

## Veterinary Nurses Council

Wednesday 13 November 2024 at 9.30am to be held remotely by Microsoft Teams

### Agenda

	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationale<sup>2</sup></b>
1. <b>Apologies for absence</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
2. <b>Declarations of interest</b>	Oral report Unclassified	n/a
3. <b>Obituaries</b>	Unclassified	n/a
4. <b>Minutes of meeting held on 18 September 2024</b>		
i. <b>Unclassified minutes</b>	Unclassified	n/a
ii. <b>Classified appendix</b>	<b>Confidential</b>	<b>1,2,3,4</b>
5. <b>Matters arising</b>	Oral report	n/a
6. <b>CEO update</b>	Oral report	n/a
<b>Matters for decision by VN Council and reports from Committees (unclassified items)</b>		
7. <b>VN Education Committee Minutes of meeting held on 15 October 2024</b>		
i. <b>Unclassified minutes</b>	Unclassified	n/a
ii. <b>Classified appendix</b>	<b>Confidential</b>	<b>1,2,3,4</b>
8. <b>Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Meeting of VetGDP and CPD Compliance Subcommittee held on 5 November 2024</b>	Oral report	n/a

## Matters for report

- |       |   |                             |     |
|-------|---|-----------------------------|-----|
| 9.    | <b>RCVS and VN Council governance</b>                     | Unclassified                | n/a |
| 10.   | <b>Reports from RCVS Committees</b>                       |                             |     |
| 10.01 | VN Preliminary Investigation Committee                    | Unclassified                | n/a |
| 10.02 | Standards Committee                                       | Oral report<br>Unclassified | n/a |
| 10.03 | Advancement of the Professions Committee                  | Oral report<br>Unclassified | n/a |
| 11.   | <b>Communications report</b>                              | Oral report<br>Unclassified | n/a |
| 12.   | <b>Any other business (unclassified)</b>                  | Oral report                 |     |
| 13.   | <b>Date of next meeting</b><br>Wednesday 26 February 2025 |                             |     |

## Confidential and private items (closed session)

- |       |  |  |                |
|-------|--|--|----------------|
| 14.   | <b>Risk Register</b>   |  |                |
| 14.01 | Risk Register summary  | <b>Confidential</b>                    | <b>1,2,3,4</b> |
| 14.02 | Any items arising from the current meeting to be added to the Risk Register                            |  |                |
| 15.   | <b>VN Education Committee confidential items</b><br>Confidential items from meeting of 15 October 2024 | <b>Confidential</b>                    | <b>2,3,4</b>   |
| 16.   | <b>MCQ Examination costs 2025</b>  | <b>Confidential</b><br>Paper to follow |                |
| 17.   | <b>Items for RCVS Committees</b>   | Oral report                            |                |
| 18.   | <b>Any other business (confidential items)</b>   | Oral report                            |                |

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## **<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
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## **<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

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<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	13 November 2024
Title	18 September 2024 VN Council Minutes
Summary	Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 18 September 2024
Decisions required	To approve the unclassified minutes and classified appendix
Attachments	Classified appendix ( <b>confidential</b> )
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary a.amato@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0713

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Classified appendix	<b>Confidential</b>	<b>2,3,4</b>

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## Veterinary Nurses Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 September 2024 at the Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN

### Members:

Mrs Belinda Andrews-Jones	Chair
Miss Jessica Beckett	
Miss Linda Belton	Officer Team observer (non-voting)
Mrs Anita Bickerdike	
Ms Jessica Franklin	
Ms Lisa Grainger	
^Mrs Susan Howarth	Vice-Chair
Mr Tim Hutchinson	
Dr Zara Kennedy	
Mrs Katherine Kissick	
^Mr Matthew Rendle	
Ms Stephanie Richardson	
*Mr Simon Williams	
Miss Holly Witchell	
Mrs Kirsty Young	

\*Denotes absent

^Denotes remote

### In attendance:

Mrs Annette Amato	Committee Secretary
Mr Luke Bishop	Media and Publications Manager (open session only)
Mrs Julie Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
Miss Shirley Gibbins	VN Qualifications Lead
Ms Abi Hanson	Media and Publications Officer (open session only)
Mrs Victoria Hedges	VN Examinations Quality Lead
Ms Lizzie Lockett	Chief Executive
Ms Corrie McCann	Operations Director (confidential session only)

### Guests:

^Ms Lacey Pitcher	<i>VN Times (open session only)</i>
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### Welcome to new members

1. The Chair welcomed new members Jessica Franklin, Lisa Grainger, Zara Kennedy and Kirsty Young.

### Apologies for absence

2. Apologies for absence had been received from Simon Williams.

### Declarations of interest

3. There were no new declarations of interest to report.

### Obituaries

4. No written obituaries had been received. The CEO reported that news had recently been received of the passing of Des Thompson FRCVS, former RCVS President, who along with his many other roles and honours had been Chair of the Veterinary Nursing Committee, precursor to Veterinary Nurses Council, for a number of years. Council stood to observe a minute's silence for all members of the professions who had passed away since the last meeting.

### Minutes of previous meetings

5. **Minutes of meeting held on 28 February 2024.** The revised minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 (unclassified section) were approved as a correct record.
6. **Minutes of meeting held on 22 May 2024.** The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

### Matters arising

7. There were no matters arising on the previous Minutes.

### CEO update

8. Council noted the CEO's paper, which provided a detailed synopsis of activity against the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The College had entered the last phase of the current strategic plan and was starting to develop a new plan, which should be in place for 2025 onwards, and a there would be a different way of reporting on the plan in the future. The CEO highlighted a few items from the report and recent activities of interest.
9. **Governance consultation.** The good governance consultation had been opened in June and had run over the summer. This had asked the professions and the public various questions around the governance structure of the College, including whether the RCVS should move to a system of all Council members being appointed, and the balance of professional and lay members on the Council. Another question being considered was how the possible inclusion of paraprofessionals would affect the composition of Council in the future.
10. The individual response rate had been quite low, with 734 responses from individuals, but there had been 28 from organisations, which represented the views of many more people. The responses and the report

had been collated by an external company that specialises in this field. The report would be presented to RCVS Council and VN Council at their November meetings.

11. **Surveys of the Professions.** The outcomes of the surveys of the professions were likely to be published in October, and it was likely that detailed presentation of the documents would take place at a future VN Council meeting, maybe in February 2025.
12. **AI guidance.** Following on from the AI roundtable in May, the report had now been published and the different workstreams were in the process of being established, looking at how to maximise the opportunities and mitigate the risks of the use of AI across the professions.
13. **Neurodivergent student support.** Following a stakeholder event held in June organised through a collaboration between the Veterinary Nursing, Advancement of the Professions and Education teams, steps were being taken to develop guidelines for good practice in supporting the wellbeing and academic success of neurodivergent students.
14. **Clinical careers pathway.** The Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway project was ongoing, looking principally at veterinary careers but with strong links to developments in veterinary nursing. There were three main workstreams: to consider a specialism in generalism; to look at alternative routes to specialism that might be more accessible than the traditional routes and attract a broader range of people from within the profession; to consider the various different roles within clinical practice and how they were communicated. There had been two focus groups so far, and further online meetings planned.
15. **Legislation.** Since the election of the new government in the summer, a number of meetings had already taken place with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the indication was that they were on board with the RCVS' requests for new legislation and keen to support this. At this point work was being done to ensure that all the requests for items in new legislation were completely clear.
16. **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).** Work was ongoing in responding to requests from the CMA for information required in their investigation into veterinary services in the domestic pet market. The CMA had issued a draft survey for pet owners and had asked for feedback. An RCVS CMA working Group had been established in order to support the work and to respond to the firm deadlines.
17. The workload across the RCVS was currently high. In addition to the CMA workload there were many major projects underway including a new website, new building, branding work and a new database, work on the VN Vision project and maintaining business as usual as a statutory regulator.

#### **Veterinary Nurse Education Committee (VNEC)**

18. Susan Howarth, VNEC Chair, presented the unclassified sections of the minutes of two meetings of the VNEC which had taken place since the previous meeting of Council.
19. **Meeting held on 20 June 2024**  
The meeting had been the last one for several members who had completed their terms of office; Julia Cox, Sophia Hoyland, Sarah Parkhouse and Leigh Willson, and they had been thanked for their contributions to the work of the committee.



20. Both the DoVN and the Qualifications Lead had been attending various conferences around Europe, attending and presenting at various successful events including the first inaugural Association of Veterinary Technicians (ATVE) Conference, the first standalone veterinary nursing conference in Europe.
21. The committee had agreed the following:
  - Full accreditation for five years for the FdSc Veterinary Nursing and BSc(Hons) Veterinary Nursing awarded by Coventry University.
  - Full accreditation for five years for the BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing and BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing with Foundation Year awarded by Middlesex University.
22. The committee had considered and agreed a number of programme changes, and had reviewed many quality monitoring activities undertaken by the VN qualifications team.
23. It had been reported at the meeting that the first pre-registration knowledge examination had been held, using remote live invigilation delivered by an external contractor. The system had worked well and had also acted as a pilot for the delivery of the theory section of the statutory membership examination for overseas educated veterinary surgeons, with a much larger cohort.
24. The committee had heard about the recent launch of the RCVS Academy's External Examiner course which had had considerable input from one of its members, Sarah Reynolds-Golding.
25. Council ratified these minutes.
26. **Meeting held on 14 August 2024**

The committee had welcomed several new members to their first meeting including Lisa Grainger, as the newly appointed lay representative on the committee from VN Council.
27. The accompanying guidance on the revised Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training had now been completed and the comms department was finalising the online version, for publication on the website. The pdf version had been made available to all institutions due to undergo accreditations.
28. The committee had been reminded that student nurses who had completed their qualification but had been unable to meet the requirement for 1,800 clinical placement hours due to the restrictions in place during the Covid pandemic, were able to apply for special consideration of their application to enter the Register of veterinary nurses on completion of their training. No applications had been received for some time, but the special consideration opportunity would remain in place until it was known that no further students would have been affected. This had initiated a discussion on the overall number of practical hours that students are expected to complete in order to meet the requirements of the Veterinary Nursing Registration Rules, and the committee had suggested that it would be appropriate for this requirement to be reconsidered when the registration rules were next reviewed by VN Council.

29. The committee had been pleased to learn that the Apprenticeship Levy had been increased from £15,000 to £17,000 in time for commencement of the September courses.
30. Going forward, the Chair of VNEC, who also sits on the RCVS Education Committee would be reporting at each meeting on any matters of interest from a veterinary nursing perspective.
31. The committee had reviewed the Terms of Reference for the VN Pre-registration Examination Board and had approved the proposed revised Terms of Reference, including an increase in the membership of the board from six to eight members.
32. The committee had been presented with a report which provided an overview of the pre-accreditation support package for Accredited Education Institutions (AEIs). The support package had been introduced in 2021, to assist AEIs with understanding the Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training, and in turn, to improve compliance with the Standards during the accreditation process. Since the introduction of the pre-accreditation support package, no accreditation events had been cancelled or postponed and there had been a clear trend of improving compliance. The support package had been well received and had also been positively commented on by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) at the RCVS accreditation event in 2023.
33. As always, the committee had been informed and updated on the many quality monitoring activities undertaken by the VN qualifications team.
34. Council ratified the minutes.

### Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

35. **Minutes of CPD Policy and Compliance subcommittee held on 25 June 2024.**

Stephanie Richardson presented the Minutes of the meeting of the CPD Policy and Compliance subcommittee held on 25 June 2024. The subcommittee had been responsible for looking both at compliance with the requirements and requests for special consideration, as well as the encouragement of compliance including the marketing and engagement around CPD.
36. Discussion in the meeting had been mainly around the engagement and marketing of CPD, the data suggesting that most members knew to record this through the 1CPDapp. The requirements were understood, although there were still some issues with understanding of what constitutes CPD. A common misunderstanding was that formal courses were the most important, whereas much research indicated that informal learning was more of a contributor to an individual's professional competence. There had been discussion around further messaging on this topic. It was commented that informal learning was important for nurses as it did not then necessarily rely on someone else's permission or budget.
37. The subcommittee had discussed the issuing of reminders including the frequency, timing, messaging and the means of delivery, including the possibility of postal letters for those who were digitally disengaged. There had also been discussion on how to deal with those who were continually not engaged, including the type of language to be used in communications.

