VN Council election: vote online, or by post

- 13 candidates standing in this year’s election – see inside for candidate bios and statements.
- Voting closes at 5pm on Friday, 24 April 2020.
Quiz the candidates

Your questions answered

This year we put the candidate biographies and statements online before the start of
the election period to allow the profession more time to get to know each of them
and ask them questions accordingly. Thank you to all those veterinary nurses who
submitted a question following our ‘Quiz the candidate’ call.

Following the deadline for questions at the end of February, we have asked all
candidates to record themselves answering two of the submitted questions of their
choice, as well as briefly explaining what they feel sets them apart as a potential
member of VN Council, in no more than two-and-a-half minutes.

The videos will be published on our website at www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote20 in March
and on the RCVS YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/rcvsvideos) and these will
be available to view until the voting deadline at 5pm on Friday 24 April 2020.

Please note: Under the RCVS Election Scheme, as approved by the Privy Council,
the RCVS Registrar shall not be required to circulate an election statement which
they consider to be defamatory (or otherwise unlawful), or factually misleading and
may, when the statement cannot be agreed with the candidate, either edit the
election statement or decide not to circulate it.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

My veterinary nursing journey started as a student in mixed practice in Hampshire, culminating in being Head Nurse. I am of the Green Book generation and trained through both correspondence course in conjunction with PDSA and local technical college. After spending ten years in the same practice, I then moved into teaching, setting up animal care courses at a college where I also gained my teaching qualifications. As a mum with a growing family, we decided to relocate to Norfolk. I remained in further education now with significant input into veterinary nurse training for the next eleven years, progressing to the role of Curriculum Manager. My career then moved into practice management level as a result of redundancy, overseeing several veterinary practices for one of the veterinary groups. After four years, I briefly transitioned to practice director for a large veterinary referral hospital before returning to education in 2019, I am currently Course Director and teaching veterinary nursing students for a college in Cambridge. Outside of work I am usually found on my yoga mat, practicing, not very well I might add. Yoga has simply helped my personal wellbeing and mental health. More recently I have started volunteering with StreetVet.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

As I approach my thirtieth year in the profession and working to my own personal mantra of ‘wanting to make a difference’ putting myself forward to be a VN Council member seemed to be a natural step for me. I have spent most of my working career training the nurses of the future, I absolutely love teaching, it has bought me many joys and challenges, but I ultimately love being in the classroom and seeing students flourish. My overarching aim of teaching is to produce nurses that are confident, empowered and reflective practitioners. They should feel able to have input into practice and be recognised and fully utilised as they move into their professional status. Through discussion with the students and peers, I am aware that not all veterinary nurses feel they are fully recognised or have a rewarding career path. Once qualified, I believe veterinary nurses should be proud of their profession and be able to maximise their potential and skills in their professional careers through post registration training and qualifications. It shouldn’t stop when we become an RVN and we should have a choice on how this can be achieved. My veterinary nursing qualification has always been at the basis of my career path, I am very passionate about vet nurse training but equally I am also an advocate for mental wellbeing having faced my own personal challenges. It is important as a profession that our own wellbeing is managed, that we create a supported profession and get an important life balance. As I reflect on my career, I would like to have the opportunity to utilise the skills that I have gained to represent the profession on the VN Council, I believe that we still have plenty to do but veterinary nursing has a positive future.
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**Proposers:** Gemma Cooke, Amy Davies

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**CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY**

I completed a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science in 2005, before beginning the Veterinary Nursing NVQ in 2006. I qualified in 2008, completing my training at Ashfield House Veterinary Hospital in Derbyshire. I completed the Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing, as well as a bachelor’s degree in Veterinary Nursing in 2013. I worked at Ashfield House for 9 years, before relocating to Manchester in 2015 to join Petmedics Animal Hospital, one of the largest ECC hospitals in the UK as Head Nurse. I look after a team of approximately 50 RVNs, SVNrs and Patient Care Assistants. I lecture in surgical and ECC nursing for universities and colleges, as well as providing training for my own team. I write peer-reviewed clinical nursing articles that have been published in nursing journals. I was a module leader for the ECC element of the CVS MiNurse Academy, an internal CPD programme. In 2017, I was a finalist in the CVS Veterinary Nurse of the Year. Outside of work, I follow ice hockey, attend music concerts and have an allotment. I have seven cats and a dog.

