BVA policy position on good veterinary workplaces

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A strong voice for vets

Introduction

There is general recognition that the veterinary profession has been challenged by recruitment and retention for a long time, with mounting efforts from a range of stakeholders to address the 'leaky bucket' and workforce shortages[1,2,3,4,5]. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about further acute changes and challenges but showed how adaptable teams and workplaces could be. This document has been brought together to establish the basis for a good workplace that can endure challenges to the workforce, with practical recommendations to help all team members work towards this. Much of its content is aspirational, but we believe the core values underpinning it are essential for a good working environment.

UK veterinary practices have long reported difficulties in recruiting, with a BVA survey in 2018 revealing an increase in vacancies and a decline in applications, with only 39% of advertised roles being filled within three months, and a significant number (11%) of vacancies being withdrawn due to a lack of suitable candidates[6].

It is vital that the UK veterinary profession retains a thriving, engaged and sustainable workforce. However, in the 2019 RCVS surveys of the professions 9.5% of vets[7] and 24.8% of RVNs[8] said they wished to leave the profession for reasons other than retirement. Furthermore, the Autumn 2019 Voice Survey[6] revealed that only 60% of vets said they would choose to pursue a career in the veterinary profession if they could make their choice again, showing worrying levels of dissatisfaction. Day to day factors including HR support/staff management, pay and benefits, work-life balance and job-related stress were revealed as the parts of their job that vets were least satisfied with. This must change if we are to maintain a happy and healthy profession. This is increasingly urgent as recruitment concerns have intensified subsequent to the UK's decision to leave the EU[9].

Throughout the many and varied conversations during the **Vet Futures project**[10], workforce challenges were prominent, and many of the recommendations within the Vet Futures report relate to better understanding the work-related challenges in order to maintain a thriving sustainable and engaged profession. Similarly, creating a sustainable workforce and maximising their potential were key themes of the **VN Futures report and action plan**[11]. Following this, we committed to undertaking a veterinary workforce study that would provide evidence to help inform the development of resources, guidance and recommendations to foster and maintain a happy, healthy profession.

In November 2018, we released two workforce studies carried out in conjunction with the University of Exeter. The first study, **Motivation, Satisfaction, and Retention: Understanding the importance of vets' day-to-day work experiences**[12], showed that the creation of an environment where all individuals feel they fit in and ensuring that employees feel valued and admired for the work that they do would likely improve the experiences of vets and improve the retention of skilled and motivated staff.

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[1] British Veterinary Association (BVA), 2017. Brexit and the Veterinary Profession.

[2] British Veterinary Association (BVA), 2018. "No-deal" Brexit and the Veterinary Profession.

[3] British Veterinary Association (BVA), and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), 2019. Migration Advisory Committee: Call for evidence Shortage Occupation List review 2018. Available at: https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News,_campaigns_and_policies/Get_involved/Consultation_archive/Migration%20Advisory%20Committee%20SOL%202019%20BVA%20RCVS%20Submission%20FINAL.pdf

[4] British Veterinary Association (BVA), 2018. Motivation, Satisfaction and Retention: Understanding the importance of vets' day-to-day work experiences.

[5] British Veterinary Association (BVA), 2018. Gender discrimination in the veterinary profession A brief report of the BVA Employers' Study 2018

[6] British Veterinary Association, Voice of the Veterinary Profession (Voice) survey, Spring 2019

[7] Institute for Employment Studies (2019) The 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Profession, A report for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/the-2019-survey-of-the-veterinary-profession/?destination=%2Fnews-and-views%2Fpublications%2F

[8] Institute for Employment Studies (2019) The 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession, A report for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/the-2019-survey-of-the-veterinary-nursing-profession/?destination=%2Fnews-and-views%2Fpublications%2F

[9] In early 2015, in a BVA Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey, 40% of practices with vacancies had taken more than three months to recruit or had withdrawn the vacancy due to a lack of suitable candidates. A review undertaken by the veterinary Major Employers Group (MEG) in July 2017 of members providing first-opinion clinical services direct to the public found over 600 vacancies open for veterinary surgeons in the UK. Based on MEG's combined employment at the time of the survey, this represents a workforce shortage of around 11%. A subsequent survey was conducted in November 2018 and showed 890 vacancies in member practices employing over 7700 veterinary surgeons, representing a veterinary workforce shortage of approximately 11.5%. A survey of veterinary nursing vacancies 475 vacancies in practices employing over 6200 veterinary nurses representing a shortage of approximately 7.6%.

[10] https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/resource/vet-futures-report/

[11] https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/resource/vn-futures-report-and-action-plan/

[12] https://www.bva.co.uk/media/2990/motivation-satisfaction-and-retention-bva-workforce-report-nov-2018-1.pdf

The second report, **Gender discrimination in the veterinary profession: A brief report of the BVA Employers' Study 2018**[13], offered a compelling piece of evidence that even when everything about two vets is equal, their gender can still significantly impact upon how they are perceived, treated, and paid.

The **BVA discrimination report**[14] also highlighted worrying levels of discrimination within the profession, and the negative impacts this has. Unsurprisingly, facing any form of discrimination at work also significantly reduces satisfaction and motivation at work. Our first discrimination questionnaire received an unprecedented response, and our research revealed that 24% of working vets and vet students had experienced or witnessed discrimination in the past year, yet only 56% of the profession felt concerned about this. Following this, we launched the "Big conversation on equality and inclusion in the veterinary professions[15]", aiming to raise awareness of the issue and gather stories from even more members of the profession.

It is essential that, as a profession, we take steps to recognise and address the workforce issues we're facing. Healthy workplaces are good for us and for business[16,17]. They are vital to allow veterinary professionals to fulfil their professional oaths and continue to safeguard animal health and welfare, and public health. A healthy workplace is also more likely to cope well with unexpected challenges like those posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the team better placed to work together effectively. As part of this, we are calling on all members of the profession, across all sectors of veterinary work, to commit to our vision for a good veterinary workplace, and to demonstrate that commitment by signing up to our **Good veterinary workplaces voluntary code**.

It is important to remember that every workplace is different, and that individuals will fit in better in some than in others. Our vision is aspirational and workplaces do not necessarily need to fulfil every aspect to be considered 'good', but it is underpinned by the following core values, to which we believe all workplaces should aim.

> **All good veterinary workplaces should:**
>
> - support and facilitate veterinary professionals in upholding their respective oaths
>
> - develop, establish and track good physical and mental wellbeing and be supportive of the needs of all team members
>
> - provide fair and equal pay and benefits for all team members, relevant to their respective roles
>
> - be fair and equitable for all members of the team, with no tolerance of prejudice, discrimination, bullying or harassment
>
> - have clear career pathways that are an attractive, accessible and attainable professional route for those positioned across all socio-economic demographics
>
> - Support, recognise and reward personal and professional development (both clinical and non-clinical) which is aligned with the business
>
> - have appropriate recruitment processes and structures to support the retention of skilled team members, including regular mentoring and appraisal throughout their career
>
> - have employers and employees who are aware of what is expected of them and share responsibility to fulfil those expectations
>
> - acknowledge the importance of a positive working culture, with the organisation's own culture and values being well understood
>
> **Every member of the profession has a role to play in creating and maintaining good workplaces, no matter their role or chosen sector, and regardless of whether they are an employer or an employee.**

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[13] https://www.bva.co.uk/media/2988/gender-discrimination-in-the-vet-profession-bva-workforce-report-nov-2018.pdf
[14] https://www.bva.co.uk/media/2991/bva-report-on-discrimination-in-the-veterinary-profession.pdf
[15] https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/bva-launches-big-conversation-as-report-shows-a-quarter-of-vets-have-experienced-or-witnessed-discrimination-this-year/
[16] Waddell, G. and Burton, A.K. (2006) Is work good for your health and well-being? *The Stationery Office*
[17] Black, Carol M.(2008) Working for a healthier tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's review of the health of Britain's working age population. The Stationery Office.

Health and Wellbeing

A culture of good health and wellbeing

Good workplaces develop, establish and track good physical and mental wellbeing, and are supportive of the needs of all team members.

Wellbeing at work is a dual responsibility for employer and employee. Day one competences include a requirement to promote, monitor and maintain health and safety in the veterinary setting, and the codes of conduct for veterinary surgeons and Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) include an obligation to take steps to address issues that may affect your ability to do your work;

> *"Veterinary surgeons/nurses must take reasonable steps to address adverse physical or mental health or performance that could impair fitness to practise; or, that results in harm, or a risk of harm, to animal health or welfare, public health or the public interest."*

Employers have a legal responsibility under the **Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)** to protect the health and welfare of workers, which includes managing hazards to both physical and mental health. Employers must be fully aware of current legal requirements[18] to protect their team and of course, avoid potential legal action.

Employees have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions at work, and to co-operate with employers and co-workers to help everyone meet their legal requirements[19].

Investment in wellbeing will have benefits for individuals as well as the veterinary business[20]. With wellbeing linked to job satisfaction and therefore the likelihood of leaving the workplace, investments in wellbeing can reduce staff turnover and associated costs[21]. Furthermore, a study from London Business School suggests companies with high levels of wellbeing outperform on the stock market by 2-3% a year[22].

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Across Great Britain, it is estimated that 28.2 million working days were lost due to work-related ill health and non-fatal workplace injuries in 2018/2019[23].

Poor health and wellbeing can have a financial impact on a business, through impacts on productivity, performance, absence rates, inefficiencies, frequency of mistakes and accidents, quality of care provided, and the number of complaints received. Poor wellbeing in the workplace can be costly, with mental wellbeing alone estimated to cost UK employers £34.9bn annually, £1,300 for every employee[24].

Without a strong understanding of requirements, workplaces may mistakenly put the onus of dealing with a problem on the employee rather than looking to resolve structural or systemic problems in the workplace environment. Employers are responsible for their colleagues' wellbeing as well as their own, so it is important that they are aware of any workplace strains and pressures which may lead to additional work-related stress.

What roles do employers and employees have?
All individuals, including employees and employers, should recognise that they have a responsibility to take care of their own personal health and wellbeing. In addition to the legal requirements, they have a moral responsibility to look out for their own and colleagues' health and wellbeing, for the benefit of individuals, colleagues, the public and animals. In some circumstances this may mean reporting a colleague to the RCVS, under the **health protocol**[25].

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[18] Eg https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=refferal&utm_campaign=hsms&utm_content=home-page-info, https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/workplace-stress-fulfilling-your-responsibilities-as-an-employer/ and https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm

[19] https://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/responsibilities.htm

[20] Black, Carol M.(2008) Working for a healthier tomorrow: Dame Carol Black's review of the health of Britain's working age population. The Stationery Office.

[21] Wright and Bonett (2007) https://www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/the-power-of-wellbeing-how-investing-in-staff-delivers-dividends/

[22] https://www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/the-power-of-wellbeing-how-investing-in-staff-delivers-dividends/

[23] Labour force survey https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm

[24] https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/mental-health-problems-work-cost-uk-economy-ps349bn-last-year-says-centre-mental-health

[25] https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/health-protocol/

Employers should create a culture that helps all team members prioritise their own physical and mental health by:

- supporting, encouraging, and celebrating a good work-life balance

- holding regular scheduled one-to-one meetings to discuss current workload, agree priorities, and raise any other concerns in an informal environment

- monitoring and auditing sickness absence

- regularly reviewing training, knowledge and skills within a team and taking steps to address any gaps

- considering the value of resilience training, for individuals or the entire team

- developing a programme of shadow days to enable team members to experience each other's roles, especially between clinical and non-clinical roles

- signposting appropriate helplines and support groups and making sure that all team members are aware of the support available

- considering working with external providers, or seeking accreditation such as the Practice Standards Scheme, to help reduce the risk of systemic issues

Case study 1: Improving our workplace culture
Collaboration and feedback across the practice team is a really important element of our workplace culture, and everyone's opinion is valued equally. We use surveys to monitor this, including the Nottingham Safety Culture survey and the HSE Indicator tool, which helped us to formulate our practice stress policy.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we recognised that our team were facing additional stress. So, we undertook a survey to gather feedback about their experiences and to identify opportunities for change, both for the business and individuals. We then used this information to structure a workshop for the team to further share their thoughts and concerns and agree on an action plan.

We discovered our vets got frustrated when they felt they were wasting time, eg when driving, and the office found it difficult to keep everyone happy with the diary management. We all agreed that we wanted to improve efficiency and productivity and collectively came up with lots of small ways to improve and help reduce stress for everyone in the team. We also shared our break-even point, so everyone knew what we needed to achieve.

We also found that some team members had enjoyed the extra time at home. We already provide flexibility both for hours worked and within individual roles, so we offered condensed hours and a 4 day working week to those who wanted it. Our practice also offers part time work and the option to work two weeks on, two weeks off, to accommodate team members' needs.

We've made lots of relatively small changes, but all as a result of re-thinking how we work, feedback from the team and a desire to improve our culture. Investing in our team and workplace culture is important, and it's the reason we never struggle to recruit vets. We have a high average employee retention rate of 90% and are successful because we look after our team.

Liz Somerville, Managing Director, Loch Leven Equine Practice

We recommend:

Recommendation 1: Employers should encourage good health and wellbeing in the workplace by fostering a culture which celebrates, supports and encourages good work/life balance. They should allocate time for and put in place measures to ensure the prioritisation of physical and mental health which are appropriate and tailored to the workplace. Individuals should take responsibility for their own personal health and wellbeing, recognising their moral and legal obligations.

Recommendation 2: A good workplace should collectively have the awareness, knowledge and skills to effectively prevent and deal with physical and mental illness, injury and disability at work, or affecting work. This includes:

- employers being aware and acting on legal requirements, regardless of the size or type of business

- employers being aware of potential risks to physical and mental health, and actively working to reduce them

- training for all team members to give them the tools to look after their own wellbeing, and that of others

- clear signposting to helplines and support groups to ensure team members know who they can call when in need

- regular review of risks to health and wellbeing and measures introduced to help

Physical health and safety

Good workplaces ensure personal safety always takes precedence, including over professional responsibility.

As well as a moral obligation to protect team members, all workplaces have a legal requirement to comply with **health and safety regulations[26]**, including:

- appointing a competent person

- preparing a health and safety policy

- completing risk assessments

- consulting workers

- providing information and training

- having the right facilities

- providing first aid

- displaying the law poster

- having suitable insurance

- reporting accidents and illnesses

More information can be found on the **HSE website.**

A failure to protect health and safety in the workplace may result in injury and lead to financial and reputational losses for the business. Although the RCVS codes of conduct specifically state that veterinary professionals are not expected to compromise their personal safety when attending to animals[27] the BVA Voice of the Veterinary profession survey in 2015 found that over 60% of vets were injured in the course of their work over one year, prompting calls to improve safety**[28]**.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Veterinary work presents a host of risks to physical health and safety, including;

- injuries from animals. This can range from minor injuries such as scratches or bites from cats to more serious ones such as crushing, kicking, butting or goring from cattle. BEVA research showed that over a 30-year working life an equine vet is likely to sustain between seven and eight workplace injuries[29]. Assessing the risks and providing suitable equipment and training are essential for preventing injuries. The **HSE[30]** provides useful guidance on controlling the risks associated with handling livestock.

- contact with zoonotic disease risks, eg from contaminated clinical waste.

- handling hazardous waste, including infectious clinical waste and sharps. All businesses have a duty of care to ensure that waste is sorted and disposed of responsibly, and all veterinary workplaces should ensure they

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[26] https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/
[27] https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/24-hour-emergency-first-aid-and-pain-relief/
[28] Injuries common among vets (2015) Veterinary Record 177, 216 https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/177/9/216.info
[29] https://www.beva.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Working%20For%20Change/Clinical%20Practice/Workplace%20Safety/Risk%20Assment%20Guide%20Document%20-%20FINAL.pdf
[30] https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/livestock.htm#what-risks

have read, understood, and applied the guidance on the **BVA handling veterinary waste guidance posters**[31].

- working with veterinary medicines. Some veterinary medicines contain hazardous substances that may be harmful to human health. A COSHH assessment is required to highlight what harmful effects a medicine could have and estimate the exposure of people who might come into contact with it. All veterinary workplaces should ensure they have read, understood, and applied the guidance in the **BVA Veterinary medicines good practice guide**[32] and the **HSE resources**[33].

- exposure to ionising radiations from diagnostic equipment. Exposure can damage DNA and can cause health effects, such as cancer, later in life. The risks are small for low levels of exposure, but repeated long-term exposure can be more significant. Exposure to high levels of ionising radiations may cause acute effects such as burns, tissue and organ damage. Poor understanding of the risks can lead to poor practise in the workplace. All veterinary workplaces working with ionising radiations should ensure they have read, understood, and applied the guidance in the **BVA Safe Use of Ionising Radiations in Veterinary Practice**[34].

- physical work which may lead to poor health, eg back pain and joint problems. For example, lifting, lowering and restraining animals, especially at awkward angles, can all put strain on the body, as can standing still for long periods of time during protracted surgeries or consultation times. Providing suitable equipment as well as teaching and enforcing proper technique is essential.

- lone working and domiciliary visits. Although essential elements of some veterinary work, lone-working and domiciliary visits can increase the risk of potential exposure to violence or aggression, from clients or others.

- patterns of working. Shift work and being on-call may result in disruption of the internal body clock, fatigue, sleeping difficulties, disturbed appetite and digestion, reliance on sedatives and/or stimulants, and social and domestic problems. These effects can adversely impact performance, increase the likelihood of errors and accidents at work and might have a negative effect on health[35].

- stress from workplace pressures can also have a direct impact on physical health – see the section on stress below for more information.

It is important that all risks to health and safety are continually assessed and appropriate measures put in place to reduce identified risks.

What roles do employers and employees have?
Employers must ensure they have systems and policies in place to comply with the Health and Safety Legislation. A good workplace should also instil a culture that encourages and allocates appropriate time for employees to actively engage with health and safety matters in the workplace and appreciate that health and safety is everyone's responsibility by:

- including regular health and safety topics in practice meetings

- providing practical training sessions

- providing access to relevant resources for all team members

- carrying out regular health and safety reviews

- having systems in place for raising health and safety issues as they arise

Employers should have a culture of being aware of and respecting the physical limitations of individual employees, such as not being able to lift heavy patients or restrain in certain positions. Appropriate manual handling aids should be provided for all team members as standard. Recognising and respecting limitations is particularly important for managing chronic illness or disabilities, and employers may need to make adjustments to an employee's work equipment, hours or tasks in order to do this. Employees should discuss any concerns with their managers, engage fully with all health and safety discussions, and always follow the advice provided.

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[31] https://www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/practice-management/handling-veterinary-waste-guidance-posters/
[32] https://www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/veterinary-medicine/veterinary-medicines-good-practice-guide/
[33] https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/as31.pdf
[34] https://www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/practice-management/ionising-radiations-guide/
[35] https://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/hsg256.pdf

It is important that members of the team know where to turn if there are questions concerning workplace health and safety, and how to seek specialist advice about health and work-related issues. Referral to external **occupational health services**[36] may be appropriate in some circumstances, the **free advice on health and wellbeing from ACAS**[37] may be useful for both employers and employees, and the **British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS)**[38] group can provide information and advice relating to managing chronic illness and disabilities.

We recommend:

Recommendation 3: Employers should promote a culture of active engagement with health and safety matters, support good practise and challenge unsafe practises. Limitations must be respected rather than worked through, especially when managing chronic illness and disabilities, taking advice from external services and groups where necessary.

Recommendation 4: Employees should discuss any concerns with their managers, engage fully with all health and safety discussions, and always follow the advice provided.

Case study 2: Coping with an employee's chronic illness

When I became ill a few years ago, this had the potential to massively impact my career. Had my employer not been flexible, or my team not been supportive, I would have struggled to continue working and might well have left the practice, or indeed clinical medicine entirely.

Fortunately, my practice handled this really well, so I am now a valued senior member of the team and recently completed a Cert AVP. Based on my experience, below are my top tips for employers to help employees with chronic illness or disability:

Be aware of your (legal) responsibilities and proactive in addressing issues
When I first became unwell, the practice manager would check in with me regularly and chat about how everything was going. When it became clear that my health issues were likely to be long-term, she arranged for me to sit down with her and a director to discuss the situation.

Listen to your employee's explanation of their condition
I explained what my symptoms were like, what made them worse and how I had been coping up until this point. The director had personal experience of a similar health condition, but did not try to correct me on the aspects of my condition that were different.

Be flexible in finding solutions
We discussed what I could and couldn't do, to find a solution that worked for us both. I reduced my hours and initially did desk work, with occasional consulting at another branch which the director felt was more able to be flexible. When I was able to do more, I returned to my regular branch for consulting and diagnostics only, as I couldn't cope with standing for surgery. I built my hours up over the next year and now work nearly full-time, but still don't do any major surgeries.

Take the lead in creating positive workplace culture
I was never treated as though my illness was a problem; both the management team and the general staff were supportive and sympathetic, which made it much easier for me to continue to work and be useful to the team.

Ruth Cawston, Co-founder of British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support

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[36] https://www.som.org.uk/
[37] https://www.acas.org.uk/health-and-wellbeing
[38] https://www.bvcis.com/

Case study 3: Don't break your vet campaign

Equine veterinarians often sustain injuries due to the behaviour of the horse they are treating. My MScR thesis discovered that they frequently encounter horses that are needle shy or exhibit unwanted behaviours, and tend to manage this with physical restraints. It also demonstrated that they had a poor understanding of learning theory – the process through which an animal learns.

Behaviours are reinforced through two mechanisms; negative reinforcement in which an aversive stimulus is removed, or positive reinforcement where an attractive stimulus is added. A horse will exhibit which ever behaviour you reinforce, whether that is desired or not.

A needle shy horse rears because we have negatively reinforced rearing. The horse perceives our hand to be aversive, so will rear to remove it. Recognising this means we can adapt how we work, by placing our hand on the horse's neck further away from the injection site and removing our hand before the horse moves, to reward the behaviour of standing still. Over time the hand can be moved closer, and, as the horse has now learnt to stand still and relax in this scenario, they can then be safely injected. For the vast majority of horses this process takes around one minute. Clicker training can also be used for positive reinforcement, where we make the 'click' sound and give a small amount of food when the horse stands calmly. The click sound marks the desired behaviour and indicates the imminent arrival of food.

Understanding learning theory can offer vets a safer and kinder alternative to handling difficult horses than physical restraints. So, I worked with Malcolm Morley and BEVA to create the 'Don't break your vet' campaign. We filmed short videos which showed how horses can be rapidly trained to accept common procedures calmly, including those with aversions to needles and clipping, through both positive and negative reinforcement techniques. The videos were shared on social media and continue to be viewed regularly. We had a fabulous response, receiving several thankful emails from vets who had successfully used these techniques on previously dangerous horses.

Gemma Pearson, Horse Trust PhD Student, University of Edinburgh Equine Hospital

Sickness

Good workplaces have a culture of respecting personal health rather than one of "pushing through" illness or injury.

