

**ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS
DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

INQUIRY RE:

CLAIRE TURNER (née FINNEY) RVN

DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

1. Mrs Turner was due to appear before the Disciplinary Committee (“the Committee”) to answer the following charge:

That, being registered in the Register of Veterinary Nurses:

1. On 8 August 2025, at Llandudno Magistrates. Court, you were convicted, following a guilty plea, of burglary, contrary to section 9(1)(b) of the Theft Act 1968;

And, in respect of this conviction, you were sentenced to 12 months. imprisonment, suspended for 18 months and to an order to carry out unpaid work for 140 hours within the next 12 months; you were ordered to pay compensation of £761.20; and you were made subject to a restraining order until 7 August 2030;

And it is alleged that the above conviction renders you unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Nurse.

Preliminary matters

Service and Proceeding in Absence

2. As Mrs Turner was not in attendance the Committee had to be satisfied that service of the Notice of Hearing had been sent to her, in accordance with the Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Practitioners (Disciplinary Committee) (Procedure and Evidence) Rules, Order of Council 2004 (“the Rules”), before moving on to consider whether it would be appropriate to proceed in her absence.
3. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor. The Committee had sight of an email dated 13 April 2026 sent to Mrs Turner at her registered email address, giving notice of the hearing. The Notice of Hearing informed Mrs Turner of the hearing time, the date and that the hearing would be conducted remotely by video conference. Information was included about how Mrs Turner could apply for a postponement, should she have wished to do so, and the Committee’s power to proceed in her absence, in the event that she did not attend.
4. The Committee therefore determined that service had been complied with in accordance with the Rules.
5. With Mrs Turner not present, Miss Curtis, who appeared on behalf of the College, made an application to proceed in her absence.
6. The Committee heard and accepted the legal advice from the Legal Assessor, who referred it, *inter alia*, to the case of the GMC v Adeogba [2016] EWCA Civ 162, and the principles to be considered when deciding whether or not to proceed in the absence of a respondent. The Committee had in mind the need to exercise its discretion to proceed with the utmost care and caution, particularly as Mrs Turner was not represented.
7. The Panel was satisfied that Mrs Turner was aware that the hearing was due to go ahead on 11 May 2026 and that, in the event that she did not attend, the hearing could go ahead in her absence, as detailed in the Notice of Hearing. Mrs Turner had responded to the Notice of Hearing on 18 April 2026, indicating that she would not be attending the hearing. She did not request an adjournment.
8. By way of background, on 28 August 2025, the College wrote to Mrs Turner seeking her comments on the fact that she had been convicted at the Llandudno Magistrates’ Court on 8 August 2025. On 26 September 2025, Mrs Turner replied to that letter, by email. She stated that she had pleaded guilty and would be leaving “*the profession and the register*”. On 2 October 2025, the College wrote back to explain that she could not be removed voluntarily, pending the outcome of the disciplinary process. In January 2026, the Clerks to the Disciplinary Committee sent emails to Mrs Turner regarding a pre-listing meeting. Mrs Turner replied to these emails,

including on 30 January 2026, stating that she did not wish to attend “any [hearing]”. On 2 February 2026, the Clerks asked whether she was happy for the hearing to go ahead in her absence. The following day, she replied stating she was, but would like to “write [her] side”

9. The Committee noted that Mrs Turner faced serious allegations and there was a clear public interest in the matter being dealt with expeditiously. The Committee considered an adjournment would serve no useful purpose, because it seemed most unlikely that Mrs Turner would attend on another occasion. Furthermore, the Committee noted she had not requested an adjournment. In light of Mrs Turner’s clear indication that she would not be attending this hearing, the Committee decided that she had voluntarily absented herself from this hearing and thereby waived her right to be present and her right to be represented.
10. The Committee concluded that it was in the interests of justice that the matter should proceed notwithstanding the absence of Mrs Turner. The Committee would draw no adverse inference from Mrs Turner’s non-attendance and would take into account any information within the papers that furthered her case.

