



Advancement of the Professions Committee Meeting

04 February 2026

RCVS

1 Hardwick Street

London, EC1R 4RB



Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

04 Feb 2026, 10:00- 16.30 | In-person at RCVS, Hardwick Street, 4th Floor

Agenda

- 1. Apologies for absence, declarations of interest and welcome (5 mins)**
- 2. Matters arising and minutes of the meeting held on 07 Oct 2025 (5 mins)**
- 3. Workstream Updates (15mins)**
- 4. Presentation: 'AP Wrapped' (15mins)**
- 5. Presentation: MMI Funded Research project by Olivia Cormier – Annex A (20 mins)**
- 6. Tea Break (11:00-11:10)**
- 7. Discussion: Contextualised care – Annex B (40 mins)**
- 8. AOB (5mins)**
- 9. Lunch Break (11:55 – 12:35)**
- 10. Workshop: Environment & Sustainability – Confidential (2hrs)**
- 11. Tea Break (14:35 – 14:45)**
- 12. Workshop Continues – Confidential (1hr 45mins)**
- 13. Date of next meeting 06 May 2026 (online)**

Summary

Meeting	APC
Date	07 October 2025
Title	Advancement of the Professions Committee Report 07 October 2025
Summary	To note the attached minutes of the meeting held on 07 October 2025
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Classified appendix (confidential)
Author	Charlie Coaker Secretary to Advancement of the Professions Committee c.coaker@rcvs.org.uk

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Paper	Unclassified	N/A
Classified appendix	Confidential	2

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
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Minutes of the Advancement of the Professions Committee Meeting Held In-Person at 10:00 on 07 October 2025

Members:

Dr Z Kennedy (Chair)	Chair of the Advancement of the Professions Committee & Chair of Mind Matters Initiative
Mrs. B Andrews-Jones	VN Council Chair, Chair of Innovation
Ms. A Boag (Observer) *	Chair of Board of Trustees for RCVS Knowledge
Mr. J M Castle	RCVS Lay Council Member
Dr T Gardiner	Lead for EDI
Prof. M Jones	Lead for Environment & Sustainability
Ms. L Lockett	RCVS CEO
Prof. C Loughrey	Lead for Global Development
Dr S Paterson	Lead for Leadership
Mr. S Williams	VN Futures Project Board
Dr Niall Connell	Chair of the Fellowship Board

In attendance:

Mrs. A Belcher	Director for Advancement of the Professions
Mrs. G Gill *	Leadership and Inclusion Manager
Mrs. R Newton	Mind Matters Initiative Lead
Mr. S Hurley	Mind Matters Initiative Senior Officer
Mr. L Emeka	Diversity and Inclusion Senior Officer

Ms. A Youngs	Fellowship and Leadership Senior Officer
Mrs. T Goodwin Roberts	Projects Implementation Manager
Ms. C Coaker	AP Officer / Secretary to the Committee
Mrs. J Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
Miss J Macdonald	Veterinary Nursing Progression and Development Lead
Ms. Katie Mantell	RCVS Knowledge CEO
Mr. I Holloway	Director of Communications
Mr. L Bishop	Media and Publications Manager
Mrs. Abi Hanson	Media and Publications Officer
Mr. B Myring	Policy and Public Affairs Manager
Mr. M Sundhu	Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Dr V Bolton	Research Manager
Ms. Cheryl Walmsley	Head of Media and Content

* apologies

Welcome and Apologies for Absence

1. The chair welcomed all present to the meeting, introducing new members Matthew Jones, Lead for Environment & Sustainability and Christopher Loughrey, Lead for Global Development. The chair also noted that this was their first meeting in the role and expressed thanks to Dr S Paterson for her contribution during her tenure in this position.
2. Apologies were received from Amanda Boag and Gurpreet Gill.
3. Dr. Sue Paterson declared a new interest as Vice Chair of Trustees at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home.

Matters arising and minutes of the meeting held on 07 May 2025

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

Workstream Updates

Diversity and Inclusion

5. Health passports for students remain at an early stage of development, with a current focus on use within the workplace. Collaboration continues with the RCVS Education and Veterinary Nursing teams, alongside two veterinary school representatives. Wider engagement will follow once a draft is ready for circulation. The initiative was commended as an excellent development.
6. Progress on the Reasonable Adjustments campaign was congratulated and international interest in RCVS leadership in this area was noted. An Australian veterinary equity campaign resource will be shared.

Mind Matters Initiative

7. The Committee noted research by an MMI grant recipient on integrating wellbeing principles into veterinary nursing curriculum and discussed links with other educational bodies undertaking similar work.

Leadership

8. Initial recruitment challenges for the Leadership research were raised but these have been overcome through broader outreach, resulting in 42 participants across focus groups segmented by career stage and minority ethnic background. The first phase will conclude by mid-November, with findings to follow. Potential collaboration with the Fellowship initiative was noted.

Workforce

9. The Committee reviewed plans for the upcoming podcast series which will include Workforce content as key segments within the show. The first episode will be due to be published shortly on Podbean, Spotify, Apple, Amazon Music and the RCVS website. Accessibility and promotion strategies were discussed.

Oral Update: RCVS Knowledge – Contextualised Care

10. An overview was provided of the 2025 contextualised care events. The update summarised engagement across the veterinary sector, including practitioners and pet owners alongside the research methods being applied. Initial insight indicates that this is an important area for further evidence-based exploration and development. A detailed update, including key findings and final recommendations, will be shared at the February 2026 meeting.
11. The Committee commended the Contextualised Care event as an excellent and well-delivered session. Members who attended reported that it was highly engaging and noted that it had received very positive feedback from a wide range of participants.

Oral Update: Vital transitions – MMI International

12. The RCVS continues to collaborate with several international veterinary organisations to promote a positive culture of mental health and wellbeing across the global profession. Planning is underway for a coordinated international programme to be delivered over four weeks, combining global online sessions and locally hosted events.
13. Practical considerations noted include funding constraints for a regulator-led initiative, as well as variable partner capacity in certain regions. Time-zone, language, power and connectivity challenges were also highlighted. The team will continue to develop the programme, adjusting timelines as partnerships and resources are confirmed.

Oral Update: VN Vision

14. An update was presented on the first derivative project from the original VN Vision work performed in 2024. The project, entitled A Vision or a Necessity: Strengthening the role of RVNs in team-based veterinary healthcare, focuses on the integration of veterinary nurses within multidisciplinary teams, and through a series of workshops, aims to create a profession-guided theory of change to drive the work of the project
15. Events have so far been held in Usk, Belfast, Edinburgh, London, Dorchester and Birmingham. Further engagement activities are planned for 2026, with participants due to receive interim summaries of ongoing work.

Discussion: UKHACC Paper (Annex A) Confidential

16. This information is available in the classified appendix.

Discussion: Fellowship-led Debates

17. As part of the new strategic plan, there is a plan to provide space for more challenging topics to be discussed, engaging not only the professions but also animal owners, keepers and wider society on key issues. Fellowship will be responsible for delivering some of these discussions, and the committee considered a range of potential themes. It was noted that, depending on the subject and intended audience, events could be held in different formats to encourage open and constructive dialogue. Suggested approaches included in-person sessions at Hardwick Street, professional-only and mixed events, as well as educational, evidence-based, or science-led discussions. Other ideas included debates, roundtables and citizen science sessions, with flexibility to operate under the Chatham House Rule where appropriate. Members were invited to submit further topic suggestions for consideration to the Fellowship Board.

AOB

18. No AOB was raised.
19. The date of the next meeting is 04 February 2026. This will be held in-person at Hardwick Street.



