



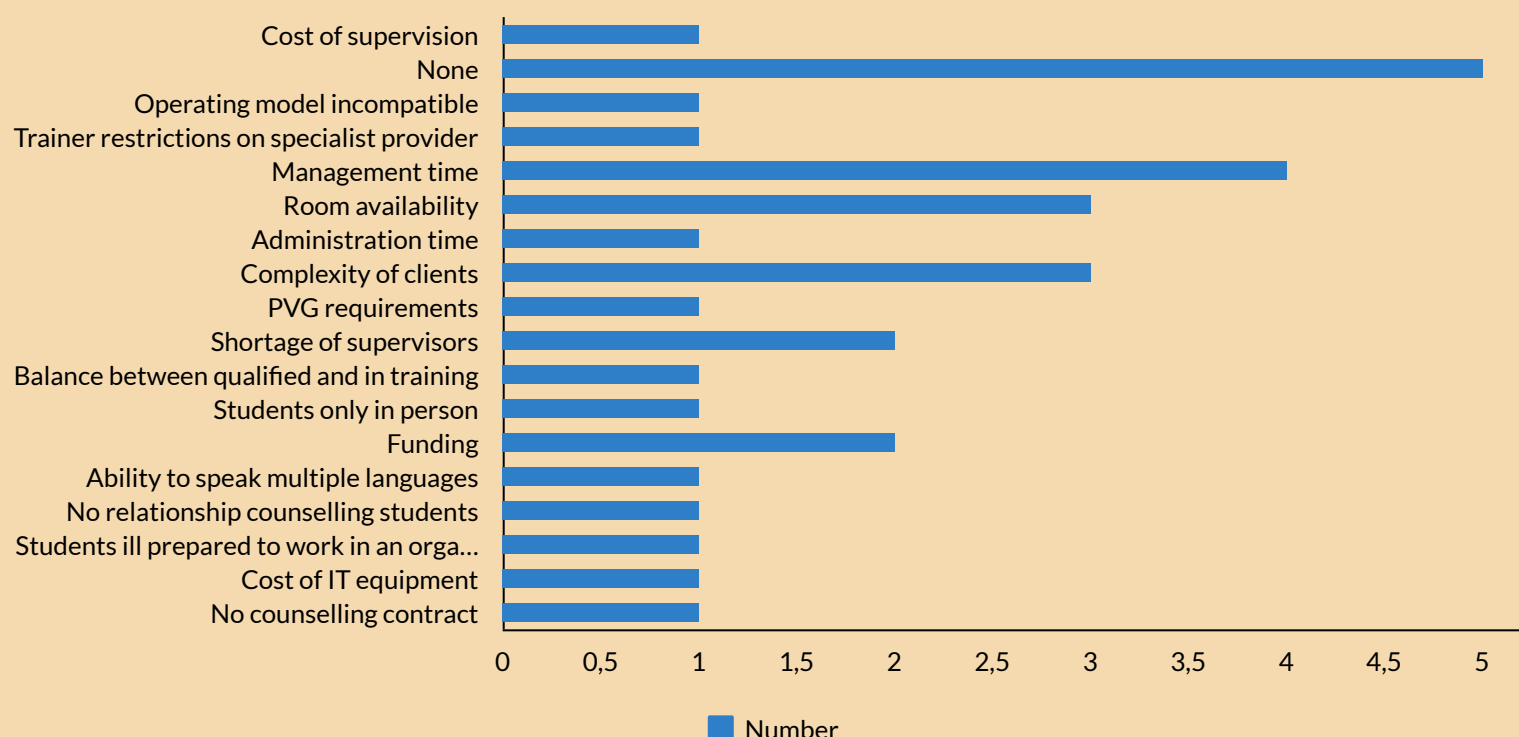
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# **Survey on draft Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements guidance**

# Introduction

Over summer 2025 COSCA drafted new guidance for those working with students to provide practice placements. As part of that, a survey of COSCA Member Organisations was conducted asking for possible barriers and help, opinions on the guidance and anything else they thought we should know. The results of this survey are below as are answers to a few of the points raised by participants.

