

Counselling in Scotland

WINTER / SPRING 2016

THE POETIC SELF

SEARCHING FOR WHOLENESS IN
SOCIETY

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF
BEREAVEMENT IN PRISON

COUNSELLING TRAINING IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

SCOTLAND'S YEAR OF LISTENING



COSCA

Counselling & Psychotherapy
in Scotland

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Editorial



John Dodds

As I am sure all of the journal readers will be aware, COSCA celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2015. And in November, Shona Robison MSP, The Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport congratulated COSCA on the first re-accreditation of its Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

In a letter to COSCA earlier that month, the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged COSCA's great achievement of being awarded the re-accreditation from the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care under its Accredited Registers scheme. In her letter, she said: "This Government supports the PSA's Accredited Registers scheme as a proportionate and efficient method of promoting good practice and high quality care, and I note that COSCA remains the sole professional body in Scotland with a PSA accredited register of members. This is an achievement of which you must be proud, and rightly so".

Our Chief Executive, Brian Magee, stated that "this letter of congratulation comes at a very significant time in the history of COSCA. It is our 25th anniversary this year and to receive such a high level endorsement of our work is very encouraging. Going forward, it will inspire us to continue to raise awareness of and improve access to safe and effective counselling and psychotherapy services in Scotland".

As far as this issue of the journal goes, although we have fewer articles in terms of number, one piece is much longer than usual. The case study, *A Confined Encounter: The Lived Experience of Bereavement in Prison*, is a fascinating and often moving account of the subject by Janette Masterton BSc, a volunteer counsellor at Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland.

Once again we have a beautiful piece by Benet Houghton, this time on *The Poetic Self*, in which he

talks about the meaning behind, and between the words exchanged in the therapeutic relationship. As he says, not the $1+1=2$ but a third thing, which he describes as "an aesthetic of knowing which some poems and art forms, at certain moments can conjure up, highlight or bring nearer and, which, if followed allow us to enter a world hitherto not experienced".

Taking a much broader sweep is Colin Kirkwood in his piece, *Searching for Wholeness in Society*, an edited version of his contribution to the Bridge Pastoral Foundation, Scottish Conference, St Andrews on "Searching for Wholeness: searching souls, a searching community, a searching society". In his thesis he explores the notion that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts".

I was pleased to receive close to publication date an excellent article about counselling training in higher education. In it authors Kate Smith and John McLeod talk about about the situation where one of Scotland's leading providers of counselling training in Scotland has attempted to close its doors to students wishing to study counselling at Masters level. The authors discuss, among other things, the tensions that exist between the "gold standard" of course validation/accreditation (from COSCA, BACP and others) and the realities of funding and strategic planning in the higher education system.

All in all a diverse and interesting journal, I hope you will agree. I would be keen to hear your views on running longer articles, as we have done this time, and as ever we are always keen for more articles, not only from qualified practitioners, but also from counsellors in training.

I'd like to close by wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

John Dodds, Editor