



Vets4 Pets Grantham - Highly Commended

Q1. Work Conditions: supporting staff in dealing with the demands of their job

All of our colleagues are enrolled on a 2 day course led by a veterinary life coach which include workshops on resilience and self awareness, alongside one to one personal life coaching.

Our clients have access to an online feedback system via SMG to dissect the service we have provided, be it poor or good. This feedback is shared with colleagues every period, successes are recognised and poorer feedback is governed in a round table format with objective accountability from each team member; we believe this helps our colleagues better understand our clients and how we can improve the client journey and as such colleague satisfaction with their role.

Our colleagues are given an annual budget to develop their colleague room by whatever means they wish to improve the environment for their rest time.

Client complaints have defined SOP's for management/ resolution and timescales for colleagues to follow with demanding clients.

Open lines of communication exist within and between job roles for discussion of cases to ensure team wide involvement with our patients. Electronic updates for progress are posted to our management system message board.

The practice will not allow lone working, is air conditioned and has comfy seats including a deep sofa and bean bags in the colleague room!

As part of our outstanding pass in client care through the rcvs pss scheme, we engaged colleagues on two separate client care courses and a bereavement course, the training from which was disseminated to the rest of the team. Notable changes ensued after this training and accreditation with our net promoter score peaking over 90% top box satisfaction from clients

We responded to feedback from colleagues about their uniforms being uncomfy and over-hot, as such we reinvested in looser tunics for our reception team and scrubs for all clinical colleagues.

Q2. Balanced Workload: supporting work-life balance

Our practice is dedicated to maximising work life balance. The practice outsources its own out of hours and plans to stay this way moving forward, also to never open on Sundays.

This year, in response to our annual paws4thought colleague feedback survey we have increased holiday allowance by 25% for all colleagues which was very well received at their reviews.

We bench mark our salary provision against the spvs survey and always aim to exceed our local averages.

In addition to normal holiday allowance, colleagues are given an extra day off for their birthday

We provide paid "peternity": a day off when a new animal is taken on by the colleague to allow them to settle their pet in.

We provide a paid day off for colleagues taking their children to their first day at school

We provide a paid day of charity leave for colleagues to outsource their time to a cause they believe has value.

To balance the days when workload is high, when quiet, colleagues are given an additional half an hour paid fresh air break after their lunch to get outside and relax in any manner they see fit; colleagues have already regularly enjoyed walks to our local park for some fresh air and sunshine. Colleagues are paid for any overtime they end up working.

Colleagues are allowed to arrange their own rotas within their team eg vets vs nurses vs reception

We recognise skill and experience varies within our teams. For those colleagues with less experience we offer less demanding schedules. Our student nurses and new graduate vet are permitted extended appointment slots for their consults and also additional breaks within clinics to rest or catch up.

Q3. Relationships at Work: fostering effective working relationships

Communication is key within our team at both micro and macro levels. We encourage personal objective accountability for any mistakes that are made and govern these openly in discussion with the whole team.

On the flip side we run a gratitude board in the practice for colleagues to post notes to thank a colleague for something they have done which brightened their day ranging from covering a shift to making an excellent cup of tea! The board has already generated huge activity, we will offer a wellness award to the colleague that receives the most recognition periodically.

We have an informal 10 minute catch up at the start of each operating session with all team members to discuss anything of note be it minor or major.

We have formalised monthly practice meetings with all colleagues to ensure communication of significant events, changes in protocols, and to discuss things that have gone well or otherwise. SMG is reviewed at this time. The practice manager runs monthly check ins and formal annual review with every colleague for them to communicate any concerns.

Annual colleague awards have been introduced this year. Every colleague has the opportunity to nominate in each category and awards for recognition are provided at our xmas meal.

As a part of our vet life coaching sessions, each colleague is DISC profiled and the results shared with the team to ensure that we all understand each other's personality type and how we can better interact with each other. This has already had proven benefit between the partners and practice manager.

We encourage out of work social activities, having recently been for several pizzas and also a trip to the local bingo hall which was great fun!

Our nurses have an active whatsapp chat group to keep each other updated on cases when they are away from work. It always surprises me how active this group is with colleagues on their day off, but must demonstrate a desire and satisfaction with the ongoing involvement of care with their patients

Our colleagues run a system of mutual cover to help each other with sickness leave from work, we have recently had a lot of illness in our practice and our receptionists and kennel maid have covered extensive additional shifts to help out our colleagues requiring extra time off to recuperate.

The practice has set SOP's for handing over cases between shifts and the admission and discharge of patients. This ensures smooth flow of information regarding a patient where several colleagues may be involved.

Q4. Personal & Career Development: enabling staff to work effectively

Our practice dedicates an enforced 1% spend of our annual turnover minimum towards CPD although typically we will overspend (this year we have overspent by £2500 to ensure full colleague access to our veterinary life coach). Every colleague has the opportunity to apply for cpd at their monthly check in and formalise this annually at their review. Colleagues may take time during working hours to undertake cpd in house if trade is quiet.