Background

11. Miss Curtis then proceeded to open the case on behalf of the College.
12. At all times material to the allegation before the Committee Mrs Turner was registered as a veterinary nurse. At the time of the burglary, Mrs Turner was employed at Mochdre Vets in Colwyn Bay (“the Practice”) as a Veterinary Nurse. The Practice also had a branch at Llandudno Junction. The owner of the Practice described her as “a well respected member of staff” whom they had known for over 10 years. They confirmed that at the time of the burglaries, Mrs Turner was on sick leave and thus had no legitimate reason to enter the Practice premises. However, a temporary member of staff reported having seen Mrs Turner entering the Practice several times and it was suspected she had been stealing drugs. On checking CCTV for the two premises, they found Mrs Turner had entered premises at the two sites on 26 occasions between 21/01/2024 and 25/03/2024, each time out of hours when the premises were closed.
13. When interviewed on 26 March 2024 by the Practice in relation to these visits, Mrs Turner admitted entering the premises, but claimed this was to use the toilet when she was passing and felt unwell. When shown photographs of her removing medication, she admitted to having taken Vetemex for herself because she felt sick, but denied taking anything else. Mrs Turner was then suspended by the Practice with immediate effect.

14. On 10 August 2024, Mrs Turner attended a voluntary interview with the police. During that interview she admitted taking Prevomax for her cat (an anti-sickness medication), having been told it was okay for her to do so (this was denied by the person in question). She did not admit to taking any other medication from the Practice premises. Mrs Turner referred to one of the vets as a bully who was trying to ruin her career.
15. In a statement provided to the Police by the Practice, drugs with a total value of £751.62, were listed as having been taken by Mrs Turner.
16. In a Victim Personal Statement, the owner of the Practice spoke of how difficult it had been at the Practice during the relevant time with all the staff being under suspicion, having a lasting impact on the staff. Mrs Turner had been considered to be a trusted and valued friend and work colleague who was highly thought of. When discovering her crime the owner felt *“physically sick, extremely sad and hurt”* by Mrs Turner’s behaviour.
17. On 8 August 2025, Mrs Turner was convicted at the Llandudno Magistrates’ Court of burglary of a non-dwelling, contrary to section 9(1)(b) of the Theft Act 1968. Mrs Turner had pleaded not guilty, but changed her plea to one of guilty on 8 August 2025.
18. The particulars of the offence were that on 23 June 2013, Mrs Turner, between 20/01/2024 and 26/03/2024 at Colwyn Bay, Conwy having entered as a trespasser a building, namely Mochdre Vets, stole therein veterinary medication of a value unknown.
19. In respect of this conviction, Mrs Turner was sentenced to 12 months’ imprisonment, suspended for 18 months and to an Order to carry out unpaid work for 140 hours within the next 12 months. She was also ordered to pay compensation of £761.20 and she was made subject to a Restraining Order until 7 August 2030 in the following terms:
 - i. not to contact or approach [the owners of Mochdre Vets] directly or indirectly.
 - ii. not to enter the curtilage of Mochdre Vets or [the owner’s home address].
20. The Magistrates’ Court proceedings were not officially transcribed. However, a local newspaper report recorded events at Court as follows:

THE owner of a veterinary practice near Conwy has spoken of her relief at the conviction of a former nurse for stealing medication.

Claire Turner, 42, of Rhodfa Cowlyd in Prestatyn, pleaded guilty to burglary other than a dwelling at Llandudno Magistrates Court on Friday, August 8.

The court was told that between January 20 and March 26, 2024 at Colwyn Bay, Turner entered into her place of work at Mochdre Vets Practice, in Conway Road, Mochdre, where she stole veterinary medication, including ketamine.

Initially intending to enter a not guilty plea, Turner instead admitted the offences and was sentenced at the magistrates court to 12 months in prison, suspended for 18 months.

District Judge Gwyn Jones heard that Turner used her access to the vets on around 40 occasions to access the drugs, which was to alleviate her own pain as she was in ill-health.

This, he heard, was captured on CCTV on each time though the defendant was nearly successful in switching the blame to a student veterinary nurse.

Probation told the court that the defendant did not have a 'pattern of offending' but was in ill-health, both physically and mentally, and that there did not appear to be any financial gain.

Sentencing her, DJ Jones told Turner that had she not changed her plea at the last minute, she would have faced a crown court date to be told her fate.

He highlighted the breach of trust, both as a valued member of staff but also as a friend to Ms Heywood and that it passed the custody threshold.

But, he said, he accepted her guilty plea and health issues, leading to the suspension.

DJ Jones added: "It is clear that you entered the premises at various times when it was mostly empty, and that you used your fob and computer access to try to order veterinary medication that you may have wanted to use.

"You were attempting to obtain medication which may alleviated pain but you were doing it on a regular basis.

"You were offended when the practice owners suggested you'd done anything and you were taken aback when irregularities were suggested.

"But the evidence was there through CCTV that you went there, including at 11.145pm and to where the medication would've been kept. [sic]

"There was an enquiry as to how that medication didn't tally up and a member of staff was put under suspicion.

"That would have left her upset."