Summary

Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	04.02.26
Title	Updates from APC Workstreams
Summary	Provided below is an update on the outputs and outcomes of APC workstreams since the last Committee meeting in addition to looking forward to planned work for the next. Where relevant, also highlighted are matters arising as a result of these activities that would benefit from further APC scrutiny presently or in due course. The Summary is ordered as follows. i. Diversity & Inclusion ii. Environment & Sustainability iii. Fellowship of the RCVS iv. Global Development v. Mind Matters Initiative vi. Workforce vii. RCVS Knowledge viii. VN Vision
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Author	Charlie Coaker AP Officer / Secretary to APC c.coaker@rcvs.org.uk 020 8148 2577

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Diversity and Inclusion Workstream Update

Events, Outreach and Engagement

D & I Networking Event

1. A diversity and inclusion networking event was held at Hardwick Street on 6 November for DIG members, wider affinity group members and others in the sector involved in Diversity and Inclusion work. The event consisted of a guided tour of RCVS offices, presentations from external speakers (Business Disability Forum and Hearing Dogs for Deaf People), a workshop and networking opportunities. Positive feedback from delegates was received via a post-event online survey.

Campaigns and Activities

Let's Talk Adjustments Campaign

2. Launched in February 2025, the joint RCVS/MMI reasonable adjustments campaign 'Let's Talk Adjustments' closed at the end of August 2025. The campaign was well-received and we are currently evaluating campaign impact. RCVS has circulated a short campaign evaluation survey with veterinary professionals that provided their consent to be contacted. Survey results will be analysed during the coming months to help determine the level of campaign impact.

Social Media Stats

The social media campaign for 'Let's Talk Adjustments' launched in late February 2025 across three social media platforms (LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram) and concluded in Mid-July 2025. There are no further updates on social media results for this campaign.

The web page statistics from the campaign are provided below. At the time of writing, the campaign home page and sections on 'Reasonable Adjustments: a legal duty' and 'Real stories and insights series' have received the highest number of visits.

Web page stats (27 February-13 January 2026)

Web page	Publication date	Views/ downloads
Reasonable Adjustments campaign - Professionals	Feb 2025	12,283
Reasonable adjustments: a legal duty - Professionals	Feb 2025	4,687
Disability inclusion - Professionals	Feb 2025	2,434
Equality Act guidance - Professionals	Feb 2025	2,578
Real stories and insights - Professionals	May-Aug 2025	4,153
Understanding occupational therapy in the workplace - Professionals	July 2025	3,626
Let's Talks Adjustments: a guide to discussing reasonable adjustments at work	Aug 2025	794/1,631

All views/download figures have increased significantly (ranging from 11% - 74% increase) since the last APC update which would suggest that there is continued interest and engagement with the resources that were developed for the campaign.

Black History Month

- Black History Month campaign launched in October 2025 around the theme, "Standing Firm in Power and Pride" which is a tribute to the resilience, strength, and unwavering commitment to progress that defines the Black community across the globe.

Interviews were conducted with four Black veterinary professionals and students which were hosted on the RCVS website and utilised as part of a social media campaign. Animated videos were also developed for social media to showcase the first Black member and first Black president of the RCVS.

The campaign performed strongly with engagement rates ranging from 0.42% - 14.76% across LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook. This represented a noticeable improvement on the 2024 Black History Month campaign where engagement rates peaked at 3%.

Courses, Content and Publications**Health passport project (Tailored Adjustment Passport or TAP)**

- This project is currently in progress. A task and finish group was formed in Summer 2025 with members of the VN and Education teams, and experienced external educators from the Universities of Bristol and Surrey.

A toolkit approach has been developed and the task and finish group agreed that there should be one set of documentation that can be used and adapted by individuals, workplaces and educational institutions. This includes a simple health passport template, information and guidance sections for individuals and organisations, examples and links to resources, and an FAQs section. The toolkit draft is currently undergoing final review and amendments and should be ready for publication in February/March.

A series of videos that covers various aspects of the toolkit are also being developed. The videos are intended to be a complement to the written toolkit and will cover topics such as how to complete a health passport template and FAQs. The videos will also be released in February/March to coincide with publication of the toolkit.

Inclusive language guide

5. The inclusive language guide is currently in progress and will be released in Spring 2026. The guide will explain some of the key terminologies across race and ethnicity, age, gender diversity and sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity and mental health, and showcase language that is widely considered as inclusive. It is intended that the guide will be a resource that can help improve knowledge and inform daily interactions within veterinary workplaces.

EDI Fundamentals

6. Work on module development has resumed with a view to the course now launching in Summer 2026.



Environment & Sustainability (E&S) Update

RCVS Council

In November RCVS Council considered a paper updating them on the College's progress on E&S matters, along with the plan agreed by APC to meet the commitments of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC). Concerns were raised about the plan to switch to vegetarian-only catering at lunchtime, and it was agreed that the plan should be brought back with further evidence and options. This question will be brought back to APC at its next meeting, following the Climate Change workshop at this (January) meeting.

As part of the plan to meet the UKHACC commitments two papers are in progress, which will also be brought to the next meeting of APC:

Paper on Carbon Offsetting Schemes (Policy, Insight, and Public Affairs)

1. Paper lists examples of carbon offsetting schemes, along with descriptions of their merits including co-benefits, to assist in deciding which scheme(s) the College should choose should it include carbon offsetting as part of a future net zero plan.

Current initiatives paper (Policy, Insight, and Public Affairs)

2. Paper specific to the 'Sustainability plan for the veterinary professions' goal, summarising the work of groups like VetSustain.

Fellowship Update

Events, Outreach and Engagement

Fellowship Day

1. Fellowship Day 2025 was another successful event with majority positive feedback from the audience. The venue, keynote and workshop session format were well-received.
2. Following the Contagion and Control workshop session at Fellowship Day, a Task and Finish Group (TAFG) is being formed to further the discussion, chaired by Dr Christianne Glossop who also chaired the workshop session.

Campaigns and Activities

Disasters and Emergency Response Task and Finish Group

3. This project is currently sitting with the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Association (BARTA) team who anticipate having the Small Animal Emergency Responder Guide ready for print by the end of January for a February release

Contagion and Control Task and Finish Group

4. As mentioned above, a TAFG will be chaired by Prof Christianne Glossop, taking forward the key themes of the session. We have contacted the Fellows and MRCVS who had expressed an interest in joining this group to schedule a date for the first meeting.

BARTA and Fellowship Smoke Inhalation Project

5. The Fellowship are working with BARTA on producing educational guides on how to treat animals in emergency situations who have been exposed to smoke inhalation from house fires or similar. This will allow us to further petition the National Fire Chiefs to ensure that more data is collected relating to animals and house fires, as there is currently no mandatory data collection on this. From there, we can build baseline data that will allow further collaboration with BARTA to evolve the emergency responder guides.

Other

6. The Fellowship Board are currently exploring ideas for a change in format for Fellowship Day, with potential to move Fellows of the Future Student Competition out of Fellowship Day, and into a more specialised day event based at Hardwick Street.



Global update

Federation of Veterinarians of Europe

The General Assembly of the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe was held in Limassol, Crete, on 14-15 November 2025. Position statements were agreed on 1) the phasing out of fur-farming and 2) calling for vaccination to be preferred over culling where practicable. Germany, France, the Netherlands and the UK all gave presentations on the topic of 'corporatisation, prices, and market authority investigations'. The next General Assembly will be held on 10-13 June 2026 in Finland.

The FVE Statutory Bodies Working Group, including UK representative Dr Sue Paterson, met in December to continue work on the revision of the FVE template code of conduct.

