

# vetlife

## Annual Review

# 2016



[vetlife.org.uk](http://vetlife.org.uk)

Veterinary Benevolent Fund is a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, Company No. 153010 Charity Registration No. 224776.



# Foreword

From our President, Geoff Little



'Our profession is currently witnessing a great deal of interest and concern surrounding mental health issues. It is not surprising therefore that Vetlife is receiving an ever increasing number of contacts from members of our profession over the phone and via email. Although this is a worrying trend, the increased contact is hopefully a reflection of individuals being more willing to discuss their issues and to seek help. The Board of Trustees for Vetlife is constantly looking at ways in which the charity can keep ahead of demand and this year took the major decision to engage a new provider for the health support side of the charity.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rory O'Connor, Alison Cameron and Douglas Fowlie, for their unstinting, invaluable help in supporting members of our profession over many years. Because of the confidential nature of their work, we will never know the full extent of the debt of gratitude we owe them.

Vetlife is aware that other bodies within the profession are doing a great deal to help in this area and we are keen to work with them to maximise effort and minimise duplication of effort.

With all the interest in Health Support and the Vetlife Helpline, it must not be forgotten that a considerable amount of Vetlife's expenditure goes to the other major arm of Vetlife, namely Financial Support.

Again, I would like to express my sincere thanks on behalf of the entire Vetlife team and those we help, to those who provide us with the wherewithal to carry out our vital work.'

# What we do

## Our Vision

A UK **veterinary community** with high levels of physical and mental wellbeing.

## Our Mission

Vetlife provides **support** to members of the UK veterinary community and their families who have emotional, health or financial concerns, whilst seeking ways to prevent such situations in the future.

## How we do it

Vetlife funds and manages three support services in order to achieve this:



### helpline

**Vetlife Helpline** provides confidential emotional support by phone or anonymous email via the website.

Support is provided by trained volunteers who have knowledge of the veterinary profession.

It is a completely confidential, non-judgemental listening service, which gives people time and space to talk. People calling are supported to access specialist help where appropriate.



### health support

**Vetlife Health Support** provides professional support for mental health issues, including those related to stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol, drugs and eating disorders.



### financial support

**Vetlife Financial Support** provides financial and other assistance to veterinary surgeons, and their dependants, in the form of regular monthly grants or one off special gifts. We may also fund professional advice on issues such as debt and State benefits.

For younger people, this support can mean that they don't have their homes repossessed or that they are enabled to deal with their physical or mental health problems and return to work successfully. For the elderly or those unable to return to work, the support provides them with an improved quality of life.

# Our People

## Vetlife Board of Trustees – September 2017



**Geoff Little**  
President



**Bill Marvir**



**Patricia Colville**



**Graham Dick**  
Treasurer



**Ewan McNeill**



**Adrian Pratt**



**Elaine Garvican**  
Honorary Secretary



**Katie Moore**



**Richard Killen**



**Sarah Brown**

# Vetlife's impact in 2016

**32,000**

visits to the **Vetlife website** for information and advice

**219**

Facebook posts

**229**

Tweets

**4,067**

followers on Twitter



**1,688**

direct acts of **support to the veterinary community**

**12**

individuals provided with specialist debt and benefits **advice** funded by Vetlife

**1,285**

phone or email conversations with our **helpline**.

**94**

veterinary surgeons and dependants given **financial support**

**297**

individuals provided with professional **mental health & addiction support**



# Financial Support

'Receiving financial support from Vetlife meant we could stay in our home. It **lifted a huge burden** from me, I felt so overwhelmingly relieved'

## How we provide financial support

Vetlife looks at the individual's circumstances to understand the financial issues better and help to plan a way forward. We may provide:

- Emergency assistance
- Regular monthly grants
- One-off gifts
- Professional advice on state benefits and debts
- Access to CPD
- Bungalow accommodation in Dorset

## £116,773

to **34 veterinary surgeons** (or dependants) as monthly grants

## £27,995

to **60 veterinary surgeons** (or dependants) as one-off gifts, usually at Christmas time