DJ Jones also ordered a five-year restraining order against Turner to not contact in any form her victim or enter the grounds of her work or home.

She was ordered to pay costs £400 and compensation of £761.20 plus 1450 hours of unpaid work. [sic]

Sarah Heywood, who owns the practice, said after the hearing the abuse of trust by a former friend and employee was 'stressful'.

She said: "It is a relief to have it behind us.

"It has been a very stressful time for all involved knowing a highly-regarded colleague could abuse a position of trust so much.

"Whereas it would have been far easier to just turn a blind eye, the safety and welfare of the animals at Mochdre vets remained the priority."

21. In an email dated 16 March 2026, the College asked the Practice owner if the above press report accurately reflected what took place in court, including the District Judge's sentencing remarks. In an email of the same date, the Practice owner confirmed the newspaper article accurately reflected what happened in Court.

22. In an email dated 26 September 2025, Mrs Turner said to the College, *"I pled guilty as the vet that accused me is a bully and a manipulator, I felt like I had no choice. As a result of all of this and the stress it has put me under, I will be leaving the profession and the register."* In correspondence with the College, Mrs Turner continued to deny having taken Ketamine from the Practice.

The Committee's determination on the Charges

23. The Committee made the following findings on the Charge:

Charge 1

24. The Committee found this charge proved on the basis of Mrs Turner's admission to the College that she had entered a guilty plea at Court, as supported by the evidence relied on by the College, namely the copy extract of the Memorandum of Conviction from the Llandudno Magistrates' Court.

25. The Committee noted that although she admitted entering a guilty plea, Mrs Turner continued to deny taking Ketamine. However, the Committee saw no reason to go behind the account given at Court, as reported by the Press and as confirmed to be an accurate account of what took place in Court, by Mrs Turner.

26. The drugs taken, amongst others, included:

- Comfortan (methadone) POM-V [Prescription-Only-Medicine (Veterinary)] and a Controlled Drug, Class A, Schedule 2
- Fentanyl patches POM-V and a Controlled Drug, Class A, Schedule 2
- Ketamine, a POM-V and a Controlled Drug, Class B, Schedule 2
- Buprenorphine POM-V and a Controlled Drug, Class C, Schedule 3
- Medetomidine, a POM-V.

27. All the above drugs are listed in the Police summary. Although in correspondence with the Disciplinary Committee Clerks and the College's solicitors, Mrs Turner denied taking Ketamine, the Committee was satisfied that this drug formed part of the nature and circumstances of the offence underlying the conviction. The Committee noted that Mrs Turner was legally represented at the Magistrates' Court and pleaded guilty to the offence before being sentenced for it. Ketamine was clearly referred to in the press report of the sentencing hearing, which refers to the Court being told that Mrs Turner "*stole veterinary medication, including Ketamine*". The fact that Mrs Turner was sentenced on the basis that she stole all the above drugs, including Ketamine, was further supported by the fact that the Court's compensation order of £761.20 matched the total value of all the drugs, including Ketamine, listed in the police summary.

Fitness to Practise

28. Miss Curtis, on behalf of the College, provided detailed written submissions to the Committee and submitted that the nature and circumstances of the offence, which led to the conviction, were such as to render Mrs Turner unfit to practise as a Registered Veterinary Nurse.

The Committee's Determination on Fitness to Practise

29. The Committee considered the submissions made by Miss Curtis and noted that Mrs Turner did not dispute the nature and circumstances of the offence, which led to her conviction, beyond claiming she never took Ketamine, a fact the Committee did not accept. The Committee also took into account the Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Nurses ("The Code").

30. Veterinary nurses, by virtue of their professional position, are entrusted with access to a range of medication including controlled drugs. It is of fundamental importance that members of the public and colleagues can rely on Registered Veterinary Nurses not to abuse that trust. Controlled drugs attract specific legal restrictions and a higher level of control and responsibility than other medicines. These restrictions are in place to guard against the risks that unauthorised use may present, both to humans and animals.

31. The Committee found Mrs Turner had breached the following parts of the Code:

"1.5 Veterinary nurses who supply and administer medicines must do so responsibly.

