

BVA submission to Migration Advisory Committee: Call for evidence Salary Threshold and Points-Based System Commission

Who we are

1. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the national representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK with over 18,000 members. BVA represents, supports and champions the interests of the veterinary profession in this country and we therefore take a keen interest in all issues affecting the profession.
2. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit a joint response to this call for evidence.

Key points

- Veterinary surgeons should be paid a professional salary that reflects their training, expertise and the value of their work.
- Veterinary surgeons work across the economy, allowing strategically important economic sectors to operate successfully. This would be impossible without the contribution of immigrant vets.
- The UK is reliant on vets from overseas. In recent years over half of the veterinary surgeons who register in the UK each year qualified elsewhere in the EEA.
- The application of a £30,000 per annum threshold on all vets immigrating to the UK would have consequences for parts of the veterinary profession.
- A disproportionate number of Official Veterinarians (OVs) working in slaughterhouses would fail to meet the threshold. Losing these OVs would increase the risk of food fraud, provide the potential for animal welfare breaches, and remove a level of public health reassurance to consumers at home and overseas that could jeopardise trade.
- A high proportion of vets work part time. The average salary for a part time vet working in clinical practice is £28,110, which would exclude a significant proportion of the workforce from meeting the proposed threshold, and particularly female vets.
- Elements other than wages should be counted towards salary. The use of non-wage benefits is particularly common within the veterinary profession.
- A shift from free movement to the reporting of salaries for any new EEA nationals working in the UK will be a significant reporting burden for veterinary employers, many of which are small businesses.
- An 'Australian' style Points-Based System is not clearly defined within the document. If there is consideration of a more centrally planned system and a move away from an employer-based visa system this could mitigate some of our concerns around the reporting burden.
- Any criteria within a new Points-Based System should not encroach on the role of the RCVS as the regulator and adjudicator of who meets the criteria to practise in the UK.
- Priority should be given to occupations on the Shortage Occupation List.

The veterinary profession

3. The veterinary profession is relatively small, with around 23,220 UK-practicing veterinary surgeons,¹ but its reach and impact are significant. The UK veterinary profession is an integral part of the international scientific community using evidence and practical skills to further animal health and welfare, and public health.
4. Veterinary surgeons work across the economy, allowing strategically important economic sectors to operate successfully. Official statistics put the value of UK livestock outputs at £14.8bn, not a penny of which could be realised without the input of the veterinary workforce.²
5. Veterinary surgeons work closely with animal keepers to ensure biosecurity measures are implemented. Poor biosecurity can have devastating economic and social consequences. Animal disease outbreaks are a strategic risk on the National Risk Register.³ The Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001, for example, is estimated to have cost £5billion to the private sector and £3billion to the public sector, damaged the lives of farmers and rural communities and caused a general election to be postponed.⁴ More recently vets were involved in the response to the 2017 Avian Influenza (AI) outbreak, assisting with the cull and undertaking surveillance visits.⁵
6. The contribution of the veterinary profession to the economic, social and political life would be impossible without EEA vets. As the Government response to the House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee notes:
7. “Many vets working in the UK are EU nationals...and the Prime Minister has made clear that securing the status of the veterinary workforce is a top priority.”⁶
8. The veterinary profession is diverse, with far-reaching influence and impact in many areas of political, economic and public life. Vets work in myriad settings, including in:
 - production animal clinical practice providing preventive healthcare and treatment for livestock, as well as carrying out surveillance, promoting good biosecurity, boosting productivity and maintaining standards of animal welfare;
 - companion animal and equine practice looking after family pets, leisure and sport animals as part of the local community;
 - veterinary schools and independent research laboratories advancing our scientific understanding;
 - abattoirs and throughout the food chain, where veterinary certification is key to securing public health, food safety, animal welfare and assurance for consumers in domestic and foreign markets;
 - industry and technology ensuring the UK remains competitive and forward thinking; and
 - government providing veterinary expertise to public policy making.
9. Only those registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) may practise veterinary surgery in the UK. The structure of the veterinary qualification and regulation means

