

# VN VISION:

**The future of team-based  
veterinary healthcare**



# VN VISION

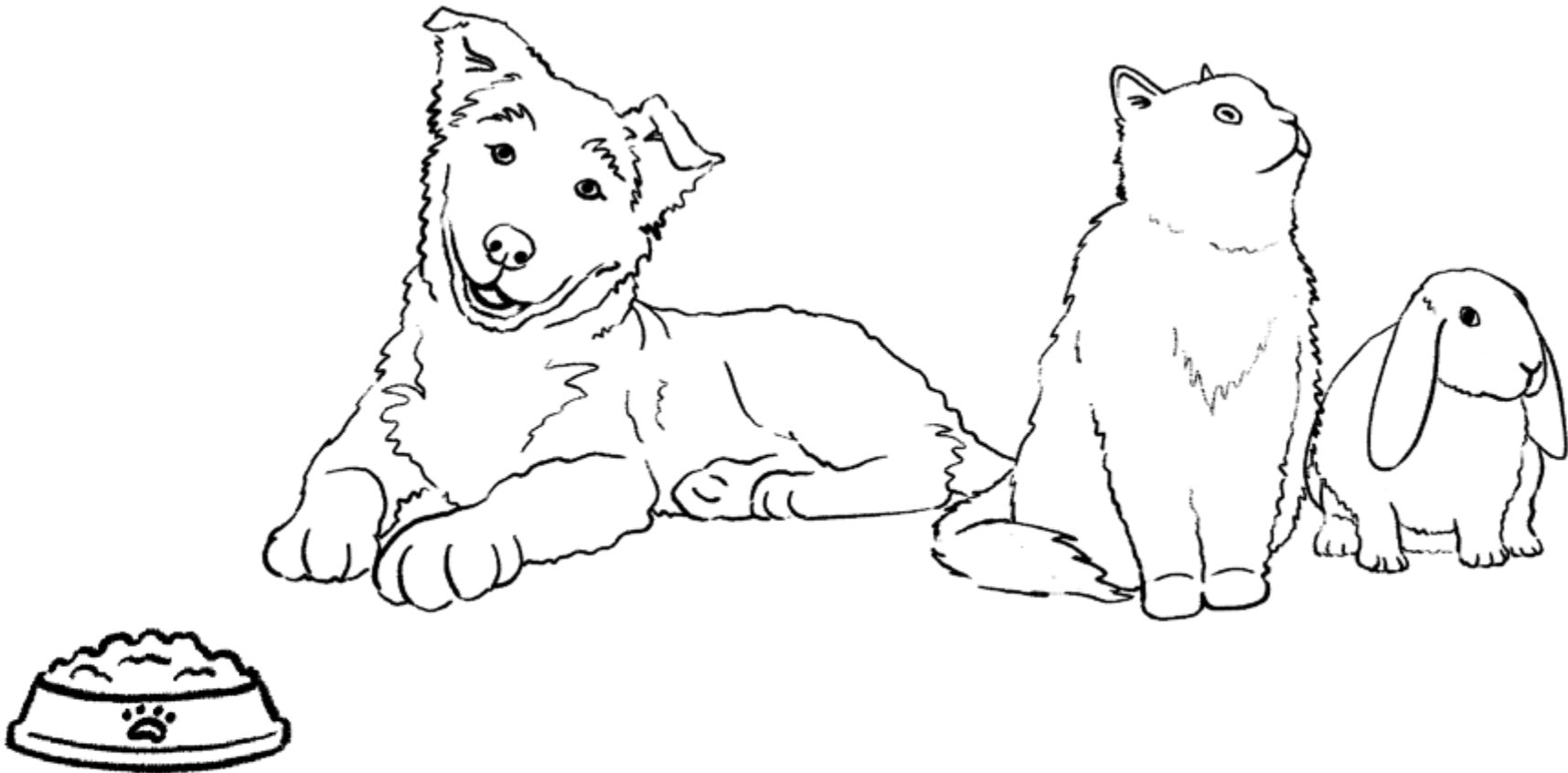
## Snapshot Report

The work of VN Vision  
so far and next steps



### Contents

<u>03</u>	<a href="#">Background</a>	<u>06</u>	<a href="#">Attendance</a>
<u>03</u>	<a href="#">About VN Vision</a>	<u>07</u>	<a href="#">Participant feedback</a>
<u>03</u>	<a href="#">Why VN Vision?</a>	<u>08</u>	<a href="#">Data collection and analysis</a>
<u>04</u>	<a href="#">Scope of activity</a>	<u>08</u>	<a href="#">Results</a>
<u>05</u>	<a href="#">Run by RVNs for RVNs</a>	<u>09</u>	<a href="#">Key themes</a>
<u>05</u>	<a href="#">Bringing in other stakeholders</a>	<u>10-12</u>	<a href="#">Results commentary</a>
<u>05</u>	<a href="#">Event structure</a>	<u>13</u>	<a href="#">Authors' message</a>
<u>06</u>	<a href="#">Event locations</a>	<u>14</u>	<a href="#">Contact details</a>





