



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
Vacant	COSCA Treasurer
Stuart Valentine	Specialist Counselling Area – Relationships
Linda McLachlan	Specialist Counselling Area – Alcohol/Drugs; Bereavement
Jill Whitfield	Rurality
Caron Westmoreland	Statutory Agencies
Linda MacLeod	Criminal Justice
Mary Maccallum Sullivan	Ethics
Daniel Reilly	Co-optee Lay Representative
Vacant	Co-optee Lay Representative

Vacant	Research
Vacant	Membership Services; Human Resources

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

14th February 2022

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 16th of August 2021 from 11 am to 1.10 pm via Zoom

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. PRESENT

Jan Kerr	Chair/Training & Recognition Scheme
Birgit Schroeter	Vice Chair/Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers
Stuart Valentine	Relationships
Linda McLachlan	Alcohol/Drugs & Bereavement
Jill Whitfield	Rurality
Mary Maccallum Sullivan	Ethics
Caron Westmorland	Statutory Agencies
Tatjana Hine	Co-optee – Lay Representative
Lachlan MacKinnon	Co-optee – Lay Representative
Brian Magee	(in attendance)
Ashleigh Greechan	(Minute Recorder)

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed the Board and thanked the Vice Chair for Chairing the last meeting as she couldn't be there. It was stated there was a lot to get through in this meeting's agenda.

Apologies: Linda MacLeod

3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

4.1 Minutes of the Board Meeting of 24th of May 2021

Paper previously circulated.

Decision: The minutes of the Board Meeting of the 24th of May 2021 were approved as a true record.

4.2 Redactions of Minutes

There were no redactions of the Minutes of 24th May 2021.

5. MATTERS ARISING: 24th May 2021

BM stated all relevant items are covered in today's Agenda and there were no new matters arising.

6. RISKS

6.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients

BM invited the Board members to reflect on the context of counselling taking place and if they felt there were any new risks that need to be considered and measured. It was stated that there is a change in landscape in online training. However, this risk has already been identified and is currently on the risk matrix (2a) and was already identified in yellow. There was a question as to what moving back to face to face delivery of training may look like and what the guidance from the Scottish Government is, to which BM informed the Board that guidance on this had been issued that morning to all COSCA trainers and COSCA Validated training providers.

No new risks were identified.

7. DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA

7.1 Chairs Action Report

Paper previously circulated.

JK stated that this was a Chair's Action Report that was implemented on the 23rd of July 2021. Following the decision taken by this Chair's action, there was now a vacancy for a treasurer which had been advertised on the COSCA website, Good Moves and the new volunteering portal of Stirling Volunteer Enterprise. JK thanked TH for stepping in at short notice and producing this Treasurer's Reports for this quarter. JK asked the Board if, in the interim, someone else would consider producing these reports and stated that would be much appreciated and if they could keep that in mind. There were no further comments on the Chair's Action Report

Decision: Report was accepted as information.

7.2 Annual Statement of Trustee Suitability

JK stated this was a new item on the agenda and handed over to BM. Given that checks on trustees were only currently carried out on appointment, BM proposed that Board members submit an annual statement of their suitability. This would sit in line with requirements from COSCA's insurers and demonstrate to OSCR that regular checks were carried out to minimise potential damage to COSCA and safeguard its principles, mission and purpose. BM ran through a list of requirements set out by the insurance company and proposed this form would be a simple tick box statement.

The question was asked if COSCA have a whistle blowing policy in place. BM explained that we have systems for passing information known about members and those who work for COSCA which is essentially a whistle blowing policy. However, it is not called whistle blowing but having this policy shows that we are not just waiting for self declarations and that there are additional means for information to come in. It was stated that the whistle blowing policy should be named as such to make it clearer. A further suggestion was that 'Whistle blowing' could be put in brackets next to the policy name which would make it clearer.

'Discussion took place around this issue and members questioned whether the adoption of this annual statement of suitability would bring inappropriate behaviour to light. It was acknowledged that it was not a fool-proof system but it could bring concerns to light earlier. It was reassuring to know that the whistle-blowing policy had been effective in bringing this matter to our awareness.

BM ensured the Board that it wasn't about distrusting Board members but that annual audits of trustees were in fact part of recognised good governance and recommended by SCVO and OSCR as a way of increasing the public trust in charities.

Further discussion took place on the challenges facing new Board members in trying to inform themselves about what is involved in being a Board member. JK proposed having a refresher or 'away day' session on the roles and responsibilities of being a Board member, where all Board members can come together out with a Board meeting, where there are less time constraints on what can be spoken about. JK asked Board members what they thought about this and stated that as a new Board member she would find it helpful. All Board members agreed to it being a good idea. It was stated that this would be a good opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities and answer any questions that arise. A date in October 2021 for this will be decided later.

Decision: Consent was given to the implementation of this form.