38. It was noted that this had been the final meeting of the subcommittee in its current format. The remit of the two new separate subcommittees would be covered in the next item.
39. In response to a query, it was confirmed that on review of the demographic breakdown it appeared that non-compliance was spread across all age groups and demographics with no significant groups identified.
40. **Terms of Reference for CPD and VetGDP Engagement Group and CPD and VetGDP Compliance Subcommittee.**  
Council noted a paper setting out the rationale for the changes to the committee structure for the committees managing the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Veterinary Graduate Development Programme (VetGDP). The two separate subcommittees had each been discussing many of the same issues, such as compliance and engagement, and after discussions with the professional conduct department it had been suggested that there should be one committee responsible for compliance and a separate committee responsible for policy and engagement.
41. The details of the proposed new subcommittees were provided together with the Terms of Reference (ToR) and membership. Both subcommittees would report to RCVS Education Committee and VN Council.
42. The Chair queried the balance of the membership of the CPD and VetGDP Compliance Subcommittee, which has two members from VN Council and five members from RCVS Council. It was confirmed that the reason for this was to reflect the fact that the subcommittee would also cover VetGDP for which there was no veterinary nursing equivalent, and hence the higher percentage of veterinary members.
43. On a vote being taken, Council agreed unanimously to accept the proposed ToR for both the CPD and VetGDP Engagement Group and the CPD and VetGDP Compliance Subcommittee. It was confirmed that there would be an opportunity to review the ToR and that committees generally review their ToR on an annual basis.

### Reports from RCVS Committees

#### Registered Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation Committee (RVN PIC)

44. Council noted the report of the RVN PIC Committee that had been circulated with the agenda.

#### Standards Committee

45. There was no report from the recent meeting of the Standards Committee.

#### Advancement of the Professions Committee (APC)

46. The Chair reported that the meeting of the APC held in May had reviewed the strategic plan. The next meeting was due to be held in October.

#### RVN Disciplinary Committee

47. The Chair reported that the RVN Disciplinary Committee report summarising recent hearings had been loaded into the VN Council workroom library and these reports were no longer included in the papers in the Boardpack. Full hearing details were also always available on the RCVS website.

### VN Futures report

48. The Director of Veterinary Nursing (DoVN) provided some background for the new members of Council on VN Futures, a collaborative project between the RCVS and the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) which launched in 2015, engaging with the profession to look at the barriers that there were at that time, and the opportunities that might be available to progress the profession. A report had been published in 2016, with six ambitions and 31 actions in total. Much work had been carried out to address the actions, some of which had been achieved. In the meantime there had been a pandemic, a workforce crisis and cost of living issues, and the profession looked very different today than it had in 2016.
49. VN Futures had introduced and supported a series of VN Vision Events which had begun with a workshop at the VN Council meeting in February, with very good feedback. Since then, there had been many events both in-person throughout the UK and online. Forthcoming events would cover sessions for educators and one specifically for equine nurses and students, and there would be in-person events at the BVNA Congress in October. A number of very similar themes were coming through from every session, including the need for nurses to carry out more specific skills than those currently covered in the Legislative Reform Order, a nurse practitioner role, a nurse prescriber role, community nursing and team-based healthcare.
50. The meetings in the main had been very positive and well attended. At present these had been for veterinary nurses and students, but the DoVN was mindful of the need for input from veterinary surgeons, and also suggested that it might be a good idea to conduct a session with the Public Advisory Group, to obtain views and perceptions from a public perspective. The aim was that by the end of the year, the many views and themes that had arisen could be categorised and inform the development of the projects to take forward, with a written report and series of actions or projects.
51. As mentioned previously, there would be VN Vision sessions running in the hub space at the forthcoming BVNA Congress, and there would be two VN Futures sponsored sessions around impact change and having difficult conversations. The Chair added that she had welcomed the opportunity to engage with so many veterinary nurses during the VN Vision meetings and to have such a breadth of feedback.
52. The DoVN had also visited number of practices to talk to their nurses and staff about the VN Vision project and had also become more familiar with how equine nurses are utilised.
53. Comments made in the subsequent discussion included:
- Commending the VN Vision team on behalf of VN Council for going out and engaging the profession in the development of their future, and welcoming the positive response.

- Thanks to the team for pushing this forward. Many positive comments had been received from veterinary nurses on the nurse prescriber role and in particular the nurse practitioner role. This would be very useful and would help on many levels with the workforce crisis.
- In response to a question on whether there had been any discrepancies in views from veterinary nurses and vets, it was confirmed that so far there had not been many veterinary surgeons providing views, as the events had been mainly for nurses and students. There had been some vets in the educators group and also in the initial VN Council pilot session, and Matthew Rendle had been with the DoVN to talk to a group of veterinary surgeons about the nurse prescriber role. The responses had been very positive and encouraging.
- A key area would be to ensure that nurses are empowered and understood in their current role, as well as developing the nurse prescriber and nurse practitioner role. Workstream 2 of the Veterinary Clinical Career Pathways project was considering distinction of roles for the veterinary team including advanced and general practitioner status.
- The CEO said that the survey of the professions had included some questions on how nurses were valued by the public and the profession, and the feedback would be published.
- One member echoed the commendation for giving veterinary nurses the opportunity to put their views and shape the future of the profession.

### Communications report

54. The Media and Publications Manager provided an overview of recent VN-related activities in the Comms Department.
55. Following on from the report by the DoVN on the VN Vision events, there was a request from the events team that members should share information about the forthcoming events and put these out to their wider professional networks, to encourage as much participation as possible, in particular for the in-person events.
56. The revised Standards framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training had been launched on the website the previous week and was available online with the guidance. There was also a new application on the publications page, enabling users to see the Standards either in web format or pdf format. A press notification had recently been issued.
57. Work on the next edition of the *VN Education* e-newsletter was nearly complete, and this was due to be published in early October. In terms of other forthcoming publications, work was being completed on the next edition of RCVS Facts (2023), and this would be published within the next few months.
58. The RCVS would attend the New Scientist Live event for the first time, in mid-October. The primary purpose was to showcase careers materials for both vets and veterinary nurses and would include the materials that had been developed VN Futures. It was likely that there would be many schoolchildren attending this event.

59. As mentioned by the DoVN, the RCVS would have a stand at the forthcoming BVNA Congress and there would be a game on the stand based on questions around Schedule 3.
60. The next Veterinary Nurses Day would take place in Bristol on 10 December 2024, with the keynote speaker Richard Casey from the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA). For the first time, invitations would be sent to veterinary nurses who were returning to the profession after completing a period of supervised practice following a break, in addition to newly qualified veterinary nurses and those who had completed the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing.
61. The comms team had recently welcomed a new member as an outreach and engagement manager. Part of their role would be managing communications with VN students as well as engagement with school aged children on careers possibilities.

#### **Any other business (unclassified)**

62. There was no other business.

#### **Date of next meeting**

63. The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 13 November 2024. This would be a remote meeting, starting at 9.30am

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	13 November 2024
Title	Minutes of meeting of VN Education Committee held on 15 October 2024
Summary	Minutes of the meeting of Veterinary Nurse Education Committee held on 15 October 2024
Decisions required	To approve
Attachments	Classified appendix
Author	Annette Amato Committee Secretary a.amato@rcvs.org.uk / 020 7202 0713

<b>Classifications</b>		
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Appendix	<b>Confidential</b>	<b>2,3,4</b>

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## Veterinary Nurse Education Committee

### Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 held remotely via Teams

<b>Members:</b>	* Mrs Sarah Batt-Williams	HE veterinary nursing provider
	Mrs Donna Cotton	Employer representative
	Ms Lisa Grainger	VN Council lay member
	Mrs Sarah Holman	FE veterinary nursing provider
	Mrs Susan Howarth	VN Council veterinary nurse (Chair)
	* Ms Helen King	FE Independent regulatory expert
	Miss Georgina Larkin	Student representative – FE sector
	* Miss Betsy Malamah-Thomas	Employer representative
	Mrs Sarah Reynolds-Golding	HE independent regulatory expert
	Miss Marie Rippingale	FE veterinary nursing provider
	Miss Gemma Thirkettle	Student representative – HE sector
	* Mrs Perdi Welsh	Post-registration veterinary nurse provider

\*absent

<b>In attendance:</b>	Mrs Annette Amato	Committee Secretary
	Mrs Justine Armour	Examinations Assessor
	Mrs Julie Dugmore	Director of Veterinary Nursing
	Miss Shirley Gibbins	Qualifications Lead (QL)
	Miss Abigayle Gomez	Senior Qualifications Officer
	Mrs Victoria Hedges	VN Examinations Quality Lead (VNEQL)
	Ms Tori Thornton	Qualifications Assessor

### Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Batt-Williams, Helen King, Betsy Malamah-Thomas and Perdi Welsh. Comments sent in by email would be brought into the meeting at the relevant point in the agenda. The Chair welcomed Gemma Thirkettle, student representative from the Higher Education (HE) sector, to her first meeting.

### Declarations of interest

2. The following declarations of interest were made, relevant to items on the agenda:

Sarah Holman – Central Qualifications OSCE examiner; involved in delivery of Central Qualifications veterinary nursing qualification.

Marie Rippingale – Central Qualifications OSCE examiner; involved in delivery of Central Qualifications veterinary nursing qualification.

### Minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee (VNEC) 20 June 2024

3. The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2024 as a correct record.

### Matters arising

4. There were no matters arising from the previous minutes other than those which were covered throughout the agenda.

### Operational update

5. The Director of Veterinary Nursing (DoVN) provided an update on recent activities and issues of note.
6. **Veterinary Nursing team.** Recruitment for the role of Qualifications Assessor, mentioned at the previous meeting, had been successful. The new appointee, whose training had been via the equine pathway, would start in post at the beginning of December and would bring equine expertise to the team.
7. **Publications.** The recent issue of the *VN Education* e-newsletter had been published in early October and it was confirmed that the link had been sent to all members of the committee. The next issue was due to be published in April 2025. *VN Education* is a bi-annual publication which is sent to all educational establishments and training practices, and provides updates on the activities of the RCVS as a regulator to help progress the profession, veterinary nurse education and nurses in general.
8. **VN Futures.** As reported at previous meetings of the committee, the Veterinary Nursing Vision events, supported by VN Futures, were continuing and since the last meeting of the committee several further online meetings had taken place as well as two in-person events, in South Wales and London. There had also been two in-person events at the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) congress. Forthcoming events would include one specifically for equine nurses and students. It was reiterated that the aim of the VN Vision workshops was to gain the views of, and input from, veterinary nurses and students with a broad range of perspectives and experiences on where they see team-based veterinary healthcare in 2035, and what the role of the veterinary nurse might look like in the future taking into account issues such as AI, the workforce crisis and the potential for legislative reform.
9. The DoVN and the VN Futures Project Lead had started to carry out a thematic review of the data, with 28 different themes having emerged so far. Points arising from the forthcoming meetings would be added in. At the recent VN Futures Board meeting with the BVNA, it had been agreed that the cut-off date for the VN Vision events would be 31

January 2025, following which the new projects for VN Futures would be developed. The RCVS events team had been asked to ensure that slots were made available at congresses for 2025 and in the future, to ensure that the conversation can continue, and actions can be disseminated, as well as ensuring that the vision evolves alongside the profession.

