



**Great Workplaces by BVA Accreditation Scheme  
Accreditation Framework**

# Great Workplaces by BVA

There are three levels in the Great Workplaces framework, but only the top two result in accreditation:

**Gold.** These workplaces ensure they encompass the Great Workplaces framework in all aspects of their organisation and excel at many of these.

**Silver.** These workplaces ensure they encompass the Great Workplaces framework to a good extent in all aspects of their organisation.

**Working towards** – These workplaces have made a commitment to their Great Workplaces journey, which is a positive step. However, there is some development needed in certain areas, which will be discussed with the accreditor during the feedback meeting. An action plan may be offered to suggest how accreditation can be achieved.

The categories, and accreditation itself, are intended to be **aspirational, inspirational, and achievable**. Therefore, the categories that do not meet the two accreditation levels are framed as ‘working towards’ to acknowledge a workplace’s willingness to take a positive step towards great workplace culture.

To achieve the Great Workplaces by BVA accreditation, organisations are assessed on 18 themes, using an online survey to be completed by all team members, and interviews with a cross-section of team members, or all team members for those workplaces with less than 10 people. Those that meet the Silver Workplaces standard across all 18 themes will receive the Silver Workplaces accreditation. Those that meet the Gold Workplaces standard across all 18 themes in Silver *and* 15 or more of the 18 themes in Gold will receive the Gold Workplaces accreditation.

The whole process is designed to provide helpful feedback to develop, if and where, necessary. A report and follow-up discussion are designed to help the organisation to implement an action plan for the workplace.

The terms we use are:

- **Workplace[s]** is used to cover all organisations or departments in which veterinary work predominates. This includes clinical teams i.e. veterinary practices, and non-clinical teams such as, but not limited to academic and research teams. Some areas of the framework, such as working with clients, may only be relevant to clinical practices in the community.
- **Team members** refers to all those within a veterinary workplace, including those employed in clinical and non-clinical roles, students, and apprentices. Volunteers can be part of the process in some situations.
- **Managers** refers to those who have day to day responsibility for the workplace.
- **Leaders** refers to those who have strategic responsibility for the workplace.

Note that some people will have all three roles of leader, manager, and team member. In clinical settings, the line manager could be head nurse, lead vet, practice manager or a team lead.



The following themes make up the framework:

### **HEALTH AND WELLBEING:**

1. Physical wellbeing – supporting employees to work safely from a physical perspective, and generally supporting colleagues to have good physical health.
2. Psychological wellbeing – ensuring employees behave with respect and kindness to colleagues and generally supporting employees to have good mental health.
3. Managing work related stress – making the workplace less stressful and therefore more enjoyable for all.
4. Work life balance – promoting wellbeing by ensuring working life does not adversely impact on family and social life.
5. Flexibility – adapting working patterns to enable employees to work effectively.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT:**

6. Effective communication – ensuring all information is shared appropriately and with transparency.
7. Role clarity – enabling employees to perform well in the role they are trained for.
8. Leader Capability - helping Leaders to meet the needs of team members and the business.
9. Performance conversations – ensuring employees are included in delivering performance goals.
10. Recruitment – ensuring the right people are selected at the right time with appropriate support.
11. Relationship management - creating and maintaining positive relationships with those inside and outside the workplace. This includes clients, customers, suppliers, and the array of stakeholders in charities, public and private sectors.

### **CULTURE:**

12. Teamwork – ensuring people work well together, both for effectiveness and inclusion.
13. Positive culture – building a great place to work.
14. Open and fair culture – encouraging a culture based on fairness, equity, inclusion, and diversity.