The need to remain competitive and increase productivity can lead to presenteeism, where employees attend work whilst ill[39]. Team members who are clearly unwell should take the appropriate time off to rest and recuperate, rather than trying to work, potentially making things worse for themselves and/or the rest of the team. This is beneficial for the whole team.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

In a recent **Voice survey**[40], nearly two thirds of vets (63%) reported working when they didn't feel well enough in 2018/2019, and 18% said they did not feel comfortable taking sick leave. The main reasons given for not taking time off when sick were concerns about the impact on colleagues and worries about "letting the team down". A perceived culture of working through sickness was reported.

Research shows that people are significantly less productive when unwell and they can be a hazard to others through passing on infection[41]. Additionally, when an individual is ill, they may make mistakes that are detrimental to animal health and welfare, and the productivity of the veterinary business. In the long term, presenteeism may be more damaging for employees' health, morale and productivity.

Joint research[42] released from **The At Work Partnership** and the **Work Foundation** found that 3.2% of working time is lost to sickness absence in respondents' organisations, equivalent to 7.3 days per employee a

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[39] https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/report-summaries/report-summary-presenteeism-review-current-thinking

[40] https://www.bva.co.uk/news-and-blog/news-article/sick-as-a-dog-presenteeism-is-a-problem-in-the-vet-profession-says-bva/

[41] Garrow V (2016) Presenteeism: A review of current thinking, Report 507, Institute for Employment Studies. Available at https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/presenteeism-review-current-thinking

[42] Long-term sickness absence: a biopsychosocial survey, April 2018: https://www.atworkpartnership.co.uk/journal/issue/14_6/contents/survey-long-term-sickness-absence-a-biopsychosocial-survey-part-1

year. Stress and mental health were the most common reasons for long-term sickness absence referrals to occupational health.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should facilitate a culture of respecting personal health, including respecting when appropriate sickness absence is for the benefit of all. All veterinary workplaces should have a clear sickness absence policy that also sets out how employees will be supported when returning to work after a prolonged absence.

Employers have a legal responsibility to provide statutory sick pay but should consider offering additional benefits, which should be uniformly available, for accident or illness, irrespective of the cause. Employers should also take appropriate action to take pressure off the team and the employee who is on sick leave.

No-one should feel obligated to work when unwell, either explicitly by their employer or implicitly through pressure from peers. Everyone should take responsibility for their own physical and mental wellbeing. They should recognise that they have a legal right to be absent from work when they are not well enough, and avoid creating a culture of competitive presenteeism. Employees should take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, including respecting when their appropriate absence may be of benefit to all.

Workplaces may also find it beneficial and appropriate to provide flexibility in how employees return to work. For example, a phased return to work or the option to carry out more office or administrative roles may enable the team member to return more quickly, helping to ease the workload without causing additional stress to the returning team member. If an injury or illness has resulted in an employee having a disability, by law, their employer must consider making 'reasonable adjustments' if needed to help them return to work. These might include adjustments to their work equipment, hours, duties or tasks.

Employers should consider investing in and promoting positive physical wellbeing, to reduce the likelihood of team members becoming ill and needing to take time off work. This may be through training and awareness schemes, recognising and rewarding employees who take positive health-related actions, or by facilitating physical activity such as allowing flexible hours for an employee to attend a regular fitness class. Making sure team members have regular structured breaks, with an opportunity to get outside, is also an important. Refer to the section on breaks under **workload and flexibility** for more information.

We recommend:

Recommendation 5: Employers and employees should foster and support a culture of respecting personal health, including respecting when appropriate sickness absence is for the benefit of all. Everyone should take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, and not attend work when they aren't well enough do so.

Stress

Good workplaces proactively manage workplace stress.

Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope[43]. Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes. Workplace pressure is never completely unavoidable and providing it is at an acceptable level for the individual it can contribute positively to motivation. However, when that pressure becomes excessive or otherwise unmanageable, it leads to stress, which can damage an employees' health and the business performance.[44] There is often confusion between pressure or challenge and stress, and sometimes it is used to excuse bad management practise.[45] Stress can also be directly related to the culture at work and could be induced by workplace bullying, intimidation or harassment.

All employers have a legal responsibility to create safe workplaces and to risk-assess and minimise the risks of workplace stress. Workplace stress is included in several pieces of legislation, including:

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**

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[43] https://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/
[44] https://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/
[45] https://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/

- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**

- **The Equality Act 2010**

Proactively managing workplace stress can lead to business benefits. It can lead to a happier, healthier, more motivated workforce that makes fewer mistakes, has good retention rates, and works better together[46]. In veterinary workplaces, the management of workplace stress and wellbeing is critical to ensuring the smooth running and performance of the team.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Stress, the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them[47], can affect both physical and mental wellbeing. Employers who fail to deal with stress appropriately are acting illegally, and may face claims for personal injury, discrimination or unfair or constructive dismissal from employees complaining of work-related stress. This is in addition to incurring the costs of stress-related lost productivity and absence.

In the UK, around 602,000 workers reported suffering from stress, depression or anxiety caused or made worse by work in 2018/2019, accounting for over half (54%) of all working days lost to ill health[48]. Public service workers, including healthcare professionals, show higher levels of stress compared with other occupations[49]. An RCVS survey of veterinary surgeons found that almost 90% reported that veterinary work is stressful[50], and the FVE[51] found that UK vets report a moderate to high level of stress at work of 6.7 out of 10, where 10 represents the highest level of stress.

Recent research[52] showed that employee stress is a growing problem in the UK, with 37% of UK businesses having seen an increase in stress-related absence. The top three causes were workloads/volume of work, management style, and relationships at work.

There are six main areas known to be causes of workplace stress:

- the demands people are under, including workloads, work patterns and the work environment

- how much control people have over the way in which they work

- their job role. Do people know their role and are steps taken to make sure job roles aren't conflicting?

- the quality of relationships within the team

- how change is managed and communicated at work

- the degree of support available, in terms of people, systems and resources available

In a veterinary workplace, a 'blame culture' culture can also lead to a significant level of stress, preventing team members from speaking up when things go wrong. Refer to the section on mental health and wellbeing below for more information.

It is also important to note that individuals respond differently to demanding situations at work, which, in turn, affects the degree of stress we experience – a stressful event for one person may be exciting for another. In addition, employees face other stresses outside the workplace, that an employer has little control over. An individual may have little capability to cope with any additional stress, meaning workplace stress can act as a tipping point.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should have regular conversations with team members to identify the actual risks and challenges they face, since workplace stress affects everyone differently. Getting to know team members well and gaining their trust is essential for understanding and reducing their stress levels. Employers must take appropriate action when it is needed, and any systemic problems which cause workplace stress should be addressed. Risk

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[46] HSE 2017
[47] HSE definition
[48] HSE, 2019
[49] HSE, 2019
[50] Institute for Employment Studies (2014) The 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Profession, A report for the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-survey-of-the-veterinary-profession-2014/?destination=%2Fnews-and-views%2Fpublications%2F%3Ffilter-keyword%3D%26filter-type%3D%26filter-month%3D%26filter-year%3D2014%26filter%3DFilter
[51] FVE 2018, Survey of the veterinary profession in Europe http://fvesurvey.com/
[52] The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Simply Health - Health and wellbeing at work report, April 2019, http://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/health-well-being-work

assessments must be regularly reviewed and updated accordingly. Employers should regularly gather anonymous feedback, to monitor levels of stress within the workplace and evaluate the effectiveness of any interventions, eg through the **VDS Training Practice culture survey**.

Employees have a responsibility to understand and manage their own stress, so it does not negatively impact on their work. They should recognise that stress affects everyone differently, speak up when an issue affects them and work with their managers to implement any necessary changes. Individuals should aim to work smarter rather than harder and may find training such as time-management useful. Focusing on improving personal wellbeing and work-life balance may also help to reduce stress. The **NHS provides useful tips**[53] on managing stress. Those in management positions should also be mindful of the impact their own stress levels can have on their leadership qualities and how they come across to others.

We recommend:

Recommendation 6: Employers and employees should work together to proactively manage workplace stress in a way that is appropriate to the veterinary workplace and takes account of the individual.

Case study 4: Managing stress in practice

We know how busy and difficult working in practice can be, so the last thing we want is for our culture to be a stress-factor. The hospital is founded on the belief that that all employees are as important as each other and we work hard to maintain our positive, welcoming, anti-blame culture. Below are some of the measures we have in place to achieve this:

Demands and expectations

We have regular one to ones with team members to discuss performance and any issues or concerns. We set performance objectives and regularly provide training workshops on stress management, resilience, time management, teamwork and other important skills. Where necessary, we have altered roles and responsibilities to suit team members' needs, for example, we created an admin role for an RVN who was struggling until she was ready to begin nursing again. We also make sure we recruit further as soon as we recognise the need to do so.

Relationships

Communication plays a large part in making sure relationships don't break down, so, we use DISC profiling throughout the hospital and teach employees how they can use this to work together effectively. Our thorough recruitment and onboarding processes help to hire people who will fit in well, and we emphasise our culture throughout. Anyone who displays behaviour which persistently goes against this is spoken to, which is usually enough to address the issue, but those who do not fit in move on from the practice. It doesn't matter to us how effective someone is at their job; if they are toxic and divisive there is no place for them here.

Change

We actively encourage feedback and suggestions from all team members and have processes in place to make sure these get implemented. We've recently appointed a communications and marketing manager to make sure all updates are fed back to the team effectively.

Support

We have two team members trained in mental health first-aid and are looking to train all line managers. Employees can turn to their line managers as well as these two trained team members for support. Everyone has regular one to one meetings, and we have a buddy system for new joiners, with additional support for those in clinical roles. Employees can also claim a monthly wellbeing contribution, which can be put towards anything relating to the employee's wellbeing, such as gym memberships, meditation classes, sports massages etc.

There are of course still 'blips', but overall, we are extremely proud of the culture we are building.

Lisa Dover, Operational Support Manager, Hamilton Specialist Referrals

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[53] https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/reduce-stress/

Mental health and wellbeing

Good workplaces foster and support a culture of psychological safety, in which all team members' mental health and wellbeing are supported.

In addition to the legal and moral responsibilities outlined above, poor mental health and wellbeing can have a financial impact on the business, through its effects on productivity, performance, absence rates, inefficiencies, frequency of mistakes and accidents, quality of care provided, and the number of complaints received.

Investment in workplace mental health interventions has been shown to have overwhelmingly positive impacts, with the average return on investment being 4.2:1[54]. Employers can achieve better returns on investment by providing proactive interventions to enable employees to thrive rather than intervening at later stages.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

According to **Vetlife,** common contributors to poor mental health in veterinary work include:

- a lack of professional support and struggles with working relationships
- loss of confidence
- dealing with complaints
- stress and burnout

A significant proportion of concerns come from those in their first five years after graduation or returning from career breaks.

Animal welfare investigations, euthanasia, and mass culls during notifiable disease outbreaks[55] can also have a significant emotional impact on veterinary teams, especially when performed on a regular basis.

A fear of speaking up or expressing concerns, asking questions and admitting mistakes can cause issues at work and lead to anxiety. There is still a perceived stigma around mental health which prevents many people from speaking up or asking for help when they need to.

A blame culture can lead to internalisation of issues which confounds an approach of continual systemic improvement. Veterinary professionals may worry about how others will judge them for their mistakes, including the RCVS, their colleagues and the public. However, research shows that reporting and learning from mistakes is beneficial for individuals, workplaces, and the profession[56].

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employees should recognise that they have a responsibility to look after their own mental wellbeing and take steps to protect themselves. Individuals must recognise that their mental health can be affected by many influences, in and out of work, all of which can all have an impact on their ability to do their job safely and effectively. Charities such as **Vetlife**[57] and **Mind**[58] provide advice and resources for maintaining good mental wellbeing on a daily basis, and support for those in need of help.

Employers can support employees to look after their mental wellbeing by being aware of triggers and risk factors and working to reduce them. It is important to recognise that little things can make a big difference, and allocating time for open and honest conversations with team members play a key role.

Employers can work to reduce the strain from known stressors, such as euthanasia, by implementing simple practical measures such as scheduling extra time for the appointment, and scheduling them at the end of appointment blocks wherever possible. They should be especially mindful of staff members who have had a recent personal bereavement, and adapt their work schedule if appropriate. Communicating decisions with non-clinical team members can also help to make it easier for the whole team to cope, as those not closely involved with the case and unaware of the clinical issues surrounding the decision may find it difficult.

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[54] Monitor Deloitte (2017) Mental health and employers: The case for investment. Supporting study for the independent review. https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-mental-health-employers-monitor-deloitte-oct-2017.pdf
[55] https://www.agv.org.uk/app/download/5813501909/Vet+Wellbeing+survey+-+Final+February+2019.pdf
[56]Oxtoby, C., Mossop, L.(2019) Blame and shame in the veterinary profession: barriers and facilitators to reporting significant events. *Veterinary Record* **184**, 501. https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/184/16/501.full
[57] https://www.vetlife.org.uk/
[58] https://www.mind.org.uk/

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Workplaces cannot ensure employees have good mental wellbeing. However, they can foster and support a culture of psychological safety, which is where team members believe that it is ok to speak up and raise concerns without fear. Colleagues should be able to ask each other how they are feeling, call out signs they are struggling (such as rudeness or poor work), ask what they can do to help, listen carefully and be respectful. Team members should be reminded that they are not alone in finding it difficult to have these important conversations.

Veterinary workplaces should work to remove the 'blame culture' and instead create a '**just culture**[59]', which sees staff supported by a culture of fairness, openness and learning by making them feel confident to speak up when things go wrong. Supporting team members to be open about mistakes allows valuable lessons to be learnt so the same errors are not repeated. To help achieve this, leaders should be the first to admit that they have made mistakes and failed sometimes, be open and honest when they are not having a good day, and act as positive role models to their colleagues. Clinical auditing and reflective practise should be encouraged as a way to make talking about mistakes normal, including use of the **VDS VetSafe confidential significant event reporting service**. Open and honest morbidity and mortality meetings should be encouraged as well as sharing of clinical scenarios and encouragement of peer to peer learning. Structured discussions and learning sessions can also help team members to feel they fit in by seeking out and valuing their opinion.

We recommend:

Recommendation 7: Employers and employees should recognise that they have a joint responsibility to look after their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues. Employers should be aware of triggers and risk factors for all team members and work to reduce them.

Recommendation 8: Workplaces should foster and support a culture of psychological safety in which team members feel comfortable talking about honest mistakes and learning from them.

Case study 5: &me campaign

Those in the healthcare professions, such as doctors, dentists, pharmacists and veterinary surgeons are at higher risk of poor mental health and suicide than the population at large. But the stigma attached to mental ill-health can make it particularly hard for those in professions where they are expected to be on top, to show any perceived weakness. These health professionals often find it difficult to seek the help they need to get well, putting unnecessary pressure on their working and personal lives which can, ultimately, put those lives at risk.

&me is a mental health anti-stigma campaign for health professionals, which aims to encourage senior people within the healthcare professions to come forward with their stories to show that we all have mental health, and that a mental health problem does not exclude people from achieving leading roles in healthcare. It was launched by the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI), in conjunction with the **Doctors' Support Network** at the House of Commons on 31 January 2017.

&me Ambassadors share their inspiring stories on the **Mind Matters Initiative website**, to provide general encouragement and to help break down stigma. By reducing stigma and showing that it is possible to continue to flourish in your career no matter where you are on the mental health continuum, these role models will help those who are not yet seeking help or who are struggling with their diagnosis to speak to appropriate people.

&me also share stories on social media using the hashtag **#AndMe**, and through other media outlets.

Individuals can help with the campaign by retweeting **#AndMe** stories and supporting those who come forward to share their experiences. This is also something that can have an impact within veterinary workplaces, as positive role models will have an impact on the wider team.

Lisa Quigley, Mind Matters Initiative Manager

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[59] https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/just-culture-guide/

Lone working and domiciliary visits

Good workplaces recognise the potential risks posed by lone working and domiciliary visits and take steps to mitigate those risks.

Lone working and domiciliary visits pose a potential risk to physical safety and mental wellbeing. However, it is a necessary practise in some types of veterinary work, including outside of clinical practice.

According to the code of professional conduct, when considering whether to attend an animal away from the workplace, veterinary professionals should consider their personal safety and that of anyone else who may need to accompany them. They are entitled to decline to visit when they have overriding personal safety concerns.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Lone working and domiciliary visits are often a necessary part of veterinary work. Lone working is associated with several risks, including the possibility of assault[60], the prospect of accident or injury[61], social isolation and a lack of help from others. Domiciliary visits pose similar risks as the team member may be entering a location with unknown dangers.

Working alone, or remotely, can also have a significant impact on mental wellbeing. For example, being on-call has been highlighted as one of the main difficulties faced by both new graduates and more experienced vets[62,63]. This applies to any form of lone working, including working on an ambulatory basis and roles outside of clinical practice.

Veterinary professionals working alone or away from their workplace must balance the, sometimes competing, demands of personal risk against treatment requirements and duty of care to the patient. The culture of the workplace, especially around communication and discussion of safety, can influence how much employees prioritise personal safety[64].

What roles do employers and employees have?

To minimise the physical risks associated with lone working and domiciliary visits, employers should complete the relevant risk and health assessments with employees, following the HSE guidance on **lone working** and **domiciliary care**.

Where such visits are a necessary part of the work, there should be a system to actively check on the safety of team members. There are a number of organisations offering phoneline services for this purpose.

Individuals working alone should ensure they are aware of the risks and follow advice provided by their employer, remembering that personal safety takes precedence even over professional responsibilities. They should also familiarise themselves with guidance from external resources, such as the HSE. Employees should share any concerns with their manager and make sure they are sufficiently trained to prevent potential mistakes and injuries.

Employers should consider initiatives to bring the team together, which can help reduce feelings of isolation. This may include regular all-staff meetings and social events. Social media chat groups, congresses and support networks such as the **Young Vet Network** can be useful for building a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation. Social activities, such as staff parties, may also be popular, although it is important to get to know the team and recognise that these are not enjoyable for everyone. Employers and employees should encourage and facilitate such initiatives to help team members, where they wish to participate, feel part of a community.

[60] NHS Security Management Service. Not alone: a guide for better protection of lone workers in the NHS. London; UK, 2005. Google Scholar

[61] Huang Y-hsiang , Zohar D , Robertson MM , et al . Development and validation of safety climate scales for lone workers using truck drivers as exemplar. Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour 2013;17:5–19. doi:10.1016/j.trf.2012.08.011

[62] Routley JE, Dobson H, Taylor IR, et al. Support needs of veterinary surgeons during the first few years of practice: perceptions of recent graduates and senior partners. Vet Rec 2002;150:167–71

[63] Fairnie HM. Occupational injury, disease and stress in the veterinary profession [PhD thesis]. Perth: Curtin University, 2005

[64] Irwin, A., Vikman, J., Ellis, H.(2019) 'No-one knows where you are': veterinary perceptions regarding safety and risk when alone and on-callVeterinary Record 185, 728. https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/185/23/728

We recommend:

Recommendation 9: Employers should complete relevant risk and health assessments for lone working and domiciliary visits, which are regularly reviewed with employees and reflected upon by the whole team. There should be a system in place to actively check on team members.

Recommendation 10: Individuals should ensure they are aware of the risks associated with lone working and domiciliary visits, and follow advice provided by their employer, putting their personal safety before professional responsibility.

Recommendation 11: Employers and employees should encourage and implement initiatives to ensure team members feel part of a community.

Case study 6: Lone working safety measures

We run our farm animal and equine ambulatory practice from a rural office and our visits often take us to remote areas, sometimes with no phone signal. We have therefore recently installed trackers in all our vans so that the office staff can see where the vet is in relation to where they should be according to the diary, and whether they have been at a visit for an overly-long period.

All new vets who don't yet know the clients are backed up on call by a director for at least the first six months. Although they won't necessarily require clinical support if they are already experienced, they notify the director if they are called out of hours so that somebody knows where there are and so that, if the client isn't well-known to the practice (or indeed well known to be a difficult client!), the director can speak to the vet before they go and ask for a phone call after the visit is finished.

We have a policy that we will not go to a farm/yard out of hours if they are not already registered with us as a client, unless it is a potential welfare situation. In such cases, the director will speak to the owner before the assistant vet goes there and, again, the vet is asked to phone when finished their visit.

All vans have sat-navs and all clients have directions added into their files which can be accessed from the vets' phones to reduce the risk of getting lost late at night.

Sally Wilson, Director, Evolution Farm Vets

Diversity, equality, and fair treatment

Tackling discrimination

Good workplaces treat all members of the team fairly and equitably, with no tolerance of prejudice or discrimination.

Discrimination is illegal, reprehensible and has no place in society. Fairness in the workplace is a vital part of a successful business, and is supported by the Equality Act 2010).

A person discriminates against another when, because of a protected characteristic, they treat them less favourably than they treat (or would treat) others[65]. The protected characteristics in law are[66]: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Discrimination may come from team members or the public and may be deliberate or unintentional. Regardless of the perpetrator or intent, facing discrimination causes distress, and can also have an impact on how valued and respected team members feel, as well as how well they feel they fit into the workplace or profession. Workplaces should be inclusive, with no tolerance of prejudice or discrimination.

There are legal requirements to challenge discrimination in workplaces[67]. In addition, for veterinary professionals, the RCVS code of conduct guidance states:

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[65] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/2

[66] https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/how-you-can-be-discriminated-against

[67] https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights

"Veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses should be aware of and adhere to all of their responsibilities as set out in the relevant equalities legislation and should take steps to challenge unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation where it arises."

and

"Colleagues should be treated fairly, without discrimination and with respect, in all situations and in all forms of communication"

Other key terms are:

- **prejudice** is an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge[68].

- **bullying** is behaviour from a person or group that's unwanted and makes you feel uncomfortable, frightened, made fun of, or upset. By law, bullying or unwanted behaviour becomes harassment when it is about any of the protected characteristics.[69]

- **equality** is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination[70].

- **equity** is the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically[71]. Whereas equality refers to equal opportunity and giving the same levels of support for all, equity is about achieving fair outcomes by offering varying levels of support depending upon individual need. **This image from the Interaction Institute for Social Change** explains the difference between equality and equity.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Discrimination can come in one of the following forms:

- direct discrimination - treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others

- indirect discrimination - putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage

- harassment - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them

- victimisation - treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment

At work, discrimination can manifest itself in many ways, including language, recruitment processes, being allocated less desirable tasks or greater workloads, a lack of tolerance of when needing to work in a different way, decisions on who is mentored, lower rates of pay and lack of access to flexible hours or training. It can also affect how likely a colleague is to be promoted or sought out for advice, which affects how valued they feel in the workplace.

