



Drove Veterinary Hospital - Winner

Work Demands & Work Conditions

Q. Is training in working with clients provided for team members?

Vets - consulting technique and client handling CPD is ongoing. We have used Brian Faulkner internally and externally

Support staff - shadow both the telephonists and receptionists as part of training. They also do Pet Plan and Bereavement training.

Client care team - 6-week induction program including working with clients as a large area Nurses - most start as telephonists/receptionists and get full client training.

Q. How are colleagues supported in the event of client complaints?

Staff are encouraged to 'own' small issues (knowing they will be supported). After this it is escalated to the Customer Service Manager (Naomi) who deals with it as a priority. Staff can talk about the circumstances of any complaint to any manager and support given.

E.g. A vet spoke with a client who was very angry that the cost of a dental had exceeded the estimate. They would not accept her explanation and were quite rude. Naomi immediately took control of the situation, investigated and dealt

Q. How are colleagues supported in the event of clients being abusive or threatening?

We have a policy that abusive phone calls are not tolerated, and the abuser will be told to cease such behaviour, or the call will be terminated. Our calls are recorded and can be reviewed at any time.

Face to face abuse is never tolerated and staff are encouraged to seek support immediately from surrounding colleagues if they feel threatened.

We have written to clients in the past asking them to look for veterinary services elsewhere due to their ongoing behaviour towards our staff.

Q. How are colleagues who may spend time working alone supported?

A vet and nurse always work together overnight. Widespread CCTV around and within the building are visible from an internal alarmed flat. A panic button also goes straight through to police.

Lone working is avoided as much as possible and a director is always contactable by phone should there be any concerns. Night shifts and shifts that may have less team involvement are rotated so that no one feels isolated physically or emotionally (for example a quiet branch receptionist shift)

Q. Give one additional example of how work demands are managed to support wellbeing in your practice

We have 22 vets and very few have the same rota/work pattern. We have a jigsaw of a rota (!) but have accommodated many different requests to maintain work/life balance and wellbeing. For example, 2 ladies work only 1 in 3 weekends (when husbands take over childcare). One of the hospital vets works 4 long days instead of 5 varying length days to allow him a day off every week. Some vets do out of hours and others do not, one vet has a half day a week due to commuting pressures. We allow one vet to do her OOH at set times to work around a husband who works away. We accommodate our head nurse condensing her hours into four days with one of those working from home to help her work/life balance

Workload and work scheduling

Q. Are individuals' workloads monitored and, if necessary, revised?

All the time - weekly managers meetings allow discussions on issues and all managers - including owners - work within the teams meaning they have first-hand experience of workload. Adjustments can then be made.

Lots of stats are looked at each month to look at staffing levels and to make sure its manageable e.g. call stats are pulled for each branch which shows amounts of calls, how many we lose etc, from this we can identify pinch points and increase staffing where necessary.

Q. Do work schedules allow adequate rest between one working day and the next?

All staff have a minimum of a 12 hours rest in between shifts.

For example, vets who do on call have the next 24 hours off and after working consecutive days at the weekend have 48hours off. Vets and nurses never work overnight then during the day.

Nurses that work overnight come in at 6.30pm and leave at 8am and are allowed to sleep where possible to maintain as normal a sleep pattern as possible. They also work a 6 on 8 off shift pattern to average out hours.

Q. How is colleagues' work-life balance supported?

Active 'Thriving in Practice scheme' for all staff. Activities planned throughout the year to support the five ways to wellbeing (connecting, exercising, learning etc) Some examples: - dragon boat racing, yoga (paid for by practice) craft activities and pub quizzes - lots more planned!

EAP for all colleagues (well-advertised)

Culture of importance of work/life balance e.g. efforts always made to get staff home on time and leadership team appreciative in various forms of dedication/extra effort.

Q. Give one additional example of how workload and work scheduling are managed to support wellbeing in your practice.

Nurses - Audits of workloads occur at least every two weeks and changes have been made to staff levels accordingly, to ensure workload is balanced but that the day runs efficiently. Recently, it was identified nurses were being used to perform tasks that could have been done by an animal care assistant. This was putting pressure on the nursing team as well as the vets. As such we have recruited extra animal care assistants to help support the clinical teams.

Relationships at work

Q. Does the practice provide opportunities for colleagues to spend time together outside work, if they wish? Do these involve activities to suit different interests and preferences (e.g. people who might prefer to avoid alcohol)?