# 1. What barriers are there to your organisation providing student placements or more student placements?



Five people responding to the survey said there were no barriers and that they were offering placements already. Most, however, felt there were significant barriers. A lot of these related to cost: cost of supervision, funding, IT equipment; and others to resources: management time, room availability, administration time, shortage of supervisors. Complexity of clients was mentioned by three Organisations and one noted they needed a balance between qualified and in training counsellors.

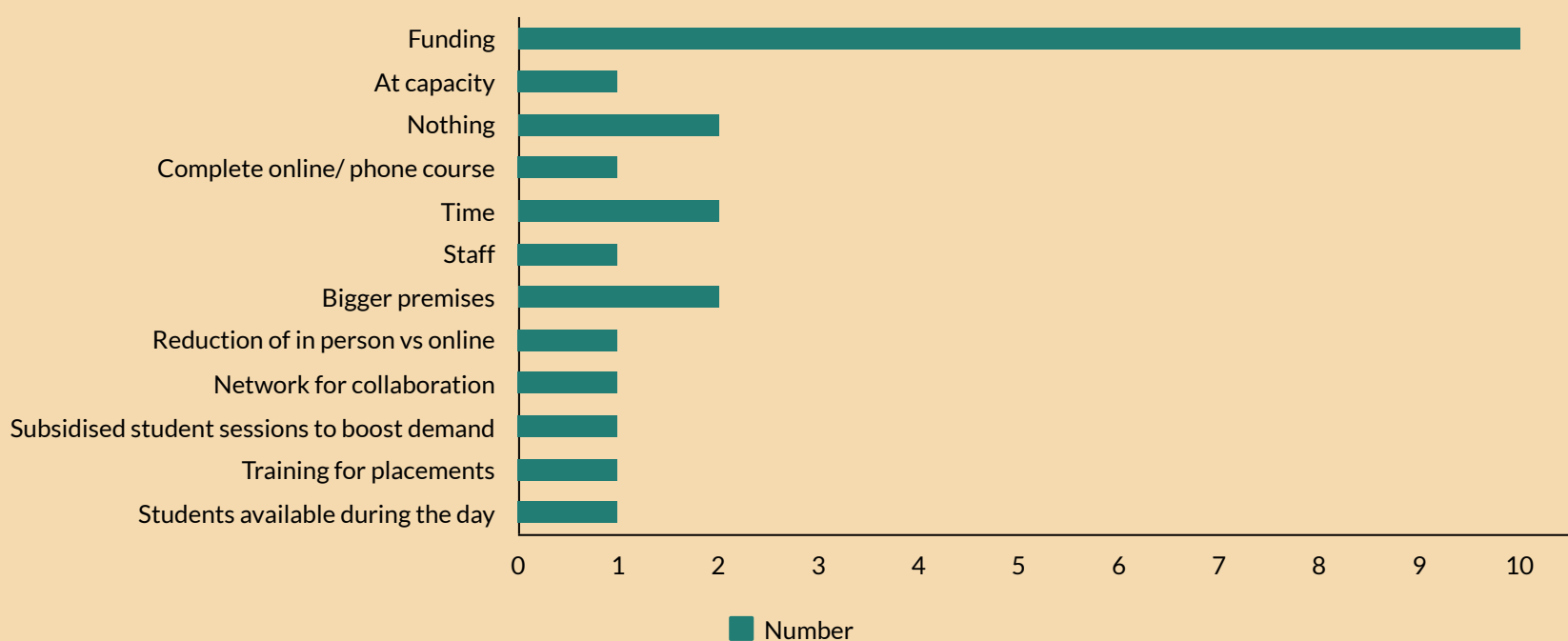
One person was worried about PVG requirements. You can read more about COSCA's guidance on PVG requirements here:  
[https://www.cosca.org.uk/application/files/6215/5749/7601/PVG\\_Scheme\\_SG\\_Advisory\\_Note\\_Dec\\_201406-25-15.pdf](https://www.cosca.org.uk/application/files/6215/5749/7601/PVG_Scheme_SG_Advisory_Note_Dec_201406-25-15.pdf)

Another mentioned that students can only work in person. This is up to the individual training provider. For COSCA Validated Courses, clients can be seen in the ratio of online to face to face they are taught on their course.

