  **COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland) 16 Melville Terrace | Stirling | FK8 2NE**

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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 in person meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 12th May 2025 from 11 am to 12.30pm at The Barracks, Stirling.

1. **PRESENT**

Jan Kerr Chair/ Training; Recognition Scheme

Jill Whitfield Vice Chair, Rurality

Ashlie McVey Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers

Lisa McGilvray Ethics

Martha Pollard Research

Daniel Reilly Lay Representative Co-optee

Craig Ferguson Lay Representative Co-optee

Eleni Kepelian Lay Representative Co-optee

Brian Magee (in attendance)

Christina Oliver (Minute Recorder)

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The chair welcomed Board members.

**Apologies**: Stuart Valentine, Linda McLachlan & Tatjana Hine.

1. **CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS**

No conflicts of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF MEETING**

**4.1 Board Meeting of 24th February 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

**Decision:** Consent granted for minutes.

**4.2 Redactions of Minutes: 24th February 2025**

No redactions were suggested.

**4.3 Matters Arising: 24th February 2025**

**OVERVIEW**

**5.1 Information on items 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15 and 5.18**

Paper previously circulated.

**DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA:**

**5.2 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group**

Paper previously circulated.

JK noted that from looking at the figures they continue to show an upward trend.

**5.3 COSCA** **AGM 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

JK noted that this item covers the promotional information and invitation to attend COSCA’s AGM, which will take place on the 3rd September 2025 at The Barracks, Stirling.

The flier mentions there will be a presentation titled ‘Acceptance in Practice: Overcoming Therapist and Client Stuckness’ which will be led by Andrew Duthie, Director of Glasgow Cognitive Therapy Centre.

JK noted this will be the first in person AGM since 2019.

BM added that is it not the first attempted in person AGM since COVID but that there were insufficient numbers for the 2023 AGM to take place in person.

**5.4 Lay Representatives Vacancies**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK highlighted that adverts have been placed on a number of relevant recruitment websites, and on the COSCA website, to fill the two forthcoming Lay Representatives vacancies. Members have also been encouraged to pass on the information about these vacancies to people they think may be interested in becoming a Lay Representative.

The application form and briefing pack is on the COSCA website under vacancies. The deadline for submitting application forms is noon on Monday 2nd June 2025.

**5.5 Board Vacancies**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK noted that as more than one nomination was received for both vacancies, a ballot of members is currently being carried out.

**5.6 Members E-bulletin April 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

JK highlighted that the e-bulletin included topics such as counsellors working within their competence and the Disclosure Scotland Act 2020, because the PVG scheme became a requirement on the 1st April 2025. There was mention of the AGM and Trainer and Counsellor Accreditation workshops, the Recognition Scheme Standards event, acknowledgement of the elections, information about Gift Aid and a call for articles for the COSCA Journal.

EK added that she could write something for the journal on the topic of grief.

BM added that the Journal will be published whenever we get enough articles, and that after two years the Journal archives are posted to our website.

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

**5.7 Changes to Disclosure Checks**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK noted that all members of COSCA have been informed about the above changes and that the list of ‘regulated roles’ now includes explicit reference to counselling in relation to work with children and protected adults.

JK said she found the information circulated really helpful, and it made clear what was required.

BM noted that he had heard nothing back from any COSCA members about the above information.

BM stressed that PSA are looking into whether there is a need for accredited registers such as COSCA to assess Disclosure checks of registrants who have not been otherwise checked and/or who are self-employed. The costs of carrying out the above checks are considerable. BM has highlighted to PSA the differences in Scotland as opposed to the rest of the UK regarding disclosure checks.

BM stated that COSCA currently works on a voluntary declaration of unspent criminal convictions basis, both when an applicant applies for membership and during the period of membership. There is a small risk that some registrants do not attend to this and so would be practising outside of the terms and conditions of their membership of COSCA. COSCA has a fair and robust system in place for considering the above information when it is submitted.

DR added that there can be a reputational risk, if someone has committed a crime and is listed on a register.

**5.8 Recognition Scheme Annual Report 2024-25**

Paper previously circulated.

JK highlighted that the report clearly summarises the work that is being carried out on behalf of organisations within the Scheme and those working towards membership. JK gave thanks on behalf of the Board to Jenna Fraser, Recognition Scheme Development Officer, for this work.