10. The DoVN added that all the VN Vision meetings had been very positive. The nurses had been very engaged and had appreciated having their views heard, and the opportunity to be part of the conversation.
  11. **Standards.** The revised Standards Framework for Veterinary Nurse Education and Training and accompanying guidance had now been published on the website. The pdf version of the Standards had been issued in advance of the website publication, to all those institutions due to undergo accreditation in the Autumn.
  12. **Applications for registration.** There had been no applications requiring consideration of reduced clinical hours from students who had completed their training, since the previous meeting of the committee.
  13. **Apprenticeship.** The Employer Trailblazer group would shortly be having its first meeting to review the Standards and the End Point Assessment. The RCVS was very much involved in the review and would be required to approve any updates or changes.
  14. **Veterinary Nurses Day.** The next Veterinary Nurses Day would take place on 10 December 2024, in Bristol. To date, 95 newly qualified nurses plus their guests had applied to attend, although so far only one nurse who had achieved the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (CertAVN), which was disappointing.
  15. **Practice Standards Scheme (PSS).** The PSS review was continuing, with various working groups looking at the different standards. The intention was to have a greater focus on areas of higher risk to prevent duplication, provide clear outputs and guidance and be a little less prescriptive.
  16. **BVNA Congress.** The recent BVNA congress had gone well. The RCVS stand had included a game covering Schedule 3 activities which had provided a focus for discussion and good interaction with the delegates. As mentioned previously, there had been some VN Vision sessions in the hub, and a VN Futures Board meeting. There had also been an opportunity on the stand for delegates to provide views to add into the VN Vision themes. In the main programme there had been two sessions around conflict management, and having difficult discussions.
  17. **Pre-accreditation support package.** There had been no pre-accreditation support meetings since the previous meeting of the committee. Several meetings were planned for the next few months, which would be chargeable to the institutions concerned.
  18. The committee complimented the DoVN and VN Futures Lead on the excellent work on the VN Vision project.
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## Report from RCVS Education Committee

19. The Chair, who sits as a member of the RCVS Education Committee, reported on matters of common interest and issues relevant to veterinary nurses and the work of the VNEC.

## Matters for decision

### Licence to practise qualifications

#### Programme change

20. **University of Bristol.** The committee discussed and approved a programme change to the accredited BSc (Hons) Veterinary Nursing and Companion Animal Behaviour programme offered by the University of Bristol.

#### Accreditation Status

21. **University of Portsmouth.** The accreditation status for the University of Portsmouth FdSc Veterinary Nursing Science programme was moved to probationary accreditation status.

## Matters for note

### Licence to practise qualifications

#### Programme changes

22. The committee noted oral reports on changes to the following accredited programmes:
- University of Plymouth
  - University of South Wales (USW)
  - Coventry University

#### Action plan monitoring accreditation/re-accreditation

23. Oral updates were provided on the action plan monitoring and progress for the following:
- Aberystwyth University
  - Coventry University

#### Quality Monitoring activities

24. The committee was provided with papers detailing the quality monitoring activities and the actions which had been identified, for the following Accredited Education Institutions (AEIs) as well as the risk ratings:
- Lantra Awards
  - VetSkill Limited

#### Action plan quality monitoring

25. Oral updates were provided on the monitoring of action plans and future planned actions for the following AElS:
- Anglia Ruskin University
  - Harper Adams University
  - Central Qualifications
  - Lantra Awards
  - VetSkill Limited

Evidence and action plans had been submitted promptly.

### Post Registration qualifications

26. **University of Glasgow.** A brief oral update was provided on the action plan quality monitoring for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Nursing (CertAVN) provision at the University of Glasgow.

### VN Pre-Registration Examination Board

27. The VNEQL presented the report of the Pre-registration Examination Board which had met on 15 August 2024 to consider the results of the pre-registration theory multiple choice examinations which took place in July. This was the second time the examination had been delivered and the first time with paper 3 as an open book examination. This had worked well.

### Items for publication

28. There were no items identified from the meeting for publication.

### Any other business

29. The DoVN reported that the Standards Framework for the CertAVN was due for review, and a small working group was being put together to carry out this work.
- 30.. The QL thanked Tori Thornton for keeping an excellent oversight of all the quality monitoring action plans for the qualifications team, in the absence of Jasmine Curtis and while awaiting the new qualifications assessor to start in December.

### Meeting dates 2024

31. The remaining meeting date for 2024 was confirmed as Thursday 12 December, starting at 9.30am.

### Meeting dates 2025

32.
  - Wednesday 12 February
  - Wednesday 23 April

- Thursday 26 June (in person, full day meeting)
- Tuesday 19 August
- Tuesday 21 October
- Wednesday 17 December

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	13 November 2024
Title	RCVS Council & Veterinary Nurses Council governance reform consultation - report
Summary	This paper summarises the results of the consultation of RCVS governance reform.
Decisions required	None
Attachments	Annex A – Consultation report by Adelphian Ltd.
Author	Ben Myring Policy & Public Affairs Manager <a href="mailto:b.myring@rcvs.org.uk">b.myring@rcvs.org.uk</a>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	n/a
Annex A	Unclassified	n/a

## RCVS and Veterinary Nurses Council governance reform – consultation

### Introduction

- 1) In January 2024, RCVS Council agreed on a number of principles of governance reform, and two specific models of RCVS Council governance, and agreed that these should go out to consultation before returning to Council for a final decision. RCVS Council governance reform will require changes to or a replacement of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Any detailed recommendations on governance reform will form part of the College's package of legislative reform recommendations for government. Ultimately, the details of future governance reform will be in the hands of government and parliament, and may differ from the College's preferred option.
- 2) In February 2024, Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC) also agreed on a model of governance reform, and agreed that it should go out to consultation alongside the RCVS Council recommendations. VNC governance composition is a matter for RCVS Council, rather than requiring new legislation, and therefore any final recommendations could be implemented without the need for a new Act.
- 3) The consultation was held between 10 June and 22 July 2024, supported by an extensive communications campaign. The results were analysed by the independent researcher agency Adelpian Ltd on behalf of the College. The results of the consultation can be found in Annex A.
- 4) This paper briefly summarises the consultation report, and then sets out a number of decisions for Council.

### Consultation results

- 5) The RCVS received 734 responses to the consultation. This included 28 submissions from organisations such as representative bodies and employers.

Respondent type	Number	Percentage
Veterinary surgeon	484	66
Veterinary nurse	57	8
Member of the public	84	11
Other professional or paraprofessional	61	8
Organisation	28	4
Other	20	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>100</b>



- 6) An absolute or relative majority (i.e. more in favour than against) of respondents broadly supported the overall rationale for reform, and all of the individual recommendations for reform. This was also true for each category of respondents (i.e. veterinary surgeons, nurses, members of the public, organisations, etc), with one exception.
- 7) On the proposal to switch to a fully-appointed system, there was high support for the proposal among veterinary nurses, members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals. Views among veterinary surgeons were more evenly distributed, with slightly more opposing than supporting the proposal. Among organisations, a majority was broadly in agreement that the RCVS Council should be fully appointed.
- 8) RCVS Council are due to discuss the consultation results and related decisions at their meeting on 7 November 2024.

Adelphian  
Regulatory  
Consulting

## **Report on the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) Consultation on Governance Reform**

Independent analysis carried out by Adelphian Regulatory Consulting  
on behalf of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons

17 October 2024

## Introduction

### Background

1. Through June and July 2024, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) carried out a public consultation on proposals to reform its governance structure. Proposals were set out in “Ensuring Good Governance: a consultation on RCVS governance reform” and published on the RCVS website.<sup>1</sup> This report contains the findings from analysis of the 734 responses received to that consultation.
2. The consultation invited comments on the rationale for governance reform and specific proposals for the reform of RCVS Council and Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC). In short, the specific proposals were: introducing an appointment system for selection of all members of RCVS Council and the VNC; increasing the representation of lay members on both Councils; removing Veterinary School Council appointees on RCVS Council; creating the flexibility to increase the representation of allied professionals on RCVS Council; separating the role of RCVS Chair from the role of RCVS President; and reducing the size of the VNC.
3. The consultation was approved by RCVS Council following its March 2024 meeting. It followed on from the package of recommendations for reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (VSA) 1966 agreed by RCVS Council in 2021, following a public consultation during 2020/2021, as set out in the Legislative Reform Consultation Report.<sup>2</sup>

### Consultation process

4. The present governance reform consultation was open for six weeks, from 10 June to 22 July 2024.
5. The proposals were launched at the BVA Live conference on 7 June, three days prior to the consultation formally opening, and were publicised to seek a wide range of responses. Communications were targeted towards key audiences including individual veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses; veterinary surgeon and veterinary nurse associations; students; veterinary and veterinary nursing schools; and other stakeholder organisations, including those representing allied professionals. The consultation was made available to the general public via social media and the RCVS website. Briefings were given to the specialist press and a webinar was hosted on 11 June 2024 to further explain the proposals.
6. Responses were collected using an online platform (Survey Monkey). A small number of responses were also accepted by email. Adelphian Regulatory Consulting was appointed to carry out an independent, qualitative assessment of responses to the consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/ensuring-good-governance-a-consultation-on-rcvs-governance/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/legislative-review-consultation-report-2021/>

7. Qualitative analysis was conducted on all responses to the consultation. Each response was carefully reviewed, and key themes have been identified and summarised in the following section of this report. Responses were reviewed in relation to levels of support and arguments supporting and opposing the proposals. Differences between respondent groups were noted where relevant, for example, in relation to levels of support and differences in themes within responses. Queries, requests for further information and suggestions of alternatives or modifications were also noted. These are outlined in the report, with more detailed queries, evidence and suggestions summarised in the annex.

## Summary of responses

8. A total of 734 valid responses were received. Responses were rejected as invalid if they did not include comments against any of the nine questions. Partial responses were accepted as valid.
9. The breakdown of responses by respondent type is shown below. Two thirds of the responses were from veterinary surgeons, with the next largest group being members of the public, followed by other professionals/paraprofessionals, veterinary nurses, organisations and other respondents. The “other” category included retired veterinary professionals, student vets and a number of other animal-related professionals.

*Table 1: Breakdown of responses by respondent type*

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Veterinary Surgeon	484	66
Veterinary Nurse	57	8
Member of the public	84	11
Other professional or paraprofessional	61	8
Organisation	28	4
Other	20	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>100</b>

10. There were 28 responses received on behalf of organisations. Responding organisations are listed below, where organisation names were provided:
- A.P. Vet
  - Animal Health Professions’ Register (AHPR)
  - Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT)
  - Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors (APBC)
  - Blue Cross
  - Bridging The Gap Rescue
  - British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA)
  - British Veterinary Association (BVA)
  - British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)

- Cattle Hoofcare Standards Board
- Coleg Gwent
- Equine Sports Massage Association (ESMA)
- Greyhound Rescue and Co-ordinated Emergencies
- Institute of Osteopathy (Animal Osteopathy Special Interest Group)
- IVC Evidensia
- Lincolnshire Veterinary Referrals
- McTimoney Animal Association/McTimoney College of Chiropractic
- North of Ireland Veterinary Association (NIVA)
- One Voice for Animals UK
- PDSA
- Pets at Home
- Progressive Veterinary Association (PVA)
- Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP)
- Scottish Borders Animal Rescue
- Synergy Farm Health
- The Pet Practice Ltd
- Tuk's Law

11. The table below shows the number of responses for each question. There were significantly more responses to the first six questions relating to the rationale for governance reform and RCVS Council. Response rates were lower for questions relating to VNC.

*Table 2: Responses by question (excluding NIL responses)*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
1. Rationale for governance reform	533
2. Fully appointed RCVS Council	554
3. Towards lay parity for RCVS	603
4. Removal of VSC appointees	463
5. Flexibility to include Allied Professionals	563
6. Separating the Chair from the Presidency	468
7. Fully appointed VNC	342
8. Reducing the size of VNC	287
9. Lay parity for VNC	392

## Results of Analysis

### Question 1: Rationale for governance reform

12. The rationale for governance reform set out by RCVS was to provide greater public assurance and draw closer to the regulatory norm, as would likely be expected by government as part of any reform of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. Respondents were invited to provide any comments on the rationale.
13. The majority of respondents supported the rationale for reform set out in the consultation. Many cited the need for the RCVS governance structures to be modernised, to align with wider regulatory norms or to update the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. A number also mentioned that reforms would be in the public interest or would support greater public trust and confidence in the profession. The majority of veterinary nurses, members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals agreed with the rationale. More veterinary surgeons agreed than disagreed, but there was not a clear majority within this group.
14. Reasons for not supporting the proposals included that moving away from elections would be undemocratic and would not serve the interests of the veterinary profession; that current arrangements did not need to change; and that the veterinary profession was an exception or should not be governed in a similar way to human healthcare professions.
15. A number of alternative proposals were put forward, including separating the Royal College and regulatory functions of the RCVS or creating separate governance structures within the RCVS for each of the different professions it regulated.