¹ RCVS Facts 2017, 2018 RCVS Facts (2017)

² Defra, DAERA, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2018, 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/815303/A_UK_2018_09jul19.pdf

³ Cabinet Office, National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies 2017, 2017

⁴ National Audit Office, The 2001 Outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, 2002

⁵ What it's like working on the ground during a bird flu outbreak <https://vets.blog.gov.uk/2018/01/02/369/>

⁶ Government Response to the House of Lords European Union Committee Report on Brexit: Farm Animal Welfare <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-energy-environment-subcommittee/Brexit-farm-animal-welfare/Gov-Brexit-farm-anim.pdf>

vets graduate with omni-potential, which means they can move freely between many of the roles outlined above as long as they keep within their own area of competence.

The current difficulty recruiting vets

10. Before the EU referendum, UK veterinary practices were reporting difficulties in recruiting. This problem was compounded following the Brexit vote, as non-UK EU vets were faced with considerable uncertainty about their futures.
11. The Major Employers Group (MEG), which represents some of the largest UK veterinary businesses providing primary care directly to the public, conducted a survey looking at vacancy rates amongst its members in November 2018. The results showed that there were 890 vacancies in member practices employing over 7700 veterinary surgeons providing primary care directly to the public in the UK. This represented a veterinary workforce shortage of approximately 11.5%. A survey of veterinary nursing vacancies revealed that there were 475 vacancies in practices employing over 6200 veterinary nurses representing a workforce shortage of approximately 7.6%. The previous MEG survey in July 2017, found an average workforce shortage of approximately 11% for veterinary surgeons. The figure for veterinary nursing vacancies was estimated to be approximately 5.6% at that time.
12. Recruitment of vets has become more difficult according to the findings of the BVA Voice of the Profession Spring 2018 Survey. 73% of the vets surveyed who had responsibility for recruitment said that they had advertised for a qualified veterinary surgeon role in the previous 12 months, up from two thirds when the question was asked in 2015. While vacancies were up on 2015, the number of applications being received had declined. On average only around four in ten vacancies (39%) were filled within three months; half (50%) of the vacancies advertised took more than three months to fill and almost a quarter (23%) took more than six months. Furthermore, a significant minority of the roles advertised (11%) were withdrawn because of a lack of suitable candidates.
13. The average time taken to recruit for veterinary surgeon vacancies had increased since the question was first asked in spring 2015. Since 2015, the proportion of vacancies filled within three months decreased by a third (from 60% to 39%) and the proportion which took more than six months to fill had more than doubled (from 10% to 23%).
14. In the Migration Advisory Committee review of the Shortage Occupation List published in May 2019,⁷ this shortage of vets was recognised:
15. "It is clear from the stakeholder evidence that they [vets] are facing significant recruitment difficulties. Furthermore, the SOC code ranks 44th in the shortage indicators which indicates it is in relative shortage compared to other occupations. The vacancy rate has been increasing over recent years, apart from a dip in 2016/17, however, still above average."

Increasing demand for veterinary surgeons in the UK

16. Growth in the veterinary sector is estimated at 5% per annum, and double that figure for specialist referrals.⁸ This requires a steady growth in the size of the veterinary workforce. EU exit will create

⁷ Full review of the shortage occupation list, May 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-review-of-the-shortage-occupation-list-may-2019>

⁸ Pets at Home September 2018 Investor Update

additional demands beyond this steady growth.

