

**Veterinary Nurses Council****Agenda for meeting to be held on Wednesday 11 September 2019 at 10.30am**

1. **Welcome to new member**
2. **Apologies for absence**
3. **Declarations of interest**
4. **Obituaries** Paper attached
5. **Minutes of meeting held on 8 May 2019** Paper attached
6. **Matters arising**
  - 6.1 Online Leadership programme – number of participating veterinary nurses Oral report
  - 6.2 Any other matters arising not listed below
7. **Update on operational matters** Paper attached

**Matters for decision by VN Council and reports from Committees**

8. **VN Education Committee**
  - 8.1 Minutes of meeting held on 24 July 2019 Paper attached

**Matters of note**

9. **Reports from RCVS Committees**
  - 9.1 VN Preliminary Investigation Committee Paper attached
  - 9.2 Standards Committee Oral report
  - 9.3 VN Disciplinary Committee Paper attached
  - 9.4 Practice Standards Group Paper attached

- .10. **VN Futures** Presentation
- .11. **Communications report** Oral report
- .12. **Any other business**
- .13. **Risk Registers**
- .14. **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 13 November 2019 at 10.30am

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September 2019  
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# Remembering Louise O'Dwyer

13 May 2019

Racheal Marshall, Chair of VN Council, has made a statement regarding the recent passing of Louise O'Dwyer (pictured below with previous VN Council Chair Liz Cox), a previous VN Golden Jubilee Award winner and prominent member of the veterinary nursing profession.



"Last week I was amongst many in our profession who was devastated to learn of the passing of Louise O'Dwyer. I was fortunate to know Louise both as a friend and colleague and know the impact she had across the whole veterinary nursing profession. She was a true inspiration and leader who achieved so much and took every opportunity to use her passion and drive to raise the profile of veterinary nursing in the UK and internationally.

"In 2016 she was a very well-deserving recipient of the RCVS Golden Jubilee Award, which recognises leaders and ambassadors within the veterinary nursing profession. She received the award in recognition of her pioneering role in veterinary nursing, acting as the first veterinary nurse Clinical Director within the CVS Group and the first UK veterinary nurse to be voted on to the US-based Academy of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Technicians' (AVECCT) Board. She was subsequently chosen to be President of AVECCT. Latterly I was privileged to work closely with Louise in her position as Clinical Support Manager at Vets Now.

"She volunteered for several years at the Bella Moss Foundation, worked on a variety of British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Committees, contributed to over 35 journal and magazine articles in the UK, USA and Canada, had written three nursing textbooks, contributed chapters to numerous textbooks in the UK and US and was a hugely popular and highly-respected speaker and advocate for veterinary nursing at congresses around the world.

"Louise's infectious personality, enthusiasm and natural ability to motivate and encourage others made her a role model and friend to so many within the profession. She was always willing to get involved in projects to move veterinary nursing forwards including the VN Futures project.

"When she won the Golden Jubilee Award back in 2016 she told the RCVS that 'nursing is about making your mark' and I think that Louise, more than any one I have known, lived up to this ideal. She is an immense loss to the profession and to her friends and family. She will be hugely missed."

# Lorraine Anne Allan 1950 – 2019

It is with great sadness that I announce that Lorraine Allan died in hospital at the age of 70 in the early morning of Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2019 after a short illness.

There is so much to write about Lorraine that I am sure I can never capture it all. She had always been focused on education, not only as a lifelong student herself but throughout her career and she had always championed animals, even from a very tender age. Her children heard many stories of how from a child of only five or six years she would regularly rescue injured birds, rabbits, hedgehogs, bringing them home to nurse back to life before releasing them. She was born to be a vet, and she was a giant talent in her field. She could diagnose most things at a glance, even before she had laid hands on her patient, and what hands they were. As a surgeon she was magic to watch at work, swift with the scalpel and accurate too, delicate yet decisive. A true master.

Lorraine qualified as a veterinary surgeon from Liverpool University in 1975. She gained her assessor awards in 1995 followed by her Certificate in Education and her Post Graduate Certificate in Education in 1998 and her Masters Degree in Education in 2010.

Her role as a veterinary surgeon was varied, with time spent at Holroyd's, a local Blackburn mixed practice in Lancashire, as a student and then as an assistant veterinary surgeon. Lorraine's passion for teaching others began in 1976, where, after qualifying, she took up a position at Cambridge Veterinary School lecturing on veterinary anaesthesia.

Lorraine met her husband at Holroyd's Veterinary practice and Robert became her soul mate and Veterinary partner, first in their small practice at home and then between 1980 and 1990 at the Riverbank Veterinary Centre in Preston, Lancashire. Lorraine always looked for the next challenge and whilst working as practice manager for her husband, and raising a young family, she was also the official veterinary surgeon at British Beef in Bamber bridge and established a part time veterinary nursing course at the Hutton Centre, Lancashire College of Horticulture and Agriculture, later re branded as Myerscough College.

She gave up practice as the on-call hours were too much when widowed and, as a single parent, she valued her children's childhood over her own endeavours.

Lorraine saw a gap in the veterinary nursing training market in the 1980s and along with other local veterinary surgeons and dedicated College staff they established the first block release veterinary nursing training course in the North West with 9 resident student veterinary nurses embarking on a two year Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Veterinary Nursing course. This went on to grow to over 500 veterinary nursing students on block, day release, full time and blended learning courses. Lorraine was always keen to use her expertise to train others and soon became involved in Animal care, Animal welfare and animal science modules at Myerscough College as well as the block release veterinary nursing.

As the veterinary nursing provision grew at Myerscough College Lorraine realised that she had a particular interest in the Higher Education teaching and training and, as well as being an outstanding teacher for the veterinary nurses in further education, she helped to develop and tutor on Foundation degrees and Degrees in Animal Behaviour and Welfare and The Welfare of Animals, culminating in the accreditation of a Foundation degree and Degree in Veterinary Nursing and a Diploma in Advanced Nursing with the University Central Lancashire.

In addition to this long list of educational developmental successes Lorraine managed to stay focused on her role as duty veterinary surgeon and organiser and official veterinary surgeon for several cat and dog shows in the North West. As president of the Preston and Blackpool cat club and founder of the Northwest Cat Club she gave lectures and workshops to breeders centred around congenital conditions and responsible breeding programmes, long before this was the hot topic of today. Along with her husband, Robert, she championed rare breeds, helping form the Cameo, Pewter and Smoke Society, and helping run their annual show in Fleetwood. She was a keen exhibitor in cat and dog shows with her Rottweilers, Abyssinians, Cameos and Maine Coons and with Boston Terriers and Lhasa Apso's, alongside her daughter, winning numerous prizes across the country.

Lorraine was always happy to use her considerable expertise to help others and became a member of the University Central Lancashire Review panel, a member of the Faculty of Health Partnership Forum, Chair of the Lancashire Constabulary Animal Welfare group, a member of the editorial board in the Veterinary Nurse, and a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons examinations appeals committee.

Lorraine shared her ideas and knowledge on all these committees as well as in the classroom where she mentored students at all levels of veterinary nursing training, always taking pride in their achievements and successes

She dedicated enormous amounts of time to veterinary nursing training and in the latter years her role as Head of Veterinary Nursing, Farriery and Equine Science at Myerscough College enabled her to continue to see growth in all of these areas as well as mentoring the next generation of veterinary nursing leaders and tutors.

In her spare time Lorraine got enjoyment from spending time with her family, sewing and needlework and solving murder mystery conundrums. She always managed to work out "whodunnit" before the end of the film or play and insisted in sharing it with everyone as soon as she had solved it!

The news of Lorraine's death has shocked us all, she has taught thousands of student veterinary nurses and the consensus amongst so many of them is that she was an inspiration, a dedicated professional, a lovely lady and a legend. She was so very proud of all the thousands of students she taught over the years, she dedicated so much of her extra time to the college, it really was an extension of her vocation.

Lorraine had a wicked sense of humour and didn't suffer fools gladly but would be generous with her time and knowledge and always acted as advocate for her students and the animals in her care.

Lorraine was a dear friend and her passing has left a huge hole in the veterinary nursing profession and the dog and cat showing world but she has left behind generations of nurses who will remember, with great fondness, her unique and outstanding teaching methods, her attention to detail and her ability to inspire students to achieve at the highest level.

She always put her own needs second, a truly, truly selfless woman but she embraced life with a wry sense of humour, and a formidable quick wit. She was nearly always the smartest person in the room but never needed to tell anyone. She was caring, she was charming, and she was Robert and Helens mum.

Our thoughts are with her family, friends and colleagues during this time and particularly they are with her beloved children Helen and Robert and her grandchildren Abigail and Robert.

Thank you, Lorraine, for being such a supporter of the veterinary nursing profession, spending so much time encouraging nurses to take an evidence-based learning approach, to stand up for their profession and for helping to drive the profession forward. You will be remembered dearly by so many of us.

Kathy Kissick MA Ed Cert Ed RVN

*Lorraine's family have requested donations rather than flowers to the Rosemere Cancer Foundation*  
<https://rosemere.org.uk/>

<b>Meeting</b>	Veterinary Nurses Council
<b>Date</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	Minutes of Meeting held in May 2019
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	Minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) held on 8 May 2019
<b>Decisions required</b>	None
<b>Attachments</b>	None
<b>Author</b>	Annette Amato Committee Secretary 0207 202 0713 <a href="mailto:a.amato@rcvs.org.uk">a.amato@rcvs.org.uk</a>



## Veterinary Nurses Council

### Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2019

<b>Members:</b>	Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones	
	* Mrs Lucy Bellwood	
	Miss Alison Carr	
	Ms Elizabeth Cox	- Vice-Chair
	Mr Dominic Dyer	
	Dr Joanna Dyer	
	Ms Wendy Drinkwater	
	Ms Lucie Goodwin	
	Mrs Susan Howarth	
	Mrs Andrea Jeffery	
	Mrs Katherine Kissick	
	Miss Racheal Marshall	- Chair
	Professor Susan Proctor	
	Mr Matthew Rendle	- Vice-Chair

<b>In attendance:</b>	Mrs Annette Amato	- Committee Secretary
	Mr Luke Bishop	- Senior Communications Officer
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	- Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Mrs Suzanne Edwards	- Chair, VN PIC
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	- Examinations Manager
	Mrs Lily Lipman	- Senior Practice Standards Manager
	Dr Greer Wild	- Policy and Public Affairs Officer
	Mrs Jenny Soreskog Turp	- Senior Education Officer

Before the meeting commenced, Council held a minute's silence in memory of Louise O'Dwyer, a highly respected member of the profession and holder of the VN Golden Jubilee Award, whose recent death had been announced.

#### Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Lucy Bellwood, the Chief Executive Officer and the Registrar.

#### Declarations of interest

2. There were no new declarations of interest.

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2019**

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2019 were accepted as a correct record.
4. **Matters arising.** The Chair confirmed that the template listing the standing items for each Council meeting was being finalised and would be circulated shortly.  
Action: Committee Secretary
5. In response to a query regarding the suggestion at the previous meeting that the VN risk register should be scored, it was agreed that the Director of Veterinary Nursing would carry this out and bring forward to the next meeting.  
Action: Director of Veterinary Nursing

### **Update on operational matters**

6. The CEO's update report on the implementation of the RCVS Strategy Plan, provided to RCVS Council in March, had been circulated to Council members for information, and a few queries were raised.
7. It was confirmed that the online leadership programme is open to veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons, and that quite a large proportion of the participants are veterinary nurses. The Director of Veterinary Nursing added that feedback from a number of veterinary nurses at the recent British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress indicated that they had been encouraged and motivated by the programme. It was requested that information on the number of participating veterinary nurses should be provided at the next meeting.  
Action: Committee Secretary
8. It was confirmed that the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, reporting through the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC), has veterinary nurse representation through the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA). It was also noted that the VN Futures group is looking into promotion of diversity within the profession.
9. The CEO's written report was very much welcomed.

### **VN Education Committee (VNEC)**

10. Susan Howarth, Chair of the VNEC, presented the report of the meeting held on 27 March 2019 and highlighted a few points.
11. The Committee now has a student representative from the Higher Education (HE) sector, but a Further Education (FE) student representative is still being sought.
12. The Committee was pleased to note that student enrolments are being well managed within the stated timeframe.

13. The new Qualifications Manager, Shirley Gibbins RVN, took up her post in April and several accreditation and reaccreditation visits were taking place in the coming few months.
14. The Committee had requested clarification from the Professional Conduct department as to what guidance should be given to universities on the background checks which should be made before placing students in training practices. It was noted that this had been addressed in the development of the revised accreditation standards, which would be brought to the meeting in the afternoon session.

