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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

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| --- | --- |
| **Name**  | **Area of Interest**  |
| Jan Kerr  | Chair/ Training; Recognition Scheme  |
| Jill Whitfield | Vice Chair/Rurality |
| Tatjana Hine  | COSCA Treasurer/ Funding: income generation; financial management  |
| Stuart Valentine  | Specialist Counselling Area – Relationships  |
| Linda McLachlan  | Specialist Counselling Area – Alcohol/Drugs; Bereavement  |
| Ashley McVey  | Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers |
| Lisa McGilvray | Ethics |
| Martha Pollard  | Research |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name**  | **Co-Optees**  |
| Daniel Reilly  | Co-optee Lay Representative  |
| Eleni Kepelian  | Co-optee Lay Representative  |
| Craig Ferguson | Co-optee Criminal Justice  |

1. **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.

1. **Dates of COSCA Board Meetings**

Monday 24th February 2025

Monday 12th May 2025

Monday 18th August 2025

Monday 24th November 2025

1. **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)

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**DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING**

An online meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 24th February 2025 from 11 am to 12.30pm.

1. **PRESENT**

Jill Whitfield Vice Chair, Rurality

Ashlie McVey Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers

Tatjana Hine COSCA Treasurer/Funding: income generation; financial management

Linda McLachlan Specialist Counselling Agencies: Alcohol Drugs;

Bereavement

Daniel Reilly Lay Representative Co-optee

Craig Ferguson Lay Representative Co-optee

Brian Magee (in attendance)

Christina Oliver (Minute Recorder)

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

JW, Vice Chair, chaired the meeting in the unavoidable absence of JK, Chair. JW welcomed Board members and invited each member of the Board to introduce themselves.

**Apologies**: Martha Pollard and Jan Kerr.

Eleni Kepelian, Stuart Valentine and Lisa McGilvray not present.

1. **CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS**

No conflicts of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF MEETING**

**4.1 Board Meeting of 18th November 2024**

Paper previously circulated.

**Decision:** Consent granted for minutes.

**4.2 Redactions of Minutes: 18th November 2024**

No redactions were suggested.

**4.3 Matters Arising: 18th November 2024**

BM highlighted item 5.8 and 5.9 as a final reminder to Board members who have not already submitted their Register of Interest and Annual Review of Performance to do so as soon as possible.

Agenda item 6.1 Financial Report to December 2024 – BM stated that there had been an update regarding funding and the information since the Board last met, which was positive in relational to multi- year funding. The First Minister, John Swinney had announced at SCVO’s The Gathering in early February 2025 that he was very intent on moving forward with multi-year funding of organisations that the Scottish Government funded. Since that commitment was made in public, a pilot of multi-year funding has been launched, which is actually two years of funding from the Scottish Government of 45 organisations. COSCA is not one of those organisations, nor are other national counselling organisations but those who have received the two-year funding have been awarded £60 in total over the next 2 years on a pilot basis.

Agenda item 7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients - it was noted by one member of the Board at the last meeting that farmers’ mental health may be a new risk for inclusion in the client risk matrix. JK and BM spent time looking at the client risk matrix and found it hard to single out farmers as being a particular risk when they enter into the counselling room, compared to others who are experiencing similar things to do with the recent government announcements on tax which are causing financial pressures for many sectors. They agreed there wasn’t a place to single out farmers in the client risk matrix. This doesn’t mean that farmers are not at high risk because of the above pressures but that the client risk matrix is about the risks facing clients from counsellors when they come into the counselling room.

Agenda item 12.1, BM noted that the final version of COSCA Guidance on Clinical/Professional Wills was distributed to our members since the last Board meeting.

**OVERVIEW**

**5.0 Information on items 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.6, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12.**

Paper previously circulated.

JW reminded Board members that it had been previously agreed that any questions or queries relating to these items should be raised with BM before the meeting.

JW thanked BM for overview paper and how useful she found this.

**DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA:**

**5.1 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group**

Paper previously circulated.

JW commented that overall, even though the total numbers of members has gone down ever so slightly, it shows a healthy position.

CF said that from a trend perspective, the numbers are on the up and there will be the odd variance from quarter to quarter. There generally is a positive upward trend.

**5.2 COSCA Funding Application - Update**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW stated that as far as we know, we are going to get the funding for the coming year but it is subject to approval from the Scottish Government following the finalisation of the government’s budget for 2025-26..

BM agreed that this is the line the Scottish Government has taken, but there have been very few organisations that have been notified about their funding application apart from the 45 organisations mentioned above in the multi-year pilot. At the SCVO national intermediaries network meeting last week, there were 20 organisation’s there and none of them had award letters. Last year, it was December by the time award letters were sent out to some of these intermediaries by the Scottish Government.

