer's report.

#### **5.4 COSCA Budget Forecast 2022-23**

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair noted there was a suggested deficit for next year and asked if there was anything BM or TH would like to acknowledge from the report.

BM stated it was a prudent budget and that those involved in producing it (BM, Alan Smith, TH) had done their best as a team to reduce the deficit as much as possible. BM stated that it was hoped that the income streams may increase as we go through the year and that we will end up with a surplus instead. TH added that in the budget forecast, we are accepting that we will receive grant from the Scottish Government and hoped that we do. Last year's forecast budget was also shown as a minus, but we have to be cautious at this stage and hope that we will recover some of it as the year goes along.

Discussion took place around how difficult it must be to do a budget forecast right now and thanks was given for pulling the budget report together in this climate.

Discussion took place around the forecast and if there needs to be a discussion around priorities and changes to these. TH responded by saying that adjustments had been made to property expenses and energy bills etc. and stated that the budget is for running costs and there won't be much change in these costs.

Consent given to Budget Forecast 2022-23.

## **5.5 PSA Safeguarding Pilot**

Paper previously distributed.

The Chair introduced this item and stated that it was for discussion, mainly about whether there was a need for COSCA to have access to Disclosure Scotland for PVG Scheme criminal record checks for its individual members. Thoughts and comments were invited on this.

Discussion took place around the logistics, financial and administration work involved to oversee the checking of disclosure checks for members. In the overview paper it states that PSA had given £2000 to a PSA accredited register to cover the costs of checking 30 of its registrants. BM stated that PSA are currently restricting checks for only registrants who are not employed as there is an expectation that employers would be making these checks themselves and scrutinising the disclosure information received. Feedback from the above pilot so far are that it costs a lot of money and that it takes up a lot of time to request and review these checks. There is a question around what is the problem that is actually being sorted here. We have never had any issues with any member of COSCA being barred from the PVG scheme. BM stated he has had discussions on a one to one basis with PSA regarding this. In Scotland it will be the case that at the end of this year once the new legislation comes in that every single counsellor in Scotland will need to be registered with PVG by law, which again raises the question what is this needed for. It has come from a small number of registers who feel they want access to the barring list, not because they inadvertently have admitted anyone that has been on that list. It seems to be a sort of fear out there that people applying to be members of registers are on the barred list. However, there appears to be no evidence of this.

Further comments came up that the PVG scheme gives false reassurances as applicants can have convictions that are not listed particularly historical convictions so as an organisation there is a risk that you believe you are protected and you aren't.

There was concern voiced about what the implications would be to COSCA as an organisation if we police our members. Instead of policing our members, COSCA is trying to build up a trust and honesty approach with members, who voluntarily talk with us about their situations when they arise which is a much better approach than checking up on them.

It was stated by one member that there is already a degree of disengagement as people would rather not be regulated in that way. A number of other people across the field are dropping out of regulation. It is regulation for the sake of it - the more doubling down on regulation of the field the more people will disengage and the less of us there is as a whole. COSCA does not need this.

It was stated that the push for regulation would make sense if counselling was a protected title and there was a legal need for us to do this in our individual practice. Given that it's not regulated by statute, it would not work in COSCA's favour to introduce this.

It was also stated that there is a need for the profession to become more visible and that need is pretty urgent. There is a population that is being underserved and all the regulation in the world is not going to help. People need organisations such as COSCA and other similar organisations and if people drop off then the whole population suffers. BM stated that there was a meeting on Thursday last week that PSA had had in Edinburgh with regulators. The Chair of the PSA Accredited Registers Collaborative had asked for, and been given, help by BM for her presentation at this meeting. As a result of this meeting the head of the Scottish Government Regulation Unit will be speaking with the Cabinet Secretary for Health to raise the profile of accredited registers and what they are doing.

The Chair thanked all members for the discussion.

## **5.6 Board/Staff Collaboration**

Verbal report.

The Chair opened up this item stating we would like to pick up some of the points from the away day and that this item had been set aside for that. It was stated that the feedback from the facilitator of the away day included things going well at COSCA with evidence that it was highly organised with a strong structure in place. For example, the Development plan, clear notifications on the Agenda, Board members having specific areas of interest which ensure the areas of the Development plan are overseen. He believed the group of Board members wish to get it right and are committed to COSCA and to their roles but seeking more clarity in order to carry out their roles with more confidence. He respected that COSCA was well organised, but that it takes board members time to learn about this. There has been a reduction in the length of meetings and that online meetings have exacerbated lack of involvement, especially for newer members but the other side of that is that more Board members are able to attend online.

The Chair opened it up to Board for discussion.

It was stated that the agenda item was headed Board/Staff collaboration and suggested that BM come in with some input as this would be useful to hear more from staff as a starting point.

BM stated it is the Code of Conduct document in Board members handbook that is the guide for the collaboration COSCA is looking for. The Code states that COSCA has a staff team that take care of the operational side of COSCA and the Board has employment responsibility for that staff team. How the Board supports the staff team and helps it to develop in terms of what it does operationally is the question here. Respecting the boundaries between the Board team and staff is also clearly stated in the Code. It also goes on to talk about micro management and for the Board not do that in respect of staff but instead to focus on the big things that matter such as performance, quality and results. BM emphasised that in terms of governance, the Board at its meetings really needs to provide positive messages when appropriate about the work done by staff, which he can then communicate to them. Examples of reports of work done by staff that are presented to the Board on a regular basis are the draft Trustees Report, Recognition Scheme reports etc.