### **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT:**

15. Learning for all – enabling employees and organisational performance to be better.
16. Career development – providing opportunities for growth
17. Mentoring – ensuring all have the personal support to excel
18. Improvement focus – being transparent in the operational and business aspects of the workplace, allowing all to be included in improvement. It also includes how mistakes are handled, and in some cases used as opportunities to improve.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

	Silver	Gold
<b>1 Physical Wellbeing</b>	<p>All team members take breaks during their working shift to maintain their physical health and wellbeing, including eating and resting. These breaks are protected and respected by all team members in the Workplace, to the extent that this is breached only in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The Workplace values the health of all team members, both for sustainability of the Workplace and out of concern for people.</p> <p>Managers ensure working practices follow safe working guidelines, and suitable equipment is provided. Risk assessments are part of normal practice. Personal safety always takes precedence.</p>	<p>The Workplace is proactive about the health of its employees, including enhancing the physical health of team members and ensuring those with health issues are supported.</p> <p>Physical health and wellbeing policies are in place and managers are proactive about ensuring they are applied effectively. If financially viable, private health care is provided.</p> <p>All team members feel they have enough control of their working day to meet their core needs for rest and sustenance.</p> <p>Feeling overloaded with work commitments is an occasional occurrence.</p>



## 2 Psychological Wellbeing

Team members feel they can be themselves as there is respect, tolerance, and kindness towards one another.

Unacceptable behaviours are not part of the working culture and there are policies in place that ensure leaders and managers take action to stop them if they do occur.

There is awareness that mental health more generally can be an issue for staff and efforts are made to be supportive and to provide a safe environment to talk about psychological wellbeing.

Leaders and Managers lead with compassion, maintaining a safe culture in which all can thrive in their working lives.

Team members are comfortable to challenge unacceptable behaviours, irrespective of the role of the offender in the Workplace. They know they will be supported if they report the behaviour to a leader or manager.

When a colleague must take time off due to mental ill health related to work, this is seen as a genuine illness and the workplace supports the colleague to return to work when able.

There are initiatives in place to help team members maintain and improve their mental health.

<p><b>3 Managing work related stress</b></p>	<p>Being stressed by work is recognised as being a challenge for the organisation, and leaders and managers put support in place to reduce it.</p> <p>Team members feel supported by leaders, managers, and team members when they have personal issues that affect their ability to perform their role well.</p>	<p>Team members report their workplace to be low stress.</p> <p>Leaders and Managers notice when a colleague or team is stressed and take action to reduce it/remove stressors where possible.</p> <p>There is provision to manage and reduce work stress levels in the Workplace.</p>
<p><b>4 Work-life balance</b></p>	<p>Leaders strive to ensure team members can leave work at work.</p> <p>Working long hours is recognised as a problem which managers monitor and try to resolve.</p>	<p>Team members report they have a great work-life balance.</p> <p>Leaders keep metrics on hours worked so they can spot imbalances.</p> <p>Leaders and managers see a positive impact on the performance of the organisation by providing a good work life balance.</p>



## 5 Flexibility

Requests for flexible working are encouraged and decision-making about approving flexible working requests is consistent, fair, and transparent.

Family and social life of team members is respected by leaders and managers.

When asked to stay late or do tasks outside of their normal role, it is rewarded tangibly and proportionally.

The Workplace provides flexibility around the day-to-day personal pressures for team members; this is done in a fair way that does not put them off asking again, or cause stress for other team members.

Flexible working is valued as a tool to motivate and retain the best people. Managers and leaders consistently work to ensure the Workplace can support the needs of all team members to respond to the needs of daily life outside work.

Family and social life is celebrated as part of a caring culture.

Requests for flexible working arrangements are carefully considered and granted when feasible and fair to all.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGMENT

	Silver	Gold
<b>6 Effective communication</b>	<p>Team members have accurate information at hand so they can make decisions quickly and effectively.</p> <p>Team members have regular and appropriate chances to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and their work.</p> <p>Leaders and managers value keeping all team members informed, so communicate regularly and share as much as they can with their teams, including information about the business that is relevant to them.</p> <p>When people step up into leadership and management roles, the workplace provides training in effective communication.</p>	<p>Information flows through the workplace quickly and easily. Team members are confident that they are fully informed to be able to perform their roles.</p> <p>Leaders flex their communication style to suit individual team members.</p> <p>A range of communication channels are in place so people can access information in a timely way.</p> <p>Team meetings take place at least monthly, providing the opportunity to discuss issues as well as receive information.</p>