# BACKGROUND

The VN Futures Project, a joint initiative between the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA), was launched in July 2016.

Since its launch, the VN Futures Project has addressed different areas of challenge and progression within the profession.

The VN Futures 2023 video provides an overview of these achievements.

[Watch video](#)



# WHY VN VISION?

The veterinary landscape has changed significantly in recent years, with further developments anticipated. Demand for veterinary healthcare has grown, driven by an increase in pet ownership and rising expectations from animal owners. Veterinary nurses possess a unique skillset—combining technical, medical, and pharmacological expertise with a strong commitment to patient care, advocacy, and client support. However, this skillset is often underutilised, with many veterinary nurses not working to their full potential, leading to feelings of being undervalued and a lack of role satisfaction.

The ongoing Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into 'veterinary services for household pets' required extensive data collection from across the profession, including input from professional bodies and regulators such as the RCVS, as well as from consumers—namely, animal owners and the general public. This wealth of data presents a valuable opportunity to gain a broad, multifaceted understanding of the veterinary profession and the provision of veterinary services.

While the CMA's findings are far-reaching, in the context of veterinary nursing, they reinforce a view long held by many within the profession: that more effective utilisation of veterinary nurses could significantly enhance both the efficiency of veterinary healthcare delivery and the experience of pet owners.

The RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Nursing Profession offers comprehensive insights into the demographics of the profession, the roles currently performed in practice, and factors such as flexible working, mental health, and wellbeing. Meanwhile, BVNA initiatives—such as the 'Protect the Title' campaign—have delivered targeted data on specific issues of concern within the veterinary nursing field.

Additional canvassing, such as the 2021 Mind Matters Initiative (MMI) student veterinary nurse (SVN) wellbeing survey and discussion forum, also provided valuable data on the veterinary nursing profession.

However, there has been limited in-depth exploration of what veterinary nurses truly envision for the future of their role.



[Read Report](#)

# SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

Throughout 2024, we took the opportunity to explore a wider, more ambitious vision for the profession, considering the changing landscape and the potential future demands for the delivery of veterinary healthcare, and the work we can do to prepare for and support this.

The fundamental goal was to explore how team-based veterinary healthcare could be delivered in the future to maximise efficiency, enhance role satisfaction among team members, and improve accessibility of veterinary care for animal owners

Entitled ‘VN Vision: The future of team-based veterinary healthcare’, the initiative provided a series

of in-person and online events to gain a broad range of perspectives and encouraged open-minded and unrestricted thinking.

During this preliminary stage of the initiative, the events were open to registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) and student veterinary nurses (SVNs) from a wide range of backgrounds, areas of work, and experiences within the sector. We gathered data from all those who attended.

Later stages of the work will incorporate input from the wider veterinary profession, veterinary support staff, and additional stakeholders, including animal owners.

## The key questions we sought answers for were:

- What does the veterinary nursing profession want the future of veterinary healthcare to look like?
- What role will RVNs play in shaping this future?



**The fundamental goal was to explore how team-based veterinary healthcare could be delivered in the future to maximise efficiency, enhance role satisfaction among team members, and improve accessibility of veterinary care for animal owners.**



# RUN BY RVNS FOR RVNS

Registered veterinary nurses (RVNs) and student veterinary nurses (SVNs) were invited to join the events, providing them with an opportunity to discuss the future of their profession with one another. Data was gathered from the RCVS registration database, and, for in-person events, invitations were sent to individuals within a specific geographical area.