## New Cases 2016

## 25

enquiries

## 7

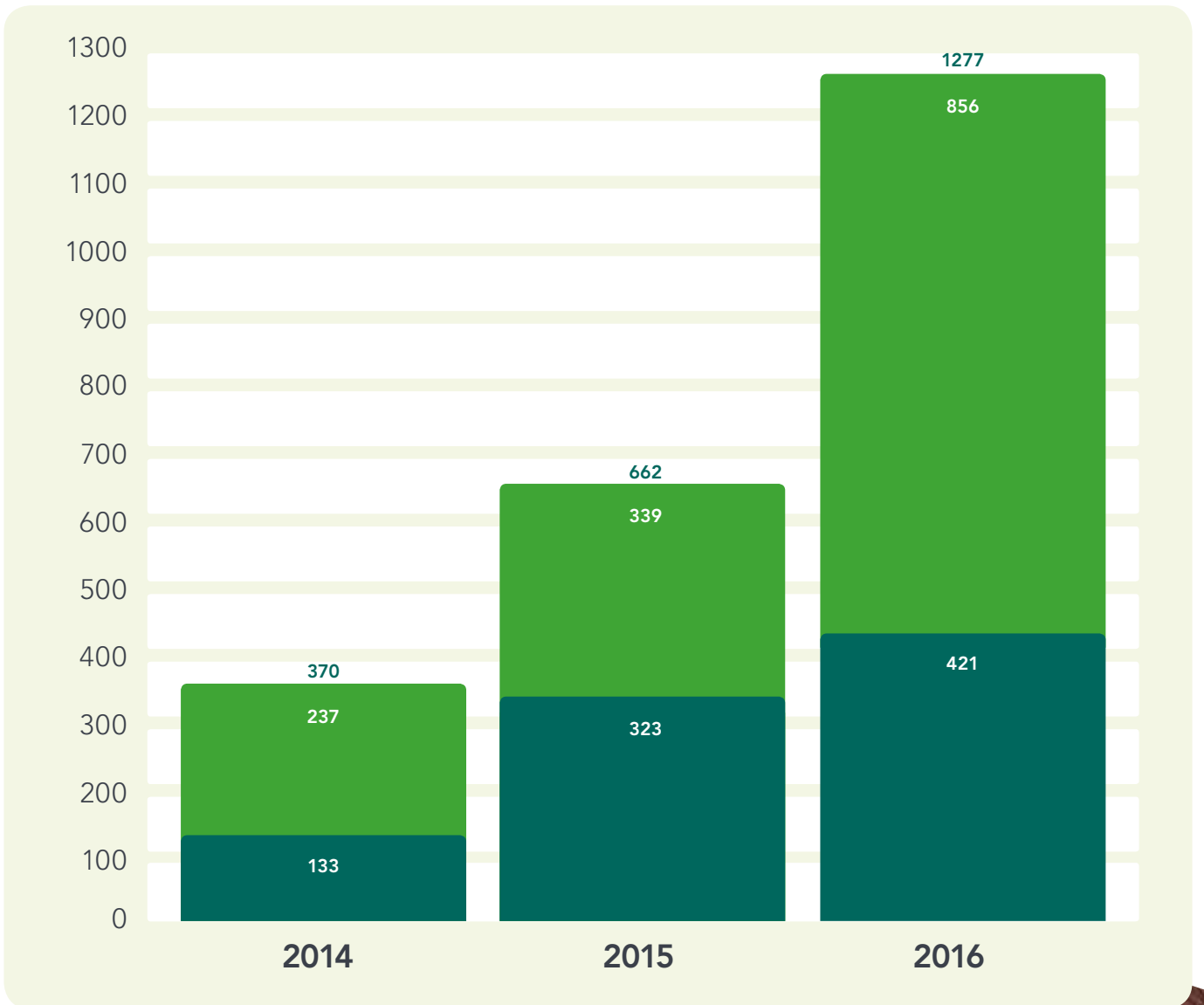
**new applicants** were given financial support