**5.9 Recognition Scheme Business Plan 2025-26**

Paper previously circulated.

JK gave thanks again for the comprehensive amount work that is carried out by Jenna Fraser.

**5.10 Recognition Scheme Annual Standards Event 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

JK acknowledged this event is being held via Zoom on the 7th August 2025, and that this year’s event will be on the topic of Artificial Intelligence and its potential uses by counselling and counselling skills organisations. The event will be led by Linda McLachlan.

**5.11 Recognition Scheme Update on New Outcome**

Paper previously circulated & information in overview document 5.1.

JK acknowledged that a new Outcome on Organisational Culture had been added to the Recognition Scheme Handbook and copy of the Outcome is attached to the Board papers.

Some of the headings covered in the paper included Values, Communication, Leadership, Equality, diversity and inclusion, Innovation, Loyalty and Team collaboration.

BM added that this focuses on the aspects of organisations that are not necessarily being picked up on in the other outcomes, and it gives those involved in an organisation an opportunity to express any concerns or feedback about their organisation.

**Increasing Access to Services:**

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

**5.12 PSA Annual Seminar 2025**

Information in overview document 5.1.

BM noted that he attended in person the above conference in London on 25th February 2025. The first half of the day was taken up with a discussion on PSA’s Standards Consultation, and the afternoon was based around working on the development of a maturity model for the PSA Accredited Registers Programme. The maturity module is a device that is used to futureproof systems.

BM noted that it was a feel-good event and a coming together of the accredited registers.

**5.13 PSA: COSCA Annual Renewal Application**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK noted that the above application was required to be submitted by COSCA by 16 May 2025, with the annual check due by 30th June 2025. Significant changes to key policies and processes for any area within COSCA needed to be included in the application.

**5.14 PSA: Consultation on Standards - COSCA Response**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK acknowledged that PSA carried out a consultation on its current Standards for both regulators and Accredited Registers. COSCA submitted a response to this consultation by the deadline of 8th May 2025. PSA will analyse the responses it receives and then decide on what changes it wishes to make to the Standards.

BM added that he proposed to the PSA Accredited Registers Collaborative that it should work on a joint response to the above consultation. The Collaborative is a grouping of PSA accredited registers that is independent from PSA and of which COSCA is a member.

**5.15 COSCA National Counselling Agencies Group**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK noted that these meetings will now be held again 2-3 times per annum and will usually last around two hours. The next meeting will be in Glasgow on 3rd June 2025. All national agencies involved in the Group are member organisations of COSCA.

The remit of the group is to address national policy areas and issues relevant to the field of counselling, and provide networking opportunities for national counselling agencies.

**5.16 COSCA Trainers Accreditation Workshop**

Paper previously circulated.

JK acknowledged the promotional flier for the Trainers Accreditation workshop to be held on the 19th June 2025.

**5.17 COSCA Counsellor Accreditation Workshop**

Paper previously circulated.

JK acknowledged the promotional flier for the Counsellor Accreditation workshop to be held on the 26th June 2025.

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

**5.18 Scottish Government Counselling in Schools Project**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK noted that at the last meeting of the Group, COSCA and BACP agreed to work together on updating the Scottish Government’s guidance in relation to the recruitment of counsellors in schools. The agreed draft has been submitted to the Scottish Government for feedback and as a replacement on the current guidance it offers on recruitment.

BM added that the concern that was coming from this meeting was around the recruitment of counsellors to work in schools and about what to look for as evidence of training and qualifications made more difficult because of the wide diversity of training pathways. BM recommended that COSCA and BACP work together on submitting a revision of the guidelines that the Scottish Government currently has on qualifications and training to try to make it clearer on what recruiters need to be looking for.

Part of this was to try and take away from what some local authorities have introduced in terms of upping the essential qualifications. For example, some of them are looking for accredited counsellors when they only need to have registered counsellors meeting the competencies of working with children. We will see if the Sottish government responds to this. We will also continue to help, if possible, our member organisations trying to win these counselling in schools contracts without necessarily having a workforce full of accredited counsellors. Some member organisations are losing out on the above contracts because they cannot present their counsellors as accredited, but they do not need to be accredited to work as counsellors in schools.

LM added that there are many counsellors that do not have accreditation that are brilliant and who are very functional.