International Veterinary Regulators Network (IVRN) and The Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) conferences

Lizzie Lockett and Ben Myring attended the IVRN and CLEAR conferences in Wellington, New Zealand, between 1-5 December 2026.

IVRN covered topics including 'cultural responsiveness to complaints processes', 'compassionate regulation' (introduced by Lizzie Lockett) and 'Right touch Regulation'.

The CLEAR conference included talks on a wide range of subjects, including artificial intelligence, trends in retention and attrition, Right Touch Regulation, sexual misconduct, evolving government expectations of regulators, governance, team-based veterinary care, international workforce mobility trends, and workforce planning.

Mind Matters Update

Events, Outreach and Engagement

MMI Research Symposium and Anniversary 2025

1. The fifth biennial Mental Health Research Symposium coincided with MMI's 10th anniversary celebrations, on Friday 10 October 2025. The event was a great success, with 121 individuals attending (including 53 Vets and 20 RVNs). We received positive feedback from speakers, poster presenters, exhibitors and delegates with 100% rating their experience as either good or excellent.

The report from the day, alongside session recordings will be available on the RCVS website shortly.

British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) Congress 2025 - Veterinary Nursing Journal (VNJ) Live

2. On Saturday 11 October 2025, MMI research grant recipients from 2023, Dr Jackie Hargreaves and Dr Faye Didymus at Leeds Beckett University, presented their SVN research at VNJ Live, which was part of the BVNA Congress.

College of Animal Welfare Student Veterinary Nursing Presentation 2025

3. The MMI team supported a session to a mixed cohort of students at the College of Animal Welfare on Wednesday 19 November, in conjunction with the RCVS Diversity & Inclusion, and Veterinary Nursing teams.

London Vet Show (LVS) 2025

4. The MMI team attended the London Vet Show on 20 and 21 November 2025 to raise awareness of MMI and supported activities on the RCVS exhibition stand.

RCVS Academy Live session 2026

5. Following the success of the 'An introduction to managing mental health in the workplace', an Academy Live session was held in November 2025, which currently holds the record for the highest number of attendees. The MMI team will be delivering another session on Tuesday 27 January 2026.

MMI International CPD Webinar 2026

6. As part of the MMI International (MMInt) work, a free CPD webinar for signatories and international partners focussed on 'Mental Health, Addiction and Substance Misuse' has been organised for Thursday 10 February 2026.

MMI International Early Career 'Vital Transitions' Event 2026-27

7. Planning is ongoing with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to organise a Vital Transitions Event, with the first event provisionally planned for September 2026. This will be a series of events with a focus on veterinary professionals transitioning from education into their early careers.

Association of Veterinary Students (AVS) Congress 2026

8. The MMI team will be attending the 2026 AVS Congress at Harper & Keele Veterinary School from 6 to 8 February 2026 to raise awareness of MMI, and support activities on the RCVS exhibition stand.

British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) South West Region CPD Webinar 2026

9. On Monday 23 February 2026, the MMI team will be delivering a CPD webinar on 'Let's talk human stress in practice' as part of the BVNA South West Region CPD webinar series.

Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Congress 2026

10. The MMI team will also be attending the 2026 SPVS Congress, to deliver a session on 'Managing Mental Health in the Veterinary Workplace: an introduction to practical steps for managers', as well as supporting activities on the RCVS exhibition stand.

Veterinary Management Group (VMG) Congress 2026

11. On Thursday 23 and Friday 24 April, the MMI team will be attending the 2026 VMG Congress to deliver a 90-minute session on 'Managing Mental Health in the Workplace: Managers' guide to having those difficult conversations', as well as supporting activities on the RCVS exhibition stand.

Research

MMI Research Grants 2025-26

12. In 2025, MMI awarded £60,000 in research grant funding, including:
 - I. £5,000 to Nottingham Trent University (Evaluating the Implementation of Reasonable Adjustments in addressing Mental Health and Neurodivergence for Student Veterinary Nurses during Clinical Placement);
 - II. £15,000 to the University of Manchester (Organisational Interventions to Support Wellbeing in Veterinary Workplaces); and
 - III. £40,000 (over 3 years) in conjunction with the Veterinary Nursing Department to Leeds Beckett University (Veterinary Educator Training in Mental Health Integration and Nurse Development (VET-MIND) project).

Round 3 of the new research grants programme opened in January 2026. The deadline for applications is 23:59pm GMT on Sunday 22 March 2026. One £5,000 Discovery grant and one £15,000 Impact grant is available.

Campaigns and Activities

Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) Assessor Training

13. In December 2025, the MMI team delivered a training session to PSS assessors focussed on suicide prevention. The team continues to work closely with colleagues in Standards and PSS, ahead of new suicide prevention standards which are due to launch in April 2026.

Courses, Content and Publications

Applied Mental Health Science series 2025-26

14. Following successful launch of the 'Let's talk' guides in 2025, a new 'Let's talk Bipolar' guide will be published on World Bipolar Day on Monday 30 March 2026. The launch of the guide will coincide with a webinar focussed on 'Work, mental health and mood', as well as a range of lived experience blogs on bipolar, depression and premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).

RCVS Academy courses 2025-26

15. The new 'Managing mental health in the workplace', and 'Suicide awareness fundamentals' course were launched in October 2025. To date 55 learners have completed 'Managing mental health in the workplace' and 53 learners have completed 'Suicide awareness fundamentals' courses in full. Work is ongoing to promote these two new courses with the RCVS Academy and Communications teams.

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses 2025-26

16. 10 x 2-day MHFA courses were facilitated in 2025 year (including 1 in-person course in Scotland), Excellent feedback has been received from delegates. Further courses are planned in 2026, with the first two taking place in January and February.

Managing Mental Health in the Workplace for Everyday Veterinary Leaders CPD 2026

17. Following successful delivery of the 'Managing Mental Health in the Workplace' CPD course on the RCVS Academy, MMI is now exploring how to ensure that the core skills and knowledge are imparted to a larger audience of everyday leaders. Through the MMI strategy we have committed to training 500 managers. Therefore, in 2026, MMI will be offering in person and virtual CPD workshops to veterinary managers and leaders.

MMI has commissioned Ultimate Resilience (the course co-authors) to design and deliver a series of 5 CPD sessions including 4 in-person at RCVS HQ in Hardwick Street, and 1 online.

The purpose of the workshops is to embed key concepts from the online "Managing Mental Health in the Workplace" RCVS Mind Matters Academy course by bringing them to life through discussion, self-reflection, and practical exercises. The intended audience is current or aspiring veterinary managers/leaders including those who work in niche veterinary roles in different parts of the sector.

Safe Events & Congresses Guide

18. In the MMI strategy we have committed to launching guidance on creating psychologically safe events and congresses. We have worked with members of the MMI Taskforce, to produce a guide for those who organise events, congresses or large meetings in the veterinary sector to help them think about how to better protect delegates, speakers and all those attending. The guide is almost complete. It has been delayed for a number of reasons, including limited resource. We aim to publish the guide this year.

Other

19. The MMI team have continued to support the work on the new MMI brand identity and website migration, which is nearly complete. The new MMI branding will launch early this year, date TBC.