In addition to the moral imperative to tackle this issue, failing to tackle discrimination at work can result in formal action under the Equality Act 2010. Claims against an employer can be financially costly, with the average cost to an employer for an employment tribunal being £8,500[72]. For discrimination claims, there is no upper limit and the compensation normally includes an element to cover injury to feelings.

Discrimination is a significant issue within the veterinary profession. The **BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession** showed that 24% of working vets and vet students have experienced or witnessed discrimination in the past year, yet only 56% of vets said they were concerned about this issue. The report found:

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[68] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/prejudice
[69] https://www.acas.org.uk/if-youre-treated-unfairly-at-work/being-bullied
[70] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/understanding-equality
[71] https://www.who.int/healthsystems/topics/equity/en/
[72] https://www.accountsandlegal.co.uk/small-business-advice/employment-tribunals-costing-uk-employers-8-500-on-average

- there are significant differences between the experiences of different demographic groups, with younger vets significantly more likely than older vets to have personally experienced discrimination in the past year.

- discrimination against different protected characteristics were generally experienced in similar proportions by vets in clinical practice, in non-clinical roles, and current students.

- sex discrimination was the most common type of discrimination reported. Race discrimination was the next most commonly reported, and incidence of discrimination was also high against those who described their sexual orientation as bi, gay or lesbian.

- the perpetrators can be managers, other colleagues or clients. The biggest discriminators were senior colleagues, followed by clients.

The report on **Gender discrimination in the veterinary profession** offered a compelling piece of evidence that even when everything about two vets was equal, their gender can significantly impact on how they are perceived, treated, and paid. It also highlighted that those who do not perceive gender discrimination to be an issue are most likely to perpetuate this inequality. This highlights how even unconscious bias can have a significant impact on how people are treated, with awareness being key to changing this. The awareness and knowledge section below explains this further.

The **BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession** also showed that two-thirds of incidents go unreported. The most common reasons given for not reporting an incident were:

- ignored incident or decided not to take it further

- not knowing how to complain or report the incident

- not having the confidence to complain

- did not believe reporting would lead to action

- fear of reprisal

The report also revealed that, of the incidents that were reported, very few were handled satisfactorily, which is a major concern. When colleagues fail to understand or support colleagues facing discrimination, practices, managers and colleagues may inadvertently end up escalating the situation. Team members must know that they will be supported against discrimination, irrespective of whether the employee is directly or indirectly involved. Having access to emotional support and assistance is also important when team members need to call out poor behaviour and deal with incidents of discrimination.

The view that this issue will cease to exist as a new generation of vets come through is unacceptable – discrimination is illegal and causes severe distress to those discriminated against, which the profession should not tolerate. There is also the risk that if discrimination is not removed from the profession those that discriminate will influence and bias others.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employees and employers should not tolerate discriminatory behaviour, bullying or harassment in any form, including, but not limited to, discrimination associated with age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. They should report all incidents to managers so they are aware of issues and can work to reduce them.

Employers must have a zero-tolerance policy for all forms of discrimination, which they must make clear to everyone, including staff and members of the public. Procedures should be in place before incidents happen, to ensure all team members know what to do when faced with an issue. These procedures should also include information on how employees should handle any issues with their managers. It is insufficient to have a corporate level policy – it must be accessible and specific to the veterinary workplace in order to be relevant, understood and enacted by those working there. Further information, guidance and useful template documents can be found on the **ACAS** website.

When issues arise, the zero-tolerance policy must be enacted, as quickly as possible. Managers should know how to handle situations, or who to seek advice and training from if they do not. **ACAS** offer free training in equality law. Employers should be able to signpost to support and guidance available in relation to reporting discrimination, and how to act appropriately in response to reported incidents, eg **ACAS** and the **BVA legal helpline**. Employers must be receptive to employee's explanation of an issue they face, without pre-empting or judging, and be pro-active in addressing the issues and flexible in finding solutions. As a minimum, they should

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have conversations with anyone behaving inappropriately to understand how they have been discriminatory, ask them to stop, and direct them towards diversity training and resources.

There should be fair and transparent processes at all stages of recruitment and employment that can be audited for equality of treatment, and only those who show they can follow the anti-discrimination policy should be hired. Total transparency in all processes and structures, including pay, will also help to show the business is committed to creating and maintaining equality in the workplace. The ACAS guidance **'Prevent discrimination: Support equality'** contains more information on how to mitigate unconscious bias from recruitment practises. Larger organisations with more than 250 members of staff are legally required to publish information on the gender pay gap[73], but smaller organisations should also consider being transparent. Organisations should also consider publishing information on the pay gaps relevant to other groups potentially affected by discrimination, eg race.

All team members need to know how to access support whenever they need it. Access to organisations, social media groups and forums for relevant groups of people can be very useful when dealing with specific issues. For example, British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS), British Veterinary LGBT+ (BVLGBT+) and British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS) are communities which can provide support for members facing discrimination. Helplines, such as the **BVA legal helpline**, can also help provide support and guidance when it is needed.

The veterinary profession collectively needs to work to recognise and stop discrimination. Further guidance should be produced for the profession.

> **Case study 7: Courageous Conversations Conference**
> When I applied for a role at Surrey School of Veterinary Medicine, I made it clear that I have a habit of bringing up difficult conversations and they knew about my work with the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDs). So, when they hired me, I knew they were already open to listening. After the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer, during which BVEDs had been very active, my manager asked what they could do to help.
>
> I explained that the communities affected by discrimination needed a safe space to talk about the issues they face with the wider profession, and so the Courageous Conversation Conference was formed. It brought together many different communities, including BAME, LGBT+ and those with chronic illness and disabilities, to share their experiences.
>
> Raising awareness of issues and the barriers some of our colleagues face is really important. Many of these conversations had already been taking place within the individual communities, but this was possibly the first time those from the wider profession had heard them and been able to empathise. It was really pleasing to see people witnessing these conversations and realising that they hadn't appreciated what their colleagues go through. It also helped to highlight the existence of support groups to those who can benefit from them, and to stress the importance of these supportive communities for mental wellbeing.
>
> This international conference was a huge success for the university. It was only able to take place because my employers reached out, listened and then supported me with the infrastructure and by allowing me the time to progress it during my paid hours.
>
> To tackle discrimination in any workplace and the wider profession, leaders must have conversations with those who are affected by it. As this conference shows, by supporting employees who have the skills and enthusiasm to make a difference, leaders can make their workplace more inclusive and bring many benefits for both the team and the organisation. The knowledge to make a real difference already exists within the profession – leaders just need to tap into it.
>
> **Issa Robson, Veterinary Clinical Teaching Fellow, Surrey School of Veterinary Medicine**
> **Co-founder of British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society**

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[73] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gender-pay-gap-reporting

We recommend:

Recommendation 12: Veterinary workplaces should be inclusive. A zero-tolerance policy for all forms of discrimination[74] and inappropriate behaviour must be available and clearly communicated to everyone, including staff and members of the public. The policy must be acted on consistently by all employers and employees, and managers should know how to handle incidents related to discrimination, and where to seek advice.

Recommendation 13: Employers should have fair and transparent processes at all stages of recruitment and employment that can be audited for equality of treatment.

Recommendation 14: Incidents of discrimination should always be reported and recorded. To support this, guidance on reporting and reacting to incidents appropriately should be produced by professional associations.

Recommendation 15: Team members should know how to access support when they need it. Employers should signpost relevant helplines and guides, and individuals should consider joining support networks and groups.

Language

Good workplaces have no tolerance of prejudicial, discriminatory or offensive language.

Day to day interactions are very important for making sure team members feel valued and respected, and for psychological safety. Inappropriate language can damage relationships, productivity, wellbeing and feelings of fitting in[75]. All members of the profession must therefore consider and evolve their language to make sure it is not causing offence, including unintentionally.

Note: Throughout this document we have used words and phrases that are currently used widely, but we acknowledge that language around diversity and inclusion is constantly involving, including these very phrases themselves. It is important that we are aware of changes in language and will seek to educate ourselves and our members as this changes.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Inappropriate language can range from overt bullying and rudeness to subtle acts of thoughtlessness. Descriptions of the incidents given in the **BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession** showed that the use of offensive language was the most common form of discrimination reported, with cases involving physical harassment being much less frequently described. An example included:

> *"On farm EMS and some farmers start liberally using 'f****t' around me, start doing the same thing to the vet and the vet just casually joins in, meanwhile I'm stood there silently watching...I appreciate it's just meant to be 'banter', but the vet joining in was a bit much and became VERY uncomfortable for me."*

Discriminatory language and comments directly result in team members not feeling valued or respected. It can also have an impact on mental health, productivity, performance, vigilance, diagnosis, communication and patient management[76]. Research shows that just one habitually offensive employee, critically positioned in a workplace, can cost millions in lost employees, lost customers, and lost productivity[77].

Failure to address inappropriate language in the first instance may well lead to more formal action being taken under the Equality Act.

It is also important to be mindful of the fact that everyone has their own personal issues and may be hurt by some discussions or use of language. While certain characteristics, such as class or weight, are not protected by law, offensive comments nevertheless reinforce harmful stereotypes, impact negatively on the dignity and experiences of the public and colleagues, and damage psychological safety, so should not be tolerated in an inclusive workplace. Careless open discussions may also be unintentionally impacting negatively on others.

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[74] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2/chapter/2
[75] British Veterinary Association (BVA), 2018. Motivation, Satisfaction and Retention: Understanding the importance of vets' day-to-day work experiences.
[76] https://www.civilitysaveslives.com/academic-papers-1
[77] Porath, C and Pearson, C (2013) The price of incivility. Harv Bus Rev. Jan-Feb;91(1-2):114-21, 146. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23390745

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employees and employers should call out inappropriate language, explaining why it is not acceptable, and where appropriate it should be reported to managers. It is important that there is a tolerant and inclusive environment that enables employees to raise concerns and educate their colleagues. While it may seem daunting to raise concerns employees should feel supported to do so, and guidance on how to raise an issue about their manager or employer should be available. Individuals should be able to seek support from their HR department or consultant. If the workplace is not supportive, individuals can seek advice from outside sources, such as **ACAS**, **Stonewall** or the **BVA legal helpline**.

Employers must have an enforceable zero-tolerance policy on using inappropriate language. They should also help to raise awareness of these issues and highlight the correct way to act, as training, reading and talking openly will help to reduce the likelihood of making inappropriate comments. Arranging for team members to work with groups and people with personal experience in diversity matters can also be helpful. It is difficult to appreciate discrimination unless you are immersed with those affected and having discussions about the issues they face. This may be through reverse mentoring, which acknowledges that the more senior person can benefit from a colleague providing them with a fresh outlook[78].

We recommend:

Recommendation 16: Everyone should be prepared to call out inappropriate language, explaining why it is not acceptable, and report it where appropriate. Employers must have an enforceable zero-tolerance policy on using inappropriate language.

Case study 8: TfL marketing campaign to tackle abuse

Unfortunately, Transport for London (TfL) staff are often subjected to abusive language and behaviour. Team members need to feel safe at work and know that their employer takes their safety seriously.

At TfL, we have developed several anti-social behaviour marketing campaigns over the past decade to make it very clear that violence and abuse against our staff will not be tolerated. We advertise our anti-social behaviour campaigns across the transport network, primarily using out of home media placements in stations and within carriages to ensure that we are communicating these messages to customers, perpetrators and to staff. Research on our anti-social behaviour campaigns has revealed both a significant level of customer recognition and comprehension.

We have found that the best approach in addressing this and to drive behaviour change is to humanise our staff, whilst also veering away from 'finger pointing' at customers. The campaigns which have resonated best with our staff are those which are authoritative, with someone respected telling customers that abusive behaviour isn't acceptable, but also reinforcing that our staff are human beings and shouldn't have to suffer from abuse in the workplace.

Emma McCallum, Customer Marketing and Behaviour Change Manager, Transport for London

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Respect from the public

Good workplaces expect fair and equal treatment of all team members from members of the public, and do not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour.

Respect and recognition from the public are important for team members to feel valued, but this is sometimes missing.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

The BVA discrimination report showed that discrimination from clients is a major issue. The Voice Survey Autumn 2019[79] reported that almost half of vets had felt intimidated by a client's language or behaviour in the last year, and three-quarters were aware of team members who had felt intimidated by a client's behaviour in the last year.

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[78] https://www.virgin.com/entrepreneur/how-reverse-mentoring-helping-improve-diversity-businesses
[79] British Veterinary Association, Voice of the Veterinary Profession (Voice) survey, Autumn 2019

In the Voice Survey Autumn 2018[80], vets cited numerous examples of threatening and intimidating behaviour, including death threats, other physical threats, offensive language, shouting and threatening to defame the practice on social media. The survey also found:

- Intimidating language and behaviour is often related to the cost of treatment and/or repeat prescription policies. Almost all vets (98%) said that at some time they feel under pressure from clients to waive fees/charges or to accept the promise of late payment. For over half of vets, this happens on at least a weekly basis. Anecdotally, the Good Workplace Working group heard that vets being made to feel guilty for charging for their time and expertise is a common theme across many sectors. There can be an expectation that they should work for the love of animals. In some settings, clients may also accuse the vets of being obstructive when they put the needs of the animal before financial considerations.

- Young vets report suffering the most frequent pressure to reduce bills, but it is the receptionist who is challenged most often as the person responsible for taking payment. Support staff, especially receptionists, most often bear the brunt of intimidating behaviour, but in many cases clients are more reasonable in their dealings with a vet.

- Some vets find that client expectations are unrealistic, for example regarding treatment options, appointment times and costs of veterinary care and medicines. The lack of understanding regarding costs is in part due to comparisons with the NHS where medical care is seen as "free". Many feel the need to justify the costs of veterinary care to their clients, who may perceive that veterinary practice is very lucrative or feel that veterinary services should be offered cheaply or for free. Clients can become aggressive when their demands were not met.

- Some vets put unpleasant client behaviour down to factors including stress and anxiety (due to the animal's condition), financial concerns, drink, drugs and mental health problems. However, others felt that client demands and their behaviour and language towards vets and support staff has become more unreasonable in recent years. Several vets spoke about the need to train and support staff to deal with intimidating client behaviour.

In cases of discrimination against a particular person, changing the vet who sees the offender does not tackle the problem. This gives tacit endorsement and may mean that the team member does not feel valued or supported at work. The Voice Survey 2019 found that over a third of vets had sacked a client for unacceptable behaviour in the past year, however one in ten reported having a policy not to do so.

What roles do employers and employees have?
Employers must make their expectations and zero-tolerance policy clear to everyone, including members of the public. The **RCVS poster** to support client and practice partnership is a useful resource to display in practices, and may be adaptable to other veterinary workplaces. They must also have confidence in dealing with clients and should not hesitate to sack those who are discriminatory, abusive or disrespectful to team members.

Employees must report incidents of unacceptable behaviour from the public to enable management to handle it appropriately.

The RCVS, BVA and animal charities also have a role to play in educating the public on the value of vets. It needs to be made clear that owning an animal is a privilege, to be realistic with their expectations regarding treatment, and to respect their vet. Campaigns such as #Lovemyvet should be further promoted to improve respect and recognition from the public.

We recommend:

Recommendation 17: Employers must make their zero-tolerance policy clear to everyone they work with and be prepared to deal with any inappropriate behaviour. Employees should report all incidents of unacceptable behaviour to their managers. Workplaces should cease working with those who are repeatedly or wilfully discriminatory, abusive, or disrespectful to team members.

Recommendation 18: The veterinary profession should work to educate the public that owning an animal is a privilege, to be realistic with their expectations regarding treatment, and to respect their vet. This may be through campaigns such as #Lovemyvet.

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[80] British Veterinary Association, Voice of the Veterinary Profession (Voice) survey, Autumn 2018

> **Case study 9: Sacking clients**
>
> We have a zero tolerance policy within the practice for abuse or discrimination. That's an easy thing to write down but if it is to have any credibility it must be adhered to 100%. A policy that purports to protect your team but which is inconsistently or rarely applied is probably worse than nothing.
>
> Often if a report of abusive language or threatening behaviour toward a staff member by a client, or prospective client, comes to a partner or director the perpetrator is polite and claims some misunderstanding when contacted. I always remember the words of Muhammad Ali who said; "I don't trust anyone who is nice to me but rude to the waiter because they would treat me that way if I were in the same position".
>
> We will always remove an abusive client from our books immediately. If I am confident of the circumstances, I usually don't even invite a response. The only reason to keep a client who will treat team members that way is if you value their money over your colleagues' wellbeing and right to respect and fairness. We don't.
>
> We expect colleagues to follow practice policies and this can mean giving out some hard truths on occasion. They speak for us as practice owners, and any threatening or abusive responses are treated as if they were said to us as owners. Our response is as robust and immediate as if the words or actions were communicated directly to the directors, and we won't tolerate it.
>
> A clear policy empowers your staff to stand firm under pressure or threat and protects colleagues that might have to deal with the abusive individual in future. The public must realise that we stand four-square together as a team and as a wider body of professionals in our demand for respect and personal safety.
>
> **Robin Hargreaves, Director, Stanley House Veterinary Group**

Diversity and inclusion

Good workplaces recognise the importance and value of diversity, at all levels.

Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another, and is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin[81].

Inclusion is an organisational effort and practises in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed, and equally treated. In simple terms, diversity is the mix and inclusion is getting the mix to work well together[82]. Simply increasing diversity in a workplace will not be sufficient; having a genuinely inclusive culture is vital for all team members to feel respected and valued.

In addition to the moral case, there are legal and business reasons to increase diversity and inclusion in the workplace[83], including:

- the ability to attract and maximise value from a range of talent

- generation of more creative ideas, by disrupting established ideas and solutions. This may be especially useful in anticipating and dealing with challenges.

- a greater ability to connect with target customers, since the team will be more likely to understand the needs and wishes of a diverse range of people.

- more attractive values – by acting more ethically and positively contributing to society, an organisation may become more attractive to potential clients and employees.

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[81] https://globaldiversitypractice.com/what-is-diversity-inclusion/
[82] https://globaldiversitypractice.com/what-is-diversity-inclusion/
[83] Urwin, P., et al. (2013) The business case for equality and diversity: A survey of the academic literature.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-business-case-for-equality-and-diversity-a-survey-of-the-academic-literature

When colleagues feel excluded, their efforts are distracted and their self-belief reduced[84], meaning they no longer perform at their peak, invest less energy in pursuing goals[85] and their behaviour becomes more cautious and inhibited[86]. Inclusive cultures are twice as likely to meet and exceed their financial targets and are eight times more likely to achieve better business outcomes[87]. Leadership is especially important, as when team members perceive their leaders to be inclusive, 85% of people report feeling more motivated, and 81% indicate it has a positive impact on their productivity[88]. Full inclusion is not a constant state, and both employers and employees need to pay constant attention to it, with a continuous drive for improvement in the best interests of the veterinary business, employees and all stakeholders.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

The profession has a worrying lack of diversity. The **Vet Futures report** showed that the UK veterinary profession is only 3% black and minority ethnic (BAME), compared with a UK population that is 14% BAME. In terms of widening access to the profession from a socio-economic point of view, the report showed that people entering the profession are more likely to come from certain socio-economic groups – for example, almost a quarter of vets (24%) responding to the RCVS 2014 survey had been privately educated, and 30% had attended school outside the UK[89]. By comparison, just 6.5% of school children in the UK are educated in the independent (private) sector[90]. Despite this, the **BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession** showed that just 45% of vets were concerned about diversity in the profession.

The make-up of the general UK population and workforce is undergoing considerable change. For example, more people are continuing to work instead of retiring, women now make up around half the workforce, around one in ten of the UK working-age population are from an ethnic minority, while, looking to the future, one in four primary school children are from an ethnic minority[91]. The profession must work to increase diversity and inclusion and remove barriers to attract talent and customers from this increasingly diverse group of people.

Diversity is important at all levels of the organisation, including within leadership positions. If managers all have the same values and background, then they are less likely to challenge each other's thinking, are less approachable to employees, and are less effective at anticipating and communicating problems. A lack of diversity and exposure to the issues different people face may also result in an increased risk of discrimination.

We recognise that there are barriers to overcome in order to have more diversity in the profession overall. Despite proactive efforts to widen participation across UK veterinary schools, veterinary science has one of the lowest proportions of BAME students when compared with other areas of study (4.9%)[92] and veterinary medicine is under-represented as a degree choice for widening access or 'Gateway' Students[93]. The **BVA policy position on UK undergraduate veterinary education** identifies that further efforts should be undertaken by stakeholders across veterinary education to attract students from underrepresented and minority groups.

Role models are also important to inspire members of the veterinary professions to seek out opportunities, and hearing about others' similar experiences can help people to feel less alone.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Workplaces should recognise the importance and value of diversity and inclusion at all levels, encourage recruitment of diverse team members, and create an inclusive culture to ensure they feel like they fit in.

The whole profession must encourage greater diversity and work to make the profession more accessible and inclusive for underrepresented and minority groups. Barriers to having more diversity in the profession need to be tackled. Workplaces and individuals should consider what steps they take to encourage, mentor and recruit those from underrepresented groups into the profession, and what barriers they can tackle to do so. We have a

[84] Haslam, C, et al. (2018) The new psychology of health: Unlocking the social cure. Routledge.
[85] Greenaway, K.H., et al. (2015) "From "we" to "me": Group identification enhances perceived personal control with consequences for health and well-being." Journal of personality and social psychology 109.1: 53.
[86] Eg Twenge, Jean M., et al. (2007) "Social exclusion decreases prosocial behavior." Journal of personality and social psychology 92.1: 56.
[87] J. Bourke, Which Two Heads Are Better Than One? How Diverse Teams Create Breakthrough Ideas and Make Smarter Decisions (Australian Institute of Company Directors, 2016)
[88] Opportunity Now (2011) Inclusive Leadership from Pioneer to Mainstream
[89] RCVS Survey of the professions (2014) https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-survey-of-the-veterinary-profession-2014/
[90] Independent schools council research: https://www.isc.co.uk/research/
[91] ACAS (2018) Prevent discrimination: Support equality guidance, https://archive.acas.org.uk/media/4402/Prevent-discrimination-support-equality/pdf/Prevent_discrimination_June_2018.pdf
[92] Universities UK., 2018. Patterns and trends in UK Higher Education 2018
[93] Woodfield, R., 2014. Undergraduate retention and attainment across the disciplines

BVA policy position on good veterinary workplaces

role to play in terms of increasing the exposure of underrepresented or minority groups to veterinary careers, by working with organisations such as the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS), British Veterinary LGBT+ (BVLGBT+), British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS), RCVS Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Working Group, Vet Schools and MyVetFuture.

Showcasing role models, celebrating improvements and sharing publicity about issues are positive ways to provide support. This applies at all levels of veterinary work, from individual organisations to across the profession, including campaigns such as our #BigConversation and #TimetoChange. It is important to note, in order to avoid tokenism, that this must come alongside a commitment to challenge discrimination and provide a culture of psychological safety.