### **Post Registration qualification framework**

15. Susan Howarth introduced the paper setting out the detailed rules for the administration of the RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, which had been reviewed and fully endorsed by the VNEC in March 2019. The framework had been developed as part of the VN Futures project, and the proposals had undergone a number of changes in response to feedback from the professions and potential providers. The framework had been designed to ensure that veterinary nurses from any academic background would have the opportunity to gain a post professional award from the RCVS.
16. In order to make the qualification more accessible, there is the option of being more subject specific and less prescriptive than the previous post-registration qualifications, and this is similar to the format for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice. The institutions offering the qualification will be required to show that there is a need and market within the industry and the profession. It is likely that the fees for the Certificate will be lower than the current DipAVN due to the smaller size of the qualification, and it was hoped students could obtain student loans. There was also the potential to develop a degree-level apprenticeship, although this would need to be employer led.
17. It was suggested that information should be provided for future students to demonstrate the benefits of achieving the qualification, possibly in the form of case studies.
18. In response to a query on the level of the qualification, it was confirmed that candidates must achieve a minimum of 60 credits, of which 40 credits must be in a focussed field of study at a minimum of level 6. Universities and other organisations will be free to develop courses above the minimum level, in order to provide veterinary nurses with an opportunity for academic progression alongside professional development. There would not be a requirement for a graduate nurse to achieve a different level than a nurse entering with a vocational qualification. It was added that the knowledge requirement would be the same, but the assessment different, depending on the level.
19. It was also confirmed that the title of the qualification would be the same, regardless of the level of the units achieved or the number of credits. Further information on the subjects, units achieved and levels would be available in the transcript provided with the qualification certificate from the awarding university or accredited institution.
20. A number of positive comments were made by Council members on the framework, which it was felt would enhance career progression. It was also noted that a great deal of interest had already been shown by potential candidates.

21. At the conclusion of the discussion, Council confirmed its approval and ratification of the framework, and the Chair thanked all those who had been involved in its development.

Action: Relevant publicity by RCVS VN Department and Comms team

### International Qualifications

22. **Annual update report.** The Examinations Manager presented the annual report summarising the applications for registration from nurses trained outside the UK, covering the period between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. There has been a decrease in the number of completed applications received (87 in total), compared with 97 the previous year. Applications from veterinary nurses educated in the EU/EEA have decreased, especially applications from nurses educated in the Republic of Ireland. There has been an increase in applications from non-EU educated nurses, mainly from the USA and South Africa. A further fifteen applications submitted during that time period have not yet been completed.
23. The number of applicants entering the Register has decreased from 82 to 73, although it was pointed out that the Pre-registration OSCE was held at the end of March rather than the end of February this year and therefore this figure does not take into account the thirteen nurses who passed this exam.
24. It was reported that seven applicants had included information on their application about employment/internships in the UK, which indicated that they had been carrying out procedures which they were not legally permitted to undertake. These applicants were required to undertake an assignment covering the role of the veterinary team and UK legislation before entering the Register. Where this occurs, the employer is also contacted, to remind them of the legislation around delegation to people who are neither students nor registered veterinary nurses.
25. Council was asked to consider a proposal to remove the requirement for veterinary nurses educated outside the UK to provide professional references as part of their application, and replace this with a requirement to provide a letter of good professional standing from a regulatory authority, or equivalent evidence of good professional standing. The current requirement had been based on the requirements for overseas-educated veterinary surgeons. However, the professional references differ greatly in quality and can cause delays, and it is impossible to check the credentials of the person making the reference and their association with the applicant. This requirement has now been removed for overseas-educated veterinary surgeons. Where they have been registered with a professional regulatory authority they must provide a letter of good professional standing. If they have not been registered, they can provide alternative evidence.
26. There was some discussion regarding the complete removal of references, with a suggestion that perhaps one reference should be requested, with a standard template being provided. It was noted that the guidance notes specify the format of the reference and the details which it should contain, although there is not a specific template. It was agreed, however, that as the current custom for many employers is not to provide a detailed reference, other than to confirm the dates of employment, it would be unlikely that meaningful references would always be provided.
27. At the conclusion of the discussion it was unanimously agreed:

- a. That the requirement for veterinary nurses educated outside the UK to provide professional references should be removed, and replaced with the requirement to provide a letter of good professional standing from a regulatory authority.
- b. Where the applicant is a recent graduate and has not yet registered with a regulatory authority, the letter of good professional standing should be provided by the Dean or Principal of the University or College where they completed their veterinary nursing qualification.
- c. Where the applicant is neither a recent graduate nor has been on a professional register they will be required to provide evidence of good standing via a declaration or affidavit.

Action: Application paperwork and guidance to be amended VN department

## **Reports from RCVS Committees**

### **Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)**

28. The Chair of the VN PIC, Suzanne Edwards, joined the meeting to present the annual report of the Committee, which had been circulated with the agenda, and responded to a few queries.
29. Regarding the provision of support to those involved in investigations, for example witnesses, it was confirmed that the Committee is not involved, but each case has a case manager who is able to direct those needing support to the relevant person or organisation.
30. It was confirmed that as the number of concerns raised against veterinary nurses is low, it was not possible to say whether there were trends in the commonest type of case. It was noted that charts showing the numbers in each category are included in the report to Council from time to time.

### **Standards Committee**

31. Matthew Rendle provided a brief update on the Standards Committee meeting held on 10 April. The Committee approved proposed updates to the supporting guidance to the Code of Professional Conduct to reflect changes implemented as a result of new legislation relating to equine identification. Amendments were also approved to the cycle of awards assessment within the Practice Standards Scheme, and clarification on what is considered to be a 'branch' practice.
32. The Committee was updated about the TB testing pilot, which runs until 2020. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) intends to increase this following its end of March review. It had been observed that the training is comprehensive and this might be an area where RVNs could develop skills.
33. There was discussion regarding various case studies. It was agreed that the telemedicine case studies should be reduced in number to three in the first instance to enable focus upon clear general principles. Further case studies on informed consent had been prepared following the release of a first batch in 2018. The Committee was happy with the style and suggested additional topics for future studies. A second batch of case studies had been prepared to cover the "grey" areas relating to

Schedule 3. Feedback was provided and minor amendments suggested.

34. There had been discussion around having a single checklist, relating to Schedule 3, covering the whole veterinary team. It had been felt, however, that whilst this might be desirable there was potential for confusion, and it had been decided that it would be most appropriate for the checklist to be directed at veterinary surgeons as it is they who delegate Schedule 3 procedures. Further checklists for RVNs could be considered in the future.

### **Practice Standards Group (PSG)**

35. The Senior Practice Standards Manager presented an update report on the Practice Standards Scheme. It was noted that the PSG has been revising the standards for accreditation. The review has been completed for the majority of the small animal modules, to be confirmed at the May 2019 meeting of the group. This would be followed by review of the equine and small animal modules, and it was anticipated that the changes would be ready to implement in 2020.
36. A query was raised as to whether the revised standards would include an amendment in respect of the minimum number of RVNs required in a practice, and it was confirmed that this would be covered in the discussion at the forthcoming meeting.
37. Council also raised again the question of including veterinary nurses as Practice Standards Assessors, an issue which had been raised on several occasions previously. The Senior Practice Standards Manager confirmed that this had been agreed in principle but that further work needed to be done as to how it would work in practice, and it was noted that this would require a change to the current rules. The Chair of PSG would liaise with the Chair of VN Council.
38. A number of other points were raised, which it was agreed that the Chair would pass on to the representative on the Practice Standards Group, Lucy Bellwood, to raise at the forthcoming meeting on behalf of VN Council.

### **Communications report**

39. The Senior Communications Officer reported on a number of recent and forthcoming activities.
40. A very successful Veterinary Nurses Day had been held at London Zoo on 7 May, at which over 220 newly qualified veterinary nurses had been welcomed to the profession, as well as the presentation of six Diplomas in Advanced Veterinary Nursing and the recognition of the long service of Sandra Robson RVN, whose career in veterinary nursing had spanned over forty years. The Chair added that there had been many positive comments from the nurses and guests attending, and thanked all those who had been involved in the organisation and success of the day.
41. The approval of the post-registration framework by VN Council would now be publicised, to tie in with VN Awareness Month. It was also hoped to publish an update on VN Futures, career blogs and a blog focused on training practices. There would also be publicity to tie in with Mental Health Awareness week. Later in the month, online interviews would be carried out with members of the Ethics Review Panel with a view to promoting the service to the profession.

42. Forthcoming online publications would include *VN Education*, to include details of the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, *Mind Matters E-News*, *The Practice Standard* e-newsletter and *RCVS E-News*. The Coms Department is also in the process of developing a dedicated website for the VN Futures project.
43. Forthcoming activities would include involvement in VET Festival, an event for veterinary surgeons, in Surrey on 7-8 June, a CPD event for overseas qualified veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses on 11 and 12 June, the Royal Highland Show on 22 to 23 June, and Countryfile Live North from 15-18 August at Castle Howard in Yorkshire.
44. Council was reminded that RCVS Day would be on Friday 12 July, at the Royal Institute of British Architects.

### **VN Futures**

45. Council received an update report from the VN Futures Project Manager on activities over the last quarter, and the planned work over the coming months. The Project Manager was unable to attend the meeting, but intended to attend the next meeting to present her update and address any queries. As aforementioned, the Coms Department is developing a dedicated website for the project..
46. It was commented that now the project has a dedicated Manager and the level of activity has increased, it was hoped that engagement of the profession would be a priority, with publicity being focused on a few key areas where actions have been taken in response to ambitions, and the benefits demonstrated to the profession. It was suggested that the Terms of Reference of the Project Board might be updated to be more explicit in relation to engagement.
47. It was confirmed that VN Futures is a joint RCVS/BVNA project and that the next Project Board meeting would be held in June. Council acknowledged the work which had been carried out by the project manager since her appointment.

### **VN Council membership**

48. It was noted that Elizabeth Cox would continue as a member of Council for a further three-year term, and that Jane Davidson would take up her place on Council at the AGM in July.
49. Lucy Bellwood would be retiring from Council in July, having served as an elected member for four years. During that time she has represented VN Council on RCVS Standards Committee (from 2015 – 2017) and then on the VN Education Committee (from 2017 – 2018). Lucy was not present at the meeting, but would be attending the AGM in July when there would be an opportunity to thank her for her contribution to Council.

### **Risk Register**

50. There were no additional items identified for addition to the Risk Register.

**Date of next meeting**

51. Wednesday 11 September 2019 at 10.30am



<b>Meeting</b>	Veterinary Nurses Council
<b>Date</b>	.11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	CEO Updates, presented to RCVS Council in June 2019 and September 2019, for information
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Decisions required</b>	None
<b>Attachments</b>	Annex A: CEO update June 2019 Annex B: CEO Update September 2019
<b>Author</b>	Lizzie Lockett CEO <a href="mailto:l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk">l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk</a>

## Summary

The Strategic Plan 2017-19 outlines 39 actions arranged under five ambitions:

- a) Learning culture
- b) Leadership and innovation
- c) Continuing to be a First-rate Regulator
- d) Global reach
- e) Our service agenda

This paper outlines progress under each heading; we also update the profession on progress on a regular basis by email and via the veterinary and veterinary nursing media.

The pages to follow cover a range of areas; but in terms of highlights, since the March 2019 meeting of Council, we have:

- Been ranked number 28<sup>th</sup> Best Place to Work in the UK (medium-sized) by Great Place to Work, and given a Laureate Award for being within the top 50 for five continuous years
- Signed the Time to Change Pledge, to signal our commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our team
- Hired a new HR Director, Lisa Hall, who started on 28 May
- Been made a finalist in the prestigious European Foundation for Management Development Excellence in Practice Awards, for our joint leadership Massive Open Online Course jointly with the NHS and FutureLearn
- Represented the College at the ENQA forum in Tallinn, the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) Conference in Zagreb, and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe General Assembly in Bratislava
- Published the results of our second survey amongst non-UK EU graduates, in light of the UK's decision to leave the EU
- Secured, working with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), a recommendation from the Migration Advisory Committee that the veterinary profession rejoins the Shortage Occupation List
- Launched our 2019 Surveys of the Veterinary Professions
- Held the first meeting of our new Diversity and Inclusion Working Group
- Opened RCVS Day (12 July), our 2<sup>nd</sup> Mind Matters Mental Health Research Symposium (24 September) and our 2<sup>nd</sup> ViVet Innovation Symposium (1 October) for ticket applications
- Welcomed 220 new veterinary nurses to the profession at our VN Day at London Zoo
- Launched our inaugural Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant
- Attended the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) Congress, with a stand and a programme of lectures
- Run the 2019 RCVS Council election

If Council members would like more information on any aspect of our work, please just ask.

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## Meeting the objectives of our Strategic Plan

Objectives to be tackled year by year are agreed in the November of the preceding year. As we are now in the final year of our current plan, all of the objectives are 'live'. Numbering is as per the 2017-9 Strategic Plan.