One member stated that it is interesting to know that the Board should not engage in micro-management, but that if Board members had questions about, for example, writing their area of interest report, it would be good to know who would be the appropriate staff member to ask. BM invited Board members in this situation to approach him in the first instance.

One member suggested that discussing the Board papers prior to the meeting with other Board members might help members to understand and appreciate them better and also help them to work better as a group. Another member suggested that once we can get back together face to face over a cup of coffee a lot of that need will go as Zoom means we are working in isolation.

BM stated that when proposal papers are coming in to the Board, respect should be given to the process that has gone into the work behind the proposals. This usually involves staff, but often also our many panels, committees, working groups etc. and our members. To this it was stated that the Board might not have been fully aware as a Board – we have been spoiled by the quality of the papers we get and we have taken for granted the amount of

work the COSCA staff do. Added to this the Board members maybe don't know each other so well and having ways to help us feel like we are a collective might help address some of this. The quality of what the staff deliver is overlooked and it should not be. It was also suggested that instead of just seeing the papers it may help to see the person behind the paper. The papers are amazing and being spoiled with the quality, it becomes really easy to tick them off.

The Chair suggested the discussion was left there and BM agreed, stating he sees no reason to keep discussing this.

## **6. MINUTES OF MEETING**

### **6.1 Redactions of Minutes: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

No redactions were required.

### **6.2 Matters Arising: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

No matters arising.

## **7. RISKS**

### **7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients**

BM stated he would bring PSA's generic risk matrix to the Board when it was ready – it has been delayed. We might have to make changes to our own risk matrix. However, our current risk matrix is already really comprehensive and so it is unlikely that a large number of new risks will need to be added from the above new generic one. The structure and some of the language of our matrix may need to be changed, though.

## **8. INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES**

### **8.1 Equality, Inclusion and Diversity**

BM reported the important point in the attached information paper is that PSA plan to introduce an EDI standard and that we need to watch this space to see what COSCA will be required to do under EDI. PSA's own action plan is huge in its scope. They will consult on the new standard and then we will need to comply with it when it is finally implemented.

It was stated that we have a specific situation in Scotland regarding all of these dimensions of diversity and all of the challenges that we face in terms of inclusion, and that we should develop our own thinking which may be different to that of other UK countries.

There was a suggestion that we should have someone from a minority group on the Board. It was also suggested that we wait until we find out about the above PSA new standard to see what its requirements may be. It was also noted that the Board cannot be expected to include individuals from all of the protected characteristics groups, but that we are reasonably well represented as we are already. It was suggested that EDI is something that needs to be kept in mind going forward, but also that we need to be mindful that the Board positions are voluntary and that people are elected from the membership. So, we can't force people from a protected characteristics group to apply to be Board members. BM reminded the Board that there is currently a lay representative vacancy on the Board and invited members to invite suitable people to contact him about this.

It was stated that there are some exciting things in the COSCA EDI Action Plan. It helps us to have an awareness of EDI matters and to focus on ensuring that COSCA is welcoming and encouraging in relation to equality, inclusion and diversity. Like to see things kept on the table and kept alive in discussions so we can be inclusive.

**Decision:** The COSCA EDI Action Plan was approved without any changes.

## **9. INCREASING ACCESS TO TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION**



## 9.1 Conversion therapies

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated that a Conversion Therapies Bill was included in the recent Queen's Speech. This legislation will not apply in Scotland, but the Scottish Government has announced its own plan to set up an expert advisory group to take this forward as well.

BM spoke to the report. The Queens Speech did include an announcement in banning conversion therapies. This is to be a limited ban in that it didn't include transgender communities or adults, and that there has been a lot of discussion around these limitations. The defence of UK Government is that it is being sympathetic towards people who are working through gender identities and they want to allow that to happen. However, It wasn't expected by the campaigners that communities would be divided in this way.

BM stated Scotland may come up with something different, it would be interesting to find out who is on the above group and which mental health charities or individuals will be selected for it. Scotland may produce a totally different view in relation to banning these therapies. It will be minded, though, to allow services such as counselling to happen for people who want to talk about their sexual identity, gender identity, sexual orientation and try to make sure that there is a differentiation between counsellors working ethically with people compared with those who want to persuade them to change their identity or orientation. We have guidance on conversion therapies on our website already and this still applies for the time being.

It was stated that there is a danger to counsellors who will be unwilling to approach the work if they are unable to talk about gender identity to those who are not openly questioning their identity. This will impact us enormously. Parents of children in schools and teachers are struggling to manage difficulties and we will be faced with similar difficulties. There will be many people not willing to engage in this work. What is interesting about this is the definition about what boundaries need to be met, and at what point does something start to become conversion therapy. It needs to be clear in the legislation. It was stated there was a desperate concern for the safeguarding with children and young people and about the current lack of evidence of the practice and its definition.

BM asked the Board if they have come across the new helpline the UK Government has recently funded. This is a UK-wide helpline called Galop and is for those having problems with conversion therapies being used on them - [Conversion therapy - Galop](#) It was agreed that on the one hand the more information people have access to the better. However, there is a worry around the mis- information out there. Unless we have more information about Galop we would be hesitant to promote it. It was agreed that we should wait until the Scottish Government produces its own legislation and/or guidance.

There was a final question as to whether there is evidence of conversion therapies happening in Scotland and also the definition being used to decide what such therapies include.

## 10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 15 August 2022 11 am to 1 pm

Zoom session