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**CANDIDATE STATEMENT**

I am passionate about encouraging and facilitating nurses to achieve their full potential in practice, using their skills and training to directly affect the quality of patient care they deliver. Each nurse should be able to use, and continually develop their unique experiences as clinical practitioners and have confidence, and be actively inspired to develop specialisms in areas they are interested in. I believe that job satisfaction in both the veterinary industry and within each nurses’ individual employment can be directly improved by empowering nurses to celebrate and make full use of their knowledge and abilities – giving them the autonomy they deserve.

I feel that our profession would benefit from greater clarity on the nature and extent of Schedule 3, and tasks that can be delegated between vets and nurses. More opportunities for learning and progressing in this area should be accessible to all; working together collaboratively and proactively to provide training and support is essential.

I think that nurses are not as visible to clients as veterinary surgeons, and as such they can be unsure of the nurses’ role and responsibilities in practice. I would like to contribute to the continued promotion of the nurses’ role to both our colleagues and clients, especially on the usefulness of nurse consultations in many areas - particularly preventative care and monitoring of chronic conditions. This will help to provide fulfilment and encouragement for nurses to do more in practice, and to feel comfortable doing so.

I am also keen to explore the development of a nurse prescriber role to assist in nurse consultations, assuming this can be done within the current legislation.

I firmly believe in nursing as a career choice and fundamental role in the veterinary practice, and would like the opportunity to represent you on the VN Council.
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Proposers: Bethany Walker, Kirsty Jenkins

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

Through my longstanding interest in the management and rehabilitation of senior dogs, in 2018 I started my own canine rehabilitation business, working under veterinary referral, visiting patients in their home environment. I am a registered member of the International Association of Animal Therapists (IAAT). I am a volunteer StreetNurse Team Lead and committee member with the Plymouth branch of the veterinary charity StreetVet. In addition, for the past three years I have volunteered as a Veterinary Nurse Advisor with Canine Arthritis Management (CAM). I regularly lecture and enjoy public speaking.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
I passionately believe that the career of a Registered Veterinary Nurse should be rewarding, exciting, challenging and fulfilling. The reality of the role should reflect the years of study, dedication and hard work required in order to gain the qualification.

Throughout my years in the profession I have seen many positive advances, including greater recognition of the valuable role, which the veterinary nurse fulfils within the profession and I would like to see a continued increase in acknowledgement of the nursing qualification. Nurses are highly skilled co-professionals and therefore should be respected accordingly, in all aspects of their work. Promoting veterinary nursing as a valued profession is best achieved through the development of skills and knowledge and through evidence based nursing. By encouraging and developing the diversity of specialist roles available to nurses, through continuing education, we can support nurses to achieve their full potential.

We must provide exciting, inspiring and rewarding career pathways which will ensure the highest of standards are maintained, whilst providing for career progression and job satisfaction. Nurses can be empowered through education and advancement of their skill based knowledge. Nurses should be encouraged to reflect on their work and be motivated to seek new and exciting pathways to direct their careers through a structured and diverse programme of post-qualification training. I believe a strong educational culture is the cornerstone in achieving these goals.

Mental health, wellness and wellbeing should be at the forefront of our minds as we strive to retain highly skilled and experienced nurses, through a supportive and open culture.

I have dedicated my professional life to being a veterinary nurse and would be proud to stand as ambassador for our profession, helping to shape future policy and promote the highest standards of animal welfare and good practice.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

Rebecca has worked in the veterinary nursing profession for 14 years, and qualified in 2010. Her education includes certificates in hydrotherapy, emergency and critical care, and clinical canine massage. She is currently studying for a small mammals qualification. Rebecca is a member of the British Veterinary Nursing Association, the Association of Charity Vets and the Association of Zoo and Exotic Veterinary Nurses.

She is Veterinary Welfare Advisor to Support Adoption for Pets, the charity inside Pets At Home stores nationwide and the largest small animal rehoming organisation in the country. Prior to this, Rebecca held a variety of roles both in and out of practice, including working for a veterinary laboratory, running a hydrotherapy clinic, working in veterinary referral hospitals and owning a shoe manufacturing business.

Rebecca has travelled extensively using her qualifications. Her favourite role was that of turtle conservation alongside working in practice in the Cayman Islands.

Aside from overseeing the rehoming of some 76,000 small animals a year, she enjoys working with animal rescues to help improve pet welfare across the UK. Rebecca has spoken at conferences about this subject.