<p><b>7 Role clarity</b></p>	<p>All are clear as to what is expected of them, both in their role and in their wider contribution, particularly to the collective effort to work effectively.</p> <p>All understand the range of roles that are needed to ensure effective functioning of the Workplace and respect the time invested.</p> <p>All understand the roles of leaders and managers.</p>	<p>New roles are carefully constructed and communicated to everyone so they can fit in quickly.</p> <p>The roles of leaders and managers are reviewed regularly to ensure they are delivering what both the business and team members need of them.</p> <p>Team members feel they contribute fully and feel satisfied that they are provided with appropriate 'stretch'.</p>
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<p><b>8 Leader Capability</b></p>	<p>Leaders understand the breadth of the role and expectations of them among team members.</p> <p>Leaders are well connected with team members at all levels.</p> <p>When there are problems, leaders seek to understand different perspectives before making decisions or resolving an issue.</p> <p>Leaders involve others to make the best decisions.</p>	<p>Leaders are at the heart of the Workplace. They are visible and seen to be effective, proactive, and collaborative across all groups of employees.</p> <p>Leaders consider all stakeholders and try to ensure their needs are met, both present and future.</p> <p>Leaders take developing their leadership skills seriously, knowing it is important to learn how to lead well.</p>
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<p><b>9 Performance conversations</b></p>	<p>All team members have regular, private discussions with their manager about work issues. They leave these meetings feeling listened to and supported.</p> <p>All have a performance review conversation at least once a year, covering a review about how they performed, their learning and future plans.</p> <p>Team members feel they can speak with their manager at any time to get support on their performance.</p>	<p>All team members have frequent 1:1 time with their manager. The focus is on positive feedback and appreciation of their performance, in terms of what they do well, as well as areas to develop.</p> <p>Team members can share concerns openly and confidentially. Managers are interested in their views and act where appropriate.</p> <p>Staff feel empowered to discuss how they may need their manager to adapt their management or leadership style.</p>
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<p><b>10 Recruitment</b></p>	<p>Recruitment is fair, open and focused on getting the best person who will be competent and a good fit for the team.</p> <p>There is a formal induction process which includes time allowed to adjust. New starts feel considered, respected, and fully informed about their role and the organisation.</p> <p>The organisation looks to grow existing team members to fill roles internally as an alternative to recruiting externally.</p>	<p>The Workplace is open to new talent even when they are fully staffed.</p> <p>Team members' input is valued during the selection process.</p> <p>Paid trial days for successful applicants are standard practice as far as possible.</p> <p>The workplace actively asks new starts for feedback on the induction.</p>
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<p><b>11 Relationship management</b></p>	<p>Building and maintaining relationships is valued and proactively managed to ensure problems do not develop.</p> <p>With individuals such as clients and suppliers, care is taken to ensure processes and finances are understood.</p> <p>Training is available about how to manage difficult conversations.</p> <p>Leaders and Managers act to protect team members from unreasonable behaviour they encounter at work, both when it is happening and after.</p> <p>Verbal or physical abuse is not tolerated.</p>	<p>Leaders/Managers are proactive at creating and maintaining positive, long-term working relationships with the organisations they associate with.</p> <p>The Workplace has a culture of zero tolerance of unacceptable behaviour towards team members, and acts on every incident to ensure they do not recur.</p> <p>Training is delivered to all team members on how to handle difficult conversations well.</p>
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## CULTURE

	Silver	Gold
<b>12 Teamwork</b>	<p>There is a team working culture, with all involved in working efficiently and easily to benefit animals, their owners, their colleagues, and themselves.</p> <p>Team members communicate effectively with each other. They feel confident to ask questions and take the initiative.</p> <p>Teams cooperate effectively with other teams in the organisation.</p>	<p>Teams are high performing work units, creating camaraderie and confidence that they will be supported.</p> <p>Teams have autonomy to make decisions where appropriate.</p> <p>Cross team working is smooth and supportive.</p> <p>Remote and part-time workers feel as much part of the team as those who are physically in the workplace or work full-time.</p>



### 13 Positive culture

Leaders and managers strive to achieve a positive work environment by being a positive and active member of the team. They have a can-do attitude to problems and support others to solve them.

Leaders and managers ensure negativity, apathy and conflict within the Workplace are recognised and acted on.

Team members are recognised for hard work and dedication to doing the best job they can.

Team members feel appreciated for their hard work, skills, and commitment.

Team members regularly express appreciation to their colleagues.

