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care plans
post-CMA**

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through
change**



Over a third of pet parents expect to change vets in 2026

Get the 2026 Pet Parent Research Report

35% are likely to change their vet clinic in the next year

58% had issues when trying to book an appointment with their vet

29% decided against a clinic because of its website

73% often or always check reviews before choosing or switching vet

Vetstoria surveyed 2,000 pet parents in the UK and Australia about the importance of technology as part of the client experience. We explored expectations around communication and interactions with veterinary clinics, including digital services and websites. We also asked about overall levels of satisfaction with vet practices and likelihood to change vet.

Find out what pet parents are thinking



Get the report
vetstoria.com/research-vbj

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Leadership at every level ...



As our profession is reshaped by shifting client expectations and economic pressures, one thing is increasingly clear: uncertainty is no longer an occasional disruption but a constant companion. And, as we balance clinical complexity, client communication and operational demands, the accelerating pace of change is placing a significant strain on the well-being and performance of everyone working in the veterinary sector.

The recent CMA investigation has highlighted how rising operating costs and a widespread discomfort around discussing fees have contributed to the challenges we face. But, as we await its conclusions, we're already seeing innovative responses from veterinary teams, including more transparent pricing models, clearer client communication and greater use of technology to improve efficiency.

These adaptations reflect something the veterinary profession has always done well: evolve in response to changing circumstances. But, consultations on reform of the Veterinary Surgeons' Act, while welcome, are yet another reminder that the environment in which we work will continue to shift.

So, how do we build veterinary teams and businesses capable of thriving in this challenging environment?

The answer lies in our people, and in developing and embedding leadership skills and confidence at every level of practice. Leadership is no longer reserved for those with leadership in their title. It's a core capability that enables clearer communication, better decision-making and stronger resilience.

Continual personal and professional development is essential. When team members grow in self-awareness, confidence and leadership capability, they're better equipped to balance patient care, client care, team well-being and business performance. Strong leadership creates clarity, supports healthier communication and helps teams adapt without accumulating stress.

Collaboration and community are equally important. By learning from one another, sharing ideas and offering support, we create a collective strength far greater than any single organisation can achieve.

The only certainty is that change will continue – but with the right investment in leadership, development and professional networks, our profession can navigate it with confidence, clarity and shared purpose.

Rebecca Robinson, president of the Veterinary Management Group

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Independent practices raise fears about online pharmacy monopoly

Business regulators have been accused of not listening to the concerns of independent practice following the release of their final plans to reform the sector.

Two representative bodies have hit out after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) published its proposals late last month (24 March).

But other senior figures believe the new plans are “more workable” despite the continued prospect of significant change arising from them.

Much of the concern about the CMA’s proposals has been linked to the impact of its medicine reforms, which critics have warned could

force some practices to close.

The Federation of Independent Veterinary Practices (FIVP) has welcomed moves to raise the proposed prescription price cap from £16 to £21 for primary medicines.

But it warned of an emphasis on short-term client benefits as it argued the authority’s approach risked a “monopolisation” of medicines by larger groups.

FIVP chair Rita Dingwall said: “More than 90 per cent of independent vets agree that a move to online pharmacies will impact their ability to provide veterinary services to pets in need.

“We encourage pet owners to support their local independent vet and not online pharmacies, many of which are owned by corporates.”

Meanwhile, Progressive Veterinary Association director Iain McGill argued the published report summary implied the authority had “simply not heard the independent sector’s concerns”.

He said: “Perhaps unsurprisingly, this looks like a blueprint for a corporate takeover of the profession. There is no divestment and an undue focus on medicine prices, which will adversely impact independent practices.”

In brief

PETS AT HOME is set to open four new locations, including three Vets for Pets practices, after an investment of more than £3 million. The group opened a new retail space in Kew, London, and a relocated and expanded pet care centre in Glossop, Derbyshire, offering veterinary care and 24-hour emergency support. It will also open new Vets for Pets practices in Stockbridge, Sheffield and Giltbrook, Nottingham; it said the former will enhance local clinical capability while the latter will provide greater choice for routine and specialist veterinary care.

TEAROOM CONVERSION: An old village tearoom has been converted into a new practice for a Merseyside veterinary group. Rutland House Vets has opened a new site in Haydock, which will replace both its previous practice in the village and the Village Surgery in nearby Ashton-in-Makerfield. Two vets, five veterinary nurses and three support staff have transferred to the new site, which bosses say will consolidate services in a better facility.

Graduate job prospect concerns ease

Several prominent companies have indicated they expect recruitment to proceed in line with recent trends, despite fears of a difficult time ahead for new entrants.

Concerns first emerged in January when the RCVS council was told some of its largest firms were now taking on many fewer graduates.

Those fears were echoed by one new graduate who told *Vet Times* last month they had “never seen the job market so empty”.

However, while Association of Veterinary Students president Jayson Hughes acknowledged the present picture was now “less straightforward” for new graduates, he stressed informal feedback did not indicate a widespread lack of jobs.

He said: “Most final-year students do still seem to be securing jobs, but often with more emphasis on being flexible about location, type of practice or timing.”

CVS Group bosses insisted their graduate programme would proceed “absolutely as normal” this year while IVC Evidensia said it was still making substantial investment in its graduate scheme, and expected to recruit similar numbers to 2025.

XL Vets chief executive Andrew Curwen also reported no major difference in its graduate numbers, despite both changes in the wider marketplace and a growing trend of places being filled through longer term relationships originated in IMR or EMS work.

Despite concerns that some companies prefer graduates to have identified a practice they want to join, or already have links to, before they apply, he argued such a process “works both ways and clearly has advantages for all parties”.



Indy group celebrates first co-owner

A North Lincolnshire vet has celebrated becoming the first co-owner within a network of independent practices through a veterinary partnership programme.

Scott Kerss (pictured) has acquired a 25 per cent equity stake in Barton Veterinary Centre, Barton-upon-Humber, part of DNA Vetcare's group of independent vets, having joined the practice as a senior vet in 2024.

Dr Kerss was offered the ownership opportunity after raising the possibility of partnership during a quarterly review.

He said: "I really enjoy being part of a team. I really enjoy leading a team and supporting their progress."

"The natural progression of that is to either end up in a clinical director role, in a partnership role, or go and set up your own practice."

Plans are also in place to expand



the practice and extend opening hours to seven days per week to enhance capacity, as well as for the installation of advanced diagnostic equipment including a CT scanner.

DNA Vetcare owner Dane Walker said: "We're delighted to welcome Scott as a partner at the brilliant Barton Veterinary Centre in what is a proud and meaningful milestone for DNA Vetcare."

"Scott is the first employee to enter into a partnership with us and he has already been a key part of DNA Vetcare's journey."

Partnership ecosystem announced by the VMG

The VMG has launched a "partnership ecosystem" to provide new opportunities for veterinary employers, professional bodies and sector suppliers to support its membership.

Three types of partnership are on offer:

- Leadership development partnerships: these are available to large veterinary groups, multi-site practices, national charities, hospitals, laboratories, pharmaceutical and tech companies.

In return for their support of the VMG's members and ILM-accredited qualifications, leadership development partners receive benefits including tiered discounts on qualifications, membership and congress attendance.

- Member benefit partnerships: these offer veterinary suppliers structured marketing and engagement opportunities with VMG members, offering visibility, priority congress opportunities and digital promotion.

- Strategic alliance partnerships: these offer associations, representative bodies and networks opportunities to collaborate in the promotion of veterinary leadership through joint initiatives, communications and events.

VMG President Rebecca Robinson MRCVS said: "With the launch of our partnership ecosystem, we're inviting organisations from across the sector to help us bring about a happy and healthy veterinary world built on excellent leadership."

For more information, visit the VMG website.

In brief

PET NUTRITION pioneer Omni has announced sales growth of 200 per cent since appearing on Dragons' Den in February 2025. Founded by vet Guy Sandelowsky and former finance executive Shiv Sivakumar (both pictured), Omni closed the year with £8.4 million in sales, up from £2.7 million in 2024 and £1.2 million in 2023. During the past 12 months, the company has grown annual recurring revenue (ARR) tenfold, reaching £11 million by January 2026.



A MAJOR veterinary group has unveiled a new regional training centre it hopes will help more clinicians to access education closer to their own practices. Courses have now begun at the new CVS facility following several months of building work at the site adjacent to its Bristol Veterinary Specialists practice. Officials say the facility will match the CPD offered at its existing training site in Harrogate and hope it will make training more accessible to practitioners working across Wales, the midlands and south-west England.

VETSalUS HAS appointed the former AnimalhealthEurope vice-president Adam Estrup as its incoming chair. Mr Estrup (pictured) worked alongside outgoing chair Katrine Lawaetz through a handover period until he was formally appointed as chair and board director at the VetSalus board meeting in March.



CVS chief executive confirms plans to go

The CEO of one of the UK's largest veterinary groups is set to step down from the role.