Home is Stockport in Cheshire, where Rebecca lives with her partner Carlos and dog Ruby.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Over the past 14 years, I’ve followed the veterinary nursing world with great interest. It appears that more nurses want better choice to specialise; more nurses want to develop themselves and grow their career; more nurses are interested in moving out of practice. Veterinary nurses are skilled, intelligent people and it’s wonderful to see that this is being recognised now more than ever. But there’s still a lot of work to be done to support nurses and grow our profession. We need to act now.

I’m fortunate to have had a varied career and have experienced different environments within the veterinary – and wider – world. I have a unique and well-rounded view of the profession; drawing on my experience of different roles in and out of practice puts me in a good position to work with the other VN Council members in helping to shape our future.

We must address the need for more varied and accessible career paths for those both in practice or those wishing to use their skills in another setting. We must enable and empower our peers through wider choice and through accessible education. And at all times, health and mental wellbeing should be our top priority.

The more we can improve and enrich the lives of UK veterinary nurses, the happier our peers will be and the more fulfilling and long-term our careers will be. This has a knock-on effect; all steps we take to grow ourselves and our profession ultimately improves the welfare of animals.
I qualified in 1992 and have worked in a wide range of practice settings and roles over the last 30 years including: first opinion, referral, teaching, head nurse, training management and university. I gained my DipAVN (surgical) in 1997 while at the Royal Vet College. I am a member of BVNA, BSAVA and BVBA; a past RCVS VNC member (2002 – 2011); BVNA President (2003-2004) and I received the RCVS Veterinary Nursing Golden Jubilee Award in 2015. More recently, I chaired the VN Futures post-registration qualification framework group and currently am a member of the VN Futures school ambassadors project. I joined Millennium Veterinary Practice in 2013, an independent first opinion and referral practice in Essex. My current role includes some PR and marketing work but my main focus is nurse consulting, in particular weight management and behaviour. I have always had a strong interest in behaviour and welfare and since 2017 have made this my CPD focus. Through this I have developed the role of a behaviour support nurse in my practice. I also visit pre, primary and secondary schools, other community groups and career events; to raise awareness about animal welfare and veterinary nursing as a career.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
After graduating from The University of Bristol (2007) with a BSc (Hons) degree and VPAC, I initially worked in primary care in practices in Surrey and Reading. I then moved to The University of Liverpool SATH as ICU nurse where I set up and ran the ICU. After 4 years I joined VetsNow Referrals Glasgow as Head Hospital Nurse. In 2013 I joined Pride Veterinary centre’s team to set up and run the ICU where I gained my credentials to sit my VTS(ECC) exam.

I’ve lectured for BSAVA, BVNA, various private UK and European CPD companies, also lecturing across Europe at EVECC, ‘The Voorjaarsdagen’, Utrecht University, and in various US states at IVECCs. I became a Lecturer in Veterinary Nursing at Harper Adams University (2015), where I achieved my PgC in HE, became a FHEA, and became a VTS(ECC).

I have sat on the EVECCS General Board for 8.5 years representing European veterinary nurses, the VECCS members committee and was chair of the EVECCS PR committee for 4 years.

I am a qualified mental health first-aider and wellbeing champion (2019).

I’m currently (since 2017) Head RVN at Lumbry Park Veterinary Specialists where I lead, teach and develop people and work clinically.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
I work as Head RVN for the CVS Group PLC at Lumbry Park Specialists. Alongside my job I enjoy spending time with my partner, friends and family, travel, reading, yoga, Pilates, walking my Springer dog, Dotty and snuggling with my cat, Archie.

We all love animals and that’s why we do what we do; but it’s more than that! We aim to work to the highest standard and to keep pushing towards what we mean by the highest standards; the gold standard of care. Ultimately as human beings, we can’t continue to do this without remaining professionally fulfilled, valued, understood and challenged. Do our clients, friends, MRCVS colleagues and families know what we do, what our role really entails and what we stand for as a profession? Do we all still feel challenged? Or do we feel at times limited and stunted as to where we are as individual VNs and as a profession?

Having worked in primary care, both university and private referral hospitals, full time teaching and now a leadership role for Lumbry Park, I feel I can serve our profession. I will use all the knowledge I have gained from these roles as well as the experience from the 8.5 years I have worked on the EVECCS General Board representing VNs across Europe to ensure we have a strong and representative voice.