Achieving excellence as both an employer and as a veterinary workplace is at the heart of the culture, and all want to play their part to be the best team members they can be.

Leaders embody a culture of celebrating success and, along with managers, make constant efforts to appreciate and recognise everyone's contribution. They promote positivity and enjoyment in the workplace alongside great performance.

Team members consistently report that it is a great place to work.

The Workplace seeks feedback from the community as well as clients and invests in being a positive part of the community.



**14 Open and fair culture**

All team members feel they belong to the Workplace, as equal members of the team, irrespective of differences.

Leaders and managers look to be fair and open with their team members. They take accountability for their own actions and that of their team members.

The processes and policies reflect current thinking on what equality and inclusion looks like and are in place to help all understand.

Discriminatory and offensive language is not tolerated and is reported. Breaches are dealt with anonymously and thoroughly.

Pay conversations are carried out on a proactive, regular [commonly annual] basis.

Being accountable is part of the culture and leaders and managers in particular are quick to accept responsibility.

Leaders and managers ensure all team members understand what equality, diversity and inclusion looks like for the Workplace.

The Workplace strives to continuously value and improve diversity, fair and equal treatment of team members and clients.

Pay structures are transparent and pay levels are reviewed at least annually.





## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

	Silver	Gold
<b>15 Learning for all</b>	<p>Leaders and Managers value and support all team members in their workplace development.</p> <p>Opportunities for training are provided to all team members. Internal training is provided by those competent to do so.</p> <p>An annual learning budget is available to all team members, including non-clinical team members.</p> <p>Team members are allocated appropriate time during their working day to learn.</p> <p>Clinical team members have learning goals that their line managers are aware of.</p>	<p>Team members in all roles, from the top down, participate in regular training and learning, including clinical and non-clinical skills.</p> <p>Leaders and managers have their own learning provision to ensure they are competent in these roles. New recruits see and are attracted to the Workplace because of the quality of CPD and training it provides.</p> <p>There is a clear budget for external training that is used to ensure team members have the skills needed by the Workplace, both now and for the future. This budget may be flexible if training is mutually highly valuable to the individual and the business.</p> <p>Coaching is available for any team member who requests it, given budget availability.</p>

<p><b>16 Career development</b></p>	<p>All team members have an annual opportunity to discuss how they are progressing in their career, focused on their potential for development rather than financial reward.</p> <p>Career progression is framed as several complementary roles e.g. teaching and specialisms alongside management roles.</p> <p>Vacant posts are shared within the Workplace and suitable team members are encouraged to apply. When they are unsuccessful, they get supportive feedback.</p>	<p>The Workplace has a transparent career structure and may have associated pay bands.</p> <p>Succession is discussed among leaders, so they ensure they have a plan for resourcing the future of the Workplace.</p> <p>Team members discuss what they need to do to prepare themselves for the next level up with their manager.</p> <p>Training is made available to enable career progression for the individual.</p>
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<p><b>17 Mentoring</b></p>	<p>Students/trainees have designated mentors/supervisors.</p> <p>The Workplace makes the effort to find a mentor for those who request one.</p> <p>There is a designated mentor for newly qualified vets.</p> <p>Those who mentor team members have received training in what it consists of and how to do it well.</p>	<p>Mentoring and supervision are fully established and available to all team members.</p> <p>Time assigned to mentor others is scheduled and respected.</p> <p>All new team members are assigned a mentor, who is responsible for their induction and support until they are competent.</p>
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<p><b>18 Improvement Focus</b></p>	<p>Improving work practices is part of the culture. Team members can suggest improvements for both clinical and non-clinical activities and processes.</p> <p>Team meetings have an agenda slot to share ideas and discuss improvement.</p> <p>Mistakes are seen as a natural part of working life. Team members support each other to put things right.</p>	<p>All team members take part in helping the Workplace to improve and become more successful and sustainable.</p> <p>There are regular case reviews to identify how to improve clinical performance. Non-clinical processes and practices are similarly regularly reviewed to ensure constant learning.</p> <p>Those who contribute to improvement are acknowledged and rewarded for any measurable improvement in performance.</p> <p>All improvement ideas are welcomed and considered. Mistakes are seen as a learning and improvement opportunity.</p>
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