Our library is open to ongoing additions as required

Vets4pets run our own academy to offer colleagues discounted CPD and as such access to greater volumes.

After any cpd course the practice will gather for a verbal feedback from the colleague to disseminate the knowledge they have gained

Our new vet graduate has access to our graduate programme which offers a formalised structure to settling into the group practice, cpd surrounding the challenges of early skills. Our graduate went on a basic surgical procedures course which was of obvious benefit, managing to spay a labrador on her own after only 2 previous live involvements with the procedure.

We aim to constantly improve the practice through the PSS having achieved GP status, a pass in inpatient care and outstanding award in client care. These accreditations have involved additional cpd for colleagues in the form of client care, end of life consultation, infection control, pain management, anaesthesia and surgery.

We run in house cpd from external providers, for example recently inviting the animal health trust to provide a full day of lectures on anaesthesia to all staff. In this way we endeavour to ensure CPD is easily accessible to colleagues and does not conflict with out of work commitments.

Two of our veterinary surgeons are enrolled on webinar cpd programmes which are accessible to all colleagues

One of our nurses has expressed an interest in undertaking minor surgery; she is now enrolled on a practical course and undergoing practical mentoring by our senior surgeon. This has also led to the incentive of a nurse procedures board to be run parallel to the vet procedures board, offering our nurses empowerment.

Our new practice manager has been extensively mentored through our academy in business and management skills and has flourished rapidly into her new role.

We train student nurses on site, having developed one candidate into an employed RVN this year and two more expected within the next 12 months; both have accepted permanent job roles upon qualification :-)

Our practice manager has monthly check ins with every colleague to ensure their personal and professional development is proceeding according to their and our expectations. This is backed up by the annual review process. If any areas require improvement, we have a structured process for review.

Our practice is enrolled with the retail trust to offer colleagues advice on career development, financial control, legal advice and personal counselling as needed.

Colleagues are empowered within their job roles and know their duties to be effective by having a job description provided alongside both a practice handbook and a practical procedures handbook to follow as SOP's

Every colleague has a full day of induction before commencement of work.

Being a part of vets4pets allows us access to our clinical forum and referral division allowing clinical staff access to widespread discussion regarding cases in often access to out of house mentoring. After my tplo course, I have access to two referral centres with orthopaedic specialists for me to observe and become involved with practicing the procedure.

Our group has an online forum called the "kennel" which is a site for active debate on cases and opinions being offered. It also allows access to documents on recommended best clinical practice.

Q5. Control at Work: enabling staff to have a say in their work

We minimise micromanagement extensively in order to empower our colleagues within their job roles.

Our veterinary surgeon team, nursing team and reception team are empowered to run their own weekly/ periodic meetings to discuss matters specific to their responsibilities.

Recommendations from each group are fed back to management and are actioned as appropriate. Examples of this are more efficient management of our daily timetable following recommendations from our reception team which has led to less frantic consultation periods for vets and more time investment for each client which has led to greater patient care and client satisfaction. Our most recent nurse meeting implemented some practical changes to our inpatient care for cats through the use of cat forts as hiding holes and non aerosolised preparations for removing tape from legs; these changes are also initiating the nurse led drive to achieving our cat friendly status. Our most recent vet meeting prompted improved client care by applying immediate post op phone calls and also the addition of cytopoint to our management regimes for atopic patients.

Each team also has freedom to manage their own rotas within their contracted hours, offering greater flexibility with managing their work life requirements.

All team members are involved in clinical governance for complications in a round table manner, encouraging objective personal accountability.

The aforementioned daily pit stops before ops, monthly and annual reviews allow open discussion for colleagues to control their work. This is backed up again by the periodic whole practice meetings.

Our practice management system allows efficient day to day running of the clinic with message folders for each colleague, "kennels" for inpatients, day cases and out patients.

The practice handbook has been constructed with input and review from all colleagues, meaning they have all been empowered to advise how they feel the practice should be run. This handbook forms the basis of practice protocols. This was constructed alongside the clinical procedures manual which was put together by the entire surgeon and nursing teams..

All of our colleagues are heavily motivated to the care of our patients and their involvement in the construction of these SOP's has led to a reported improvement in satisfaction with our clinical practice.

Our practice works with an ethos of objective accountability, meaning alongside celebrating our successes we are open to constructive criticism from any other colleague where it is felt that matters could have been improved upon. These matters are discussed in a round table forum with no one opinion carrying more weight than another. In instances of dispute, a casting vote is undertaken between the three managers and then fed back to colleagues with reasoned conclusions.

We have this week had two of our RVN's qualify under amtra as suitably qualified persons for dispensing medications; this has empowered our nursing and reception team to have greater access and accountability to routine dispensing.

A recent example of our colleagues having equal input to clinical procedures was our decision on outsourcing for orthopaedic work. We have been using a travelling surgeon and the nurses had raised some concerns over post operative care offered for the cases involved. We clinically governed the workload complications wise according to national standards for orthopaedics and found that the work was well within accepted limits. The nurses maintained a subjective viewpoint though that the service was inferior to others they had witnessed. As such we are temporarily outsourcing to another surgeon to compare the work offered objectively for comparative clinical governance. This highlights our commitment to acting on personal feelings were appropriate for patient care and involving it in informed clinical decision making.

