



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

Name	Area of Interest
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
Alison Shoemark	Research

Name	Co-Optees
Daniel Reilly	Co-optee Lay Representative
Eleni Kepelian	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 15 May 2023
Monday 21 August 2023
Monday 20 November 2023

4. COSCA Board Minutes

Approved minutes of COSCA Board meetings are posted on COSCA's website under About Us, www.cosca.org.uk.

Brian Magee

Chief Executive

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)



A meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 7th of November 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
Mary Maccallum Sullivan	Ethics
Stuart Valentine	Relationships
Jill Whitfield	Rurality
Linda McLeod	Criminal Justice
Caron Westmorland	Statutory Agencies
Linda McLachlan	Drugs, Alcohol & Bereavement
Alison Shoemark	Research
Brian Magee	(in attendance)
Ashleigh Greechan	(Minute Recorder)

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members to the Board meeting and let Board members know there would be a comfort break at 12 and a finish at 1pm. The Chair welcomed new Board member Alison Shoemark and invited Alison to introduce herself, which she did and stated she looks forward to being on the Board.

Apologies: Tatjana Hine

Absent: Daniel Reilly

Birgit Schroeter left meeting at 12pm.

3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest reported.

4. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING

4.1 Board Meeting of 15 August 2022

Paper previously circulated.

Consent was granted for the minutes.

4.2 Redactions of Minutes: 15 August 2022

No redactions were suggested.

4.3 Matters Arising: 15 August 2022

The Chair acknowledged that some of the matters arising would feature later in today's agenda items.

BM let the Board know that COSCA had submitted a response to the Scottish Government Mental Health & Wellbeing Consultation (agenda item 10.1). A question was raised on whether the submission could be shared and BM stated the results of the consultation would be shared by the Scottish Government once all responses had been analysed. Some Board members stated they were unable to complete a response to the consultation themselves as there were too many questions and they felt a lot of them were not relevant. A suggestion was made that in consultations such as this, only the relevant questions could be answered and the irrelevant ones left blank.

OVERVIEW

5.1 Information on items 5.4, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12.1, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16.1, 5.17, 10.1, 10.2

The Chair thanked BM for putting together the reports for the Board meeting and stated that the overview paper was helpful in providing a summary of some of the items. The Chair acknowledged the format of information items being listed at the start of the agenda and reminded Board members if they had any queries around these items that they should be highlighted prior to the meeting.

DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA:

5.2 Board Members Area of Interest

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair thanked CW for her very informative and concise report.

5.3 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair acknowledged the healthy increase in membership numbers.

5.4 COSCA Scottish Government Grant (2022-23)

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair thanked BM for providing the latest information about the imminent payment of the above grant and that she appreciates his efforts on following up on this payment. Board members stated it was great the funding has come through and asked if there was any indication for future funding. It was stated the grant used to be a three year funding grant but it's now one year and we need to keep campaigning for a three year grant to allow for future planning. BM stated since the last Board meeting that there had been a contingency planning meeting if the money didn't come through. He also highlighted that having the stamp of approval and investment from the Scottish Government is equally as important as the money awarded in the grant.

5.5 COSCA e-Bulletin October 2022

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair acknowledged that some of the items on the e-Bulletin feature on today's agenda. These were – the Trustees report, Counsellor Accreditation Guidance and Application update, the Ethics event, Information on Conversion therapies, Guidance on referral of clients and Trauma training.

5.6 OSCR Annual Return 2021-22

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair thanked BM for the work that went into this return.

5.7 Money Laundering Compliance

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated that the 4 office bearers of COSCA have complied with the request from our accountants for personal information under its money laundering compliance requirements.

DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS:

5.8 Recognition Scheme: New Logo

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated that as noted the logo had been refreshed to help raise the profile of the COSCA Recognised Organisations. BM stated the text on the previous logo was very small so it is now much clearer.

A Board member was of the view that COSCA needed to explain its use of the term 'psychotherapy' in its name to avoid the possibility of misrepresenting psychotherapy.