### Themes

16. Comments made in support of the rationale for reform contained the following main themes.
  - a. **Need to modernise and reform** Many comments were made of a general nature recognising the need for change and modernisation in the RCVS's approach to governance and the need to reform the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, which some felt no longer reflected the realities of the profession.

**IVC Evidensia:** "We welcome the proposals which represent an important step in modernising the RCVS's governance structure, and support the proposed reforms."

- b. **Public confidence** A number of respondents felt reforms would increase or maintain public confidence in the veterinary profession. A small number also commented on the need for better outward communication to help the public understand the role of RCVS.

**Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors:** “Regrettably the RCVS has an external perception of being 'for its own'... Having a reformed council (and better outreach for public information) will improve this.”

- c. **Aligning with the regulatory norm** A number referenced the need to come in line with widely accepted regulatory standards or with other regulatory bodies.

**Blue Cross:** “It is important for the profession to ensure we move closer to the regulatory norm to avoid our governing structure adding to the current lack of trust in the profession.”

- d. **Regulation of Allied Professions** Some respondents welcomed the suggestion of extending regulation to Allied Professionals.

**McTimoney College of Chiropractic:** “It is important that this reform takes place... to take into account the way the landscape has altered the care of animals including the growth and development of animal paraprofessionals.”

- e. **Public interest** Some respondents also referenced the need for RCVS to operate, and be seen to operate, in the interests of the public.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “We can no longer be a club... regulation must be objective, outward facing, looking after the genuine interests of the public and their animals’ welfare.”

**Member of the public:** “The views of the general public, who use the veterinary profession and pay for the services provided, are important. An election process with voting rights confined to members of the profession does not enable a holistic representation when regulating.”

17. Among the concerns and points made in opposition to the rationale, the following themes emerged.

- a. **Interests of the profession** A common theme was concern that the profession should have a say through elections, and that the reforms would result in worse outcomes for the profession as a whole. Some referred to other Royal College Councils with democratic electoral representation.

**Lincolnshire Veterinary Referrals:** “... a proposal which disenfranchises an entire profession.”

- b. **Veterinary profession as an exception** A similarly common theme among those opposing the proposals was that the veterinary profession was different to other professions and therefore following the “norm” may not be appropriate. Within this, a number referred to the dual status of RCVS as both a Royal College and a regulator. Some felt the proposals did not give sufficient attention to the Royal College function.

**Progressive Veterinary Association (PVA):** “As the RCVS is a Royal College that regulates, it will probably require a somewhat unique status, so that the regulatory norm for RCVS Council is not immediately obvious.”

**North of Ireland Veterinary Association (NIVA):** “NIVA accepts that there is a need to update the governance of the RCVS by moving closer to the current regulatory norm ... It is concerned however

that there is no early prospect of formal, tangible proposals for the parallel development of innovation and updating around the College's Royal Charter activities which in light of the current proposals, NIVA considers to be absolutely imperative."

- c. **Reform not required** A number argued that the reforms were not necessary, in some cases because they felt the main challenges facing the profession would not be addressed by governance changes.
  - d. **Human healthcare model not appropriate** Some argued that RCVS should not follow human healthcare, either because of perceived shortcomings and difficulties in the regulation of some human healthcare professions; or because of major differences in human healthcare including public funding and the need for the public to have a voice in their own treatment.
  - e. **Corporate influence** Some were concerned that corporate interests were having a negative impact upon the profession and that the proposals would not address this or could make it worse.
18. A small number requested **further information**, including more detailed proposals; benchmarking data on the current level of public confidence; or consideration of international comparisons.
19. A range of **alternative proposals** were put forward, in particular, a number suggested some form of **separation of RCVS functions**. A common suggestion within this was to consider **splitting the RCVS into two separate bodies**: a Royal College focused on advancement of the profession, and a separate regulator.

**Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT)**: "Separate the RCVS's powers of professional association/governing body and regulator to mirror the successful model of governance which is standard practice and has existed for many years in the human healthcare sector."

20. The **British Veterinary Association (BVA)** argued for a more holistic approach to governance reform. It broadly agreed with the proposals in so far as they related to the regulatory function of RCVS, but argued for different arrangements for the Royal College functions.

**BVA**: "A separate governing Council for the Royal College function should be established, with elected members. The Royal College Council should focus on the veterinary surgeons and veterinary nursing professions, while other allied professions should establish their own equivalent(s) of Royal College(s) if needed."

21. The **Register of Animal Musculoskeletal Practitioners (RAMP)** and the **Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Animal Therapy (ACPAT)** proposed individual regulatory bodies for each profession, overseen by a "super regulator", described below. A similar model was proposed by the **Animal Health Professions' Register (AHPR)**.

**RAMP**: "Each of the individual professions (vets, vet nurses, MSK [musculoskeletal] etc) should have a regulator for their own specific profession... these individual regulatory bodies would be overseen



and audited by a super regulator (SR) similar to the Professional Standards Authority which oversees many professions in human healthcare. This overarching SR could still be the RCVS Council representing the whole Veterinary Healthcare industry but whose role would be specifically the oversight of the regulatory processes of each individual profession within the sector.”

22. The **British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA)** wished to see equality between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses in governance matters, rather than a “vet-led” model. If this was not the outcome, BVNA proposed increased responsibility be delegated to VNC.

**BVNA:** “We would prefer to see a more holistic, team-based approach to RCVS governance... providing equal influence and voting rights to veterinary nurses within RCVS Council... However, if it is deemed necessary that RCVS Council retains a professional majority of veterinary surgeons as the ‘lead profession’... we would welcome responsibility for governance, policy, voting rights and decision-making relevant to the veterinary nursing profession, all to be fully delegated to VN Council. This would move RCVS governance towards a model more aligned with human healthcare (i.e. separate regulatory bodies for doctors and nurses and midwives).”

23. In addition, **BVA**, **BVNA** and **AHPR** argued to reduce the size of RCVS Council. For **BVA** this was linked to a proposal to create a separate ‘Royal College Council’, while **BVNA** and **AHPR** argued that RCVS Council and VNC should be of equal size. Other suggestions made by small numbers included an independent complaints system, an ombudsman, an elected subcommittee to oversee Royal College functions or independent scrutiny of RCVS by a structure similar to the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), which oversees the regulation of human healthcare professionals.

**BVNA:** “We are still unclear for the justification of maintaining a Council which is much larger than the regulatory norm... BVNA feels that greater agility is afforded by a smaller Council of 10-12 members.”

## Question 2: A fully appointed RCVS Council

24. Views were sought by RCVS on the proposal to move away from elections to a fully appointed RCVS Council, in line with the regulatory norm.
25. More respondents supported than opposed this proposal, although there was a range of opinions with a significant number of mixed and opposing views. Key reasons for support included that Council would be more representative of different groups and that appointments would be of higher quality, providing the specific skills needed for governance. Respondents also referred to an appointment system being fairer and avoiding the shortcomings of the current election system, as well as the need to modernise governance arrangements.
26. There were significant differences in views between groups. There was high support for the proposal among veterinary nurses, members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals. Views among veterinary surgeons were more evenly distributed, with slightly more opposing than supporting the proposal. Among organisations, a majority were broadly in agreement that the RCVS Council should be fully appointed.
27. Reasons for not supporting this proposal included a perception that an appointments system was more open to bias and corruption or concerns that it removed democracy. Concerns were also raised about appointees and the independence and transparency of the appointing panel. A number of respondents asked for more information or reassurance about the appointments system.

### Themes

28. Among responses that supported the proposal for an appointed Council, the following main themes were evident.
- a. **More representative Council** This was a common theme, with many referring to greater “balance” on the Council and improved representation. Some expressed support for representation of all four nations and different sectors. Small numbers made requests for representation of specific groups, such as those from other geographic areas, practice types, women or recent graduates.

**Pets at Home:** “Support an appointment system which implements standards such as coverage from all four nations of the UK and ensuring appropriate coverage of expertise from across the sector.”

- b. **Higher quality appointments** Another commonly expressed theme was the view that an appointment system would facilitate recruitment for the specific skills and expertise that the Council required.

**BVA:** “Appointment processes can ensure that Council Members possess the necessary skills and competencies to effectively govern... the RCVS could attract a more diverse range of experts, which should include members of the veterinary professions, with specific competencies required for regulatory governance.”

- c. **Election system weaknesses** A number of respondents referred to the shortcomings of the existing election system. Some mentioned low turnout for elections or referred to elections as a “popularity contest” or “badge of honour,” which would not necessarily result in the best candidates for the purposes of the Council.

**PDSA:** “The current electoral system is entirely dependent upon individuals putting themselves forward... [it] does not always align with a desire to strategically progress the work of RCVS council and may not result in an ideal mix of candidates for progression of council business.”

- d. **Fairness** Some felt that an independent appointment system would be fairer and more objective than elections.
- e. **Aligning with best practice or modern standards** Some respondents mentioned the need to come in line with regulatory norms, with some referring to human healthcare professions and the PSA guidelines.

**BVNA:** “The move towards independent appointment of Council members more closely aligns with the regulatory norm amongst human healthcare. We also feel that an appointment process better promotes inclusivity and diversity within the Council, whilst also ensuring the skills and qualities which are necessary to be effective in a governing position.”

29. Among responses that raised concerns or opposed the proposal, the following main themes were identified.

- a. **Concerns over appointees** Many respondents raised concerns about the type of appointment that would be made, commenting that ordinary vets would not gain appointment, that it would be a “club” or based on “who you know”, or that the process would attract professional committee members who lacked experience of frontline veterinary work. There were also concerns that inappropriate interests could gain influence, such as campaign groups or commercial interests.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "I do not want to see a Council made up of academics and those drawn from high positions in society... we need to have a Council which serves the public and especially animal owners and the profession as their first priority."

- b. **Risk of bias, corruption, cronyism** Another common theme related to concerns that an appointment system was more vulnerable to bias, corruption or cronyism, and lacked the safeguards of an election system. A number were concerned that it would put more power into the hands of the RCVS executive or government.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “Appointments ensure a 'tame' council that will not criticise government and excludes lone voices that challenge the actions of the council.”

**Veterinary surgeon:** “I have no confidence that appointments will be made on merit, rather than for political reasons or nepotism.”

- c. **Removes democracy or weakens the voice of RCVS members** A similarly common theme concerned the need for the profession to have a voice through democratic elections to Council. Some commented that the proposals were skewed too far towards the public interest and paid insufficient attention to the interests of the profession.

**Synergy Farm Health:** “We feel that elected members of the profession should represent us.”

**Veterinary practice:** “If this is to act in the interests of the public who will act in the interests of the veterinarian.”

- d. **Concerns over the panel** A number of respondents raised issues relating to the panel making the appointments, questioning whether it would be trusted, genuinely independent and transparent, and expressing concern over possible political interference.

**PVA:** “As we understand it... the RCVS would be picking the panel which will appoint Members to Council. This would not then be an independent process.”

- 30. A significant number requested **additional information or reassurance**, in particular, more detail on the selection and makeup of the panel, the criteria and process for appointment; or requesting transparency or further consultation on criteria. Some felt it was not possible to form a view on the proposals without more detail. There were also queries about cost implications; how oversight by a PSA-type organisation might operate; and whether there would be a mechanism to change the panel.

**NIVA:** “It is concerning that so little detail has been made available regarding the practical arrangements for the appointment of the new Council members, including those such as professional versus lay members, the selection process, qualifications and experience required, and terms of office.”

**BEVA:** “BEVA would like reassurance that diversity in terms of representation of all the major species groups will be prioritised during the appointment process.”

- 31. A number of respondents put forward **alternative proposals**, with the main themes as follows.