Richard Fairman has informed the board of CVS of his intention to retire for "personal reasons", sparking a search to find a successor to the man who led the business through the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation process and oversaw its move to the Main Market of the London Stock Exchange.

After joining CVS in 2018 and assuming the role of CEO in 2019, Mr Fairman also led the company's expansion into the international market with a growing number of practice acquisitions in Australia.

He said: "While I will be stepping down for my own personal reasons, I remain firmly committed to supporting the business and ensuring continuity as the search for a successor begins and an appointment is made.

"With clarity provided by the CMA outcome, a rapidly expanding presence in Australia and a growing UK business with acquisitions back on the agenda, I believe the outlook for CVS is positive and the group is well-positioned to attract a high-calibre successor."

Since 2019, CVS has seen EBITDA almost triple, with the business now employing a total workforce of around 9,000, including 2,500 vets



and 3,300 vet nurses and patient care assistants across almost 500 practices.

Mr Fairman will remain in post until a successor as CEO can be found.



Diagnostics company tops 'Innovation World Cup'

A veterinary diagnostics company has taken the top spot at a global innovation competition for wearable and health technologies.

FluoretiQ Limited saw off competition from more than 210 companies to be crowned in first place at the Hong Kong MedTech Innovation World Cup 2026 earlier this month.

The University of Bristol spinout – the only company among 11 finalists presenting a veterinary health product – won with its Veri-5 Vet product, a diagnostic tool designed to identify the most common canine and feline UTI pathogens directly from urine.

Veri-5 Vet is said to work within 15 minutes with 91 per cent sensitivity and 92 per cent specificity, enabling vets to target pathogens with the right antibiotics at the point of care during the consultation window.

FluoretiQ chief executive and co-founder Neciah Dorh said: "The Hong Kong MedTech Innovation World Cup win is a major boost for us, and positions FluoretiQ as a leading voice in global MedTech innovation with a mission grounded firmly in improving outcomes for animals, their owners, and the veterinary professionals who care for them.

"We are especially honoured to receive this award at the first Medtech Innovation World Cup to be hosted in Hong Kong in 10 years."

anval

FOR SALE PRACTICE + 2 FREEHOLD PROPERTIES

Anval is currently marketing a long-established and successful 100% SA practice for sale in a city on the south coast of England, with the current owner looking to retire. Out-of-hours provision is in place and the two sites would both have options to extend and develop the premises.

The practice is delivering good profits on a turnover of £700K. It would suit one or two vets looking to run their own independent business and should offer a good return on investment.

Further details can be obtained from Ewan McNeill on 07976 671482 or enquiries@anval.co.uk

ECO Animal Health surpasses global expansion expectations

ECO Animal Health Group issued a bullish trading update for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2026, revealing that both revenue and profitability are set to exceed market expectations.

The global animal health company, which primarily focuses on pigs and poultry and has an expanding portfolio divided between a market-leading antibiotic and a range of vaccines, projects a year-on-year revenue increase of approximately 8 per cent, reaching an estimated £86 million.

This growth was spearheaded by robust performances in the North American and Latin American markets.

Beyond top-line growth, ECO reported a "material increase" in adjusted EBITDA, which is expected to land significantly ahead of the 2025 figure of £7.3 million. Final audited results are expected in early July 2026.

Building loyalty with health care plans in new era of transparency



Image: Guillermo Spelucín / Adobe Stock

This recent testing time for the veterinary sector creates a chance to show what good animal care looks like. Thom Jenkins feels it is a time to make health plans shine...

Thom Jenkins



is co-founder and chief executive of PetsApp, a client engagement app used by more than 170 practices across the UK. He has served as chief operating officer for veterinary groups in both the UK and Asia. Thom was the inaugural chairperson of VetForum in the UK, US and Asia-Pacific and also sits on the board of YLD, a software engineering and design consultancy.

It has been a bruising couple of years for the UK veterinary professions. The CMA's market investigation. The BBC *Panorama* documentary. Cost-of-living pressures that have made every invoice a potential flashpoint. And through it all, veterinary teams, the people who bear the brunt on the front line, find their earnest reasons for choosing this important work cynically questioned.

Most practices I work with are already doing the things that the current scrutiny says the professions need to do better: communicating openly with clients, recommending based on clinical need and trying to make good care affordable. The frustration is real and it is legitimate. But the scrutiny is not going away. The CMA investigation highlighted a raft of issues across the sector, Defra is consulting on Veterinary Surgeons Act

reform and public awareness of veterinary pricing has permanently shifted. For clinic owners considering whether to launch or refine a health care plan, all of this might feel like a reason to step back.

I would argue the opposite. The current climate presents an opportunity to demonstrate exactly what good veterinary care looks like: transparent, relationship-focused, and genuinely aligned with pet welfare. Done properly, health care plans embody these principles. Done poorly, they become precisely the kind of opaque commercial practice that erodes trust.

Current landscape

The CMA's provisional decision identifies several concerns that directly relate to how veterinary practices structure and communicate their services. Chief among

→ page 7 continued

these are transparency around pricing, clarity about ownership and affiliations and ensuring that commercial interests do not unduly influence clinical recommendations. These are not unreasonable expectations; for many of us they reflect not only what any of us would want when entrusting someone with our family member's care, but also what we already seek to provide to our patients.

Simultaneously, the profession faces genuine operational pressures. Staff well-being remains a critical concern, with RCVS surveys showing broad and consistent agreement that ours is a stressful line of work. Recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges. The economics of providing high-quality care are genuinely difficult, particularly for practices committed to

fair wages and sustainable working hours.

Health care plans, when designed thoughtfully, can address both sets of concerns. They can provide the predictable revenue that supports sustainable business practices while simultaneously improving preventive care uptake and strengthening the relationship between practice and pet owner. The key lies in how they are structured and communicated.

Membership thinking

A fundamental distinction exists between transactional businesses and relationship businesses. Transactional businesses optimise for individual purchases; relationship models focus on continuity of care over an individual's lifetime. In veterinary medicine, this distinction matters enormously for

patient outcomes.

Consider how pet ownership actually works. A pet joins a family, ideally receives preventive care throughout their life, occasionally requires treatment for illness or injury and eventually reaches the end of their life. The practice that sees this owner once for vaccinations and then not again until a crisis may have missed several patient advocacy opportunities. The practice that maintains regular contact, prompts appropriate preventive care and is present throughout the pet's life story has fulfilled its role as a health care provider.

Health care plans facilitate this ongoing relationship. By bundling essential preventive care into a monthly subscription, they reduce the friction that leads to missed vaccinations, lapsed parasite prevention and skipped health checks.

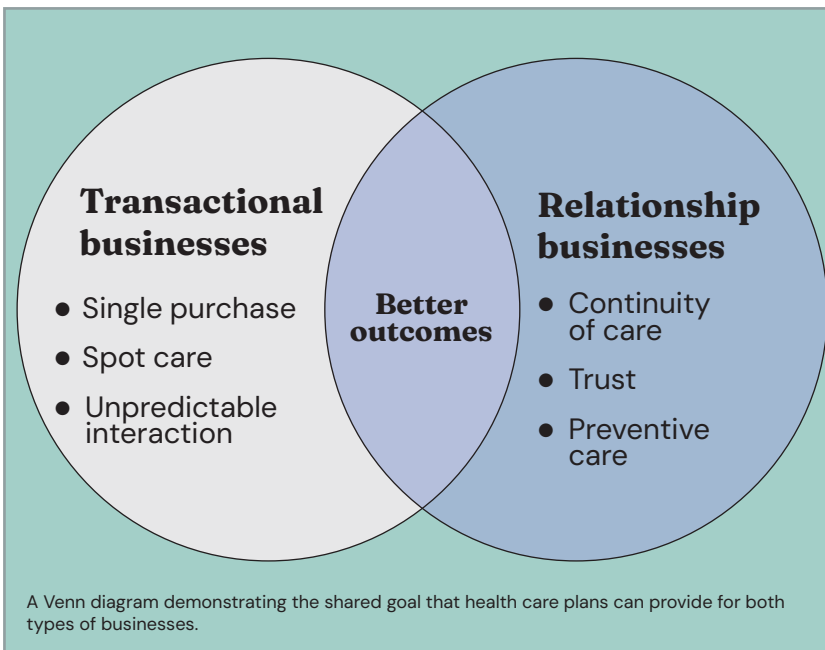
The pet owner commits to a relationship; the practice commits to proactive care.

This is not merely a commercial observation. The persistent and widening gap in preventive care uptake across the UK pet population is well documented by PDSA and others. Research from large-scale international studies shows that pets enrolled in health care plans receive more consistent preventive care than those attending on an ad hoc basis. They also present earlier when problems arise. The loyalty that develops is not transactional, but relational, earned through demonstrated value.

