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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](mailto:info@cosca.org.uk)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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**

A meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 18th of November 2024 from 11 am to 1pm at The Barracks Conference Centre, Stirling.

1. **PRESENT**

Jan Kerr Chair

Jill Whitfield Vice Chair, Rurality

Ashlie McVey Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers

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

Martha Pollard Research

Daniel Reilly Lay Representative Co-optee

Craig Ferguson Lay Representative Co-optee

Brian Magee (in attendance)

Christina Oliver (Minute Recorder)

1. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The chair welcomed Board members and invited each member of the Board to introduce themselves.

**Apologies**: Eleni Kepelian, Stuart Valentine and Linda McLachlan.

Lisa McGilvray was not present.

1. **CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS**

No conflicts of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF MEETING**

**4.1 Board Meeting of 19th August 2024**

Paper previously circulated.

**Decision:** Consent granted for minutes.

**4.2 Redactions of Minutes: 19th August 2024**

No redactions were suggested.

**4.3 Matters Arising: 19th August 2024**

JK invited BM to speak to any matters arising.

BM stated that at the last meeting there were two nominations for election to Board vacancies at the AGM. However, before the AGM happened one of the nominees withdrew their nomination. The AGM was presented with one nomination, Ashlie McVey. Therefore, we now have a vacancy on the Board for Statutory Services and nominations will be called for this in the lead up to the next AGM in September 2025.

**OVERVIEW**

**5.1 Information on items 5.2, 5.4, 5.6, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.13, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17 and 5.18.**

Paper previously circulated.

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

JK thanked BM for overview and stated it covers quite a few of the Agenda items.

**DEVELOPING, COMMUNICATING AND MARKETING COSCA:**

**5.2 New Appointment to Board**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK confirmed that Ashlie McVey has been appointed to be a member of the COSCA Board and that this was announced to all COSCA members at the AGM in September 2024.

JK welcomed AM onto the Board and looked forward to working with her.

**5.3 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK stated that the report continues to show an upward trend.

**5.4 Board Members Area of Interest Report**

Paper previously circulated.

JK thanked MP for her interesting report on research, which acknowledged work and potential challenges.

MP added that she raised a point about library access for students on COSCA validated courses that are not associated with Universities or Colleges, and recognised this as a challenge. There are more open access journals now, so it is not the same kind of problem as it once was. Nevertheless, there are many library resources (journals/academic papers) that students on COSCA validated courses not delivered by Universities and Colleges will not have the ability to access, as they do not have library accounts. MP wanted to highlight this as a current/ongoing matter.

BM responded by saying there is now a list of resources, which we provide to our Counsellor Skills Course training providers offline. BM asked Board members to let him know of any relevant library articles that can be accessed without the payment of fees, and these would be considered for inclusion in the above list. BM reported that some of our trainers have started to ask for the list, which we are sending out on request but mostly it includes video resources at the moment as there is now a fully revised set of easily accessible resources in the new course Counselling Skills Course handbooks, but we can easily add other resources that weren’t included in the revised Counselling Skills handbooks to the above offline list.

JW added that she thought the report was very interesting and found the point on library access important.

**5.5 COSCA Annual General Meeting Draft Minutes 2024**

The Board noted the above Draft Minutes. JK stated that these Draft Minutes would be presented at the next AGM 2025 for approval. From the feedback we got from the meeting it was well received by members. JK thanked those at the Board meeting who were able to attend.

BM added that we had a very good attendance for the AGM, and that, as previously decided by the Board, the AGM will alternate between online and in person each year, with the AGM in 2025 being held in person.

**5.6 Annual Returns: Trustees Report 2023-24**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK invited the Board to note that a signed copy of the COSCA Trustees Report (2023 -2024) was submitted to OSCR along with COSCA’s annual return as required by charity law. These were accepted by OSCR.

JK noted that a copy of the COSCA Trustees Report 2023-24 has been submitted to Companies House. This was submitted within the required 6 months of the end of COSCA’s accounting year (31 March 2024).

**5.7 Board Meeting Dates 2025**

Paper previously circulated.

JK confirmed the Board meeting and AGM dates for 2025.

**5.8 Board Members Register of Interests 2024-25**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK requested that Board Members complete and submit the above Register of Interests Form.

**5.9 Board Members Annual Review of Performance 2024-25**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK Requested thatBoard Members complete and submit the above review of performance form.

**5.10 Changes to Charity Law**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK highlighted the recent changes which OSCR has implemented with regard to charity law and noted that OSCR will provide a publicly searchable record of individuals who have been permanently disqualified by the Courts from being a charity trustee so that charities can carry out due diligence on prospective new trustees.

BM noted that Board Members may be interested to know that names will be published publicly but personal addresses will not be.

**DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS:**

**Increasing Access to Services**

**5.11 Ethics Committee Meeting Notes (28.08.24)**

JK highlighted that this report was to inform Board Members of a recent complaint outcome report from a member organisation reviewed by the Ethics Committee.

JK asked BM if the submission of complaint outcome reports to COSCA was linked to PSA’s recent assessment of COSCA’s renewal application.