- a. **Mix of appointed and elected** A number of respondents proposed a compromise whereby the Council would have more appointed members but would still retain some elected members. Some felt that this would realise the benefits of a more balanced Council whilst retaining a “voice” for the profession, while others suggested that a few elected members could guard against the Council becoming an “echo chamber”.
- b. **Separation of RCVS functions** A number of respondents made general comments relating to some form of separation of regulatory and Royal College functions. Some suggested that an appointment system could be used for the regulatory body, while elections could be held for the Royal College governing body.

**BVA:** “We support the appointed RCVS Council as part of a comprehensive package of governance reforms, which includes the creation of a separate, elected Royal College Council. That body would be able to focus on the Royal College functions, maintaining a democratic process for the profession while allowing the ‘RCVS regulatory Council’ to function with the independence and expertise required for effective governance.”

- c. **Improved election system** A common proposal among veterinary surgeon responses was to adapt the existing election system to make it more representative. Suggestions included holding separate elections in all four nations, filtering/sorting candidates to meet certain criteria or looking at examples of professional bodies that used different types of electoral systems.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “Candidates for election could be “sorted” to ensure that a cross section of sectors is represented prior to voting taking place.”

32. Further detailed suggestions were made by small numbers. To ensure a broad spread of veterinary experience on Council, it was suggested to include representatives of small animal, farm animal, equine, exotics and mixed practice. Public health professionals were also proposed. A rotation arrangement was suggested to enable wider representation of different sectors and stakeholders. Suggestions were made relating to diversity on Council, including ensuring younger people were not disadvantaged in an appointment process. Some proposed considering remuneration, flexibility and timing of meetings, and whether the posts were full time, noting that these could restrict applicants, including those currently working in practice. It was also suggested that the majority of the panel appointing the Council should have veterinary experience.

### Question 3: Towards lay parity on RCVS Council

33. Respondents were invited to comment on the proposal to reform RCVS Council to introduce either lay parity, or to maintain only a small majority of veterinary professionals.
34. Significantly more supported than opposed the overall proposal to move towards lay parity, however, there was no overall consensus as to the precise makeup of the Council (parity or small veterinary majority). The main reasons given in support of this proposal included the wider perspectives and experience that lay members could bring, the need to ensure public confidence and the need to align RCVS with the regulatory norm. The main reason for opposition was concern over the skills, experience and suitability of lay members. In addition, concerns were raised that RCVS would no longer be representative of vets and that vet representation would be further eroded by the addition of allied professionals to the Council. A number of respondents asked for more information on the proposal.
35. There were significant differences between groups. Among veterinary nurses, members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals there was a clear majority in support of the proposal. These groups also showed a strong preference for lay parity on RCVS Council, rather than a small majority of veterinary professionals. A majority of organisations supported the proposal overall, with many not expressing a preference for either parity or a small veterinary majority. Where a preference was expressed, similar numbers of organisations supported lay parity as supported a small majority of veterinary professionals.

**Veterinary nurse:** "I think that parity would be fine. Veterinary professionals do need to be represented alongside lay people but their vote should not be so great that the opinion of lay people (representing the animal owning public) is drowned out."

**One Voice for Animals UK:** "The regulator board should not be made up of a majority of veterinary professionals. It is there to ensure the public are getting the best service, and the veterinary professionals are doing what they should be... 1 or 2 veterinary professionals to provide the industry specific information and the rest of the board to be made up of lay people."

36. Views among veterinary surgeons were more finely balanced, with roughly equal numbers for and against the proposal. Most veterinary surgeons who expressed a view on the precise makeup of the Council wished to see some form of veterinary majority. A significant number of responses from vets did not specify whether they preferred a small majority, as suggested in the proposal, or a larger majority.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "Council must be designed and composed to allow it to discharge its regulatory responsibilities of setting and upholding standards, but must also be able to fulfil its Collegiate responsibilities of 'advancing and promoting' the profession... the public, animals and veterinary professionals would be best served by a Council composition that has a small majority of veterinary professionals to allow it to effectively fulfil its dual role."

**Veterinary surgeon:** "Veterinary surgeons with the appropriate qualifications, experience, and skill sets are the best people to judge, and set policy for standards of animal health and welfare... In many ways it undermines the expertise of veterinary surgeons if they are not in the majority on Council."

Having said that lay members should definitely be part of RCVS Council, and with the reasons outlined I would make it 60% Veterinary Surgeon and 40% lay members.”

## Themes

37. The common themes in responses that supported the proposal to move towards lay parity were as follows.

- a. **Benefits of lay members** A number referred to the external perspectives, challenge and wider experience that lay members could bring, with experience of wider animal-related professions and the owner perspective commonly cited as examples.

**Cattle Hoofcare Standards Board:** “We support lay parity. We would expect lay persons to understand the current challenges facing the livestock sector and understand that better welfare is central to what trimmers are doing.”

**Member of the public:** “Having a mix of people will add value and provide some positive feedback into this body.”

- b. **Confidence** Some commented that lay parity would help ensure confidence in the Council and/or profession.

**Veterinary nurse:** “I think that many of the issues that the profession currently face are down to not listening enough to the client or layperson's perspective. Not only will more lay members increase input from this sector, but should help to increase public confidence.”

- c. **Aligning with best practice** Some respondents referred to the need to come in line with modern regulatory norms or commented that self-regulation was no longer acceptable.

**BVA:** “We agree that RCVS regulatory governance should be updated to align with the best practice seen in human healthcare regulators. This means ensuring a balanced composition of registrants and lay members, who are appointed based on clear competencies through an independent process.”

**BVNA:** “Lay parity is aligned with best practice in human healthcare regulators, and ensures public interests are better reflected within the governance composition.”

38. The following common concerns were raised about the proposal.

- a. **Concerns over lay members** Reservations about the skills or qualities of lay members was a very common theme, raised by both those who broadly supported the proposal and by those who opposed. This included concerns about a **lack of experience/knowledge**, including practical experience of veterinary work, clinical or sector-specific knowledge and understanding of ethical or welfare issues; and risk of **unrealistic, incorrect or hostile attitudes** towards veterinary practice, reflecting misconceptions held by the public. There were also concerns that campaign groups, commercial interests or other inappropriate groups could gain influence on the Council through increased lay membership.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "Any lay person may imagine how veterinary practice should occur from the safety of a committee meeting room while well rested, but vets and nurses may at least remember what it's like to work at the coal face."

**Veterinary surgeon:** "The veterinary surgeon must work in a unique environment where it must advocate for a patient whose health and welfare may be in conflict with its owner, additionally unlike other health professionals, finance plays a much greater role. Given this unique environment, it is essential that the veterinarian retains a majority."

- b. **Not representative of vets** Some who opposed the proposal argued that RCVS should stand up for vets or that vets should self-regulate, and some feared the result would be more vets leaving the profession.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "When I became a vet we felt the college were there for us. Now I feel if a member of the public has a grievance you are not there as an independent arbitrator but rather on their side."

- c. **Combined impact with Allied Professionals proposal** There were concerns about the longer-term impact of lay parity should the proposal to increase the proportion of APs be enacted (see Question 5 below). Some respondents were concerned that the combined impact of these two proposals would mean veterinary surgeons became a minority on the Council. Some asked for greater clarity on what the interaction between lay parity and increased allied professional representation would mean for the overall make up of Council and, in particular, the number of veterinary surgeons.

- 39. There was a number of requests for **further information**, including regarding the criteria for selection of lay members and their role on Council. Queries were raised over the timetable for implementation and safeguards against inappropriate appointments.
- 40. A number of **alternatives** were put forward, the most common being **separation of RCVS functions** into Royal College and regulator, with lay parity applying to the regulatory body only, proposed by **BVA** and others; and for the **Chair to have a casting vote**, as an alternative to a small veterinary majority.
- 41. Further suggestions, put forward by small numbers, included a range of groups that lay members should represent, namely: key sectors (equine, farming, companion, zoo, laboratory or animal breeding); animal welfare/animal rescue; related fields such as medicine/biology or wildlife/conservation/sustainability; allied professions or complementary/alternative therapies; or wider fields such as law, business, economics or academia. Conversely, others suggested lay members should not be from drug companies or other commercial interests. A number of alternative ratios were suggested, such as 50% vet, 25% nurse/AP, 25% lay; or parity between professionals already regulated by RCVS (vets plus nurses) and lay/AP. Election of lay members was also proposed, as well a review mechanism so that lay/professional proportions could be altered in light of experience.



## Question 4: Removal of Veterinary School Council (VSC) appointees on RCVS Council

42. The Veterinary Schools Council (VSC) is the representative body of veterinary schools in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands, and currently appoints three members to RCVS Council. Views were sought on the proposal to remove these direct appointees and ensure adequate educational expertise on Council through the independent appointment process instead.
43. The majority of respondents agreed with this proposal, with high levels of support among veterinary nurses, members of the public, organisations and other professionals/paraprofessionals. Key themes amongst those who agreed were that veterinary school input could be obtained in other ways; and that the existing system created a conflict of interest or gave excessive influence to VSC.
44. While levels of support were lower among veterinary surgeons than among other groups, significantly more agreed than disagreed with the proposal. Those who disagreed argued that veterinary school representation on Council was needed due to their critical role, or was important to maintaining high quality education. There was a number of requests for more information about the appointments system and how it might select educational expertise.

### Themes

45. Among responses that supported the proposal, the following common themes were identified.
- a. **Other ways to gain veterinary school input** Respondents suggested that direct appointment was not necessary as educational expertise could be selected via the independent appointment process, could be obtained from the RCVS Education Committee, or could be assured through effective consultation on education policies. Many commented that their support for the proposal was conditional on there being adequate representation of veterinary education via the appointments process, with a few clarifying that this must not be generic educational expertise.

**Institute of Osteopathy (Animal Osteopathy Special Interest Group):** "The contact between educational establishments and the regulator is vital... but that interface should be at a more tactical level, via a standing sub-committee of Council rather than at the level of Council directly – bringing the Veterinary Profession into parity with the wider healthcare sector."

**One Voice for Animals UK:** "The council should be quite independent of all representative bodies so the direct appointment of members shouldn't be allowed. I would expect that there would be another committee or platform for the VSC and others to be included."

- b. **Conflict of interest** Concerns were raised over the appropriateness of direct representatives of VSC, with a number commenting that they were not impartial and some referencing the financial interests of universities.

- c. **Excessive influence** A number of respondents felt that the veterinary schools had a disproportionate level of representation or that they held too much influence.

**PDSA:** “Educational establishments are currently over-represented when consideration is given to the wide range of stakeholders that may have a place on RCVS Council.”

46. The following main themes were noted in responses expressing opposition to the proposal.

- a. **Veterinary schools need a voice on Council** A substantial number of respondents cited the critical role played by veterinary schools in educating the next generation and argued that this meant they needed representation. A number of these proposed that the number of VSC appointees could be reduced from three to one or two.
- b. **Impact on education** Some responses highlighted the importance of close working between veterinary schools and the Council, for example, to ensure courses remained fit for purposes, for fair assessment of veterinary education and reasonable inspection standards or to hold veterinary schools to account at Council.

**PVA:** “There should continue to be representation from the Veterinary Schools, as vital feedback from the expertise of teachers and researchers should feed into RCVS Council.”

47. There were a number of requests for **more information**, in particular about how educational expertise would be represented under the revised system, the appointments process and the criteria for selection; and how quality of education and parity between courses would be assured under new governance. Queries were also raised about costs.

48. A number of **alternative and suggestions** were put forward. The **BVA** supported removal of VSC appointees from regulatory functions, but proposed they could sit on a separate Royal College governing body. Some suggested that veterinary school representatives should be elected, or that veterinary nurse education should be represented.

**Coleg Gwent:** “The VSC could consider including veterinary nursing into their council and the proposed independent appointment process could call for one representative of the VSC or one MRCVS and one RVN [registered veterinary nurse] member of the VSC.”

49. Other suggestions made by small numbers included: keeping VSC appointees but removing their voting rights or giving them observer status; moving VSC appointees to the RCVS Education Committee; VSC recommending appointees to the independent appointments panel; and representation of allied professional education.