# Vetlife Helpline

'Being able to **talk to someone** about it, who did not judge, was a huge step forward'



Email

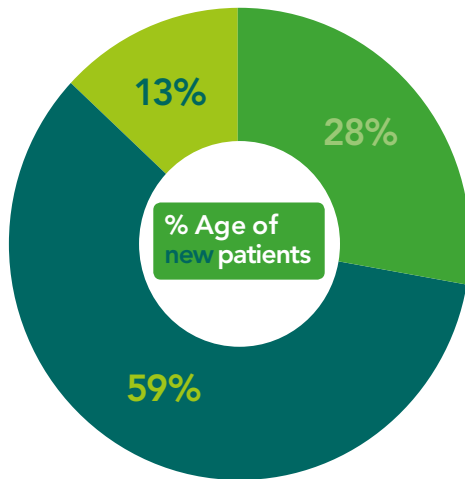


Phone





# Vetlife Health Support



- Under 30
- 30-50
- Over 50

**315**

enquiries in 2016

**70**

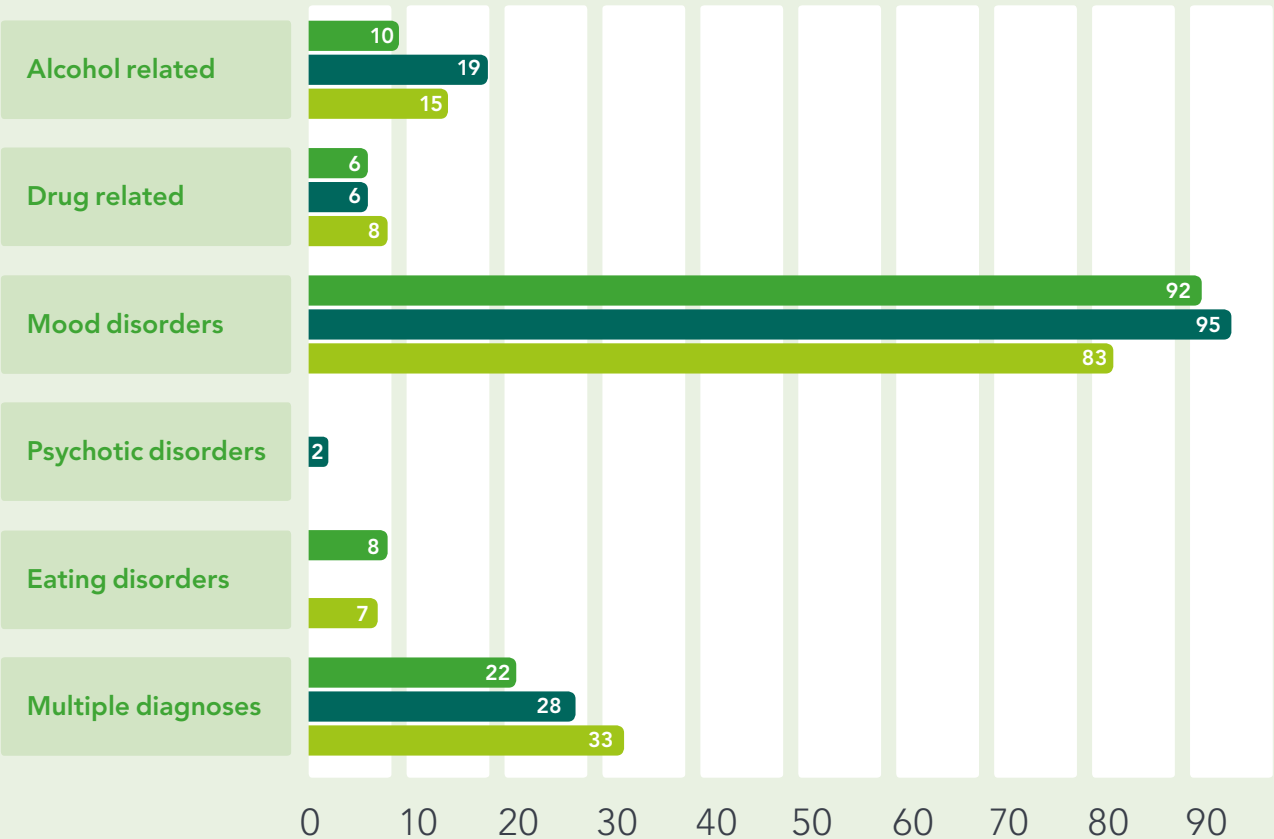
were taken on as **new** patients

**297**

**total** number of patients at year end

**% distribution of health issues**

● 2016 ● 2015 ● 2014



\* Several patients had multiple diagnoses affecting sum of percentages



# Real Stories:

## How A Veterinary Surgeon's Family Dealt With His Breakdown

"When we first approached Vetlife for help I was working part time one and a half days a week and doing some catering work from home as and when it came up."

**Michael was and had been the main breadwinner and when we knew he would be dropping down to 'statutory sick pay' we found it pretty scary. I knew I couldn't up my hours as I would need to be around to keep an eye on Michael as things progressed.**

Michael wasn't in good shape and having to try and discuss our finances and make some serious decisions with him was near impossible, so it was a matter of going it alone and cancelling anything I felt could be. My biggest concern was the house and the mortgage we had on it. The sensible thing seemed to be to sell and downsize but that would all take time and I dreaded us getting into debt. The children were twelve and fourteen and moving was going to be even more instability for them to cope with.

It was with this all whizzing around my mind that we received a letter telling us that Vetlife was going to give us financial support. I really cannot begin to tell you how we felt when we read that. There was disbelief that anyone could be so generous; overwhelming relief and a feeling that a huge burden had been lifted from me. Most importantly it meant we could stay in our home as your donation would cover the mortgage.