### A – Learning culture

#### **A1. Establish the extent to which a blame culture is present within the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, and set a baseline against which any change can be measured, as we move towards a culture where learning and reflection is encouraged**

An independent research organisation was commissioned to carry out initial research to establish the extent to which any such blame culture might exist in the professions and whether the RCVS contributes to its existence.

An online survey was completed during last spring 2017 by 7,349 people. The results of this survey have informed activities and talks but were not considered robust enough to publish as a stand-alone piece. Further thought will be given to additional information gathering.

#### **A2. Develop a series of evidence-based actions that the veterinary team can take to reduce blame culture and ensure a culture of continual learning is established**

Working with the Point of Care Foundation (POCF), the charity that delivers Schwartz Round training and support in the UK, we have launched a pilot of this reflective practice model involving a range of different practice types, to see if this approach to developing non-judgemental sharing of the emotional impact of cases can contribute to a learning culture. This was an approach identified as part of the Vet Futures Action Plan and is being run under the Mind Matters Initiative.

#### **A3. Help to change public expectations around their interactions with veterinary professionals, including around risk, uncertainty and value (VF ambition five, recommendation 27, action M)**

The RCVS and BVA communications teams launched a social media campaign during National Pet Month in April/May 2018 to encourage animal owners to ensure their pets are registered with a veterinary practice, under the hashtag #petsneedvets. This campaign gained some traction on social media and will continue to be used at our public events this summer – the Royal Highland Show and BBC Countryfile North.

#### **A4. Review the impact of our concerns-handling and disciplinary framework on the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary professions, and take appropriate actions**

An independent research organisation was commissioned to carry out this review. A series of interviews took place with stakeholders such as Vetlife and the Veterinary Defence Society, and some of those who have been through our disciplinary process. Meanwhile, qualitative data were gathered as part of the blame culture survey outlined above.

A draft report has been produced by the researchers and will be published as part of the Mind Matters Initiative, allowing the RCVS Professional Conduct Department to respond to the recommendations, alongside other relevant organisations who play a part in supporting those going through our complaints process. It has been reviewed in draft by the Mind Matters Taskforce and the Preliminary

Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee. A further iteration went to the PIC/DC Liaison Committee in October. A paper including the report and our draft responses was discussed by Council at its March meeting. Thereafter Mind Matters Taskforce members were invited to comment on the report and recommendations before publication. Some comments have now been received and the report will be published soon.

**A5. Review the impact of the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) with respect to mitigating the effects of blame culture and ensure that the project is well enough funded and resourced to address the issues (VF ambition three, recommendation 10, 12 and 15 and action N)**

Increased funding was agreed at the September 2018 meeting of Council, on a rolling three-year basis. An outline budget and strategic priorities will be discussed by Council at its March meeting. Evaluation of key activities is underway. A Risk Register for MMI will also be presented at the 10 July meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

**A6. If appropriate following the completion of trials, introduce an Alternative Dispute Resolution service.**

Complete.

**A7. Consult upon, and implement as appropriate, an outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development (CPD)**

In March, Council supported the recommendations of Education Committee to implement an outcomes-based approach to CPD. To ensure that an effective IT recording platform is available to support the implementation of this policy, the new CPD requirements will be implemented using a phased approach from January 2020. From January 2020, the IT platform and supporting guidance will be available, and members will be able to voluntarily sign up to using this approach. The new requirements will become mandatory from January 2022.

**A8. Extend our concept of life-long learning to include mentorship (VF ambitions three / six, recommendations 12, 15 and 34, action P)**

Since this objective was agreed in 2016, several of the veterinary organisations have embarked upon pilot mentorship schemes, including the BSAVA. Meanwhile the Fellowship is considering mentorship as part of its programme of activity, and mentorship also features in the Graduate Outcomes consultation around the Professional Development Phase.

**A9. Help to ensure that prospective veterinary students have a clear idea of the reality and opportunities of a career in veterinary science, and assist the veterinary schools in providing support for them (links to VF action H)**

Work began in 2018 on refreshing our Walks of Life careers materials, and is ongoing. Meanwhile support for vet students is considered as part of the Graduate Outcomes proposals. Mind Matters has also financially supported a one-day mental health and wellbeing course for students, in partnership with the Association of Veterinary Students – VetKind – which took place on 24 November and was well received. A student wellbeing roundtable will take place on 23 September 2019, in conjunction with the Veterinary Schools Council and Mind Matters.

**A10. Improve communication with veterinary and veterinary nursing students, in order to clarify our role and function**

Attendance of vet and VN student representatives at our flagship events has been very well received, and we will continue to invite these representatives to our key events in 2019, including Royal College Day and Fellowship Day.

Vet Futures Student Ambassadors are involved in the next ViVet Symposium in the autumn, and we worked closely with the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) to help drive student engagement in the Graduate Outcomes consultation.

A student engagement working group is also being set up to discuss and identify other areas for improving communication and engagement with vet/VN students.

Following the recruitment of two veterinary student representatives to both the Education Committee and the Primary Qualifications Subcommittee (PQSC), all students attended the meetings held in April and May and provided valuable contributions across a wide range of issues.

In addition, we have recruited one higher education student to VN Education Committee who attended the March meeting adding relevant and valuable contributions to the discussions. We are still looking to recruit a further education student to this committee.

A student from the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) successfully completed an extra-mural studies (EMS) placement at Belgravia House in March, learning from the Communications Department and reviewing international accreditation standards with the Education Department. A programme open to all of the veterinary schools will be launched soon.

Meanwhile, to ensure RCVS staff have a better understanding of life at vet school, a group of team members headed to Bristol vet school for a visit on 28 March.

Plans are underway to create a My Account area on the RCVS website for VN students, allowing them to manage the details that we hold for them, and provide the opportunity to increase our engagement with them from an earlier stage. We are also reviewing the opportunity to extend My Account functionality to our Higher Education partners, enabling them to have an RCVS home / portal online which would provide a communication channel we can use to interact with each other concerning all aspects of our relationships with them and their students.

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## B – Leadership and innovation

### **B1. Continue to support the Vet Futures and VN Futures initiatives, working collaboratively across professions to ensure actions are met**

The key Vet Futures activities form part of the ongoing Strategic Plan and are being taken forward accordingly. We are also supporting the delivery of the Vet Futures Europe plan, where appropriate (see D10). The Vet Futures Project Board (RCVS/BVA/Veterinary Schools Council) meets regularly to assess progress, and evaluation of the impact of priority activities will be considered this year.

Delivery of the VN Futures Action Plan is being supported by VN Council and is overseen by the VN Futures Project Board (RCVS/British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)). Work is underway to improve the presence of VN Futures online, to help raise the profile of the work of the Project Board and its working groups.

### **B2. Through completion of our governance review, ensure that we are an effective and efficient organisation, better able to lead the profession and serve the needs of the public, including the carrying out of training and the provision of coaching for RCVS Council members who take, or are considering taking, leadership roles**

The legislative reform order (LRO) completed its passage through Parliament with a debate in the House of Lords on 1 May 2018. The Order was subsequently signed by the Defra Minister, Lord Gardiner, on 2 May and came into force on 1 July 2018.

A process of reviewing the committees that support Council, and the work of the Operational Board, has taken place in the intervening months, and an updated Delegation Scheme will be considered by Council at its June meeting.

Further training and development opportunities for Council members will now be prioritised following the recruitment of the new HR Director, who will work with the Director of Leadership and Innovation to develop and deliver proposals.

All new and existing Council members will be asked to update the Skills Matrix in order to support appropriate deployment of skills in committees and working groups. They will also be asked to consider training requirements (as relevant to their Council roles). Meanwhile a recent meeting of those Council members who joined in summer 2018, together with lay members of the Veterinary Nurses Council, sought their views on the induction and embedding process, so that we can continue to learn and improve.

### **B3. Define the role of the new Fellowship to advise and support the RCVS and act as ambassadors for the profession within society at large**

Council approved the future direction of the Fellowship following a presentation from the Chair of the Fellowship Board, Professor Nick Bacon, at its September 2018 meeting. The activities of the Fellowship are now overseen by the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC).

The Fellowship Board has recently developed proposals in relation to its size and composition, as well as the processes for appointing and electing individuals to the Board. These were approved by APC in May and full details of the changes are to be found in the papers for that meeting.

An online Directory of Fellows is being developed to help raise the profile of the Fellowship and to highlight the ways in which Fellows can contribute back to the veterinary profession and wider society.

**B4. Identify and support the next generation of veterinary leaders and develop leadership opportunities across the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, within all branches of the professions, at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally (VF ambition six, recommendations 12, 17, 31, 32 and 34, action Q)**

A three-year plan to address this objective was submitted to the Operational Board at its March 2017 meeting, it included three key streams of activity: leadership for everyone; leading the profession; and, veterinary leadership development opportunities.

As part of the 'leadership for everyone' stream, we have been working closely with the NHS Leadership Academy to develop a MOOC to provide a gateway programme for veterinary professionals wishing to improve their leadership skills. This proved very popular, with well over 5,000 enrolments across the programme's modules. Participants include veterinary surgeons and nurses drawn from over 130 countries, demonstrating its universal relevance.

The programme was recently announced as a finalist in the prestigious EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development) Excellence in Practice Award, which recognise collaborative management and leadership programmes across the globe.

The leadership team has also been working on an initiative to showcase the diversity of leadership and leadership roles in the professions, which will be launched at RCVS Day 2019.

**B5. Develop a biennial Innovation Symposium, to showcase new technologies, educational and business models etc. from within veterinary and related fields, and encourage a culture of innovation (VF ambition five, recommendation 24, action R)**

The initial event took place in September 2017 and a further Symposium will be held on 1 October 2019 at the Lowry in Manchester, focusing on Precision Veterinary Medicine.

**B6. Encourage diversity in our Council, our staff and other groups allied to the RCVS**

This activity is being considered as part of the review of governance and Council / committee structure and operation, and ensuring that any proposed changes do not limit diversity is a key objective.

Training for Council members and staff around unconscious bias is under consideration.

The veterinary careers materials we are developing will have a particular focus on encouraging broader diversity within the next generation of veterinary students.

A meeting was held with a representative from the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society to see how the College can further support diversity within the profession. The conversation focused on two areas – encouraging diversity and discouraging unhelpful behaviour towards those from minorities from within the profession. A blog by the President – 'We need to talk about veterinary

diversity' – was published in September and included in *RCVS News* that month:

[www.rcvs.org.uk/blogs](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/blogs)

The President also took part in a panel discussion around gender diversity within the profession at the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons/Veterinary Management Group Congress in January.

Following the Operational Board's decision last October to set up a Working Group to progress these issues (reporting to the APC), the first meeting of the Diversity and Inclusion Group was held on 23 April, including representatives from MMI, the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society, British Veterinary LGBT+, the British Veterinary Association, the Association of Veterinary Students and the Society for Practising Veterinary Students. The British Veterinary Nursing Association is also on the group but was not represented at this first meeting.

## **C- Continuing to be a First Rate Regulator**

### **C1. Review Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and the relevant parts of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, to clarify and bolster the role of the veterinary nurse (VNF ambition six, actions 29-31)**

This work is now being fed into the broader review of veterinary legislation which, although it does not feature as a specific line item in the Strategic Plan, is bringing together several strands of work, many of which have been thrown into sharp relief by Brexit.

We published the outcomes of the 2017 consultation towards the end of that year. One of the key findings that could be tackled quickly was the perceived lack of clarity around delegation, which led to a lack of confidence in both delegating veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses being delegated to. Guidance. To address this, in June 2018 we published a series of case studies for vets and VNs illustrating examples of how Schedule 3 should be used in practice. These were publicised in the first edition of our new-style online *RCVS News*, and were subsequently covered in the *Veterinary Record* as well as *Veterinary Times* and *VN Times*. A further series of case studies has been drafted and a useful checklist for veterinary surgeons to use in practice has now been approved by Standards Committee.

### **C2. Develop a strategy for regulating allied professionals, either via Associate status or updated Exemption Orders (VF ambition six, recommendations four and six, action U)**

Following the decisions of RCVS Council in January 2019, the final Report of the Review of Minor Procedures Regime (RMPPR) was submitted to Defra; this included the suggested reforms to Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, as approved by Council in terms of a potential route for the regulation of paraprofessional groups in the future. Defra has been asked to consider the Report and Recommendations and we have requested a meeting to discuss the matters raised further. We hope that this will happen in the near future. In the meantime, we are continuing our discussions with the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) and the Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) with a view to progressing towards invitations to these groups to become Associates / Accredited respectively, and we are currently putting in place the appropriate internal resources to develop the necessary structures and documentation.



**C3. Review our concerns-handling and disciplinary processes, including the impact of the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) that separated the membership of the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees from Council, the standard of proof that we set and our sanctions**

The Secretary of State was required to produce a report reviewing the objectives and impact of the LRO by the end of July 2018. To assist in this process, and working within a framework supplied by Defra, we submitted a report to Defra at the end of April. This has been published and is now available on the UK government website.