If I am successfully elected to the RCVS VN Council, I will use my voice to channel yours and push on with the work regarding schedule 3, post-graduate qualifications and true, representative RVN skills sets. I want to ensure that we continue to strive for the gold standard and professional fulfilment whilst keeping this centered around our wellbeing so we can always give our best to ourselves, our team and the animals we love.

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Proposers: Kathryn Bradbury, Judith Parry

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
As a child, I knew that I wanted to work with animals which began with a part-time auxiliary role in a mixed veterinary practice in 1999, which ignited my determination to become a veterinary nurse. I qualified via the NVQ route in 2002, and have worked in mixed, small animal referral and first opinion practices, taking on various senior roles.
Currently, I am a senior theatre nurse at a small animal first opinion and referral hospital.
In 2015 I gained the RCVS Advanced Diploma, in 2018 became a clinical coach and in 2019 gained the ISFM Feline Medicine Diploma. I am a BVNA Regional Representative for Staffordshire and Derbyshire and enjoy providing CPD events for local nurses.
My main interests include anaesthesia, ECC, theatre practice and feline nursing. Having been in this industry for 20 years, I have never lost my passion for learning and love sharing my knowledge with students, colleagues and followers of my social media page.
I have a 12-year-old daughter who shares my love of animals and helps to take care of our menagerie of pets. I would be proud if she were to follow in my footsteps and embark on a career in veterinary nursing.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
Having worked in veterinary practice for over twenty years, I am fortunate to have observed the advances that have occurred in veterinary medicine, and it excites me that these continue. I am proud to be a veterinary nurse and enjoy seeing the role diversify, and am thoroughly supportive of VN Futures, a joint venture of the RCVS and BVNA which highlights how far a VN qualification can lead.
I strongly believe that because something has always been done a certain way, that it doesn’t make it the right way, and if elected, would encourage nurses to make themselves be heard, whether implementing new protocols, performing clinical audits or just voicing ideas.
I am passionate about continued learning and believe that CPD should not be considered a box ticking exercise, but an area that should be embraced and enjoyed, and I would try to educate and encourage nurses to share my enthusiasm. I am currently working on a personal project, investigating the prevalence of bullying in veterinary practice. I have found that many vets and nurses have been affected, and more than half of the respondents were unaware of the resources available to support them. I fully support the Mind Matters initiative and if elected, would do my best to ensure that VNs are fully aware of the resources available to them.
As I work in practice full time, I believe that I would be a valuable addition to the VN Council because I experience first-hand, the issues which SVN and RVNs face on a daily basis. Thank you for taking the time to read my personal statement, I hope that you decide that I am the ideal candidate to represent you as a member of VN Council, but regardless of who you choose, please use your vote.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

I have over 20 years’ experience working in the veterinary profession, qualifying as a veterinary nurse in 2003, spending 15 years clinical nursing starting in a mixed practice before moving into emergency and critical care.

My current role is Head of Clinical Nursing at Vets Now with responsibility for driving nursing standards along with supporting and promoting veterinary nurse development.

I achieved the Vets Now VN Certificate in Emergency and Critical care in 2011 and have been a tutor on the course for the last 8 years.

Throughout my career I have always been passionate about veterinary nursing, I am a long-standing member of the BVNA and the Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care Society (VECCS). I sit on the editorial board of the Veterinary Nursing Journal and have presented at numerous conferences and events. I have recently become a STEM ambassador to promote veterinary nursing as a profession to the next generation.

In 2016 I had the privilege to join the VN Council which I now chair along with the VN Futures project board. I am actively involved in the VN Futures working groups having been a member of the group which developed the new advanced veterinary nursing qualifications.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

The veterinary nursing profession is one I am immensely proud to be part of. In the 17 years since I qualified there have been many positive changes, as a VN Council member I will continue to work hard to ensure that our profession continues to evolve.

During my time on VN Council, I have been involved in several college committees and working groups, including the Schedule 3 review, standards committee and operational board, as well as being one of the first RVNs to formally sit on RCVS Council.

If re-elected, I will work to ensure that this progress continues. Through my work and role on VN Council I have had the pleasure of meeting nurses from across the country, having listened to their thoughts, concerns and ambitions, I am aware of both the challenges and opportunities that face our profession.