17. Post-Brexit there will almost certainly be increased demand for veterinary certification and supervision. The import and export of animals and products of animal origin to third countries is dependent on veterinary certification. This veterinary certification is dependent on having available enough adequately trained veterinary surgeons in place to sign certificates and provide assurance to our trading partners that standards have been met. As a member of the EU Single Market, there is currently no need for this additional veterinary certification for exports of animals or products of animal origin to other member states or for such products to travel through the EU to a third destination e.g. Gibraltar. Brexit will change that for the UK, but the extent of the changes will depend on the nature of the UK's exit and the international trade deals agreed.
18. There are material uncertainties and limitations on knowing what the increase in export health certification is likely to be. However, in the event of a no deal Defra's "mid estimate" is that the number of export health certificates may increase fivefold.⁹ For Northern Ireland, in a no-deal scenario, the potential demand for export health certificates could jump from 18,000 to 1.9 million, a need that may not be able to meet with the current veterinary workforce.¹⁰
19. There could also be additional demands placed on vets in small animal and equine practice to provide additional testing and veterinary certification before cats, dogs, ferrets and horses will be able to enter the EU.

Registration data

20. In recent years over half of the veterinary surgeons who register in the UK each year qualified elsewhere in the EEA. The below table shows the country of graduation of veterinary surgeons who have registered with the RCVS each year since 2011/12, when this data was first captured.
21. Free movement of people has had an enormous impact on our veterinary workforce. Any additional barriers to the movement of EEA qualified vets to the UK will have significant consequences for animal health, animal welfare, public health, and trade.
22. Furthermore, if the UK establishes additional barriers this could make other countries within the EEA more attractive for EEA vets. They will be able to provide certainty to EEA vets and frictionless access to live, work and practise. Brexit will create additional demands for veterinary workforce in the EEA. We are aware of progress made in the EU to hire vets to undertake additional veterinary checks on animals and products of animal origin from the UK. For example, the recent Irish Budget provided €7m for staff and IT costs arising from additional import control and export certification requirements arising as a result of Brexit.¹¹ Furthermore, any further devaluation of the pound against the euro would make the UK a less financially appealing place to live and work.

⁹ Letter from Christine Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer

¹⁰The Detail, Export health certificates issued in Northern Ireland could rise from 49 per day to 5,200, October 2019 <https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/number-of-export-health-certificates-issued-daily-in-northern-ireland-set-to-increase-from-49-per-day-to-5-205>

¹¹ Department of the Taoiseach, Government provides in excess of €1 billion in Budget 2020 to respond to a No Deal Brexit, 8 October 2019 <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/035dcb-government-provides-in-excess-of-1-billion-in-budget-2020-to-respond/>

Country of graduation	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Non-EU/EEA							
Australia	67	56	83	93	110	86	102
Canada	5	8	2	10	10	7	5
New Zealand	19	25	17	12	21	21	25
South Africa	13	8	15	24	20	34	30
United States of America	22	25	18	17	12	13	21
Sub-total (Non-EU/EEA)	126	122	135	156	173	161	183
EU/EEA/CH							
Austria	4	5	1	5	4	13	4
Belgium	9	11	20	22	18	21	25
Bulgaria	12	15	22	19	21	23	24
Croatia	0	0	2	5	8	10	17
Czech Republic	7	4	11	10	11	12	12
Denmark	5	6	11	11	7	4	7
Estonia	0	1	2	2	4	7	2
Finland	1	4	1	0	1	1	2
France	12	8	9	11	23	20	20
Germany	25	14	17	22	25	19	10
Greece	17	25	27	24	46	40	55
Hungary	19	22	21	13	36	38	35
Ireland	58	69	70	73	62	50	56
Italy	51	45	111	92	149	144	139
Latvia	1	0	1	0	3	2	2
Lithuania	4	8	4	7	10	10	12
Netherlands	9	12	11	15	17	12	8
Norway [EEA]	0	2	0	2	3	3	3
Poland	29	38	55	70	89	110	93
Portugal	24	46	42	57	64	73	83
Romania	46	59	48	73	160	150	133
Slovakia	17	10	10	24	22	32	38
Slovenia	2	6	2	2	6	6	9
Spain	95	181	190	198	171	167	198
Sweden	4	1	2	2	1	1	1
Switzerland [CH]	4	3	3	4	5	3	6

EU-recognised qualifications ¹	0	8	8	4	9	6	11
Sub-total (EU/EEA/CH)	456	603	701	767	975	977	1005
UK	815	807	795	813	910	910	868