Action: BM to change the name of the above policy on website to clearly state 'Whistle blowing'.

Action: Arrange Board 'away day'.

7.3 Financial Report to June 2021

Paper previously circulated

JK thanked TH again for stepping in and producing the Treasurer's report in the absence of a Treasurer.

TH noted the PSA fee is not a one off cost this year and there will be another fee near the end of the financial year. Interest was expected to be low but interest on investments will come in at the end of the year and is expected to be the same as last year. On a whole everything else balances itself out and there is nothing to worry about and it's been brilliant to stay on an even keel during this period.

Decision: Consent was given to the report.

7.4 Report of the Treasurer to June 2021

Paper previously circulated

Decision: Consent was given to the report.

7.5 Trustees Annual Report 2020-21

Papers previously circulated

JK stated that this Report is usually taken to the AGM and as we are not having an AGM this year it needs approval by Board. BM reported that he hopes the Board will acknowledge the huge amount of work that has been achieved in the last financial year by Board, members and staff and the purpose of the report is to bring all of that together. In particular the report captures being able to keep the organisation afloat financially and organisationally.

JK thanked staff for their work especially with the challenges of working remotely and she stated she was really impressed with what was covered in the report.

Comments were invited. Discussion took place around how the report would be communicated to members to highlight that, despite the cancellation of the AGM, COSCA is giving an account to members. BM explained that copies of the report usually go to those who attend the AGM but we could send to all members this year to communicate to them directly. It was suggested that members of COSCA may have felt isolated, and sending this report to them may help them feel like part of a group. Once the copies have been signed it would be sent to members.

Decision: Consent was given to the report.

Action: Send out signed Trustees report to members.

7.6 Scottish Government Grant

Verbal report

BM confirmed that the Scottish Government have authorised the payment for the grant for 2021-2022. Although COSCA has not received the money yet, there is no cause for concern. It was asked if it usually takes this long and it was explained that there is no difference this year in the time scales compared with previous years.

Decision: The report was accepted as information.

7.7 Board Member's Area of Interest

Paper previously circulated.

JK thanked SV for the report and asked if anyone had any comments. Discussion took place around the risk of online working in the context of those in a coercive or controlling relationship and home environment and what is changing for couples or relationships when working online. It was explained that this risk and safety was considered at the start of the pandemic and processes put in place to address this in relation to both counselling and family mediation.

Another suggestion was that in the rural context, something that could be considered and recommended is creating hubs where people can go and have a private session online out with the home which would provide more security and privacy. It was stated that some people have had counselling in their cars to get some privacy but there were questions around how private this was. There are so many things post-pandemic that we can review. The key question is what is COSCA's role in this. It was suggested that it would be worth a discussion in future. There are some things that would be the role of COSCA but others which would not and so we would need to be careful here. BM reported that COSCA had already begun this conversation with our member organisations as it was the theme of the Recognition Scheme Standards event last week.

Decision: Board accepted the report as information.

7.8 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group

Paper previously circulated.

BM invited the Board to note from this report that COSCA's membership base is continuing to grow.

Decision: The report was accepted as information.

7.9 Audit of COSCA Members

Verbal report

BM reported that there was another audit of members since the last Board meeting as part of our commitment to do this twice per year. This is done to ensure members remain compliant with COSCA's membership standards. There was a question around how long this takes and BM explained that it depends on how well the member has kept their paperwork and records. Some audits can be processed quicker than others. If, for example, an organisation has a complaints procedure that is not approved that there can be some work needed to make this compliant.

Decision: The report was accepted as information.

7.10 May 2021 COSCA E-Bulletin

Paper previously circulated.

Decision: The report was accepted as information.

8. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING

8.1 Scottish Government: counselling in schools, colleges and universities: Results of survey of members

Paper previously circulated.

BM spoke to the report (results of the above survey) which came from a discussion at the last Board meeting to find out what was happening with the Scottish Government's counselling in schools project. Following the last Board meeting, a survey was sent out to all members of COSCA. There was only one response to the survey. The survey was mostly positive and didn't indicate to us where the problems lay. For example, within one service people were trained and working within their competencies. So, we can't use this data as a statistical report. It's not what was expected by the Board as it had previously been of the view that there were problems out there with this project. However, no problems were reported to COSCA by our members. There seems to be anecdotal stories that come up from time to time about problems, but without concrete details, it is not possible for COSCA to act on these. The lack of response could be because of the difficulties involved, politically, financially, contractually. BM will continue to meet with Scottish Government and to attend the SG's Counselling in Schools Project Network Meetings regarding this project. One particular issue recently successfully addressed by BM was around information sharing between the counselling service and the school and the need to preserve the confidentiality of counselling.

