

# Good Veterinary Workplaces: Taking action

## Make returning to work, work!

Thank you for being involved in the most recent 'Good Veterinary Workplaces – Taking Action' webinar.

You are well on your way to knowing how best to approach change in your practice, however big or small. We hope you are finding the talks useful, inspirational, and interesting.

We want you to be able to take something from each talk and put it into action, even if it is just a slightly different mindset or viewpoint that helps in the future. So, along with the help of the speakers you saw earlier, we have put together some bits and pieces to bookend your experience.

There are some feedback questions too, so [please complete](#) the survey if you would like to see anything done differently next time – these sessions are led by, and created for, the veterinary community, so we value your input.

## Speaker messages and take-home points

**Louise Withers and Vicky Jux both work at an ambulatory equine veterinary practice and had both taken periods of absence. In Louise's case, she had been out of the vet profession for 11 years before making a comeback, where Vicky supported her one day a week during her work. Vicky had been qualified for two years, so was technically less experienced than Louise, but they found the combination of their joint experience invaluable. Vicky eventually went on to take maternity leave, so returned after her own time-out. Here, they talk about what worked for them, what could have worked better, and the benefits of embracing staff returns in the veterinary profession.**

### Louise

- On returning to work: **"Vet work was part of my identity"**
- After finding a practice through asking her own horse's vet, they worked out together how best to integrate Louise back into vet work. This was arranged around childcare and school hours, **making it as straightforward as possible for both Louise and the practice to get the best from the induction.**
- During this induction period, which lasted nearly a year, Louise discussed with Vicky en route to next visit, all the things that had changed in equine medicine and practice which helped acclimatise to the environment.
- That first full week back into employment was **"terrifying but fulfilling!"**
- You realise that **veterinary muscle memory comes back quickly**, it's the academic knowledge that needs refreshing.
- Most importantly, I never felt like a burden to anyone at the practice. **A supportive workplace is everything.**

### Vicky

- When I was Louise's mentor, I was so grateful to have her with me as she was so knowledgeable and helpful even though 'out of practise'.
- **The days when Louise came to work with me were better than the days she didn't.**

## Good Veterinary Workplaces: Taking action

- My own return to work after maternity was on the condition of no OOH, which felt unheard of in equine, but that was incredibly supportive and **made it possible for me to come back**.
- **I had to have time to think about how I would return to the practice** as I wasn't sure what being a parent would entail and therefore didn't know what I could manage workwise.
- **I couldn't have come back to work if the role hadn't changed**, so I was very grateful for that as I did really want to work as a vet.

### Key Takeaways:

1. An improvement to the process would have been to include 'Back to work' meetings to go over any updates of workplace changes – simple things like where drugs may have been moved to, any diary or system updates etc. Although you learn that in time, a bit of prep before coming back would have been useful.
2. Not every practice can amend roles for you, but being supportive and as accommodating as possible whilst considering the wider team is crucial. It can be done, with some flexibility, and is so valuable to retain good staff who want to come back either to the same workplace, or the profession in general.
3. Having a mentor/mentee/buddy system is a really positive way to bring people back into work. It allows a more informal 'safe-space' style of work and re-learning.

### Thoughts from Rob Williams

**Rob hosted the conversation and asked the big questions in this session. He has a genuine passion and experience in the veterinary return-to-work area.**

### Key Takeaways

- It is possible to come back after veterinary work but **takes thought and communication**.
- Making return to work is so important for enabling clinical practitioners to be retained - doesn't matter what the reason for return to work is or the absence, but it can be done. **Shift the business model to ensure you don't lose staff!**
- Adapting and understanding any new drugs/methods/processes can feel like a struggle but is often the easiest bit to overcome – **make sure you make time for returners to understand these updates before coming back**.

Don't forget, our next Taking Action webinar is at **1pm on Wednesday, July 19<sup>th</sup> on the topic of 'That's not OK... How do we handle racism, discrimination, and unacceptable behaviour?'**. Register [here](#).

Click for more guidance around [BVA's Good Veterinary Workplace campaign](#), and of course if you are interested in becoming a BVA member, which gets you full access to the resources mentioned, then do check out different membership options: <https://www.bva.co.uk/join/>