Three ways to pay

One of the most useful conversations any practice can have with a client, and one that too often gets compressed into a leaflet rack, is helping them understand that there are three distinct ways to manage the cost of their pet's care. Pay-as-you-go covers everything at the point of need. Pet insurance exists for the unexpected. And a health care plan covers the expected: the routine preventive care your team will be recommending as a matter of course.

Insurance is something you have but hope you will not need. A health care plan covers what your pet will benefit from predictably, every year. The two are complementary, not interchangeable. Practices that take the time to explain this distinction clearly are genuinely helping their clients make better decisions, and it is the kind of conversation that



builds trust precisely because it is not trying to sell anything.

The right choice for an owner is not always straightforward. I remember working in a clinic where the membership plan included neutering as standard for puppies and kittens. One owner was adamant that he did not want his dog neutered, but equally adamant that he wanted his pup on the membership. I tried to explain that without the surgery, pay-as-you-go made more sense financially for him. He was offended: "Just because I don't want him neutered, doesn't mean I don't want the best for him."

That conversation has stayed with me because it reveals something about what clients are really asking for, and how they may feel judged for their choices. While payment clarity is certainly important, when you construct a membership you are, in fact, designing more than just another way to pay.

Designed to deliver value

The architecture of a health care plan communicates your values more clearly than any marketing material. Plans that emphasise discounts on medications available more cheaply online signal that the practice is competing on price. Plans that emphasise joined-up online-to-offline access, expertise, and comprehensive care signal that the practice is competing on value.

In the book *The Membership Economy* by Robbie Kellman Baxter,

he suggests four levers when designing your plan: volume, duration, features and service.

- **Volume** refers to how much of something is included. This might be unlimited digital consultations, a set number of in-person health checks or inclusive vaccinations. The key is ensuring that what you include genuinely promotes health rather than simply appearing generous on paper.

- **Duration** encompasses when services can be accessed. Extended hours for chat triage, evening access to digital advice or priority booking during busy periods all add genuine value for owners whose lives do not conform to traditional opening hours.

- **Features** include the specific products and services bundled into the plan. Here, focus on items that genuinely require veterinary oversight or benefit from your professional relationship. Vaccines, tailored parasite prevention, dental care and nutrition counselling fit naturally. Items where you cannot add professional value beyond mere supply probably do not.

- **Service** encompasses the quality of the relationship itself. Regular check-ins, personalised health reminders and responsive communication demonstrate that membership means something more than a payment arrangement.

Transparency: feature, not burden

The CMA's emphasis on transparency should not be viewed as an imposition. Practices

genuinely delivering value have nothing to hide; transparency is an opportunity rather than a compliance requirement.

Price transparency starts with publishing what your plan costs and what it includes. Be specific. If your plan includes particular vaccinations, a custom flea and tick prevention plan and two health checks, say so clearly. Provide the equivalent pay-as-you-go cost so that owners can see the genuine savings. If the saving is modest, acknowledge this and emphasise the other benefits: convenience, budgeting, the relationship.

One practical note: if your marketing claims savings, for example, "save up to £X" or "from £Y per month", the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) requires

substantiation, and "from" and "up to" figures must not exaggerate what is typically available. If you advertise savings, document how you calculated them. A simple spreadsheet showing your assumptions is usually enough. It protects you if challenged and forces clarity in your own thinking.

As Pete Orpin of SPVS observed in the wake of the *Panorama* documentary: "The 'expectation gap' is the problem. Unhappiness is directly related to the difference between expectation and reality."

Health care plans, communicated plainly, narrow that gap to almost nothing. The client knows what they are getting. The practice knows what it is delivering. There are no surprises. So, be equally

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PREMIER
VET ALLIANCE

Pet health plans require a human touch

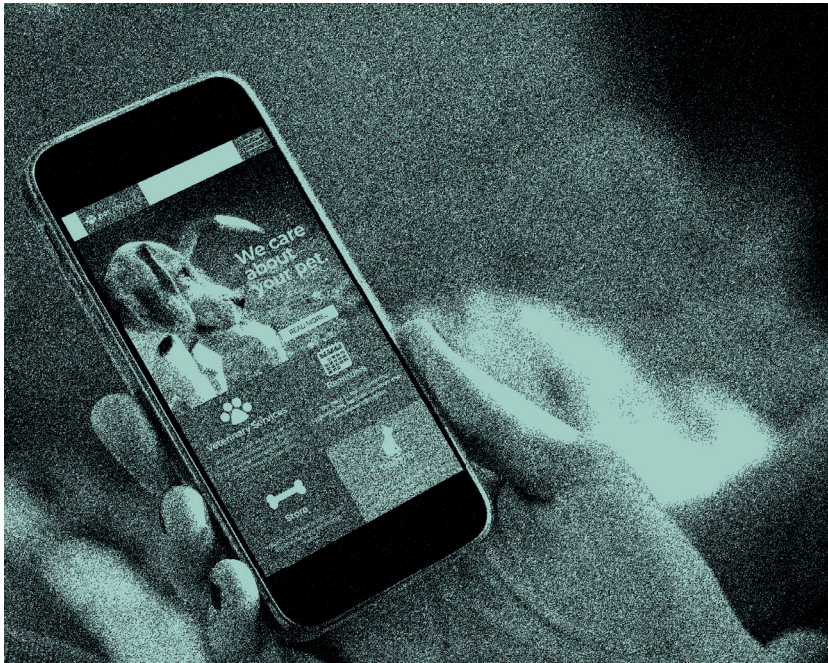
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→ page 9 continued

clear about what your plan does not include. Owners should never be surprised by additional charges. If dental treatment beyond a basic assessment incurs extra costs, explain this upfront. If emergency care is separate, make this explicit.

Cat owner opportunities

Cat owners present a particular challenge and opportunity. Data consistently shows that cats receive less preventive veterinary care than dogs. Many cat owners believe they are

being kind by avoiding the stress of veterinary visits: for themselves, for their pet and for the veterinary team. They think they're doing everyone a favour by staying home. However, they often do this without realising the potential for problems to develop undetected.

Health care plans that incorporate digital touch-points can bridge this gap. A messaging service that allows owners to share photos or videos when they notice something concerning reduces the threshold for seeking advice. It allows them to sense-check whether a particular issue justifies the stress

of a visit. In addition, regular health reminders delivered digitally maintain engagement outside of clinic visits. When visits are necessary, the established relationship makes them feel less transactional.

The key insight is that cat owners are not negligent; they often simply have a different mental model of what their pet needs. Plans that meet them where they are, providing reassurance and guidance rather than simply demanding attendance, convert that concern into appropriate care.

Implementation: a team play

A health care plan is only as good as your team's ability to explain and deliver it. This requires genuine buy-in, not scripted sales pitches.

Start by ensuring your team understands why the plan exists and what it genuinely offers. Ideally it

was designed with them. If your whole veterinary team believes in the plan's value, this conviction will communicate itself naturally. If they see it as a sales target, they will likely reject it. Pet owners will also sense it, and the trust you are trying to build will not materialise.

Consider how plan membership integrates with your existing workflows. When a non-member presents for a service included in your plan, this is an opportunity to mention the plan's existence – not to apply sales pressure, but to ensure the owner knows the option exists.

When a member uses their plan benefits, acknowledge this positively. Small moments of recognition reinforce that membership is valued.

Digital tools can reduce the friction of client awareness, sign-up and ongoing management. Self-service sign-up, automated payment collection and digital delivery of member-differentiated reminders and communications allow your team to focus on clinical care rather than administrative processes.

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 introduces new rules for subscription contracts, including clearer pre-contract information, renewal reminders, cooling-off rights and easier cancellation. Implementation is expected in 2026.

Practices that already operate transparent, fair membership terms will be well placed when the new regime comes into force.

“A well-structured health care plan is one of the clearest things a practice can offer. No hidden agenda. No fine print. Just our best clinical thinking, made accessible to you and yours.”

Measuring what matters

The temptation is to measure plan success purely in commercial terms: sign-up rates, retention rates, revenue per member. These metrics matter, but they are not the whole story.

Consider also tracking clinical outcomes: are plan members receiving their preventive care on schedule? Are they presenting earlier when problems arise? Is their lifetime relationship with your practice longer and more consistent? These metrics tell you whether your plan is achieving its stated purpose of better pet health and better relationships.

A poorly constructed plan can distort behaviour. It encourages interventions that are not clinically indicated, or makes it harder to tailor

care to the individual animal, it should be redesigned or abandoned. You want to ensure you have the right measures to spot when such an intervention is necessary. The plan must serve the medicine, not the other way around.

Customer effort score and related satisfaction measures help you understand the owner experience. If members find the plan confusing or feel that promises are not being kept, this will eventually manifest in cancellations, but measuring satisfaction allows you to identify and address problems earlier. Capturing the reason at time of cancellation is also a valuable source of insights.