Progress against strategy and KPIs

20. Below is a brief overview on how we are progressing against our five-year strategy in some of the key areas.

Workstream	What we said we will do	Progress made to date
Prevent: Leadership	Mental health for line managers to be incorporated into our core training programme ready for 2024.	New 'Managing mental health in the workplace course' (55 completed to date) and Suicide awareness fundamentals (53 completed to date) launched in October 2025. Academy Live sessions ongoing to support uptake. Five 'Managing mental health for everyday veterinary leaders' CPD sessions to be piloted in 2026 (in-person and online). Attending external events to reach a wider audience.
	Our new veterinary mental health grant programme will support researchers at all stages of their career to make a tangible impact with research that makes a difference in practice as well as enhancing our understanding of the theory around mental ill-health in the veterinary professions	• Launched new research grants programme 2024-2028. • Two grants available, including a £5,000 Discovery grant to support early career researchers. • Plans for impact and dissemination embedded into the application and assessment process. • To support researchers through all stages of the applications process, a new applicant guide and grant holder guide have been developed to provide proactive support and advice. • Have provided £75,000 in funding since the launch of the new programme, supporting four new research projects so far.
Prevent: EDI and civility	We will continue to develop our suite of online resources on these topics, to include written booklets, 'hubs' and webinars. We will continue to deliver relevant, timely, and high-quality training on a range of topics.	2024 • Civility Fundamentals course launched on RCVS Academy in October 2024. 221 Individuals have completed the course to date • Self-Compassion course available for free on MMI website for the veterinary community. Made available through previous Sarah Brown Grant recipients. • Sponsorship of WellVet Menopause related content. - o 23 videos and expert content produced - o >180 hours of content viewed (as of March 2025) - o Over 10k views of animation • Facilitated two research webinars, on compassion and veterinary wellbeing with researchers at the University of Surrey, and on SVN mental health education with researchers at Leeds Beckett University.

		2025 - Revised understanding and managing stress in the veterinary workplace guide published (1,300 downloads). - NEW Applied Mental Health Science series launched in May 2025, with five guides on - Anxiety (320 downloads), - Depression (252 downloads), - OCD (165 downloads), - PTSD (183 downloads), and - Perinatal anxiety and depression (80 downloads). - Worked in partnership with the RCVS Diversity & Inclusion Team to deliver the 'Let's talk adjustments' campaign in 2025.
Prevent: Widening the conversation	While continuing to raise awareness, we will challenge ourselves and our audiences to have more nuanced conversations around mental health, and mental ill health	2024 - Three Campfire events delivered. Topics included anxiety 101, movement and mental health, and allyship and LGBTQ+ mental health. - Shelter Vet Conference – Delivered a session on the value of mental health and wellbeing CPD. - Virtual Veterinary Congress – Sponsored a session on dealing with bereavement and grief. - BSAVA Congress – delivered sessions on key topics such as civility, moral stress and injury, and OCD/PTSD, - Titanic Vet Show – delivered a session on strategic approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the veterinary team. - CAW Head Nurse Congress - delivered session on thriving as a veterinary nurse. - ECVIM-CA Congress – delivered sessions on compassionate communication and moral injury. - Vetnnet Conference - delivered session on incivility. 2025 - BSAVA Congress – delivered a session on understanding and managing stress in the veterinary workplace, to coincide with the launch of the new guide. - CAW Clinical Supervisor Congress - delivered session on thriving as a veterinary nurse. - Vetnnet Conference - delivered session on thriving for sustainable futures. Suicide prevention INTERNAL: Although not included in the strategy, we have fed into the PSS review, ensuring requirements relating to mental

		health follow best practice and encourage a positive work culture that is conducive to good mental health. We are also currently supporting PSS in preparation for the new standard on suicide prevention.
Protect: Lesser heard voices	We will continue to provide targeted projects for veterinary nurses, in collaboration with other initiatives such as VN Futures.	Working closely with VN Directorate to gather insights from their work to feed into VN specific projects. 2025 Joint VN and MMI Research Project (over 3 years) to look at VN Educator Training on integrating mental health in SVN curricula.
	We will build our rural network of mental health first aiders to 250 vets, vet nurses and support staff by 2025	2024 - Delivered 3x 1-day Mental Health Champion courses (including one fully funded course for the Association of Veterinary Students) and 4x 2-day Mental Health First Aid courses. 25/49 participants lived or worked in rural communities. - First course delivered in Northern Ireland. 2025 - Delivered more courses, including in rural locations across the UK. - Delivered first session in including Scotland). 88/154 participants lived or worked in rural communities Total number of 2-day MHFAiders trained to date: 203
Protect: A trusted source of accessible information	We will continue to deliver training on a range of topics relating to mental health and wellbeing.	2024 As well as delivering MHFA training, we delivered the 'Mind Yourself' CPD programme, with the charity 'Two Roads'. 2025 Launched our Applied Mental Health Series to deliver high-quality, accessible and trusted content relating to mental health. Content developed following PIF Tick best practice (trustable health information), and developed working with experts across clinical, counselling and occupational psychology. INTERNAL: Delivered MMI training and assisted facilitating MHFA Aware training for PSS assessors, to assist them with managing conversations with distressed members of the professions.
Support: Research	We will continue to deliver a Veterinary Mental Health Research Symposium every other year.	2023 Successful 4th symposium delivered (Manchester), which included research talks (from all previous Sarah Brown grant recipients

		between 2019-22, as well as a range of other projects within the veterinary community). ○ 84 registered, with 74 attending. ○ 100% of respondents would recommend the symposium to colleagues and their professional network. 2025 Successful 5th symposium delivered (Birmingham), which included both research talks, poster presentations and exhibitors. ○ 134 registered, with 121 attending ○ 100% of respondents said their overall experience was Excellent or Good. • New abstract guide/form developed to support researchers at all career stages. • Planning for 2027 symposium will begin shortly.
	We will develop a 'hub' of resources for those interested in veterinary mental health research.	• The MMI website has been updated, and now includes a tab dedicated to research. This includes updated information about the research grants, including guidance documents, and terms and conditions which we developed in 2024. • We have also created a new assessment process, with clear guidance created for assessors. • The Hub also includes all previous symposium information. • Working with the Communications Team to ensure the suite of resources will be easily located in the new MMI website due in 2026.
Support: Hope for tomorrow	We are committed to continuing our support for Vetlife, allowing it to continue to deliver its vital services for the professions.	• £100K funding per year continues, as well as additional payment to Vetlife each year for call handling fees. • We also fund training for VetSupport volunteers, who support members of the professions. • Signposting to Vetlife included in all resources and CPD courses as standard. 2025: The MMI team delivered training to VetSupport volunteers, ensuring they are aware of and can promote the new resources being developed to support the professions.
	Guidance on creating psychologically safe events and congresses will be released in 2024	In progress, delayed due to other priorities. To be delivered spring/summer 2026.



RCVS Knowledge Update for Advancement of the Professions Committee, 4 February 2026

Developments and activities since October 2025:

Contextualised care research

1. In November 2025 we published our mixed-methods research into the barriers and enablers of contextualised care. The research, funded by Battersea, drew on insights from more than 1,000 people across the veterinary sector and pet owners. The report and roadmap for contextualised care were launched at a live webinar on 6 November attended by more than 200 people.
2. The report sets out five key areas where concerted action is needed to support the delivery of contextualised care: professional leadership, veterinary education, practice support, evidence and research, and pet owner empowerment.
3. The findings and recommendations have been well received within the profession, with messages of support received from BVA, BSAVA and BVNA, among others. The findings were shared in a session by RCVS Knowledge clinical lead Sally Everitt at London Vet Show.
4. There has also been international interest in the findings from Canada, US and the Netherlands, given the similar issues being faced in other countries. Katie Mantell was invited to speak at the VMX conference in Florida in January to present findings from the report as part of the Veterinary Innovation Council stream.
5. The report is available at: <https://rcvsknowledge.org/cc-report>.