Meanwhile, it is anticipated that, later in 2019, Council will be asked to consider proposals to consult in relation to the Standard of Proof for Disciplinary Cases.

**C4. Review the regulatory framework surrounding new technologies, to ensure it is proportionate and encourages innovation, while maintaining high standards of animal health and welfare (VF ambitions five, recommendations four and 23, action S)**

After 18 months of detailed discussion, Standards Committee presented recommendations to Council in November 2018 as to how to progress with the issue of the regulation of veterinary telemedicine. Council sent the proposals back to Standards Committee for further work and consultation with stakeholders and this is for discussion at the June 2019 meeting of Council.

**C5. Explore compulsory practice inspection (VF ambition five, recommendation 26, action T)**

This has been included within the workstream of the Legislation Working Party.

**C6. Review outcomes for graduates, with consideration of the likely requirements from the profession and the public of the vets of tomorrow (including the structure and provision of extra-mural studies) (VF actions I and J)**

The Graduate Outcomes consultation closed on 18 January 2019 and received 1,963 full responses and 3,825 partial responses from members, in addition to numerous organisational responses. Individual stakeholder interviews and several focus groups have also been completed. An initial draft of the consultation report was reviewed by the Graduate Outcomes Working Party in April, and it was agreed that further qualitative data analysis was required in order to be able to clearly identify the themes emerging from the profession. The group split into subgroups to consider the more detailed data from each of the four sections in the consultation (Day One Competences, Professional Development Phase (PDP), extra-mural studies (EMS) and clinical education for general practice). Proposals for a way forward for each section will be considered by the working group in August and Education Committee in September, before coming to Council thereafter.

## **D – Global reach**

**D1. Develop a strategy to make sure that the profession is in charge of its future by maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks of Brexit**

Work continues with the joint Defra/RCVS/BVA Veterinary Capacity and Capability Project (VCCP), which aims to ensure that workforce needs continue to be met, regardless of which Brexit scenario becomes reality. Efforts are currently focused on ensuring that the best quality evidence can be compiled showing the scale of the shortage of veterinary surgeon and the reasons for low retention rates in order that any improvements can be tracked.

Following lobbying by the RCVS, BVA and Defra, the Migration Advisory Committee has recommended that veterinary surgeons be added to the Shortage Occupation List. If the Home Office accepts this recommendation, this will streamline the process for veterinary surgeons with overseas nationality to gain a UK work visa (including, in the event of Brexit, citizens of the European Union).

**D2. Collaborate with other competent authorities, associations, educational bodies and the commercial sector to establish a framework for the management of the impact of new technologies, such that animal health and welfare remains centre stage, regardless of from where veterinary services are being delivered into the UK and beyond (VF ambition five, recommendations four and 23, action S) [see also B5 and C4]**

This work is on hold until we have a clear steer regarding telehealth in the UK.

**D3. Improve our support for, and communication with, overseas graduates working in the UK and those considering working in the UK (VF ambition three, recommendation 13, action K)**

We conducted a follow-up survey of the more than 6,100 non-UK EU graduates working in the UK, to re-establish their views on living and working in the UK post Brexit. Just over 50% responded, and the results were published in April.

The RCVS/Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) continuing professional development (CPD) course for overseas vets and VNs was held on 20 November in London and was well received by the 50 or so delegates who attended. The next course will be held on 11/12 June and a further course is planned for October.

Our FAQs regarding Brexit have also been updated.

Meanwhile regarding those graduates who may be considering work in the UK, we will shortly carry out a survey of our overseas-practising membership to understand why they maintain this and the value it has for them, and whether or not they plan to work in the UK in the future, amongst other things.

**D4. Clarify our offer for overseas members and consider expanding the number of members in this category, revising the Registration Regulations, if required**

As mentioned above, research among our overseas members better to understand their motivations for retaining that membership category and what they would like to see from the College is underway.

**D5. Investigate the global market for RCVS qualifications and Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status**

Global Council lead Dr Chris Tufnell and Policy Manager Ben Myring attended the 7th Pan Commonwealth Veterinary Conference (CVC) of the Commonwealth Veterinary Association on 3-7 March 2019, in Bangalore. During the conference meetings were held with stakeholders from across the Commonwealth and with representatives of the World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The discussions focused on exploring options pertaining to objectives D6-D9.

Subsequent to the conference, a paper was drawn up for consideration by the APC outlining a series of options for further exploration. In due course APC will consider more detailed papers on each of these options. Where appropriate, APC's recommendations will be referred to the Finance and Resources Committee and/or RCVS Council in due course.

#### **D6. Consider the global market for the RCVS accreditation of undergraduate veterinary education, particularly in the light of Brexit**

Given the more pressing need to understand how we will work with European veterinary schools in the event of a no-deal, the global market for RCVS accreditation is not currently a high priority. However, in the light of the aforementioned CVC visit and discussions that took place there, opportunities are being considered by APC.

#### **D7. Investigate the global market for the RCVS accreditation of veterinary practices**

This work is to be started, meanwhile it is worth noting that four more overseas practices have been approved for the purposes of VN training, in Singapore, Sweden and Finland (two). Again, positive conversations took place at the CVC which will help in identifying potential pilot countries.

#### **D8. Share knowledge with developing world countries to help raise standards around regulation and also animal health and welfare**

Opportunities to work within the OIE regulatory body twinning programme are being explored.

#### **D9. Stimulate and communicate global career opportunities for UK graduates, including around One Health (VF ambitions two and four, recommendations seven, eight, 17-22, action G)**

Some opportunities are being flagged via the Vet Futures 'My Vet Future' careers hub, which is being led by BVA/Vet Record. Others may come out of our pilot work, in the future.

#### **D10. Support the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe's Vet Futures Europe initiative (VF ambition six, recommendation 33, action W)**

The Vet Futures Europe Report has been published. We offered to support some particular streams of work but these are not those that appear on the FVE priority list for 2019 so there is no immediate need for resources.

The RCVS and BVA will host the FVE General Assembly in the UK in summer 2020, an important signal to our European colleagues that the UK veterinary professions intend to remain fully engaged in Europe and beyond. We will also host a meeting of the International Accreditors Working Group alongside this event.

## **E – Our service agenda**

#### **E1. Recognising that staff who are highly engaged will deliver the best service for our stakeholders, we will continue to review the way we work, with particular emphasis on cross-departmental working, involving Council members where appropriate**

A new approach to staff appraisals was launched in January 2018, with a greater focus on personal and career development. The new approach has been positively received by staff, but line managers

need support with the conversations they are having with their team members. Another great output has been a significant increase in training requests directly related to the development of the staff member in their role, however, work remains to be done to ensure training requests are relevant and the needs and opportunities well recognised by both individuals and their managers. New approaches to learning and development will be explored now that we have the new HR Director in post.

Work continues around mapping of our roles using a job evaluation system, to give us an opportunity to understand the common skills required by seemingly different roles. This will feed into career development and succession planning, helping us to retain and progress talented individuals and recognise and develop cross-functional skills. The whole organisation has now been mapped and communicated to staff, we are now committed to using the insights from this mapping to review where our structures might not be the most effective and where we can improve career opportunities for staff. The approach will also consider looking at whole teams rather than just individuals.

New pay structures were launched for used by department heads in making salary decisions from the annual review cycle in 2019 onwards. To support this, a pay decision tool was created to enable greater consistency of decision making across the teams – the need for improvements in the perception of fairness in this area was one of the key outcomes of the 2017 Great Place to Work staff survey. Ultimately, we aim to be as transparent with staff as possible on pay and pay progression. The new structures were discussed at the December 2018 Operational Board meeting and will be implemented effective 1 April 2019.

The Great Place to Work survey was completed by staff in August 2018 with a response rate of 89%, with positive changes in the areas on which we focused, such as corporate social responsibility, and reward and communication, and some decreases in other areas. More recently, on 8 May, we were ranked 28<sup>th</sup> Best UK Workplace (medium category) and awarded a Laureate for being within the top 50 consistently for the last five years.

Meanwhile the results of the survey have been the basis of useful and constructive conversations with teams about how we can improve the way that we work. We will continue to keep our participation in Great Place to Work under review to ensure it remains a useful tool for us.

The new HR system 'Cascade' is in place and being used by all staff to manage holiday booking and update their personal details directly. It means internally we can offer a more accurate and secure service to employees and rely less on manual intervention, which can result in errors.

## **E2. Continue to review our Estates Strategy so that we have appropriate spaces in which to work effectively and creatively, and a building that reflects the status of a Royal College**

A paper has been prepared for discussion in the confidential session of the June meeting of Council.

## **E3. Embrace the opportunities of technology to fully engage with 'generation mobile' and make interactions with the College as accessible and easy as possible, including the development of innovative ways for us to share our knowledge and communicate our services with all of our key audiences**

We have now completed recruitment for the Digital Team as approved via the Digital Plan. A new Support Engineer has now joined the team and is enabling our IT Services Manager to dedicate more time to projects such as those listed below.

The software development function continues working apace on our new CPD system, under the direction of the CPD Working Group and Education Team, with an “alpha” version of the system already up and running on both desktop and mobile platforms.

Work on the RCVS Evidence tool, which allows the secure storage and sharing of video evidence, has now been completed, and it is now in daily use by the Professional Conduct team and members of the Preliminary Investigation Committee.

We have established the first use of our secure data API (Application Programming Interface), known as CODEX (The COLlege Data EXchange), in partnership with the Equine Register, which delivers the Central Equine Database for Defra. They are now able definitively to verify if individuals are registered with the RCVS using an automated query / response system. Their system does this by sending us the individual's name and membership number whereupon our system responds with that individual's register status.

Continued efforts to improve our members' experience of the College have delivered a number of improvements, including, amongst others; introduction of the full set of My Account self-service capabilities for student nurses, a Practice Standards Scheme self-re-certification process, self-service “Change of Category” as part of annual renewal, an updated Advanced Practitioner process, and a new online application process for prospective Specialists.

Over the next few months we will be continuing to work on self-service Direct Debit management and supporting the Communication Team's re-design of the My Account area and overhaul of content. We are also developing a new system for Fellows to manage their biographies for publication on the new online Fellows Directory, and an Advanced Practitioner reapplication process.

Our new Council and Committee Collaboration System is now in use across a number of committees and we are actively seeking to complete migration of every such group by the end of June 2019.

In April, we completed consolidation and upgrade of all printers with a new more capable and secure device on each floor, all of which operate as one, and allow for a far more flexible approach to printing and scanning across all teams.

In March we completed the migration of our Remote Desktop capability away from Belgravia House and into Microsoft's Azure cloud infrastructure, and in June we will be completing migration of IMIS. This is one of the most complex moves required within the Digital Plan and occurs as a result of the huge amount of work done so far in progressing this initiative.

Finally, we are delighted to have achieved Cyber Essentials certification, and are now working hard on upgrading this to Cyber Essential Plus, the highest level of Digital Security certification publically available from the UK government.

**E4. Develop and improve the advice we offer to animal owners and others to ensure they get the best out of their interaction with veterinary professionals**

We are continuing our attendance at animal owner events in 2019, and will be exhibiting at both the Royal Highland Show near Edinburgh and the new BBC Countryfile Live event in Yorkshire.

Work continues with an external agency to develop a digital marketing campaign to promote the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme to animal owners, and explain how it can benefit them and their animals.

The vet-client relationship poster, previously agreed by Standards Committee, was mailed to all veterinary practices in March and was generally well received by the professions. We will look next at ways to make this poster available through digital channels, for example, a video version for practice websites, social media channels and waiting room display screens.

**E5. Review our Service Charter and associated Service Standards, making changes to our core services to ensure these promises are met, including reviewing resources and funding, where appropriate**

We are still collecting feedback from our 'customers' and monitoring compliance with our service standards. This is ongoing and will provide evidence for changes to the Service Charter and Service Standards. This feeds into the broader First Rate Regulator Review.

**E6. Develop a mechanism via which members of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions can proactively engage with the College so that their issues and concerns are fed into discussions at an early enough stage to influence our agenda, where appropriate**

Senior Team and the Operational Board have discussed potential options for a mechanism and this now needs to be actioned.

**E7. Carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to measure perceptions of the College and see what progress has been made since the research carried out as part of the First -rate Regulator exercise (2013); make appropriate recommendations for change**

An outline plan for a review of our First-Rate Regulator Initiative was considered by the Operational Board in September 2018. A series of research activities is now underway to support this, including additional questions to the regular Surveys of the Professions around relationship with, and views on, the RCVS; animal-owner research around awareness of the RCVS, Practice Standards Scheme and Veterinary Client Mediation Service; research amongst the public about trust in the professions; research amongst our key stakeholder organisations. In addition, mechanisms for capturing better data around the experience of those making complaints are being developed.