We are in a good position to have been told that subject to the above budget COSCA’s grant looks like it will go ahead but it is never guaranteed until the award letter is issued.

**5.3 Companies House Confirmation Statement**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW noted that COSCA has paid and submitted the required information within the stipulated period, and that it is good to know that we have now met this legal requirement.

**5.4 COSCA Board Elections 2025**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW highlighted that there will be two trustee vacancies on the Board in September 2025. There is a current vacancy for the Statutory Agencies area of interest and due to JW retirement in September 2025. The role of Vice Chair, which JW currently holds, will also become vacant.

BM informed the Board that the appointment system for the Vice Chair allows current Board members to nominate themselves or another member of the Board to this office. If the vacancy is not filled through this process, the role will be advertised to the wider membership and the public at large.

JW noted that sadly the two co-opted lay representatives, Daniel Reilly and Eleni Kepelian, will also reach the end of their appointments in September 2025. To fill these impending vacancies, the co-option system will be implemented later this year.

BM added that the papers for nomination for the forthcoming Vice Chair vacancy will be distributed in due course. This will happen outside of the Board meeting, probably in advance of the next Board meeting.

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

**5.5 Ethics Committee Meeting Notes (15.01.2025)**

Paper previously circulated.

JW noted that it is useful for the Board to see the notes of the meeting and that she was interested in the draft proposal for changing the supervision ratio.

BM added that the supervision ratio has been with COSCA since it began and it has generally worked. However, as counselling develops it has become slightly different in terms of how it is delivered and the volume of delivery. So, there is a little step back possibly needed here to take account of that difference. The draft proposal will formally come to the Board for discussion and decision after the Ethics Committee approves it.

CF asked if there has been much comment from practitioners.

BM responded saying every so often there is, particularly from people coming to join COSCA from other professional bodies who have different supervision ratios. The incentive we have in place at the moment is that when people become accredited the supervision ratio changes and makes it easier for those with a high number of client sessions.

LM shared that as a an accredited member of BACP and a counsellor member of COSCA, she said that the 1:12 supervision costs her more but she feels supported through her practice. When she ran a charity, it costs them a lot of money going by COSCA supervision guidelines and so she understands this is a big decision to be made.

**5.6 COSCA Annual Ethics Event**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW said she was unable to make the event but she heard from peers that is was a very worthwhile event.

BM added that it was great to hear Aristotle mentioned and to go back to the understanding that ethics is very much based on a dialogue with all sorts of people, including one self. The take away for him was when the presenter, Caz Binstead, said it’s not only about *what* to do but it’s about *why* and *how*.

**5.7 COSCA E-bulletins December 2024 & February 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

JW noted that there was a lot of information in these e-bulletins and she thinks these are critical to keeping members informed of what is happening.

**5.8 Changes to Disclosure Checks**

Information in overview document 5.1.

LM highlighted that when you look on Disclosure Scotland’s website, it says that your PVG is for a lifetime, but now she is wondering if counsellors have to individually go back to Disclosure Scotland and get a new PVG.

BM responded by saying the final guidance on the implementation of the legislation has not been issued yet, and is due to be issued by the end of February 2025. This will hopefully cover the unanswered questions, but it is known now that the legislation allows only 5 years for disclosure checks before they expire.

BM will aim to have another update on the PVG Scheme in the next e-bulletin if the above guidance has been issued by then.

BM added that the fee waivers for volunteers have been continued, which has been welcomed across the country by volunteer-involving organisations.

BM said that for counselling there is a distinct possibility that PSA may decide to produce a requirement whereby accredited registers need to check registrants who have had disclosure checks but have not had them checked by anyone else. An independent practitioner, or counsellor who has their own practice, will be required in Scotland to have a disclosure check if they are working with vulnerable adults or children, but if they are not employed or under contract, they may not have anyone checking their disclosure check. PSA are looking at that gap and accredited registers may be required bv PSA to carry out those checks. At the moment, the checking of a disclosure check can cost over £70.

BM also stated that here are cases where police sometimes don’t pass on information they know about because they use their discretionary powers. On a few occasions, by not passing on what is known to them, harm has been caused to people that could have been prevented if the perpetrators had been prevented from working with them.

**Increasing Access to Services:**

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

**5.9 PSA Review of Standards**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW highlights that PSA is preparing proposals for changes to the Standards that would go live in 2026 and it wanted Accredited Registers and prospective applicants for accreditation to be involved at the earliest stages. BM attended and participated in an online workshop that PSA held in September 2024 as part of this involvement.