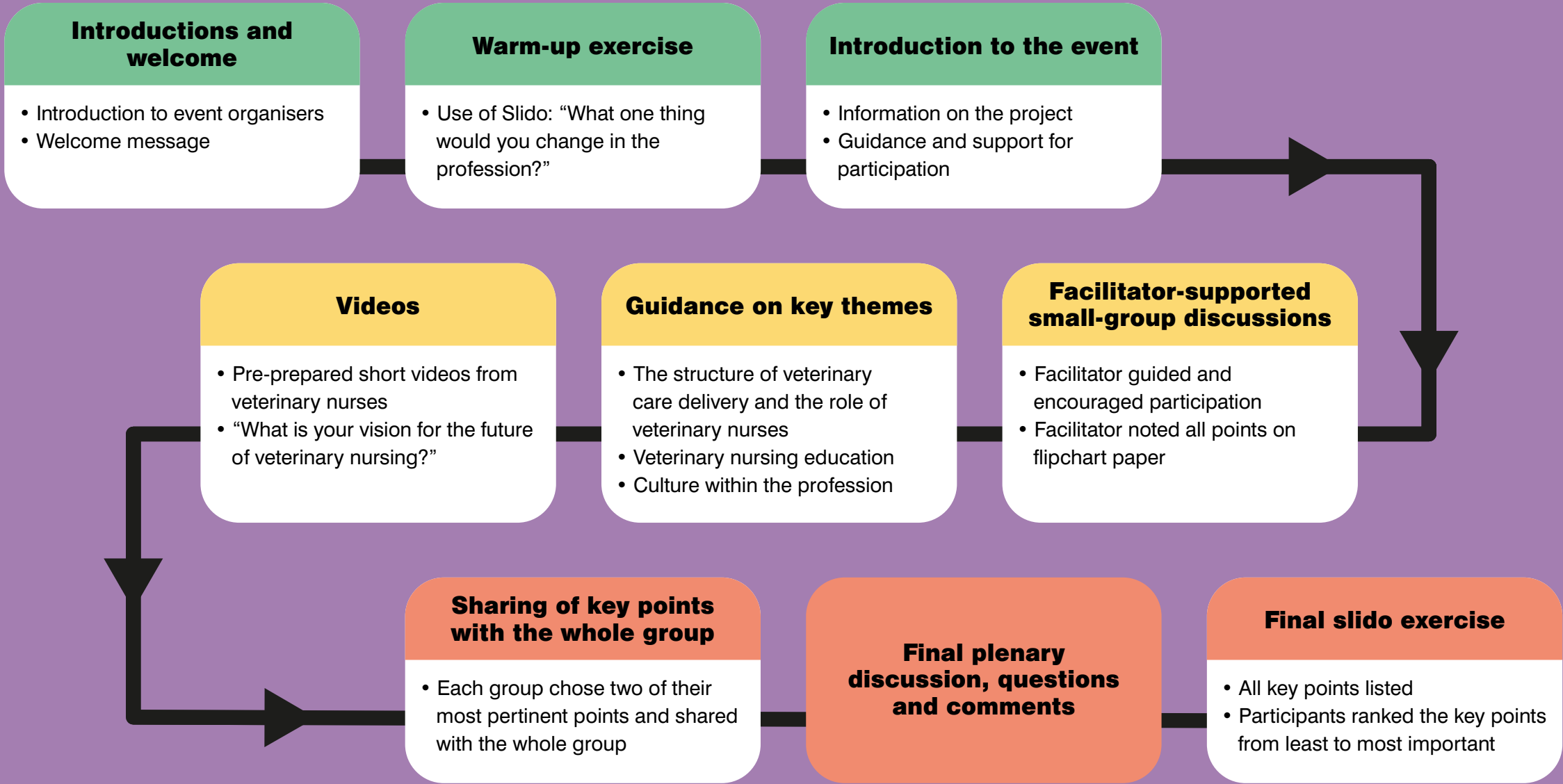
The events were planned, delivered, and managed by RCVS VN Team members Julie Dugmore RVN, Director of Veterinary Nursing, and Jill Macdonald RVN, VN Futures Lead. Assistance at some events was provided by RCVS VN Council and BVNA staff members, as well as members of the RCVS events and communications teams.

# BRINGING IN OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Subsequent phases of the project will involve input from the broader veterinary community, including veterinary surgeons, directors, managers and practice owners, front-of-house teams, and practice support staff, as well as additional stakeholders, such as animal owners. This will allow for triangulation of the data and help ensure that the perspectives of the wider profession and the public align with the views of veterinary nurses.