## Summary

The Strategic Plan 2017-19 outlines 39 actions arranged under five ambitions:

- Learning culture
- Leadership and innovation
- Continuing to be a First-rate Regulator
- Global reach
- Our service agenda

This paper outlines progress under each heading; we also update the profession on progress on a regular basis by *RCVS News* (electronic) and social media, and via the veterinary and veterinary nursing media. Going forward, now there is an increased number of Council meetings, it is proposed that this lengthy update be produced for every other meeting, with a summary of key highlights produced at every meeting.

The pages to follow cover a range of areas; but in terms of highlights, since the June 2019 meeting of Council, we have:

- Expanded our public outreach by attending the Royal Highland Show and BBC Countryfile Live North for the first time
- Held a strategy day for Officers and outgoing and incoming Committee Chairs in Bristol, together with the first meeting of the new Officer team
- Put out a call for vets and nurses to volunteer to test an early version of the new OneCPD app
- Reviewed our recruitment process and made a number of appointments in new roles, including a Marketing Communications Manager, an Education Quality Improvement Manager (as recommended by ENQA), and a new Committee Liaison Officer to help cope with the increased number of committee and Council meetings post Legislative Reform Order
- Launched self-service direct debit management for all vets and nurses (due w/c 2 September)
- Announced our new continuing professional development (CPD) policy to help improve compliance rates
- Opened voting for a new Chair of the Fellowship Board, along with a new governance structure
- Working with the British Veterinary Association and Defra, succeeded in gaining a recommendation from the Migration Advisory Committee that veterinary surgeons return to the Shortage Occupation List, which has now been approved by the Home Office
- Announced a review of 'under care'
- Hosted a successful RCVS Day, which included a focus on diversity and the launch of a campaign to celebrate leadership role models
- Launched a new series of ViVet innovation events
- Completed the data-gathering stage of the Surveys of the Veterinary and Veterinary Nursing Professions
- Published our Annual Report 2018
- Bestowed our first Sarah Brown Mental Health Research Grant
- Rolled out the new Council and Committee collaboration tool to the majority of committees

If Council members would like more information on any aspect of our work, please just ask.

## Meeting the objectives of our Strategic Plan

Objectives to be tackled year by year are agreed in the November of the preceding year. As we are now in the final year of our current plan, all of the objectives are 'live'. Numbering is as per the 2017-9 Strategic Plan.

### A – Learning culture

#### **A1. Establish the extent to which a blame culture is present within the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, and set a baseline against which any change can be measured, as we move towards a culture where learning and reflection is encouraged**

The implementation of our outcomes-based CPD policy, which includes reflective practice, is now underway – see A7 for detail – and the Education team is working closely with RCVS Knowledge to ensure that clinical audits and significant event analysis are included as options in the new OneCPD App, and are promoting the range of different types of CPD beyond attending conferences and reading the vet/VN press.

A podcast on blame culture has been recorded as part of the RCVS Knowledge digital Quality Improvement event, which will be available soon.

A further podcast considering the benefits of learning culture and compassionate regulation was recorded for Blunt Dissection and has currently received 2,800 hits.

#### **A2. Develop a series of evidence-based actions that the veterinary team can take to reduce blame culture and ensure a culture of continual learning is established**

Working with the Point of Care Foundation (POCF), the charity that delivers Schwartz Round training and support in the UK, we have launched a pilot of this reflective practice model involving a range of different practice types, to see if this approach to developing non-judgemental sharing of the emotional impact of cases can contribute to a learning culture. This was an approach identified as part of the Vet Futures Action Plan and is being run under the Mind Matters Initiative. The first round of training has taken place and Rounds will be starting soon in the pilot practices. A Schwartz Rounds Live event will take place at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress to showcase how the approach works.

#### **A3. Help to change public expectations around their interactions with veterinary professionals, including around risk, uncertainty and value (VF ambition five, recommendation 27, action M)**

Following the RCVS/BVA #petsneedvets social media campaign last year, further work is being scoped out in this area, potentially to include additional information for animal owners that builds on the practice/client relationship poster and leaflets produced earlier this year (see E4, below).

#### **A4. Review the impact of our concerns-handling and disciplinary framework on the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary professions, and take appropriate actions**

An independent research organisation was commissioned to carry out this review. A series of interviews took place with stakeholders such as Vetlife and the Veterinary Defence Society, and some of those who have been through our disciplinary process.



A draft report has been produced by the researchers and will be published as part of the Mind Matters Initiative, allowing the RCVS Professional Conduct Department to respond to the recommendations, alongside other relevant organisations who play a part in supporting those going through our complaints process. It has been reviewed in draft by the Mind Matters Taskforce and the Preliminary Investigation Committee/Disciplinary Committee Liaison Committee. A further iteration went to the PIC/DC Liaison Committee. A paper including the report and our draft responses was discussed by Council at its March meeting. Thereafter Mind Matters Taskforce members were invited to comment on the report and recommendations before publication. Some comments have now been received and the report will be published soon.

**A5. Review the impact of the Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) with respect to mitigating the effects of blame culture and ensure that the project is well enough funded and resourced to address the issues (VF ambition three, recommendation 10, 12 and 15 and action N)**

Increased funding was agreed at the September 2018 meeting of Council, on a rolling three-year basis. An outline budget and strategic priorities were agreed by Council at its March meeting. Evaluation of key activities is underway. A Risk Register for MMI was presented at the 10 July meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee. The Advancement of the Professions Committee now oversees the work of MMI. A new Chair, Professor Susan Dawson, has taken over from Professor Stuart Reid, who has stepped down from Council; Professor Reid will continue to support the Initiative as Veterinary Schools Council representative on the Taskforce. As MMI comes to the end of its initial five-year period, a review report will be published and an event is planned to mark this anniversary.

**A6. If appropriate following the completion of trials, introduce an Alternative Dispute Resolution service.**

Complete.

**A7. Consult upon, and implement as appropriate, an outcomes-based approach to continuing professional development (CPD)**

In March, Council supported the recommendations of Education Committee to implement an outcomes-based approach to CPD. To ensure that an effective IT recording platform is available to support the implementation of this policy, the new CPD requirements will be implemented using a phased approach from January 2020, at which point the IT platform and supporting guidance will be available, and members will be able voluntarily to sign up. The new requirements will become mandatory from January 2022. In preparation for the launch, we are recruiting volunteers to test the new OneCPD recording App between October 2019 and December 2019, to ensure that it is fit for purpose. We will also be gathering feedback from major employers.

**A8. Extend our concept of life-long learning to include mentorship (VF ambitions three / six, recommendations 12, 15 and 34, action P)**

Since this objective was agreed in 2016, several of the veterinary organisations have embarked upon pilot mentorship schemes, including the British Small Animal Veterinary Association. Meanwhile the Fellowship is considering mentorship as part of its programme of activity, and mentorship also features in the Graduate Outcomes consultation around the Professional Development Phase (PDP). The Graduate Outcomes consultation results have indicated strong support from the profession for mentorship within the PDP, and initial proposals emerging for a new, redesigned PDP are centred on support for graduates through mentorship.

**A9. Help to ensure that prospective veterinary students have a clear idea of the reality and opportunities of a career in veterinary science, and assist the veterinary schools in providing support for them (links to VF action H)**

Our public outreach programme of events in recent years (expanded this summer to include the Royal Highland Show and BBC Countryfile Live North) has afforded us the opportunity to speak to hundreds of school pupils about the realities of a career in veterinary science. Meanwhile, we will be establishing a veterinary careers working group, in liaison with the Veterinary Schools Council, to determine how best to produce and disseminate the most appropriate and useful veterinary careers information for school pupils.

This will also work alongside activity within the Diversity and Inclusion Group to address broadening the pool of prospective veterinary students.

Mind Matters financially supported a one-day mental health and wellbeing course for students, in partnership with the Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) – VetKind – which took place in autumn 2018, the course will be re-run this autumn. Meanwhile, a Mind Matters Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Roundtable will take place on 23 September 2019, in conjunction with the Veterinary Schools Council.

The Graduate Outcomes consultation included a section on ‘clinical education for general practice’, which explored how the profession felt about where clinical education should take place for students, to ensure they are prepared for their future careers. The results indicate strong support for the majority of clinical education to take place in general practice, and the Working Group is currently considering options on how this can be realised in future.

**A10. Improve communication with veterinary and veterinary nursing students, in order to clarify our role and function**

Attendance of vet and VN student representatives at our flagship events has been very well received, and we have once again invited these representatives to our key events in 2019, including Royal College Day and Fellowship Day. We will be repeating the successful Fellows of the Future student competition at Fellowship Day 2019 (20 September).

For the first time, we sought the assistance of veterinary and veterinary nurse students at our public outreach events over the summer, to help provide information to school pupils on applying for vet/VN courses, which was a well received initiative.

Vet Futures Student Ambassadors are involved in the next ViVet Symposium (1 October). and a meeting is currently being arranged with AVS reps to understand how we can rejuvenate the Ambassadors project more broadly.

A student engagement working group is also being set up to discuss and identify other areas for improving communication and engagement with vet/VN students – see A9.

VN Futures attended the inaugural SVN Fest held at Royal Veterinary College in Camden to help student veterinary nurses (SVNs) learn more about VNF and encourage involvement.

We have written an article for the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Student Companion magazine, aimed at informing students and new graduates about the current PDP and available support in their transition into the workplace. This article also references the work we are planning through Graduate Outcomes to improve the PDP further and provide more support. This is due to be published shortly.

In terms of our EMS placement programme at the College, we have recently hosted a student from Liverpool, who worked in the policy team carrying out various tasks in relation to the LWP and Brexit. This follows a previous successful placement with a student from the RVC, who had a similar week but also spent some time in the Education Department working on a project related to European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE) accreditation standards, which was tailored for them as they had some previous experience as a student rep in that area. Other placements are in the process of being organised, and there has been some interest from students from most schools in the first wave of applications. It has been suggested that it might be possible to try and combine placement weeks from several schools at once in order to have a group of students working together, but this needs further discussion with the school EMS co-ordinators.

Plans are underway to create a My Account area on the RCVS website for VN students, allowing them to manage the details that we hold for them, and provide the opportunity to increase our engagement with them from an earlier stage. We are also reviewing the opportunity to extend My Account functionality to our Higher Education partners, enabling them to have an RCVS home / portal online which would provide a communication channel we can use to interact with each other concerning all aspects of our relationships with them and their students.

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## **B – Leadership and innovation**

### **B1. Continue to support the Vet Futures and VN Futures initiatives, working collaboratively across professions to ensure actions are met**

The key Vet Futures activities form part of the ongoing Strategic Plan and are being taken forward accordingly. We are also supporting the delivery of the Vet Futures Europe plan, where appropriate (see D10). The Vet Futures Project Board (RCVS/BVA/Veterinary Schools Council) meets regularly to assess progress, and evaluation of the impact of priority activities will take place during 2020, the final year of the current five-year Vet Futures Action Plan.

Delivery of the VN Futures Action Plan is being supported by VN Council and is overseen by the VN Futures Project Board (RCVS/British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)). Work is underway to improve the presence of VN Futures online, through the development and build of a separate website and exploration of a dedicated Facebook presence, to help raise the profile of the work of the Project Board and its working groups.

### **B2. Through completion of our governance review, ensure that we are an effective and efficient organisation, better able to lead the profession and serve the needs of the public, including the carrying out of training and the provision of coaching for RCVS Council members who take, or are considering taking, leadership roles**

The legislative reform order (LRO) completed its passage through Parliament with a debate in the House of Lords on 1 May 2018. The Order was subsequently signed by the Defra Minister, Lord Gardiner, on 2 May and came into force on 1 July 2018.

A process of reviewing the committees that support Council, and the work of the Operational Board, then took place, and an updated Delegation Scheme was agreed by Council at its June 2019 meeting, including the winding down of the Operational Board and the setting up of the new Finance and Resources Committee. The composition of all committees, subcommittees and working groups has now been agreed, and the new calendar of meetings put in place for the current presidential year. The new set up will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Further training and development opportunities for Council members will now be prioritised following the recruitment of the new HR Director, who is working with the Director of Leadership and Innovation to develop and deliver proposals.

All new and existing Council members were asked to update the Skills Matrix in order to support appropriate deployment of skills in committees and working groups. A recent meeting of those Council members who joined in summer 2018, together with lay members of the Veterinary Nurses Council, sought their views on the induction and embedding process, so that we can continue to learn and improve.

A new Governance Officer has been recruited and is now working within the Operations Department to manage items such as the skills matrix, terms of reference, contracts register, trademarks register, risk register, secretariat function for Audit and Risk Committee and Finance and Resources Committee, etc.

### **B3. Define the role of the new Fellowship to advise and support the RCVS and act as ambassadors for the profession within society at large**

Council approved the future direction of the Fellowship following a presentation from the Chair of the Fellowship Board, Professor Nick Bacon, at its September 2018 meeting. The activities of the Fellowship are now overseen by the Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC).