BM there is another aspect that someone who is an accredited counsellor may not apply for those jobs, because the salaries that are attached to them may not fit with their expectations as accredited counsellors.

AM added that some people were getting qualifications from England and from online counselling courses/unregulated courses, and with England having a different qualification level system to Scotland, they were presenting for jobs as counsellors of children and young people, and it looked as though they were higher qualified than they actually were.

BM added that there could be a potential confusion between accredited and registered. Some employers are using the word accredited when they are actually looking for people to be on a register, albeit some are deliberately using accredited because they are looking to employ accredited counsellors.

**6. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

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

**6.1 Financial Report to March 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

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

**Decision:** Consent granted.

**6.2 Report of the Treasurer to March 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

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

**Decision:** Consent granted

**6.3 Forecast Budget 2025-26**

Paper previously circulated.

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

**Decision:** Consent granted

**7. RISKS**

**7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients**

JK asked the Board if anyone wished to make any comments.

The Board was happy to move on.

**7.2** **Proposed new risk for COSCA Risk Report/Paragraph 2o**

Paper previously circulated.

JK noted that the updated matrix was included in the Board papers following the discussion which took place at the February Board meeting and that are looking for a decision about including this new item within the matrix.

JK asked the Board if they accepted this change.

**Decision:** Consent granted

BM added that at the next meeting there will be a proposal submitted for a new geopolitical risk to be added to COSCA’s Risk Management Report.

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

**8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

JK invited the Board to discuss.

No discussion took place.

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

**9.1 COSCA Risk Management Report**

Paper previously circulated.

JK acknowledge that this report provides an annual opportunity for us to review the risk management report and determine whether any amendments are required.

JK asked the Board’s consent.

**Decision:** Consent granted

**9.2 Appointment of new Vice Chair of COSCA**

Paper previously circulated.

JK noted that one nomination had been received, and the nominee was Dr Martha Pollard.

JK asked MP to step out of the room whilst the Board discusses MP’s statement.

Voting slips were handed out to the members of the Board, a discussion took place, and the slips were collected, and votes counted. MP invited back into the Board Room.

JK informed the Board that MP has been accepted as new Vice Chair of COSCA.

**Decision:** Consent was given to the appointment of MP as new Vice Chair of COSCA.

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

**11. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING**

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

**12.1 The Supreme Court Ruling on Biological Sex**

BM noted that he put this on the agenda before a letter from PSA arrived. BM read out the PSA letter.

BM added that the questionable thing for COSCA is what guidance on the above ruling do we need to issue now to the members of COSCA, or should we wait until the Scottish Government writes their guidance and then assess its impacts on counselling.

BM asked what a counselling service should look like, in terms of it being non-discriminatory when someone from the trans community becomes a client. Is it about the counsellor not having a discriminatory attitude and behaviour towards that client? It is also about a non-discriminatory approach to who the counsellor needs to be. Counsellors do not actually have to have a belief structure that endorses transgender as a concept to be a counsellor. Counsellors can have a belief, as legally entitled under the above ruling, that a woman is determined by biological sex, and still work with someone as a client who is transgender.

MP added that the ruling makes an implicit over generalised suggestion that to be trans is pathological, so it puts counsellors in a very delicate situation.

BM added that at some point COSCA will need to write a statement on our position on this ruling and to strongly say to registrants and members not to be discriminatory of trans people (or any other client group) in their work. The statement also needs to respect that counsellors can hold different views on transgender, but that these views should not impact negatively on how they work with transgender clients.

LM added that she thinks COSCA should acknowledge what is happening by issuing a statement acknowledging the above ruling and that there will be many ways counsellors can work with the trans community, just like they work with different cultures, religions and huge ranges of people. On the other hand, there may be trans people who have never disclosed their transition and now they are questioning, do I need to? Who am I in the workplace? And that may come into the counselling room, rather than it focusing purely on transitioning.

BM added it might be that a trans person is not presenting anything relating to being transgender. It’s just the same as any other person within a particular client population - it does not sum them up, it is not their entirety.

AM added it is the same with every value that might clash, and it’s about having a non-discriminatory, non -judgemental approach.

JK added that their maybe people that have been living as a trans person for decades and feel that this has brought somewhat of a spotlight on them.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 18th August 2025, 11 am to 1 pm via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 12:55pm.