While a verbal contract with clients is fine, it is advisable to have a formal contract. You can see more guidance from COSCA on contracts here:  
[https://www.cosca.org.uk/application/files/1915/2119/7097/Statement\\_of\\_Ethics\\_CURRENT\\_Nov\\_1412-08-14.pdf](https://www.cosca.org.uk/application/files/1915/2119/7097/Statement_of_Ethics_CURRENT_Nov_1412-08-14.pdf) part 3 Contracts.

While funding and resources are significant barriers to offering Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements, other barriers may be more surmountable.

2. What would help you to offer more student placements?



While funding would help significantly, people responding to the survey were able to point to factors that may also be useful.

One person mentioned that students were unable to work online. Many of COSCA's Validated Training Courses are now offering training in working online as part of their in person courses.

Subsidised student sessions was an interesting suggestion, although COSCA considers students to be able to offer high quality counselling once they have achieved their fitness to practise. It may help to emphasise this to your clients and to highlight the extra supports they have to be able to work to this high standard.

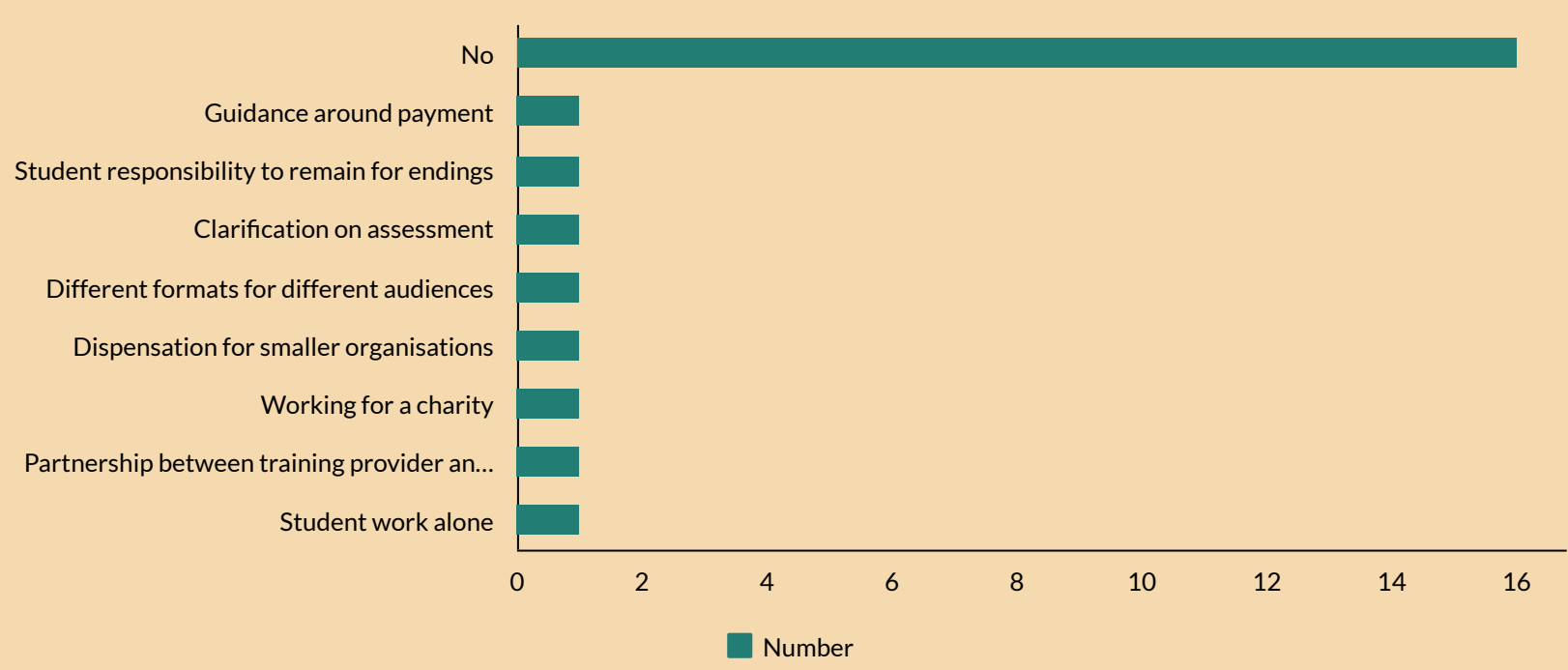
Reduction of the in person to online ratio is not currently being considered by COSCA as it is important that qualified counsellors have the ability to work in person and this is still preferred by a great many clients.