## Question 5: Flexibility to increase representation of allied professionals on RCVS Council

50. The consultation sought views on the proposal that flexibility should be built into future governance composition so that the proportion of allied professional (AP) members on the Council could be increased over time, as and when new allied professions were added to the College's remit. It was also proposed that veterinary surgeons, as the lead profession, would retain a majority among the professionals on the Council.
51. A majority of responses were broadly in agreement with the proposal, but there were significant differences between respondent groups. Among veterinary nurses, members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals there was a clear majority in agreement. The main themes evident within responses in favour of the proposal were support for extension of regulation to APs and a view that APs would bring benefits to the Council.
52. For veterinary surgeons views were more mixed, but significantly more agreed than disagreed. Organisations were broadly in agreement, although a number raised concerns or proposed variations.
53. The main reasons for not supporting the proposal were opposition to RCVS regulating APs and concern over diluting the focus on veterinary surgeons, along with views that APs should not regulate vets and fears the Council would become unwieldy. Some particular concerns were raised about how the proposal could impact on veterinary nurses.
54. Others commented that they could only support the proposal if veterinary surgeons maintained a majority; that APs should not take veterinary places on the Council; or that APs should be represented on a dedicated AP Council or committee.
55. Others called for equality between professions rather than a vet-led approach, and there was a number of requests for regulation or representation of particular professions.

### Themes

56. The following common themes were identified in responses supportive of the proposal.
- a. **Support extending regulation to APs** Many expressed general support for extending regulation to more professions working with animals. Some raised concerns about unqualified practitioners and felt that regulation and standard setting was necessary to protect animal welfare. Some argued that Council representation would be necessary if APs were to be regulated by RCVS.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "I would welcome the regulation of these currently unregulated individuals from an animal welfare point of view."

- b. **Benefits of APs on Council** A number felt that APs would bring valuable expertise and a wider viewpoint to the Council, or could facilitate better joint working between different professions.

**Institute of Osteopathy (Animal Osteopathy Special Interest Group):** “These professions are a vital and increasingly needed part of the Veterinary team... inclusion of them at the highest level of Veterinary leadership signals the acceptance to all members of the Veterinary Team, the value that these roles play in the care and treatment of animals.”

**Equine Sports Massage Association (ESMA):** “Supports the proposal... welcoming the opportunity of a Council seat for an Allied Musculoskeletal Professional whose skills, knowledge and experience could be invaluable towards good governance.”

57. **Nurse representation** Another theme among responses, both for and against the proposal, was a desire to ensure that veterinary nurses were adequately represented on the Council. There were differing interpretations of what the proposal to increase AP representation could mean for nurses. Around half within this group felt that the RCVS proposal would improve the representation or status of nurses. However, others interpreted the proposal as worsening the situation of nurses, as they felt other APs could be elevated above nurses, could have more seats on Council than nurses or might take the places of nurses. Some asked for the proposal to extend to nurses only, not other APs, and parity between APs and nurses was also requested.

**Veterinary nurse:** “Stating that veterinary surgeons will always maintain a majority, while increasing the amount of allied professionals, in turn possibly decreasing the amount of RVNs will only increase this belief [that nurses are not respected] within the profession but also within the public.”

**Veterinary surgeon:** “I agree the number of veterinary nurses should slowly increase but the majority of professional members should always be veterinary surgeons.”

58. The **BVNA** requested a rebalancing between veterinary surgeons and veterinary nurses within the existing structure and urged that nurses should not be squeezed out as APs were added. It also requested clarity in communications as to whether nurses were included within the “allied professional” umbrella.

**BVNA:** “[VNC] does not afford its members voting rights, and therefore the same degree of influence as afforded to those on RCVS Council... We are concerned that as a growing number of allied professionals also hold seats on RCVS Council, there is a potential risk that veterinary nurses may not be represented at all in future... we urge that veterinary nurses must always be represented on RCVS Council, regardless of its future composition with allied professions.”

59. Among responses that opposed the proposal or raised concerns, the following major themes were identified.

- a. **RCVS should not regulate APs** A number of respondents felt that APs should be regulated elsewhere, not within RCVS, and some were concerned that the interests of APs and veterinary surgeons could conflict.
- b. **Focus on veterinary surgeons** A number expressed concern that inclusion of APs would dilute the focus of RCVS on veterinary surgeons. Some

expressed concern about the impact on the number of vets on the Council. A number of alternatives were proposed (see paragraph 61 below).

**NIVA:** "It would not take the addition of many para-professional representatives until vets would be in an overall minority ... This would not only be far from desirable, it would completely undermine the concept of the RCVS as a "Veterinary" Council – it would also severely restrict... representation for each of the main sectors... [and] regions of the UK. Moreover, were the professional seats to be limited to 12 (parity) from the outset, then the risk of the marginalisation of the pure "veterinary" representation rapidly increases further, to under a quarter"

- c. **APs should not regulate vets** A number were concerned about the prospect of other professions regulating vets, citing a lack of relevant expertise and knowledge on veterinary matters outside their area of specialism, and the inappropriateness of APs overseeing Royal College functions.
- d. **Unwieldy Council** There were some concerns the Council would become too large if it sought to have representation of every profession that came to be regulated. A few commented that this was at odds with the idea that Council members are not representing a specific constituency.

**BVA:** "Expanding the regulatory Council to include representatives from every allied profession could lead to an unwieldy and inefficient governance structure, complicating decision-making processes and potentially diluting the focus and expertise needed to effectively regulate the vets and veterinary nurses."

60. Some requested **more information** including clarity on the number of AP representatives and the impact this would have on veterinary surgeon representation; the timeline and implementation process; clarity on whether APs would regulate vets or whether they would sit on a sub Council; detail of how APs would be regulated; whether the proposals included nurses; and how nurse representatives would be nominated.

**PDSA:** "RCVS suggested that there would be parity between lay members and veterinary professionals, it would be prudent to ensure that the profession is clear that, it would appear, this does not mean veterinary surgeons in any proposals put forward."

61. A range of conditions, alternatives and suggestions were put forward.

- a. **Veterinary majority must be maintained** Many respondents commented that they could only support the proposal on condition that a veterinary majority was maintained. Most expressed this as a majority of veterinary surgeons, with smaller numbers referring to veterinary professionals or veterinary surgeons plus nurses. The consultation proposal stated that veterinary surgeons would "retain a majority among professionals". However, a number of respondents within this theme specified that they wished veterinary surgeons to hold the majority on the Council as a whole. Other respondents were not clear as to whether they wanted to see a majority on the Council as a whole, or among professionals.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “Happy with this as long as Vet surgeons have a small majority.”

- b. **Allied professionals must not take veterinary places** Some argued that rather than take places of veterinary surgeons or nurses, APs should take lay places on RCVS Council; or that the overall size of the Council should be increased to allow the addition of APs. Some suggested limiting the number of APs to one or two, e.g. with a rotation arrangement. A fixed ratio between veterinary surgeons, lay members and allied professionals was also proposed.

**PVA:** “The PVA fully supports the flexibility to expand the number of allied professional members on Council. However we urge that those seats be created anew to expand on the 24 Council seats, to perhaps 43.”

- c. **Separate Council/Committee for APs** Some respondents proposed a separate Council, or Councils, similar to VNC while others proposed a subcommittee or subcommittees. Some suggested that the separate Council/committee could have one or two representatives on the main Council, who would represent APs as a whole rather than their specific profession. Proposals of this nature were made by a number of professional bodies.

**BVA:** “Allied professions regulated by RCVS should have their own dedicated regulatory Councils, similar to the existing Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council. These dedicated Councils would report to RCVS regulatory Council and consider the specific regulatory challenges, standards, and professional development of their respective professions, ensuring that each group’s unique needs and perspectives are adequately represented and managed.”

**BVNA:** “If all allied professionals are considered to have an equal status to veterinary nurses, this would also then support the introduction of additional Councils for each allied profession, as per the current VN Council. We feel this may better represent the intricacies and specific needs of each of these professions, as opposed to addressing them all within the remit of RCVS Council.”

**ACPAT:** “ACPAT would like to see the proposal for a separate sub-council similar to that of the Veterinary Nurse Council set up to allow musculoskeletal therapists to have a voice within the new regulatory structure driving true tangible change within the industry. Representation at board level must be obtained for each professional group in order to guide and develop the industry.”

- d. **Requests for specific APs** There was a number of requests for specific APs to be regulated and/or represented on Council. Musculoskeletal professionals were frequently mentioned. There were also requests relating to equine dental technicians, animal fertility/ultrasound/artificial insemination, behaviourists, nutritionists, hoof trimmers, farriers and fish health professionals. A number of comments were made relating to particular qualification levels for APs (see annex).
- e. **Equal status among professions** A common theme among responses from other professionals and paraprofessionals was that veterinary surgeons should not be assumed to be the “lead profession” and that APs should be regulated alongside vets, not by vets. As in responses to earlier questions, some wished to see this reflected in the Council structure, with a Council for

each profession (including veterinary surgeons) overseen by RCVS in a role described by some as a “super regulator”.

**AHPR:** “There should be a veterinary surgeons council, which sits below RCVS council and alongside VN, MSK, EDT [veterinary nurse, musculoskeletal, equine dental technician] and other individual professional councils. This will provide greater transparency and see other professions regulated alongside vets rather than by vets.”

**BVNA:** “A more holistic team-based approach is more appropriate in [non-clinical] circumstances... applying the ‘vet-led team’ model to all other aspects of the veterinary nursing profession without question – in this instance, such as governance, strategy and the development of policy – is deeply flawed. This approach presents a missed opportunity to capture veterinary nurses’ existing capabilities to govern, plus to further enhance and develop the veterinary nursing profession in future.”

**RAMP:** “The proposal of giving other professions a seat at the table is progress but it must result in substantive change in the legislation to allow allied professions to deliver best care alongside, and not subordinate to, the veterinary profession... one seat on a RCVS Council dominated by vets would not automatically ensure progressive regulatory governance for MSK professionals.”

62. **BEVA** said that they accepted the proposal but requested extensive consultation on the detail of how it would be implemented:

**BEVA:** “Given the number of allied professionals working within the equine industry at present, and the impact that lack of regulation has had on the veterinary profession, this subject is one of great importance and sensitivity to BEVA. As such, we would like to emphasise the need for extensive consultation with BEVA if, and when, the objectives and processes for effecting this change are discussed.”

63. Other suggestions put forward by small numbers included adding APs prior to increasing lay membership in order to review impact; excluding professionals who may have a vested interest in changing regulation; and limiting the scope of the AP role on Council to matters related to their own profession.

## Question 6: Separating the Chair of RCVS Council from the Presidency

64. The consultation sought views on the proposal to separate the role of RCVS President into two different posts. This would create a new President role to act as the public face of the College, retaining ceremonial duties; alongside a separate Chair role, which could be appointed for a longer period and would chair Council sessions and oversee RCVS governance. The Chair could be either a lay member or a registrant.
65. There was a high level of agreement with this proposal overall. There was very strong support among other professionals/paraprofessionals and members of the public, and high agreement among veterinary nurses. The main reasons given in support of the proposal were that the extended Chair tenure would provide greater continuity and that splitting the role would facilitate selection of good quality candidates with the specific skillset needed.
66. There was more of a spread of opinion among veterinary surgeons but most broadly agreed with the proposal. The main concern raised by those not supporting the proposal or expressing reservations was that the Chair should not be a lay person, while a number were concerned that the President's role would be diminished.

### Themes

67. Responses in support of the proposal raised the following main themes.
- a. **Benefits of greater continuity** Many welcomed the proposal to extend the Chair's tenure, commenting that it would offer continuity in leadership and make it easier to deliver change. Small numbers suggested the tenure should be extended without splitting the role, or that the President's tenure should also be extended.

**Institute of Osteopathy (Animal Osteopathy Special Interest Group):** "The separation of these roles will ensure a better continuity of strategic leadership, reducing the risk of knowledge being lost as members change."