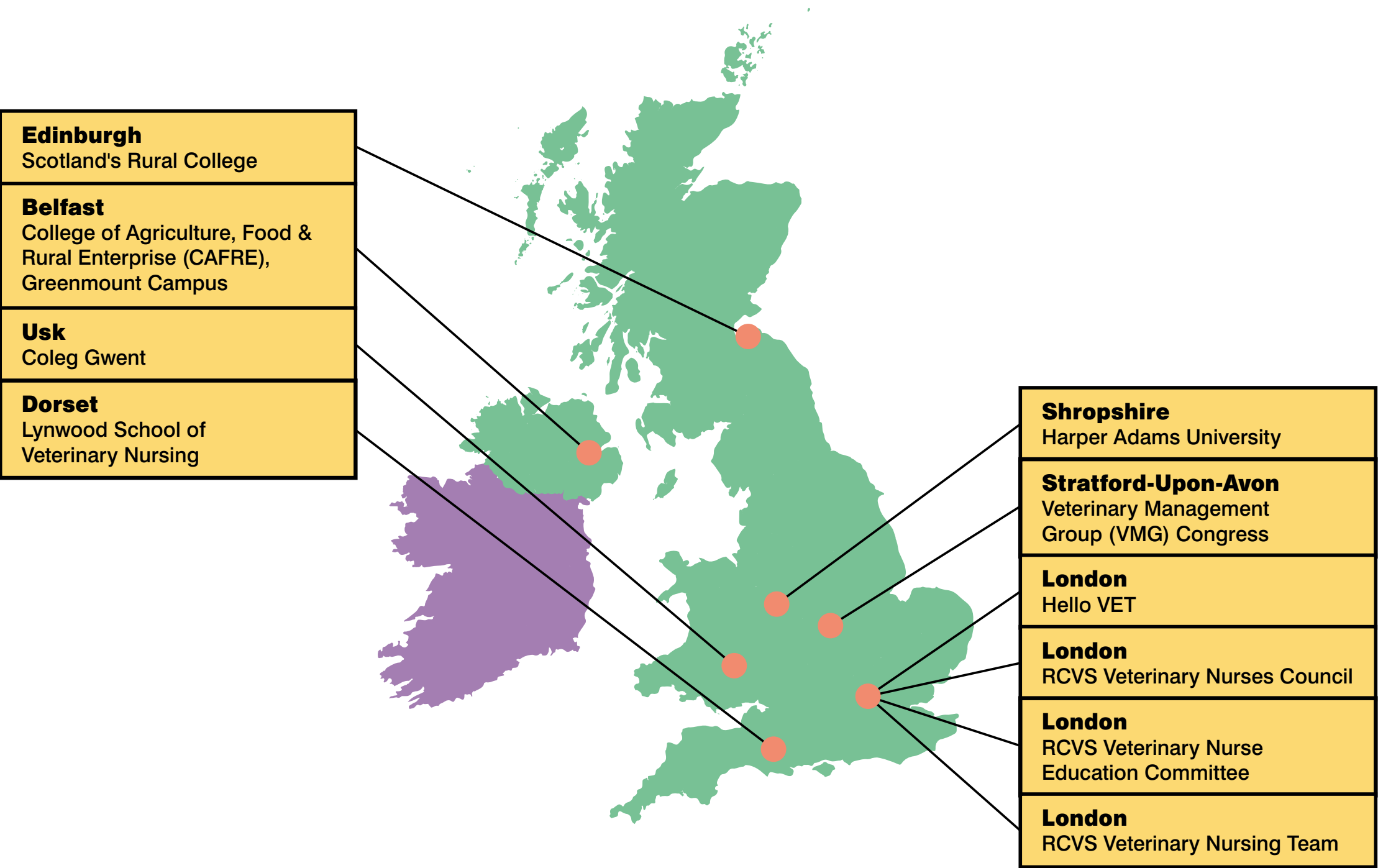
# EVENT STRUCTURE

The events held as part of the study followed a consistent format:





# EVENT LOCATIONS



# ATTENDANCE

Event attendee log:

Event	Date	Registered	Attended
RCVS VN Council	28/02/2024		12
VMG conference, Stratford-Upon-Avon	26/04/2024		20
VN Vision event, Belfast	08/05/2024	35	22
RCVS VN Education Committee	20/06/2024		16
VN Vision event, Edinburgh	26/06/2024	24	13
VN Vision event, Shropshire	11/07/2024	23	16
VN Vision event, online	18/07/2024	34	21
RCVS Veterinary Nursing Team	07/08/2024		9
VN Vision event, South Wales	24/09/2024	15	12
VN Vision event, online	26/09/2024	28	6
VN Vision event, London	02/10/2024	17	14
VN Vision event, online	15/10/2024	33	14
VN Vision event, equine online	23/10/2024	32	26
VN Vision event, Dorset	14/11/2024	12	12

# PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

A snapshot from session participants

## ENGAGEMENT

All attendees approached discussions thoughtfully, bringing new ideas and concepts to the table, while also considering how these could be practically implemented and managed in real-world scenarios. The level of insight was exceptional, with many unique ideas emerging that had not been previously discussed. Participants were supportive of one another, creating a safe space for conflicting views to be raised and explored from various perspectives.

