

Chair: Jan Kerr
Chief Executive: Brian Magee



History of COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

COSCA was launched in March 1990 as the Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies, following the break up of the Scottish Association of Counselling. It was recognised as a charity and as a company limited by guarantee in January 1993, having commenced work some 4 years earlier in October 1989.

COSCA came about as the result of a combined initiative on the part of The Scottish Office's Social Work Services Group, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, and several of the large national voluntary counselling and statutory agencies together with independent counsellors throughout Scotland.

The initial task was to look at the large variety of counselling training that existed at that time and consider what scope existed for rationalisation or standardisation.

COSCA's approach to this task was to devise the highly successful Certificate in Counselling Skills course. Since its launch in January 1995, over 29,000 participants have completed all or part of the course. Currently, there are around 40 validated training providers and over 90 individuals accredited as trainers to deliver all or part of the course, or their own COSCA validated course that shares the same learning outcomes.

Whilst COSCA was developing this training activity, a demand was emerging amongst individual practitioners and organisations for a Scottish organisation to represent their professional interests.

In April 1996 COSCA produced its Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice and the accompanying complaints and appeals procedures as a further means of it establishing itself as a professional body. This Statement defined its ethical principles for the practice of counselling/psychotherapy and laid down its code of practice for the discipline of its members and the welfare of the clients served by these members. The Statement was extensively reviewed and re-launched in April 2003 with some minor changes being made since then.

At the same time the British Association for Counselling (now BACP) was exploring with a number of partners the establishment of a UK Register of Counsellors (UKRC). Once established in 1997, COSCA staff and its Management Committee were involved in the management of UKRC from the outset, although this involvement came to an end when BACP began to manage it internally. Throughout, COSCA was a gateway for its accredited counsellors to register on the UKRC, which later became the UKRCP (UK Register of Counsellors/Psychotherapists). In 2012 the UKRCP was re-named the BACP Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

In the course of the 1990s the newsletter produced by COSCA grew into a journal, *Counselling in Scotland*, with a high quality content that reflected on and considered a range of issues that were of interest to members. In 1998 the format of the journal was changed to provide an opportunity for views, comments, news of events and advertising. This format continues to the present day. Back copies of *Counselling in Scotland* can be viewed on COSCA's website under journal. www.cosca.org.uk

In 2002 COSCA changed its name to COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland). This marked another shift towards COSCA becoming Scotland's professional body for all forms of counselling, psychotherapy and the use of skills not only in organisations but also in independent practice.

In 2013 COSCA established its Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists. The Register aims to protect the public when accessing counselling and psychotherapy. It contains the names of individual counsellors and psychotherapists who have met COSCA's registration standards.

In 2014 the COSCA Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists was accredited by the Professional Standards Authority under its Accredited Registers programme. <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/accredited-registers> The Register can be accessed on COSCA's website under 'find a therapist'. www.cosca.org.uk

Supported by the Scottish Government, COSCA now seeks imaginative and new ways of building on its successful work in setting and supporting training standards and also providing a range of professional services to its organisational and individual members, a wide range of customers, and to the public at large.

Under the governance provided to COSCA by its Board, its new aims include the public protection of clients, and the promotion of counselling, psychotherapy, counselling supervision and the use of counselling skills in Scotland, and to maintain the lead role in Scotland for the professional validation of diploma and other courses related to the counselling/psychotherapy profession. Further information on COSCA is on our website. www.cosca.org.uk

Brian Magee, Chief Executive
COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)
August 2025