BM said that the arrangement for our members is that organisations or individuals with their own complaint procedure, must consider the investigation of the complaint themselves under the standards set by COSCA for complaints procedures. Once an investigation has been completed, and after an appeal period, they need to submit a complaint outcome report to us. We do not reinvestigate the complaint, but we look at the procedure that was implemented by the member and review the fairness of the decision that was made. We then feedback to the member, which may include some recommendations. This was the arrangement proposed to and accepted by PSA at our initial application, and for which we received praise in our most recent renewal application outcome report. It avoids us investigating the complaint and allows the member to do this. This is a procedure that has been used for many years and is working well for us, our members, as well as the public.

AM added that as a training provider she likes that the organisation manages the complaint because she knows there is somewhere else to go and they can try to manage it to the best of their abilities.

BM stated that COSCA stands as a safeguard and helps to protect the public, as well as providing support to those dealing with complaints.

**5.12 Ethics Committee Meeting Notes (17.10.24)**

JK stated that this report brings us up to speed to the proposed changes to COSCA’S complaints procedure, following on from PSA’s recommendations and conditions. JK acknowledged formal thanks to the Ethics Committee for their time and efforts in implementing the necessary changes, especially as there is a time constraint in completing with PSA’s requirements. This paper is here for us to note the process that has happened.

**5.13 Recognition Scheme Annual Survey 2024**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK highlighted that this paper provides the latest survey on COSCA’s website relating to the Recognition Scheme Survey 2024.

BM added that the biggest take away from this was regarding the question on delivery of counselling session and what the format of those were. The data shows that 73% of sessions delivered by our recognised organisations were delivered in person and, given COVID and where we have been, that statistic was quite surprising and unexpected and he would have expected a preference from the public to be for session to be held online/remote services. A survey of independent practitioners may have produced a different response. Nevertheless, it is still a preference to see someone in person, which is something, when we look at the future of counselling, to take into consideration.

JK added that for her, it comes down to the relationship between client and counsellor, as you can have someone in a room with you who is completely disengaged and someone else who is online who is totally engaged.

MP mentioned what comes to mind first is disinhibition.

BM highlighted what is happening in court circles recently with Edinburgh Rape Crisis and the worker there who made a case and won it around the gender identification of the workers that were allocated to work with individuals who were domestically abused. In terms of matching the counsellor to client, there is an element of choice to the client and how much of that choice is retained by the provider.

JK made a final point that the data on some of the client’s characteristics had been reduced from last year and that came down to them not wanting to be subject to overtly intrusive questioning, which brings us back to EDI.

***Increasing Access to Services:***

**5.14 Scottish Government’s Student Mental Health Action Plan**

BM stated that there is no budget attached to it and the student counselling funding from the Scottish Government to Universities and Colleges has stopped. So, this strategy does not come with money or additional resources, but it does pay attention to what is already happening in Universities and Colleges in respect of counselling and also what services are available in the community to students outside of a GP practice. It is holistic and multi-purpose in its reach. With problems in universities such as funding and redundancies, we are not yet ready to say where the counselling services are in relation to being impacted.

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

**5.15 PSA Review of Standards**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK stated that PSA has started the process to review its Standards for Accredited Registers as well as Standards of Good Regulation. JK thanked BM for bringing us up to speed with PSA’s intentions.

BM added that PSA has arranged an in person event for accredited registers in London in February 2025 to take this agenda forward.

**5.16 PSA: COSCA 3 Year Renewal Application**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK stated that as noted in this paper 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, subject to meeting two conditions.

**5.17 University of West Scotland Credit Rating of Third parties**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK acknowledged that it is disappointing that the University has decided to step back from its credit rating agreements with COSCA and other training providers. On reading the information provided, BM has already begun to explore potential options with a view to ensuring continuity with the courses currently mapped onto the SCQF.

BM added we are not alone in the counselling field, and that some of our validated training providers have also received the same letter. So far, BM has met with UWS, SQA, and SCQF and will have a meeting with Fife College in two weeks’ time to find an institution in Scotland to offer this to external educators.

AM asked BM if he would consider a University and if it would be an option.

BM responded by saying PSA are not requiring courses to be credit rated. The purpose of us having our courses credit rated is to try and make the courses as attractive as possible to the public who want to undertake it. Finding the right awarding body that fully understands COSCA’s role as a validating body rather than a delivery body is the important matter which, along with the associated costs, will determine which academic institution we work with.

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

**5.18 Vision for Future Event**

Information in overview document 5.1.

JK stated that JW kindly attended this event and asked JW if there was anything she would like to add.

JW highlighted that the meeting was organised by the Psychotherapy and Counselling Union, she did find it a very well organised and structured meeting and it started with a SCOT (Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. They were looking at essentially, after a consultation with various counsellors and academics, where are we in Scotland in terms of the counselling profession. JW liked that under Strengths, they mentioned COSCA as being highly successful in the dissemination of counselling skills training to front line practitioners within health, social care, education, and criminal justice through the COSCA Counselling Skills Course

They made a point that the level of training for professionals who use counselling skills does not seem to be available in England in the same way. BACP’s 4 nations lead, Steven Mulligan, did a presentation on the Scottish Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is ambitious but has no funding. There was a level of frustration in terms of where do counsellors fit into this strategy and how can they become more visible.