Retention rates deserve particular attention. Cross-industry data from RevenueCat suggests that

consumer subscription services typically see first-year renewal rates between 17 per cent and 40 per cent, with exceptional performers achieving above 50 per cent. Veterinary health plans can and should exceed these benchmarks because the underlying relationship is stronger and the value more tangible. Practices achieving retention rates at or above 85 per cent are demonstrating that their plans genuinely serve their members.

Meeting the moment

The CMA's final decision is now in. Defra is moving on Veterinary Surgeons Act reform. New subscription contract regulations are on the horizon. For many in our profession, this period of scrutiny has felt disproportionate and poorly informed. The impact on morale,

particularly on the front line, has been real and damaging.

But the best response to being misunderstood is not defensiveness. It is clarity.

A well-structured health care plan is one of the clearest things a practice can offer: here is what your pet needs, here is what it costs, here is how we will deliver it and here is what is not included. No hidden agenda. No fine print. Just our best clinical thinking, made accessible to you and yours.

It is not a loyalty programme. It is good veterinary medicine, structured so that more people can say yes to it. The loyalty, when it comes, is earned. And the veterinary professions have been earning it, quietly and without enough credit, for a very long time.

Business Survey

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Make sure your PMS keeps pace with your practice

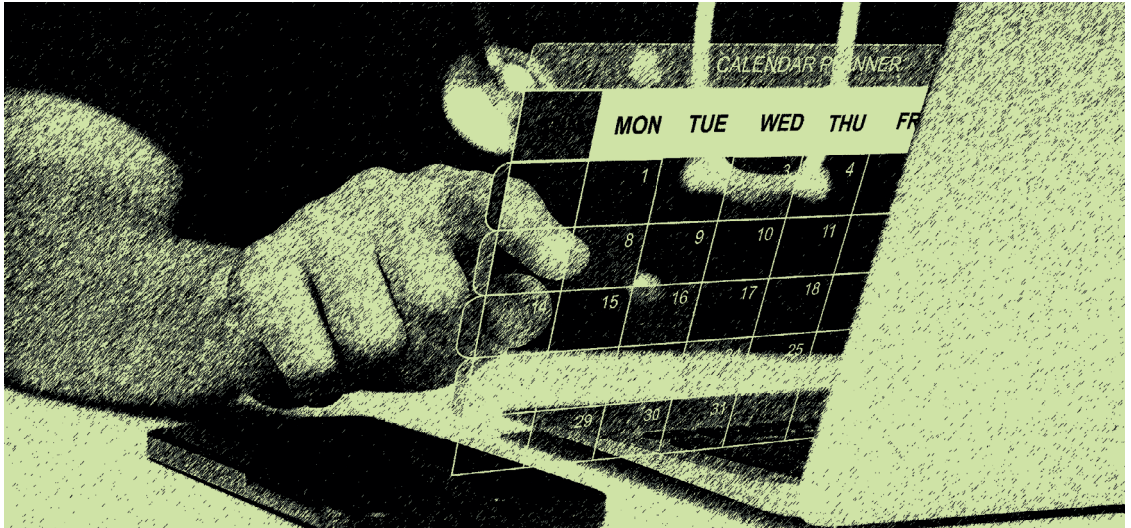


Image: boonstudio/ Adobe Stock

Is your practice management system a backbone or a bottleneck? Tony Houghton explores how modern, AI-integrated software streamlines clinical workflows and reporting, ensuring your veterinary practice remains scalable, resilient and focused on patient care...

Tony Houghton



is the MD and founder of VetIT. With a passion for client relationships and technology, Tony combines expert industry knowledge with best practices to drive product innovation and maximise software capabilities to benefit veterinary practices.

As technology rapidly develops, a veterinary practice is only as efficient as the systems that support it. One of the most fundamental technologies used by a vet team is the practice management system (PMS), forming the backbone of both clinical record-keeping and operational management. It underpins how patient data is captured and shared, while also enabling effective oversight of workflows, staffing, reporting and communication across the business.

When first introduced, your PMS was designed to support the needs of the practice as they existed at the time, alongside anticipated developments. As practices have evolved, PMS software itself has developed rapidly into a streamlined, integrated tool that underpins more connected, scalable and resilient veterinary practices.

New technology additions and the growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) mean that developers of the software are constantly finding new ways to support veterinary teams and make working in practice easier.

Is your system keeping up? How are the newer technologies taking leaps towards supporting more sustainable and profitable growth? And where is AI helping the movement?

Is PMS hindering rather than helping?

When a PMS no longer aligns with how a practice actually operates, inefficiencies can arise that begin to hinder the practice workflow. When left unaddressed, this can risk becoming a normal part of operations. For example, if clinical teams are spending excessive time navigating the system to search for

information or update records, the software is no longer supporting efficiency. This might present as a slow system with limited functionality or options that are difficult to find. A PMS should improve processes, not slow them down. This also applies in a reception and practice management setting. For example:

- Can you quickly find the relevant client notes in the PMS?
- Is it a simple task to keep track of client invoicing?
- Are reports and key business metrics readily available and presented in a logical way?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, your PMS could be holding you back.

You may also notice that your PMS does not integrate effectively with other elements of your business. This can lead to information being duplicated across multiple platforms, increasing the likelihood of errors occurring. All of this leads to inefficiencies that slow down processes and have a negative impact on operational efficiency.

How PMS software is developing

A PMS was originally designed to remove some of the challenges and inefficiencies of managing a practice with manual, paper processes. This supported a huge step towards an efficiently managed diary and appointment list, as well as an ability to access administrative information from any location. However, a modern PMS is now no longer functioning alone as an isolated database.

Instead, new integrations



Image: Rudzhan Nagiev / iStock

and functions allow for an easier link to other aspects of practice management, such as enhanced scheduling, billing or stock management. Connectivity can also enhance the relationship between the PMS and suppliers, labs, wholesalers, insurers and more. The potential for greater integration is extensive, with clear benefits for improving efficiency across practice operations.

Introducing a PMS with a modular design allows a practice to create a system that is highly bespoke to it and allows the practice to add features as it grows. This is particularly beneficial for practices offering many different services or operating across multiple sites where a more rigid system may not fully reflect the complexities of the practice structure. A modular approach can help to develop a PMS that will grow and change alongside the practice, enhancing scalability and supporting growth.

AI and PMS

You've probably heard a lot about the significant developments in AI and PMS. Many practices are starting to use a PMS that integrates AI to help reduce administrative pressure by automating patient summaries, pulling together records and automating repetitive and laborious tasks like data entry.

When a returning patient visits, significant time is saved when records from prior appointments

and patient history are immediately accessible in the PMS. The addition of AI in this case can allow for specific summaries tailored to the needs of the vet or nurse to be generated at the click of a button or touch of a finger. This allows clinicians to keep their attention on the owner and removes the need to manually trawl through records to familiarise themselves with patient history.

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1. Zoetis Data on File. Phase IV Study Report No. DHXMZ-US-25-285 (v1.0).
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→ page 15 continued

AI is also increasingly being used as a scribe in consults, taking notes or producing transcripts of conversations between vets and pet owners.

AI isn't intended to replace the role or judgement of a clinician. Instead, by streamlining administrative tasks, it can free up valuable consultation time, allowing veterinary teams to focus on meaningful conversations with clients and a deeper understanding of the animal's needs.

This in turn supports more informed and confident clinical decision-making. These efficiencies can deliver significant time savings, enabling clinicians to be more present during consultations and

strengthen relationships with both patients and clients.

Should you upgrade your PMS?

If you're noticing that your PMS isn't as helpful as it once was, should you consider upgrading?

A PMS upgrade can have significant workload and productivity benefits across the whole veterinary team, with different members finding benefit in different aspects of the software.

- Practice managers and owners can benefit from a PMS that provides easy access to reports at the click of a button, saving time that would otherwise be spent manually collating and analysing data. AI integrations can further personalise reporting, tailoring insights to specific areas



Image: chinmarach / Adobe Stock

of the practice. With clearer, more relevant data, practice managers are better equipped to plan ahead, monitor performance and make proactive adjustments to staffing, spend and workflows.

- The reception team can benefit from a highly organised system to handle data in a convenient and manageable way. Centralising records keeps all information in one place, reduces the risk of duplication and improves client communication and transparency. Modern PMS software also builds in additional levels of security and data protection measures to safeguard client and patient information and support compliance with data protection requirements.

- Vets and nurses can see several benefits in the consult room. With easy access to well-organised clinical records, histories and test results, clinicians can stay focused on the client and patient rather than admin. By removing friction from the consultation process, a modern PMS helps support confident clinical decision-making, clearer communication with clients and colleagues and

better clinical outcomes.

- For the whole practice team, an efficient PMS can improve internal communication by centralising client and clinical information in one shared system, reducing the risk of miscommunication and supporting clear, consistent handovers. Built-in task and messaging tools keep conversations and actions within the PMS, helping teams coordinate effectively and access the information they need at the point of care.