6.5 Veterinary nurses must not engage in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession..."

32. When considering the nature and circumstances of the conviction, and the underlying behaviour resulting in that conviction, the Committee found the following aggravating factors:

- committing a criminal offence that involves dishonesty;
- committing a criminal offence directly linked to her professional role;
- a serious abuse of trust placed in her by virtue of her professional position as a Registered Veterinary Nurse;
- allowing suspicion to fall on a junior member of the Practice Team;
- premeditated conduct involving an element of planning and deception - she entered the premises using a fob she had been given as an employee and, as part of the offence, she accessed the practice computer to order medication she wished to steal;

- an abuse of her professional position;
- the burglaries were repeated over a period of time on many occasions;
- potential impact on the welfare of animals brought to the Practice if necessary medication were unavailable due to having been taken by Mrs Turner;
- financial gain, in that Mrs Turner obtained a significant quantity of medication without having to pay for it.

33. The Committee acknowledged that Mrs Turner was on sick leave at the time of the burglaries and that she had health problems. The press report of the hearing referred to Mrs Turner stealing the various drugs to alleviate her own pain as she was in ill-health. Furthermore, the District Judge appeared to accept her account that she was stealing veterinary medication to alleviate her own pain and this, together with her guilty plea, led to him passing a suspended prison sentence rather than one of immediate custody. However, Mrs Turner had provided no medical evidence or explanation to this Committee. There was, therefore, no evidence before this Committee of a causal link between Mrs Turner's health and stealing the medication and thus the Committee was not in a position to find this to be a mitigating factor relating to the circumstances of the conviction.

34. The Committee also took into account the case of CHRE v GDC and Fleischmann [2005] EWHC 87 (Admin), which provides that as a general principle, a professional who has been convicted of a serious criminal offence should not be allowed to practise until such time as the satisfactory completion of their sentence. This is referred to at paragraph 49 of the RCVS Disciplinary Committee Procedure Guidance. The underlying custodial period of Mrs Turner's sentence will not come to an end until August 2026 and the suspended prison sentence period is not due to expire until February 2027 and therefore her suspended sentence Order is still current. The Committee considered this to be relevant to the public interest in a finding that the conviction rendered Mrs Turner unfit to practise. The conduct underlying this conviction involved Mrs Turner committing burglary on many occasions at two separate premises in order to steal medication, much of it consisting of controlled drugs. The Committee considered this to be very serious and deplorable conduct on the part of a veterinary nurse, a member of a profession specifically entrusted to handle controlled medication in a lawful and responsible way.

35. Mrs Turner's conduct was also liable to have a seriously detrimental effect on the reputation of the profession and to undermine public confidence in the profession. The fact that she was a veterinary nurse was made clear at Court and reported in the press. The Committee considered that members of the public would rightly be appalled that a Registered Veterinary Nurse had committed offences of this nature.

36. The Committee was satisfied that this conduct fell far below the standard expected of a Registered Veterinary Nurse and that Mrs Turner's conviction was of a nature and seriousness that rendered her unfit to practise as a veterinary nurse.

Sanction

37. Miss Curtis informed the Committee that Mrs Turner has no previous disciplinary matters recorded against her.

38. Beyond denying she took Ketamine and claiming the Practice owner was a bully (without linking that to why she repeatedly committed burglary), Mrs Turner had provided nothing for the Committee to consider.

The Committee's Determination on Sanction

39. In reaching its decision on sanction, the Committee took into account all the written evidence and all matters of personal mitigation, such as were known. The Committee also referred to the RCVS Disciplinary Committee Procedure Guidance. The Committee had in mind that the purpose of sanctions was not to punish Mrs Turner, but to protect animals, maintain public confidence in the profession and maintain proper standards of conduct and performance. The Committee was also cognisant of the need to ensure that any sanction was proportionate. The Committee accepted the advice of the Legal Assessor.

40. The Committee first considered the aggravating and mitigating factors present in this case.

41. The Committee found the following aggravating factors:

- committing a criminal offence that involves dishonesty;
- committing a criminal offence directly linked to her professional role;
- a serious abuse of trust placed in her by virtue of her professional position as a Registered Veterinary Nurse;
- allowing suspicion to fall on a junior member of the Practice Team;
- premeditated conduct involving an element of planning and deception - she entered the premises using a fob she had been given as an employee, and, as part of the offence, she accessed the practice computer to order medication she wished to steal;
- an abuse of her professional position;
- potential impact on the welfare of animals brought to the Practice if necessary medication were unavailable due to having been taken by Mrs Turner;

- the burglaries were repeated over a period of time on many occasions;
- financial gain, in that Mrs Turner obtained a significant quantity of medication without having to pay for it;
- a complete absence of insight;
- a lack of apology, remorse and no evidence of remediation;
- denials right up to the date of her trial and even now denying she took Ketamine and seeking, in some inexplicable way, to blame the Practice owner.

42. The Committee found the following mitigating factor:

- no previous adverse disciplinary findings (albeit in a brief career as a veterinary nurse).

