



387 Veterinary Centre – Highly Commended

Work Demands & Work Conditions

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

Members of St Francis Business Academy (3yrs). Includes Customer Service training day for 2 team members every year (Telephone Training, Dealing with Difficult Clients etc.). Information disseminated on return. 'Effective recommendation' team training = confident team.

Receptionist training in Level 3 Diploma in Customer Service and ongoing CX Club membership. Individual empowerment, sharing best practice, stimulus for new CS initiatives (e.g. pet centric not just fact centric on phone).

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

Clear procedure in our Handling Complaints SOP: how to respond in person/ on phone; how to refer a complaint/invitation to involve Clinical Director at any point.

Management supportive of individuals, e.g. client complained team member rude and brusque. Discussion with team member stressing their strength in being concise and accurate may be construed by some as being too direct. Team member reassured of capabilities, but important constructive feedback given for more thoughtful communication

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

Following some rudeness to reception team 'Please respect our staff: we will not tolerate verbal or physical harrassment' sign displayed by reception. No incidences of threatening behavior, but panic alarm easily accessible behind reception in case of threat, which triggers practice burglar alarm.

Referral of difficult issues to Clinical Director always encouraged.

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

Lone working very rare. Two nurses rostered to lock up after evening surgery for security. Have OOH provision. However, if team member coming back into practice to check on an in-patient, should phone other late nurse/clinical director/other team member on arrival and departure before entering building, and after getting back into car.

Checks must be before 11pm as building floodlit until then. Advised to park at front where well lit, and enter practice by double-gated side entrance, to lock gates securely before opening practice. Entrance security-lit. Most downstairs internal doors Chubb locked to prevent penetration by intruders. Glass at front of building pressure sensitive to trigger alarm. Team advised if in any concern for their safety, they should trigger the panic alarm (on burglar alarm keypad). Triggers burglar alarm and calls clinical director and practice manager who can monitor situation on 15 camera CCTV system remotely and summon help.

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

Receptionist phoned client for post op. check call, but pet had died late previous evening in practice and had not been recorded on PMS. Embarrassing, difficult and upsetting. Discussed at Practice Meeting. New communication system introduced using whiteboard to list all recently deceased pets so whole team aware even if not involved in case or on day off. Also ensures we follow up all deaths with sympathy cards/calls. No recurrence of incident.

Workload and work scheduling

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

Agreed guidelines around appointment management to ensure team not overstretched. 'Emergency appointment only' slots inserted on busy days to prevent clinical team being over booked. 'Slot unavailable' used to book off time for team members to complete own specific responsibilities (e.g. insurance claim processing; clinical coaching) without time pressure. Slot booked off to ensure vets have lunch if surgery over-runs. Reviewed at practice meetings.

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

Yes. First consulting appointment 8.30am and last official appointment at 6.15pm. Normal working Rota means RVNs alternate between 8am to 6.30pm and 8.30am to 7pm shifts. No OOH. All vets and nurses work a 4-day week. RVNs' day off rotates for midweek or long weekend break. Vets' day off fixed. SVN day and a half off midweek. Reception team works 8.30am to 4.30pm.

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

4-day week for clinical team; fair rotation of long weekends for RVNs; birthday given as day off; day off in lieu for attending bi-monthly evening practice meetings; time back in lieu for nurses if working 20+ minutes over shift. Set Rota lets clinical team know days off well in advance for planning purposes. Flexibility for RVN team to swap days for personal commitments if necessary. Practice closes Sat 2pm until Mon 8am to enable team to spend time with family/friends/pursue interests.

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

Management supportive of team rescheduling requests to facilitate an activity or a personal priority. E.g. Team member's work hours currently amended so she can leave early one day/fortnight to attend complementary wellbeing therapy sessions. Another team member moving house - allowed to 'owe' time in lieu to have day off after moving, to sort suppliers and settle in. Part time vet returning from maternity given working days to fit in with family needs. Flexibility leads to happy team members

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 events include Christmas meals, in house wellbeing awards night out, leavers' meals, a jewellery party, skin care parties, lavender planting and local litter picking. We are a small team. Meals are the best attended activity. Questionnaire issued to team recently asking for new suggestions for social events and people's general preferences. Overall preference still indicated meals out the preferred majority choice.

