

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

INQUIRY RE:

HANNAH RUTH WILDE RVN

**DECISION ON DISGRACEFUL CONDUCT
AND FITNESS TO PRACTISE**

Determination on Disgraceful Conduct in a Professional Respect and Unfitness to Practise

1. The Committee accepted the test for considering disgraceful conduct in a professional respect is as set out by the Legal Assessor, namely whether the conduct falls far short of that which is expected of a member of the veterinary nursing profession. In respect of the convictions the Committee also considered whether those convictions rendered Ms Wilde unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN).
2. The question of whether the conduct amounts to unfitness to practise or disgraceful conduct in a professional respect is a matter of judgement for the Committee, not a matter which is to be decided on a burden or standard of proof.
3. In coming to its decision, the Committee took into account the submissions of Counsel for the College. Although Ms Wilde was not present the Committee carefully considered her written submissions which she provided to the College.
4. Counsel for the College invited the Committee to find that the facts found proved amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and that Ms Wilde's convictions render her unfit to practise.
5. The Committee had regard to the legal advice and it also took into account the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses (the Code) together with the Supporting Guidance provided by the RCVS. The Committee took into account aggravating and mitigating factors

relevant to the conduct found proved in Charges 4-5. It considered separately whether the convictions in Charges 1-3 rendered Ms Wilde unfit to practice as an RVN.

6. In considering whether the conduct amounted to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect and unfitness to practise the Committee had regard to the public interest which includes protecting the health and welfare of animals, maintaining public confidence in the profession and declaring and upholding proper standards of conduct and behaviour.
7. The Committee also accepts that not every breach of the Code amounts to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.
8. The Committee considers that the following principal of the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses had been breached by Ms Wilde:

Honesty and Integrity

9. The Committee also had regard to the Disciplinary Committee's Procedure Guidance document:

"A conviction may be related to professional or personal behaviour and whether it renders a respondent veterinary surgeon unfit to practise is a matter of judgment for the Disciplinary Committee. Behaviour unconnected with the practice of veterinary surgery can cause concerns about the protection of animals or the wider public interest." (Para 15).

"Proven dishonesty has been held to come at the 'top end' of the spectrum of gravity of disgraceful conduct in a professional respect. In such cases, the gravity of the matter may flow from the possible consequences of the dishonesty as well as the dishonesty itself. The Privy Council has, in a case involving dishonesty, provided guidance on the distinction between removal and suspension from the register." (para 52).

The Convictions

10. The Committee first considered whether the convictions render Ms Wilde unfit to practise. The Committee considered the nature and extent of Ms Wilde's health condition, but it noted that it had insufficient medical evidence to support Ms Wilde's assertions.
11. The convictions are for serious offences involving dishonesty which were sustained and repeated over a significant period of time (2015 to 2017). Such convictions breach the fundamental principle of honesty and integrity. The Committee was particularly concerned because the convictions save for one concerned Ms Wilde's abuse of her position as a veterinary nurse. She forged prescriptions and abused her position of trust by trespassing and stealing from the premises where she worked. She put the reputation of other veterinary professionals at risk by forging their signatures and using their practice addresses. She also put the reputation of the Pharmacists who dispensed the medication at risk. Further her actions were premeditated. The Committee also considered that her theft from a store of cigarettes and scratch cards undermined public confidence in the reputation of the veterinary nurse profession.

12. The Committee accepts that Ms Wilde admitted the charges, is remorseful, apologetic and has some insight into her criminal behaviour. However, her actions were repeated.
13. The Committee concluded that the numerous convictions brings the veterinary nurse profession into disrepute. Ms Wilde's criminal behaviour failed to maintain public confidence in the veterinary nursing profession and it failed to declare and uphold proper standards of conduct and behaviour; such behaviour falls far short of the standards expected of a RVN. The Committee considered that Ms Wilde's convictions render her unfit to practise as an RVN.
14. Having regard to the matters set out above the Committee considers that, taking the charges 1-3 individually and in combination, Ms Wilde's conduct has fallen far short of the standard expected of an RVN and her conduct clearly renders her unfit to practise as an RVN.

Disgraceful Conduct in a professional respect

15. The Committee has already found that Ms Wilde acted dishonestly. She knew that she was not registered as an RVN yet she held herself out as being so and obtained employment in that capacity. In holding herself out in this manner she potentially put her colleagues at risk. She could have compromised the practices that employed her in the capacity of an RVN as their insurance had the potential to be invalidated. As a result of holding herself out she gained financially.
16. Ms Wilde was also dishonest with the RCVS when she completed the application for restoration of registered veterinary nurses form by stating that she had no convictions. Following this application, Ms Wilde went on to commit the seven further offences (from December 2016 to March 2017) for which she was later convicted in the Northampton and Leicester Magistrates' Courts.
17. The Committee considered that such conduct falls far short of the standards expected of an RVN.
18. Having regard to the matters set out above the Committee considers that, taking the charges individually and in combination, Ms Wilde's conduct has fallen far short of the standard expected of an RVN and her conduct clearly amounts to disgraceful conduct in a professional respect.

VETERINARY NURSE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

27 MARCH 2018