Q6. Communication at Work

Our practice has a structured process for team wide and individual communication with each other and their line managers.

The aforementioned:

- daily pitstops- each day before ops the team gathers for a drink to discuss any relevant events occurring over the going day and to generally chew the fat about anything and nothing!
- structured team specific meetings between managers, vets, nurses and receptionists. These meets allow effective intra-team round table communication and a method to feedback for review to management.
- structured monthly check ins with the practice manager regarding personal development, wellness, cpd etc
- structured formalised annual review process for each colleague. At this time each colleague receives an informed assessment and feedback on their performance.

On a day to day basis, colleagues will utilise our practice management software rxworks to communicate with each other via message folders for each colleague regarding client contact, case updates etc. There are folders where each colleague can visualise the progress of inpatients and operations.

Each colleague has a practice email address and is part of the grantham vets4pets email group for interim and informal communications

As a part of the group, vets4pets provide the practice as a whole with a weekly partner report regarding larger group wide decisions and procedures updates which are monitored and filtered through to colleagues as appropriate.

Annually colleagues receive the paws4thought survey which allows them to provide anonymous feedback to their managers regarding all aspects of their work. This anonymous feedback allows completely objective feedback to managers for areas we have succeeded and areas we could improve upon. Out of our latest survey we listened to colleagues telling us that their worklife balance was not where they wanted it to be. This led us to introducing the 25% increase in annual leave, peternity, first day at school and charity leave.

Nothing is left to fester and no good deed goes unrewarded. If there is an issue requiring addressing, one of the managers will approach the colleague in question for first informal discussion immediately. Where this is not immediately possible, the colleague is communicated with by phone to be informed that a meeting will take place. The gratitude board allows us to immediately thank a colleague if something has gone well and they are not available to be thanked, they can just see the board next time they are in practice and see the happy notes!

All governance processes are recorded and physically filed for colleagues to review at any stage.

Q7. Health & Psychological Wellbeing

All of colleagues have access to our veterinary life coach Carolyne Crowe. This year we are offering all colleagues a full two day programme of in house cpd on resilience, wellbeing and coping strategies. Each colleague will receive a one to one life coaching session and a DISC profile. The DISC profiles will be shared with all colleagues to help us understand each others' personalities and ways we like to work effectively.

Outside of aforementioned measures for wellness we recognise that finances can be a considerable stress riser for colleagues. In addition to salaries standardised against spvs survey, we offer our colleagues:

- the workplace pension
- paid professional and personal interest subscriptions
- practice specific discounts of 30% on products and services, free consultations for pets free vac4life careplans for 3 pets.

Vets4pets offer all colleagues access to our lifelines app which gives them regular discounts on extracurricular activities ranging from meals out to shopping to overseas car hire!

Bonus schemes are available for sales of our careplans and referring a colleague into our employment. This year the colleagues have a £500 bonus to split from the care plans and we have paid out £1500 in colleague referral bonuses.

Personal stress comes in many forms but we have tried to identify and address some specific examples:

- 1) Nutrition, eating healthily improves our health and wellbeing, the practice offers a weekly budget and provision of healthy snacks which are put in the colleague room every monday for general consumption. Biscuit consumption has notably declined!
- 2) Exercise- we offer additional 30 minute fresh air breaks to colleagues after their lunch, workload dependant, in order to get some physical activity in the form of a brisk walk. These prove immensely popular and are taken up by all colleagues
- 3) Seasonal affective disorder, being a small animal practice means our colleagues experience reduced exposure to sunlight. In order to minimise this the practice has invested in 2 medical lightboxes which we permit colleagues to use when they are working in front of a terminal or on their lunch breaks. These are now in regular use.

4) Nutritional advice and personal training- annually every colleague is offered a paid for one to one consultation by a personal trainer to discuss and optimise their nutrition and exercise regime

The practice recognises the benefits of meditation and offers an annual workshop for all colleagues on the benefits and methods of practicing meditation

Relaxing in a comfortable environment is important to winding down, so the practice offers colleagues an annual budget for the renovation and augmentation of their colleague room. This year they are looking to repaint it, buy a new sofa and dishwasher, reading books, a record player and a footspa!

Our colleagues fed back to us that they were uncomfortable in the standard vets4pets designed uniform, as such we personalised their uniform to comfier tunics for reception and scrubs for all clinical staff.

there have been several instances of staff requiring additional sick leave/ earlier finishes for childcare/ compassionate leave. The practice has provided all of these as paid leave where it has not been possible for the colleague to make the time up or take unpaid leave. This has created the concept of our "goodwill bank" where we see the additional leave paid back from colleagues willing to stay late for cases without grumbling.

All colleagues have paid access to the retail trust for personal advice on financial control, legal advice and counselling support for personal issues

Our colleagues are all provided with our customised wellness portfolio to help them understand our dedication to their wellness and the physical ways in which we will apply this for them.