



Vale Vets Animal Hospital – Highly Commended

Work Demands & Work Conditions

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

New receptionists shadow mentor (1month) Initially don't answer phones/deal directly with clients. Mentor trains on how to deal with difficult situations. Training by vet on phone triage/common emergencies Nurses starting nurse clinics shadow experienced team member & speak to vets as needed If a vet is struggling e.g. how to discuss a challenging case with client. Other members of the team are available to discuss, give suggestions/phrases that they have found useful in the past- WhatsApp used OOH

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

Clear complaints policy on website. Staff aware- same info always given

Management team available 24/7- speak to subject of complaint confidentially. Both sides of story gathered. Speak to VDS on their behalf if asked

No blame policy for discussing problems before they arise, team members encouraged to speak to manager ASAP Whilst complaints dealt with in an unbiased manner, we feel that management has confidence in our abilities and give us fair representation

Outcome discussed after resolution

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

Clear policy- abusive/threatening behaviour not tolerated. Management may ask client to seek alternative veterinary care No pressure for team member to see client if have had disagreements in the past Pop-up notes on client's records showing previous problems and any 'no go' topics e.g. animal's weight Any concerns about client's behaviour more than one staff member present in consult/meeting- one being senior Encouraged that consult room door left open to allow other staff to be alerted

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

In depth lone working policy

2 vets & experienced nurse on call (+ night nurse) Night nurses carry mobile phone & practice keys

Duty vet on site until nurse happy with cases- may stay overnight. Stays within 20 mins of practice

Plans made for overnight cases- any concerns vet contacted

Speed dial phone system for rapid contact of vet Night shifts covered for social events so all involved

1 receptionist on Sat afternoon- door locked & intercom used for safety House visits never attended alone.

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

The demands of cases can be challenging as we strive to consistently offer gold standard care. On occasion we may have a case that an individual is struggling with due to management of either the case or owner. In these situations, especially we work closely as a team. Non-judgemental advice is always available from other vets and managers. If the need arises, on discussion with all involved, the vet in charge of the case may be changed. There is no blame attributed as it is understood that a fresh perspective is all that is needed.

Workload and work scheduling

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

Head nurse monitors departments, if one stretched nurse moved Locum nurse used due to recent high workload

Vets' workload increased-new vet hired

New grad vet's rota often reviewed; consults last 20mins (norm=15mins) +more breaks Vets involved in new rota plans, includes admin/study time

Areas of interest accommodated e.g. vet doing a surgery certificate given extra surgery slots

Reception raised difficulty dealing with client and phones at front desk. New system moves phones away to reduce pressure

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

Nurse shifts e.g. early/late kennels are allocated in blocks of 1 week, so regular breaks between unsocial shifts Night nurses never required to stay late

Following a weekend working vets & nurses are given time off (1 day for vet & additional early finish and 3 shifts for nurses)

Vets routinely work a four-day week + one night on call. They work the day after a night shift to ensure case continuity- however if they have had a busy night, they will be given time off the following day.

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

Staff gifted birthday off

Holiday increases with time at practice- encouraged to spread through year & carry minimal over When planning vets' rota preferences for days off/early finish taken into account

Clinical team take in turn to work unsocial days such as Christmas/bank holidays. Asked for preferences & fairly split between team

Breakfast box for team when working a bank holiday Lieu time e.g. volunteering at dog show

Vet on 2-month sabbatical- supported by the practice & locum organised

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

Due to the nature of the job emergencies may be seen outside of normal hours. We have implemented staggered shifts for clinical staff as we aim for no staff to stay beyond their allocated hours. e.g. nurses: start between 7:30am-3pm finish between: 3:30pm-10pm. There is 2 hours overlap between the day and night nurses. By doing this we aim to provide OOH care, including surgery, by inconveniencing the staff as little as possible. If a nurse stays beyond normal hours, they are given time back in lieu or paid for their extra work.

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)?

Social & inclusive team

Many friendships formed- meet up after work/weekends & even holiday together Practice summer social & Christmas party

Practice paid for each team to go out for a meal to show thanks for ongoing hard work- in last 6 months Inclusive running group- regularly attends Parkrun and other events

Practice free taster yoga class for international yoga day

Due to the expansion of the wellbeing team plans for 2019 include pub quiz, dog walking group, yoga, knitting group

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

Approachable and well-respected management team.