Attendees at the events demonstrated enthusiasm, engagement, and passion for their profession, and in sharing their views on its future.



WHICH ASPECT OF THE VN VISION SESSION DID YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE?

“ Realising that as a collective we all have very similar ideas and visions, which is very positive for the future of the profession. ”

“ Collaborating with other professionals. ”

“ Brilliant evening, exceeded my expectations. I felt heard and valued as an RVN. ”

“ The ability to network and understand that there are many shared goals with both others in the profession and with the RCVS on the future of nursing. ”

“ Hearing others’ thoughts on the future of education. ”

“ All of it. It was good to know many people in the nursing profession, or involved in it, would like the same things to happen. ”

“ Feeling like RVNs are being taken seriously. Finally hopefully we will have a structure for further certification and be allowed to work to our full potential. ”

“ This was an excellent opportunity for the voices of veterinary nurses to be heard. ”



## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data was gathered using flipcharts at in-person events and scribes at online events. All data was anonymous, and no comments, ideas, or concepts could be linked to specific attendees. Facilitators guided the discussions and encouraged participants to expand on their ideas and translate them into actionable concepts.

The data was subjected to thematic analysis, enabling the identification of key themes and related areas within those themes. The data will provide a basis for future project work and be relevant to veterinary professionals, businesses, employers, and educators.