Discussion took place around the SCoPEd (Scope of Practice and Education) framework which is being developed by some other professional bodies. Concern was raised over how counsellors may be significantly differentiated from psychotherapists in the framework. It was agreed that this was an important topic and so it would be an item on the next Board meeting Agenda.

Action: Include item on SCoPEd in next Board meeting Agenda.

5.9 Counsellor Accreditation Diploma Route Application and Guidelines

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair thanked BM for informing Board of the change to documents. It was stated the change was encouraging. BM informed Board that there were thirty attendees at the most recent Counsellor Accreditation workshop and that the form would be well used.

5.10 COSCA Guidance on Referrals

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated that the guidance has been uploaded to the COSCA website and it encourages more of a dialogical process between the counsellor and client so that it is not just signposting someone on without any discussion or collaboration.

5.11 Trauma Training/Awareness

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated this was a developing area with the Scottish Government now considering that trauma is everyone's business and we all have a role to play and it highlights the need for our members to increase their own training and awareness so they can work in a supportive and informed way. There seems to be a range of opportunities for training out there and it is very topical just now.

INCREASING ACCESS TO TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

5.12 Future Events:

5.12.1 COSCA Annual Ethics Event 2023

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated the theme of this event is 'Responding to clients with suicidal thoughts'

More details on this event can be found in the overview paper and flyer.

Speakers for the event haven't been finalised yet, and so if anyone would like to put themselves or colleagues forward that would be welcomed.

5.13 Professional Standard Authority: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Standard Consultation

Information in overview document 5.1.

The new PSA EDI standard will be published in April 2023.

BM confirmed PSA are now consulting Accredited Registers, stakeholders and the public on this proposed new standard, which includes the proposal of gathering and analysing data around the profile of registrants on accredited registers. If this goes ahead, it will have significant consequences for COSCA. The new EDI standard is likely to present a range of challenges for COSCA. BM will pass a link to the consultation to Board members and requested Board members pass their views back to him.

Action: Send out consultation to Board members.

5.14 PSA Consultation on Criminal Record Checks

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated that the overview document gives a sense of BM's thoughts on this item and invited Board members for any further comments or thoughts.

BM let Board know that he had spoken with both the COSCA Ethics Committee and COSCA Corporate Affairs Group and they all agree the criminal record checks would be problematic if they were enforced. There was concern around who would pay for the criminal record checks to be done. BM has challenged PSA for evidence on the need for these checks to protect the public. Scotland differs from England in that all counsellors in Scotland will soon need a PVG. PSA knows COSCA's views and we will go back with our response once the consultation has been published. COSCA already asks for a self-declaration and there is no evidence to hand that we are admitting people who are not appropriate onto our register.

5.15 SIGN Guidelines on Depression

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair noted that this information featured in the overview paper and that BM would continue to monitor updates and keep Board updated on any developments.

5.16 Past Events

5.16.1 COSCA Members Gathering Event

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated it was great to notice that we received positive feedback from this event and thanked the Board members who attended and facilitated the small group discussions.

Discussion took place around the idea of sharing experiences and that it would be interesting to see what has come out of these discussions and seeing more of a use being made of the discussions that took place. It would also be interesting to see what was said and what people made of it. It was suggested that a summary of the breakout rooms is something we can consider for future events and we could use these events to gather data. It was stated that this was a really good event and the level of engagement and attendance by members was really encouraging.

INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING

5.17 GIRFEC Refresh of Guidance and Policies – information sharing section

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated Information on this was included in the overview paper and it highlights a number of key changes and gives a sense of what has been revised there.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA

6.1 Financial Report to September 2022

Paper previously circulated.

Decision: Consent was given to report.

6.2 Report of the Treasurer to September 2022

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated that the two financial reports show COSCA finances are still healthy despite the reports not currently including the Scottish Government grant.

Decision: Consent was given to report.

7. RISKS

7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients

Verbal report.

The Chair asked Board if there were any new considerations. BM stated that PSA is working with Accredited Registers to develop a new client risk matrix and once this has been agreed it would be brought to Board.

8. INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES

8.1 Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

The Chair stated this is a standing agenda item which allows us to consider and discuss relevant issues around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Chair invited Board to comment.

Discussion took place around how middle class and white the counselling field is and whether it is really open to the full population of Scotland. There is particular concern around unconscious bias and starting to address this can be difficult and challenging. BM stated that COSCA had an Ethics Event with the theme of 'unconscious bias' three years ago. Taking small steps forward and having a plan is important and should be encouraged. Board members shared their experiences of what they had done in their own organisations and what other Professional bodies are doing to address EDI. BM stated that COSCA already has an Equality, Diversity and Action Plan to address equality issues and that this Action Plan was approved by the Board and that the Board now reviews this annually. It was suggested that COSCA advertise for people from certain underrepresented groups to join the Board, and that it may not be easy but we have to be proactive about it. It was also suggested that under our democratic Board election system we cannot start to say who to include in the Board and also each Board member has an area of specialism which needs to be considered. It was stated that being explicit is important. However, there are also hidden disabilities that shouldn't be ignored.

9. DEVELOPING, Communicating and MARKETING COSCA

9.1 Appointment to Board – Lay Representative

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated that she and BM were very impressed with Eleni. They found her to hold a really keen interest in Counselling & Psychotherapy. She made it very clear what her responsibilities as a Lay Representative on the Board would be. Eleni is a very impressive young individual and we are very keen to appoint her to the Board.

Decision: Lay Representative appointed to Board.

9.2 Dates of Board Meeting 2023

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated these were dates for the Board members diaries.

9.3 Draft COSCA Development Plan 2023-24

Paper previously circulated.

The Chair stated that the draft plan was included in the Board papers, and that there are five objectives listed on the plan. The Chair thanked BM and staff team for preparing the Plan and suggested that if everyone has had a chance to read through it, can we decide to approve it.

Board members thanked the COSCA staff for a comprehensive plan and discussion followed. The main points of discussion were –

It doesn't look like anticipated costs are going up to which BM explained that our costs haven't gone up that much and we don't need an uplift grant yet to keep functioning the way we are. Uplifts to voluntary sector funding are not happening anyway during the current cost of living crisis.

It was suggested that a brief summary of the plan would be helpful as the level of details is not appropriate for Board to be considering. We need to consider a way of reflecting on the specific objectives and how we re-think these based on what we are being faced with such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis, the climate breakdown challenge. From year to year, we need to be thinking what has changed since that objective was last formulated. There was concern about how does this particular Plan speak to the specifics of our current situation.

It was suggested that Board members have an opportunity to be involved in formulating the next Plan. BM stated that it is an outcome-based type of plan and that there is a statement of outcomes under each objective. BM stated that if there are suggestions for changes to the titles of the objectives to reflect current changes, then that's something the Board might want to consider. This is the plan the Scottish Government accepts for our funding award and it was the template we are required to use for our grant application. BM suggested that it would be unwise to move away from its general format and would advise against changing it radically. However if there are suggestions on how we can build in what is happening in society such as the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit for example he would welcome suggestions from Board members on how that could be done.

In the plan it names Facebook. It was suggested that it would be a safer option to put social media instead of Facebook. BM explained that is our chosen social media platform, we don't have any others but that he will make the above change as suggested in the Plan.

It was stated that it's important for Board to have an opportunity to have a general discussion from which might emerge different perspectives. It is encouraging to hear individual suggestions but there are things that emerge during discussions and we've not had the opportunity to have that discussion.

BM suggested that there are areas of the Development Plan that Board members can help with e.g. sourcing articles for the COSCA Journal. The Board can be helping at a strategic, policy level and not at an operational level. BM asked if another Board meeting on the Plan may help with a decision to approve it as we have a timescale to approve it for the next financial year.

It was suggested that we free time up to discuss the five objectives and that without a discussion you are relying on one person coming up with brilliant ideas. It was suggested we have a specific, separate non agenda'd meeting to discuss the Development Plan.