Extra training for placements is a little concerning. COSCA would hope that any student receiving a fitness to practise from their COSCA Validated Training Organisation would be fit to work within a placement providing organisation, after a suitable induction process.

A network for collaboration was an interesting suggestion. COSCA has tried introducing collaborative networks in the past, most recently for the Recognition Scheme, but engagement has always been quite low. COSCA would be interested to hear any suggestions for how this might be offered more successfully.

Funding would greatly help the provision of Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements, and COSCA is still actively campaigning for this, but we are always keen to offer guidance for the scaling of potential barriers.

3. COSCA has produced the attached guidance on student placements for placement providers. Is there anything you think needs to be added or deleted from this guidance?



It was incredibly encouraging to see the positive feedback for the new Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements guidance. For those of you that made suggestions for improvement, they will be seriously considered.

Fees may still be collected for the work of students, but the client must be informed that students are providing their counselling. Students expenses may be paid, but they are not expected to have paid positions.

It is expected that students will remain for a suitable ending to be reached with their clients rather than abruptly leaving when they have reached their hours. This should form part of the four-handed contract when the placement starts.

COSCA will be producing guidance for different audiences, starting with training providers, in the near future.

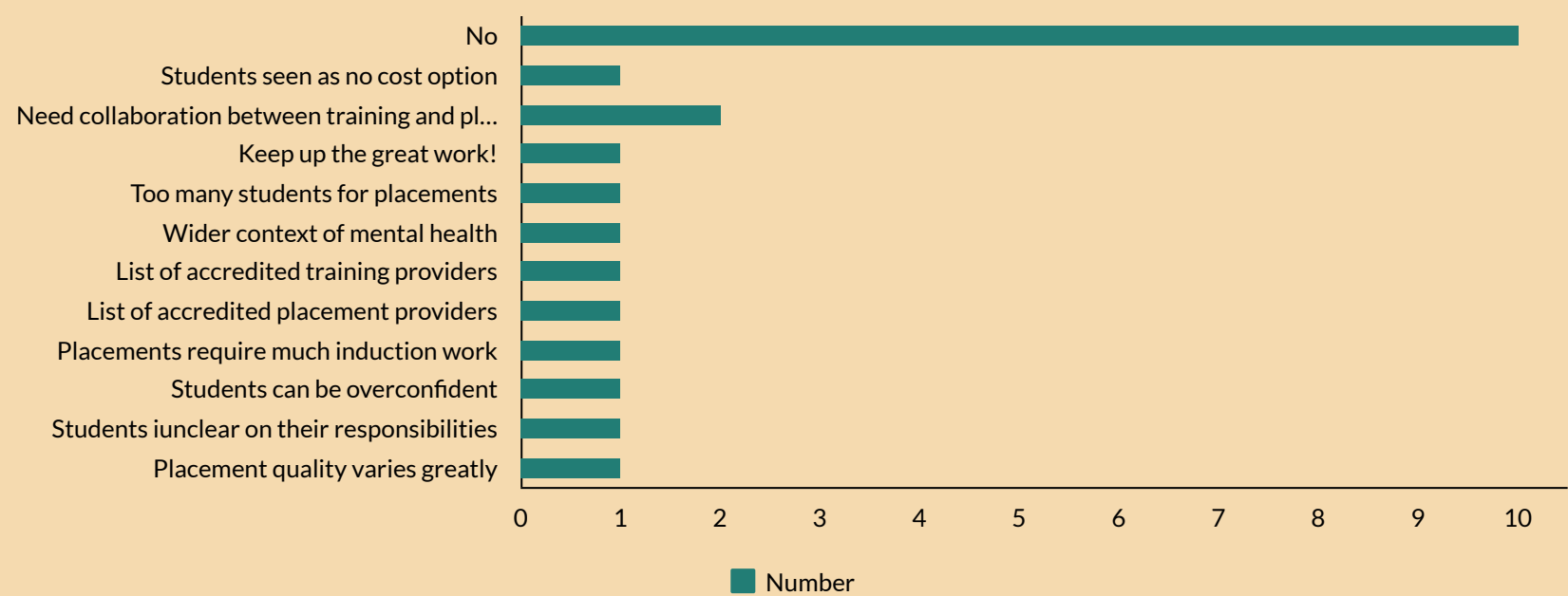
Dispensation for a smaller charity is something to be considered. If anyone representing a smaller charity would like to talk more about this, COSCA would be very keen to discuss further.