Conclusion

In summary, the rapid developments in technology are providing new opportunities to support busy vet practices and their teams. If you haven't taken a good look at the efficiency of your PMS recently, now might be the time to do so.

An effective PMS should be modern, trustworthy, easy to use and effective in supporting the operation of your practice and your team's workflows. Used effectively, a modern PMS provides the structure and flexibility practices need to adapt, scale and deliver high-quality care in an increasingly complex and demanding environment.

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Leading from the front – VMG launches three tiers of change

The veterinary sector offers plenty of opportunities for the development of clinical skills and expertise, but when it comes to leadership and management, the picture is much less positive. As the association for veterinary leaders and managers, the Veterinary Management Group, is working hard to change this...

As part of the VMG's drive to make leadership training and support more accessible, relevant and practical, we've just launched a new membership model. The headline change is the creation of three distinct membership tiers, designed to support you at every stage of your leadership career.

They are as follows:

- **Associate membership**

– for those not yet in a formal leadership role, but with the ambition to get there.

- **Professional membership** – for those already leading people or practices.

- **Qualified membership** – for those with a higher-level leadership qualification, such as the VMG's ILM-accredited award, certificate or diploma in veterinary leadership and management, or an equivalent level five qualification. These new tiers reflect the reality that leadership development is not linear. The support you need evolves at each stage of your journey.

In developing our new model, we've focused on delivering tangible value. For example, every member receives an annual VMG professional development voucher – a direct contribution towards further learning. Associate members

receive £50, professional members £100 and qualified members £150. It's a simple idea, but one we hope actively supports continuing education, rather than simply providing passive resources.

Practical benefits

Members also receive a range of practical benefits. The member rate for VMG Congress tickets alone can offset the cost of membership, while free access to webinars, "microbursts" – short, practical online learning sessions – provide regular opportunities to learn and develop expertise across a wide range of subjects. Topics covered recently via a microburst include Making SOPs Work in Real Life, Leading Gen Z, Meaningful 1:1s and Understanding Neurodiversity in Practice.

We've also tried to keep the cost of membership as affordable as possible. Annual membership starts at £99 plus VAT for associate members, rising to £179 plus VAT for the professional and qualified tiers. Where CPD budgets are so often stretched, accessibility really matters.

For me though, one of the most important aspects of our new offer is the emphasis on community. Associate members are encouraged to participate in discussion groups tailored specifically to them, while qualified members

benefit from a dedicated alumni-style community exploring career growth and dealing with more complex leadership challenges.

A clear focus

We already offer peer support mentoring for professional and qualified members and will shortly be introducing "reciprocal mentoring" – pairing experienced managers with associate members.

And beyond leadership theory, we're keeping a clear focus on supporting our members through the realities of running veterinary businesses day to day. They already gain access to a growing bank of resources covering everything from CMA and VSA reform to practice standards and workplace incivility.

In addition, benefits offered by our company partners include HR and health and safety helplines, cybersecurity guidance and a variety of operational tools.

Taken together, the offer begins to look less like a traditional membership package and more like a practical toolkit for modern veterinary leadership. Our goal is a happy and healthy veterinary world built on excellent leadership. At a time when the sector is facing increasing complexity – from workforce challenges to regulatory pressures – this goal feels more important than ever.

Chris White



is a director of the VMG and its director of operations

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The hidden cost of HR – and what to do about it



Technology Insight

Agilio Veterinary on why good HR isn't a back-office function, and the tool that's changing how practices think about it...

For many independent veterinary practices, HR has become one of the most complex and overlooked parts of running a business. Practice managers juggle rotas, contracts, staff records and absences across spreadsheets, inboxes and shared drives – one overloaded inbox at a time, with no single system to hold it in place.

These pressures sit alongside well-documented workforce challenges in the profession. Research has highlighted high levels of burnout among veterinary professionals¹, with one recent study finding nearly one in five (19.8 per cent) veterinarians reporting a diagnosis of anxiety or depression² – a figure that speaks to a profession feeling the strain.

The daily reality for

many practice managers is fragmented systems and a constant stream of administrative tasks, with a nagging anxiety about whether training records, contracts and staff information are actually up to date. The cognitive load alone of knowing what needs doing and remembering when something hasn't been done, all while trying to run a clinic, is its own form of burnout that rarely gets named as such.

The RCVS Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) – adopted by around 69 per cent of practices³ – can bring those operational gaps into sharper focus during assessment periods, but it isn't the root cause. The challenge sits in the day-to-day reality of managing people and records across fragmented systems.

Business foundations

"There's a tendency to view HR as background admin," says Emma Barnes, managing director of emerging markets at Agilio Veterinary. "The reality is that HR is key to the foundations of any business. Organised processes with staff members at the heart really can make or break a practice.

"When managers have visibility of contracts and records, and staff feel supported through clear onboarding and transparent policies, the whole practice runs more smoothly."

Platforms such as iTeam, built specifically for veterinary practices rather than retrofitted from a generic HR tool, are beginning to make that shift more achievable. "We kept coming back to the same question," explains Emma. "How do we give practice owners and managers confidence and control, without asking them to become HR experts?"

"Culture and leadership matter just as much as the software. But the right tools mean the admin stops getting in the way of both."

In practice, that means bringing HR records, training documentation and absence management into a single system. The live absence calendar gives an instant view of who's in, who's off and where the gaps are – sortable by role, so a head nurse, for example, can see the nursing rota at a glance. Absence limits can also be set per role, giving practice managers a straightforward way to manage leave fairly and consistently across the team.

Staying on top of records

The need for visibility is crucial for practice managers. "Managers know what they're supposed to have in place," says Emma. "They just don't always have a reliable way of knowing whether they do. When you're also trying to run a business, that lingering doubt is exhausting."

Having policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and staff documents stored and tracked in one place gives managers the day-to-day confidence of knowing everything is in order. A self-service option also allows staff to complete their own HR checks, without everything falling to the practice manager.

The same logic applies to CPD. The integration of iLearn Vet into iTeam provides an at-a-glance view of where each team

member stands with training and certification, with automatic reminders before anything lapses. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and HR compliance tasks work the same way. It won't eliminate every complexity, but it means the basics aren't what catches you out.

Putting people first

One of the less obvious drains on a practice manager's time is the volume of small requests that land on their desk. "A locum checking their contract details, or someone asking for a rota change or how much leave they have left – it all adds up," says Emma.

She explains that iTeam's self-service portal helps with all those niggling administrative tasks – team members can access their own information directly, reducing the

back-and-forth and freeing managers up for the things that actually need their attention.

For more complex people matters, such as a difficult disciplinary or a tricky absence situation, iTeam includes optional access to dedicated HR advisors, so practices don't need to hire an HR director on top of everything else.

Future for practices

For Emma, the conversation doesn't stop at HR. "The admin pressure doesn't just come from one place, so we've always thought about iTeam as part of something bigger."

That next step is iRota, Agilio Veterinary's just launched rota management tool, giving practices clearer visibility of shifts, cover and capacity – integrating directly with iTeam so absence data and staffing decisions sit side by side.

"If a better system means a practice manager has an hour back in their week – an hour that goes towards caring for animals or their team – that in itself is worth it," says Emma.

Practices interested in learning more about how integrated HR platforms can support veterinary teams can scan the QR code to explore Agilio Veterinary's iTeam.



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Is your HR holding your practice back?

Today's practice leaders face enormous pressure to support teams with solid, reliable HR. This administrative burden is only growing, with DBS checks to complete, staff training and documentation to keep on top of, and practice policies to update.

But most HR systems aren't built for veterinary practices, which usually means there's one overwhelmed practice manager piecing HR information together across a maze of email chains and spreadsheets.

Built for veterinary practices

For practices looking for a tailor-made HR solution, iTeam can help. Developed by Agilio Veterinary, iTeam brings staff records, absence management, policies and standard operating procedures into a single system. Policies can also be assigned by role, so on any given day, for example, a vet nurse and a receptionist can each see what's relevant to them.

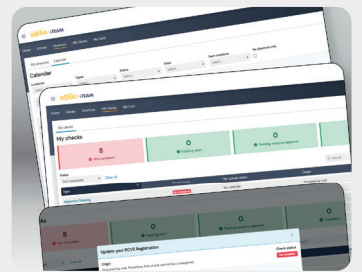
Day to day, that means less chasing and fewer gaps. Absence is managed through a live calendar that can be

filtered by job role, with limits on how many people can be off at once, so a vet surgeon can see quickly whether there's enough staff to cover a busy surgery morning. Compliance reminders run automatically in the background. And with iLearn Vet integration, CPD certificates and HR checks are tracked and flagged before they lapse.

What changes for your practice?

- No more hunting for paperwork. Records and documents are easily accessible and stored centrally, so you're always ready for an audit or inspection.
- Less admin landing on one person with self-service HR checks and automated workflows, meaning there's no longer a growing to-do list of small manual requests.
- Better staff retention with consistent onboarding, transparent policies and performance visibility, so staff feel supported and valued from day one.