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

Open door policy, twice yearly appraisals and team encouraged to speak to directors with any issues. Small team means close working environment. Willingness of management to approach upset team members, to open dialogue. 1 to 1 meeting with action points set and progress regularly monitored. Have used mediation, DISC profiling and life coaching to address conflict. Recent team workshops to collectively create a behavior charter re helpful and hindering behaviors and highlighting accountability.

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

Behavior charter collectively created by the team to identify expectations around behavior at work and creation and maintenance of positive working relationships. Clear statement of disciplinary action cited to address antisocial behavior should an individual be unwilling to follow the charter. Charter now issued to new team members as part of the induction process. Disciplinary Policy and Equal Opportunities Policy included in Employee Handbook issued to all team members.

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

Team noticeboard: all team encouraged to feed into a gratitude board which links to key themes of practice ethos. Positive comments and thanks to individual team members visible for all to see. Positive client testimonials printed and also displayed here. Feel good factor, sense of pride and self-worth. Sharing of good deeds most of team would be otherwise unaware of generates camaraderie, appreciation and respect.

Career development

Q. Is supervision provided for less-experienced colleagues?

Yes. All induction programs tailored to individual's role and experience to be wholly relevant. In addition to general induction pack: 'Quick start guide' for vets/need to know session with Clinical Director; buddy for new RVNs; 'Getting to know' sessions for SVNs with different team members, mentoring for new receptionist and gradual build-up of responsibilities; no one undertaking duties beyond experience/capability. Reduces stress in new environment and maintains high Customer Service level

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: Cat Friendly Clinic Advocate vet funded to attend ISFM European Congress 2018 in Italy (including travel/accommodation): professional development and helps us improve feline initiatives in accordance with our ISFM Gold accreditation. Vet interested in complimentary therapy funded to attend vet acupuncture training courses. Now runs own acupuncture clinics here. Skill investment = job satisfaction/self-worth. CPD courses and multiple congresses funded including BSA VA, SPVS, LVS, ISFM, SAMSoc. No funding ceiling.

Nurses: Cat Friendly Clinic Advocate nurse currently undertaking the ISFM feline nursing diploma course to develop her skills and support practice development in an area about which she feels particularly passionate. Feels more motivated, confident and valued at work. Feels fulfilled feeding new info to the team and being able to help and educate clients. RVN feels invested in and encouraged by management. Now running own feline behavior clinics. No funding ceiling for RVNs. Course merit over cost.

Reception staff: We funded our receptionist through a Level 3 Diploma in Customer Service with CAW, and currently pay a subscription for her to access webinars and reception specific CPD with CX Club. Has led to an improved level of Customer Service in practice, and receptionist's role development with responsibility of sharing ideas with the rest of the practice. Validation of receptionist's existing high levels of Customer Service and feeds inspiration for new initiatives. Motivating.

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

Verbal praise by management for specific day to day successes, achievements showcased at practice meetings, Facebook, press (where relevant), waiting room displays; in our quarterly bespoke newsletters; team gratitude board. Related salary increases. Target driven incentives (e.g. rewards for gathering set number of reviews by deadline). E.g. Receptionists praised recently at coffee break/in message book for retaining 'Outstanding Customer Feedback Award'. Public announcement when official

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

When Head Nurse handed in notice, we arranged an open discussion meeting with RVN team to discuss opportunities at team and individual level. As a result, team structure changed leading to new opportunities for all RVNs to follow their own particular passions and interests and take on new, challenging responsibilities (e.g. Clinical coaching; Cat Friendly Clinic advocacy). Empowering and motivating. Training provided to support new roles.