The four-way contract has been newly introduced to foster greater relationships between student, training provider, supervisor and placement provider. We would hope that this would only be the start of building that relationship and not the only contact between the parties.

Students are able to work alone, as long as there is a point of contact from the organisation available to offer support, preferably in person, but this can also be remote i.e. online or phone. COSCA would hope that all Counselling Organisations offer some kind of community and mutual support that are so valuable when providing, often emotionally intense, services to clients and service users. That respondent was probably underestimating what their organisation was already offering in the way of support and community to their counsellors.

It sounds like the guidance is broadly welcomed, but there is room for clarification of some points and tailoring for different audiences. If you would like to offer more, in depth suggestions, please get in touch.

4. Is there anything else that you would like COSCA to know about the provision of student placements?



Your comments here were very helpful here, thank you for sharing them.

As we can see from the previous questions, Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements are certainly not a no cost option, and it is worrying that this is how they're being seen by some organisations. COSCA can be pretty confident that these would not be COSCA Member Organisations who always uphold the highest of standards. Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements should be seen as an investment in your organisation and counselling as a whole.

COSCA totally agrees that there needs to be collaboration between training and placement providers. Hopefully the four-way contract goes some way towards this, but COSCA will be keeping an eye on how this is progressing. COSCA would also like to add that some placement providers and training providers already have excellent ties, so it would be helpful to hear from them to see what they think could improve communication.

COSCA would also be interested to hear more from the person who wanted placements to be set in the wider context of mental health.

All COSCA Validated Training Providers can be found on COSCA's [Directory of COSCA Validated Training Courses](#). They all meet COSCA's high Standards and are re-Validated every year.

COSCA is about to request all COSCA Member Organisations to review their listings in the [Directory of Member Organisations](#). Offering Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements is something we will consider asking you to include in your listing. Counselling Organisations who are not members of COSCA are not subject to our [Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice](#) so we would not be able to recommend or otherwise their services.

The other concerns raised by this question COSCA would hope could be addressed with clear contracting in the four-way agreement, but please let us know if there's anything else that COSCA could put in the guidance that may help with this.

Hopefully this has addressed many of your comments, but COSCA would love to hear from you if you have further comments.

## Conclusions

It seems that funding and resources are the most significant barriers to offering Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements, but there are other aspects that can be addressed to remove or significantly reduce barriers.

COSCA is keen to support you to provide a supportive structure for students to gain experience with extra support and supervision from training providers, practice supervisors, their placement provider and peers; and for you to gain that energy and vibrancy that accompanies a constant influx of new counsellors and their most up to date training.

COSCA would be happy to meet virtually with any organisation wanting to ask questions around the Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements guidance. COSCA would also be keen to hear from any organisations successfully offering Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placements if they would be willing to mentor an organisation wanting to take on students for the first time.

COSCA would encourage Placement providers looking for students to get in touch with COSCA Validated Training providers on COSCA's [Directory of Validated Training Courses](#) and for Training Providers to get in touch with COSCA Member Organisations on COSCA's [Directory of Member Organisations](#) to foster the relationships that make such a difference to providing a successful Supervised Student Counselling Practice Placement for all involved.

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