Antimicrobial stewardship: Ruminant roadmap

6. Despite a 60% reduction in antibiotic use across UK farming over the past decade, significant data gaps remain, particularly in cattle and sheep. These gaps present challenges for both proving and improving responsible antimicrobial stewardship.
7. RCVS Knowledge is taking a central role in an initiative that seeks to address these challenges, working in collaboration with the UKRI-funded AMR in Agrifood Systems Transdisciplinary Network (AMAST). The initiative will deliver surveys, workshops and focus groups as part of research led by members of the AMAST team based at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) and coordinated by RCVS Knowledge. The work will culminate in a summer 2026 summit and publication of a roadmap to inform future RUMA TTF targets in the fulfilment of the National Action Plan.
8. Co-chaired by Fiona Lovatt (RCVS Knowledge), Mark Jelley (Cattle Antibiotic Guardian Group), and David Black (British Cattle Veterinary Association), the initiative was launched at a sector-wide online event on in September 2025, attended by 112 people live (and 61 people on demand). Professor Dame Sally Davies endorsed the initiative as a bold step in addressing the global antibiotic crisis.

Canine Cruciate Registry

9. Our report for 2025 was released in December 2025, including data provided by more than 400 veterinary surgeons across the UK.
10. As part of the report, we shared testimonials from users of the registry about the positive impact it has had on their work in practice.

Website launch

11. In January, we launched a new website at www.rcvsknowledge.org. The new site has been designed to make it easier to access and browse our resources, to sign up to our events and to join our library, and to find out more about our work to help vet teams to advance the quality of veterinary care.

Knowledge awards

12. We received 40 submissions this year, with 25 in the QI in Practice category, 7 in Antimicrobial Resistance and a record 8 in our QI to Lead Organisational Change.
13. Independent review by our panel of experts will now commence with winners announced at RCVS Day in July.

Upcoming activities

14. Continue raising awareness of the contextualised care findings, with further speaking slots planned, alongside targeted engagement with key stakeholders to support implementation of the report's recommendations.
15. Continue to encourage participation in the Ruminant Roadmap survey and prepare for June summit.
16. Run in-person QI in a Day event in March and encourage attendance at two further QI in a Day events in Bristol (July) and Newcastle (October).
17. Review nominations for the Plowright Prize, which recognises an individual who has made a significant contribution to the control, management or eradication of infectious diseases of animals. The judging panel will meet in the spring ahead of the announcement of the 2026 winner in June.

VN Vision Update

Events, Outreach and Engagement

VN Vision events

1. *'A vision or a necessity? Strengthening the role of veterinary nurses in team-based veterinary healthcare'* events have continued into 2026.
2. *To date, nine in-person events across the UK have been completed.*
3. *Attendance has been very good, and engagement with the process has been excellent.*

Additional stakeholder events

4. We will be offering and organising online events to additional stakeholder groups, such as BVNA Council, BVA Council, RCVS VN Council, BEVA Council.
5. We also aim to offer 1-2 online events to the profession for those who were unable to attend in-person.
6. We would like to offer either an in-person or online session to the AP Committee.

Research

ERP approval

7. ERP approval was gained in September 2025 for the in-person events.
8. Approval for online events was gained in December 2025

Data

9. We have a large amount of data and are seeing saturation across the information contributed by participants.
10. We have obtained two online licenses for 'Quirkos' qualitative analysis software, to facilitate coding of the data.
11. We plan to run in-person events until the end of Q2 2026.
12. The stakeholder online events will feed into the same data set, and we aim to have these completed by the end of Q2 2026.

Campaigns and Activities

Planning

13. An outline plan has been compiled for the work of the project over 2026 and 2027. This will be fleshed out over the coming weeks.
14. The next stage of work will include the development of an advisory panel.
15. We aim to continue with support from the Theory of Change consultant. Her guidance and support have been invaluable.

Courses, Content and Publications

Publication

16. A research paper was published in The Veterinary Nurse in December 2025. The paper is based on the VN Vision work completed in 2024.

Dugmore, J., and Macdonald, J. (2025) 'The future of veterinary nursing: challenges, opportunities and a vision for progress.' The Veterinary Nurse. Vol.16 (10), pp 228-234. <https://doi.org/10.12968/vetn.2025.0045>





Workforce Update

Events, Outreach and Engagement

London Vet Show, 20 – 21 November 2025

1. The Projects Implementation Manager attended London Vet Show to engage with members of the veterinary professions regarding the forthcoming 'Next Steps' events (outlined below). These events are designed to provide targeted support for three key groups: individuals returning to practice following parental leave, those re-entering the professions after a career break, and professionals transitioning into management roles.
2. The purpose of these discussions was to gather valuable insights into the challenges faced by these groups and to identify the types of content that would be most beneficial within the programme. Direct conversations at the event provided an opportunity to hear first-hand experiences and priorities from those working within the professions.
3. To complement these conversations, a feedback form was made available, which 48 individuals completed. This has provided a rich source of data and insights that will inform the development of the programme. Collecting this feedback was critical to ensuring that the events are relevant, practical, and responsive to the real needs of the professions, thereby enhancing their impact and effectiveness.

Campaigns and Activities

'Next steps' project

4. In alignment with the RCVS Strategic Plan and Workforce Action Plan, we have begun a new project titled 'Next Steps'. This initiative demonstrates our ongoing commitment to workforce sustainability, wellbeing, and professional development by creating and bringing together a suite of resources to support veterinary professionals during three key career transitions:
 - i. Returning from parental leave
 - ii. Returning after a career break
 - iii. Transitioning into management for the first time
5. To complement this, each group will be invited to attend a dedicated one-day CPD event at Hardwick Street. These events will be structured to provide tailored guidance from relevant teams across the College, foster a positive environment for discussion and the exchange of experiences, support the development of professional networks, and identify shared challenges alongside potential avenues for resolution.
6. We remain committed to co-creating these events in partnership with the professions. To support this approach, we will commence with a pilot event offered free of charge. This pilot, aimed at veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses returning to work following parental leave, is scheduled to take place on Thursday 12 February 2026, preceded by a short online preparatory session on Thursday 5 February. Insights and feedback gathered from this pilot will be essential in informing the design and delivery of future events and associated resources.
7. The pilot programme will include group discussions, opportunities to self-assess skills, advice from RCVS colleagues on returning to the Register and other queries, and a group coaching

session led by Dr Arabella Ashfield, a specialist in supporting individuals through motherhood and workplace transitions. While attendance at the pilot will be free of charge, future sessions will be ticketed to cover costs. This approach aligns with our strategic priority to equip professionals with the confidence and tools to navigate career transitions, ensuring they remain engaged and supported within the professions.

8. Impact will be measured via pre- and post-event confidence scales, resource uptake, session ratings, and qualitative feedback. Delegates will be contacted again 12 weeks post-event to reassess the impact of the event and resources.

Courses, Content and Publications

'Welcoming a returner' RCVS Academy course

9. Following the success of the 'Vet return' and 'Vet Nurse return' RCVS Academy courses, and in response to learner feedback, the Projects Implementation Manager will be developing a new course for practice staff and employers on welcoming returners.
10. The aim of the course will be to equip practice staff with the knowledge, skills and practical tools to confidently, safely and inclusively welcome and reintegrate colleagues returning from parental leave or other career breaks, thereby supporting patient safety, team cohesion and retention.
11. Further updates will be provided in due course.

Workforce update animation

12. To support the Workforce project and evidence delivery against the Workforce Action Plan, a short animation is in production highlighting RCVS activities aligned to the Plan's seven ambitions.
13. The animation presents key projects being delivered across the College in clear, accessible and engaging terms, using real examples of actions and early impacts. It concludes with a strong call to action inviting members of the professions to participate in upcoming research, events and initiatives.
14. An accompanying article will expand on the animation's content, provide further detail and links, and signpost additional opportunities to engage with the RCVS and its ongoing work to support the professions.