JW was impressed by a presentation by one of the academics from Strathclyde about the Clydesdale Counselling & Human Development Project, which provides counselling free at the point of access, with GP’s the gatekeepers of it.

**6. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

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

**6.1 Financial Report to September 2024**

TH added that the concern for next year would be whether we get Scottish Government funding or not.

BM has contacted the Scottish Government about next year’s funding and is awaiting a response. The Scottish Government’s Draft Budget will be announced in December ’24, but BM does not think that funding decisions will be made until later and possibly after the Budget is approved, which is scheduled for February 2025. Last week, there was a Scottish Parliament Social and Justice Committee Pre-budget Report on the Voluntary Sector funding and this made a strong case for including for multi-year funding of voluntary organisations funded by the Scottish Government.

BM reported that the employers national insurance increase in the recent UK Budget will affect many larger voluntary organisations, but COSCA is not is not in the category that is going to be affected as we will receive a additional £5000 to our employment allowance which should off-set the above increase.

JK asked for the Board consent to the report.

**Decision:** Consent granted

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

JK asked for the Board consent to the report

**Decision:** Consent granted

**7. RISKS**

**7.1 Assessment of New Risks to Clients**

TH highlighted mental health in farmers because of the changes in Capital Gains tax in the recent UK budget. For tenant farmers, if landlords were to sell, they would be homeless.

DR added that there is a range of views on the impact of above tax on farmers, but he suspects that farmers in general sometimes need access to counselling and support.

BM mentioned RSABI’s Gatepost service which provides support and counselling to farmers and stated that he would check our current client matrix to ensure the risk of harm to farmers when they see a counsellor is already included in the matrix or whether there needs to be a specific risk to them identified.

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

**8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

JK asked the Board if they had anything to discuss regarding EDI. The Board declined to raise any items for discussion.

**8.2 PSA’s Accredited Registers Scheme: Assessment Report**

BM stated that one of the recommendations in the above Report related to COSCA offering EDI training for those involved in recruitment. BM has written comprehensive selection and recruitment strategies totally based on EDI principles, which could be presented to the Board as a means of training Board members in the EDI principles of recruitment. However, the COSCA Board does not recruit people as this is carried out by staff and, when appropriate, in conjunction with members of the Corporate Affairs Group (CAG) which has a role in assisting the Chief Executive in the area of human resources. CAG, and any relevant staff, could also be presented with the above strategies as their training in selection and recruitment.

JK highlighted that in point 7.4 the wording they use when referring to the suicide risk is “glaringly missing from COSCA’s matrix of risks. The Panel was keen to know how COSCA ensured that its registrants are practising in line with the most recent evidence”. JK found this to be strong wording.

BM informed that Board that we have just produced a guidance on suicide, which has been distributed to all members and we previous had an Annual Ethics Event based on this. This risk has also been added to the risk matrix. BM assured the Board that the above recommendation had been actioned and that PSA would be informed about this at the time of our next renewal.

JW asked what PSA were asking when they said ‘We ran a public consultation for COSCA between April and May 2024. We received no responses. We have also received no information since COSCA’s last assessment. The Standards and minimum requirements are, therefore, unaffected by any third-party view.’

BM stated that this is a standard exercise that PSA uses to consult and ask other PSA accredited registers and the public if there are any concerns about registers under assessment. BM stated that no responses is to the above consultation is positive outcome for COSCA.

**8.3 PSA Conditions and Recommendations**

JK asked for approval for the two conditions and two recommendationsoutlined in BM’s proposal papers previously circulated to the Board. BM reported that these proposals regarding changes to COSCA Complaints Procedure had also been submitted to the Ethics Committee which had fully endorsed them.

**Decision:** Consent was granted to the above two conditions and two recommendations.

**Action**: BM to submit the above evidence to PSA prior to the deadline of 5th December 2024 and make any agreed changes to the Complaints Procedure before informing members.

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

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

**10.1 COSCA Counselling Skills Course Review**

JK passed on congratulations to all the people involved with this. The Course has been brought up to date in terms of inclusivity and terminology.

BM added that we have tried to build longevity into this Course by updating all the theories and references. It has been received well so far by our trainers and training providers. In the review, we took full account that this Course is now delivered both fully online (real time) and in-person, and so there are hardcopy and interactive digital handbooks available for this purpose.

**11. INFORMING AND INFLUENCING POLICY MAKING**

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

**12.1 COSCA Guidance on Clinical/Professional Wills**

CF commented that he found it straightforward and not contentious.

BM added that what the proposed changes in his proposal paper are trying to do is to remove the blockages or barriers in the current guidance that would make it not practical in the event of the sudden incapacitation of a counsellor or supervisor. BM informed the Board the proposed changes had previously been presented to the Ethics Committee which had fully endorsed them.

**Decision:** Consent was granted.

**Action:** BM to draft the revised guidance based on the above proposal and distribute to members.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 24th February 2025, 11 am to 1 pm via Zoom

The meeting closed at 1pm.