For more complex people matters, such as a disciplinary, sensitive absence or a tricky contract, practices have optional access to dedicated HR



advisors. That means you're not alone with difficult situations, and there's no need for a costly in-house HR function.

Rota management just launched

Agilio Veterinary's rota management tool, iTeam Rota, will integrate directly with iTeam to give practices full visibility of shifts, cover and capacity.

Both systems connect to form an efficient people management and working planning platform, built around how vet practices operate.

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Managing change: coaching-led leadership in uncertain times



Image: koldo studio / iStock

The veterinary profession is in the middle of a period of significant structural change. Following years of rapid corporatisation and a prolonged CMA investigation, practices now face a raft of mandated operational changes. Here, executive coach and VMG director **Helen Mason** makes the case for coaching-led leadership during periods of change...

Helen Mason



is an executive and team coach with more than 20 years of experience working in the veterinary sector, including senior leadership roles at IVC Evidensia and MSD Animal Health. She is a board director at VMG and works with leadership development consultancy Ambito Partners, as well as her own private practice.

Not everyone processes change at the same pace. The change curve was developed by Scott and Jaffe, based on the Kübler-Ross grief model. It describes four stages people move through: denial, resistance, exploration and commitment¹.

Your job as a leader is to notice which stage each team member is in and adjust your approach accordingly. People move through these stages at different speeds and they rarely move as a group. Your receptionist may be quietly energised by a new pricing transparency framework while your senior vet is still in denial that anything needs to change at all. Research confirms that actively managing the emotional state of teams during times of change produces more positive reactions².

The practical implication: don't just communicate what

is changing, actively notice and respond to the emotional stage your people are in.

Empathy is strategic

Leaders in clinical environments are trained to fix problems. But rushing to solutions when people need to be heard first is one of the most common leadership mistakes during change.

The link between emotional intelligence and transformative leadership has been gaining momentum³, and Amy Edmondson's landmark Harvard research identified psychological safety, the belief that you can speak up without repercussion, as a significant factor in collaborative work when teams face uncertainty and change⁴. In other words, making it safe for people to voice concern is not a nicety, it's operational necessity.

In practice: start team meetings by asking how

people are doing with the changes, not just what's on the agenda. Acknowledge before you advise.

Model appropriate vulnerability

The instinct to project certainty during turbulent times is understandable – but counterproductive. Brené Brown's research demonstrates that leaders who acknowledge what they don't know build significantly more trust than those who perform confidence they don't have⁵. The key word is appropriate: this is not about sharing every anxiety with your team. It is about being willing to say, when it is true: "I don't have all the answers yet. Here is what I do know, and here is how we'll work through the rest together."

Teams led by leaders who demonstrate intellectual humility show

greater problem-solving capacity and hold more intrinsic motivation during organisational change⁶.

Ask more, answer less

When pressure mounts, the instinct is to direct. The evidence suggests asking works better. A coaching-oriented leadership style, leading with questions rather than solutions, consistently produces better engagement and performance outcomes⁷. David Marquet's work on intent-based leadership shows that shifting from "I give orders" to "I ask, you think, you act" creates more resilient, self-directed teams⁸.

Try replacing "Here is what we are doing about X" with "We need to meet this requirement by [date] – what are your ideas?" The outcome is the same;

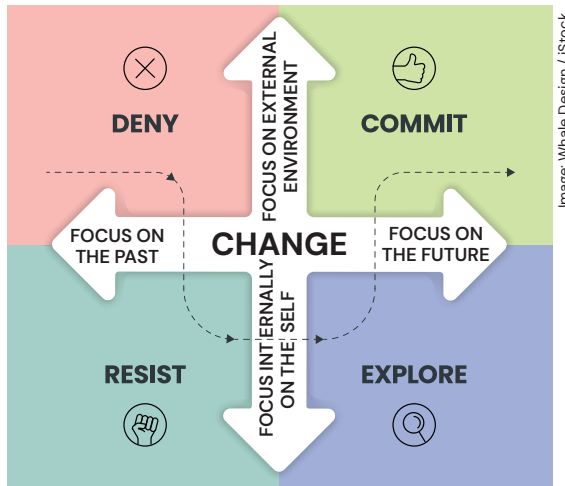


Image: Whale Design / iStock

the ownership and quality of solution are typically better. When someone raises a concern, respond with a question before an answer. It signals that their thinking matters.

Useful questions during change:

- "What would make this easier for you?"

- "What is working well that we want to protect?"
- "What do you need from me right now?"

Hold your standards

Here is something counterintuitive: maintaining clear standards and expectations is one

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of the most stabilising things you can do during a period of disruption. Teams cope better when their environment contains reliable anchors, and your professional standards are exactly that.

Some leaders relax all expectations during difficult periods, believing it to be a kindness. In practice, ambiguity about standards creates additional anxiety. Be flexible about how your team achieves outcomes but stay clear about what those outcomes, are and why they matter. Purpose is a genuine buffer against stress: teams with a clear sense of meaning in their work show greater resilience⁹.

Explicitly name what is not changing: “Our commitment to clinical

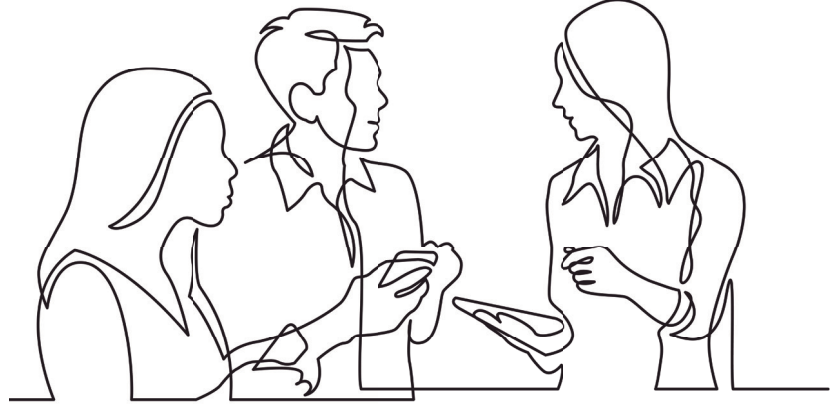


Image: OneLineStock / Adobe Stock

excellence and how we treat clients remains exactly what it has always been.” That continuity matters.

Communicate more

People tolerate uncertainty better than communication vacuums. When information is absent, teams fill the

gap with assumption and during change, assumption tends towards the negative¹⁰. The change management research suggests that communicating more frequently than feels necessary is the way forward. Be honest about what you know and don't know and give people a coherent narrative; where you've come from, why this is happening, where you're going. A short, honest and weekly update is worth more than a comprehensive one that arrives rarely.

Don't forget yourself

Leaders carrying a team through change need support, too. Research on leader burnout is clear: community and reflective spaces (a coach, peer group, or supervisor) are an antidote to burnout¹¹. If you don't already have this, now is the time to build it. You cannot reliably hold space for others if nobody is holding space for you. The VMG's ShareSpace sessions provide exactly this – and it's free for members.

For more information on the issues discussed in this article, visit the VMG website.

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Beacon View Vets

High Street, Eastry, Sandwich, Kent

Opening a vet practice that clients weren't allowed to enter for the first year of its life sounds like a recipe for disaster. But for Beacon View Vets in Kent it worked out just fine, as *VBJ* discovered when we caught up with the owners last month...

When coronavirus struck in March 2020, the way people lived and the way they worked changed almost overnight. A series of unprecedented lockdowns and social distancing rules had long and lasting impacts for many and – in the short term at least – they certainly had a big impact on the business plans of Claire and Josh Smith.

The pair had spent years

planning for the moment they opened the doors of Beacon View Vets in the village of Eastry, a few miles outside of Deal and Sandwich on the east Kent coast.

However, just three weeks after opening, the COVID pandemic meant their carefully curated launch plans had to be shelved and the whole client journey swiftly transitioned to the car park.

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Staff: full-time vets **6** | registered veterinary nurses **9** | practice administrator **6**
Fees: vet consult **£62** | nurse consult **£22**



Images: Beacon View Vets



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Car park vetting became a grim reality for practices across the UK and working without clients in the building proved to be a huge challenge for even the most established veterinary businesses, especially new practices like Beacon View.