Podcast content

15. Following the relaunch of the RCVS Podcast, the Director for Advancement of the Professions and Projects Implementation Manager have worked with the Communications Team to produce feature content for two episodes. The first, 'Research with Purpose: An RCVS Perspective', was released on 8 October 2025. The second, focused on reasonable adjustments in the veterinary workplace, will be released shortly.
16. Further content is being planned for release throughout 2026.

Summary

Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	04.02.2026
Title	MMI Funded Research Project – Annex A
Summary	An update on the MMI funded alcohol harm project
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Annex A – Alcohol Harm, Mental Health and Opportunities For Change In Veterinary Practice: A Cross-sectional Study
Author	Olivia Cormier

Classifications

Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Annex A	Unclassified	

¹Classifications explained

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

²Classification rationales

Confidential	1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others 2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation 3. To protect commercially sensitive information 4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS
Private	5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation

Alcohol Harm, Mental Health and Opportunities For Change In Veterinary Practice: A Cross-sectional Study

Key findings:

- Drinking at harmful or hazardous levels was common amongst UK veterinary workers across veterinary roles.
- Greater alcohol-related risk of harm was associated with poor mental health amongst UK veterinary workers, amplified by the motives drinking to cope and for enhancement.
- Lower alcohol risk levels were associated with a positive attitude towards help-seeking, positive self-worth as well as possessing the knowledge, capability and intention to drink at low-risk levels.

Introduction

Evidence suggests UK veterinary professionals engage in at-risk drinking at higher levels than the general population (1), with an entrenched drinking culture that normalises at-risk drinking and drinking to cope (2). Alcohol consumption has been associated with poor mental and physical health (3-5), which is likely to hold particular significance for UK veterinary professionals given the high levels of psychosocial stress and elevated mental health risks reported amongst this population (6, 7). Despite positive mental health campaigns within the veterinary professions (8) raising awareness, reducing stigma and encouraging seeking help; tailored intervention strategies for alcohol and related support remain undeveloped.

Understanding the factors influencing alcohol use amongst wider veterinary roles and barriers to help-seeking is the first step in intervention development.

Method

An exploratory cross-sectional online survey was completed by 652 UK veterinary workers in clinical settings who had consumed alcohol in the past three months. Measures included AUDIT, Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Adults, Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, Kessler 6, and [COM-B](#)-based items (capability, opportunity and motivation for behaviour, see link for further details) assessing behavioural influences on alcohol reduction and help-seeking. Analyses comprised correlations, multiple regression, and mediation.

Results

Of 652 participants, 40.4% reported at-risk drinking (AUDIT ≥ 8), with 32.6% at increasing risk, 5.2% higher risk, and 2.6% probable dependence. Drinking to cope and for enhancement predicted alcohol-related harm and mediated the relationship between poor mental health and alcohol risk level.

Predictors of lower alcohol related risk of harm included the following:

- Psychological capability, meaning having the knowledge and confidence in self-efficacy to limit drinking.
- Physical opportunity, having a lifestyle that allowed low risk drinking.
- Social opportunity, feeling colleagues practice low risk drinking.
- Automatic motivating factors such as not drinking as a habit or part of a routine and not drinking to cope with work stressors.
- Reflective motivating factors such as believing help-seeking was a good thing to do and that it would not harm one's career to do so.

However, seeing seeking help as a personal weakness and being fearful that colleague knowledge of help-seeking would have negative career repercussions were barriers to help-seeking. This suggests alcohol-related stigma may prevent people from seeking support when it is most needed.

In addition, believing drinking is intrinsically part of socialising with colleagues, that it is part of routine and that you use it to cope with work stressors were barriers to reducing alcohol consumption.

Implications:

1. The relationship between greater alcohol risk level and poor mental health, highlights the importance of addressing at risk drinking within the veterinary community.
2. Reducing alcohol related stigma, fostering positive attitudes towards seeking support and building trust that seeking support will be non-punitive, are likely to be key in enabling veterinary professionals to access support.

3. Drinking at risky levels appears to be common across the UK whole veterinary workforce. Veterinary-specific workplace policies on alcohol use are needed, alongside clear guidelines that support a positive cultural shift away from harmful drinking norms.

Future research

I am undertaking a PhD with a focus on co-development of an intervention strategy to improve access and provision of alcohol-related support to UK veterinary professionals.

To define the aims of the intervention, further research is first required to explore the barriers to help-seeking and to understand veterinary professionals' experiences and attitudes toward existing alcohol-related support. Building on these insights, I will apply a behaviour change framework in collaboration with a co-development team, ensuring that individuals with lived experience remain central to the research process.

Further information

If you are interested to read more, please see our original qualitative paper ["Alcohol-related Stigma in the UK Veterinary Profession."](#)

To share any further thoughts or questions relating to this research or my ongoing PhD project, please contact me via email: 19175231@brookes.ac.uk.

References

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Summary	
Meeting	Advancement of the Professions Committee
Date	04.02.2026
Title	RCVS Knowledge Contextualised Care
Summary	Contextualised Care: a roadmap
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Annex B – Contextualised Care: a roadmap
Author	Katie Mantell Chief Executive Officer katie.mantell@rcvsknowledge.org / 020 8148 4065

Classifications		
Document	Classification ¹	Rationales ²
Annex B	Unclassified	

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Contextualised care: a roadmap



The vision

All veterinary teams and pet owners are empowered to enable veterinary care that is adapted to the specific circumstances of each animal, its owner and the broader context.

This leads to enhanced animal health and welfare, and improved wellbeing for pet owners and veterinary teams.

About this roadmap

This roadmap lays out the support that is needed to empower all veterinary teams to deliver contextualised care.

It sets out the steps that can be taken by a wide range of people and organisations — including veterinary practices, veterinary associations, veterinary educators, regulators, charities and others — to support all veterinary teams to deliver care that is adapted to the circumstances of each animal, its owner and the wider context.

The roadmap draws on insights from more than 1,000 vet team members and pet owners, and has been developed with input from 70 sector leaders and pet owners.

For more on the research and engagement that informed this roadmap, see rcvsknowledge.org/cc-report

We hope that this roadmap will help all those with a stake in the delivery of high-quality, accessible veterinary care and good animal welfare outcomes to play their part in supporting contextualised care. At RCVS Knowledge, we are committed to working with and supporting everyone from across the sector, and animal owners, to help make this happen.



What is contextualised care?

Contextualised care is a way of delivering veterinary care that is adapted to the needs and circumstances of the individual animal, its owner and the wider context. This requires a partnership between caregivers/owners and the veterinary team, all working together for the best quality of life for the animal patient.



Contextualised care to me is delivering veterinary medicine that takes into consideration all aspects of the client's needs, the owner's needs, things like finances but also things like how tolerant the patient is to daily medications, whether they travel well, how able the owner is to administer medications."

Veterinary surgeon (interview)

Taking a contextualised approach to veterinary care means considering a range of factors around the patient, as shown on the following page.