- b. **Attract more/better candidates** A number felt that separating the role into two could be beneficial as different skillsets were needed for each role. Respondents felt this approach could widen the candidate pool as some individuals may be suited to one role but not the other, for example, if they were not comfortable in the public-facing role.

**Veterinary surgeon:** "The skills are very different and a year is not long enough to bring about impactful change."

- c. **Effectiveness** Some commented that splitting the role could make the workload more manageable and allow postholders to focus on their role.



68. In responses that expressed concerns or opposition, the following key themes were noted.

- a. **Chair should not be a layperson** A common theme in responses both for and against the proposal was that the Chair must be a vet registrant. Some also commented that the President should not be a layperson. A small number argued that it should be possible for the Chair to be a nurse.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “Our profession is unique in our responsibility and advocacy for animal health and welfare, and I am uncomfortable with the possibility of a lay member as Chair.”

- b. **Diminishes the role of President** A number felt that the role of President would be less meaningful if it was mainly ceremonial in nature or argued that the public face needed to be the person with ultimate responsibility.

**NIVA:** “As presented this proposal appears to limit the role of the new “President” to that of a two-dimensional figurehead with no formal power or authority, beyond perhaps, responsibility for the Royal College’s Charter activities. As such NIVA believes that the role would struggle to have credibility and / or meaningful relationships or engagement with the profession’s membership.”

- c. **Cost** A number raised concerns over the cost implications and value for money of creating a second role. A small number queried whether ceremonial duties were required.

69. More **information** was requested regarding role descriptions of the President and Chair; how they would be selected (directly appointed or elected by Council members); and whether the Chair would also be a Council member. A small number requested consultation on the role descriptions.

70. The main **alternatives and variations** suggested were as follows.

- a. **President should be elected** This was suggested both for the existing Presidency model, and in a scenario where the role was split into a separate Chair and Presidency. There was no clear consensus on what an elected President would mean, and a number of the responses did not provide further detail on this. Small numbers suggested that the President should be elected from within the Council, or proposed direct election by the membership. In addition, a small number suggested that the Chair should be elected.
- b. **Maximum term length for Chair** Some requested a maximum term length to avoid the same person being appointed repeatedly and hence ensure some turnover and fresh ideas. The maximum terms suggested varied between two and eight years, with suggestions also for a fixed number of possible additional terms.

71. A number of more detailed suggestions were made by small numbers of respondents. Safeguards were suggested, such as mechanisms to remove the Chair or to break a deadlock between the Chair and the President. Alternatives were proposed such as increasing the number of Vice-Presidents or making more use of a

Vice-Chair role. The need for effective management and appraisal of the Chair role was also mentioned.

## Question 7: Appointed Veterinary Nurses Council (VNC)

72. The existing VNC comprises of 14 members, of which 12 are elected and two appointed. The proposal from VNC was to move to a fully appointed system, with all VNC members selected via an independent appointment system.
73. The majority of respondents supported this proposal, reasoning that this could make the VNC more representative and diverse, would be consistent with proposals for the RCVS Council and with the regulatory norm, and would ensure the quality of appointments.
74. There were very high levels of support from veterinary nurses, with only a handful of responses opposing the proposal. The main themes within nurses' responses were improved representation and quality and effectiveness of appointed members.
75. There were also high levels of support amongst members of the public and other professionals/paraprofessionals. A large majority of organisations agreed with the proposals, including the **BVNA**. While views were mixed among veterinary surgeons, slightly more supported than opposed this proposal. Common reasons for not supporting the proposals included a desire to retain a democratic approach and concerns over appointed members not effectively representing nurses.

### Themes

76. The following main themes were identified within responses that supported the proposal.
- a. **More representative** A common theme was that an appointment system could deliver better representation of all four nations and different sectors. Respondents also requested representation of different geographical areas and types of practice. The need for better gender balance was also raised.

**Veterinary Nurse:** "Representation should be seen to reflect the length and breadth of the UK not solely the four nations but regional representation as far as reasonably practicable."

**Veterinary Nurse:** "Men make up only about 3% of the VN profession, but 30% of our VN council representatives... it is unrepresentative and sends the wrong message about gender power dynamics."

- b. **Consistency with RCVS** Another common theme was the importance of having the same approach for VNC as for RCVS Council.
- c. **Align with regulatory norms** Some argued that it would be beneficial to adopt the regulatory norm, with some commenting that this would provide greater independence and transparency or would inspire trust.

**BVNA:** "Independent appointment, working to the PSA's key principles of 'merit, fairness, transparency and openness, and inspiring confidence', ensures that public interests can indisputably be reflected in the appointment of members onto Council."

**ACPAT:** “This will further strengthen the governance structures and bring the RCVS in line with current standards set for regulatory bodies. Leading to greater animal welfare standards and public reassurance.”

- d. **Quality/effectiveness** Some argued that an appointments system could select people with the right skills or who would have greater engagement with the work of VNC. This was a significant theme among veterinary nurse responses in particular.

**Veterinary Nurse:** “Appointed members would allow selection for specific expertise and increase engagement with the work of Council.”

77. The following key themes were noted among responses that raised concerns or disagreed with the proposal.

- a. **Retain democracy** Many expressed a desire to maintain democratic representation and to give nurses a voice in the governing of their profession. Some also commented that an election system would be more representative and created a better relationship between nurses and VNC/RCVS.

**PVA:** “The composition of VN Council should be fully elected, and an appointment system should not be used. Veterinary nurses also have a right to democracy, and there should be annual elections to both VNC and for a small number of places (2-4 say), on RCVS Council itself.”

**Veterinary nurse:** “Currently I believe RVNs are side lined despite paying annual fees and I feel strongly we must have more say about our profession and the direction it takes.”

- b. **Concerns over appointees** A number were concerned that appointments would favour professional committee members over ordinary veterinary nurses, would lack diversity, would be divorced from the interests of nurses or would be vulnerable to influence by corporate or political interests. A number requested more information on the appointments process and selection criteria.

**Veterinary nurse:** “This will actively discourage diversity and inclusion... the appointment process would be something lots of good nurses would not want to do, as the process is controlled by the RCVS not by the veterinary nurses who can vote!”

- c. **Representation of all four nations not necessary** Many of these respondents supported the proposal overall, but they felt representation of four nations would be overly restrictive or that other aspects of diversity were more important.

78. A number of respondents put forward **alternative proposals**, with the following being the main themes.

- a. **Retain some elected members** Some argued for a mix of elected and appointed VNC members.

**Member of the public:** “A small number of elected members would be appropriate.”

**Veterinary surgeon:** “I think a combination of elected and appointed is preferable to increase diversity of viewpoint and encourage accountability.”

- b. **Improve election system** Some respondents suggested improvements to the existing electoral system including term limits, criteria for candidates, separate elections in each of the four nations or combining aspects of election and appointment to meet diversity/representation criteria, for example, an appointed shortlist of election candidates.
  - c. **Other alternative models** Some respondents put forward alternatives, including separating regulation and education/promotion of the profession into different bodies; making VNC a subcommittee alongside a veterinary surgeon subcommittee feeding into an over-arching Council; combining VNC and RCVS Council; and randomly selecting nurses to serve on VNC, akin to jury service.
79. Some specific suggestions were made as to groups that should be represented on VNC, including nurses working in practice, student nurses, musculoskeletal professionals, animal behaviourists, equine dental technicians, patient care assistants and animal rescue, as well as fewer educational representatives. Increased nurse representation on RCVS Council was also requested.

## Question 8: Reducing the size of VN Council

80. Views were also sought on the proposal to reduce the size of VNC from the current 14 members to 12, to come in line with regulatory best practice.
81. The majority of responses were in favour of this proposal, with the main themes in support being that this would reduce costs, bring the VNC into line with regulatory norms or would have minimal impact. There were no major differences between groups, with the majority of all respondent types agreeing with the proposal. The **BVNA** were also in agreement.
82. Key reasons given by those disagreeing with the proposal were that more evidence was needed of the case for change, a smaller VNC would be less representative and that the VNC should not reduce in size if the RCVS Council did not similarly reduce.

### Themes

83. Within responses supportive of the proposal, the following main themes were identified.

- a. **More efficient** A number commented that a smaller group would be more effective or would streamline decision making, and a few also raised cost effectiveness.
- b. **Adopt the regulatory norm** A number of respondents mentioned the need to come in line with regulatory best practice, and a small number referenced organisations who suggested 12 as an optimal number.

**BVNA:** “We support the recommendation that VN Council should be reduced to 12 members, to be brought into alignment with the regulatory norm.”

- c. **Minimal impact** Some considered that the proposal would make little difference as VNC was already close to the regulatory norm of 12 members.

84. Responses that raised concerns or did not agree with the proposal contained the following main themes.

- a. **More evidence needed** A number of respondents felt the case for change had not been made. Some argued that a reduction in size would not automatically lead to improved strategic focus and asked to see further reasoning or evidence on this point, or a review process.

**Pets at Home:** “As the proposals are further developed, we recommend an approach which considers necessary roles and expertise over an ideal number.”

- b. **Insufficiently representative** A number were concerned that VNC would be less representative with fewer members, some referring to the additional impact of lay parity. In addition, some commented that they could support the proposal if they were reassured that VNC would be sufficiently representative.

**PVA:** "[VNC] may need to expand to reflect geographical regions, emerging specialities, profession sectors or allied professions for example, including vet members of VNC... we support building in the flexibility to further increase the number of seats on VNC rather than reducing VNC numbers."

- c. **RCVS is not reducing in size** Some argued that there was inconsistency in the proposals for VNC and RCVS Councils, as RCVS numbers were significantly higher than the regulatory norm.

**Blue Cross:** "We are not sure of the reasoning in reducing the size of VN council to fit with the regulatory norm, when there is no such recommendation for the Vet council (which at 24 is much bigger)."

85. A number of requests were made for **additional information**, including on costings, typical meeting attendance numbers, the impact on quoracy, how operational matters could be dealt with if not at VNC, and the original rationale for 14 members. A number felt it was not possible to give a view without this information.
86. **Suggestions** included increasing the size of VNC; further reducing the size; allowing for flexibility in size; introducing additional lay members first before making a decision on optimal size; and short-term co-option of members where additional skills were needed.

## Question 9: Lay parity for VN Council

87. The consultation sought views on the proposal that VNC should comprise equal numbers of lay and professional members, in line with regulatory best practice.
88. More respondents agreed with this proposal than disagreed, but there was significant variation between different groups. There was a majority in support among members of the public, other professionals/paraprofessionals and organisations (including the **BVNA**).
89. Responses from veterinary nurses were more mixed, but more supported than opposed the proposal. Key themes in support of the proposal included that lay members would bring wider skills to the VNC, that this would align the VNC with the regulatory norm and that it would increase confidence.
90. For veterinary surgeons, slightly more disagreed than agreed. The main reasons given for disagreeing with the proposal were concerns over the experience and knowledge of lay members and the view that the existing lay representation was sufficient.

### Themes

91. Among those responses that supported lay parity for VNC, the following main themes were evident.
- a. **Benefits of lay members** A number argued that lay members would bring benefits to VNC including a wider perspective.

**Veterinary Nurse:** “Equalising Lay Person representation would help remove perceived nepotism and enrich debate because again nurses, just like Vets, do not necessarily appreciate the impact that their decision-making has on owners.”

**Member of the public:** “Lay members can often see the wood for the trees and give a different perspective to a problem or decision.”

**Veterinary surgeon:** “We need input from external views and we need others to promote the nursing profession from the 'outside'.”

- b. **Alignment with the regulatory norm** Some referred to lay parity on governing bodies as recognised best practice.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “[This is] appropriate, to exclude the concept of ‘marking your own homework’.”

- c. **Public confidence** Some felt that lay parity would help give additional confidence to the public.

**Institute of Osteopathy (Animal Osteopathy Special Interest Group):** “It has been established in the wider healthcare regulation sector, that the Lay role brings a significant degree of public confidence in the accountability of a profession.”



92. Within responses that did not support the proposal, the following main themes were evident.

- a. **Professional majority should be maintained** This was a very common theme among those not in support of the proposal. Some argued that a small professional majority should be acceptable for VNC as it was considered acceptable for RCVS Council.