Open door policy including difficulty and conflict-though rarely required. Each team member has a manager

The vet, nurse & reception managers are members of the team and well placed to promptly identify problems They encourage an open conversation between team members in conflict. If not appropriate, then a formal mediation meeting would be held after individual discussion. Disciplinary measures would be the final step- these have never been required

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

Luckily, we have never required this, but a comprehensive policy is in place. We are committed to ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities regardless of any personal factor/quality. All complaints would be treated seriously and investigated promptly and in confidence. Initially a discussion between individuals concerned is encouraged. If this does not resolve the situation, line managers would be involved. They would investigate thoroughly and objectively.

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

In our break room you can find the positivity board. When someone wants to say thank you or well done, they write it on a post-it and put it on the board. It's regularly full and all teams are encouraged to get involved. Each 2 months the board is cleared, and the notes are given to the individual concerned. A month ago, a box with everyone's name in was put next to the board to help you think outside of your normal circle. It has been a big success and is lovely to see different people getting recognised.

Career development

Q. Is supervision provided for less-experienced colleagues?

New receptionists shadow colleague (4 weeks) & supervised (8 weeks)

Student nurses supervised until signed off e.g. anaesthetics. Not on late/weekend rota Night nurses spend 2 weeks with day team; work first shifts with another nurse

Rota arranged so less experienced nurses paired with more experienced

Experienced nurses involved with training e.g. using the ventilator & performing NMB

Clinical coach for new grad vet. On call/consults/ops with experienced vet (6 months) dedicated OOH back up (2 years)

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: CPD-funded and encouraged Allowance £1200 & 5 days

Managers pass on information about specific CPD events that individual may find interesting.

In house training is encouraged e.g. laparoscopic procedures- with the rota being altered to allow 2 vets to perform one operation.

We can request in house training e.g. updates on new medications

Wellbeing is important to the practice and CPD on this encouraged- for example attendance at the Wellvet weekend was funded for a vet

Nurses: CPD is encouraged & funded for all nurses Allowance of £500/year with no limit on days

On job training is encouraged and learning how to use more complex equipment like the ventilator encouraged Internal CPD run by vets & experienced nurses

CPR refreshers run each 4 months.

If someone shows an interest in an area, they are encouraged to have further training.

Wellbeing is important to the practice and CPD on this encouraged- for example attendance at the Wellvet weekend was funded for a nurse.

Reception staff: All new staff have training with a vet on triage, first aid & common emergencies, along with a refresher for the whole team when required. New members shadow vets and clinic nurses in their first 4 weeks to gain a fuller understanding of how the practice runs.

In the last 6 months the whole reception team has been involved in a dedicated training day including information on client communication, handling phone calls and customer support.

External training is supported and available as requested.

Support staff: Our support staff cover a huge range of roles therefore training is tailored to the individual's requirements. In recent months one member of staff has completed a bookkeeping course, another has started a management certificate and only yesterday a team member was on a day course of dealing with difficult clients. All training is supported, encouraged and funded.

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

Pay rises

Thanks, and congratulations in person and by email Social media posts- private staff page and public page Managers pass on good feedback

Monthly newsletter with recognition of achievements

Gifts. Recently for: completing a marathon, achieving post grad cert & starting wellbeing programme

Recently head nurse brought the nursing team coffee and had an extended break

During VNAM all nurses given cards with comments from vets & managers (+ chocolate) Practice has paid for each team to have a meal out

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

Certificates are encouraged in all departments. They are funded even when over CPD allowance. Time is allowed for study and revision in addition to holiday. Over half of the vets have or are studying for a certificate (surgery, medicine and rehab). Many nurses have or are training for certificates in a range of topics from feline nursing to anaesthesia. Certificates in management are encouraged. Pay rises are given on completion of a certificate.