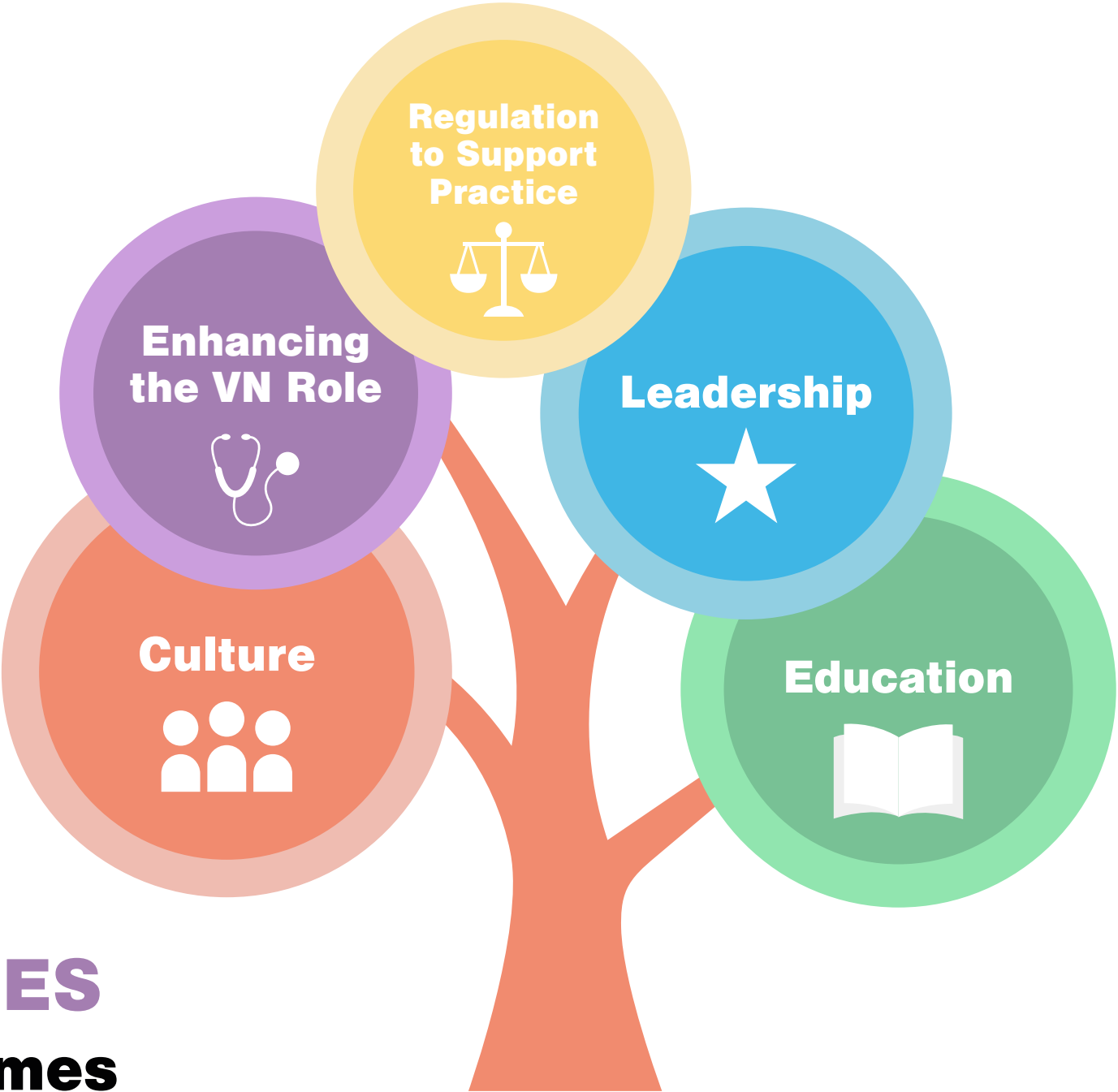
# RESULTS

Take some time to reflect on the key themes shared by VNs across the UK





KEY THEMES  
And sub-themes



# RESULTS COMMENTARY

The graphic on the previous page illustrates the key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

The following provides a commentary and overview of some of the most prevalent discussions and their potential impact on the profession.

## CULTURE

Culture within the veterinary workplace underpinned almost every discussion held around each theme. It all comes back to cultural reform: leadership within veterinary teams, how teams integrate and work together, how they recognise and respect each other for their specific skillset, and how they support and

respect each other in what is often an extremely challenging environment. This also aligns with the many discussions on mental health and wellbeing: if there is a just, supportive culture, and a system of shared accountability, mental health and wellbeing are likely to be enhanced.

**It all comes back to cultural reform: leadership within veterinary teams, how teams integrate and work together, how they recognise each other for their specific skillset, and how they support and respect each other in what is often an extremely challenging environment.**

## ACCESSIBILITY OF VETERINARY CARE

Through increased responsibility and autonomy, enhancing veterinary nurses' input to patient care was also discussed from the animal owners' perspective. In many cases presented in primary care practice, veterinary nurses feel they have the ability to manage the patient journey from diagnosis by the veterinary surgeon, and through the patient's disease process with appropriate additional training where necessary, and under the direction and guidance of a veterinary surgeon. This provides the opportunity

for animal owners to receive more one-to-one time with a veterinary healthcare professional, enabling increased support. Whilst nursing time still needs to be chargeable for the model to be sustainable, this framework for veterinary healthcare delivery is likely to be more accessible to animal owners than if offered solely by a veterinary surgeon, as is currently commonly the case.

# RESPONSIBILITY, AUTONOMY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Veterinary nurses desire more responsibility and autonomy in the delivery of team-based veterinary healthcare. They feel this will enable them to make a more meaningful contribution to healthcare delivery, expand their skillset, and provide increased support to their veterinary colleagues and animal owners. Many nurses cite that their skills and capabilities, and the scope of tasks that can be performed within the

current legal framework, are not fully utilised. It was felt that there needs to be increased clarity regarding lines of responsibility and accountability for veterinary nurses and veterinary surgeons when delegating patient care responsibilities. Both parties need to feel informed and confident for effective delegation to become more commonplace.

**Many nurses cite that their skills and capabilities, and the scope of tasks that can be performed within the current legal framework, are not fully utilised.**



# BUILDING FOUNDATIONS AND EFFECTIVE UTILISATION OF TEAM MEMBERS

To ensure the effective use of veterinary nurses, it is also important to address the role of ‘patient care assistants’ (PCAs) as a foundational element of the veterinary team. While many practices employ PCAs, others do not. PCAs can provide basic patient care and assist veterinary nurses, allowing veterinary nurses to focus on the more advanced aspects of their role. This approach would maximise the potential of all team members, leading to a more efficient and cost-effective way of working.