One Board member stated there is a lot of concern about the relationship of certain charities with the Scottish Government, sometimes the relationship is too dependent and there's not an independence of mind on the part of some of these charitable organisations who receive funding from the Scottish Government and it was a worry that would be something that would hold COSCA back. BM stated that he didn't see that as a concern with COSCA and the Scottish Government as it's a funded relationship and not a commissioning one, they don't commission COSCA to carry out a service. We ask for money to do what we want and that freedom is still there. It is not for him to decide how the Board is going to look at the Development plan so he will step out of that decision.

The question was raised as to how often a strategic planning meeting was held for Board. BM stated when it was a three-year plan there was a strategic planning meeting but now the plan is every year it doesn't make sense to review it every year but perhaps a three year gap would be beneficial. It was suggested nine months to a year from now having a refresh of the strategic themes. It would be too soon to do it for the coming financial year. It would be a better time scale to give Board time to reflect on the issues mentioned previously. It was suggested it would feel a bit rushed doing a refresh now for this proposed plan, others agreed that next year would be a better timescale instead of rushing it this year.

Another Board member stated that the current Development plan we've got in place is excellent, it is comprehensive and makes a huge amount of sense and is workable.

The Chair asked Board members if they agreed to have a strategic planning meeting next year to discuss the Development plan and if they were happy to approve 2023-24 plan as it is.

Decision: The proposed Development Plan 2023-24 was approved.

10. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING

10.1 Scottish Government Suicide Prevention Strategy

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair invited comments and thoughts on this strategy. Discussion took place with the main points being -

It was stated that it would be good if we got some statistics or idea of training and how much it does bring down suicide.

BM stated the facts are there, people do choose to go on and complete suicide after being involved in a service, that's the alarming fact. They are trying to understand the causes and all of the different factors.

It is pretty shocking, sadly the most important services who are funded are unable to help people. For example when they can't get through to mental health services on the phone.

BM stated the above strategy shifts away from services and towards community, family, friends, colleagues and trying to provide the environment to allow people to speak.

It was stated the value of counselling is simply not acknowledged, to have a country wide workforce trained in suicide and trauma. Is it making a difference? Are we spending the money appropriately? When in fact what somebody really needs is to sit down and be listened to in the intensive way that counsellors and psychotherapists are able to do if we had a more accessible workforce and recognition from the government for example.

BM responded that it is happening to some extent, the Mental Health Workforce review is currently being carried out by the Scottish Government. The submission that he put in is quoted in their slides stating that the COSCA Counselling skills course should be available to teachers, social workers etc. It was good to see this. It would be a dream come true if the COSCA Counselling Skills was embedded in the training people get to be mental health professionals.

It was suggested that there was a problem with recognition. Part of the problem we have as a profession is the lack of recognition of the value of counselling training and the financial support for people wanting to undertake recognised training. BM explained it is there now in the above presentation and the Scottish Government are looking at it and it would may be funded. It was suggested the outcome of that would be good to see.

10.2 Scottish Government: Conversion Therapies

Information in overview document 5.1.

The Chair stated this information was in the overview paper and welcomed any thoughts on this.

MMS wanted to record her deep apprehension about the legislation that is at stage one by the Scottish Government without appropriate consultation. Many responses to that have not been taken account of and are very worrying for children and young people who are exposed to this new cult which goes against all of the evidence. There is a lack of protection that is already been reported for children in schools. Parents are apparently been excluded from what is going on for them in schools. Secrets are being kept from parents. That is not safe guarding and children are in danger here and it is deeply concerning.

BM responded to MMS stating she was referring to a different bill, the Gender Transformation Bill, instead of the Conversion therapies bill. MMS stated the whole point of the legislation is to inform the conversion therapies. Counselling and Psychotherapy is one of the professions that is at the core of knowledge in human development and child development and there has been silence in respect of this legislation which will inform.

MMS submitted her resignation to the Board after two years as she doesn't feel she has been able to take the responsibility as a Trustee for the activities of COSCA so she had no option but to submit her resignation.

The Board members stated they were sorry to hear about MMS resignation as her input was valued.

The Chair brought the meeting to a close at 1pm.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 20 February 2023 11 am to 1 pm

This was agreed to be on Zoom.