It was stated that there remains a strong suspicion that the organisations winning the contracts are not operating with trained fully qualified children's counsellors and there is a real concern that people are operating unsafely in schools. It was also stated that it is a matter of considerable concern that the population in general will be looking to COSCA to be some guarantor of quality of service being provided in schools, it was suggested that this will grow and that there is a question over what the Scottish Government is investing in. BM explained that there is no concrete evidence to hand to support these views and confirmed that the Scottish Government is currently analysing data from every school in Scotland. In the event that this data is made public, then it may provide evidence of the issues and problems referred to above and that we should wait and see what the data shows before making any further overtures to the Scottish Government.

It was stated that it was unusual that there was only one reply to the survey. Is it because people in schools are not COSCA members? BM stated that according to Scottish Government guidelines for this project, everyone delivering this service in a school must be a member of COSCA or BACP. Members may not want to come forward if their job is at risk.

There was a curiosity around whether the Scottish Government has asked what the job applications for counselling roles entailed, as there were counselling students working in some schools. BM explained that the trainees that have been identified here as being unqualified aren't counted in the project and that the Scottish Government is fully aware of these appointments of students on COSCA validated diploma courses and supportive of them. It's important to recognise that we don't have power over other people or organisations that are not members of COSCA, but that we can ensure that COSCA members are following COSCA standards for working with children and young people, but we cannot force non COSCA members to adhere to COSCA standards.

It was noted that a couple of people have resigned from employment as they were being asked to work out with their competencies. Although stories are filtering in we need evidence from the Scottish government and the schools themselves. It was suggested that parents in schools would look to COSCA to be able to offer some guarantee on the service being provided is by properly qualified counsellors. BM explained that COSCA influenced the standards and guidelines for the project in that all counsellors should be members of COSCA or BACP and explained that COSCA works closely on this project and attend the same meetings with the Scottish Government. It was stated that the guidelines are unclear around being qualified counsellors and may be understood as only needing to be a member of COSCA or BACP which may be the problem. (After the meeting, BM corrected this last statement as the Scottish Government guidance states clearly in paragraph 2 that 'Education Authorities and schools should ensure that counsellors are competent to practice with children and young people.)

Decision: Report was accepted as information

Action: BM will update the Board at its next meeting on any further developments or information on this project.

9. INCREASING ACCESS TO SERVICES

9.1 Impact of Coronavirus on Counselling Services in Scotland

Verbal report.

BM reported that there is a pivotal point starting on when people will return to face to face delivery, whether or not that will be hybrid or only online. We've had the standards event for the Recognition Scheme last week and the topic was what services are doing and what they have learned from the pandemic. We are awaiting feedback from this event. What we're looking at is what we can say to our members in a helpful way of what we and they have learned from the pandemic. There was a question if COSCA's COVID-19 guidance had been updated and BM let Board members know that the updated Beyond level 0 guidance is on the COSCA website. It was stated there is still some resistance and people have different views on what to do so it will be interesting to see what happens going forward.

Decision: Report was accepted as information

9.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Verbal report.

BM stated that as part of the action plan, LMac had submitted an article for the next journal and invited him to speak about it. He reported that his article is a reflection around communications and that the pandemic has placed a burden on people mentally and emotionally and we've had to reflect on how we work. It looks at what lessons are to be learned from the perspective of talking to our diverse audiences and the article reflects on where we've gone wrong as a society especially on social media. It looks at the analysis by social media platforms on where bigoted remarks come from. The article considers how we communicate online in terms of the language that we use and how we proactively seek out different audiences as well as learning where we've gone wrong and being reflective using data and analytics and qualitative feedback as well as quantitative feedback.

BM stated he thinks it's a great piece and will help members to look at the messages they are communicating about their services and encourage them to try to accommodate messages to different groups.

JK stated she looked forward to reading the article and thanked LMac for his contribution.

Decision: Report was accepted as information.

10. INCREASING ACCESS TO TRAINING, KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

10.1 Past Events

10.1.1 COSCA 23rd Annual Trainers Event: 08.06.21

Verbal report

BM stated that this event was a sell out and that it considered formative and summative assessment which went down well with members and was a success.

JK stated she attended this event. It was a good session and thanked Jenny for organising it.

Decision: Verbal report was accepted as information.

10.1.2 Recognition Scheme Café's

Verbal report

BM reported that Jenna continues to run these café's and they will continue in this format.

Decision: Verbal report was accepted as information.

10.1.3 Recognition Scheme Standards Event: 12.08.21

BM reported this event was held last week and he is still waiting on feedback for this.

Decision: Verbal report was accepted as information.

10.2 Future Events

No future events were reported on.

Decision: Verbal report was accepted as information

10.3 Blended delivery of COSCA Validated Diploma/Specialist Courses

Papers previously circulated.