> **Case study 10: Inclusive leadership**
> There are a number of critical actions for leaders which are proven to make a difference in creating an inclusive culture and working environment:
>
> - **Manage unconscious bias**. Even if we value fairness and equality, we are all vulnerable to bias in our decisions and behaviour. This is based on stereotypes we have internalised from our social and cultural experiences. Accepting this will help you manage bias
>
> - **Adopt objective and fair practices**. When choosing who to recruit, promote, develop, or reward, bias can have an impact. Stick firmly to systematic processes based on fair measurable criteria to judge someone's capability and potential
>
> - **Invite challenge.** When making decisions or judgements about people in the team, take time to reflect and check your thinking and invite others to challenge you to help ensure you are being balanced and fair
>
> - **Build relationships**. Inclusive leaders build the same quality of relationships with all team members. Invest attention equally in everyone, getting to know each individual and supporting them in their performance and development
>
> - **Encourage participation.** Leaders can actively engage a diverse team by inviting everyone's ideas and contribution, taking time to understand unique perspectives, and celebrating the value of diversity to build team confidence
>
> - **Share mutual support**. Inclusive teams share responsibility for one another's success. Leaders should reflect on what they and other team members can do to help each person perform and actively challenge behaviours that could undermine others
>
> **Laura Haycock, Senior Psychologist at Pearn Kandola**

We recommend:

Recommendation 19: Veterinary workplaces should recognise and champion the importance and value of diversity and inclusion at all levels.

Recommendation 20: The whole profession must encourage greater diversity and work to make the profession more accessible for underrepresented and minority groups.

Recommendation 21: BVA should work collaboratively with organisations such as the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society (BVEDS), British Veterinary LGBT+ (BVLGBT+), British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS) and RCVS Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Working Group. Together they should develop an engagement strategy and resources to raise awareness amongst underrepresented and minority groups of veterinary career paths and the different routes into veterinary education.

Recommendation 22: The profession and organisations should showcase role models, celebrate improvements and share publicity related to diversity and inclusion issues.

Case study 11: Athena SWAN increasing diversity and inclusion

The Athena SWAN programme was set up to encourage the advancement of women's careers in STEM subjects in academia. Whilst veterinary science is overwhelmingly female from the pre-undergraduate admissions stage onwards, we still have a problem with the so called 'leaky pipeline'. That is, at each stage of career progression there are fewer women, so that the proportion of women in senior roles does not reflect that at undergraduate level.

At the University of Liverpool, we have put measures in place to try and encourage women's career advancement. Workshops and mentoring programmes are provided for those considering applying for promotion, which has increased the number of women applying. Clinical and teaching expertise are also now considered in promotion decisions rather than just research qualifications. At the vet school 50% of professors are now women, including the Dean of the Vet School.

More widely, we are expanding our family friendly policies, for example by advising that meetings do not occur at the very start or end of the working day, to allow parents greater opportunity to drop off and collect their children from school or childcare. We have recently carried out focus groups on maternity leave and flexible working to establish what other changes we could make to aid staff with children and other caring responsibilities. A staff and student Athena SWAN working group looks at gender equality issues across the vet school and meets with similar groups from vet schools across the UK and Ireland, to share ideas.

Philippa Mahen, Athena SWAN committee, University of Liverpool Vet School

Awareness, knowledge and review

Good workplaces have teams which understand the barriers to equality and diversity, the consequences of discrimination in the workplace, and are empowered to challenge poor practise.

Discrimination can be better avoided when colleagues understand the issues faced by their peers. Developing cultural competency, awareness and understanding of the issues and organisational and individual responsibilities at all levels is key to reducing discrimination in the workplace and the professions.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

There is not enough awareness or concern about the importance of diversity and discrimination in the profession, as shown by just 56% of the profession saying they were concerned about these issues in the **BVA Discrimination report**. With a wide range of resources and information available to all, ignorance should no longer be an excuse.

It is important to recognise that everyone has unconscious bias, which occurs when people favour others who look like them and/or share their values, eg a person may be drawn to someone with a similar educational background, from the same area, or who is the same ethnicity as them. The brain receives information all the time from our own experiences and what we read, hear or see in the media and from others and uses shortcuts to speed up decision-making, resulting in unconscious bias as a by-product[94].

Unconscious bias is difficult to change but being aware of it allows workplaces to mitigate the risks. Most people are unwilling to think of themselves as racist, but this misunderstands the true meaning of racism, thinking about extreme cases rather than recognising everyday behaviours. Training can help to raise awareness of unconscious bias in a non-threatening way, although the value of this training has been questioned[95]. Implementing the mitigation techniques and supporting colleagues is more important, as training alone will not bring about change.

What roles do employers and employees have?

As an absolute minimum, employers and employees must understand and act on equality law and their legal responsibilities.

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[94] https://archive.acas.org.uk/unconsciousbias
[95] https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/news/articles/unconscious-bias-training-has-no-sustained-impact-on-behaviour

Employers should invest in training to improve knowledge and awareness and should provide inclusive leadership training for all managers. All individuals need to acknowledge and accept that everyone has unconscious bias, including themselves. Unconscious bias training and equality and diversity training are a useful way to start conversations but are useless with out action. Employers should also be able to signpost to knowledge and resources on diversity and discrimination matters, eg to organisations such as **Stonewall** and **ACAS**. Wherever possible, training and resources should be tailored to the individual or organisation's specific needs.

Employers must ensure that any training or knowledge gained is followed up appropriately with organisational changes in order to make an impact in the workplace. An open culture of discussing equality issues should be encouraged. Developing a culture of psychological safety, as referenced in the section on Mental Health and Wellbeing, will also enable team members to feel comfortable sharing their concerns.

Employers should regularly review any diversity strategies put in place, ideally appointing an equality, inclusivity and diversity champion who should be appropriately trained, resourced, and visible in their advocacy, with the capacity to effect organisational changes. Reporting mechanisms should be clear to all team members, and everyone should be aware of who they can go to for support.

It is highly likely that individuals challenged about their own behaviour will be defensive. Talking about discrimination is challenging, and workplaces should seek professional facilitation and input from groups such as BVLGBT+, BVEDS and BVCIS, who can help individuals to understand more about common issues faced by their peers. Reverse mentoring should be considered as a positive way for colleagues to learn from each other[96].

> ### Case study 12: Video reminders
> At Zoetis we have internal policies to prevent harassment and discrimination. Harassment and discrimination have a devastating effect in the workplace and affect people's lives causing a personal impact resulting in anxiety, people leaving the workplace etc. When harassment occurs in the workplace, it destroys teamwork and as a consequence productivity declines.
>
> The policies we have at Zoetis are based on respect and fair treatment. Hostility, harassment and inappropriate behaviour are not tolerated, including for example:
>
> - Engaging in any acts or threats of violence, bullying, intimidation or abuse;
> - Engaging in unsolicited and/ or unwanted discussions about another person's medical condition, disability, religion, physical appearance, relationship status or family planning;
> - Gossiping or spreading rumours; and
> - Engaging in any other behaviour a reasonable person would find unprofessional, disturbing or offensive.
>
> The information is presented to Zoetis employees by actors in the form of a news video clip, highlighting the potential impact of harassment and discrimination on both the organisation and individuals. Some specific examples are then acted out as to how certain forms of bullying and harassment are impacting on people's lives and how this should be reported within the organisation. Employees are asked to reflect on the content by answering some questions throughout the presentation and are asked to sign off on the policies on a yearly basis.
>
> **Aurelie Moralis, Marketing and Technical Manager (Livestock) for Zoetis Ireland**

We recommend:

Recommendation 23: Employers and employees must understand and act on equality law and their responsibilities.

Recommendation 24: Everyone should work to increase their awareness and understanding of issues affecting anyone they work with that may lead to discrimination or offence. To support this, employers should invest in

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[96] https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2018/10/26/the-all-round-benefits-of-reverse-mentoring/

training and be able to signpost to resources on diversity matters, ensure that any knowledge gained is implemented, and develop an open culture of discussing equality issues in the workplace.

Recommendation 25: Employers should regularly review any strategies aimed at improving diversity and inclusion, and should appoint an equality, inclusivity and diversity champion.

Parental leave and pregnancy

Good workplaces treat all team members fairly and equally, including those requiring parental or adoption leave, and those who may be struggling to start a family.

Creating a culture of fairness and equality around becoming a parent, or trying to become a parent, can help with retention, motivation and satisfaction of employees. Legal requirements around maternity, paternity, adoption, miscarriage and stillbirth[97] pay and leave must also be understood and acted on.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Discrimination related to pregnancy and taking maternity, paternity or adoption leave may come from both employers and the public and can reduce motivation and satisfaction within teams. If not managed well by the employer, parental leave or leave taken following miscarriage or stillbirth can add additional pressures onto teams. This can lead to stress and negative attitudes towards colleagues, sometimes resulting in unfair treatment such as making those going on leave feel guilty and treating them as a burden or in less favourable ways.

Many of the incidents described in the BVA discrimination questionnaire[98] related to returning to work after parental leave. There were also examples of women being discriminated against because of their potential to get pregnant, regardless of their intentions, such as:

> *"Experienced older male vet telling me that I should not go into equine practice and that he hated hiring young female vets because they 'go off and get pregnant' and can't stick with the equine profession once they've had children."*

There are legal requirements related to maternity, paternity, and adoption pay and leave, as well as miscarriage and stillbirth, which employers must ensure are followed. There are also legal requirements to follow during pregnancy, such as risk assessments for health and safety and the right to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments. The **BVA maternity and paternity guide[99]** explains these in detail. Employees taking such leave must not be pressured into agreeing a return date, and length of leave cannot be based on business need (eg cut short to accommodate seasonal factors such as spring lambing). Similarly, those on parental leave should not be pressured to keep in touch, or use keeping in touch (KIT) days to suit business needs. Those returning from parental leave must not be forced to renegotiate contracts on less favourable terms.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should recognise that parental leave can lead to discrimination and treat any incidents of this appropriately. Team members who are currently on, due to go on, or returning from parental leave must be treated fairly and in line with the law[100]. This also applies to those on leave following miscarriage or stillbirth. Employers should also be mindful of the difficulties that some people experience when trying to start a family and, if necessary, be prepared to accommodate relevant medical appointments.

Employees should familiarise themselves with their legal rights[101] and highlight any issues with their managers or colleagues. They should also be mindful of their own actions and make sure they do not treat colleagues less favourably. Employers and employees should have open and constructive conversations about how they can make working patterns work for everyone. Looking for examples of best practise in the profession can help with these discussions.

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[97] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-maternity-pay-employee-circumstances-that-affect-payment#stillbirth
[98] The discrimination questionnaire fed into the BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession: https://www.bva.co.uk/media/2991/bva-report-on-discrimination-in-the-veterinary-profession.pdf
[99] https://www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/hr-and-employment-law/maternity-and-paternity-rights-and-obligations/
[100] https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/pregnancy-birth
[101] https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/pregnancy-birth

We recommend:

Recommendation 26: Employers and employees should familiarise themselves with the legal requirements surrounding pregnancy, parental pay and leave, including in relation to miscarriage and stillbirth.

Recommendation 27: The profession should vocally challenge the outdated perception that raising a family is incompatible with maintaining and developing a veterinary career

> **Case study 13: The positives of pregnancy in practice**
> As an employer I was always vicariously excited for anybody who was pregnant, or the partner of a pregnant person. Part of this is my love of babies, but also that I know how important it is for employees to feel happy and supported in their life outside of work and this has a two way benefit with greater loyalty to the practice. I often found that supported employees with children put down roots in the community which led them to stay long term, especially when those children started school. Remembering to be excited for your team members is important, and I think sometimes the positives are overlooked as employers focus on the immediate issue of finding maternity cover.
>
> **James Russell, President, BVA**

> **Case study 14: Pregnancy in practice success story**
> When I first became pregnant, I was worried about the impact of my everyday work on the baby. Veterinary practice is a stressful environment, and I had concerns such as the effects of anaesthetic gases and radiation from x-rays.
>
> Fortunately, my practice has been incredibly supportive from the start. I was able to have open and honest conversations with the partners and discuss changes which would help me to feel more relaxed without having a significant impact on the team. For us that meant that I took on more consulting and more of the surgery was carried out by other team members. It was never a problem when I needed time off for appointments, and the partners also carried out risk assessments and sought expert advice on radiation to help me feel safe and secure.
>
> I always felt supported and never felt judged or pressured by the team. I kept in touch over my maternity leave and have been offered 'keeping in touch' days. We are now discussing plans for me to return on a part time basis. I really couldn't fault my practice during this time, and I look forward to returning as a valued member of the team.
>
> **Jenny McCaughey, Veterinary Surgeon, Cedarmount Veterinary Clinic, County Down**

Workload and flexibility

Working hours

Good workplaces have fair and anticipated working hours, recognising and rewarding work above contracted hours.

Long working hours have been highlighted as a major issue across many types of veterinary work.

In the Motivation, Satisfaction, and Retention report[102], we found that those who endorse a long working hours culture were less likely to feel stress or burnout, or to want to leave the profession. These respondents made statements such as 'people who work long hours are likely to be more ambitious' or 'expectations to work long hours are entirely reasonable'.

This paradox may seem to be contradictory to the need to reduce a long working hours culture. However, a culture of long hours is also noted to have a negative impact on team members health and wellbeing and leads to reduced motivation, satisfaction and retention of those that do not endorse such a culture. A good workplace will look to respect and encourage employees personal time. As a profession we need to challenge the notion that ambition and success are linked to long hours.

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[102] https://www.bva.co.uk/media/2990/motivation-satisfaction-and-retention-bva-workforce-report-nov-2018-1.pdf

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Problems associated with working long hours include:

- tiredness and fatigue, potentially resulting in risks to health, safety and welfare of both animals and humans, especially when required to drive. This may also impact on competence at work and increase the likelihood of making a mistake

- compromising work/life balance[103,104], leading to increased stress and reduced satisfaction. This may impact on a person's ability to maintain their own good health and wellbeing, eg through a lack of time to spend with loved ones, access leisure activities and managing personal admin.

- stress, especially if required to work prolonged continuous hours such as working the day after being on a night duty.

Not managing these issues may lead to increased staff turnover and associated recruitment costs, poor performance, an impact on animal health and welfare and poor client satisfaction.

Busy or unreasonable workloads combined with staffing issues, missed breaks, and a lack of time to complete relevant administration tasks, carry out background research or focus on personal development, can lead to individuals feeling the need to work additional hours. A recent FVE survey[105] showed that whilst vets in the UK are contracted for 39 hours per week on average, they report working an average of 46.4hours each week instead. This is above the average of 44hours for Europe. Other research has also indicated that veterinary team members engage in work outside their contracted hours, with many describing their workload as unacceptable[106].

Many veterinary contracts include a clause that requires team members to work 'any hours the business requires', or similar, which can allow employers to avoid paying for any overtime. However, where there is an issue, such as low staffing levels or schedule management, overtime can sometimes happen regularly or even every day, often going unrecognised or unrewarded. This contributes to the culture of endorsing long working hours, since they become an expected part of the job, and can lead to team members not feeling valued for the work they do.

> ### Case study 15: Undervalued and overworked
> I rarely leave work on time due to many factors:
>
> - Consults finish on the time you are supposed to leave meaning no time to write notes
>
> - Very often I've had to admit sick patients for bloods/hospitalisation with no other vet to hand these cases over to as they are about to start their own consults, this means I have to stay behind to wait for blood results/get the patient started on medication
>
> - No time allocated in the day to make phone calls, often means I need to stay behind to do this as if I don't stay late one night I will only end up staying late the next night
>
> - Too many operations booked in by reception staff means starting consults late and therefore over-running the whole night, it's also exhausting coming straight from a two-hour surgery to consults and I find this is when I'm most likely to make mistakes
>
> - Evening consults booked up by 9am that morning sometimes- no room for emergencies which are then added alongside a fully booked list
>
> - Consult length does not always reflect case complexity, e.g. very sick patients are difficult and will require more than the 15 minute time allocation
>
> I do feel very undervalued in my role, there aren't many companies who wouldn't pay their staff overtime and it's no wonder we are losing vets from the profession. I do really appreciate the hard work of the nurses and receptionists but it feels unfair to know that when we all stay late to work on a case I will be the only one who isn't compensated for my time, yet if anything were to happen to the patient the responsibility would fall on my shoulders alone.
>
> ### A BVA member, working in small animal practice

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[103] https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/w/work-life-balance
[104] https://www.hrzone.com/hr-glossary/what-is-work-life-balance
[105] FVE 2018, Survey of the veterinary profession in Europe http://fvesurvey.com/
[106] Eg https://www.agv.org.uk/app/download/5813501909/Vet+Wellbeing+survey+-+Final+February+2019.pdf

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should ensure that working hours are fair and generally anticipated. Work should be allocated proportionately, taking into account and allocating time for paperwork and other required parts of the role. They are a contractual element and must be treated as such, with deviation from the norm taken seriously, investigated and addressed. The nature of the profession means that unexpected long hours may occur, but this should be infrequent and genuinely unforeseen. The business needs to take responsibility if there is a staffing shortage, as a lack of workers is not an excuse for excessive hours by others. This may mean difficult business decisions need to be made, such as hiring temporary staff, reducing opening hours and workload, or temporarily stopping the registration of new clients or customers. However, the onus is on the business not the employee. Team member welfare, and its potential impacts on animal welfare, should take a higher priority than business need.

Organisations should monitor working hours and put measures in place to ensure employees are usually able to leave on time. Schedules can be arranged to ensure that consultations or any anticipated workload are not being booked too close to the end of working hours. Allowing time for essential administrative tasks such as writing up notes at the end of consultations and flexibility to absorb emergency work may also reduce the likelihood of employees staying beyond their normal working hours. Management tools to assess workflow should be used to optimise staffing, in consultation with the team members who are doing the jobs. For example, receptionists could work with vets to book surgery slots with realistic lengths based on their individual needs. Flexibility in where some tasks are carried out should also be considered, eg time could be provided for paperwork to be undertaken at home if mutually agreeable by employer and employee. Where working hours are unpredictable, they must be shared equitably, and solutions sought with the team members involved. Designated shift cover should be considered for any work that may need to be started in normal working hours yet will entail working beyond normal finish time.

Where additional hours are truly unavoidable, employers should consider how best to mitigate the impacts. This may include:

- a late start or time off in lieu the following day
- implementing a workplace protocol on the minimum number of hours between shifts (above legal requirements) to allow for a sufficient amount of sleep and rest

Consideration should also be given to when team members work weekends or unsociable hours, and how these are managed.

Employers should make sure there is a structure or process in place for employees to raise concerns and address issues, eg regular performance review meetings (refer to the section on personal and career development for more information). Anonymous surveys may also help to highlight demands team members are under. When team members are required to work unpredicted additional hours, organisations should have a fair and equitable system to accommodate this and fairly reward them. This should be a formal written policy to avoid this being handled on an ad-hoc basis, which may contribute to feelings of discrimination or unfairness. Reward for additional hours may not necessarily be financial. However, paying for work above contracted hours or allowing for time off in lieu indicates to team members that their time is valued. Any system must be fair for all team members, for example, if some team members are salaried and others paid by the hour, this could result in a two-tier system in which those paid by the hour leave work on time or are paid for overtime, but salaried employees do not.

Employees should not support unreasonable hours as the norm, and not endorse a long working hours culture. Individuals should recognise that they have a right to value their own time, should not feel guilty for leaving on time, and should raise concerns with their employers in order to help work towards solutions. Colleagues should support each other by actively reminding and encouraging individuals who regularly stay late to leave on time.

We recommend:

Recommendation 28: Workplaces should challenge the culture that endorses long hours. Working hours should be fair and anticipated, and any that are not anticipated should be infrequent and genuinely unforeseen.

Recommendation 29: Employees should raise concerns about working hours with their managers and work to find solutions to the problems. Employers should have a structure or process in place to listen to employees' concerns, and acknowledge and compensate for additional time worked through a formal, fair and equitable system, eg providing time off in lieu.

Case study 16: Proactive diary management

One of the most important thing we do to help manage workloads at Meadows Farm Vets is to have a single diary for all team members.

Being able to see the whole diary on one screen means you can appreciate what everyone else is up to, which prompts team members to offer to take on work if colleagues are busy or delayed. For example, if a health plan consultation is over-running, there is usually someone in the office or nearby who will volunteer to see next client so that the first vet can catch up. Clients are trained to accept any vet for any job, and all our vets can do everything.

To help manage their own workload, all team members can enter appointments to follow up cases and give themselves time for paperwork or projects where needed. All the work is equally shared (including good jobs and tedious ones) and we make sure there is plenty of flexibility in the diary to move consultations around. Management closely monitor workloads, especially when vets have been on call at night or weekends, and adjustments are made for personal circumstances, exceptional situations, cases that go wrong, extreme weather. So, after a busy night on call, a vet's morning consultations can be shuffled around or extra paperwork time allocated, or support could come in the form of another team member washing their kit or a hot lunch being provided.

The office administrator is primarily responsible for making sure consultations happen on time, but rarely needs to ask for help. Everyone pitches in to help without hesitation as they know they may be the next person in need of support.

Sophie Aylett, Director, Meadows Farm Vets

Case study 17: Respecting team members' time

As an employer I like to consider my own experiences as an employee when managing my team's performance and wellbeing.

I pay all my team overtime, which starts at 15minutes and anything above that is paid or taken as time in lieu. I hope that I have created a workplace where each team member helps each other to ensure one person isn't alone in working longer or staying later as sharing the work cuts this down.

I also react if lunches have consistently been shortened or missed, by ensuring future days are managed to avoid this happening. For example, I limit routine ops during periods of extreme business and free up consulting vets to help with operations etc.

All of my vets have input into how they like their rota to look, one full time vet prefers extra half days and shorter lunches, another prefers longer lunches and no extra half days. I have found that offering such an environment influences the team's performance and work satisfaction, knowing that they will be compensated for working beyond their designated shift hours

Dan Makin, Joint Venture Partner at Vet4Pets Poole Holes Bay

Breaks

Good workplaces ensure regular breaks are structured, protected and adhered to.

As with long working hours, working through breaks can add to stress and tiredness levels, leading to burnout, reduced productivity and poorer performances. Evidence[107,108,109] shows that breaks increase productivity and wellbeing, so any apparent financial or efficiency losses through reduced working time are outweighed by this.

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[107] https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/changepower/201704/how-do-work-breaks-help-your-brain-5-surprising-answers
[108] https://www.ciphr.com/advice/taking-breaks/
[109] https://www.healthassured.org/blog/importance-rest-breaks-at-work-mental-health/

Workers are legally entitled to one uninterrupted 20-minute rest break during a 6 hour working day[110].

