**Vetlife Financial Support Area Representatives**

**Information sheet for prospective volunteers**

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to be a Vetlife Area Representative. This is a summary of how the Area Rep system works. If, once you have read this, you think that volunteering with Vetlife in this way could be for you, please complete an application form and we will arrange a phone interview with you.

* Vetlife Area Representatives are the interface between the charity and those members of the profession, their relatives and dependants (referred to as “beneficiaries”) who can benefit from Vetlife’s financial charitable objects. They are volunteers who go out to meet and help new and existing beneficiaries in order to ensure support is directed to those in need and is appropriate to their circumstances.
* Because we provide peer support, in-depth knowledge of the veterinary profession is a requirement for our volunteers. Volunteers can come from any veterinary background and our volunteers include vets, nurses, practice managers, and staff from other veterinary related organisations. Student vets and student VNs should finish their training before applying.
* Anyone currently serving on RCVS Disciplinary Committee or Preliminary Investigation Committee is not eligible to become an Area Representative; this is because we may support people involved in the disciplinary process. If a person who is an Area Representative applies to sit on RCVS DC or PIC they will be suspended as a Rep until their DC or PIC term is complete.
* Area Representatives cover the region local to them and visit with beneficiaries within that area. Your own work life balance is a priority too and Vetlife encourages you to be realistic about this. For this reason, and to ensure that an appropriate relationship is created between a beneficiary and their Area Representative, a Rep will be assigned no more than 4 beneficiaries. On average, a beneficiary will require 2 visits a year; in addition, an Area Rep will need to write reports on their beneficiary which provide essential information to the Grant Awards Panel and Grant Review Committee regarding their general welfare and financial situation. If it is not the right time to volunteer, we encourage you to reapply again when you have enough time available.
* Selection for Vetlife Area Representatives is a multi-stage process. The first step is submitting an application form which is then reviewed by the Financial Support team. The next step is a virtual interview via Teams or Zoom, followed by taking up your references (if you are successful at this stage).
* Initial training will be provided, usually held in person, and will include an introduction to the Financial Support service and online training.
* Attendance at training is required for ongoing volunteering with Vetlife. We hold ongoing training for all volunteers at least once annually, and you need to attend this at least once every two years to continue as a volunteer.
* We never know when new applications will be made, or whereabouts in the country a new beneficiary will be located. This means that there can be a delay between application and being assigned a beneficiary.
* We require contact details for two referees who can give you a character reference. References will be taken up only if you are successful at the phone interview and then commit to initial training.
* A common question we are asked is whether people who have experienced ill health themselves can apply. People with lived experience are very welcome to apply.