Animal

Age, breed, sex, temperament,
comorbidities, role and
relationship between animal
and owner

Owner/carer

Preferences, available
resources (including
finances), support

Consultation

Type (emergency, urgent,
routine, preventative)

Location (surgery,
owner's home, online)

Veterinary team
(knowledge, skills, values,
workload, support)

Practice

Type (first opinion,
referral, charity)

Facilities, staffing,
equipment, goals

Profession/ industry

Regulation, ethics
and protocols

Evidence base
Medicine availability

Scientific advances in
medicines and equipment

Wider society

Legislation (animal
welfare, health and
safety, employment and
business law)

One Health of people,
animals and ecosystems

Public health (zoonotic
diseases, dog bites)

Sustainability

Environmental impact
Responsible use of
antimicrobials

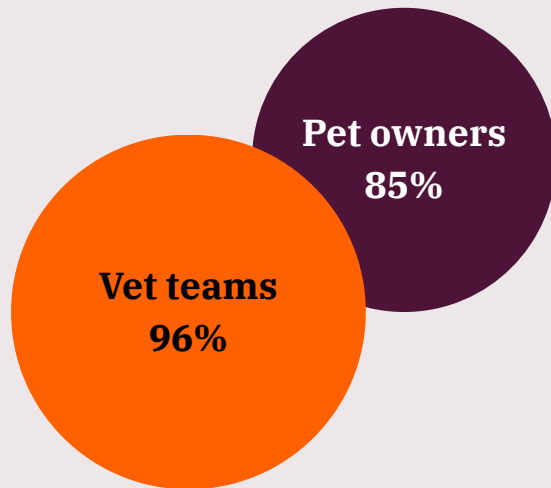
Financial sustainability
of the practice and the
sector

Workforce recruitment
and retention

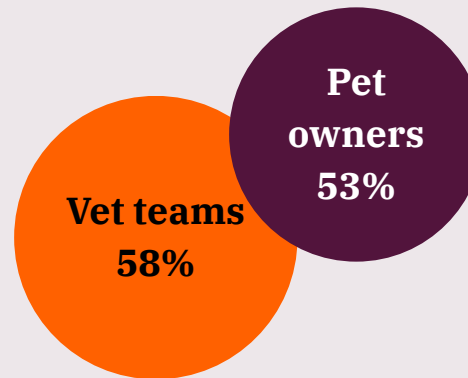
The benefits of contextualised care

There is strong agreement from both pet owners and veterinary professionals that applying a contextualised care approach can bring benefits for animals, pet owners and veterinary teams:

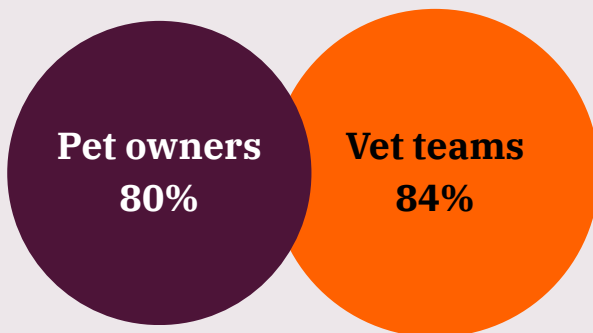
Improve trust between pet owners and vet teams



Reduce rehoming of pets



Improve the quality of care



Additional benefits anticipated by veterinary teams:

- Foster openness and support within the team (69%)
- Enable the practice to operate sustainably (60%)
- Improve job satisfaction and reduce burnout (54%).

Where are we now?

Our research suggests that, in many cases, contextualised care is already being delivered, with 45% of veterinary professionals and pet owners reporting that they face very few barriers in providing, or receiving, contextualised care. Some veterinary professionals considered it to be the way that veterinary care has always been practised over the years.



Contextualised care shouldn't be considered as something new. It's what we should have been doing all along, unfortunately we lost our way."

RVN (survey)

However, while a contextualised approach to care is not new, most veterinary professionals and pet owners currently report experiencing barriers to contextualised care.

Through our research with veterinary teams and pet owners, we explored the barriers to, and facilitators of, contextualised care. These insights shone a light on the support needed to enable all veterinary teams and pet owners to achieve contextualised care. The findings have helped inform the roadmap that is laid out here.



**What
support is
needed**

More support is needed to enable all veterinary teams and pet owners to achieve veterinary care that is adapted to the needs of each animal, its owner and the wider context. A wide range of individuals and organisation have important parts to play in making this happen.

Veterinary associations and leaders can visibly endorse contextualised care as the accepted way to deliver veterinary care. Veterinary team members can champion contextualised care and support colleagues who are facing barriers. Pet owners can seek out evidence-based information and support to ready themselves for the decisions involved around their pet's healthcare. Everyone in the veterinary community can reflect on what they are doing to enable contextualised care, what they are doing that might inadvertently be hindering it, and how they could both support and learn from others.

There are five broad areas where visible, explicit support for contextualised care could make a difference:



Professional leadership



Evidence and research



Veterinary education



Pet owner empowerment



Practice support

Professional leadership

A culture of contextualised care should be fostered across the veterinary sector, recognising it as the most appropriate way to deliver veterinary care.

What needs to happen:

- Debunk the notion of ‘gold standard’ in veterinary care.
- Ensure veterinary professionals are clear that making warranted adjustments to diagnosis and treatment routes based on the individual patient and client circumstances will not result in disciplinary action.
- Promote and celebrate examples of good contextualised care.



What needs to happen	Example actions	Who could take this forward	Timeframe	What success would look like
Debunk the notion of ‘gold standard’ in veterinary care.	Clearly and kindly call out the use of the term ‘gold standard’. Explain why this is important.	All	Ongoing	The idea of a single best way to diagnose or treat a disease is replaced by an understanding of the need to adapt care to individual circumstances and context.
	Publish clear messaging about the importance of contextualised care.	Veterinary associations, veterinary publishers and communicators	Short term	
	Ensure publishing guidelines and writers’ support tools explain how this term should and should not be used.	Veterinary associations, veterinary publishers and communicators	Short term	
Ensure veterinary professionals are clear that making warranted adjustments to diagnosis and treatment routes based on the individual patient and client circumstances will not result in disciplinary action.	Run a campaign to increase awareness that contextualised care is required by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) as set out in the guidance to the Codes of Professional Conduct.	RCVS, with support from veterinary associations and leaders	Short term	Veterinary professionals report that they are clear that practising contextualised care appropriately is not a reason for disciplinary action.
Promote and celebrate examples of good contextualised care.	Share examples of contextualised care in practice. This could include stories from the perspective of both vet teams and animal owners, and discussions about how specific cases of clinical care have been adapted to a particular context.	Veterinary associations, veterinary publishers and communicators	Medium term	Teams know what good contextualised care looks like.
	Create contextualised care awards to celebrate good contextualised care.	RCVS Knowledge	Medium term	

Veterinary education

The knowledge and skills needed to practise contextualised care should be more explicitly embedded in education and training for all team members, in both academic and workplace-based learning environments.

What needs to happen:

- Ensure that a spectrum of evidence-based options is explicitly included, together with teaching on how diagnostic and treatment pathways can be adapted to individual circumstances.
- Embed people and communication skills as a key component into all training.
- Teach vet and vet nurse students how to apply knowledge in a contextualised way and make decisions under conditions of uncertainty.