The Fellowship Board has recently made governance changes, including to its size and composition, as well as the processes for appointing and electing individuals to the Board. An election is currently being held for the new Chair of the Board, who will take office at Fellowship Day 2019. In addition, two members have also been added to the Board, to be responsible for projects and engagement.

An online Directory of Fellows is being developed to help raise the profile of the Fellowship and to highlight the ways in which Fellows can contribute back to the veterinary profession and wider society.

### **B4. Identify and support the next generation of veterinary leaders and develop leadership opportunities across the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, within all branches of the professions, at all levels - locally, nationally and internationally (VF ambition six, recommendations 12, 17, 31, 32 and 34, action Q)**

A three-year plan to address this objective was submitted to the Operational Board at its March 2017 meeting, including three key streams of activity: leadership for everyone; leading the profession; and, veterinary leadership development opportunities.

As part of the 'leadership for everyone' stream, we worked with the NHS Leadership Academy to develop a MOOC to provide a gateway programme for veterinary professionals wishing to improve their leadership skills. This proved very popular, with well over 5,000 enrolments across the programme's modules. Participants included veterinary surgeons and nurses drawn from over 130 countries, demonstrating its universal relevance. The programme made finalist in the prestigious EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development) Excellence in Practice Award, which recognise collaborative management and leadership programmes across the globe. An evaluation project for the MOOC will shortly be underway.

An initiative called 'Inspiring Veterinary Leaders' designed to showcase the diversity of leadership and leadership roles in the professions, was launched at RCVS Day 2019 and has been widely promoted across social media: [www.rcvs.org.uk/inspiringleaders](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/inspiringleaders). The information panels used at RCVS Day can currently be seen on the walls at Belgravia House.

**B5. Develop a biennial Innovation Symposium, to showcase new technologies, educational and business models etc. from within veterinary and related fields, and encourage a culture of innovation (VF ambition five, recommendation 24, action R)**

The initial event took place in September 2017 and a further Symposium will be held on 1 October 2019 at the Lowry in Manchester, focusing on Precision Veterinary Medicine.

**B6. Encourage diversity in our Council, our staff and other groups allied to the RCVS**

Training for Council members and staff around unconscious bias is under consideration.

The veterinary careers materials we are developing will have a particular focus on encouraging broader diversity within the next generation of veterinary students.

Following the Operational Board's decision last October to set up a Working Group to progress these issues, the first meeting of the Diversity and Inclusion Group was held on 23 April. A second meeting took place on 20 August when an action plan was drawn up, including a draft RCVS statement on diversity and inclusion. The Group is chaired by the President and reports via the APC, which will consider the statement at its 10 September meeting. Meanwhile the President published a blog on the case for a diverse and inclusive workforce on 15 August.

Diversity was also the theme at RCVS Day, with the outgoing President's guest speaker, Tricia Mundy, speaking on the topic.

## C- Continuing to be a First Rate Regulator

### **C1. Review Schedule 3 to the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and the relevant parts of the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct, to clarify and bolster the role of the veterinary nurse (VNF ambition six, actions 29-31)**

This work is now being fed into the broader review of veterinary legislation by the Legislation Working Party (LWP) which, although it does not feature as a specific line item in the Strategic Plan, is bringing together several strands of work, many of which have been thrown into sharp relief by Brexit. The LWP has made considerable progress, including a growing list of recommendations for legislative reform, and hopes to be able to report to Council in early 2020. The recommendations are likely to include several items focused on bolstering the VN role. The RCVS website now has summaries of each LWP meeting, and a blog by the LWP chair Professor May has been published.

One of the key findings of the 2017 VN Schedule 3 survey that could be tackled quickly was the perceived lack of clarity around delegation, which led to a lack of confidence in both delegating veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses being delegated to. To address this, in June 2018 we published a series of case studies for vets and VNs illustrating examples of how Schedule 3 should be used in practice. These were publicised in RCVS News, and subsequently covered in the veterinary and VN media.

A further series of case studies addressing more challenging questions has been drafted and the content for a useful checklist for veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses to use in practice has been developed and, following a period of review and amendment, will be considered by the Standards Committee on 9 September. The checklist – which uses the mnemonic ‘SUPERB’ – will be produced in poster format and a copy mailed to all veterinary practice premises in the UK. All Schedule 3 related guidance and advice will be available via [www.rcvs.org.uk/schedule3](http://www.rcvs.org.uk/schedule3)

### **C2. Develop a strategy for regulating allied professionals, either via Associate status or updated Exemption Orders (VF ambition six, recommendations four and six, action U)**

Following the decisions of RCVS Council in January 2019, the final Report of the Review of Minor Procedures Regime (RMPPR) was submitted to Defra; this included the suggested reforms to Schedule 3 of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, as approved by Council in terms of a potential route for the regulation of paraprofessional groups in the future. Defra has considered the recommendations and congratulated the RCVS on its work, and indicated that they are minded to wait for the outcome of the LWP so that they can consider all the College’s reform recommendations in the round.

In the meantime, we are continuing our discussions with the Association of Meat Inspectors (AMI) and the Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) with a view to progressing towards invitations to these groups to become Associates / Accredited respectively, and we are currently putting in place the appropriate internal resources to develop the necessary structures and documentation.

**C3. Review our concerns-handling and disciplinary processes, including the impact of the Legislative Reform Order (LRO) that separated the membership of the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees from Council, the standard of proof that we set and our sanctions**

The Secretary of State was required to produce a report reviewing the objectives and impact of the LRO by the end of July 2018. To assist in this process, and working within a framework supplied by Defra, we submitted a report to Defra at the end of April. This has been published and is now available on the UK government website.

Meanwhile, it is anticipated that, later in 2019, Council will be asked to consider proposals to consult in relation to the Standard of Proof for Disciplinary Cases.

**C4. Review the regulatory framework surrounding new technologies, to ensure it is proportionate and encourages innovation, while maintaining high standards of animal health and welfare (VF ambitions five, recommendations four and 23, action S)**

Following its lengthy and detailed consideration of the implications of new technologies the recommendation of Standards Committee was that there should be a detailed review of a number of areas of the Code / Guidance including the interpretation and application of 'under care' and the provision of 24/7 care, as well as a number of anomalies that had arisen within the current guidance. In June 2019, Council considered these recommendations, along with independent legal advice, and agreed that there should be a wide-ranging review engaging all sectors of the veterinary professions.

The work in carrying out the review was referred back to Standards Committee, who will be considering how this might proceed and the timetable for the process at its meeting in September.

A 'call for evidence' will be the first stage of the process of obtaining views leading to the working up of the terms of proposed new guidance, if appropriate, which would be considered by Council and, once approved in principle, would be subject to formal consultation.

**C5. Explore compulsory practice inspection (VF ambition five, recommendation 26, action T)**

This has been included within the workstream of the Legislation Working Party.

**C6. Review outcomes for graduates, with consideration of the likely requirements from the profession and the public of the vets of tomorrow (including the structure and provision of extra-mural studies) (VF actions I and J)**

The final report of the results from the Graduate Outcomes consultation has been received, and considered by the Graduate Outcomes Working Party. In order to review the feedback from the profession in detail, the group initially split into three subgroups to consider the data for Day One Competences (D1C), the Professional Development Phase and EMS/Clinical education for general practice. The results provided a clear direction of travel for D1C and PDP, and proposals for workstreams as a result have been agreed by the full working party and will be presented to Education Committee in September. The consultation feedback for the EMS and Clinical Education sections is less clear, and as a consequence these proposals are still under development.

## D – Global reach

### **D1. Develop a strategy to make sure that the profession is in charge of its future by maximising the opportunities and minimising the risks of Brexit**

Work continues with the joint Defra/RCVS/BVA Future Veterinary Capacity and Capability Project (FVCCP), which aims to ensure that workforce needs continue to be met, regardless of which Brexit scenario becomes reality. Efforts are currently focused on ensuring that the best quality evidence can be compiled showing the scale of the shortage of veterinary surgeons and the reasons for low retention rates in order that any improvements can be tracked.

Following lobbying by the RCVS, BVA and Defra, the Home Office has indicated that it will accept the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendation that veterinary surgeons be added to the Shortage Occupation List. This will streamline the process for veterinary surgeons with overseas nationality to gain a UK work visa (including, in the event of Brexit, citizens of the European Union). We continue to await a final decision, and publication of the delayed Immigration Bill.

### **D2. Collaborate with other competent authorities, associations, educational bodies and the commercial sector to establish a framework for the management of the impact of new technologies, such that animal health and welfare remains centre stage, regardless of from where veterinary services are being delivered into the UK and beyond (VF ambition five, recommendations four and 23, action S) [see also B5 and C4]**

This work is on hold until we have a clear steer regarding telehealth in the UK.

### **D3. Improve our support for, and communication with, overseas graduates working in the UK and those considering working in the UK (VF ambition three, recommendation 13, action K)**

We continue to assist prospective and existing registrants with overseas qualifications who have concerns about their ability to practise in the UK after Brexit. We will shortly be updating the RCVS website with detailed information about how registration eligibility for EU graduates will change in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

The RCVS/Veterinary Defence Society (VDS) 'Introduction to the UK veterinary professions' course for overseas vets and VNs was held on 11 June in London and was well received by the delegates who attended. The next course will be held on 29 October 2019 and a promotional video is currently in production to help boost attendance.

### **D4. Clarify our offer for overseas members and consider expanding the number of members in this category, revising the Registration Regulations, if required**

We have carried out a survey amongst non-UK practising members of the College in order to better understand the benefit of membership to them, how well engaged they feel with the College and whether they may be likely to return to work in the UK. The data are currently being analysed and will be discussed by the APC in due course.



#### **D5. Investigate the global market for RCVS qualifications and Advanced Practitioner and Specialist status**

Subsequent to the Commonwealth Veterinary Conference (CVC) in Bangalore, a paper was considered by the APC outlining a series of options pertaining to objectives D5-D9 for further exploration. In due course APC will consider more detailed papers on each of these options. Where appropriate, APC's recommendations will be referred to the Finance and Resources Committee and/or RCVS Council.

#### **D6. Consider the global market for the RCVS accreditation of undergraduate veterinary education, particularly in the light of Brexit**

Given the more pressing need to understand how we will work with European veterinary schools in the event of a no-deal, and given the current review of RCVS undergraduate veterinary education accreditation, the global market for RCVS accreditation is not currently a high priority.

However, in the light of the aforementioned CVC visit and discussions that took place there, a scoping discussion was held at APC, and in due course more detailed proposals will be drawn up for further discussion. One related option under consideration is the possibility of delivering the Statutory Examination overseas.

#### **D7. Investigate the global market for the RCVS accreditation of veterinary practices**

At its May 2019 meeting, APC considered a paper that noted expressions of interest in the UK's Practice Standards Scheme from representatives from various Commonwealth countries. Options for marketing the Scheme abroad will be drawn up for consideration by the Committee.

#### **D8. Share knowledge with developing world countries to help raise standards around regulation and also animal health and welfare**

Opportunities to work within the OIE regulatory body twinning programme are being explored. OIE is identifying candidate countries, and discussions have begun with Australia and South Africa concerning their experience as 'parent' organisations in the hope that we can learn from them. APC will have the opportunity to consider a formal proposal once further progress has been made.

Observer status of the World Veterinary Association (WVA) is also being considered, as they are developing a 'global vision of veterinary medicine education' and increasingly engaging more with statutory bodies or bodies with mixed competence. Observer status would give the College an opportunity to engage in WVA's work and better understand whether, in the longer term, full membership would be beneficial.

#### **D9. Stimulate and communicate global career opportunities for UK graduates, including around One Health (VF ambitions two and four, recommendations seven, eight, 17-22, action G)**

Some opportunities are being flagged via the Vet Futures 'My Vet Future' careers hub, which is being led by BVA/Vet Record. Others may come out of our pilot work, in the future.

### **D10. Support the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe's Vet Futures Europe initiative (VF ambition six, recommendation 33, action W)**

The Vet Futures Europe Report has been published. We offered to support some particular streams of work but these are not those that appear on the FVE priority list for 2019 so there is no immediate need for resources.

The RCVS and BVA will host the FVE General Assembly in the UK in summer 2020, an important signal to our European colleagues that the UK veterinary professions intend to remain fully engaged in Europe and beyond. Preparations for this are now underway, with a conference venue (Church House, Westminster) booked and options for evening events being explored. We also plan to host a meeting of the International Accreditors Working Group alongside this event.

## **E – Our service agenda**

### **E1. Recognising that staff who are highly engaged will deliver the best service for our stakeholders, we will continue to review the way we work, with particular emphasis on cross-departmental working, involving Council members where appropriate**

The Great Place to Work survey was completed by staff in August 2018 with a response rate of 89%, with positive changes in the areas on which we focused, such as corporate social responsibility, and reward and communication, and some decreases in other areas. More recently, on 8 May, we were ranked 28<sup>th</sup> Best UK Workplace (medium category) and awarded a Laureate for being within the top 50 consistently for the last five years. The 2019 survey opens shortly.