43. As stated above, the Committee was provided with no evidence of a causal link between Mrs Turner's ill-health and the burglaries she committed and accordingly was not in a position to find this to be a mitigating factor. Even if it were to be a mitigating factor, it would not have altered the Committee's decisions in this case.

44. The Committee noted that certain of the District Judge's comments appear in the certificate of conviction, namely:

*"Reason: the offence(s) are so serious that only a custodial sentence can be justified.
Reason for custody: Breach of trust and degree of planning."*

45. From the press report, confirmed by the Practice owner to be accurate, Mrs Turner was nearly successful in switching the blame to a student veterinary nurse. The District Judge highlighted the breach of trust, both as a valued member of staff but also as a friend to the Practice owner.

46. In deciding on the appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case, the Committee took into account the nature and seriousness of the conduct, the aggravating and mitigating factors, together with the general principle in the case of Fleischmann, referred to above. The Committee accepted and followed the advice by the Legal Assessor that the principle in Fleischmann was not to be applied as if it were a rule and must bend to the overarching requirement to impose a sanction that is just, proportionate and necessary to maintain public confidence in the profession and the College as Regulator of Registered Veterinary Nurses.

47. In light of the seriousness of the conduct, the Committee did not consider this was an appropriate case to take no further action or for judgment to be postponed.

48. The Committee next considered whether to reprimand or warn Mrs Turner about her behaviour. However, the Committee was firmly of the view that such a sanction would not reflect the seriousness of the conduct which led to her conviction. Mrs Turner had been convicted of committing burglaries on numerous occasions at two premises over a significant period of time and stealing medication belonging to the Practice. The Committee was of the view that public confidence in the profession, and the College as its regulator, would be seriously undermined if such behaviour were dealt with by either a reprimand or a warning.
49. The Committee then considered whether to suspend Mrs Turner's registration. The College's guidance states that suspension may be appropriate where some or all of the following apply:
- (a) the conviction is serious, but a lesser sanction is inappropriate;
 - (b) the respondent veterinary nurse has insight into the seriousness of the misconduct and there is no significant risk of repeat behaviour;
 - (c) the respondent veterinary nurse is fit to return to practice (after the period of suspension).
50. The Committee took into account the fact that Mrs Turner had appeared before a criminal court and been punished for her behaviour: it is not this Committee's role to punish her further. However, it is its role to protect animal welfare and the reputation of the profession. Mrs Turner's offending behaviour was particularly grave in the context of someone who works as a veterinary nurse. Of significant concern was her continued denial of the conduct when interviewed by the Practice and later by the police, her late guilty plea at Court and then her claim that she only "*... pled guilty as the vet that accused me is a bully and a manipulator, I felt like I had no choice.*" She also continues to deny stealing the Ketamine that went missing. All this suggested a complete absence of insight into her offending behaviour. As a consequence, the Committee could not conclude that there was no significant risk of repeated behaviour.
51. Of particular concern to the Committee was the effect of Mrs Turner's behaviour on the reputation of the profession and therefore the wider public interest. The Committee was firmly of the view that public confidence would have been severely affected by Mrs Turner's behaviour. The public quite rightly expect Registered Veterinary Nurses who have access to controlled drugs, to behave lawfully and responsibly and not to abuse their position by stealing such, or indeed any, drugs. The Committee considered that suspending Mrs Turner's registration would not be sufficient to maintain confidence in the profession and that accordingly, for public interest reasons, a suspension would not be sufficient.

52. The Committee was of the view that the nature and seriousness of Mrs Turner's behaviour, which led to the conviction, was fundamentally incompatible with being registered as a veterinary nurse. The conduct represented a serious departure from professional standards; these were serious offences of dishonesty; Mrs Turner has not demonstrated any remorse for her behaviour and instead has sought to blame others; she had demonstrated a complete lack of insight, especially in regard to the impact of her behaviour on public confidence and trust in the profession. In light of these conclusions, the Committee decided that the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case was removal from the Register.

53. In reaching this decision the Committee recognised the impact this may have on Mrs Turner, although she has said she wants to be taken off the Register and no longer wishes to practise as a veterinary nurse and accordingly the impact may be less than otherwise would have been the case. In any event, the need to protect the reputation of the profession and thus the wider public interest, outweighed Mrs Turner's interests and the Committee concluded that removal was the only appropriate and proportionate sanction in this case. 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 Mrs Turner and discredit upon the profession.

54. The Committee therefore directs the Registrar to remove Mrs Turner's name from the Register.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

12 May 2026