What needs to happen	Example actions	Who could take this forward	Timeframe	What success would look like
Ensure that a spectrum of evidence-based options is explicitly included, together with teaching on how diagnostic and treatment pathways can be adapted to individual circumstances.	Critically review curricula and continuing professional development (CPD) content to ensure teaching explicitly includes a spectrum of evidence-based options and how diagnostic and treatment pathways can be adapted to individual circumstances. Review the impact of the ‘hidden curriculum’.	Veterinary educators, CPD providers	Medium term	Learners report that their education emphasised the spectrum of evidence-based diagnostic and treatment options and supported them to deliver contextualised care.
	Ensure there is explicit reference to contextualised care in day one competences.	RCVS	Medium term	
	Ensure VetGDP has an explicit emphasis on a contextualised approach and communication skills.			
Embed people and communication skills as a key component into all training.	Review curricula and CPD to ensure that learners are equipped on subjects such as quality of life, managing emotions, discussing risk and talking about money and value.	Veterinary educators, CPD providers	Medium term	Learners report that their education included a focus on people and communication skills.
	Review day one competences to ensure there is more explicit emphasis on the people skills enabling contextualised practice.	RCVS	Medium term	Veterinary team members report that people and communication skills are valued and embedded in clinical CPD.
Teach vet and vet nurse students to apply knowledge in a contextualised way and to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty.	Critically review curricula to ensure they are sufficiently covering how to apply evidence in a contextualised way and make decisions amid uncertainty.	Veterinary educators	Medium term	Newly qualified vets and RVNs report that their education included how to apply knowledge in a contextualised way and to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty.

Practice support

Active steps should be taken to ensure that veterinary practices have the systems, support and team culture in place to enable contextualised care.

What needs to happen:

- Foster a team-based approach to contextualised care, creating a culture of psychological safety for pet owners and team members to have open discussions.
- Implement systems that encourage continuity of care.
- Critically review practice systems and processes to ensure that they do not restrict the delivery of contextualised care.



What needs to happen	Example actions	Who could take this forward	Timeframe	What success would look like
Foster a team-based approach to contextualised care, creating a culture of psychological safety for pet owners and team members to have open discussions.	Take deliberate steps to develop a culture of learning rather than blame, involving all team members (including the pet owner).	Veterinary practices and teams	Ongoing	Pet owners and veterinary team report enhanced safety culture and team working. Students and team members report that they are able to work together to achieve continuity of care and contextualised care.
	Provide support and mentorship on contextualised care to students, recent graduates and other team members.			
	Facilitate team-based reflection, training, and shared learning to clarify roles and strengthen collaboration.			
	Create safe systems for pet owner feedback and advocacy, such as through pre- and post- consultation information collection.	Veterinary practices and teams	Medium term	
Implement systems that encourage continuity of care.	Use technology to improve information flow between team members to ensure that key contextual details are captured.	Veterinary practices	Medium term	Teams and pet owners report that systems are facilitating continuity of care.
	Develop guidance on how to record and use contextual information about the owner that is compliant with data protection regulations.	RCVS, veterinary practices	Short term	
	Implement scheduling systems that enable booking with the same member of the veterinary team, where possible/appropriate.	Veterinary practices	Medium term	
Critically review practice systems and processes to ensure that they do not restrict the delivery of contextualised care.	Review measurement frameworks, policies and protocols that could directly or inadvertently impact contextualised care.	Veterinary practices and teams	Short term	Decrease in reports from veterinary teams that practice systems and processes restrict appropriate clinical decision-making.
	Ensure that the difference between guidelines, protocols and checklists are clear to all team members.			

Evidence and research

Better data and research on outcomes for treatment pathways should be developed to support veterinary teams and pet owners to make informed decisions about care.

What needs to happen:

- Promote widescale engagement in generating evidence on the outcomes for different treatment options.
- Develop evidence-based tools to support shared decision-making between the veterinary team and pet owner.
- Prioritise primary research that compares diagnostic and treatment options that are most relevant to the needs of individual animals, their owners, and their circumstances.



What needs to happen	Example actions	Who could take this forward	Timeframe	What success would look like
Promote widescale engagement in generating evidence on the outcomes for different treatment options.	Support veterinary teams and pet owners to actively contribute to practice-based research, and to national audits and registries that develop the evidence base for the outcomes of different treatment pathways.	RCVS Knowledge, veterinary associations, veterinary leaders, veterinary groups and practices	Ongoing	Increase in use of national audits and registries, and increased participation in practice-based research. Veterinary teams report that they are better equipped with information to support contextualised care. Pet owners feel that they have enough information on different options to make informed decisions.
Develop evidence-based tools to support shared decision-making between the veterinary team and pet owner.	Create tools that explicitly compare the impact of different diagnostic and treatment options, and that consider the different contextualised factors and impact on the animal’s quality of life and burden on the client (for example, value matrices).	RCVS Knowledge and funders, with promotion by veterinary practices and leaders	Medium term	Widespread use of resources by vet teams and pet owners with evidence that this is supporting shared decision-making in practice.
Prioritise primary research that compares diagnostic and treatment options that are most relevant to the needs of individual animals, their owners, and their circumstances.	Develop structures that facilitate stakeholders (including animal owners, practitioners, researchers, funding bodies and insurers) to collaboratively identify areas of research that are most relevant to clinical practice within the veterinary sector.	Funders, researchers, veterinary publishers, RCVS Knowledge	Long term	Increase in practice-based research and in practice—research institution collaborations on issues relevant to supporting pet owner decisions about care.

Pet owner empowerment

Pet owners should be empowered with independent, trusted information and resources to support them to make informed, guilt-free decisions about their animal's care.

What needs to happen:

- Provide greater transparency on the costs and value of veterinary care for pet owners.
- Empower pet owners to feel confident and guilt free in selecting the options that are right for them and their pet.
- Develop evidence-based, online resources to support pet owners and veterinary teams to make decisions about diagnostic and treatment options.
- Provide support and encouragement for conversations about quality of life and care-giver burden as part of the vet consultation.



What needs to happen	Example actions	Who could take this forward	Timeframe	What success would look like
Provide greater transparency on the costs and value of veterinary care for pet owners.	Ensure that pricing of treatment and diagnosis options is transparent and, where possible, information is given about the likely outcome. Provide written information after the consultation when appropriate, to help owners reflect and make decisions post-consult.	Veterinary teams and practices	Short term	Pet owners report that the costs of veterinary care are transparent, and that they understand the value of different options.
Empower pet owners to feel confident and guilt free in selecting the options that are right for them and their pet.	Run a campaign to empower pet owners to make confident, guilt-free decisions about their pet's care, covering topics such as animal welfare, quality of life, euthanasia and how to cover the costs of veterinary care.	Animal charities, breeders, RCVS, RCVS Knowledge	Medium term	Pet owners have increased confidence in making choices about their pet's care.
Develop evidence-based, online resources to support pet owners and veterinary teams to make decisions about diagnostic and treatment options.	Create online, freely accessible resources that clearly present different options for diagnosis or treatment of the most common presenting conditions, being explicit about the outcomes that are most relevant to pet owners.	RCVS Knowledge and funders, with promotion by veterinary practices and leaders	Medium term	Widespread use of resources by veterinary teams and pet owners, with evidence that this is supporting shared decision-making in practice.
Provide support and encouragement for conversations about quality of life and caregiver burden as part of the vet consultation.	Secure resources and protected time for veterinary team members to undertake CPD in these areas. Practices might consider structured ways, such as quality-of-life assessment tools, to support conversations about treatment options.	Veterinary teams, veterinary practices, veterinary groups, veterinary associations	Short term	Pet owners report that they are well supported through quality of life and treatment discussions. Veterinary teams report an increase in CPD being undertaken in these areas.

The future

This roadmap has been developed with tremendous support, engagement and input from a wide range of people from across the veterinary community and pet owners.

We know that, in many cases, excellent contextualised care is already being delivered. This roadmap is about galvanising the veterinary community to put in place support at all levels to ensure that veterinary teams and pet owners are empowered to achieve contextualised care.

In doing so, we hope to achieve enhanced animal health and welfare, and improved wellbeing for pet owners and veterinary teams.

At RCVS Knowledge, we're committed to working with and supporting everyone in the veterinary community, and pet owners, to help make this happen.

To see the research that informed this roadmap, go to rcvsknowledge.org/cc-report



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