23. The unpublished RCVS Survey of the Profession 2019 provides data on vets currently registered to practise in the UK:

- 63.9%- UK Graduates
- 21.6%- in an EEA/EU/EFTA country
- 4.7%- Graduated in Republic of Ireland
- 9.8%- Graduated elsewhere

24. This data illustrates our existing reliance on non-UK graduates within the veterinary profession.

In the meat hygiene sector, this is particularly acute. The FSA estimates 95% of the veterinary workforce in abattoirs graduated overseas - with the clear majority of these coming from the EU. Losing these Official Veterinarians (OVs) from slaughterhouses would increase the risk of food fraud, provide the potential for animal welfare breaches, and remove a level of public health reassurance to consumers at home and overseas that could jeopardise trade.

Wage data

25. In the Voice of the Veterinary Profession Spring 2018 Survey, all working vets were asked to indicate, in bands, their approximate gross income (before tax) in 2017, including car, fuel, accommodation, company dividends or bonuses, company pension contributions etc. Overall, most of the vets surveyed (59%) said they between £25,000 and £55,000 per annum while just over a quarter (28%) earn more than £55,000 per annum and around one in eight (13%) earn less than £25,000 per annum. The median value is at the top end of the £35,001 £45,000 income band.

26. Amongst full time working vets, around four in ten (39%) earn up to £45,000 per annum: a similar proportion (36%) earn between £45,001 and £65,000 per annum; and around a quarter (25%) earn more than £65,000 per annum, with around one in seven (14%) claiming to earn more than £85,000 per annum. The modal (i.e. most common) income band for full time working vets is £45,001-£55,000 per annum, which covers the incomes of around a quarter of all full-time vets, and the median value falls roughly in the centre of this income band.

27. Eville & Jones is contracted to supply Official Veterinarians (OVs) for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) for every abattoir in England and Wales. These OVs audit and inspect meat processing sites, certify imports and exports, and carry out official disease control measures such as TB tests. Eville & Jones “recruits junior OVs on £27,000 to match the starting salary for junior doctors, while trainee OVs employed by Eville & Jones work as meat inspectors for six months on the equivalent of £23,000.”¹² Therefore, the entry route for OVs working in

¹² Vet Record ‘Ridiculous’ salary threshold could hit OVs, January 2019

<https://veterinaryrecord.bmjjournals.com/content/184/1/4.1>

abattoirs will be affected by this change. This is of note, as estimates suggest 95% of the veterinary workforce in abattoirs graduated overseas - with the clear majority of these coming from the EU.

Non-wage salaries

28. Within the veterinary profession there is high levels of in-kind renumeration. The RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Profession 2014 provides the below survey evidence.¹³

'Does your employer provide you with the following?' (% of number of respondents)		
	2014	2010
Accommodation	11.5	14
Health Insurance	18.1	15
Uniform/ work clothing	52	42
Pension	31	
Car	19.5	23
No/ reduced vet fees	55.2	49.5
Free/ reduced pet insurance	1.8	
Training/ CPD support (time and/ or cost)	84.5	71
RCVS retention fees paid (whole or part)	48.9	39
Professional subscriptions (eg BVA)	35.8	32
Professional indemnity insurance	60	54
Membership of a technical/ scientific library	13.8	
Access to scientific literature and research papers	27.8	
Other	2.9	
N=	3,858	

29. A similar set of questions were asked as part of the Society of Practicing Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Salary Survey 2018, with the following findings recorded:¹⁴

Salary Package Element	Number receiving	2018%	Interquartile Range	Median 2018	2017%	Median 2017
Performance Related Pay	128	36.9	£222.50 - £2,000.00	£500.00	25.5	£790.00
Payment for OOH	85	24.5	£800.00 - £2,600.00	£1,500.00	19.4	£1,405.50
Accommodation / Allowance	23	6.6	£4,050.00 - £6,250.00	£6,000.00	9.4	£6,000.00
Mileage Allowance	46	13.3	£262.50 - £5,191.25	£3,000.00	9.4	£4,000.00