## ADVANCED VETERINARY NURSING

The potential for the development of an advanced practitioner in veterinary nursing was raised many times. As with effective utilisation of veterinary nurses in their current state, nurses feel that an advanced practitioner role would enable them to make a greater contribution to veterinary care, whilst increasing accessibility for animal owners. A nurse prescriber role has also been discussed as a potential area for consideration. This could have a particular impact on repeat and routine prescriptions, where patients currently must be regularly re-examined by a veterinary surgeon to provide prescription-only medications.

**PCAs can provide basic patient care and assist veterinary nurses, allowing veterinary nurses to focus on the more advanced aspects of their role.**

**Valuing the whole veterinary healthcare team and recognising what each individual professional and person can bring to a team was also mentioned many times.**

# RECOGNITION

Veterinary nurses desire more recognition from veterinary surgeons and the public and for veterinary nursing to be understood and valued. This was expressed in terms of what veterinary nurses are capable of within the veterinary healthcare team and what veterinary nursing can bring to veterinary healthcare delivery. Veterinary nurses feel that they are often ‘invisible’ to clients, and not always recognised by veterinary colleagues for their professional competencies.

Valuing the whole veterinary healthcare team and recognising what each individual professional and person can bring to a team was also mentioned many times. This theme of recognition also aligns with the repeated comments about increased opportunities for interprofessional education. It is felt that this should be beyond vets and vet nurses simply being taught certain aspects of syllabuses together and should include problem-based learning, integrative teamwork, and peer-to-peer teaching and learning.

## PROGRESSION

There were many discussions around further qualifications for veterinary nurses, and appropriate recognition, through career progression and remuneration, for those nurses who commit to and achieve such qualifications. Development of a ‘tier’ system, whereby further qualifications are linked to additional responsibilities and progression, was often brought up within the same discussions. Veterinary

nurses who complete additional qualifications at level 6 or 7 are currently not afforded any additional autonomy or decision-making capacity. Ultimately, whatever the level of qualification gained, all veterinary nurses work within the same legal framework, which it was felt limits the possibility for meaningful expansion of the veterinary nurse role.

**Nurses feel that an advanced practitioner role would enable them to make a greater contribution to veterinary care.**





# THE FOCUS OF THE FIRST PROJECT

Many nurses cited that their skills and capabilities are not effectively utilised under the current legislation. Therefore addressing this issue will be the objective of the first derivative project: ‘A vision or a necessity? Strengthening the role of veterinary nurses in team-based veterinary healthcare’.

Whilst the forward travel within our profession is rapid, it is important that there is focus on what is happening now, and addressing ways to make improvements, before tackling more complex,

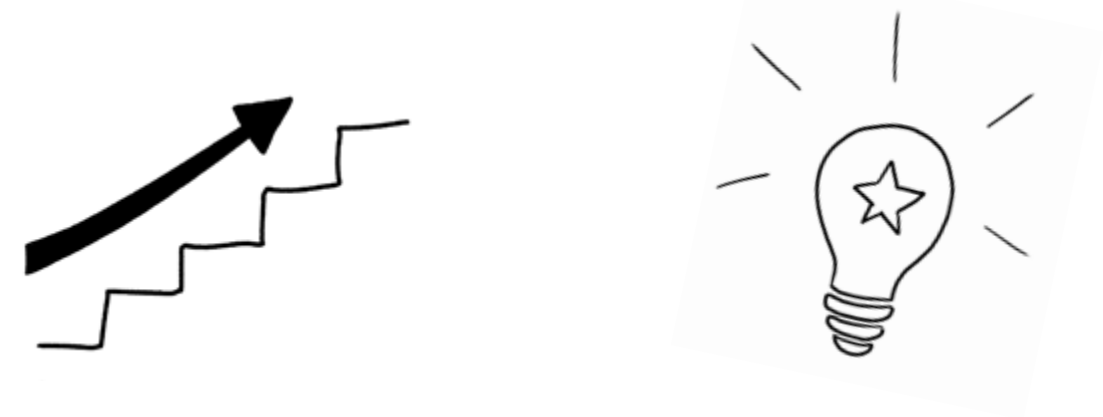
advanced developments.

Under-utilisation of veterinary nurses has been a topic for discussion for some years, yet the data highlighted that this is still an issue.

A theory of change model will be utilised in the project development, and stakeholders from across the sector will be integral in exploring the issues and developing short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes for the project.