We also came within the top ten best places for women to work in the UK (medium-sized) for the second year running, and signed the Time to Change Pledge to support better mental health and wellbeing in the workplace in the spring.

A staff away day will take place on 6 September and the agenda will include discussion around the building move, Great Place to Work, strategy and values, and working patterns.

### **E2. Continue to review our Estates Strategy so that we have appropriate spaces in which to work effectively and creatively, and a building that reflects the status of a Royal College**

A decision has been made to sell Belgravia House and an agency selected to support this. A tendering process for an agency to support the purchase of a new building is currently underway, and Council has approved broad parameters for the purchase. An update on progress will be reported in the confidential session of this meeting of Council.

### **E3. Embrace the opportunities of technology to fully engage with 'generation mobile' and make interactions with the College as accessible and easy as possible, including the development of innovative ways for us to share our knowledge and communicate our services with all of our key audiences**

As already mentioned, the oneCPD app is in testing with staff and members.

The Digital Team has worked closely with Professional Conduct team and have now largely resolved the immediate problems with performance which were present in the new ProfCon2 application at launch.

Continued efforts to improve our members' experience of the College have delivered a number of improvements, particularly, during the last two months, where we have developed and launched a number of self-service capabilities into the MyAccount area.

Self-service Direct Debit management launches in the first week of September; and our new Council and Committee Collaboration System is now in use across almost all committees and has received a positive response from all stakeholders so far.

#### **E4. Develop and improve the advice we offer to animal owners and others to ensure they get the best out of their interaction with veterinary professionals**

We expanded our portfolio of public outreach events this year by exhibiting for the first time at both the Royal Highland Show and BBC Countryfile Live North, bringing our total number of summer events since 2016 to seven (comprising 28 days).

Work continues with an external agency to develop a digital marketing campaign to promote the RCVS Practice Standards Scheme to animal owners, and explain how it can benefit them and their animals. We intend to trial this campaign with RCVS-accredited practices from early autumn and launch it publicly in late autumn.

The vet-client relationship poster that we mailed to all veterinary practices in March was converted into a leaflet for our public outreach summer events and distributed widely to all visitors to our stand. We will also look at ways to make this poster available through digital channels, for example, a video version for practice websites, social media channels and waiting room display screens.

#### **E5. Review our Service Charter and associated Service Standards, making changes to our core services to ensure these promises are met, including reviewing resources and funding, where appropriate**

We are still collecting feedback from our 'customers' and monitoring compliance with our service standards. This is ongoing and will provide evidence for changes to the Service Charter and Service Standards. This feeds into the broader First Rate Regulator Review.

#### **E6. Develop a mechanism via which members of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions can proactively engage with the College so that their issues and concerns are fed into discussions at an early enough stage to influence our agenda, where appropriate**

Senior Team and the Operational Board have discussed potential options for a mechanism and this now needs to be actioned.

#### **E7. Carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise to measure perceptions of the College and see what progress has been made since the research carried out as part of the First-rate Regulator exercise (2013); make appropriate recommendations for change**

An outline plan for a review of our First-Rate Regulator Initiative was considered by the Operational Board in September 2018. A series of research activities is now underway to support this, including

additional questions to the regular Surveys of the Professions around relationship with, and views on, the RCVS; animal-owner research around awareness of the RCVS, Practice Standards Scheme and Veterinary Client Mediation Service; research amongst the public about trust in the professions; research amongst our key stakeholder organisations. In addition, mechanisms for capturing better data around the experience of those making complaints are being developed. This research is in various stages of completion and will be drawn together, along with a summary of audits into our complaints process, during the autumn.

<b>Meeting</b>	Veterinary Nurses Council
<b>Date</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	Veterinary Nurse Education Committee
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	Minutes of the meeting of the VN Education Committee held on 24 July 2019
<b>Decisions required</b>	To approve
<b>Attachments</b>	None
<b>Author</b>	<p>Annette Amato  Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing  0207 202 0713  <a href="mailto:a.amato@rcvs.org.uk">a.amato@rcvs.org.uk</a></p>

## Veterinary Nurse Education Committee

### Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019

<b>Members:</b>	*	Mrs Donna Cotton	-	Employer representative
		Miss Julia Cox	-	Employer representative
		Miss Hannah Durling	-	HE student representative
		Mrs Susan Howarth	-	VN Council veterinary nurse (Chair)
	*	Professor Elizabeth Mossop	-	Independent educationalist
		Mrs Sarah Parkhouse	-	FE veterinary nursing provider
	*	Mrs Jill Partiss	-	FE veterinary nursing provider
		Professor Susan Proctor	-	VN Council lay member
		Mrs Nicola Ruedisueli	-	HE veterinary nursing provider
*absent				
<b>In attendance:</b>		Mrs Annette Amato	-	Committee Secretary
		Mrs Denise Chambers	-	Qualifications Officer
		Mrs Julie Dugmore	-	Director of Veterinary Nursing
		Miss Shirley Gibbins	-	Qualifications Manager
		Mrs Victoria Hedges	-	Examinations Manager
		Mrs Lily Lipman	-	Practice Standards Manager

#### Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Donna Cotton, Elizabeth Mossop and Jill Partiss. Donna Cotton joined the meeting by teleconference for discussion of Agenda item 12 (paras. 23 - 26)

#### Declarations of interest

2. Susan Howarth declared a conflict of interest in relation to item 12 (Harper Adams University) and Nicola Ruedisueli declared a conflict of interest relating to Nottingham Trent University. These members left the meeting for discussion of the item relevant to their respective Higher Education Institutions.

#### Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee (VNEC) held on 27 March 2019

3. The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019, which had been circulated and approved, prior to submission to VN Council at its meeting in February.

#### Operational update

	The Director of Veterinary Nursing updated the Committee on recent developments and activities.
4.	<b>VN Department Staff.</b> Since the previous meeting, Shirley Gibbins RVN had taken up her position as Qualifications Manager and Denise Chambers RVN had commenced as Quality Assurance Officer, both being involved in quality monitoring and accreditation. The current Enrolments Administrator, Reanne MacDonald would be leaving the College at the end of August and her successor had been appointed, with a three-week handover period. A temporary member of staff would be recruited to assist with the processing of student enrolments in the peak period from September to December.
5.	<b>Potential Scottish apprenticeship.</b> The Committee would be kept informed of the situation regarding a possible future Scottish apprenticeship.
<b>VN Futures</b>	
6.	The Committee welcomed the update paper from the VN Futures Project Manager on activities with respect to the VN Futures project over the last quarter, and the work planned for the coming weeks/months, as reported to VN Council in May 2019. It was noted that the project manager is currently working with three separate focus groups, concentrating activity on one specific topic per group in order to move forward. In response to a query, the Director of Veterinary Nursing confirmed that although the terms of reference provide for a minimum of two Board meetings per year, there will also be a number of focus group meetings.
7.	The Director of Veterinary Nursing and VNF Project Manager had attended the first SVNFEEST event, a congress designed by and for veterinary nurse students held at the RVC in London. This had been very successful and was attended by over 100 students, from FE and HE backgrounds, from as far afield as Cornwall. Information had been provided on VN Futures, and the opportunity had also been taken to encourage applicants for the vacant student role on the Committee.
<b>VN Licence to practise qualifications</b>	
<b>New accreditations</b>	
8.	<b>Royal Agricultural University (Plumpton College).</b> The Committee considered the report of the visitors to the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) accreditation event at Plumpton College on 9 and 10 April 2019, together with the associated action plan. The RAU accredits veterinary nursing degree provision with another provider, and Plumpton College has experience of delivering both HE and FE veterinary nurse training. The Committee agreed that provisional accreditation should be granted to the RAU for proposed FdSc in Veterinary Nursing to be delivered by Plumpton College.
9.	<b>University of Chester.</b> The Committee reviewed the accreditation report and associated action plan from the University of Chester accreditation event at University Centre

	<p>Reaseheath on 29 and 30 April 2019. It was noted that this was the second submission from this university, and it was clear that the university team had worked very hard to improve the programme based on last year's event. There were still some points to be resolved, including ensuring sufficient availability of training practice places, and responses to the action plan were due by early August.</p>
10.	<p>The Committee was pleased to note the positive comments made in the report on the university's examinations Policy and Procedure, and the fact that much work had been put into the planning of the OSCEs.</p>
11.	<p>The Committee commended the University for its revised submission, and agreed that provisional accreditation should be granted to the university for the proposed FdSc in Veterinary Nursing.</p>
12.	<p><b>Hartpury University.</b> The Committee considered the report of the accreditation visit to Hartpury University, together with the action plan. The visit had taken place in January, but there had been some issues to be resolved regarding clarification of the various degrees for which accreditation or reaccreditation was being sought, and confirmation of the factual accuracy of the report by the University had been delayed.</p>
13.	<p>There was some discussion on the comment made by the visitor that there seemed to be little differentiation between the equine and small animal degrees, although it was noted that the practical training, NPL and seminar sessions are species specific. It was agreed that provided the University's rules on the differentiation between the degree pathways are clear, this should not be an issue of concern. With the proviso that this should be checked and agreed by the Chair, the Committee was in agreement that provisional accreditation should be granted for the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Science Degree with Honours with integrated placement year in Veterinary Nursing</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science Degree with Honours with integrated placement year in Equine Veterinary Nursing</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science Degree Ordinary with integrated placement year in Veterinary Nursing</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science Degree Ordinary with integrated placement year in Equine Veterinary Nursing</li> <li>• Diploma in Professional Studies in Veterinary Nursing</li> <li>• Diploma in Professional Studies in Equine Veterinary Nursing</li> </ul> <p>Although Hartpury University has a number of accredited licence to practise programmes, the programmes under consideration were new and therefore provisional accreditation status was granted.</p>
<p><b>Re-accreditations</b></p>	



14.	<b>Middlesex University.</b> The Committee recalled that at the re-validation event in December 2018 of the degree provision by Middlesex University, it became apparent that the university had previously validated a BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing with foundation year, of which the RCVS was not aware. It was noted that years 2 – 4 follow the same modules as the currently accredited BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing programme, and the first year of the degree forms the foundation year. It had been agreed that the 4 year programme should be accredited as a separate entity.
15.	The programme specification and handbook had now been submitted by the university and reviewed by the RCVS. It was agreed that full accreditation should be offered for the BSc(Hons) Veterinary Nursing with Foundation Year, in addition to the BSc(Hons) Veterinary Nursing.
<b>Quality Monitoring and Action Plan progress.</b>	
16.	The Examinations Manager updated the Committee on the auditing activity and progress with the action plans following a number of reaccreditation events in 2018:
17.	<b>Anglia Ruskin University.</b> Most actions have been met, with the exception of the provision of a policy and procedure for the OSCE. A visit was due to take place later in the year to carry out an audit of the OSCE.
18.	<b>Edinburgh Napier University.</b> The university had increased the number of examiners for its practical examination, to allow one examiner per station. There were a few items outstanding on which further discussion was required.
19.	<b>Middlesex University.</b> All actions other than those related to the assessments and OSCE had now been closed. A meeting was due to be held at the RCVS the following week, to discuss the proposed examination format. It was agreed that the university should be required to provide mapping of the proposed examination format with the Day One Skills and Day One Competences, and further details on the number of examiners and the examination handbook.
20.	<b>Royal Agricultural University (Askham Bryan College).</b> It was noted that further information had been provided as requested, but the file had not been accessible and this had been requested again. Details would be reported to the next meeting.
21.	<b>Nottingham Trent University (NTU).</b> Nicola Ruedisueli left the meeting for this item due to a conflict of interest. The Examinations Manager reported on the audit of the practical examination at NTU in 2018 and the actions which had been identified. It was noted that the university is meeting the RCVS criteria.
<b>Accreditation visitor approval</b>	
22.	The Committee considered and approved an application to the accreditation visitor panel.