BM will be attending PSA’s Annual Conference in London on 25th February 2025 which will continue reflecting on the above Standards for Accredited Registers and the changes that accredited registers would like to see.

BM said that a proposed new standard is governance, culture and leadership. However, the main proposed change is around the alignment of the standards for the statutory regulated bodies with those for accredited registers, and that could bring its own potential difficulties for us depending on how much is carried over from the standards for statutory regulated bodies.

**5.10 PSA: COSCA 3 Year Renewal Application - Update**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW noted that COSCA’s application for renewal of PSA accreditation for this year was reviewed by PSA’s Assessment Panel in June 2024. COSCA was formally notified in September 2024 that our application has been successful.

BM thanked the Board for their help for getting us through this particular renewal application.

PSA were delighted with what they got back from us in relation to how we proposed to meet the two conditions applied as part of the renewal process.

**5.11 Diploma Course Providers Survey**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW stated that COSCA is presently in the process of reviewing its Diploma Validation Guidelines, in line with its ongoing aim of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion on our validated diploma courses and in response to recent training provider, trainer and participant feedback.

BM added that there are currently 10 responses to the survey, which have all been very supportive of our proposals so far. Challenges to trainers have been increasing and one of the reasons for that is diversity amongst students on our validated courses. So, we are looking at ways to support our trainers so that they can deliver a quality experience of training to their students.

***Informing and Influencing Policy Making:***

**5.12 Scottish Government Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Group**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JW finds it disappointing, as reported in the above information, that the Scottish Government Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey MSP, informed COSCA as a member of the above Group that he has decided to conclude the Scottish Government Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Group.

BM added that not having this group does take away a focus to Ministers that counselling is important, but there is a Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan in place that will be monitored by civil servants that should hopefully promote the provision of counselling as a positive support for students when they need it.

**6. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

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

**6.1 Financial Report to December 2024**

Paper previously circulated.

JW thanked TH for the report.

BM highlighted the increase in the remuneration was because of the back payment of salaries made in the last quarter, which was budgeted for. Regarding the recent increase to Employers National Insurance, COSCA should benefit from this, because we will get an extra five thousand pounds, which should cover the increased costs we have in relation to it.

BM added that the spend on special projects this year was to cover the costs of the review of the COSCA Counselling Skills Course which is an investment going forward.

JW asked for the Board’s consent to the report.

**Decision:** Consent granted.

**6.2 Report of the Treasurer to December 2024**

Paper previously circulated.

JW asked for the Board consent to the report.

**Decision:** Consent granted

**7. RISKS**

**7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients**

CF added the changes he can see are from a geopolitical perspective and the amount of uncertainty and unease which he supposes is more of a tactic than anything else. This is something to bear in mind in terms of clients who perhaps will experience anxiety and worries about the future and what that level of uncertainty brings to the counselling room.

JW responded that it is an interesting subject like COVID, which affects both people in the room. It would be a good idea to look at whether the above needs to be included as a risk and consider at the next Board meeting whether we need to make any changes.

**Action:** BM to formulate a draft new risk for decision at the next Board meeting.

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

**8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

BM asked the Board to note the on-going case about the provision of single sex changing rooms in a Fife hospital as it may have a wider impact in relation to how the Equality Act needs to be implemented not only in a health setting but much wider.

AM added that as a training provider, she does not have the capacity and affordability to change toilets, etc. It is not so much about opinions, but about practicality.

LM agreed with AM, as someone who has worked with a training provider.

**9. DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING and MARKETING COSCA**

**9.1 COSCA Development Plan 2025-26**

Paper previously circulated.

JW noted that this was a very clear and comprehensive document.

BM added that he had updated the Plan for next year and that it is in a state of readiness to support our funding application from the Scottish Government for 2025-26.

JW asked for the Board consent to the report.

**Decision:** Consent granted

**9.2 COSCA Stakeholders Engagement Strategy**

Paper previously circulated.

LM asked if Disclosure Scotland should be added as they are significantly affecting us.

BM responded that if the Board agreed we could change the strategy next year to include Disclosure Scotland as high influence, low interest.

AMc asked if BABCP should be added and this was agreed.

JW asked for the Board consent to the report.

**Decision:** Consent granted

**10. INCREASING ACCESS TO TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION**

**11. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING**

**12. DEVELOPING and PROMOTING SYSTEMS and STANDARDS**

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 12 May 2025, 11 am to 1 pm in-person in the Barracks Conference Centre, Stirling.

The meeting closed at 12:30pm.