¹³ The 2014 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Profession <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/publications/rcvs-survey-of-the-veterinary-profession-2014/>

¹⁴ Society of Practicing Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Salary Survey 2018 https://salaries.spvs-surveys.org.uk/surveys/3/results/salary_package

CPD	380	109.5	£1,000.00 - £1,500.00	£1,200.00	91.6	£1,000.00
Subscriptions	319	91.9	£300.00 - £563.00	£400.00	62.9	£400.00
Utilities	73	21	£120.00 - £500.00	£250.00	16.2	£240.00
Share Options	5	1.4	£110.00 - £1,000.00	£1,000.00	1.5	£2,000.00
PHI	48	13.8	£200.00 - £600.00	£350.00	4.6	£500.00
Medical Cover	111	32	£181.80 - £753.00	£500.00	15	£600.00
Pension Contributions	230	66.3	£500.00 - £1,875.00	£858.00	52.4	£500.00
Car / Allowance	87	25.1	£3,420.00 - £3,500.00	£3,420.00	21.8	£3,420.00
Fuel for Private Use	17	4.9	£4,199.00 - £4,199.00	£4,199.00	5.5	£4,199.00

30. It is a common practice in the profession for employers to provide accommodation. Vets are often required to live near to where they work. Like medical health care professionals, vets are required to work shifts and be on call to deal with emergencies (as stated in the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct and also included in the RCVS Practice Standards accreditation scheme under module 8, In-Patients). It is common for some practices to offer on-site temporary accommodation to vets who live too far from practice premises to respond to an urgent call within a reasonable time. Veterinary Nurses are also increasingly required to be available to offer support in emergencies and urgent cases.

31. With regards to professional development, a number of hospitals and referral centres (for example Veterinary Schools within Universities) offer internships and residencies and expect their vets to live either nearby or on-site as part of their working hours. To ensure this, they offer accommodation provisions.

32. Owing to the diversity of roles and specialisms within the veterinary profession, vets are not necessarily guaranteed a position in their preferred geographical location. As a result, many vets are willing to relocate in order to find work. A vet is able to consider a wider variety of jobs and provide vital services if they are offered accommodation which enables them to do this.

33. The predominant type of accommodation offered is self-contained, fully functional, independent properties. This accommodation is offered in a range of ways to veterinary employees:

- On-site at the practice premises; or
- A practice will rent or own accommodation near the practice – in these cases vets will be offered this accommodation as part of the employment benefits package as an incentive to relocate to an area and /or accept a position.

34. Evidencing this complex payment through tax receipts will be particularly difficult and onerous. There are further complications, for example, the salary element towards accommodation may be tax exempt and not appear on a P11D document where it is demonstrated necessary for 'the proper performance of the employee's duties that he or she should reside in the

accommodation.¹⁵ For veterinary surgeons the requirement to provide 24-hour emergency cover (i.e. out-of-hours) will often mandate this need.¹⁶

Part time working data

35. Demographic and generational factors have affected the veterinary workforce in recent decades. Alongside wider shifts in working practices, these changes have led to part-time workers and locums constituting a greater share of the total veterinary workforce. These trends are consistent with many professions, including human medicine.¹⁷
36. Findings from the Voice of the Veterinary Profession Spring 2018 Survey found that just under three quarters (72%) of those vets surveyed who are currently working said they work full time, while just over a quarter (28%) work part time. Amongst all working vets these proportions have remained roughly stable since 2014, however, part time working has increased significantly amongst those vets working in clinical practice (from 21% to 29%), whilst it appears to be declining amongst those working in non-clinical roles. Female vets remain significantly more likely to work part time than their male counterparts (33% and 21% respectively).
37. Of those responding to the Society of Practicing Veterinary Surgeons (SPVS) Salary Survey 2018, 15.5% were working part time. According to that survey the average salaries for a part time vet working in clinical practice was £28,110.¹⁸ This would suggest a significant proportion of the workforce would be excluded from meeting the £30,000 proposed threshold, and particularly female vets.