To this end I will to continue to work to improve recognition of our skills and value both within the veterinary profession and by the wider public. I believe we need to consider the future of our profession and what it could look like, we must not be short sighted in what we can achieve. Developing new career opportunities is important to our profession, to promote job satisfaction and aid retention. By supporting bolstering of the RVN role through reform of Schedule 3 and amendment of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, we will provide opportunities and career progression.

Mental health remains a pressing issue, I will continue to support and promote the work of the Mind Matters Initiative, to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary team.

With my background and experience, I believe that I am well placed to continue to play a constructive role on VN Council helping to move our profession forwards.
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Proposers: Claire Bolton, Noemi Villanueva Pérez

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
I qualified in July 2019 from Middlesex University with a BSc Honours degree in Veterinary Nursing. I am currently working as an out of hours nurse in an independent practice. I have recently also entered the world of locum nursing and love to see different ways of working to develop my own skills. Being an example, striving to exceed high welfare standards and my ongoing passion for the future of Veterinary Nursing are what pushes me to strive in my profession.

I have applied to help with the VN Futures project; as my passion is to represent the future of Veterinary Nurses in maximising our professions potential, and assisting with the continual development of Schedule 3. I was part of the RCVS outcome based 1CPD pilot, testing it out and logging feedback before its release.

The area I feel I thrive in is emergency situations, critical care nursing and out of hours advice. I commence my VNCertECC qualification in April 2020.

I am a member of the BVNA, BSAVA and AZEVN as well as being a Fellow for ZSL.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
Although I have not been a part of this incredible profession for very long, I am so proud to be able to call myself a Registered Veterinary Nurse. I hope that by standing for Council, I will have the opportunity to listen and represent the thoughts and feelings of fellow RVNs and SVN as well as action the changes to evolve our profession.

The common denominator for all of us, is our ongoing dedication and passion for all animals. I want to be able to represent our passions in all areas of the Veterinary industry and ensure we are recognised for our skill set and utilised to our full potential.

Lastly, I want to be able to champion the support structure for mental health awareness in the Veterinary Nursing profession. In an emotionally and physically demanding line of work, it is important to recognise mental health and embrace a structure to enable nurses to feel able to be open, seek support and fight back.
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

I qualified via the apprenticeship route in April 2018. I initially worked at Bridgnorth Veterinary Centre a small animal independent practice during training I moved to YourVets Smethwick a small animal hospital in November 2017. I became a clinical coach I thoroughly enjoyed supporting and helping students develop their skills. I enjoy all aspects of nursing with special interests in Pain Management, Anaesthetics, ECC, Geriatric Care and Behaviour. My fascination for cats means I completed the ISFM Advanced Certificate in Feline Behaviour in November 2018 and started the ISFM Foundation Diploma in Feline Nursing in April 2019. Since July 2019 I have been unable to work in practice due to Functional Neurological Disorder it has affected my mobility and causes light headedness making concentrating difficult. Due to not wanting to leave the profession, I am currently formulating a business plan and setting up Purrfect Solutions. The aim is to help create the perfect cat environment in various situations including veterinary practices and rescue centres using workshops and handouts. I volunteer at Shropshire Cat Rescue where I am creating a workshop programme and on a weekly basis monitor weights and highlight changes in condition of the residents in the retirement village.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I am putting myself forward for the VN Council due to having a passion for veterinary nursing and wanting to help those within the profession whilst helping to move the profession forward. I have outlined my three main areas I feel passionate about.

Developing CPD that is more accessible for veterinary nurses. Unfortunately, a lot of the time the courses nurses want to attend are out of reach due to lack of funds. Encouraging employers to increase CPD allowances will help and encourage nurses to develop their skills. The changes in the CPD regulations and the development of post qualification courses by the RCVS and other training bodies create a great opportunity for veterinary nurses to develop their skills and apply them in practice.

Due to my own health complications and battles, having colleagues and friends in practice struggling with physical and mental health, I feel that the RCVS Mind Matters is vital to the profession. There is a big need for the continual development to this service to help those struggling to stay in the profession. Offering support to help find ways to use their valuable skills and work around health problems they have whether physical, mental or both and help retain the valuable nurses we have with the profession.

In the world today, it’s vital that we start to make some drastic changes to help slow down the effects of global warming and climate change. I feel that as a profession veterinary nurses need to be part of helping reduce plastic wastage and encourage practices to become more eco-friendly by considering the environmental impact in areas like purchasing and waste management. I believe that as a profession whose main aim is to protect and care for animals it goes hand in hand that we care for the environment.