Communication at work

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

Daily clinical rounds- involving vets, nurses & hospital assistants Evening rounds- late nurse, night nurse & duty vet

Dedicated vets' office shared with clinical director & manager. We discuss work matters and cases. Time allocated in middle of day for case discussion

All teams have monthly meetings with agenda M&M rounds each 3 months.

CPR debriefs following a crash with all members involved to discuss what went well and any improvements that could be made.

Twice yearly whole practice meeting.

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

Vets have WhatsApp group- used for discussing cases. Recently OOH we had 2 GDVs in one night & after posting another vet came in to help out- without being asked!

Emails used for both group and individual communication Notes put on diary for urgent calls

Private practice Facebook groups and separate wellbeing group What's on board- used for social events or charity events

Monthly newsletter- contains information about practice news, staff updates & events Anonymous comments, suggestions & criticism box

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

Work as a team e.g. input for this questionnaire from all teams Management receptive to suggestions of change from all staff Fantastic nurses & assistants- opinions are valued & asked for re: cases Reception feeds back clients' concerns & queries

Experienced receptionists will flag up cases that may require more urgent attention

Before complex surgical cases, pre-op plan & surgical sign in discussed: includes possible complications, anaesthetic concerns & swab counts. The whole team is involved

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

We have recently had an in-house evening CPD on communication styles for the whole practice (with pizza!) All teams were involved and encouraged to attend. We strive to have excellent communication which was evidenced by the whole management team attending. It allowed better understanding of the different ways people communicate and has been helpful not only for talking to clients but for facilitating better communication between team members. It was a great success and was also an excellent team building evening.

Promoting physical and psychological health at work

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

SOPs written & available

‘How to’ folder with info on how to set up/use equipment- useful OOH for staff unfamiliar with equipment Training in the use of new equipment e.g. ethylene oxide sterilising machine.

We perform chemotherapy and use needle free closed systems. Staff are trained in correct use. Chemo spill kits available. Animals undergoing chemo are clearly labelled and appropriate H&S measures taken e.g. PPE. Drugs kept separately and clearly labelled. Chemo waste correctly disposed of.

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

Fruit in break room on Monday 2 water coolers

Tea & coffee provided +caffeine free options: squash, decaf coffee and fruit tea

Encouraging & inclusive running group- attends Parkrun, locally & further away. Also longer runs- 10k attended last week

Dedicated wellbeing Facebook group- regularly post info re: healthy initiatives e.g. Vet Yogi videos Part of healthy eating week- emails re: eating 5/day, drinking water and eating breakfast

Shower on site- staff can exercise in breaks Free yoga taster session.

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

Wellbeing Wednesday (below) often focuses on this. Specifically, tips for better sleep, wellbeing in winter (winter blues & seasonal affective disorder) & body positivity

Highlighted mental health awareness week

Vetlife number around surgery: offices, DD safe & private places e.g. bathroom- can make a note in private Wellbeing folder- information on mental health issues, advice on starting discussion (including re: suicidal feelings)

Wellbeing champion- for discussion of mental health concerns

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

Wellbeing Wednesday also covers stress management. Topics include mindfulness- using apps e.g. headspace, and mindfulness through origami. Ways to reduce screen time, including Scroll free September, listening to podcasts and reading.

We have a book swap library.

Topics that individuals are passionate about outside of work have also been discussed such as going plastic free & being kind to the bees

Plans for 2019 include pub quizzes & dog walks

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

Phased return to work is encouraged, the level of which will depend on the reason for absence.

Managers work with team members to plan a schedule that the individual returning to work feels comfortable with. This may include reduced duties, shortened days, fewer days or reduced out of hours commitments. This is regularly reviewed.

Regular communication and support between management team and the individual is maintained, both before returning to work and once back.

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

We have a wellbeing team consisting of three vets and five nurses. The team is fully supported by the practice- the quarterly planning meetings are funded.

Each fortnight the team sends out a 'Wellbeing Wednesday' email on a variety of topics. We aim to encourage involvement- often including something extra e.g. herbal tea samples when discussing sleep. During the discussion of drinking water, we ran a competition for the best flavoured water with a prize of a reusable water bottle.

As the Wellbeing team expands plans for 2019 including having a general topic for each month and monthly practice activities.