



## Dudley Vets4pets – Highly Commended

### Work Demands & Work Conditions

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

The team are all trained in house.

Most of the team have attended "dealing with difficult clients" VDS course. All vets have completed the "colourful consultation" course.

Regular mentoring for vets by Practice Partner. Celebrate and share all positive client feedback.

Compassion Understood end of life training for most of the team. This led to discussion and suggestions which have altered the way we approach euthanasia making it a more positive experience for colleagues and clients alike.

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

VDS training as above has helped colleagues deal with and understand complaints. All complaints are dealt with by the practice manager or practice partner who actively support colleagues, when necessary seeking advice from VDS.

We actively promote a no blame culture so that all issues can be discussed openly so that no-one feels criticised. Following complaints protocols can be reviewed, training put in place and when necessary hand holding and 1 to 1 support.

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

We do not tolerate abusive or threatening behaviour. We have a panic button on the front desk which will inform police if there is an issue. We have CCTV in the waiting area and only 1 entry into the practice.

We inform clients when their behaviour is upsetting a colleague and we write to clients and ask them to transfer to another practice if they have shown unacceptable behaviour.

It is important that the team feel safe and secure at work

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

We have a policy of no lone workers and do not open the front shutters until 2 colleagues are present in the practice. There are always at least 2 colleagues sent on a house visit. Colleagues may see a consult on their own but other colleagues are always available when needed to hold pets or provide emotional support.

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

We originally had 10-minute consultations, and all were booked. We found that the team were always running behind leading to client complaint dissatisfaction and stress. We also had limited time to recommend and explain and urgent appointments were extra to the booked workload. We changed all consults to 15 minutes. We added breaks and book on day appointments and retrained reception how to book. We have additional time for blood tests euthanasia and complicated conditions. We started to book operations by time taken and schedule a break from 2pm to 3.30pm to rest. This has massively reduced stress and improved work satisfaction, not to mention improving income!

## Workload and work scheduling



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

All work is scheduled and booked (vets and nurses alike). New graduate vets have additional time per consultation and work is shared and fairly allocated. The partner mentors the new graduates to monitor how they are coping.

30-minute breaks are built into the appointment schedule for catch up or rest.

If colleagues are struggling to keep up, then workload will be altered and additional training if there is a skill gap. This will be done after discussion to ensure we meet individual's needs.

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

We use a designated out of hours provider. Unlike the majority of the practices in my area I do not open on a Sunday allowing everyone a rest day. We have opening until 10 PM on three nights but this is shared fairly, and colleagues will get a later start or a lie in next day to allow adequate rest. Colleagues often take overtime back in lieu to get adequate rest.

Time off is in blocks of 2 or more days. A 3-day rest would be taken after a period of 6 working days.

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

We are always flexible to colleague needs. When necessary children and dogs come to work. Several colleagues work hours to suit childcare and even external hobbies. When a colleague's daughter recently started school, we arranged a different rota for that week and time in lieu to settle her child into school. We have allowed extended compassionate leave and we support colleagues during difficult times and children's or personal illness. Most importantly we are a family and have fun at work.

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

The way we schedule work is designed to reduce stress. We have 15-minute booked consults with several "book on day" consults each day to allow urgent consults to be slotted in without increasing stress. We have 30-minute catch up/tea breaks built into the consults. Reception are given lists of surgery times for each vet and surgery is booked out by the average time it would take that person to complete the procedure. By booking in this way the pressure on each individual is reduced and it allows them time to perform to the best of their ability.

## 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 (

We have a monthly social event. Each month a different colleague decides the event and day of the week. This way everyone is catered for. it is often a pub but can be a meal, walk, coffee etc. Social interaction is encouraged but contacting colleagues in their free time for work related issues are discouraged.

We pay for a Christmas Party every year in addition to our Christmas "Secret Santa lunch".

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

If there are any disagreements or conflict, they are noted by the management team or brought to their attention by colleagues. We then have a mediation meeting to resolve these issues quickly and calmly and prevent any future problems. A recent issue regarding reluctance to cover when a receptionist had to attend hospital with her son which upset her. Individual meetings openly discussing the issue followed by a team meeting when we discussed how to support each other has resolved the issue.

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

We have a clear written policy and bullying, and harassment are mentioned in inductions and health and safety training. Any issues are dealt with initially by the practice manager and partner as in the previous question.

Should colleagues be unhappy with the resolution we investigate further and involve our people team. colleagues can contact people team directly if they are unhappy or the business development manager. Colleagues are aware that they can report any issues in confidence.

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

We regularly schedule lunch together. Sometimes this will be for a rep to give a presentation but more often it is for team building. For example, we got together in September to share out holiday memories and pictures. We often each share a happy thought, or we have cake, a collection/present and lunch for birthdays. At Christmas we exchange secret Santa gifts in our Christmas jumpers. Other lunch gatherings have involved a meditation session, healthy eating discussion with recipe sharing and healthy eating handouts. Often, it's just tea and toast and a natter.

## Career development

**Q. Is supervision provided for less-experienced colleagues?**

Inexperienced vets are mentored closely initially and then less formally when their confidence improves. Our practice partner is dedicated to giving both clinical and emotional support while the team grow in skill and confidence. Student nurses are supervised by the more experienced RVNs and we have 2 clinical coaches. new receptionists are supported by the rest of the team. We are a friendly welcoming team that openly encourages, supports and celebrates development.