**Veterinary Nurse:** “When we are at such a vital period for the veterinary nurse profession I would like to see a small majority being RVNs.”

**Coleg Gwent:** “A small majority of professional members would be welcomed, whilst increasing lay members. This is to ensure that animal welfare interests are better served by the most qualified persons.”

- b. **Concerns over lay members** This was also a significant theme, with particular concerns over lack of relevant experience, lack of clinical knowledge and lack of understanding of the veterinary nurse role. There were also concerns that commercial interests could gain excessive influence through lay membership.

**Veterinary Nurse:** “There are ethical issues which the professionals have more knowledge and understanding about which lay members may not.”

**Member of the public:** “Only those legally bound by the VSA should, having taken aboard the ideas of Lay members, be responsible ultimately for decisions.

**Veterinary surgeon:** “Everyone has an opinion on animal welfare, how can we be sure sensible individuals are chosen and not lobbying group representatives.”

- c. **Not required** It was argued by some that VNC already acted in the interests of the public, that the existing lay representation was sufficient or that other changes could be made to better represent the public such as introducing a lay committee.

93. There were a small number of requests for **further information** regarding the selection process and criteria, the type of lay member envisaged and the impact on costs.

94. A number of other **alternatives** were put forward by small numbers of respondents, including: a lay majority; applying lay parity to regulatory functions but not Royal College functions; appointing allied professionals, major employers or educators instead of lay people; and election of lay members. Alternative ratios were proposed, including an even split of nurses, APs and lay people, or six nurses, two vets, four lay; and it was proposed that the Chair should always be a nurse. It was also suggested that if VNC was to become a subcommittee feeding into an over-arching Council, there should be lay parity on the over-arching Council but not on VNC.

## Annex: Additional queries, evidence and suggestions

This annex provides additional examples of further queries, evidence and suggestions provided by respondents. Not all proposals elicited more queries, evidence or suggestions than could be covered in the main body of the report, therefore the tables below do not cover every question.

### Question 1: Rationale for governance reform

Queries	Evidence	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are positions to be remunerated and if so what will be the impact on professional fees?</li> <li>• How RCVS Knowledge and the Advancement of the Professions Committee would impact on paraprofessionals.</li> <li>• How Royal College functions would be overseen in the new model, and how will non-regulatory functions remain fully independent of regulatory "interference".</li> </ul>	<p><b>In relation to following a human healthcare model:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical Royal Colleges are not fully appointed and many have democratic representation.</li> <li>• Human healthcare falls mainly under the NHS. BMA regulates public sector employees with a government set business structure, whereas RCVS members work primarily in the private sector.</li> <li>• Lay people represent the patient in the human model. Which would not be the case for RCVS.</li> <li>• Lay parity not considered to have been successful in professions including nursing, midwifery, dentistry, medicine.</li> <li>• When considering Law Commission Regulation of Health Care Professionals (2014) it is important to recognise that other than consolidation, simplification and imposing greater consistency across regulators in some areas where there is public interest, it stresses that beyond this regulators would be given greater autonomy to be able to deliver their functions in a way that is suited to the profession concerned. RCVS should not mimic other regulators but analyse and understand what regulation of the veterinary profession requires.</li> </ul>	<p><b>In relation to separation of Royal College and regulatory functions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human medics have a myriad of subject specific Royal Colleges there to support them, alongside the BMA (which is more of a union), and these organisations have the ear of government. Whilst the veterinary profession may be small, they deserve to have more structured, organisations there to support them. Perhaps the RCVS should set up a GMC equivalent that regulates, leaving the Royal College component to support the profession.</li> <li>• The lesson from the Law Society is that there had to be a clear separation of regulator and profession.</li> </ul>

## Question 2: A fully appointed RCVS Council

Queries	Evidence	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would an appointment system mean more RVNs were eligible to be members of the Council?</li> </ul>	<p><b>In relation to other professions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical profession: difficulties between GMC and BMA, challenge to GMC by Anaesthetists Unite, issues with physician associates, criticism of midwifery regulator, example of dentistry suggests an appointed regulator will not be an improvement on the current situation.</li> <li>Legal system/judges: appointments believed to be a "tap on the shoulder" system which is not representative/diverse.</li> <li>Social Work England has not achieved improvements in the profession, and standards in social care in the UK are considered to be far below standards in veterinary practice.</li> <li>House of Lords cited as an example of an appointment system that is regarded by the general public as biased, corrupt or politically influenced.</li> <li>National Trust and RSPCA as examples of appointments being monopolised by minority views.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on diversity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If we read the literature on diversity and inclusion, using merit as a criteria will reduce diversity. Merit tends to be based on the socio-economic background of an individual rather than true ability... higher profile members of the profession will be selected more frequently, and whether an individual is high profile depends more on their personality type than abilities as a veterinary surgeon or potential regulator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The BMA elects members representing different regions and branches and also has 5 seats reserved for ethnic minority members. The RCS has introduced 19 additional seats to allow representation of dental surgeons and other appointed and invited members. A similar model could be used to improve representation within RCVS. including allied professionals, without doing away with elections.</li> <li>A hybrid of the models used for Council Elections by the RCS and BMA might provide a good fit with traditional democracy of the profession, but one which also allows the number of Councillors from allied professions to grow, along with allowing for the appointment or election of lay people and for both appointed and invited members. For example there could be a bigger Council of, say, 43 members, comprising 24 elected Councillors (Say, 6 elected and standing down each year) and 19 additional seats. The 19 additional members could then also allow for growth of, and representation for, the allied veterinary professions, through a mix of: democratically elected regional vets, democratically elected sector vets, democratically elected RVNs, democratically elected representatives of allied professions, appointed or elected lay people, invited members, appointed members.</li> <li>Royal Society of Biology elects from a range of people who have submitted CVs.</li> <li>Other professions have elected systems that should be explored, e.g. RIBA (architects), actuaries.</li> </ul>

### Question 5: Flexibility to increase representation of allied professionals (APs) on RCVS Council

Comments and suggestions for this question related to qualifications of APs that may be regulated by RCVS or represented on RCVS Council.

General	Musculoskeletal (MSK)	Other APs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paraprofessionals need government body recognition and appraisal/ industry experience before participation.</li> <li>• The quality of the qualifications of the paraprofessionals eligible for election should be regulated.</li> <li>• Needs to be a clear standard set for the level/type of qualification required to be recognised as a member of each of these professions and use the titles associated.</li> <li>• As long as the paraprofessionals have a requirement to be members of their own regulatory bodies and are suitably qualified.</li> <li>• RCVS and vets should only work with paraprofessionals where there is regulation in place, such as equine dentists and farriers.</li> <li>• Limits should be set which restricts any allied professional body considered part of the regulated team to those who have reached Masters level qualification.</li> <li>• Veterinary paraprofessionals on the Council should be BSc/Masters degree/Doctorate level</li> <li>• Criteria/thresholds that Allied Professionals would have to meet to be considered for a seat on the Council should be published and approved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You say musculoskeletal but please state vet physios who are degree level and have expertise a vet may not have.</li> <li>• Level 7 MSK professionals should be able to work autonomously as vets do but all be regulated the same way. The regulatory model needs to be able to eventually be expanded to include (maybe another tier of qualifications?) the 'lower level' qualified such as a level 4 massage practitioner.</li> <li>• Representation of the MSK profession on council should be based upon MSc level university-validated animal qualification as the highest level of training and therefore equivalency to veterinary diversification in specialist areas.</li> <li>• Representation should come from both animal physiotherapy and animal chiropractic, reflecting that these professions have different scopes of practice and protocols. There is different legislation and regulation for chartered physiotherapists and chiropractors in human practice for this reason and so in veterinary regulation they should be represented separately too.</li> <li>• Support MSK therapists being on the council, but there are a wide variety of qualifications and professional titles so this would need to be looked at e.g. veterinary physiotherapist, chiropractors, massage therapists etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the behaviourist profession, Only CCAB and FABC should be considered and regulation of behaviourists should be enforced to bring all into align and minimum standards, especially as vets remain responsible for patients referred to non-vets. The number of member bodies in such professions is not workable and impacts integrity and upholding professionalism. For example, one body should regulate APBC, ABTC, APDT, etc.</li> </ul>

**Question 6: Separating the Chair of RCVS Council from the Presidency**

Queries	Evidence	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not clear whether the proposal is for president and Chair to be appointed or elected.</li> <li>• Will Chair be combined with CEO role?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence in management and business journals is that it is better governance to have a separate President and Chair.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However the thinking in director association and director institutes is that a chair is an existing member of a council or board, and is decided by board members, not as part of a separate election or appointment process. The president is either elected or selected based on recommendations from a nominations panel or committee. (NB – same respondent as provided evidence' comment)</li> <li>• Criteria for roles should be published</li> </ul>

<b>Summary</b>	
Meeting	Veterinary Nurses Council
Date	13 November 2024
Title	RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee Report to VN Council
Summary	This report sets out the work of the Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) Preliminary Investigation Committee (PIC)
Decisions required	None
Attachments	None
Authors	<p>Sandra Neary Professional Conduct Officer / Secretary to the RVN PIC <a href="mailto:s.neary@rcvs.org.uk">s.neary@rcvs.org.uk</a> / 020 7202 0730</p> <p>Gemma Crossley Head of Professional Conduct <a href="mailto:g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk">g.crossley@rcvs.org.uk</a> / 020 7202 0740</p>

<b>Classifications</b>		
<b>Document</b>	<b>Classification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Rationales<sup>2</sup></b>
Paper	Unclassified	N/A

**<sup>1</sup>Classifications explained**

Unclassified	Papers will be published on the internet and recipients may share them and discuss them freely with anyone. This may include papers marked 'Draft'.
Confidential	Temporarily available only to Council Members, non-Council members of the relevant committee, sub-committee, working party or Board and not for dissemination outside that group unless and until the relevant committee or Council has given approval for public discussion, consultation or publication.
Private	The paper includes personal data which should not be disclosed at any time or for any reason, unless the data subject has agreed otherwise. The Chair may, however, indicate after discussion that there are general issues which can be disclosed, for example in reports to committees and Council.

**<sup>2</sup>Classification rationales**

Confidential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To allow the Committee or Council to come to a view itself, before presenting to and/or consulting with others</li> <li>2. To maintain the confidence of another organisation</li> <li>3. To protect commercially sensitive information</li> <li>4. To maintain public confidence in and/or uphold the reputation of the veterinary professions and/or the RCVS</li> </ol>
Private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To protect information which may contain personal data, special category data, and/or criminal offence data, as listed under the General Data Protection Regulation</li> </ol>

# Registered Veterinary Nurses Preliminary Investigation Committee

## Report to VN Council

### Introduction

1. Since the last Report to Veterinary Nurses Council, there has been one meeting of the Stage 2 VNPIC which took place on 1 October 2024. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 12 November 2024.

### RVN Concerns received / registered.

2. Between 4 September and 31 October 2024, there were 12 new concerns registered in relation to RVNs. Of these 12 new concerns:
  - One case was closed by the Stage 1 VNPIC.
  - Eight cases are currently under investigation by the Stage 1 VNPIC
  - Three cases have been referred to the Stage 2 VNPIC.

### RVN Preliminary Investigation Committee

3. There have been two new cases considered by the Stage 2 VNPIC between 4 September and 31 October 2024. Of these, one case was closed, and one case was closed with formal advice issued to the Respondent. One ongoing case was considered and was referred to the VN Disciplinary Committee.

### Ongoing Investigations

4. Eleven concerns involving seven veterinary nurses are currently under investigation by the Stage 2 VNPIC, and these will be returned to the Committee for a decision in due course.

### Health Concerns

5. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Health Protocol.

### Performance Concerns

6. There are currently no RVNs being managed in the context of the RCVS Performance Protocol.

### Referral to Disciplinary Committee

7. Since the last report, one case has been referred to the VN Disciplinary Committee. The hearing dates will be confirmed in due course.



### Disciplinary Hearings

8. Since the last report, no disciplinary hearings have taken place in relation to veterinary nurses.