Communication at work

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

Daily team coffee break. Receptionists share same hours and work together so can discuss work related reception matters together easily. Approachable culture means all team supportive of each other. Any meetings arranged for maximum attendance/announcements relayed to those not present afterwards. Informal weekly vets' meetings. Clinical Director always approachable for advice and case support.

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

Daily coffee breaks; message book; whiteboard for ops info and patient progress; nurses' clinics diary; online practice 'bible' (bank of all SOPs/ practice policies/ meeting minutes etc. and events calendar); euthanasia board listing most recently deceased pets; WhatsApp group for informal messaging; system on PMS created for listing clients to phone at the end of consults. Gratitude board for communicating praise and thanks. Review communication regularly for efficiency/ team harmony/ wellbeing

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

Yes. Strongly encouraged. Big inclusivity culture generated through Investors in People (benchmark for leading, supporting and managing people) for which the practice holds platinum accreditation. Range of forums where individuals can contribute and feel comfortable to do so: Practice, RVN, Vet and Clinical meetings; 1 to 1's; appraisals; online surveys; recent paper questionnaire on being happy at work; open door policy. All leads to empowerment and people feeling they have a voice.

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

Open agenda templates posted on team noticeboard for our bi-monthly Practice, RVN and Clinical meetings, inviting individual contribution. RVN meetings held just before practice meetings so relevant topics/ issues can be brought to whole team notice. Inclusivity gives opportunity for thought around agenda topics to prepare, sense of empowerment, collective learning and sharing. Value of being heard. Everyone feels informed.

Promoting physical and psychological health at work

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

Xact H&S online modular training for whole team; accident and near miss reporting and discussion at practice meetings to avoid recurrence; regular H&S topic refreshers given by Practice Manager at practice meetings (e.g. allergies; fire safety; work related dermatitis etc.); Onsite H&S audit every 18 months and telephone action plan review with H&S advisors every 6 months around audit visits.

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

Have participated 3 times in Vet Charity Challenge in past. Large selection of caffeine/ caffeine free beverages in kitchen. Bench in private practice garden for sitting outside. One-hour daily break in addition to coffee breaks to allow all to get outside/ go off site/ recharge. Vetperks scheme for whole team: discounts on activities/ days out/ gym membership as well as retail and holidays to encourage a happy, healthy lifestyle. Includes remuneration for medical treatment up to set value.

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

Practice Manager has attended MMI 'Mental Health for Managers' training. Fed back warning signs to team and signposts to help. Showed team YouTube video 'I had a dog and his name was depression'. Whole team training in end of life care and awareness around compassion fatigue and prevention. Sharing end of life experiences at Clinical Meetings encouraged. Ok to show emotion. Wellbeing notices and tips on display in kitchen. Vetlife stickers/ det ails in staffroom/ kitchen/ meds cabinets.

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

20 week Engage Wellbeing Project in 2018. Team surveyed to measure external stressors against industry benchmark (based on HSE Management Standards Stress Indicator Model). 2 most prominent identified and group works hopped to create strategies for positive change. Individual internal stress moderators also measured. Personalized workbooks, 1-1 meetings and action points developed for stress reduction at work and fed into appraisals. Positive change indicated in exit survey. Review on going.

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

No team member been away for more than 2 weeks. Full pay given during sick leave. Back to work meeting and 1-1 touch base meetings for over 1 week of absence: weekly or as necessary with review of any action points implemented. Staffing review to ensure returning team member fully supported in role. Example: recent absence resulted in increasing another part time employee's hours so returning member would have additional support.

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

'Being happy' questionnaire issued this Autumn after whole practice consultation on what being happy at work equates to. Gauge of current feelings around communication, environment, atmosphere, teamwork, inclusivity, support, being open to new challenges, high team morale. Feedback invited where people gave score lower than a smiley emoji face. Whole team collectively strategized at Practice Meeting to devise positive action points to reduce/ remove current stress in these areas. E.g. maximizing reception support: consulting nurse remaining on reception when not in consult to answer phone/ sign off meds; vets to discuss and put up flea treatment in consult to save time. Working! Reviewing.