But it is well known veterinary professionals tend to thrive in a crisis

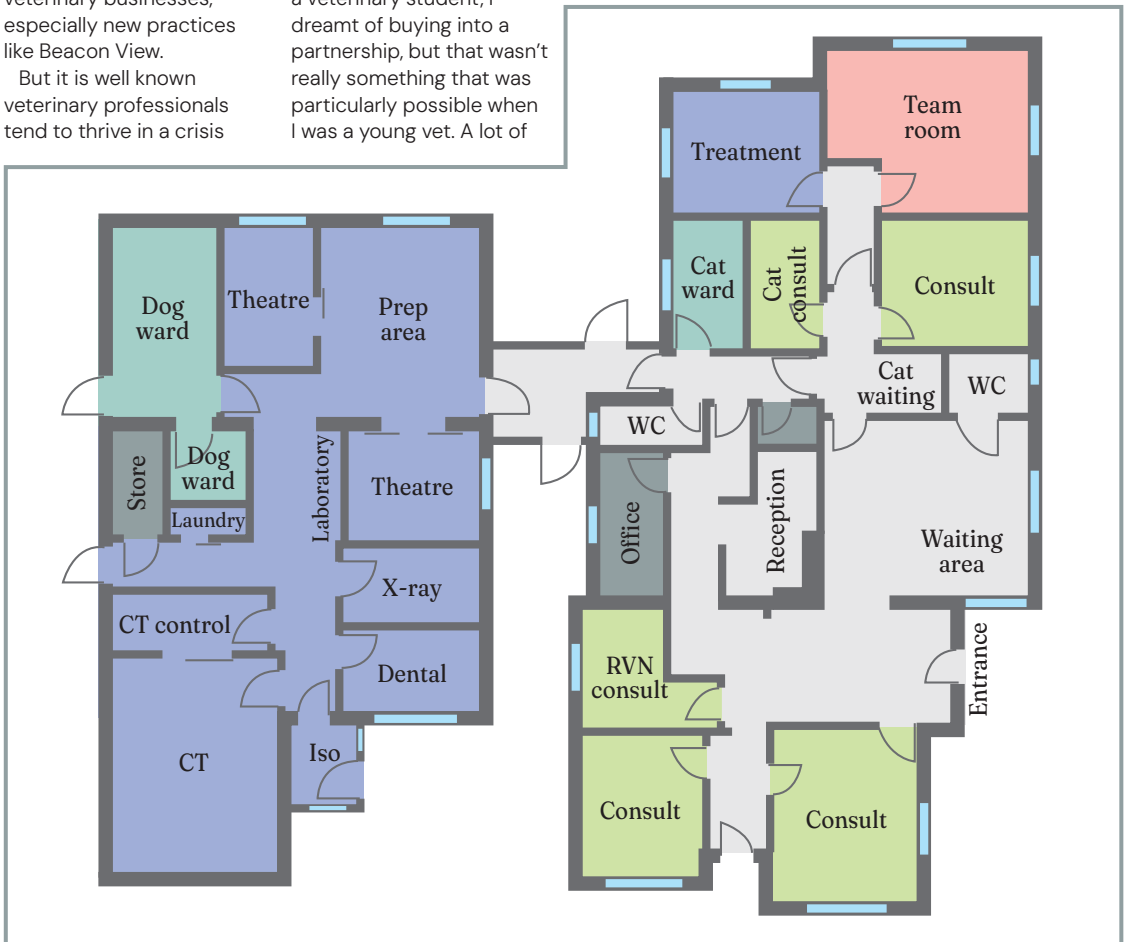
and so, despite not being able to showcase all their hard work, Claire simply rose to the challenge and pressed on with the next chapter of her childhood dream to become a vet and open her own practice.

She said: "When I was a veterinary student, I dreamt of buying into a partnership, but that wasn't really something that was particularly possible when I was a young vet. A lot of

people were just selling to the corporates at that time. It became obvious that starting up a new clinic was going to be the best long-term plan. We knew we had a good idea – we weren't re-inventing the wheel, but we knew

that there was a market there to create the vets we wanted to be.

"The responsibility was tough at times, especially going through COVID when things were really uncertain and not knowing if you'd have



a business that would survive and knowing you are responsible for the team's livelihood.

"And yet it worked out; we started with just me as the lone vet and two amazing nurses, and now Josh and I are managing 22 people in one of the most complex business environments there is."

Learning the ropes

Claire met Josh, a creative professional with specialist experience working with start-ups, while still studying at Cambridge vet school and when she graduated in 2015, the pair moved home to Kent where they lived in a flat above the practice where Claire landed her first job.

Josh and Claire both found this period extremely useful. For Claire it was her chance to learn the ropes as a practising veterinary surgeon, and for Josh it provided the perfect opportunity to learn the day-to-day challenges involved with running a practice.

He said: "When Claire first graduated, we were actually living above her first practice for a time, which gave me a real insight into day-to-day practice life. I was quickly struck by what an incredible profession it is, not just in the work itself, but the people. Everyone we have met on our journey has been open, supportive and united by a genuine shared purpose."

Once the couple had decided to press the button on their business plans, Claire left her first practice after five years to spend some time locuming across the Kent area.

This experience not only allowed her to grow her

savings, but it also gave her a clear idea of what she wanted from her own practice. "I've always been a believer in independent practices," said Claire. "My time spent as a locum really drove it home to me that for a practice to be successful, it's about the people, how the practice feels and how the clients experience interacting with that practice. For me, that time was very valuable as it reinforced how I could create a practice where I could enjoy a long-term career and invest in something meaningful and values-led."

But before they could invest anything, Claire and Josh needed to find the money to do so. But while the banks ultimately took some convincing, a strong business plan backed by extensive demographic work helped secure a loan to add to the savings they already had.

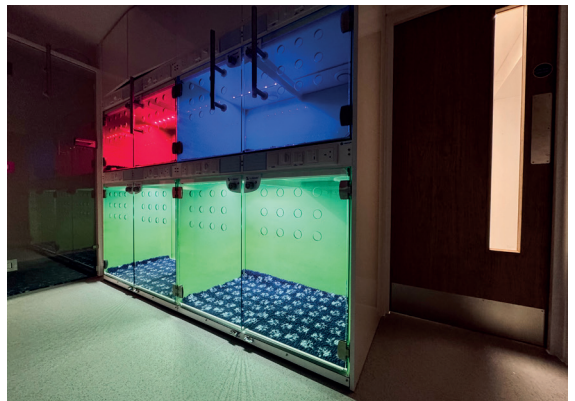
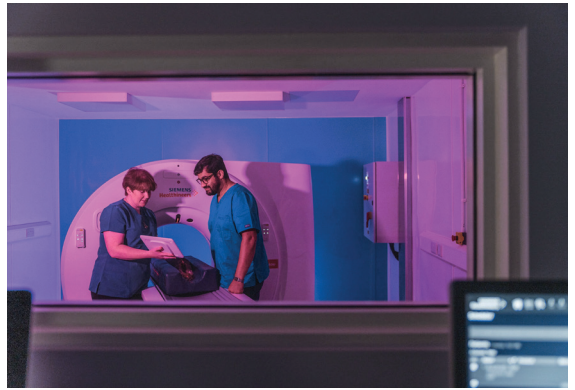
The next stage of the process was to find a suitable location. Josh and Claire looked at a number of different sites, including a unit on an industrial site, before finding an old doctor's surgery that had stood empty for two years.

Limited budget

But, as Josh explained, with a limited budget, securing the building was not straight forward. He said: "The retired doctors who owned the building were very clear that they wanted it to remain a community asset, rather than being redeveloped for housing, and they were only interested in selling rather than renting."

"That aligned well with what we wanted, but at the time purchasing the

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building outright wasn't financially possible for us. Through our accountants, we were introduced to third-party property investors who were looking for an opportunity, which ultimately made the project viable.

"Since then, we've been able to purchase the building ourselves, which has been a really important milestone for us. We'd like to think that, in time, we might be able to support others in a similar position."

The premises were secured just before Christmas 2019 and by doing a lot of the interior work themselves, Josh and Claire were able to keep costs well under control.

Claire said: "We managed a very rapid renovation – about eight weeks from getting the keys to opening the doors.

"We did so much of the renovation work ourselves, and honestly, I don't quite know how we got through it. I was still locuming and Josh was working in his other business, but every spare moment we had

we were at the practice, often from early morning until past midnight. We were incredibly lucky to have our family pitching in with the DIY, and more than that, really believing in what we were trying to do, even if it did feel like a bit of a mad plan at times."

Despite the relatively modest budget of £100,000 – a combination of a bank loan and savings – Beacon View opened with an impressive array of equipment. Braemar Finance helped secure hire purchase agreements for these big-ticket items, which included dental x-ray from the get-go which, as something of an evangelist for dentals, was "non-negotiable" as far as Claire was concerned.

"I could probably do a whole article about the importance of liking dentistry as a GP vet because that definitely helped us with our growth,"

Claire added. "There is so much opportunity to improve pets' health through dentistry."

Home from home

But it is the relaxed and welcoming environment in the practice that really stands; a carefully curated ambience largely created through the hard graft of Josh and Claire.

Claire said: "When you come inside, the environment is very intentionally calm. It doesn't feel overly clinical. It's clean and fresh, without being cluttered with advertising or promotions, and strikes a balance between being professionally simple and genuinely homely. We were very purposeful about how the building would feel, both to visit and to work in, and almost every room has natural light."