Living with Michael during the two years was incredibly hard as you lose the person you married and know to become a carer for a stranger who barely knows you are there. The children lost their father and this time round they were old enough to see it all happening. It took its toll on them in different ways.

Name changed to protect anonymity

Our teenage daughter became very reclusive and would seldom leave home. She also developed some worrying OCD rituals in an attempt to have some control in her life. She was born to dance and the money Vetlife gave us during this bad time allowed for her to continue her lessons and was a real blessing to her. Over the last few years she has got on top of her problems and is a happy and confident young lady now, still dancing as many times a week as she can manage.

Our son just closed himself off from his dad and managed in his own way, talking to me when it all got too hard. He lost any respect he had for Michael and just saw him as 'weird', but how can a 14 year old understand mental illness. Their relationship took time to build back up and repairs are still going on.

Michael and my relationship took a fair bashing but we are still together, happy and stronger. Michael has even found a new enthusiasm for veterinary work, feeling it a real privilege to be able to do his job and hopefully make a difference to people and their animals. We have made some big changes to try and prevent, as best we can, Michael getting ill again. Michael renegotiated his contract and now works 2/3 of his original hours. I am now working 3 days a week as well and between us we are probably bringing in close to the same income as before. The children get to see a lot more of their dad and we even get to eat together, which we never used to.

Everyone we have spoken to connected to Vetlife has been nothing but kind and supportive and our thanks to you all. Continue to do the good you are doing, we know how much it means.