Some employees may require additional tailoring, for example, anyone suffering with chronic illness may need to take breaks at set times to take medication, or to manage fatigue, pain or physical restrictions.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Busy workloads and high expectations from colleagues often mean that team members team find it difficult to take the breaks they are entitled to, or find they are not as restful as they should be.

For example, a BVA member currently working as a small animal vet said:

> *"I work through my lunch break on an almost daily basis. We don't have allocated lunch break slots so it's up to us to make time for this, however I find that if I spend 30 minutes eating lunch it means I start and therefore finish surgery later, my colleagues will be asking where I am and why I'm not helping them get through the surgical list and the nurses will be wanting me to start getting through the surgeries so they have time to clean up at the end of the day, so my lunch break often involves scoffing down a sandwich whilst I wait for my patients pre-medication to kick in. On the occasions when I do get time for a proper lunch break I sit in the office as I want to get through some admin and I am constantly interrupted by reception asking if I can dispense medication/sign vaccine books/sign insurance forms etc, even though they can see I am eating my lunch"*

What roles do employers and employees have?

Individuals should take responsibility to make a conscious decision about breaks and realise the value of their own time, including leaving the premises if possible. They should also be mindful of other team members' rights to have a break and make sure their actions do not prevent this, eg when finishing late means the team members clearing up after a procedure will not get any time off.

Employers should make sure that breaks are generally structured and adhered to. The nature of the profession means that scheduled breaks may unexpectedly need to be delayed, but this should be infrequent and genuinely unforeseen, with the time for a break allowed at a later point. They are a legal requirement and must be treated as such, with deviation from the norm taken seriously, investigated and addressed. Where appropriate, group breaks can additionally boost productivity and wellbeing by allowing for team support and bonding.

We recommend:

Recommendation 30: Individuals should take responsibility for, and realise the value of, their own time and make a conscious decision about taking breaks. Employers should support this by ensuring breaks are structured, protected and adhered to.

Case study 18: HALT initiative

It is all too easy to focus on trying to power through when busy, and to skip breaks and lunchtime. However, there is plenty of evidence to show that productivity is reduced and mistakes much more likely to happen, as well as our colleagues having to put up with 'hangry' behaviour, when we are Hungry, Angry, Late or Tired.

The HALT campaign provided us with a great language and culture to allow us to communicate the need for a break for ourselves and colleagues. Saying "I'm just going for a cup of tea" when everyone is running around like headless chickens may not be easy to say, or go down too well with the rest of the team, but saying "I'm just going to take a HALT" when everyone has read the supporting information for the campaign, communicates the importance of that break to the whole team. Also telling a colleague to take a break may be taken as an insult or suggestion of weakness, whereas suggesting they HALT communicates the true intention and importance of that break. Full details for the HALT campaign can be found here: https://www.vetled.co.uk/halt

Stephanie Walsh, First Opinion Head Vet, Rutland House Veterinary Hospital

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[110] https://www.gov.uk/rest-breaks-work

Case study 19: Breaks in a slaughterhouse workplace
In the slaughterhouse scenario, all of the staff take formal breaks, allowing Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs) to have a break too.

Veterinarians, both OV's and MHI's working in the slaughter industry are either directly employed by FSA or work for the service delivery partner E&J. FSA require that all staff, both employed and contracted, must take a half hour unpaid break each working day if their working hours exceed 6 hours. If the team member is completing a timesheet, they must record a break whenever they have worked for more than 6 hours.

Many abattoirs have a canteen facility and allow FSA staff to use this. In very large premises this is often a subsidised facility, with staff breaks often scheduled and staggered between different areas to avoid overcrowding of facilities. There are normally several breaks in the day, commonly a breakfast break early morning and then a lunch break.

Smaller slaughter sites may have less formal arrangements, for example taking a break after finishing with one species, before cleaning down and starting on another. There are some very small premises where the working day does not exceed 6 hours and in those cases a break will not always be needed.

The formal structure and clear requirements mean that the taking of breaks tends not to be a problem in this workplace.

Collin Willson, Senior Vice President, Veterinary Public Health Association

Flexible working

Good workplaces support requests for flexible working wherever possible, from all team members, regardless of the reason for their request.

Flexible working can allow for better work-life balance and offers a greater sense of being in control over your life, therefore improving satisfaction, motivation and retention. A government survey of employers' attitude to work-life balance found that the majority of businesses surveyed found flexible working had a positive impact on employee relations and employee motivation[111]. It can help to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and enhance employee engagement and loyalty.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
According to research from the consultancy and jobs site **Timewise**[112], an estimated 14.1 million people in Britain want flexibility in their working hours or location – equivalent to almost half the working population. **Quinyx**[113] found that 25% of UK workers value flexibility so much that they said no increase in salary would make them forgo flexibility at work, and 36% said they'd need at least a 31% increase in salary if they were to waive flexibility at work. They also found that 21% of the UK working population feel that their current work schedules mean they don't spend enough time with their families, and that 17% say their schedule suggests that their employer does not care about their wellbeing outside of work.

Flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee's needs[114]. Types of flexible working include:

- split shifts
- flexible start and finish times – eg an early shift on certain days
- compressed hours
- part-time hours

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[111] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/business-benefits-of-flexible-working
[112] http://timewise.co.uk/
[113] Quinyx (2018) Work that keeps the UK working: How flexible working can help power 24-hour Britain in a post-Brexit age Available at: https://www.quinyx.com/24hourbritain?hsCtaTracking=55ccd41a-6b04-4d72-979c-588f31ac1a1f%7Cf06f3703-d8c8-4317-b8c7-b9efd88c290c
[114] https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working

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- working from home

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working – not just parents and carers. It may be requested for a variety of reasons, including personal, social, or to care for family members.

If an employee requests this in writing, the employer must consider it and either change the terms and conditions of the employee's contract or write to the employee giving the business reasons for their refusal. The **UK** and **NI** governments provide guidance on requesting flexible working.

Flexible working does need to be considered in line with business need. Some types of flexible working may not always be appropriate for an organisation or may have an impact on other members of the team. For example, a team member working part-time may reasonably expect to reduce their out-of-hours work accordingly, but in a small team this may add additional pressure onto colleagues to work extra out-of-hours shifts.

What roles do employers and employees have?
Employers should be open to discussions about any team members' need for flexible working, thinking creatively to find ways to make it work wherever possible.

Employees should be aware of their **legal right to request flexible working**, but recognise that employers also need to take into account the impacts of this on the wider team. For example, to enable a team member to go part-time but maintain full out-of-hours duties to maintain a fair and balanced workload across the team, an employer could discuss solutions such as offering support with childcare or rota sharing.

All team members should support each other's need for flexibility and work together to find solutions. This includes acknowledging the benefits on their work-life balance and performance at work and understanding their reasons for doing so.

We recommend:

Recommendation 31: Wherever possible, employers should support requests for flexible working from all team members, regardless of the reason for their request.

Recommendation 32: Employees should recognise that employers need to take into account the impacts of their request for flexible working on the wider team, and support each other in their needs for flexibility.

Case study 20: Working flexibly
I have been extremely lucky to have been allowed to work flexibility in various jobs, meaning I was able to pursue interests outside of work.

I love working in clinical practice but was also interested in animal welfare early on in my career. My employers have allowed me to alter working hours and days in order to attend committee and trustee meetings, provided I gave them enough notice. My attendance and involvement in those committees had no direct benefit to my employers, but they acknowledged the wider positives in facilitating my involvement in them.

The flexibility afforded to me in order to pursue interests outside work means I have felt valued as an individual. It shows that my employers and colleagues are interested in, and respectful of me as an individual beyond my clinical work. Since I have not been resenting work for stopping me being able to do what I enjoy, I have been more present and focused. I have worked more efficiently and enjoyed my clinical role more as I know I am dedicating my time and skills to my patient and the business, without sacrificing what else matters to me.

We are not just vets; we are people with wider interests too. Being given the flexibility to be a clinical vet, as well as someone who can actively engage in what matters to me outside of work, has given me a more fulfilling career, and made me a happier and more productive employee for the business.

Daniella Dos Santos, Senior Vice President, BVA

Vet-led team and delegation

Good workplaces delegate work effectively within a team to create fulfilling roles for all team members.

Effective delegation within a team can create more fulfilling roles for all team members, resulting in a happier workplace. Creating an efficient and effective vet-led team has the potential to bring many benefits, including:

- better animal health, animal welfare and public health outcomes
- improved client care
- provision of more integrated animal care
- improved clinical provision or assurance on food hygiene controls
- more effective and efficient use of skills within the veterinary professions
- a strengthened veterinary workforce, with the potential to ease capacity concerns and difficulties recruiting and retaining both vets and RVNs
- improved wellbeing for veterinary surgeons, RVNs, and allied professionals
- more sustainable veterinary businesses

What are the risks of not getting it right?

It is more important than ever for veterinary surgeons to have a relationship with allied professions, in the face of political, economic, technological and legal changes.

At the heart of the vet-led team is veterinary management and leadership. However, a range of potential barriers to a successful vet-led team were identified as part of the Spring 2018 BVA Voice Survey. Primarily, there were significant concerns about whether veterinary surgeons had the appropriate team and people-management skills to lead a successful vet-led team, with some also suggesting that vets need to develop the skills for the role. For example, the ability to delegate is a task essential to the delivery of care as part of a vet-led team. However, 60% of veterinary surgeons believe the profession is "not good at delegating" and 54% of RVNs agree.

A lack of understanding of what allied professionals are legally allowed to do can also be a barrier to creating an effective and efficient team. For example, Registered Veterinary Nurses (RVNs) are key members of the vet-led team, and able to carry out limited veterinary surgery under The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 (Schedule 3 Amendment) Order 2002. However, the 2017 RCVS survey indicated that a lack of understanding of which tasks could be delegated under Schedule 3 was also given as the primary reason preventing the full utilisation of RVNs. Understanding what is permitted under the RCVS Codes of Professional Conduct for **Veterinary Surgeons** and **Veterinary Nurses** is essential before considering delegation of tasks.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should ensure they have read the **BVA policy position on the vet-led team** and consider how they can most effectively implement the recommendations within their organisation. This supports using the "**Hub and Spoke**" model to coordinate the provision of services to clients and maintain oversight of animal health, animal welfare and public health. Within the model, vets act as the hub for diagnosis and treatment, directing to the most appropriate professional with the appropriate skills. Allied professionals operate as spokes surrounding the hub, returning cases back to the vet whenever further direction is necessary. Within this model, discussion between managers and team members may help find roles individuals feel comfortable with and motivated to perform.

All members of the vet-led team should be aware of what they are legally allowed to do so that work can be delegated appropriately. For example, all team members should be aware that only a veterinary surgeon is permitted to make a diagnosis. Employees should talk to their managers if they feel their role could be developed to make better use of their skills. They should also discuss any concerns regarding inappropriate delegation of tasks, including those that go beyond an employee's skills or comfort levels. Resources such as the **RCVS SUPERB checklist poster** can also be utilised in the workplace as reminders for the whole team.

Individuals should make use of all opportunities to improve the team-working, management and leadership skills they may need for the future. Non-clinical training must be recognised as being just as important as clinical CPD

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for effective working. This should be reflected in the allocation of time and money of CPD budgets for non-clinical training.

We recommend:

Recommendation 33: Employers should ensure they have read the BVA policy position on the vet-led team and consider how they can most effectively implement the recommendations within their organisation. The "Hub and Spoke" model should be used to coordinate the provision of services to clients and maintain oversight of animal health, animal welfare and public health.

Recommendation 34: All members of the vet-led team should be aware of what they are legally allowed to do so that work can be delegated appropriately. Employees should talk to their managers if they feel their role could be developed to make better use of their skills, or if they have concerns regarding tasks being delegated inappropriately.

Recommendation 35: Everyone should use opportunities throughout their career to develop teamworking, management and leadership skills.

Case study 21: The vet-led team in action

The UK poultry industry is highly integrated and efficient, with strict biosecurity measures enforced throughout the chain. One of the challenges this model poses is to provide regular veterinary care to large populations of birds. Developing a successful vet-led team is essential to ensure the health and welfare of flocks.

Most poultry veterinary care in the UK is provided through dedicated poultry practices, with some care coming from internal company vets. In many cases, company field staff act as a bridge between farmers and vets. Such staff tend to oversee a group of farms and are responsible for ensuring the best possible management practices as well as escalating any flock health or welfare concerns to the vet. On many occasions field staff will be responsible for routine monitoring of flocks, and on some occasions may be involved in blood sampling or selecting birds for post-mortem examination. The vet will then analyse and feedback results to both the farmer and the field's person.

To ensure that these activities are carried out correctly, poultry vets provide regular training in areas such as vaccination, blood sampling and monitoring welfare. These processes are routinely audited to ensure they are being administered correctly. Much of this training is required by animal welfare schemes and by retailers to maintain a good standard of knowledge and care. Parts of the production chain such as hatcheries and larger abattoirs require trained animal welfare officers.

The vet-led team extends beyond the farms and hatcheries into abattoirs. Levels of pododermatitis are recorded by non-vet abattoir staff. Official Veterinarians will record the levels onto the FSA IRIS system. This data is then submitted to APHA so that any issues can be investigated, in conjunction with the farm's private vet. This demonstrates how the vet-led team is augmented by the use of big data. Additionally, the use of technology is becoming increasingly important with cameras to measure and record the levels of podermatitis and hock dermatitis being developed.

Overall, the poultry industry work closely and successfully with vet-led teams. These relationships positively impact the health and welfare of UK poultry, improve food safety and increase the efficiency of the veterinary surgeon involved.

Richard Jackson, British Veterinary Poultry Association

Reward and Recognition

Pay

Good workplaces provide transparent, fair and equal pay for all employees, relevant to their respective roles.

Pay can be described as a hygiene factor[115], as, provided a team member is paid fairly and at market rates, it usually has little impact on satisfaction, motivation or retention. However, when an organisation does not pay fairly, or a team member does not perceive they have been paid fairly[116], it can impact negatively.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Workplaces must provide fair and equal pay and benefits for all team members, relevant to their respective roles. It is a legal requirement for people doing the same job or work of equal value to get the same or equal pay[117].

Evidence shows that gender discrimination, manifesting as a disparity in pay, still exists in the profession. The BVA report on **Gender discrimination in the veterinary profession** offered a compelling piece of evidence that even when everything about two vets is equal, their gender can still significantly impact upon how they are paid:

- Those who believed female vets no longer experience discrimination – 44% of respondents – offered "Mark" a significantly higher salary than "Elizabeth", ranging from £1,100 to £3,300 more. Those who most strongly endorsed this belief showed the strongest pay disparity.

- Importantly, while this pay disparity was largest among those who were most confident that women in the profession no longer experience discrimination, even those who were generally indifferent or uncertain about this issue tended to pay "Mark" more than "Elizabeth."

Pay systems that are transparent and reward the entire workforce fairly send a positive message about an organisation's values and ways of working[118]. However, many veterinary roles are advertised without a salary. A survey by VetSurgeon.org and VetNurse.co.uk showed that vets and nurses prefer job adverts that show the salary, and many will simply ignore advertisements that don't contain this information[119].

What roles do employers and employees have?
Organisations should provide clear rates of pay, with the ability to move up pay scales if you work hard. Transparency is critical for showing that everyone is paid fairly.

Pay bands for all roles should be advertised, and radical transparency[120] encouraged. A regular review of pay across the workplace should be carried out to ensure equality and fairness within the team. Individual pay review must be objective, transparent and formulated to avoid unconscious bias. Performance should also be recognised, with the best people receiving greater reward. This can be achieved through a transparent pay progression structure, making it clear to all team members how they can progress within or between pay bands. Bonuses can also be used to recognise outstanding achievement, with a fair and transparent method process for earning these.

Members of the veterinary professions put in a huge amount of discretionary effort every day, but may no longer be motivated to do so if this is not recognised. The profession needs to challenge the culture that undervalues this, and ensure all work is rewarded and recognised properly. As a minimum, they should be fairly rewarded for any additional hours of work carried out - refer to the section on working hours (under 'Workload and flexibility') for more information.

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[115] A hygiene factor is something connected with a job that may not make an employee feel satisfied, but that will make them feel unhappy if it is not provided. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hygiene-factor
[116] https://hbr.org/2015/10/most-people-have-no-idea-whether-theyre-paid-fairly
[117] https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/pay/equal-pay/
[118] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/why-equal-pay-important
[119] https://www.vetsurgeon.org/news/b/veterinary-news/archive/2019/07/22/52-of-vets-39-very-annoyed-39-by-adverts-which-describe-the-salary-as-39-competitive-39.aspx
[120] Eg https://hbr.org/2017/10/radical-transparency-can-reduce-bias-but-only-if-its-done-right

We recommend:

Recommendation 36: Workplaces must provide fair and equal pay and benefits for all team members, relevant to their respective roles. They should be transparent, with pay bands for all roles advertised, and a regular review of pay should be carried out to ensure equality and fairness within the team.

Recommendation 37: The profession should challenge the culture that sees team members working for little reward or recognition.

> **Case study 22: Pay transparency**
> If you apply for a government role, you will see that they are graded according to the responsibilities of post and there are set pay-scales for each grade. All jobs are advertised giving clear details of the role, the application and assessment process and the salary for transparency. For example:
>
> ***Bovine TB Research Team Leader***
> ***Salary:*** *£51,771*
> ***Grade:*** *Grade 7*
> ***Contract type:*** *Permanent*
> ***Type of role:*** *Science*
> ***Working pattern:*** *Full-time, Job share*
> ***Selection process details:*** *This vacancy is using Success Profiles, and will assess your Behaviours, Experience and Technical skills.*
> ***Application Process:*** *As part of the application process, you will be asked to complete four 250-word statements on the Behaviours listed above, a CV. The CV will ask for your Job History, Qualifications and Past Skills and Experience.*
> ***Interview:*** *If successful at application stage, you will be invited to interview where you will be assessed on the Behaviours listed above, the Technical Skills listed above. You will also be required to complete a presentation.*
> ***Salary:*** *New entrants will be expected to join on the minimum of the pay band.*
>
> Once you take up post, you will have clear objectives set by your line-manager and your performance will be managed through regular conversations. Annual pay awards are made according to strict departmental rules on assessment of performance to ensure fairness and there is no individual negotiation of pay.
>
> As an employer of more than 250 staff, Government departments have to report their Gender Pay Gap under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.
> If a gap exists, the department is required to develop and publish an action plan to address the reason.
>
> For more information, go to https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/index.cgi and
> https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-government-veterinary-services
>
> **Kate Sharpe, Inspector, Animals in Science Regulation, Home Office**
> **President, Association of Government Veterinarians**

Benefits and bonuses

Good workplaces offer fair and equal benefits, which contribute to a positive work culture, for all team members.

Benefits packages can help team members feel valued, increasing job satisfaction and motivation. Attractive perks can boost morale, increase productivity and help to recruit and retain the best employees.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
The RCVS survey of the professions[121] showed that not feeling rewarded or valued (non-financial) has consistently been one of the most common reasons why vets say they plan to leave the profession.

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[121] Institute for Employment Studies (2019) The 2019 Survey of the Veterinary Profession, A report for the Royal College of Veterinary

Benefits can help employees to save money and add to their disposable income, improve their workplace wellbeing and maintain a better work-life balance, which helps them to feel valued and rewarded. However, they can also come with significant costs for an organisation, and could be unfairly biased towards some members of the team (eg those without or with pets), so it is important to ensure they are the right benefits for employees in order not to waste valuable resources.

Popular benefits include:

- health care insurance (e.g., medical, dental)
- holiday/paid time off above legal requirements, and including the option to buy additional leave
- performance bonuses
- appropriate CPD allowances
- paid sick days above legal requirements
- pension plan above legal requirements
- parental leave and pay above legal requirements
- payment of professional membership fees, eg RCVS, BVA

Not all benefits necessarily need to be costly, eg providing learning opportunities can be a cost-effective benefit which helps employees to feel valued.

Benefit packages must not be used a way to mollify team members where systemic issues exist within the workplace, or as an alternative to poor basic pay. The most important benefit an organisation can provide is to create a positive culture in which all members of the team feel valued, with the best leadership and management processes supporting this.

What roles do employers and employees have?
Employers should take a comprehensive view of benefits, as the upfront cost may have long term savings. For example, providing healthcare services can reduce sick leave within the team. Benefits which focus on wellbeing may be more important than sick pay over and above the legal minimum, since this focus helps create a more positive culture and helps to keep team members well.

Employers should think creatively about benefits and aim to offer those most suitable for their team. Flexible benefits packages, where employees can choose the most suitable benefits for them within a budget, can also be considered. Individual benefits or bonuses can also be used to recognise outstanding achievement, with a fair and transparent method process in place for how to earn these, to reduce the risk of discrimination.

Employees should discuss suggestions for benefits with their managers without expectation, to help them build an understanding of what would work well for the team.

We recommend:

Recommendation 38: Employees should discuss suggestions for benefits with their managers without expectation. Employers should think creatively about benefits and take a 360° view, focusing on those which best help to create a positive work culture for their team.

Personal and career development

Encouraging progression

Good workplaces encourage career progression for all team members, with regular mentoring and appraisals throughout their career.

Having clear opportunities for progression helps to keep careers rewarding and diverse, which in turn helps team members to feel motivated and satisfied at work. Regular performance reviews give team members an opportunity to provide feedback on their jobs and discuss development opportunities which helps them to feel valued and listened to. They also allow employers to manage any issues which arise, helping to maintain a positive and efficient working culture.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

The **Vet Futures report** found that half of vets who graduated within the last eight years reported that their careers had not matched their expectations, with insufficient opportunities for career progression being highlighted as a significant factor.

Vets who had qualified for five years or more were least optimistic about the future, rating their opportunities for career progression less positively than more recent graduates, and being least likely to feel that their degree had prepared them for their current work. The report also showed that vets outside clinical practice tended to be more satisfied in their careers and more optimistic about the future. More experienced vets were also increasingly likely to be working for a referral practice or consultancy, in academia, research or industry, or for a charity, shifting away from the main types of clinical practice.

One of the Vet Futures report's ambitions is to create diverse and rewarding veterinary careers. Among other things, this will require:

- opportunities for career development for vets and veterinary nurses being clearly identified across a diverse range of areas

- business models for veterinary services that reflect the importance of structured career pathways and career progression

- opportunities for secondment across business and veterinary areas to become commonplace

- veterinary businesses demonstrating the value placed on team members through investment in training, career development and enhancement

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To enable and encourage progression, it is important that line managers hold regular conversations and give feedback to individuals. Career progression must be personal to the employee, as career desires and ambition will differ between team members. It is important to allow for flexibility and personalisation where appropriate, in line with the business needs. The assessment of performance should be a continuous process, with feedback given throughout the year. Regular review meetings are important to:

- enable managers to review the individual's progress in a structured way and to assess their performance, aptitude and conduct

- enable the employee to assess their own progress, performance and conduct against required standards and against any agreed objectives

- give the employee an opportunity to highlight their achievements, raise any concerns and flag any learning or training they feel they would benefit from

- give the employee constructive feedback, flag up where there are issues and help the employee to improve where necessary, while making them aware of possible consequences

- establish aims and objectives, and any actions that need to be undertaken to achieve these, eg selecting appropriate development activities

They also allow employers to help keep development aligned with the organisation's aims and objectives.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Organisations should help to facilitate and encourage personal and career development. Managers should regularly meet with team members, to identify areas for improvement and progression, as well as to keep track of any issues arising. A clear record should be made of any formal review meetings which reflects the discussion held, records any objectives set and highlights any issues with performance, together with agreed development actions. This record should be shared with the employee. Employers should also review their own performance, so a 360° feedback approach may be useful for all team members.