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Proposers: Barbara Cooper, Hilary Orpet

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
Matthew qualified in 1992 and has nearly 30 years’ experience in nursing exotic species both in the UK and abroad. He is interested in all aspects of animal health and welfare, but especially in exotics species in captivity and the wild. Matthew helped establish the Association of Zoo and Exotic Veterinary Nurses (AZEVN) in 2016. The AZEVN is unique in the UK, being solely run by and dedicated to veterinary nurses interested in nursing exotic animals. Matthew has been assisting Wildlife Vets International (WVI) with their conservation projects around the world. Matthew has published and lectured on most aspects of delivering veterinary nursing care to exotics species from turtles to tigers.

Matthew is currently Nursing Manager and Lead Exotics Nurse for Holly House Veterinary Hospital in Leeds, a multidisciplinary referral centre, he looks after a team of 30 RVNs, SVN’s and VCA’s. Matthew maintains a healthy balance of managerial duties and clinical work within the hospital and is a clinical coach and mentor.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
Being an elected member of Veterinary Nursing Council over the past four years has given me a greater understanding of the workings of the RCVS and our profession. The only veterinary nurse on council still in clinical practice, I highlight the issues we face within our profession, at all council meetings and all VN Futures projects, I have strived to get the voice of the “normal’ VN heard.

I have represented the RCVS at numerous events, the highlight of which was the honour of taking the newly qualified RVN’s through their declaration. This exposure to my colleagues has given me the opportunity to get the thoughts of veterinary nurses everywhere and to reflect and react to these in my role.

Veterinary nursing is in an unprecedented period of growth and positive change. Reflecting on the profession from when I started and to where we have progressed, it makes me emotional to see such improvement and I am proud of my contribution to these changes over the past four years. I wish to be re-elected to continue this work for the future of our profession as I feel I have so much more to do.

I wish for the profession to continue to evolve and improve for nurses currently, for when my students qualify and future generations to come. My aim is to always be providing better veterinary care for the animals we all nurse.

I would be honoured to have the opportunity to continue the work I am doing, always with these clear objectives in mind:

• Promotion – the role of the veterinary nurse within practice and outside it
• Encouragement – of diversity within veterinary nursing
• Education – for progression and better pay, showcasing our knowledge to all
• Professionalism – to upskill, publish, lecture, teach, mentor
• Pride – to be a veterinary nurse
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

I have been involved in veterinary nursing for over 20 years and have worked in private, charity, emergency and referral practices. I have been in senior nursing positions and gained advanced qualifications. I have taught the VN Syllabus and have been an internal verifier and assistant examiner for the RCVS. I have gained the Diploma in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (Surgical), the Certificate in Veterinary Nursing for Emergency and Critical Care and the Post Graduate Certificate in Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia.

I have written numerous articles and lectured at major veterinary conferences ensuring the delivery of evidenced based medicine.

In 2011 I set up SynergyCPD which I have run alongside maintaining clinical skills in referral practice. SynergyCPD grew from my desire to support nurses in practice enabling them to feel more confident and empowered improving knowledge and patient care.

I am a big advocate for vets and nurses to learn together within the practice setting and believe that patient focussed care can only be achieved by a patient focussed team.

In February 2020 I started a new role as The Professional Development Manger within the Linnaeus group. I am married; have two children and a house full of animals.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I am a proud and hopefully respected member of the Veterinary Nursing community that has always been in positions that has enabled me to share my passion.

I believe that veterinary nursing is entering an exciting time with some very influential nurses taking up senior positions; working tirelessly at progressing the veterinary nursing role forwards.

There is an energy and drive in the VN profession at the moment that excites me to stand for VN Council where I can help provide us with a voice surrounding the issues faced by veterinary nursing and make an impact; however small that keeps the profession moving forwards because that’s what we deserve.

We are no longer seen as just the support for vets; we are a profession in our own right, craving for career opportunity, progression and recognition. I am always in awe of my peers who tirelessly continue to develop themselves professionally and academically, often through self-funding because financial support for CPD is not always seen as a priority which contributes to our sense of value.

We all agree that veterinary care should be patient focussed but for this to be achieved we need to focus on the people who have significant involvement in delivering that patient care, which are the nurses. We are a key part of the veterinary team but staff retention can be low, seeing skilled professionals leaving the profession due to low financial reward and lack of career progression that enables utilisation of our skill set.