As previous - we have an active 'Thriving in Practice' scheme where activities are regularly planned throughout the year from small things like pumpkin carving to dog walks, meals out, pub quizzes and BBQs. The practice paid for a yoga course and financially supports smaller group activities (e.g. branch bowling nights and paintballing). We entered a dragon boat racing team and there are plans for crafting events and trips in 2019. This is completely optional there is no pressure to join in.

Q. What mechanisms are used to identify and address any difficulties or conflict between colleagues?

Directors and managers have completed training in people management /conflict management/ difficult conversations etc. All employees have undergone insights profiling and teams have worked on how to communicate effectively with individuals within their teams.

E.g. when the management team were having difficulties with one individual, we conducted some 360 appraisals on each of them which drew out some great feedback and it was taken on board in an anonymous and more positive way.

Q. Does the practice have a clear policy relating to harassment and bullying at work, including processes for managing allegations of harassment or bullying?

Yes, and it is an area we feel strongly about. All staff are aware it will not be tolerated.

E.g. A previous employees who had bullying tenancies was managed accordingly and appropriately and are no longer with the company.

Q. Give one additional example of how positive relationships at work are supported in your practice.

During our mental health week, we encouraged different branches to visit each other and swap small gifts (e.g. a plant) to build relationships. The different hospital teams did something 'nice' for each other e.g. the directors and vets all went out for dinner, the nurses baked for the support staff. We asked all staff to take photos and send them to the thriving in practice coordinator. She put a board together of the weeks 'connecting' and put it in the newsletter also.

Career development

Q. Is supervision provided for less-experienced colleagues?

Vets: we have an official and documented mentoring system in the practice. Supervision of less experience vets is expected and continuous and happens on an 'as needed' basis

Reception: New starters shadow experienced members of staff for a minimum of 6 weeks as an extra before slotting into the rota. All new member of staff have a mentor/go to person.

Nurses: Buddy up with an appropriate member of the nursing team (try to personality match) and shadow shifts for as long as required.

Q. Does the practice support (e.g. fund and/or give time for) relevant training (e.g. clinical and/or professional/non-clinical skills) for colleagues in the following groups?

Vets: All vets have CPD budgets and time allowances and many are registered and supported financially/time wise on certificate programs. Internally we have one clinical (internal and external speakers) and one non-clinical vets meeting every month and we have a daily wards round to discuss hospitalised cases.

Nurses: Regular lunch and learns with both internal CPD delivered and external companies coming in. We offer a CPD budget, but if a staff member is keen to pursue a course or qualification beyond their budget then as a practice we are incredibly supportive and will cover the cost and put in place a salary sacrifice system to cover the costs, but at a manageable amount for the nurse.

Reception staff: Lunch and learns from external companies once a month

BVRA awards planning on starting these in the next couple of months Compassion understood - paid for course for all receptionists

All of the team have visited the Crematorium we use for a better understanding

A couple of receptionists are SQP trained and we pay for this and the yearly renewals

Support staff: Accounts staff - AAT membership fees paid to encourage professional standards maintained, also Sage Payroll training provided. We can shadow reception/clinical staff also to further our knowledge.

Q. How are good performance and colleagues' achievements recognised by the practice?

Verbal 'well done's' and 'thanks' encouraged in the culture via the leadership of the practice.

'Above and beyond' board in all branches and large display in the hospital where staff can leave thank you messages and stories of jobs well done/achievements.

Each team manager given a budget for small thank you/well done gifts Company quarterly newsletter helps share achievements/success.

FB posts celebrate exams passed etc and good performance ultimately rewarded financially.

Q. Give one additional example of how colleagues' professional and career development is supported in your practice.

Nurses start as receptionists becoming trained in client care/ communication. They then begin training alongside their coaches and the whole clinical team is involved in their development. When they qualify, they advance to a different degree of responsibility. After this are opportunities to specialise clinically (e.g. medical/surgical/ECC/dentistry) and also the opportunity to become a 'lead' nurse with managerial responsibility. The head nurse has recently progressed to a process managers role

Communication at work

Q. Do colleagues meet regularly – i.e. daily or weekly – to discuss day-to-day work matters?

Support staff - weekly but manager also sees them daily and 'sense checks'.

Reception - due to having lots of branches we only get together once a month, I. Weekly catch ups with the lead receptionists.