Progression also needs to be employee-driven, with individuals taking responsibility for their own career, identifying how they would like to progress and formulating a career pathway. Resources such as the **MyVetFuture careers hub**, sessions in the BVA careers stream at the London Vet Show, and articles in the Vet Record can help individuals to find out about the opportunities that are available.

We recommend:

Recommendation 39: Everyone should take responsibility for their own career progression, encouraged and supported by structured personal and career development reviews in the workplace, with employers being transparent about all opportunities which arise.

Removing barriers

Good workplaces have clear career pathways that are an attractive, accessible and attainable professional route for those positioned across all socio-economic demographics.

There are many barriers which may prevent individuals from progressing. Organisations must work to understand and reduce these in order to encourage progression and to be fair and supportive of all team members.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Some members of the profession may be less likely to receive personal encouragement to progress, due to both conscious or unconscious bias. The report on **Gender discrimination in the veterinary profession** found that those who believed female vets no longer experience discrimination also believed that "Mark" was significantly more competent than "Elizabeth". They were more likely to let the male vet take on more managerial responsibilities, advise other vets to look to him as a valuable source of knowledge, and strongly encourage him to pursue promotions in the near future.

Having objective and transparent structures and processes for career development in place is important to ensure that every team member knows how to seek out opportunities, and to help them identify a career pathway most suited to them. There are many existing examples of this across different sectors, including:

- The **Civil service** has processes and support in place for career development. CPD is provided locally, regionally and nationally to cover both skills for the immediate job and personal development for career

progression. This is supplemented with written information to give clear instructions for training, to refresh knowledge, aid consistency, provide the legal and policy backgrounds for tasks, and explain internal processes. Vets in government are civil servants and therefore sit within the staff grading hierarchy across the civil service. There are competences and behaviours for staff at each grade level, which allows employees to see the standards they are required to work to at their grade and what is required at the grade above. This enables them to look for development opportunities in discussion with their line manager. The identified training can then be sourced through a formal training course, online course that can be done remotely and around other work commitments (accessed through a civil service learning website). Other development opportunities include secondments and taking on additional short-term project work. When these needs are identified as part of the management process, individuals are supported in finding the opportunities, and provisions may be made for travel and subsistence or to work away from home.

- **Willows Veterinary Centre and Referral Service** have a number of structured career pathway programmes, which allow team members to gain skills and experience in a variety of disciplines. All vacancies are internally advertised to allow all associates the opportunity to grow and develop. For example, as well as the option to be part of the multidisciplinary team, specific roles for RVNS exist within each dedicated team across the hospital. This means they have the opportunity to work alongside specialist vets in their respective departments, eg diagnostic imaging, medicine, or anaesthesia. Each department has its own competency check list to support new members of the team and allow consistent development. For those interested in progressing into leadership roles, there are opportunities to further develop in Lead Nurse positions which oversee individual departments, to Team Leader positions overseeing multiple departments, as well as progression to the role Head of Clinical Support Services. Other progressive roles within the nursing team of the practice include the Patient Flow Coordinators who are responsible for the efficient throughput of patients on their journey within the hospital. Willows also funds the placement of at least two Advanced Diploma Veterinary Nursing opportunities every two years and encourages the nursing team to undertake the American Veterinary Technician Specialist programme.

- The **University of Edinburgh** has established a clinical academic research training programme for vets in collaboration with the Wellcome Trust, based on the well-established Edinburgh clinical academic training (ECAT) which provides a research career framework for medical graduates. The **ECAT-Veterinary (ECAT-V) veterinary clinical lectureship** posts are designed to be flexible and combine parallel specialist clinical training with the opportunity to undertake a fully-funded PhD and postdoctoral research.

- The **RVC Behaviours Framework** is a modified version of the Association of University Administrators CPD Framework. This is a versatile tool that supports the career development of higher education professionals. It works on an organisational and individual level, for professionals at all career stages and can be applied across all roles in the sector.

When opportunities do arise, the process for selection must also be fair, transparent and truly open to all.

Team members might be discouraged from re-training if they are especially valuable in their current role, for example, a highly experienced receptionist training as a veterinary nurse. Career aspirations that fall outside the organisation's scope should also be supported, to keep the employee feeling motivated and supported until the time they choose to leave. It is important that members of the veterinary professions are able to access clear information about the full breadth of career pathways available to them, including pathways outside of traditional clinical practice eg public health, laboratory animal medicine and science, research, government, pharmaceuticals.

Other major barriers to progression include:

- cost – including due to the training, equipment, transport or low pay associated with the opportunity. For example, the route to specialisation can be very costly, favouring those with the financial means and without familial or geographic constraints.

- limited scope of training in veterinary degree courses. Students tend to carry out EMS in clinical or traditional roles, which does not effectively showcase or train for the breadth of careers available. The **BVA position on UK undergraduate veterinary education** includes recommendations on providing diverse EMS opportunities.

- lack of flexibility in hours worked – progression often requires, or is perceived to require, a person to be working full time, which makes them less accessible to those who need to work reduced hours. For example, if employers advertise new roles as full time only, this might not be accessible to professionals coping with chronic illness.

- lack of flexibility in length of development period – for example, some programmes do not allow for flexibility in the time taken to be complete them, with those facing unexpected challenges having to lose out on the work already carried out. For example, a student carrying out a one-year masters might suddenly need to extend the period over which they study in order to cope with a challenge, but there would usually be little flexibility in when they could complete their work.

- limited availability of opportunities – eg a lack of internships or residencies can be a barrier to achieving specialisation. Some sectors of veterinary work are also perceived to have fewer opportunities for progression than others.

- limited opportunities for grants, bursaries or support – for example, PhD students commonly need to work locum shifts "on the side" to fund their course, which would not be possible for many people due their circumstances or the availability of locum work. It would also be physically impossible for many with a chronic illness.

> **Case study 24: Barriers to veterinary research careers**
> Veterinary graduates starting their PhD studies are at a significant financial disadvantage compared with their peers embarking on clinical careers in practice.
>
> A vet's earning will usually be lower whilst studying than they would be in a full time job, and a vet embarking on a RCUK-funded PhD programme will receive a stipend of £14,777 a year. Following the completion of their PhD studies, if a vet continues to follow an academic pathway, they could expect to be appointed at Grade 6 of the University's pay scale (£29,176 - £35,845), often on a short-term research contract. In comparison, if they had continued to work in general practice for the equivalent period of time, their median salary expectations would be between £39,524 and £45,543.
>
> An aspiring academic vet following an internship, residency and PhD programme, will have spent up to 14 years of their adult life as a student by the time of their PhD graduation; this has a major impact on their ability to obtain a mortgage, save for a pension and provide for a family, which adds a selection bias on potential candidates. Unsurprisingly, many early career veterinary researchers subsequently choose to return to practice, attracted by higher salaries, greater job security and other financial benefits compared to academia.
>
> The establishment of clear career pathways for those wishing to pursue careers in veterinary research should be a priority. Without significant investment in veterinary graduates wishing to pursue careers in research, we will continue to lose talented individuals who would otherwise have made significant contributions to the advancement of One Health initiatives and the improvement of global health.
>
> **Margaret Hosie, Professor, University of Glasgow**

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should be open and transparent about any opportunities which arise, making it possible for all members of the team to apply. There should be regular, structured conversations with managers that encourage employees to think about how they might want to progress.

Employers should look to existing examples of career pathways in the veterinary sector to identify and create models which work well in their organisation.

Employers should create fair, clear and transparent structures for progression within their organisation and ensure that everyone knows how to seek out opportunities. When opportunities do arise, they must make the selection process fair and truly open to all. Pathways for career progression should be regularly reviewed and assessed for unconscious bias.

The profession should seek to identify and remove barriers to career progression wherever possible, making them accessible to all.

Species and sector-specific veterinary associations can help to provide information about career pathways in their sectors. This would help to better define and increase understanding of the range of careers, increase

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awareness of career pathways that may not have been otherwise explored, and provide information on how to gain employment in the chosen area. We also have a role in supporting the species/sector-specific veterinary associations to collate and present this information.

We recommend:

Recommendation 40: The profession should seek to identify and remove barriers to career progression opportunities wherever possible, including financial, familial or geographical constraints.

Recommendation 41: Employers should create fair, clear and transparent structures for progression within their organisation and ensure that everyone knows how to seek out opportunities. When opportunities do arise, they must make the process for selection fair and truly open to all.

Recommendation 42: Workplaces should learn how to facilitate opportunities for progression from existing successful models, such as in corporate groups and the government sector.

Recommendation 43: Species and sector-specific veterinary associations should provide easily accessible information about career pathways in their sectors, including non-traditional career routes and post-graduate education opportunities.

Case study 25: Creating clear career pathways

VetPartners created and launched a career pathway framework for all practice-based employees during 2019. The career pathways clearly delineate how any member of the practice team: vet, veterinary nurse, receptionist, practice manager and practice support team members can progress both through their job family and into managerial and leadership roles within practice and the wider business.

Progression is based on acquiring the right knowledge, skills and experience, and consistently displaying behaviours related to VetPartners values (support, collaboration, dedication, respect and being approachable). The aim of the career pathways is to create a fair and transparent meritocracy with career development and progression opportunities open to all employees irrespective of who they are or where they started their career journey with VetPartners. This is partly based on VetPartners track record of promoting vets and vet nurses into leadership roles within the business.

Career Pathways are an important tool to attract, develop and retain employees and build resilience and capability within veterinary practice and across the industry. Well designed and implemented career pathways will help arrest the employee malaise and attrition with the industry.

Rob Williams, Head of Organisational Development, VetPartners

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Recognising different types of progression

Good workplaces recognise and reward both personal and professional development.

Professional development enables team members to gain the skills required to progress their career, as well as bringing new skills into the workplace. Personal development is also an important factor for satisfaction, motivation and productivity, which must not be undervalued.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Progression may come in many different forms and is not always in terms of pay rise or job title. For example, progression may simply mean becoming more established within a role and team, such as being asked for their input, collaborating on projects and being delegated tasks. It improves an individual's feelings of being valued and fitting in and is about enabling individuals to improve their performance and reach their desired full potential at each stage of their career. Individuals may develop significantly within their own role, and a failure to recognise this may lead to them feeling undervalued. Clear role descriptions are important for helping employees to know what is expected of them at a given level, and regularly reviewing them is important to show how the role has developed over time, as well as for identifying possible areas for further development.

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Seeking new opportunities within a role is a valuable form of development, and workplaces can sometimes benefit from looking outside their own business to find different ways of working. Employee exchanges with other veterinary organisations and cross-sector working can help individuals learn new skills and ideas which may be beneficial to both their personal and the business's development.

Recognition of external, non-veterinary related, personal development is also important. This may be simply acknowledging something a team member does outside work is different or interesting, or providing time and flexibility to progress with further studies or voluntary roles even if these are not related to the profession. This may not have an obvious direct business benefit, but will bring benefits through happy, engaged employees who feel they fit in, and are therefore more likely to stay. Additional indirect benefits may include marketing opportunities, better customer relationships due to a more personal feel, and improved working relationships with external organisations through increased knowledge of their sector.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should make it clear what is required at each job level, including the training and salary that comes with it, and recognise when an individual progresses significantly. This includes having clear role descriptions which are regularly reviewed, with possible areas for further development being identified.

Employers should be open to and actively look for opportunities for cross-sector working, eg secondments to a university department.

Organisations should recognise and celebrate team members' personal development, even when this falls outside the main aims of the organisation.

We recommend:

Recommendation 44: Employers should ensure that all employees have clear role descriptions, which are updated regularly to include any aspects of the role which have changed or developed.

Recommendation 45: Workplaces should encourage more opportunities for cross-sector working.

Recommendation 46: Everyone should recognise the importance of personal development, which may be non-veterinary related, on employee satisfaction and motivation.

Case study 26: Developing through BVA voluntary work

For me, volunteering as the BVA regional representative in Scotland has been career-changing, and it has helped to keep me engaged in the profession.

The great thing about the BVA is the input from all the specialist divisions and representatives. My input is from a small animal practice perspective whilst others provide wisdom from the world of goats, pigs, zoo animals and government to name a few. From the very first meeting in London I felt welcome and valued for being nothing more than a general practice vet. I have been reminded about the reasons I became a vet in the first place, learning about different species groups, animal welfare issues and the role of the vet in each case.

In the process I have met many lovely people who have encouraged me and restored my faith in the good of the profession. The role has also afforded me new opportunities, such as gaining experience in public speaking and contributing to discussions around BVA Policy matters. This has boosted my confidence, allowing me to reassess my contribution to the profession both as a practicing vet and in the new career opportunities I have embarked upon more recently.

Emma Callaghan, BVA regional representative for Scotland

Training and CPD

Good workplaces encourage personal and professional development (both clinical and non-clinical) that is aligned with the business.

Continual training is necessary to maintain, improve and broaden both skills and knowledge, as well as develop personal qualities, which help team members to remain professionally competent. New skills and knowledge may also bring benefits and improvements to the organisation.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

As required in the codes of professional conduct, veterinary professionals must maintain and develop the knowledge and skills relevant to their professional practice and competence, and comply with RCVS requirements on the Professional Development Phase (PDP) and continuing professional development (CPD).

CPD is necessary to continually maintain, improve and broaden skills and knowledge, as well as develop personal qualities, which help to ensure team members remain professionally competent. However, a lack of time or budget can lead to some professionals not making the most of training opportunities, meaning both they and the organisation they work for miss out on the full benefits. With increased pressures on workload, team members may feel unable to take the time out required to complete training as this adds pressure onto other team members.

Non-clinical training and CPD are often seen as softer and less important than clinical skills. However, training in these types of skills are as important and critical for an individual's personal development. A lack of key skills, such as communication or the ability to have a challenging conversation can lead to many issues which affect professional competence, especially in dealing with people.

Team members may have specific interests which they are keen pursue, so it is important for their motivation and satisfaction that they have the opportunities to develop their knowledge in these areas. Creating opportunities for them to use these skills at work, especially where they can bring benefits for the business, will also help them to feel valued and an essential part of the team. It is also important to have a variety of different skills and expertise across a team, to ensure the organisation can deal with a wide range of issues when they arise.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Both employers and employees should not overlook the importance of non-clinical CPD, including mental health, self-development and communication skills training.

Managers specifically should receive training in leadership development and key non-clinical skills. Organisations should mandate a minimum level of training for all individuals in leadership roles to ensure everyone knows what is acceptable when managing people.

Employers should encourage employees to learn new skills and pursue areas of interest. They should allow sufficient time for training and learning, and also work to make opportunities for team members to use and share new skills in the workplace.

Employees should identify specific areas of interest and seek opportunities to develop skills in these areas, using them to benefit the organisation where appropriate.

We recommend:

Recommendation 47: All managers should receive training in key leadership skills. All members of the profession should appreciate the value of non-clinical training, recognising that it is as important as clinical CPD.

Recommendation 48: Employees should identify specific areas of interest and seek opportunities to develop skills in these areas, using them to benefit the organisation. Employers should support this by encouraging employees to learn new skills and pursue areas of interest, providing enough time for training and learning, and working to create opportunities for team members to use and share new skills at work.

Management and HR processes

Investment in human resources

Good workplaces invest time and money into improving human resources.

Good management is essential for employee satisfaction and engagement. Investing time and money into human resources can bring many benefits, including:

- the acquisition of new skills and knowledge

- enhancing or updating existing skills and knowledge, helping people to further improve proven strengths

- addressing weaknesses or putting mechanisms in place to address or compensate for these

- improving confidence, capability and competence

- encouraging employees to feel supported and enabled in their work

- putting learning into practise where it can do the most good – in the workplace

- using learning to improve performance at work and improving performance throughout the whole organisation through dissemination of information, ideas and networking

- encouraging employees to share their expertise and knowledge which allows employees to feel valued, improving motivation and satisfaction

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Overlooking the importance of investing in improving HR processes and policies may result in:

- failure to comply with legal or moral responsibilities

- reduced opportunities for employee growth and development

- discrimination or unfair treatment

- difficulties attracting and hiring the most suitable employees

- increased turnover of team members.

- team members being prevented from performing their tasks properly, or a lack of understanding of what is expected of them

- difficulties maintaining a positive culture, disseminating and embedding the organisation's values and taking action when necessary

- a lack of understanding from employees of where to go to for assistance when necessary

There is also a potential for conflict between professional identity as a vet and business identity if fixed processes restrict professional judgement or clinical decision making.

HR policies are a written description of rights and responsibilities of employers and employees. Some are required by law, including:

- bullying and harassment

- discipline/dismissal and grievance (this must be in writing)

- equality and diversity

- health and Safety (if you have more than five employees; in writing)

- maternity / paternity / adoption

- pay

- redundancy

- smoking, drugs and alcohol

- whistleblowing / protected disclosure

- working time and time off

- Data Protection Act 2018 (1998) and General Data Protection Resolution 2018

Employers should also adopt policies beyond these legal requirements, specific to their needs. It is wise to have a range of written policies, to help communication with employees, clarify expectations and make sure that everyone is treated in a consistent and fair way.

Employers may benefit from seeking advice from outside of the veterinary professions to develop and improve their processes. HR professionals can bring expertise from a range of sectors which may help to improve management and recruitment processes within an organisation. There are a range of services available to suit different sizes and budgets of organisation, for example, the **BVA legal helpline** offers free advice to members, and local consultancies can offer competitive rates to smaller organisations. There may also be potential to work with other local businesses to share costs.

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What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers must be familiar with the legally required HR policies. Information on legal requirements for employers can be found on the **GOV.UK website**. Employers should also invest time and money into improving HR processes, seeking assistance from HR professionals where possible.

Employees should highlight any concerns to managers where processes may need to be improved and discuss suggestions for solutions.

We recommend:

Recommendation 49: Organisations should keep HR processes under review and, where appropriate, invest time and money in making improvements, including seeking advice from HR professionals.

Recommendation 50: Employees should highlight any concerns with HR processes to their managers, discuss suggestions for solutions and seek advice from the **BVA legal helpline** if needed.

Case study 29: BVA legal helpline

BVA members can access the BVA legal helpline 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to speak to a team of specialist legal advisors about any professional or personal subject. This service is free to members and provided by our partner Law Express. All calls are confidential, but some callers do leave feedback and grant their permission for this to be shared. Below are two examples:

Caller 1: Mr K called the helpline on 6 January 2020 for information on the terms and conditions of his contract. He'd handed in his notice, but the end date kept changing and his employer was being awkward about him attending antenatal appointments with his partner. He said: "You gave me the information that I needed, and the matter has now been resolved. Very efficient service."

Caller 2: Ms W called the helpline on 21 April 2020 to discuss her rights regarding furloughing, having just found out she was pregnant. She said "I found it really helpful, you told me exactly what I would or would not qualify for, which I found helpful to be able to use when speaking to my employer", and the service was "Really really good. I was amazed I received a phone call same day.

Case study 30: The benefits of having an HR function

I was delighted to become Medivet's first HR Director in 2018, and found working in this sector is quite different from the retail, hospitality and automotive industries that I'd spent the previous 25 years in. I could instantly tell how passionate, dedicated and professional my new colleagues were, but to me, it felt as if the industry has spent a lot of time caring for its patients and clients and not always as much time looking after the engagement, training and career development of its people. This is where an experienced HR leader and HR team can really help.

For example, I worked in a large organisation whose employees had voted to be the Sunday Times 'Best Big Company to work for' and saw first-hand how they created a very special place to work. It was great at providing a structured career development programme for its 8000 employees, with investments in training well designed and structured to make sure internal promotions were available for those who wanted them, creating a unique organisation culture. At another large, multi-site business I worked for, clearly defined engagement plans were in place and we measured the engagement of every colleague each year. Our management teams were incentivised to focus on creating a great place to work and were rewarded when they did. They were supported in developing their leadership style and received constructive feedback from their teams on how to improve.

I believe that if you provide an engaging place to work, your colleagues will ensure they provide a great service to your clients and the rest takes care of itself. Making this happen across Medivet is my number one goal and I believe we are well on the way. We have recently launched our brand new e-learning platform to provide all colleagues with 24/7 online learning, including clinical and non-clinical content. It has been fantastic to see the take up of this support, particularly during COVID. As always, there is more we can do, but this is one example of how HR professionals can make a difference.

James Dickens, Human Resources Director, Medivet

Recruitment

Good workplaces recruit appropriately, in a transparent and objective manner.

It is important to hire the right people, with the right 'fit', and to make sure that expectations from both sides are clear from the outset.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

The **BVA discrimination questionnaire** revealed a perceived resistance at the recruitment stage to hire people of a particular characteristic, despite being as well or better qualified than others applying for the role. A higher proportion of sex (pregnancy/parental leave and maternity) discrimination was reported at this stage compared with other forms of discrimination. Discrimination of any form is reprehensible, morally and legally. It is illegal for employers to discriminate during recruitment, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Having clear and fair recruitment procedures is important for complying with the law and the **GOV.UK website** provides clear guidance on this.

Many veterinary organisations have been under pressure to recruit and have struggled to do so. The Covid-19 pandemic brought about acute changes, and its impact on the recruitment crisis is yet to become clear. However, the underlying principles discussed in this section remain relevant. Recruitment of vets was becoming more difficult according to the findings of the BVA Voice of the Profession Spring 2018 Survey[122]:

- 73% of the vets surveyed who had responsibility for recruitment said that they had advertised for a qualified veterinary surgeon role in the previous 12 months, up from two thirds when the question was asked in 2015.

- While vacancies were up on 2015, the number of applications being received had declined. On average only around four in ten vacancies (39%) were filled within three months; half (50%) of the vacancies advertised took more than three months to fill and almost a quarter (23%) took more than six months. Furthermore, a significant minority of the roles advertised (11%) were withdrawn because of a lack of suitable candidates.

- The average time taken to recruit for veterinary surgeon vacancies had increased since the question was first asked in spring 2015. Since 2015, the proportion of vacancies filled within three months decreased by a third (from 60% to 39%) and the proportion which took more than six months to fill had more than doubled (from 10% to 23%).