# Our plans for 2017



**Increase** fundraising activities through veterinary events and sponsored challenges



**Assess** current and future demands on Charity staffing



**Unite and promote** all Vetlife services under one telephone number as first point of contact



**Strategically review** current objectives and re-align where necessary



As an independent charity we rely on the generosity of the veterinary community to be able to continue our work

## Vetlife's Strategic Objectives

# 2015 – 2020

**Expand health support** capacity to meet increased demand and to address the NHS shortfall in mental health care provision

**Increase** the number of Vetlife Helpline volunteers and aim to significantly increase use of service

**Continue** to review the financial support that the charity provides and how it is delivered

**Increase** representation at vet schools

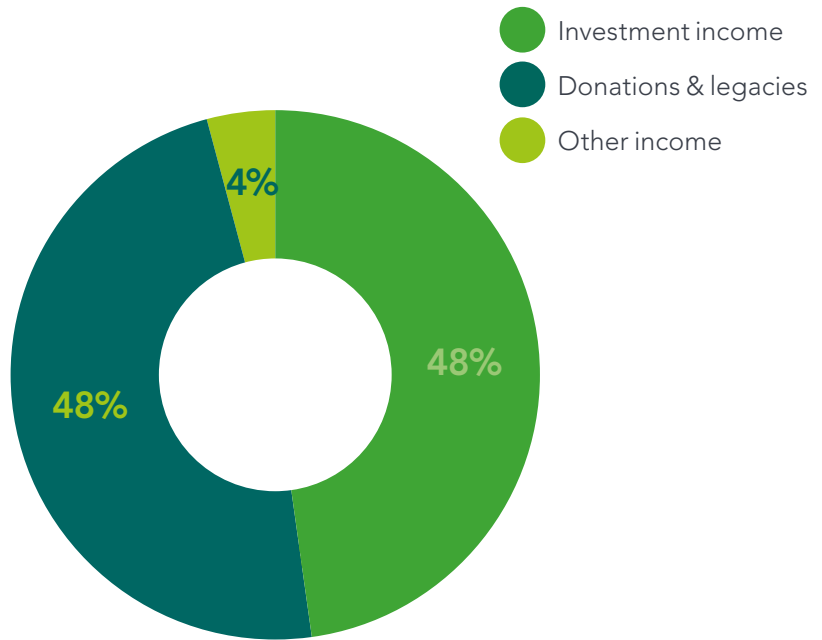
**Strengthen** further the Board's decision making processes and governance

# Financial Summary

## Income

Total income in 2016 was  
**£552,519**

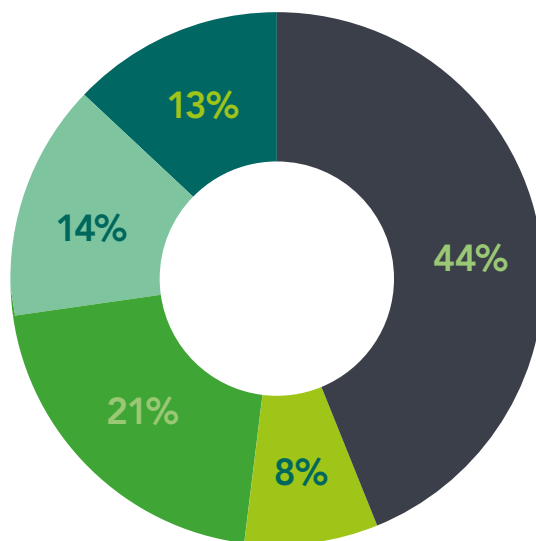
Vetlife aims to add £100,000 per annum to reserves to ensure that adequate support will be available to the veterinary community in the future.



## Expenditure

Total expenditure was  
**£447,820**

- Financial support
- Helpline
- Health Support
- Website and promotion
- Cost of generating funds



# Thank you!

Donations to Vetlife come from a variety of sources including veterinary surgeons that are Vetlife members who kindly give regular support, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the Veterinary Defence Society and other veterinary associations, and practices of all sizes.

Thank you also to all those who dedicated their time and energy into fundraising for Vetlife through sponsored events and challenges.

## Ways to support Vetlife

From signing up as a member/regular donor or undertaking a sponsored challenge to remembering Vetlife in your will, there is a range of ways you can support our work.

**Find out more at [vetlife.org.uk](https://vetlife.org.uk)**

Online donations can be made at **[justgiving.com/vetlife](https://justgiving.com/vetlife)**

# Stay in touch

**Follow us on Facebook and Twitter**

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 **@VetlifeVBF**