Reporting

38. The proportion of vets working in clinical practice who are currently doing locum work has also increased in recent years (12%). Companion animal vets are particularly likely to be working on a locum basis (15% up from 10% in 2014). These vets provide their services to clients in a practice but are usually self-employed. Furthermore, 28% of veterinary surgeons in the UK have a second profession according to survey data from the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe.¹⁹ There would be particular difficulties in reporting the salary data of this group of vets. The salary requirements could limit the ability of immigrant vets to partake in the portfolio careers that are increasingly the norm within the profession.
39. Veterinary practices tend to be small businesses with the vast majority falling within the definitions of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which is any business with fewer than 250 employees. A significant number would fall within the definition of micro-businesses (business with 0-9 employees).

Number of Employees	1	2	3 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 30	31 to 50	51 to 100	101+
UK practices	19	3	9	9	29	0	3	28

40. Consequently, most veterinary practices will have limited capacity and human resources

¹⁵ HMRC 480(2019) Expenses and benefits A tax guide

¹⁶ Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Code of Professional Conduct Supporting Guidance 24-hour emergency first aid and pain relief

¹⁷ The Kings Fund, Through the eyes of GP trainees: workforce of the future, 2018

¹⁸ Adele Waters and Matthew Limb, Vet Record, Veterinary salaries in the UK are stagnating or in decline, surveys show January 2018 <https://veterinaryrecord.bmjjournals.com/content/182/3/62.1>

¹⁹ Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, The second FVE European Veterinary Profession Study 2019 <http://fvesurvey.com/>

expertise to undertake the visa application and wage reporting necessary to meet these changes. Vets have no overarching body, such as the NHS for doctors, that will be well placed to meet these exacting administrative demands. Any future immigration system for EU citizens must not place additional administrative or fiscal burdens on practices. Veterinary practices, share characteristics noted by the Federation of Small Businesses:

41. "Although one in four (24%) small employers have at least one non-UK worker, the use of the tier points-based visa system is low. Ninety-five per cent of small employers have never made use of the UK's points-based immigration system to meet their business' labour and skills needs. Where small businesses have used visas, the most commonly used visas are the Tier 2, at three per cent, and the Tier 1, at two per cent. When respondents were asked why they had not engaged with the points-based immigration system, the most common response was that their labour and skill needs were met through the UK and EU labour markets (70%)."²⁰

Australian Style Points Based System

42. The effects of introducing an 'Australian-style' points system in the UK would depend on how it was designed – for example, what points were awarded to and whether the role of employers in the immigration system changed. There is no description provided within the documentation to provide guidance on what particular elements of an 'Australian-style' points system is under consideration.
43. For example, we would question whether there is consideration of moving towards a more 'centrally planned' system where migrants would express their interest to move to UK and the government applies set criteria, and a move away from the current 'employer-led' system of visas that operates for third country national at present. This could have the benefit of removing some of the reporting requirements that are detailed above.
44. As the competent regulator for the veterinary profession, it should be for the RCVS to determine the recognition of veterinary qualifications and language competency requirements for anyone wishing to practise as a vet in the UK. We would therefore caution against these characteristics becoming criteria within the immigration system, as they may not complement the role and procedures of the RCVS. Alternatively, registration with the RCVS could be a key criterion for veterinary surgeons who wish to migrate to the UK.
45. We would support priority being given to occupations that are on the shortage occupation list, or of significance to the wider economy and society.

Wider efforts to address workforce issues

46. The veterinary profession also has a relatively low retention rate, with many veterinary surgeons leaving practice early in their career. A combination of these factors has led to veterinary recruitment struggling to keep up with demand. BVA, RCVS and the wider veterinary profession have expended considerable time, effort and resource to addressing this problem.