Further evidence of recruitment issues were found by the Major Employers Group (MEG), which represents some of the largest UK veterinary businesses providing primary care directly to the public. In November 2018, MEG conducted a survey looking at vacancy rates amongst its members, which showed there were 890 vacancies in member practices employing over 7700 veterinary surgeons. This represented a veterinary workforce shortage of approximately 11.5%. A survey of veterinary nursing vacancies revealed that there were 475 vacancies in practices employing over 6200 veterinary nurses representing a workforce shortage of approximately 7.6%. The previous MEG survey in July 2017, found an average workforce shortage of approximately 11% for veterinary surgeons. The figure for veterinary nursing vacancies was estimated to be approximately 5.6% at that time.

In the Migration Advisory Committee review of the Shortage Occupation List published in May 2019[123], this shortage of vets was recognised:

> *"It is clear from the stakeholder evidence that they [vets] are facing significant recruitment difficulties. Furthermore, the SOC code ranks 44th in the shortage indicators which indicates it is in relative shortage compared to other occupations. The vacancy rate has been increasing over recent years, apart from a dip in 2016/17, however, still above average."*

Some sectors particularly struggle to attract new team members. For example, a vet working in the pig sector told the group:

> *"Recruiting younger vets to work in what is now quite a small niche within the profession can be a challenge for all sorts of reasons: graduates have spent at least 5-6 years studying the breadth of vet medicine and to then put a large part of that training on one side by going into a niche definitely puts some off. Intensive agriculture has also come under much attention in*

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[122] British Veterinary Association, Voice of the Veterinary Profession (Voice) survey, Spring 2018
[123] Full review of the shortage occupation list, May 2019 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-review-of-the-shortage-occupation-list-may-2019

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the last few years with significant negative portrayals in the media, again this I think makes it challenging attracting new talent to a career in pig vetting. Lack of younger vets coming through the profession can put pressure on those already present and result in increased workload pressures"

The pressure to recruit someone can lead to organisations sometimes taking unusual steps to secure an employee, but this can have a negative impact on others. For example, if a new employee is offered more favourable terms, this may cause resentment and make the current team feel undervalued. When desperate to employ a new team member, a workplace may also mislead the candidate by focusing on the more positive aspects without discussing the less desirable parts of the role. This can lead to an unhappy colleague when they find out the truth, which may have a negative impact on the rest of the team.

Sometimes no suitable candidates apply for a role. In this situation, employers may be tempted to hire inappropriate people to fill a vacancy. However, hiring an unsuitable team member can be costly in the long run; it will take time and money to train them adequately, which may affect productivity, and they may negatively impact on the morale of the existing team if they do not fit within the workplace's culture. If a vacancy cannot be filled, employers should communicate these decisions to the whole team, being honest about why there are no suitable candidates and ensure the team understands why a staff shortage will continue.

Similarly, a new employee may not fit into the organisation well, and employers may ignore these issues in order to maintain staffing levels. Regular performance reviews are important during the first few months after recruitment, to ensure team members fit in and know what is expected of them. Clear probation periods are vital for new team members and should include both regular reviews and peer to peer feedback. Simple things going wrong can make a big difference to the trust a new employee has in an organisation, so probation reviews must also include conversations to check that normal processes are working, eg whether they have been paid correctly.

It is important to remember that all workplaces are different, with their own processes and ways of carrying out routine tasks. Colleagues who are unaware of these procedures are more likely to make mistakes or be unable to carry out their role effectively. Hence, an appropriate induction is necessary for new colleagues to feel welcome and understand how they are expected to carry out their job. This also applies to colleagues joining the team temporarily, such as locum vets.

What roles do employers and employees have?
Employers should have clear procedures in place for recruitment, paying careful attention to all legal requirements and the risk of unconscious bias. They must also be clear and realistic about the role and their expectations throughout the hiring process. Trial shifts may be useful for applicants to fully understand the job and to assess 'fit'.

Employers should not hire unsuitable candidates, even when desperate to fill a staffing shortage. When a new employee does not fit in well, employers must have conversations to either ensure this improves or to terminate employment, even when this is difficult. Any decisions should be clearly communicated with the team members to help them understand the pressures. Temporary solutions may be sought to ease staffing pressures during long periods of staff shortages, eg hiring a locum or temporary staff

Employers should ensure all new team members, including temporary staff, receive appropriate induction and support to enable them to carry out their role. Written policies and handbooks can be a helpful resource for those joining the team. They should also catch up with team members regularly, to keep a track of any issues arising, especially during the first few months of a team members' employment.

Employees should discuss concerns regarding recruitment and new team members with their managers and recognise both the difficulties they face in recruitment and the importance of finding the right team member.

We recommend:
Recommendation 51: To ensure expectations match reality, employers should be transparent and honest about the role when hiring new team members, including any difficult aspects.

Recommendation 52: Employers should make sure that anyone new to the organisation receives appropriate support to carry out their role, and that they are regularly seeking feedback and reviewing the performance of new team members in the first few months of employment.

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Recommendation 53: Employees should discuss concerns regarding recruitment and new team members with their managers and recognise both the difficulties they face in recruitment and the importance of finding the right team member.

Case study 31: A warm welcome for post-grads

Within a career in research or academia, it is common to undertake further post graduate qualifications, like clinical residencies or PhD and master programmes. Unfortunately, post-graduate students can feel isolated when they start their journey, often lacking the formal, structured induction given to new undergraduates or members of staff.

I feel, therefore, I was very fortunate when undertaking my PhD at Heriot Watt University within the Biological Chemistry, Biophysics and Bioengineering Institute. They organised an induction week for all new post-graduate students. There were presentations from all the Principal Investigators, a lab crawl to see the facilities and meet our future colleagues and collaborators, and finally a quiz and curry night on the Friday evening.

This week made us feel very welcomed, created a strong sense of community and friendship that has lasted beyond the post-graduate adventure, and has certainly contributed to the success of our post graduate degrees. Any employer or manager should really take the time to welcome any new person joining the team. The first week is scary and overwhelming for everyone, so take some time to show them you care about their well-being and that they are joining an amazing and supportive group.

Valentina Busin, AVTRW President

Case study 32: The difference a welcome makes

As a locum, moving from practice to practice can be a challenge, especially when you are working somewhere for the first time. A good induction into the running of a practice can have a huge impact on your ability to hit the ground running and deliver on your service provision to that team.

A practice team can help by making every effort to ensure that locums are fully prepared to work with them prior to starting their placement. This means they can be ready to start the working day as soon as they have arrived, rather than having to find where things are. The essential things for your locum to be able to work efficiently are:

- a background check, performed by your practice or the hiring agency

- a contract of engagement or service agreement, signed by both parties

- health and safety information and handbook, emailed before work starts

- computer login details, to facilitate accurate and legal record keeping

- drug cabinet codes and location

- standard operating procedures and materials in a handbook, eg vaccine protocol

- a site tour, which could be done virtually or at an arranged visit before they start

- details of any equipment requirements, so they know what they need to bring

- details of payment arrangements, including how you will pay them and the terms

- the practice complaints procedure

Making sure locums receive this information as part of their induction process will facilitate a much clearer engagement process, smooth on boarding and effective working relationship.

Ben Sweeney, Director, Simply Locums

Managing performance

Good workplaces are proactive in managing the performance of team members.

Good performance management is essential to help employees perform at their best, support team members to improve and help maintain a positive and efficient working culture. Good performance management arrangements can also help an organisation to:

- motivate team members
- check that all staff are making valuable contributions towards organisational goals
- develop team members
- clarify and manage expectations
- recognise and acknowledge the good work of employees
- deliver tasks and projects quickly and to required standards
- spot and improve poor performance

What are the risks of not getting it right?

Poor performance reduces productivity and efficiency and has a negative impact on staff motivation and retention. In some cases, it could have negative professional or legal implications. Poor performance may also be associated with[124]:

- personal circumstances and sickness
- job design and capability
- being asked to meet inappropriate targets
- misconduct
- attitude and behaviour

What is expected will be different depending on the organisation and its culture, so employees need to be informed of what constitutes an acceptable level of performance.

Performance management arrangements can vary widely, depending upon the particular needs of the organisation, but most involve:

- employees being set performance measurements, based on a variety of targets
- meetings between a manager and each member of staff to discuss their performance
- assessing employees against their performance measures
- a record of performance being kept

As mentioned in the section on **personal and career development**, having regular one-to-one review meetings are essential for giving employees constructive feedback, flagging up where there are issues and helping them to improve where necessary, while making them aware of possible consequences. It is also important for managers to have regular performance reviews.

Dealing with issues and calling out poor behaviour is essential. Managing poor performance is difficult, so managers may sometimes avoid having difficult conversations when there are issues with members of their team. This does not resolve the issue and can lead to further problems, such as reduced team morale. Honesty is important, so telling someone there is a problem with how they are working or behaving is often kinder than ignoring it in the long term. Having these conversations means that training, mentoring or guidance can be offered to improve the individual's skills and understanding where appropriate.

If a problem persists even with training and guidance, then managers may need to consider changing the individual's role or terminating employment. Terminating employment can be especially difficult, but employers will often waste time and money trying to make inappropriate people fit in unsuccessfully. In cases where an

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[124] https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/report-summaries/report-summary-tackling-poor-performance

employee's behaviour has been especially unacceptable, the organisation's zero-tolerance policy must be enacted. This also sends a message to other employees that certain behaviour won't be tolerated.

It is also important to ensure employees are clear on expectations from the start of employment. BVA member research[125] highlighted that many veterinary surgeons enter into jobs where they do not have a written contract of employment. This leaves both employer and employee exposed and potentially less able to defend themselves if there are problems with the employment. As a minimum, employers are legally required to provide a 'written statement of employment particulars', which sets out the main conditions of employment in writing.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should provide written contracts to all employees to ensure everyone is aware of expectations and obligations.

Managers must regularly review the performance of employees and must not avoid having difficult conversations when they are necessary. Issues must be dealt with in a timely manner and poor behaviour confronted straight away, following the organisation's zero-tolerance policy where appropriate. They should be pro-active in managing poor behaviour of team members, initially through education and training.

Employers should have a good understanding of legal requirements and processes for ending employment, combined with the confidence and skills to manage this appropriately and fairly whenever it is necessary.

Employees need to listen to feedback from managers and improve their work or behaviour where necessary. They should use the regular review meetings to identify areas for improvement and any training or support they may need. They should also use this as an opportunity to feed back to their managers, particularly if an issue arises with a colleague or client. Individuals who have concerns raised about themselves should seek advice from an appropriate source, eg the **BVA legal helpline**. Individuals with concerns about others should follow the **RCVS guidance on whistleblowing**.

Case study 33: Improving our appraisal process

Over the last few years, we have worked hard to formalise and improve our HR processes and focus on team member development. Much of this has involved making small changes, like making sure all contracts are up to date, and a general upgrade of our HR administration taking advantage of the technology that exists to support us. One area we have significantly improved is our appraisal process. We previously had a system in place, but consistent, regular application was lacking. The daily demands of practice life would often take priority and appraisals would get delayed indefinitely.

We revamped our process, setting a specific time of year during which appraisals must take place, and requiring two or three shorter sessions throughout the year to check on progress and keep the conversation going. Making sure every team member has protected time for the appraisal was a huge mindset shift, and we had to work hard to ensure these were seen as important. To begin with, we actively reminded our senior team members to book time in and lead by example, and the senior management team made sure we held each other to account.

We also made the appraisal more focussed on the appraisee. They now take the form of open discussions, with two main questions to find out what's gone well and what can be better, as well as an opportunity to set goals for the year. All team leaders receive training in some simple coaching skills such as listening and asking the right questions, to shift the focus to the appraisee and engage them in how we can work together to develop.

We know we still have work to do, but the feedback from team members has shown that we have definitely improved. We've moved towards a much more sharing culture, with our employees feeling more listened to and valued. Everyone now has a formal opportunity to raise issues, and team leaders have been able to have challenging conversations about performance management where necessary. The open discussions also help team leaders to develop a relationship with their colleagues and have a better understanding of what is going on across the practice, which ultimately helps everyone to work together more effectively.

Joanna Byrne, Head of Operations and Communications, Larkmead veterinary group

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[125] https://www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment/contracts-of-employment-information-leaflet/

We recommend:

Recommendation 54: Employers should provide written contracts to all employees to ensure everyone is aware of expectations and obligations.

Recommendation 55: Managers should be pro-active in managing poor behaviour of team members, initially through education and training and if needed, by changing the team members. Employees should use their regular review meetings to raise any concerns and request support.

Recommendation 56: Employers should have a good understanding of legal requirements and processes for ending employment, to give them the confidence and skills to manage this appropriately and fairly.

Dealing with complaints

Good workplaces have clear and transparent complaints processes in place which give security to both employees and the public.

Having clear complaints policies and procedures, coupled with an open, honest and transparent workplace culture, means that individuals are empowered and encouraged to voice their concerns. Poor and unsafe practises can be resolved swiftly before any harm can be caused. A clear, fair and supportive complaints process can also reduce the stress associated with receiving complaints.

Having a fair, open and honest culture around complaints means[126]:

- staff and managers see complaints as an opportunity to improve, not as a threat

- problems are picked up at an early stage and lessons are learned

- poor practise is highlighted and put right

- complaints to external bodies are less likely

- staff and clients can feel confident that their complaint will be taken seriously

- those who find it difficult to make their views heard are protected and have access to adequate support including advocacy

- staff who are the subject of complaints are supported

- resources spent on dealing with formal complaints are kept to a minimum

- clients using the service can feel they have a voice and are able to influence change.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
An effective complaints process is important in keeping the public's faith and trust in veterinary services, and for making sure examples of bad practise are dealt with appropriately.

Internal issues and concerns amongst employees within an organisation can also affect workplace culture, so it is important to have a clear process through which they can be raised.

Without clear procedures for complaints and an open workplace culture, both customers and team members may find it difficult to raise concerns. This may result in poor and unsafe practises being allowed to continue, posing risks to animal health and welfare and the health and wellbeing of team members.

However, receiving complaints can be very stressful for the team member concerned. According to **Vetlife**, dealing with complaints is one of the most common issues affecting their callers.

Regardless of whether the complaint is from a colleague or member of the public, it is must be handled effectively to prevent it escalating and becoming a bigger and more stressful issue than necessary. If the process is not fair, supportive or well documented, it is more difficult to handle complaints effectively. Awareness of and faith in the process can help to reduce the stress associated with receiving complaints, especially when the complaint is unfounded.

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[126] https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide15/complaints/

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employers should make sure they have a clear complaints policy and procedure for dealing with concerns from the public, and consider gaining complaints training to help manage these. Concerns from members of the public must be taken seriously, and the process should be supportive and well documented for all involved. The complaints procedure must be accessible, which may mean providing it in different user-friendly formats, such as easy-read or large print, according to the individual's needs. It should detail how the complaints will be handled and what timescales will be used, as well as the complainant's right to appeal if they do not agree with the result. This should be made clearly available to all team members and customers, and all team members should be able to advise members of the public what to do if they have a concern.

Employers should have a clear and transparent procedure for dealing with internal issues, which is also accessible, well documented and supportive for all involved. For serious concerns, a formal clear and well-documented internal disciplinary process must be in place – refer to the **GOV.UK** or **ACAS** guidance for more information. Employers should also work to create an open, honest and transparent workplace culture, which empowers and encourages team members to voice their concerns so they can be resolved swiftly before any harm can be caused. Employees should familiarise themselves with the complaints procedure so that they are aware of what to do if they have a concern, or if a complaint is raised about them.

We recommend:

Recommendation 57: Employers should make sure there are clear and transparent complaints processes in place for dealing with complaints from the public and for dealing with internal concerns. This process should be supportive and well documented for all involved. Employees should familiarise themselves with this procedure so that they are aware of what to do when anyone has a concern.

Culture

Understanding workplace culture

Good workplaces foster a positive workplace culture by communicating and promoting shared values and attitudes to improve teamwork, raise morale, increase productivity and efficiency, and enhance retention.

Workplace culture is the character and personality of an organisation[127]. It's made up of the organisation's leadership, values, traditions and beliefs, and the behaviours and attitudes of the people in it.[128]

A large and growing body of research on positive organisational psychology demonstrates that a positive environment will lead to dramatic benefits for employers, employees, and profits[129]. Studies have shown a correlation between employees who say they are "happy at work" and feel "valued by their company" and those who say their organisation has a clearly articulated and lived culture[130]. A positive culture can:

- improve the quality, consistency and personalisation of a service, by creating a shared identity for the organisation where everyone understands how to behave

- help to recruit and retain a stable and skilled workforce with the right values, by attracting like-minded and talented people who have the right values for the workplace

- reduce costs through improved retention rates and positively engaged employees

- improve health and wellbeing in the workplace by making staff feel happier and healthier at work

- improve reputation through word of mouth, which can also support recruitment

- help the organisation to meet legal requirements, eg on equality and tackling discrimination.

Workplace culture incorporates and underpins all the elements of a good workplace which have been covered in this position.

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[127] https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workplace-culture/Positive-workplace-culture.aspx
[128] https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workplace-culture/Positive-workplace-culture.aspx
[129] https://hbr.org/2015/12/proof-that-positive-work-cultures-are-more-productive
[130] For example; https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/gx-core-beliefs-and-culture.pdf

What are the risks of not getting it right?

The **Motivation, satisfaction and retention report** showed that how individuals are treated in the workplace is one of the main reasons for choosing to stay or leave, and it is often small things which make a big difference. Workplaces need to show they care about the individuals in their team and the issues affecting them, to let team members know they fit in.

Proactively managing the barriers to a positive culture is essential to enable people to perform to their best ability. Failing to do so may result in additional stress, a lack of engagement, and reduced feelings of satisfaction and motivation. Ultimately this can lead to lower levels of productivity, efficiency and retention.

Factors which can erode positive workplace cultures include:

- poor health and wellbeing, including workplace stress

- unfair treatment, including discrimination, inequality, bullying and harassment

- unmanageable workloads and working conditions, eg long working hours

- failure to recognise or reward team members' work and experience

- lack of progression opportunities, support, mentoring or training

- poor management and leadership processes

Some negative behaviours and cultures are common across the profession, such as the endorsement of long working hours. By not addressing these factors, we are giving tacit endorsement and perpetuating the behaviour.

It is important to recognise that core values and fundamental principles are more important than 'perks'. Research[131,132] suggests that creating a positive and healthy workplace culture rests on a few major principles. These include:

- caring for, being interested in, and respecting colleagues

- providing support for one another, including offering kindness and compassion when others are struggling

- adopting a just culture and a positive environment to learn from mistakes

- inspiring one another at work

- emphasising the meaningfulness of the work

- treating one another with respect, gratitude, trust, and integrity

- investing in employee training and professional engagement

These values must be made clear to all team members and the public, and the organisation should take a zero-tolerance approach to actions which conflict with these fundamental principles. Action is more important than words or policies – what an individual or organisation tolerates and how they behave shows others what they truly value, regardless of what their policies say. It may seem easier to avoid having difficult conversations, but this can damage the workplace culture.

Creating clear policies is a good starting point for setting out what is expected as part of an organisation's culture and helping team members to act consistently, eg a flexible working policy. However, policies can only be successful if they are unique to the workplace and embedded in team member behaviours. Generic or company-wide policies which are not relevant to the specific team will be ineffective, and they must be followed through by team members to have an impact.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Individuals should consider what they do personally, professionally and organisationally to show their values, and should repeatedly challenge negative behaviours and processes.

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[131] http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/83259/Cameron,%20Mora,%20%26%20Leutscher%20-%20Effects%20of%20Positive%20Practices%20on%20Organizational%20Performance%20-%20Revised%20Submission.pdf?sequence=1
[132] http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10551-005-5904-4#page-1

Employers should recognise the importance of creating a positive workplace culture and invest in imparting the culture to employees, particularly when they join the organisation. They must be clear on the organisation's core values and fundamental principles, which should reflect those of the team, and consider what they do to show these values. Comprehensive induction training for new colleagues will help them to understand and embrace the culture.

Employers should ensure that all policies reflect the organisation's values. Training, role-playing and testing policies are useful for showing they are being followed through and for embedding them into the workplace culture.

The veterinary profession as a whole should challenge new and established practises which may cause harm to any members of the vet-led team or animal welfare. Bad behaviours should be raised, discussed and dealt with, rather than normalised. Professional associations, including BVA, have a role to play here, by showcasing good practise.

We recommend:

Recommendation 58: Individuals should consider what they do personally, professionally and organisationally to show their values, and should repeatedly challenge negative behaviours and processes.

Recommendation 59: Organisations should recognise the importance of creating a positive culture that reflects the values of the team who work there, and use this to mandate how the organisation operates.

Recommendation 60: Employers should make sure policies are specific to their workplace and embedded within team behaviours.

Recommendation 61: The profession should challenge new and established practises which may cause harm to members of the vet-led team or animal welfare, discussing and calling out bad behaviours rather than normalising them. Professional associations should showcase case studies of good practise.

Driving change – measuring, reviewing and benchmarking

Good workplaces regularly assess, manage, monitor and review their culture.

Constant assessment, management, monitoring and review are essential to make improvements to culture and drive change where necessary.

What are the risks of not getting it right?

To be successful, any culture change needs to be supported from the top down and bottom up; the mandate for how an organisation operates needs to come from leaders, but everyone needs to be part of the culture.

Actively talking to and listening to people at all levels of an organisation is very important for finding out what matters to them, what is working and what needs to be improved. Culture is driven by open, honest, non-judgmental communication and having conversations to find out what works for an individual team. Some team members may be too nervous to speak up about issues affecting them. Conducting surveys can be useful to gather anonymous feedback from all members of the team. Levels of response to these surveys are also important, as low response rates suggest a lack of engagement. Listening groups to discuss what is good and what needs improvement, can also be an effective way of gaining valuable feedback. These should include team members from all levels of the organisation.

Acting on feedback and communicating what has been done is vital for improving satisfaction and motivation in the workplace. Failing to make changes may lead to employees feeling disappointed and undervalued, as they have not been listened to. Using a tool that encourages team participation and shared ownership of new initiatives, rather than leaving them for the leaders to fix, can also be beneficial. Where an intervention is not possible, clear information on why this is the case will show it has been considered and may help to mitigate negative feelings.

To show they care about culture, workplaces need to measure it. Benchmarking can be useful for achieving this, using external organisations such as **Investors in People** or the **VDS Training Practice culture survey**. As a minimum, measuring and reviewing how much time and money is spent on improving culture each year will show that the organisation takes it seriously.

BVA policy position on good veterinary workplaces

Mandatory industry level changes are also important for driving change as these lend support to those who wish to make changes but lack support from their team leaders. Showcasing examples of best practise can also be useful, eg the **Vet Wellbeing Award** winners.

What roles do employers and employees have?

Employees should recognise that everyone has a role to play in creating a positive workplace culture. They should highlight issues with their managers and suggest ways to improve these. They must also actively engage with surveys and initiatives designed to improve workplace culture.