<b>Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing accreditation</b>	
	<b>Harper Adams University</b>
23.	Susan Howarth left the meeting for the discussion of this item due to a conflict of interest. The Qualifications Manager presented the report of the accreditation visit to Harper Adams University on 26 June. The proposals were to run Certificates over four separate disciplines, with a Level 6 Graduate Certificate and a Level 7 Postgraduate Certificate in each discipline. The following programmes were under accreditation review by the University and all had been recommended for approval by the University panel subject to conditions, including successful accreditation from the RCVS:
24.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Anaesthesia)</li> <li>• Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Analgesia and Pain Management)</li> <li>• Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Surgical)</li> <li>• Graduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Oncology)</li>   <li>• Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Anaesthesia)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Analgesia and Pain Management)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Surgical)</li> <li>• Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Oncology)</li> </ul>
25.	It was noted that the university intended to deliver the programmes in rotation, with two programmes commencing in September 2019 and the other two commencing in September 2020. The decision as to which programmes would start had not yet been decided, and would be determined by market demand once the programme had received accreditation. The schemes of work, assessment and example answers would be submitted for review when the University had decided which of the programmes would be delivered initially.
26.	The Committee unanimously agreed that all four programmes should be accredited. The Director of Veterinary Nursing confirmed that in the case of post- registration qualifications, the category of provisional accreditation was not applicable, as these did not lead to a licence to practise qualification. Full accreditation was therefore granted.
	<b>Quality Monitoring</b>
27.	There had been no quality monitoring activity of the existing Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing provision since the previous meeting of the Committee.
<b>Statistical report</b>	
28.	The Committee noted statistics on student enrolments for each academic year (1 July to 30 June) over the last five years. The figures showed, for each year, the number of FE and

	HE enrolments, the number of students in each cohort still in active training, those who have completed the qualification and registered as veterinary nurses, and the number with inactive records (withdrawn from training). It was agreed that this information was useful and should be provided annually.
<b>Items for publication</b>	
29.	Arising from the decisions taken at the meeting, the RCVS would update the published lists of accredited Further Education and Higher Education licence to practise qualifications, and the web pages relating to post registration qualifications.
<b>Any other business</b>	
30.	The Chair reported on a potential change in the banding for HE funding which may affect veterinary nursing degree qualifications. This information had been passed on by the RCVS to the relevant institutions and it was understood that a joint response was being prepared.
<b>Meeting dates</b>	
31.	The meeting dates for the next five meetings of the Committee were confirmed as follows:  Monday 14 October 2019 Wednesday 8 January 2020 Wednesday 25 March 2020 Wednesday 29 July 2020 Wednesday 14 October 2020

<b>Meeting</b>	Veterinary Nurses Council & Council
<b>Date</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Chair's Report to Council
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC).
<b>Decisions required</b>	None
<b>Attachments</b>	None
<b>Authors</b>	<p>Sandra Neary Professional Conduct Officer 020 7202 0730 <a href="mailto:s.neary@rcvs.org.uk">s.neary@rcvs.org.uk</a></p> <p>Velia Soames Head of Professional Conduct 020 7202 0740 <a href="mailto:v.soames@rcvs.org.uk">v.soames@rcvs.org.uk</a></p>

## ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

### REGISTERED VETERINARY NURSES PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

#### CHAIR'S REPORT TO (VN) COUNCIL 11 September 2019

##### Introduction:

Since the last Report to Veterinary Nurses Council there have been two meetings of the RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee (14 May and 2 July 2019). The next scheduled meeting is on 15 October 2019.

##### RVN Concerns received / registered:

Between 9 April 2019 and 21 August 2019 there were ten new Concerns received against RVNs. Of these ten new Concerns:

- Four are currently under investigation by the Case Examiner Group (a veterinary and lay member on RVN PIC and a Case Manager).
- Two Concerns were closed by the Case Examiner Group as there was no arguable case; and
- Four are in the process of being assessed.

##### RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee:

There was one new case considered by the RVN PIC between 9 April 2019 and 21 August 2019. This Concern related to an allegation that an RVN prescribed and administered a prescription-only medicine (Metacam) to a cat without authorisation from a veterinary surgeon. The Committee decided that based on the information presented, there was insufficient evidence to pass the realistic prospect threshold in regard to the RVN prescribing and administering the medication without authorisation. However, in closing the Concern, the RVN PIC decided it was appropriate to issue advice to the RVN under part 2.5 of the Code of Conduct for Veterinary Nurses:

*“2.5 Veterinary nurses must keep clear, accurate and detailed clinical nursing and client records.”*

##### Ongoing Investigations:

At its meeting on 2 July 2019, the RVN PIC considered a case relating to an RVN's failure to respond to numerous requests to provide CPD records as part of the CPD audit. This case had been adjourned for three months at the meeting on 26 February 2019 to allow the RVN to submit records. The Committee was satisfied with the hours recorded within the three-month period and it decided to adjourn the case for one year to monitor the RVN's CPD progress.

In a previous report to VN Council, the RVN PIC Chair reported on one case that the Committee had referred to the RVN Disciplinary Committee for a public hearing. This case related to a police caution which the RVN had accepted in relation to the theft of veterinary drugs from a practice. Since the referral of the matter to the RVN Disciplinary Committee, the Crown Prosecution Department had the caution withdrawn to enable the police to carry out a criminal investigation. The RVN's trial is listed to take place in September 2019. In the light of this development, the Committee decided to adjourn listing the case pending the outcome of the criminal prosecution.

#### **Health Concerns:**

There are currently two RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

#### **Performance Concerns:**

There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

#### **Referral to Disciplinary Committee:**

Since the last report to VN Council, the RVN PIC has not referred any cases to the RVN Disciplinary Committee.

On 20 and 21 May 2019, an RVN appeared before the Disciplinary Committee in relation to her conviction in August 2017 at Glasgow Sheriff Court, for causing unnecessary pain and suffering to a two-year-old dog, contrary to section 19(2) of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 ("the Act"). The gap between the conviction and the Disciplinary Committee hearing was due to the RVN initiating an appeal. The Disciplinary Committee concluded that the RVN's conduct represented a serious departure from professional standards and was incompatible with being registered as a veterinary nurse. The Committee decided that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction was removal from the Register. The RVN's name was removed from the Register of veterinary nurses on 24 June 2019.

#### **Training**

The RVN PIC, PIC, Veterinary Investigators and members of the Professional Conduct team took part in a day of training on 13 May 2019. Among the topics covered were departmental updates and refreshers on threshold tests (arguable case/realistic prospect), evidential issues and relevant recent case law. Attendees also participated in case studies on the extent to which issues in a registrant's personal life should be considered by their regulator.

<b>Meeting</b>	RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council
<b>Date</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	VN Disciplinary Committee Report to VN Council
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	Update of Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee
<b>Decisions required</b>	None
<b>Author</b>	Yemisi Yusuph Clerk to the Disciplinary Committee Tel: 020 7202 0729 Email: <a href="mailto:y.yusuph@rcvs.org.uk">y.yusuph@rcvs.org.uk</a>

## **Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee Hearings since the last Council Meeting on 8 May 2019.**

### **Background**

1. Since the Veterinary Nurse Council Meeting on 8 May 2019, the Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee have met once to hear an Inquiry in relation to a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN).

### **Hearings**

#### **Miss Georgina Bretman (RVN)**

1. On Monday 20 May and Tuesday 21 May 2019, the VN Disciplinary Committee met to hear the Inquiry into Miss Bretman. Miss Bretman attended the hearing and was legally represented.
2. The Inquiry was in relation to a criminal offence. In August 2017, Miss Bretman was convicted following her trial before Glasgow Sheriff Court of a criminal offence contrary to the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) 2006 Act. This was in relation to causing unnecessary pain and suffering to her two-year-old dog, named Florence. The Sheriff Court found Miss Bretman guilty of causing unnecessary suffering to Florence by injecting a poisonous or injurious drug namely insulin causing Florence to suffer from hypoglycaemia, collapse, convulsions and seizures, for which Florence needed immediate veterinary treatment to avoid coma and death. Following her conviction, Miss Bretman was sentenced to a Community Payback Order, with a requirement to carry out 140 hours of unpaid work, and, in addition, an order was made to take Florence away from her and to ban her from owning a dog for two years.
3. The full charges can be found here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/bretman-georgina-anne-may-2019-charges/>
4. At the outset, Miss Bretman admitted the facts as contained within the charge against her and, the Committee found the charge proved.
5. The VN Disciplinary Committee went on to consider whether the charge rendered Miss Bretman unfit to practise. The Committee heard from Miss Bretman's counsel, Mr O'Rourke QC who indicated that Miss Bretman accepted that her conviction rendered her unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Nurse. The Committee found Miss Bretman's actions in deliberately administering a poisonous substance to Florence



thereby risking Florence's death to be *"very serious and deplorable conduct on the part of a veterinary nurse, a member of a profession specifically entrusted to look after and care for animals."* It also took into account the fact that Florence needed urgent veterinary treatment to avoid death and that Miss Bretman was in a position of trust over Florence as her owner.

6. The Committee was satisfied that this conduct fell far below the standard expected of a Registered Veterinary Nurse and that Miss Bretman's conviction was of a nature and seriousness that rendered her unfit to practise.
7. The Committee then heard oral evidence from Miss Bretman in which she detailed that she had always been passionate about working with animals and working in the veterinary profession. Miss Bretman also mentioned how she enjoyed her work as a veterinary nurse with a particular interest in hydrotherapy and rehabilitation. She spoke about the devastating effect of the incident and the shame that was 'brought down on her head'. She told the Committee that she had been suspended from her job and, since her conviction, had not worked as a veterinary nurse. Furthermore, Miss Bretman said that, while she accepted and respected the verdict of the court, her stance remained that she had not done what was alleged and now hoped to rebuild her career as a veterinary nurse. She accepted that the offence of which she had been convicted was very serious, particularly for a veterinary nurse.
8. In considering Miss Bretman's sanction the Committee took into account the aggravating and mitigating factors. Aggravating factors included the fact there was actual injury to an animal, that it was a pre-meditated and deliberate act against an animal for whom she was responsible, the fact that a medicinal product was misused, a lack of insight and a lack of remorse.
9. In mitigation the Committee took into account the fact she had no previous disciplinary history, had received positive references and testimonials and that, following the conviction, she demonstrated a willingness to be removed from the Register and to not work with animals to avoid causing embarrassment to the RCVS.
10. *"In reaching this decision the Committee recognised the impact this was likely to have on Miss Bretman, which was unfortunate given her young age and her obvious passion for a career as a veterinary nurse. The Committee had considered with care all the positive statements made about her in the references and testimonials provided. However, the need to protect animal welfare, the reputation of the profession and thus the wider public interest, outweighed Miss Bretman's interests and the Committee*

*concluded that removal was the only appropriate and proportionate sanction.... The Committee determined that it was important that a clear message be sent that this sort of behaviour is wholly inappropriate and not to be tolerated. It brought discredit upon Miss Bretman and discredit upon the profession”.*

11. The Committee directed the RCVS Registrar to remove Miss Bretman’s name from the Register.
12. The full decision can be found here: <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/bretman-georgina-anne-may-2019-committee-decision/>

### **Upcoming Hearings**

1. There are currently no cases listed before the Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committee.
2. No case has been referred to the VN DC.

<b>Meeting</b>	Veterinary Nurses Council
<b>Date</b>	11 September 2019
<b>Title</b>	Practice Standards Scheme Update
<b>Classification</b>	Unclassified
<b>Summary</b>	Paper for note
<b>Author</b>	Lily Lipman RVN Senior Manager, Practice Standards Scheme <a href="mailto:l.lipman@rcvs.org.uk">l.lipman@rcvs.org.uk</a>

## Update on the Practice Standards Scheme

### 1. Numbers

The Scheme is continuing to grow with 3,718 practice premises now part of the Scheme, representing 68% of all eligible practice premises. This is an increase from 3,643 practice premises in April 2019.

Small animal continues to represent the biggest category of species type with 2,830 premises followed by Mixed species premises, Equine and then Farm Animal. Accreditation type remains highest under GP Small Animal followed by Core accreditation.

### 2. Awards

At present, 351 Awards are held by 221 practices. The most frequently achieved awards are Client Service; Emergency and Critical Care; In-patient service and Team and Professional Responsibility.

### 3. Update from recent Practice Standards Group meetings

The British College of Veterinary Specialists have received granular feedback on some of the proposed modules BCVPs presented to a group of PSS assessors, including the Lead Assessor.

The review of the Practice Standards has now been completed by PSG. The finalised edits are being completed by the Senior Officer, and will be presented at the next Standards Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

PSG met on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2019. At the time of writing the paper the minutes had yet to be ratified by the Chair of the Group, and will therefore be presented at the next Standards Committee meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

### 4. Digital Marketing

The RCVS has employed an external digital marketing agency called Think BDA to create a public-facing campaign about the Practice Standards Scheme, with a view to raising awareness of RCVS-accredited practices amongst the animal-owning public and increase the visibility of the Scheme. This project will be primarily digital, using videos, photography and social media, but we also plan to trial and launch it at industry events – such as BVNA Congress, London Vet Show and National Pet Show – to help maximise buy-in and engagement both from accredited practices themselves and animal owners. The campaign has two main objectives: firstly, to create greater public awareness of the scheme and provide greater recognition for accredited practices and, secondly, to drive more practices to join the scheme voluntarily.

## **5. BVNA**

The marketing campaign may be rolled out with a pilot at BVNA, which could potentially involve the RCVS Stand having a theme around this. This is yet to be firmed up depending on the timings of finalisation of the project with Think BDA. In addition, this year the PSS Awards ceremony will be held at BVNA on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October from 4.30pm onwards.

The PSS Lead Assessor and team will be running a Stanley workshop on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> from 1.45pm.