²⁰ Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), A Skilful Exit: What firms want from Brexit, 2017 <https://www.fsb.org.uk/docs/default-source/fsb-org-uk/a-skilful-exit---what-small-firms-want-frombrexit.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Education

47. The UK has taken steps in recent years to expand capacity within veterinary education. In part, these additional numbers have been facilitated by new universities initiating veterinary science courses. The University of Nottingham officially opened the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science in April 2007, the first purpose-built new veterinary school to be opened in the UK in 50 years. The University of Surrey opened its School of Veterinary Medicine in October 2015. There are concerns about how quickly the capacity of UK universities could be expanded to meet a massively increased demand at short notice.
48. Increasing capacity takes time, money (both initial capital and ongoing revenue), and personnel. At present, it is estimated that the full cost of veterinary education is well in excess of £20,000 per student, per year of study.²¹ Despite existing funding mechanisms, the cost of providing undergraduate veterinary education exceeds current direct income streams.²²
49. The University of Surrey announced plans to open the school of veterinary medicine in October 2012;²³ the first cohort of students will not graduate until 2019. The Surrey veterinary school cost £45 million to establish.
50. Further, UK graduates do favour clinical practice over public health roles. A significant cultural change would be required to reduce the existing reliance on overseas-qualified veterinary surgeons in this area.
51. Increasing the number of veterinary students alone won't provide a holistic, long-term approach to making sure we have enough vets in the workforce. BVA recently published a position setting out [50 recommendations spanning the different milestones across veterinary education to tackle this](#).²⁴ They range from thinking about how careers advice is delivered, to calling for more funding, and making sure students are equipped with core clinical and non-clinical skills upon graduation. We also want to make veterinary education more accessible for underrepresented and minority groups.

Retention of existing workforce

52. There are considerable efforts underway to retain graduates within the profession. Erosion of the veterinary workforce has been an ongoing concern for BVA, RCVS and Government, which predates the decision of the UK to leave the EU.
53. Together, RCVS and BVA launched the report *Vet Futures – Taking charge of our future*²⁵ in November 2015. The Vet Futures project aims to improve retention of the existing veterinary workforce by ensuring veterinary professionals are confident, resilient, healthy and well

²¹ Veterinary Schools Council, 2017. Maintaining excellence and sustainability in UK veterinary education and research post-Brexit <https://www.vetschoolscouncil.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Veterinary-education-research-post-Brexit-VSC.pdf>

²² Ibid

²³ University of Surrey, *New Veterinary School plans to embrace links between human and animal health* Thursday 25 October 2012

https://www.surrey.ac.uk/mediacentre/press/2012/92737_new_veterinary_school_plans_to_embrace_links_between_human_and_animal_health.htm

²⁴ BVA position on UK undergraduate veterinary education position 2019

²⁵ BVA, RCVS *Vet Futures – Taking charge of our future*, 2015

<https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/download/reports/Vet%20Futures%20report.pdf>

supported, and benefit from exceptional leadership. In July 2016, the Vet Futures Action Plan,²⁶ was launched with a series of actions to make this vision a reality. These actions are ongoing, and a review of the project is underway.

Paraprofessionals

54. Consideration is also being given to how the veterinary team can be reformed to allow paraprofessionals to take on additional tasks, freeing up veterinary time; any such reform needs to be undertaken in a measured way that prioritises animal health and welfare and public health, and does not undermine the role of the veterinary surgeon in diagnosis or the integrity of the veterinary surgeon's signature. This work is being undertaken as part of the RCVS Legislation Review. Detailed recommendations for reform are expected to be published in 2019, some of which will require legislative reform before they could be implemented. BVA's established a Vet-led Team Working Group which produced a detailed policy position to support its engagement on this issue.²⁷

²⁶ BVA, RCVS Vet Futures Action Plan 2016-2020, 2016

[<https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/download/publications/vet%20futures%20report%202016\(5\).pdf>](https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/download/publications/vet%20futures%20report%202016(5).pdf)

²⁷ BVA policy position on the Vet-led Team 2019

https://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News,_campaigns_and_policies/Policies/Future_of_the_profession/Vet%20Led%20Team%20policy%20position%20FINAL.pdf