## THE FIRST PROJECT WILL EXPLORE:

- The degree to which nurses are effectively utilised within practice
- The barriers or obstacles to effective nurse utilisation, and conversely, the mechanisms behind where it is working well
- The factors that feed into effective nurse utilisation, for example, skills, confidence, practical, legislative, leadership, and cultural perspectives
- Animal owners’ views on increasing the role and responsibilities of veterinary nurses within practice



# AUTHORS' MESSAGE

## What it has meant to us

The VN Vision workshops have been incredibly meaningful to us as fellow veterinary nurses. They provided a unique opportunity to connect directly with colleagues across the profession, listen to your thoughts and ideas from all corners of veterinary nursing, and build relationships that have reignited our passion to serve and support this profession we care so deeply about.

The level of engagement from the profession was truly inspiring. It was clear just how much veterinary nurses care about shaping their future and being heard. Many of you went above and beyond, traveling

long distances or joining online after demanding workdays, to take part in the discussions. Your openness, enthusiasm, and insight were invaluable, and your willingness to engage showed just how committed you are to moving our profession forward.

We thank our employers, the RCVS, through the funding of this project, for giving us the opportunity and privilege of completing this work.

To everyone who attended, whether in person or online, and no matter the size of your contribution, thank you. Your involvement has made a real difference.



## What does it mean to you?

Whether you are a veterinary nurse, a veterinary surgeon, or are in a client care, management, or leadership role, the information we have gained from this project will feed into the future of our profession.

Maybe you are content with the way things are for you right now – and that's absolutely fine. We don't all strive for change, progress, or advancements, and we need every kind of viewpoint to make this work.

Maybe you are looking for more from the veterinary nursing role and wish for veterinary nurses to have a more integrated position within practice and in the delivery of veterinary healthcare.

Whatever your stance, please watch out for updates, respond to our calls for action, and contact us anytime to share your views or comments.

## What the profession can do to help

We can't do it without you, and your engagement is essential in reaching our end goals. Whatever contribution you make will be valuable, and we need perspectives from all angles to build a clear picture and develop strategies for implementation.

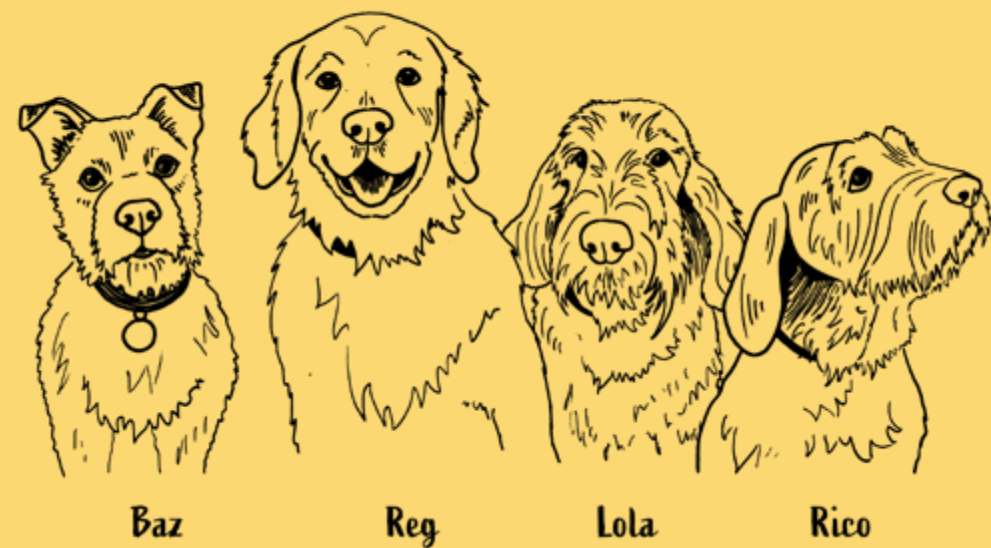
Whether it be a short survey, a feedback form, or attending a session, the motivation is that this is your future. This is your chance to shape that future.

## What we can do

Throughout 2025 during events and conferences, we are sharing an overview of the work completed to date, and our plans for the first project.

This report is a 'snapshot', and full details of the results will be published at a later date.

The first project, 'A vision or a necessity? Strengthening the role of veterinary nurses in team-based veterinary healthcare', will begin over the coming weeks and months, whilst we also consider other areas of work that we as the RCVS, and the BVNA, can perform.







## CONTACT US:

**JILL MACDONALD**  
J.MACDONALD@RCVS.ORG.UK

**JULIE DUGMORE**  
J.DUGMORE@RCVS.ORG.UK