Employers should actively encourage feedback and ideas from team members, be flexible to their suggestions and take action after receiving feedback. When an intervention is not possible, they should communicate the reasons clearly, and where possible provide clear information on any boundaries, such as maximum budgets, before team members suggest initiatives.

We recommend:

Recommendation 62: All individuals should recognise that they have a role to play in creating a positive workplace culture. Employers should constantly assess, manage, monitor and review their culture, actively listening to and seeking feedback from team members at all levels of the organisation on a regular basis, and acting upon any issues which are highlighted. Employees should suggest ideas and actively engage with new initiatives designed to improve the workplace.

Case study 34: VDS Training tool "Practice Culture Survey"

The VDS Training tool is designed to help veterinary workplaces drive a positive change in culture. It empowers team members to feel heard and listened to, showing that culture is about individual responsibility as well as management. It also aims to build an evidence base around workplace stress management, creating a pool of data for the profession to use.

VDS Training developed the online tool based on the validated HSE Management Standards indicator tool, WHO-5 and Utrecht 3 questionnaires. It looks at six fundamental principles of workplaces stress:

- The demands people are under - workloads, work patterns and the work environment

- How much control people have over the way in which they work

- Their job role -– do people know their role and are steps taken so job roles aren't conflicting?

- The quality of relationships within the team

- How change is managed and communicated at work

- The degree of support available, both in terms of people, systems and resources available

This is a comprehensive survey that highlights the risks and challenges each team is currently facing as well as drawing out the aspects that are working well for the team and the practice. It can be distributed to all employees and helps act as a temperature gauge to identify areas to work on and enable a strategic approach to applied interventions to be taken.

VDS training helps to start the conversation about culture with the veterinary workplace. An action form is provided once the survey has been completed, with the emphasis on asking the team for feedback and working towards everyone being involved in making improvements. The survey can also be repeated to see if training or interventions have made a difference.

The tool can be rolled out in all working environments, clinical or not, and is already being used by some government groups. It is very simple and cheap to use, making it accessible to all.

Further details are available at https://www.vds-training.co.uk/courses/event/practice-culture-survey

Carolyne Crowe, Training Consultant, VDS Training

Social responsibility

Good workplaces are aware of their impacts on wider communities and consider the role of social responsibility in their workplace.

Considering where social responsibility lies within the organisation's culture may help to attract customers and potential employees who share the same values, and help existing employees to feel positive about their work. It also contributes towards the positive public perception of the veterinary professions.

What are the risks of not getting it right?
Social responsibility is the practise of producing goods and services in a way that is not harmful to society or the environment[133]. It refers to initiatives run by an organisation to evaluate and take responsibility for their impact on a number of issues, ranging from human rights to the environment.

Social responsibility can come in many forms, including:

- fundraising or volunteering for charitable causes

- engaging with the One Health agenda, to work towards improving animal, human and environmental health collectively

- outreach and charitable programmes, eg support for the elderly or disadvantaged in caring for their pets, offering charitable rates to disadvantaged people, caring for British wildlife

- working towards being more sustainable, to reduce the organisation's impact on the environment and raising the profile of environmental initiatives

- involvement in veterinary politics and organisations

Social responsibility can bring many business benefits, including an improved public image, increased brand awareness and recognition, advantages over competitors and increased customer engagement. Some forms, such as a focus on sustainability, may also bring cost savings. It demonstrates that the organisation takes an interest in wider social issues, rather than just those that impact profit margins.

Consumers and employees are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of social responsibility, and actively seeking services and workplaces that operate ethically and reflect their personal views on major issues. For example, the BVA Voice Survey in February 2019 showed that 89% of vets thought the profession should engage more with sustainability, suggesting that a focus on this could appeal to a large proportion of the profession. Furthermore, sustainability is increasingly important to consumers and is influencing the food choices they make. This affects sectors allied to and reliant on veterinary professionals and it is important that veterinary businesses are knowledgeable about sustainability and are able to educate the public and their clients.

Sustainable development can be defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[134]", and employers should consider the role this plays in their organisation culture, for the benefit of all.

Many employees enjoy working more for a company with a good public image, so it can help to attract and retain good team members. Social responsibility strategies can also improve engagement and teamwork, make a workplace more positive and productive, and encourage personal and professional growth.

As the world's population grows, collaborative working will be increasingly important to make sure adequate healthcare is available, animal health and welfare are safeguarded, food is produced sustainably, and the natural environment is protected. The veterinary professions will need to ensure they are working with others in a One Health[135] approach, recognising that the health and wellbeing of people, animals and the environment are inextricably linked, and that professionals across each of these areas must collaborate in order to effect change.

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[133] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/social-responsibility
[134] Brundtland, G.H (1987) Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future, http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf
[135] The One Health Commission

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What roles do employers and employees have?

All members of the team should be aware of the impacts their work has on the wider community, both positively and negatively, and their workplace should support their efforts to improve this where possible.

Employers should consider where social responsibility lies within their organisation culture.

Organisations should do their best not to have a negative effect on people, planet or animals, as this would make it unsustainable on the wellbeing of future generations. Organisations should review, measure and mitigate their impacts wherever possible.

We recommend:

Recommendation 63: Individuals should be aware of their impacts on the wider community and engage with the sustainability and One Health agendas. Organisations should do their best not to have a negative effect on people, planet, animals, and should review, measure and mitigate their impacts wherever possible.

Recommendation 64: Employers should consider where social responsibility lies within the organisation's culture and, when possible, support employees in their additional efforts to make a positive contribution to the wider community.

Case study 35: Davies Vets

At Davies Veterinary Specialists, we recognise that the climate crisis will have a direct impact on vets, from resource availability, to changes in disease patterns, to increasing environmental regulations. We believe that integrating environmental sustainability helps our businesses to be resilient.

Our journey began after one of our anaesthetists attended a medical lecture highlighting the stark consequences of the climate crisis. In December 2016, with support from our directors, we started our green group with veterinary, nursing, maintenance, kennel assistant and administration staff. We soon realised that we needed more support and knowledge to drive meaningful change, and so we decided to join Investors in the Environment and achieve external accreditation. They were extremely helpful, made the process more manageable and gave us deadlines and targets for motivation.

By making environmental sustainability a key part of our organisation's culture, we have seen many benefits including:

- longer-term thinking. By looking at what might be restricted or regulated, we can plan ahead to maintain quality of care.

- better governance. It has helped us to plan for respond to mega-trends, risks, opportunities and dependencies through our value chain.

- financial savings through efficiencies

- increased enjoyment and engagement from team members, improved health through active lifestyle support, and an increase in staff recruitment and retention

For more information and resources, please visit our webpages at www.vetspecialists.co.uk/sustainability

Ellie West, Davies Veterinary Specialists

Case study 36: Business benefits from voluntary work

I've always found that team members who are happy in themselves are generally more productive, more engaged and more profitable. For many of our team members, giving something back to their community is important for their happiness.

We have several team members who are actively engaged with veterinary politics and associations, including at the most senior levels. Some of the key benefits of this are:

- Value – team members feel more valued and listened to when we support them to take part, which makes the more likely to continue working for us.

- Confidence – being asked to take on a voluntary position makes them feel more respected, which in turn boosts their confidence and ultimately improves their work.

- Education – team members have their eyes opened to what is happening outside of our practice and often bring back useful insights which benefit the team.

We recognise the benefits this can bring to the team members and our business, so we support team members who wish to take on voluntary roles as much as possible. We work with them to make sure they have the flexibility they need to carry out both their paid and voluntary roles effectively. As a result, we have a happier team and more profitable business.

Diane Heron, Practice director, Park Vets

Annex 1 – Useful Resources

Health and Wellbeing

A culture of good health and wellbeing

- Public Health England guidance on Health matters: health and work www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-health-and-work/health-matters-health-and-work

- Workplace wellbeing tool to help employers to work out the costs of poor employee health to their organisation and create a business case for taking action: www.gov.uk/government/publications/workplace-wellbeing-tool

- NHS health and wellbeing framework, an interactive document that makes the case for staff health and wellbeing, sets out clear actionable steps and provides guidance on how organisations can plan and deliver a staff health and wellbeing plan: www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2018/05/nhs-health-and-wellbeing-framework It's supporting evidence base can be found here: www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/health-and-wellbeing/developing-your-health-and-wellbeing-strategy/evidence-base

- The SPVS and RCVS Vet Wellbeing Awards, highlighting some of the great examples of practices supporting the wellbeing of their staff: vetwellbeingawards.org.uk/

- Guys and St Thomas education, Sleep: Looking After Your Wellbeing: www.guysandstthomaseducation.com/projectsleep-looking-after-your-wellbeing/

- AGV wellbeing survey: www.agv.org.uk/app/download/5813501909/Vet+Wellbeing+survey+-+Final+February+2019.pdf

- VDS Training Practice culture survey: www.vds-training.co.uk/courses/event/practice-culture-survey

- Vetlife, a charity providing independent, confidential and free help for everyone in the veterinary community, including a 24/7 phone and email helpline, professional mental health support, financial assistance, information and resources: www.vetlife.org.uk

- The Mind Matters Initiative (MMI), which aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of those in the veterinary team: www.vetmindmatters.org

- Occupational health and wellbeing professionals: www.som.org.uk

- MyVetFuture articles on wellbeing: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture/articles/wellbeing

- BVNA top tips; Health and Wellbeing for the Busy Veterinary Nurse: bvna.org.uk/blog/health-and-wellbeing-for-the-busy-veterinary-nurse

Physical health and safety

- The Practice Standards Scheme modules contain clear information on health and safety requirements in practice: www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/practice-standards-scheme

- Handling Veterinary Waste www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/practice-management/handling-veterinary-waste

- BVA Ionising radiations guide: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/practice-management/ionising-radiations-guide

- BVA guidance on farm health and safety: www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/practice-management/farm-health-and-safety

- BEVA guidance on managing equine risks: www.beva.org.uk/workplacesafety

- Occupational health and wellbeing professionals: www.som.org.uk

- HSE health and safety guidance: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=refferal&utm_campaign=hsms&utm_content=home-page-info

- HSE guidance on handling veterinary medicines: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/as31.pdf

- HSE guidance on controlling risks: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm

- HSE guidance on lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

- Article; "Fifteen-minute consultation: problems in the healthy paediatrician—managing the effects of shift work on your health": ep.bmj.com/content/102/3/127

Sickness

- HSE guidance on managing sick leave and return to work: www.hse.gov.uk/sicknessabsence

Stress

- NHS stress busters: www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/reduce-stress

- HSE guidance on stress in the workplace: www.hse.gov.uk/stress/

- The HSE Management Standards: www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/

- The Mind Matters Guide on enhancing wellbeing and managing work place stress: www.vetmindmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MMI-12pp-web.pdf

- VDS Training Practice culture survey: www.vds-training.co.uk/courses/event/practice-culture-survey

- CIPD; How to help your team thrive at work; Six steps every manager can take to make sure stress doesn't get in the way of success: www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/help-team-thrive

- HSE; Tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach; A step-by-step workbook: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf

Mental health and wellbeing

- Vetlife, a charity providing independent, confidential and free help for everyone in the veterinary community, including a 24/7 phone and email helpline, professional mental health support, financial assistance, information and resources: www.vetlife.org.uk

- The Mind Matters Initiative (MMI), which aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of those in the veterinary team: www.vetmindmatters.org   Their list of helpful links is available here: www.vetmindmatters.org/help-links

- The Mind Matters Guide on enhancing wellbeing and managing work place stress: www.vetmindmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MMI-12pp-web.pdf

- Mind, a charity providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem: www.mind.org.uk

- Regional support from: Mind Cymru: www.mind.org.uk/about-us/mind-cymru
  Vet Support NI: www.vetsupportni.co.uk Vet Support Scotland: www.vetsupportni.co.uk/scotland
  The National Rural Mental Health Forum (rural Scotland): ruralwellbeing.org

- Who-Five Well-being Index (WHO-5): www.psykiatri-regionh.dk/who-5/Pages/default.aspx

- VetSafe, the Veterinary Defence Society's confidential significant event reporting service: www.thevds.co.uk/aboutvetsafe

- NHS; A just culture guide; This guide encourages managers to treat staff involved in a patient safety incident in a consistent, constructive and fair way: improvement.nhs.uk/resources/just-culture-guide

- RCVS Knowledge blog post, "Building a learning culture: how quality improvement can help": www.rcvskblog.org/building-a-learning-culture-how-quality-improvement-can-help

- Time to change, support for employers to support teams: www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/tackle-stigma-workplace/support-employers

- Mental Health at work information and resources: www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk

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- Simply health mental health resources: www.simplyhealth.co.uk/sh/pages/healthy-you/mental-health-resources
- VetShift, working to improve the sleep health of all veterinary professionals through education, training and research: www.vetshift.co.uk
- An independent review of mental health problems and their impact on people's ability to work: www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-work
- There are a number of apps and websites available which users may find helpful, such as headspace.com and govox.co.uk/

Lone working and domiciliary visits

- HSE guidance on lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf
- HSE guidance on domiciliary care: www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/domiciliary-care.htm
- BVA Young Vet Network, supporting young vets around the UK: www.bva.co.uk/your-career/young-vet-network
- Crisis Prevention Institute; How to Stay Safe During Home Visits: www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/September-2016/How-to-Stay-Safe-During-Home-Visits
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust, working to reduce the risk of violence and aggression through campaigning, education and support: www.suzylamplugh.org

Diversity, equality, and fair treatment

Tackling discrimination

- BVA report on discrimination in the veterinary profession: www.bva.co.uk/media/2991/bva-report-on-discrimination-in-the-veterinary-profession.pdf
- BVA legal helpline, providing advice and support on all legal issues: www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Member-benefits/Support
- BVNA members advisory service: www.bvna.org.uk
- ACAS; free, impartial advice on workplace rights, rules and best practise for employers and employees. ACAS also offers training and dispute resolution: www.ACAS.org.uk
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en
- Citation discrimination support guides: www.citation.co.uk/hr-and-employment-law/
- Stonewall resources on LGBT+ issues: www.stonewall.org.uk/
- Government guidance on discrimination: www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights/how-you-can-be-discriminated-against
- Government guidance on gender pay gap reporting: www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-pay-gap-reporting-overview
- BVA Reporting concerns and whistleblowing for veterinary practice staff guide: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment/reporting-concerns-and-whistleblowing-for-veterinary-practice-staff-guide
- British Veterinary Ethnicity & Diversity society (BVEDS): bveds.com
- British Veterinary Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (BVLGBT) Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/392864804255735
- British Veterinary Chronic Illness Support (BVCIS): www.bvcis.com
- Athena Swan Charter, encouraging and recognising advancement of gender equality: www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan

Language

- Stonewall resources on LGBT+ issues: www.stonewall.org.uk
- British Veterinary Ethnicity & Diversity society (BVEDS) resources on tackling racism: bveds.com

Respect from the public

- Value of vets video: www.bva.co.uk/You-and-your-vet/Advice-for-pet-owners/the-cost-of-veterinary-care
- RCVS poster to support client/practice partnership: www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/new-poster-to-support-clientpractice-partnership

Diversity and inclusion

- BVA policy on veterinary education: www.bva.co.uk/news-campaigns-and-policy/policy/future-of-the-profession/veterinary-education
- Animal aspirations, Royal Veterinary College Widening participation initiative: www.animalaspirations.com
- Purdue university TOGETHER certificate program: vet.purdue.edu/humancenteredvetmed/togetherprogram.php

Awareness, knowledge and review

- Stonewall resources on LGBT+ issues: www.stonewall.org.uk
- ACAS offer good value training on equality and diversity, and advice and services for resolving disputes: www.ACAS.org.uk
- brap; unconscious bias training: www.brap.org.uk
- RCVS poster to support client/practice partnership: www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/new-poster-to-support-clientpractice-partnership
- MindTools article on avoiding unconscious bias at work: www.mindtools.com/pages/article/avoiding-unconscious-bias.htm

Parental leave and pregnancy

- BVA maternity and paternity guide: www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/hr-and-employment-law/maternity-and-paternity-rights-and-obligations
- BVA legal helpline, providing advice and support on all legal issues: www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Member-benefits/Support
- Government guidance on childcare and parenting rights and responsibilities, including time off work: www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting

Workload and flexibility

Working hours

- Government guidance on maximum working hours: www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours
- Government guidance on opting out of maximum weekly working hours: www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours/weekly-maximum-working-hours-and-opting-out
- BVA sample workforce agreement guide: www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/hr-and-employment-law/working-time-regulations/
- ACAS advice on working hours: www.acas.org.uk/working-hours

Breaks

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- VetLed HALT campaign: www.vetled.co.uk/halt

Flexible working

- Government advice on requesting flexible working: www.gov.uk/flexible-working/applying-for-flexible-working
- ACAS code of practice for handling requests in a reasonable manner: www.acas.org.uk/media/3977/Code-of-Practice-on-handling-in-a-reasonable-manner-requests-to-work-flexibly/pdf/11287_CoP5_Flexible_Working_v1_0_Accessible.pdf
- MyVetFuture articles on combining life and work: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture/articles/combining-life-and-work

Vet-led team and delegation

- BVA policy on the vet-led team: www.bva.co.uk/take-action/our-policies/the-vet-led-team
- RCVS advice on Schedule 3: www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/advice-on-schedule-3
- RCVS 'SUPERB' checklist poster to assist Schedule 3 delegation: www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/superb-checklist-poster-to-assist-schedule-3-delegation

Reward and Recognition

Pay

- Investors in People; Employee recognition ideas & principles for the 21st century: www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/employee-recognition-awards-ideas-for-the-21st-century
- Equality and Human Rights Commission; Equal pay for equal work: what the law says: www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equal-pay-equal-work-what-law-says
- MyVetFuture articles on salaries and finances: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture/articles/salaries-and-finances

Benefits and bonuses

- Government guidance on bonuses: www.gov.uk/expenses-and-benefits-bonuses
- Monster.co.uk article on "How should I reward successful employees?": www.monster.co.uk/advertise-a-job/hr-resources/workforce-management-and-planning/pay-and-benefits/how-should-i-reward-successful-employees
- Petplan veterinary awards, recognising outstanding work: www.petplanvet.co.uk/veterinary-practice-insurance/veterinary-awards/veterinary-awards-what-are-they
- Sage, article on choosing the right benefits package for you: www.sage.com/en-gb/blog/how-to-choose-the-right-employee-benefit-scheme

Personal and career development

Encouraging progression

- BVA policy on the vet-led team: www.bva.co.uk/take-action/our-policies/the-vet-led-team
- BVA personal development review guide: www.bva.co.uk/media/3025/bva_personal_development_review_guide_2013.pdf
- MyVetFuture careers advice hub: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture
- Harvard Business Review; 6 Ways to Take Control of Your Career Development If Your Company Doesn't Care About It: hbr.org/2018/01/6-ways-to-take-control-of-your-career-development-if-your-company-doesnt-care-about-it

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- Investors in People; Performance management appraisals: alternatives for the 21st century: www.investorsinpeople.com/knowledge/performance-management-appraisals-alternatives-for-the-21st-century

- Government Veterinary Services Steering Group terms of reference: www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-veterinary-services-steering-group-terms-of-reference

- Vets: Stay, Go, Diversify, an international community of veterinary professionals who support each other in pursuing fulfilling careers: www.vsgd.co

- VetFutures activities: www.vetfutures.org.uk/blogs/our-activities

- VNFutures activities: www.vnfutures.org.uk/our-activities

Training and CPD

- BVA guidance on personal development: www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/hr-and-employment-law/personal-development

- BVA guidance on the professional development phase: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment/professional-development-phase-pdp-a-guide-for-new-graduates

- BVA graduate guide: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/graduate-guide

- RCVS CPD Guidance for Vets: www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/cpd-guidance-for-vets

- MyVetFuture articles on training and professional development: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture/articles/training-and-professional-development

Management and HR processes

Investment in human resources

- BVA HR and employment guidance: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment

- BVA contracts of employment leaflet: www.bva.co.uk/workplace-guidance/hr-and-employment-law/contracts-of-employment-leaflet

- BVA policy on the vet-led team: www.bva.co.uk/take-action/our-policies/the-vet-led-team/

- VDS Training Practice culture survey: www.vds-training.co.uk/courses/event/practice-culture-survey

- BVA legal helpline, providing advice and support on all legal issues: www.bva.co.uk/Membership-and-benefits/Member-benefits/Support

- BVNA members advisory service: www.bvna.org.uk

- MyVetFuture articles on practice/business management: www.vetrecordjobs.com/myvetfuture/articles/practice-business-management

Recruitment

- Government advice for employers on preventing discrimination: www.gov.uk/employer-preventing-discrimination/recruitment

- ACAS advice on job applications and hiring: www.acas.org.uk/job-applications-and-hiring

Managing performance

- BVA contracts of employment information leaflet: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment/contracts-of-employment-information-leaflet

- BVA contracts of employment for veterinary staff guide: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/hr-and-employment/contracts-of-employment-for-veterinary-staff-guide

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- ACAS advice on Terminating employment - notice periods and pay: archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1650
- Government guidance on dismissing staff: www.gov.uk/dismiss-staff

Dealing with complaints

- BVA mediation and representation services: www.bva.co.uk/resources-support/support-for-our-members
- ACAS templates for employers: www.acas.org.uk/templates-for-employers

Culture

Understanding workplace culture

- VDS Training Practice culture survey: www.vds-training.co.uk/courses/event/practice-culture-survey
- Harvard Business Review; Proof That Positive Work Cultures Are More Productive: hbr.org/2015/12/proof-that-positive-work-cultures-are-more-productive
- Skills for care; Creating a positive workplace culture: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/managing-a-service/workplace-culture/Positive-workplace-culture.aspx
- VetSafe, the Veterinary Defence Society's confidential significant event reporting service: www.thevds.co.uk/aboutvetsafe
- NHS Health Education England; NHS values: www.hee.nhs.uk/about/our-values
- John Lewis "Be yourself, always" report 2019: www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/Juniper/Gender-Pay-Gap-Report-2019.pdf

Driving change – measuring, reviewing and benchmarking

- Gallup Q^{12} employee engagement survey: q12.gallup.com/Public/en-us/Features
- Investors in People: www.investorsinpeople.com
- The Practice Standards Scheme: www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/practice-standards-scheme

Social responsibility

- BVA One Health in Action Report: www.bva.co.uk/onehealthreport
- Vet Sustain, collective of veterinary professionals working to make the veterinary profession a leading force for sustainability: VetSustain.org
- RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk
- PDSA: www.pdsa.org.uk
- Blue Cross: www.bluecross.org.uk
- StreetVet, delivering free care to the homeless and their pets: www.streetvet.co.uk
- UN sustainable development goals: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals
- International Institute for Sustainable Development: www.iisd.org/topic/sustainable-development
- Social responsibility; website highlighting local charities for socially responsible organisations to link with: www.social-responsibility.co.uk