I want to join the VN Council so that I can use the experience I have gained in my career as a clinical nurse and as someone who understands how interprofessional education and practice can improve the job satisfaction of the nurses within a veterinary team.

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Proposers: Claire Woolford, Victoria Ford-Fennah
CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY
I qualified in 2009 from Bristol University with a BSc (Hons) in Veterinary Nursing and Practice Administration. After training in a first opinion and referral setting, I started work at Bath Veterinary Referrals as a referral nurse and now have progressed to deputy head referral nurse. In 2014 I completed the graduate diploma in Clinical and Professional Veterinary Nursing at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC). Throughout my time in practice I have developed a keen interest in surgical nursing, anaesthesia and wound management. Within practice I am lead clinical coach and thoroughly enjoy teaching the next generation of students. I am currently working towards the BSAVA VN merit award in wound management. I am also a volunteer and part of the BSAVA South West regional committee and a member of the patient safety group for Independent Vet Care (IVC). In the past I have also been a part of the nurse committee for IVC, all roles I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of. More recently I have become an examiner for both Vetskill and City and Guilds for the veterinary nursing OSCE examinations.

CANDIDATE STATEMENT
Throughout my career, I have witnessed the challenges faced by veterinary nurses, from education, retention, title protection and wellbeing, to name a few. As a member of the council I feel I would be able to assist with the progress of these areas. Awareness around mental health and wellbeing is increasing, the RCVS has worked on support systems protecting veterinary professionals and this is an area that needs to be continually supported by the RCVS and the council.

More recently the VN Council has been working towards and completed a framework for advanced veterinary nursing qualifications, allowing veterinary nurses to further expand their skills. I would like to assist in the future development of an advanced practitioner status for veterinary nurses. I believe this would utilise veterinary nurses to their highest ability, make them feel valued and appreciated in their role and increase opportunities for nurses within the profession.

Recently one training provider (City and Guilds) has announced their withdrawal of the veterinary nursing qualification, which has caused concern among many within practice. With questions regarding the impact on learners, training and familiarity of the syllabus of the other two leading providers (Central qualifications & Vetskill). I would like to work with the council on ensuring minimal disruption to students (current and prospective), supporting, guiding and providing all the information, to ensure the transition is smooth and does not affect the provision of training to veterinary nurses.

I would love the opportunity to be a part of the RCVS VN Council and assist in shaping and supporting the future of veterinary nurses within the profession. Together, we can successfully make veterinary nursing not only a recognised profession in its own right but one that provides continual support, guidance, knowledge and aspirations to us all.
• RCVS Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council currently comprises 14 members: six elected veterinary nurses, two appointed veterinary nurse members, two appointed veterinary surgeon members and four appointed lay members.

• In November 2017 VN Council agreed changes to its governance arrangements, reducing the number of elected members from 8 to 6 and introducing new appointed veterinary nurse, veterinary surgeon and lay members. Another key change was that the term of office for VN Council members was reduced from four to three years. These changes meant that no VN Council election was held in 2018.

• This year two current VN Council members are due to retire at this year’s Royal College Day on Friday, 10 July 2020. Both were eligible for re-election and both chose to re-stand this year.

• This year a total of 13 veterinary nurses have put themselves forward as candidates for VN Council, with two elected places available.

• The full biographies and manifestos of each candidate can be found at www.rcvs.org.uk/vnvote20 where videos of the candidates answering questions submitted directly by members of the profession can also be found.

• You may vote online or by post. Full voting instructions are printed on the separate ballot paper enclosed with this booklet.

• If your ballot paper is not enclosed please contact Annette Amato, RCVS Deputy Head of Veterinary Nursing and Secretary to VN Council, on 020 7202 0713 or a.amato@rcvs.org.uk to arrange for a duplicate to be sent to you.

• The result of the election will be announced after the voting period closes. The elected candidates will take up their three-year terms at the Annual General Meeting of the RCVS which will take place on Friday, 10 July 2020 at One Great George Street.

• The VN Council election is run independently by Civica Election Services (formerly Electoral Reform Services) – the UK’s leading independent supplier of ballot and election services.

• The deadline for receipt of all votes – whether online or by post – is 5pm on Friday, 24 April 2020.

Vote online* at www.cesvotes.com/vnvote20

Vote by post by returning your ballot paper in the pre-paid envelope provided.

*Look out for the secure personalised link in the email from ERS.