JK stated that we got a lot of responses on this survey and invited BM to comment. BM reported that the consultation document in their Board papers was sent to validated training providers, accredited and approved trainers. It was comprehensive and covered the issues that providers and trainers will be thinking of, and some issues they might not be thinking of. There was a series of questions and the responses to them have been summarised in the second paper presented to Board. The main question is whether COSCA is going ahead with a shift to allowing blended delivery of diploma courses and specialist courses. The COSCA Counselling Skills course has already been approved for online delivery.

Based on results of the survey BM asked the Board to think about whether it would like to approve the blended delivery of courses at today's meeting, and if a decision was made to do so then we could start to look at the details of the new system. BACP have already moved towards allowing blended delivery, but other professional bodies haven't announced anything yet. Irrespective of this, we need to do what is right for training courses, the public, students and our training providers in Scotland.

Question 1: Discussion took place in relation to the first question on allowing blended delivery of the diploma course and online delivery of specialist courses. The main points discussed were -

Particularly in Scotland there is a benefit for delivering courses in a blended way in regards to rural communities, especially the Highlands and Islands. A Board member stated they would not like any courses to be fully online in the field of counselling, they would not vote for any course being completely online. Most agreed to blended delivery being acceptable if the conditions were met for both the diploma and specialist courses.

There was a discussion around the rationale behind specialist courses being fully online and Board members did not seem supportive of these courses being fully online. However, a blended approach seemed to be acceptable. There was a discussion around creating sub categories for specialist courses but this could become complicated. It was suggested that there could be a competitive disadvantage if other professional bodies were having all specialist courses online. It could lead people to go for those courses or for providers to go to them instead of COSCA for validation. It was explained that BACP's new guidance covers only core training in counselling and psychotherapy and does not mention specialist courses. It was stated that BACP already have specialist courses that are fully online so there shouldn't be a competitive disadvantage. It was stated there is an important human principle here that we must not forget, especially as the government are pushing more online delivery of therapy.

JK asked Board for consent for Board to approve blended delivery of the diploma and for blended, but not fully online, delivery of specialist courses. Consent was granted by a majority of Board members.

Question 2a: This question in the survey related to the parts of the course that could be delivered online or face to face. There were different viewpoints in the responses from training providers with the main one being the interaction side being delivered face to face and more theoretical content being delivered online. The question put to Board was - do we need to be prescriptive or let the training providers decide themselves?

Discussion took place with the main points raised being –

It was suggested that training providers should have the choice as long as they can justify why they have chosen what elements to deliver face to face and what to deliver online. All Board members seemed in agreement that this should not be prescriptive and training providers should be given a choice as this would benefit them and their students.

Question 2c: This question was around the ratio of face to face to online with being 30/70 ratio being suggested. BM asked if this would be agreeable by Board. The main discussion around this were –

Conditions of delivery will differ and this ratio is too prescriptive and sometimes delivering training is about what happens in the moment, having no number would be preferred and asking people to describe what proportion they have used and why as people will learn as they go. Another point of view was that courses need to be planned and if there is no guidance in place training providers could decide to do only 1% face to face. It was suggested a band or scaling be put in place. There was a question around how we would measure that with it being suggested it could be measured retrospectively. It was stated that this would need to be put in place in advance of delivery. Another suggestion was specifying a minimum for face to face delivery. Students need to know in advance and providers need to know what to put out to them and let them know how their course is constructed. There was a question as to what we may face in the future, and again there was concern around having a number attached. It was stated that COSCA have to standardise the diploma guidance so we need a ratio set out. Another suggestion was having 30% but letting training providers decide if it would be 30% face to face or 30% online.

Five members consented to allowing training providers to apply to deliver a blended course with up to 30% delivered online. Three members abstained.

Question 4a : The final question covered at this meeting was around placements and whether the Board wants to be prescriptive in placements being online or face to face or whether it considers that it should be left to training and placement providers to decide.

A couple of Board members felt rushed into this decision. So BM suggested postponing the decision until the next meeting and that he would write a proposal paper on blended delivery of courses for the next meeting.

Decision: There was no overall decision and it will be revisited at the next Board meeting.

Action: BM will consult staff, the Course Validation Panel and write a set of proposals for Board members to consider at the next Board meeting.

10.4 COSCA Courses SCQF Award

Paper previously circulated.

Decision: This agenda item was not covered.

11. DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS

11.1 COSCA Re-Accreditation application to PSA

Decision: This agenda item was not covered.

11.2 Professional Standards Authority Consultation on Accredited Registers Scheme

Papers previously circulated.

Decision: This agenda item was not covered.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked all Board members for attending and for their contribution and also thanked the two lay members of the Board, Tatjana Hine and Lachlan MacKinnon, for their contributions to the Board and to

COSCA as this was their final Board meeting. The meeting ran over and finished at 1.10pm after item 10.3 on the agenda.

The date of the next meeting is – Monday 8th of November 2021 at 11am.

All Board members agreed that this should be a Zoom online meeting.