Beacon View also features sofas in the





consult rooms; an innovation Claire feels has had a big impact on how clients interact with the team.

She added: "That has been quite special. When people sit down, they naturally feel more relaxed, which helps them to explain their concerns more openly and feel like partners in their pet's care. The pets often settle straight on to the sofa as well. Clients regularly tell us they didn't realise a visit to the vets could feel like a positive experience."

Josh and Claire have taken great care to avoid creating a high volume and rushed practice environment, despite the rapid growth of the business that has seen Beacon View Vets further expand into a former residential bungalow next door. This building was renovated at the beginning of last year and now houses most of the practice's clinical inpatient functions as well as a new CT scanner.

This has helped preserve the feeling of "un-rushed calmness" in the main practice building, as Josh explained: "We've always been very mindful that we didn't want a high-volume, rushed atmosphere. We've always tried to keep our active client numbers much below

the national averages."

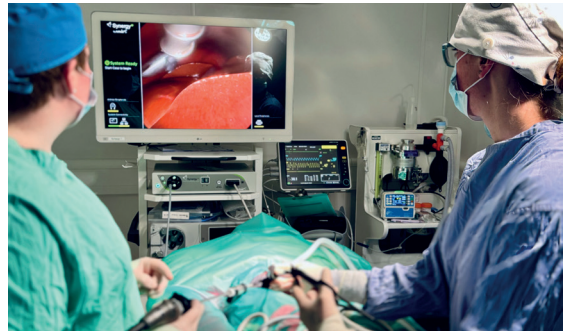
Claire added: "A lot of it was about owners feeling like they have time in the consulting room and not a sense of being rushed. From the beginning, we had longer consults; for us this meant providing better service for each client and having time to build those relationships."

A confident future

Since the beginning Josh and Claire have worked with independent veterinary consultancy firm Vet Dynamics, while membership of the Veterinary Management Group has also proved to be a big help as the business has grown.

"Having friends in the industry to talk things through with and bounce ideas off has been really powerful", said Claire. "It creates space to zoom out a little. In the start-up phase, you can become so focused on your own bubble that it's hard to see beyond it. You have to consciously make time to work on the business, not just in the business."

And while running any business – let alone a veterinary practice – is a lot of hard work, Claire says she still feels "blessed" to be able to work in such a rewarding profession in a clinical environment she has been



able to shape herself.

There is of course a measure of concern about the likely impacts of the CMA investigation on the sector, but Claire is confident Beacon View Vets and its people will continue to thrive.

She said: "We're very optimistic for the future, generally speaking, everyone adapts and moves on. There will always be people who love animals and people who love taking care of them.

"You need a real sense of pace, drive and ambition, especially in today's

veterinary world where you're often running just to stand still. A lot of people thought I was mad to start a practice so young, but actually it's given us the time and energy to really pour into it.

"At the same time, starting a practice is certainly not for everyone and you also have to accept that whatever you're building can't be everything to everyone and it's increasingly important to know what kind of service you are offering and the practice you want to be."

VMG CONGRESS 2026 PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 23RD APRIL 2026

8.30 - 9.00

Registration is open in the Hotel Reception

BALLROOM

9.00 - 9.45

Keynote Speaker - Victoria Humphries
Anything is Possible

9.45 - 10.15

ShareSPACE Live Introduction

EXHIBITION HALL AND ATRIUM

10.15 - 10.45

Exhibitor Introduction

10.45 - 11.15 - Coffee break

LEARN CHARLECOTE ROOM

11.15 - 12.15

**From Fear to Freedom:
Financial Mindset Workshop**

*Ruth Downs
Truth Financial*

SHARE BALLROOM

11.15 - 12.15

**ShareSPACE Live
Agenda Creation**

GROW HAREWOOD ROOM

11.15 - 12.15

**Veterinary Social Work – Findings from
Research, Stories from Practice**

*Rebecca Stevens
University of Sussex*

12.15 - 13.00 - Lunch

CHARLECOTE ROOM

13.00 - 13.45

**Walls that Work
The Secret to Happier Teams and
Better Performance**

*Fran Grigg
Creative Corridors Ltd*

BALLROOM

13.00 - 13.45

**ShareSPACE Live
Discussion Groups**

PACKWOOD

13.00 - 13.45

**ShareSPACE Live
Discussion Groups**

HAREWOOD ROOM

13.00 - 13.45

**The Art of Listening with The
Samaritans**

*Andrew Whitfield-Roberts
VMG*

14.00 - 15.30

**What's it Worth? The Secret
Sauce to Value-led Conversations**

*Rebecca Maher
InsideMinds Consulting Ltd*

14.00 - 15.30

**ShareSPACE Live
Discussion Groups**

14.00 - 15.30

**ShareSPACE Live
Discussion Groups**

14.00 - 15.30

**Managing Mental Health in the
Workplace: Managers' Guide to Having
Those Difficult Conversations**

*Rapinder Newton & Angharad Belcher
RCVS*

15.30 - 16.00 - Coffee break

CHARLECOTE ROOM

16.00 - 17.00

**Herding Cats: The Rx for
Successful Change**

*Ian Seath
Improvement Skills Consulting Ltd.*

BALLROOM

16.00 - 17.00

**ShareSPACE Live
Reflections**

HAREWOOD ROOM

16.00 - 17.00

Have You Taken Your Break Yet?

*Mireille Heald
Back to Active*

EXHIBITOR HALL AND ATRIUM

17.00 - 18.00

Exhibitor Happy Hour

BALLROOM ANTEROOM

19.00 - 19.30

President's Party Drinks Reception

BALLROOM

19.30 - 00.00

President's Party - This Year's Theme is 'Here Comes The Sun'



VMG CONGRESS 2026 PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 24TH APRIL 2026

8.00 - 8.45

Walk and Talk Along the River Avon

BALLROOM

9.00 - 10.00

**Affinity Futures
Cards Against Inclusivity**

10.00- 10.15 - Coffee break

LEARN CHARLECOTE ROOM	SHARE BALLROOM	PACKWOOD	GROW HAREWOOD ROOM
<p>10.15 - 11.30</p> <p>Cyber Escape Room - How Secure Are You?</p> <p><i>Jack Peploe</i> <small>Veterinary IT Services</small></p>	<p>10.15 - 12.30</p> <p>Community Space</p>	<p>10.15 - 11.30</p> <p>Sustainable Veterinary Retention</p> <p><i>Bethan Gray</i> <small>IVC Evidensia</small></p>	<p>10.15 - 11.30</p> <p>The People-Pleaser's Guide to Leading Teams</p> <p><i>Helen Mason</i> <small>Helen Mason Coaching</small></p>
<p>11.45 - 12.30</p> <p>Effective and Inclusive Onboarding and Induction</p> <p><i>Emma McGrath</i> <small>Citation Ltd</small></p>	<p>11.45 - 12.30</p> <p>Community Space</p>	<p>11.45 - 12.30</p> <p>Local Love: How to Become the Most Recognised Vet in Your Community</p> <p><i>Brooke Paul</i> <small>James Street Veterinary Centre</small></p>	<p>11.45 - 12.30</p> <p>How Do You Tell Your Story? The Impact of Values and Personal Narrative on Development</p> <p><i>Samantha Lympany-Tier</i> <small>Top Tier Consultancy</small></p>
12.30 - 13.15 - Lunch			
<p>13.15 - 14.45</p> <p>From Intent to Impact: Embedding Sustainability as a Responsible Veterinary Business</p> <p><i>Eleanor Lowen</i> <small>University of Sussex</small></p>	<p>13.15 - 14.45</p> <p>Community Space</p>	<p>13.15 - 14.45</p> <p>Stop Managing People. Start Leading High- Performing Teams!</p> <p><i>Tracey Morley Jewkes</i> <small>Tracey M J Veterinary Business Management Consultancy & Vetpreneur</small></p>	<p>13.15 - 14.45</p> <p>Emotional Boundary Management in Leadership</p> <p><i>Bronwen Williams</i> <small>Freelance Mental Health Nurse and Cobi Baillie</small> <small>Hartpury University</small></p>
14.45 - 15.00 - Coffee break			
<p>15.00 - 16.00</p> <p>Ignore Your Financial Information at Your Peril!</p> <p><i>Suzanne Headington</i> <small>Hazlewoods LLP</small></p>	<p>15.00 - 16.00</p> <p>Community Space</p>	<p>15.00 - 16.00</p> <p>The Power of Connection</p> <p><i>Helen Silver MacMahon</i> <small>Being Human Consulting Ltd</small></p>	<p>15.00 - 16.00</p> <p>From Heavy to Hopeful: Practical Strategies for Sustainable Leadership Growth</p> <p><i>Andy Green</i> <small>Andy Green Consulting Ltd</small></p>

Time to head home and reflect, we look forward to seeing you at Congress 2027.

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