Nurses - weekly senior nurses' meetings, monthly all nurse meetings. Vets - one clinical and one non-clinical meeting monthly

Managers - weekly or more if required e.g. when we had recent IT issues all managers were required to collaborate and met more regularly.

Q. Apart from meetings, what other communication channels for colleagues are used in the practice?

Telephone system - internal system connects all branches and areas of the hospital
PMS messaging system - for urgent (flashing) or same day information

Emails - for more detailed information and lab results
Intranet - for protocols/manuals and practice diary
Message boards for celebrations /thank yous.

E.g. A colleague would PHONE the hospital ward vet to discuss a patient that needed to be sent over, but a nurse would PMS MESSAGE a vet to say the patient's blood results are now on their card.

Q. Are all members of the practice team able to have a say in how work is carried out?

All teams discuss change and possible improvements during meetings. Staff are almost always consulted on change and process improvements.

E.g. we needed to make some changes to our inpatient sheets to comply with RCVS awards standards. The lead ward nurse was asked to liaise with her team to come up with a solution. This was then put to consultation with both clinical teams (nurses and vets) before rolling out the change.

Q. Give one additional example of how effective communication is supported in your practice.

All staff have undergone insights training (in some form) and done some work on HOW to communicate with their colleagues and WHAT effective communication looks like. Verbal communication is encouraged as much as possible and our phone system now allows immediate communication between all areas of the hospital and the branches. We have worked with staff on how to use the PMS messaging system in the most effective and appropriate way and use emails/intranet for more generic information.

Promoting physical and psychological health at work

Q. Does the practice take a proactive approach to managing health and safety hazards at work?

Areas of concerns are picked up on branch audits (which are performed and documented monthly) and our maintenance person is asked to address it asap. All members of staff do online training for VDU and Electrical safety. They also all read and sign the health and safety manual. Managers and directors are present amongst teams to promote sensible health and safety attitudes.

E.g. temperature logs on fridges are checked at audits and we have had to replace the lab fridge as it was not reliable.

Q. Are healthy eating, exercise and similar health initiatives for colleagues promoted?

Please see info below on our activities during mental health awareness week. The company paid for yoga classes and have a table tennis table for use at lunch time. We have promoted the cycle to work scheme and have negotiated cheap gym membership for all staff. Dog walks and other physical activities have been supported and organised. As per below we definitely encourage healthy eating but there is a lot of cake eaten and enjoyed here!!

Q. How is awareness of mental health promoted by the practice?

It is promoted continuously through our 'Thriving in practice' co-ordinator. Emails are sent on a monthly basis about the importance of mental health in various forms/subjects. There are articles/posters put on the back of toilet doors and in the kitchens about topics (e.g. How to get a good night's sleep, how to manage varying shift patterns). The EAP scheme is advertised on posters in all branches and CPD is ongoing with managers and vets particularly.

Q. What stress management initiatives are promoted by the practice?

The whole 5 ways to wellbeing are promoted continually through our Thriving in Practice scheme. Please see other answers for all the different ways!! Stress management is particularly supported by working practices (shift lengths and demands), a team ethos and making sure that support is appropriate.

E.g. if a staff member is particularly struggling, they know they can discuss this with their line manager at any time. Above that we have in place a confidential employee assistance program.

Q. Are colleagues supported during extended sickness absence and on return to work?

We like to maintain regular catch ups while they are out of the business if the type of illness allows. We always send flowers and cards and often staff will visit their colleagues if appropriate.

Return to work interviews are mandatory and any adjustments that are needed are taken into account. We have undertaken many phased returns for both mental and physical conditions. E.g. a nurse with ME had her hours altered so she could have a rest day every few days and worked a shorter day.

Q. Give one additional example of how physical health and psychological wellbeing are supported in your practice.

During mental health week we dedicated a day to different areas of wellbeing - day one was healthy eating and fruit baskets were sent to all branches with information on how good diet affects your mental and physical health, day 2 was keeping learning and puzzles and crosswords were sent based on wellbeing themes, day 3 was connecting and staff were encouraged to visit a different branch (they were paired) and take appropriate small gifts. Day 5 was sleep and everyone was sent hot chocolate sachets and information about how to keep healthy sleep patterns and the importance of it. The week finished with a staff+ family rounders match (keep active) and BBQ in a local park on the Sunday.