**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 is paid for and actively encouraged. Vets are required to do 35 hours per year but encouraged to do more. Regular 1 to 1s and appraisals allow discussion of an individual CPD plan to develop each vet according to their needs and interests. When necessary additional equipment will be purchased, and regular clinical meetings allow for updates in drugs, techniques to be shared. An example is that this year we are purchasing a new ultrasound and funding cardiac CPD.

**Nurses:** All nurses complete their required hours, but additional training is encouraged. A nurse has recently completed a feline nursing certificate with ISFM and will soon start the diploma. Another nurse has completed training and qualifications to support her promotion to Practice Manager. As with all the team additional time off is allowed to attend external courses. Nurse meetings allow discussion of learning and techniques. Success is celebrated as we are proud of

their achievements.

**Reception:** It is incredibly important not to forget the reception team and they also have paid for CPD and paid time off to attend. Training often has to be tailored to their home commitments. They have attended a variety of courses including but not exclusively first aid, dealing with difficult clients, telephone techniques, end of life training, parasite training, promotion of over the counter sales and insurance. Regular reception meetings allow sharing of information and development of work patterns.

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

We are immensely proud and celebrate achievement in practice meetings and on Facebook. We frame and display certificates in the practice for all to see. All colleagues regularly vote for the person who has gone above and beyond, "star of the month". We do not confine celebration to work based achievements. Recently a nurse achieved a gold in European Karate championships which was so exciting. We have been equally proud of charity fundraising including tough a 44-mile cycle for Vetlife.

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

5 years ago, a nurse joined us part time having lost her confidence and given up her previous full time role as head nurse. Her marriage also ended that year, but we supported her with child friendly hours and paid for her to develop and qualify in feline nursing through ISFM. She then wanted to develop further and take on additional hours and responsibility. We allowed time to collect her son and come back to work with her on late shifts and weekends. She is now our excellent head nurse.

## Communication at Work

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

We have daily tea breaks and fortnightly practice meetings. We have monthly clinical meetings and nurse meetings and reception meet most weeks. We all talk whilst working and there are lots of laughs and fun as well as serious discussion.

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

We have monthly 1 to 1s with all colleagues to discuss what's gone well, personal development, CPD, points for improvement, ideas for the practice etc. We all have work email and practice meetings are fortnightly. There is a colleague WhatsApp group which those who wish to can join.

We are friends on Facebook for social communication with current and past colleagues to keep in touch. The managers are all available and approachable.

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

We encourage ideas in all meetings and 1 to 1s and discuss while working. Everyone's input is valuable. An example is our euthanasia consultations. Vets asked for additional time and a method to create paw prints and hair clips. The manager suggested we purchase new chairs for the clients and sympathy cards. A receptionist suggested a memory tree, and another suggested we change how we greet the clients. A nurse suggested a candle to be lit during euthanasia. All have been implemented.

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

We love our appreciation station which is a dedicated notice board in the kitchen. We have ready cut out paper hearts and everyone is encouraged to write happy thoughts, positive comments about colleagues and thankyou's which are then pinned to the board for us all to share. Originally it was only going to be up in mental health week, but we all enjoyed it so much that we have purchased a new notice board to make it permanent.

## Promoting physical and psychological health at work

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

We have annual health and safety inspections and health and safety protocols along with all necessary risk assessments. More importantly we promote working day to day in a sensible and safe manner. We therefore make health and safety part of our ethos not just an annual paper pushing exercise.

All new colleagues have a thorough induction highlighting health and safety along with awareness of policy and the ethos of the practice, not to mention where to find the tea and snacks.

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

We have regular events promoting exercise and healthy eating. As part of mental health awareness week, we shared recipes, had a healthy eating handout and the practice team went out together for a walk at lunchtime. Earlier in the year we had a wellbeing week and a colleague demonstrated simple exercises and we had a lunch together. We make sure colleagues get 30 minutes uninterrupted lunch break to eat or walk as needed. Snacks are always available in the kitchen and toast in the mornings.

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

All colleagues have access to the retail trust for any concerns work or none work related. We have a notice about Vetlife displayed and we discuss mental health. All colleagues complete an annual questionnaire to assess their levels of stress and they complete an anonymous satisfaction survey annually. We had an evening training about stress management in the workplace and also all colleagues had DISC profiling. More recently colleagues have attended stress management and wellbeing courses.

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

We share our ethos, goals and how we hope to achieve them with every member of the team. The practice is busy but efficient, we are in a poor socioeconomic area and we have limited space. However, we work hard to give our team space to enjoy their work and constantly listen to ways we can improve. We share techniques to help them stay physically and mentally well and encourage resilience.

Dudley has a happiness movement encouraging the team to think a small happy thought each day and share.

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

We currently have a colleague who is on extended sick leave with secondary metastatic cancer who may never return to work. She is being paid income protection through the practice and will receive additional counselling. She is invited to all social events including a paid for Christmas party. We update her following every practice meeting and she has regular meetings to offer support. Any absence is followed by return to work interview to assess additional needs.

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

*We have regular charity events to lift our spirits and have fun such as Christmas fairs, dress as a superhero day, sponsored walks. Many of the charity events involve a physical challenge. Last week we decided to fund raise for children in need by coming to work dressed for the 80s. Even one of the pets came dressed as Madonna!*

*In addition, the practice manager and Partner will be attending a St Johns Mental Health First Aid Course in February to help them recognise and act upon early signs of ill health.*