

Steph Worsley – Presidential Address

Saturday 10th October 2026, BVNA AGM

I would like to start by saying how delighted I am seeing so many of you here at BVNA Congress, celebrating the veterinary nursing profession once again. I feel honoured and proud to be standing before you as the incoming President.

I want to thank my fellow BVNA Council members and the BVNA staff for their ongoing hard work and efforts bringing yet another amazing Congress together.

I am now in my 28th year as part of the veterinary nursing community, and I have seen many changes in that time, I also know there are many changes to come in the next 28! I have been fortunate enough to have been involved with the BVNA for a number of those years (there have been rumours that if you cut me like a stick of Blackpool rock it will say BVNA), first as a Regional Co-Ordinator – the predecessor of our BVNA Advocates prior to being privileged to be elected to council in 2022. During my time on BVNA Council, I have been lucky to be the representative Council member in groups such as Vet Sustain and Pet Advertising Advisory Group, I have also been involved in the menopause and clinical supervisor toolkits.

The past few years have seen the BVNA being invited as the sole representative body for the veterinary nursing profession to many important industry level conversations, I would like to thank Sarah and Lyndsay, and the many BVNA presidents before them, for relentlessly speaking up for BVNA members alongside the wider veterinary nursing profession. I am excited, yet a little nervous, to be stepping into very big shoes to continue this work.

One of the most exciting and important ongoing conversations is the Veterinary Surgeons Act reform, which is pivotal, not only for the veterinary nursing profession but for the wider veterinary community. As we have heard today, BVNA has worked tirelessly on your behalf to campaign for this new legislation and ensure veterinary nurses are heard. Initially, as part of the RCVS Legislation Working Party which commenced nearly a decade ago, and more recently as part of a Defra-led stakeholder group. This recent work culminated in the UK Government White Paper being published in the summer, which is an incredible step towards reformed legislation. However, as I'm sure those of you who joined us in the panel discussion earlier today are aware, there is still a lot of work to be done. We will

continue to work alongside DEFRA, plus veterinary bodies such as the BVA and RCVS. We will also draw on the views of our BVNA member working groups as needed, enabling us to represent the diverse individual voices making up our membership. Both the existing role and significant untapped potential of the veterinary nursing profession must be recognised, understood and valued within future legislative reform.

As a main party to the ongoing Competition and Markets Authority investigation, BVNA will also continue to ensure that your voice is heard within this work. While this investigation is nearing its end, we know the significant impact the CMA measures will have on veterinary teams. We also recognise how important veterinary nurses will be to implementing these measures within veterinary businesses. Our profession is integral to promoting accessible, transparent, and high-quality veterinary care – which considers the needs of both the patient and the caregiver. We've produced resources to help our members and their colleagues navigate these measures confidently.

This leads me onto my Presidential theme for 2026/27 – Unity. It was hard trying to think of a theme to follow on from Lyndsay's theme of Progression and Sarah's theme of Compassion and Empathy which also encompasses the work we, as an association, are undertaking currently. However, I feel that Unity is what is going to be our strongest point over the next year. We need to unite as a profession but also unite with our colleagues in the wider veterinary community, working alongside other veterinary bodies, stakeholders and policy makers, also our allied veterinary professional colleagues. As a wise woman has said many times during my time on Council... "it is not I, it is we..." Therefore I would like to ask each and every one of you to stand with me United in moving the veterinary nursing profession forward.

I would like to thank Sarah for her hard work this past 12 months, no one ever knows until they are involved the amount of work it takes to be BVNA President, Sarah has done this as well as becoming a new mum during her term which obviously is a full-time role in itself. I would like to invite Sarah back up to accept this small gift as a token of our appreciation for her work over the past 12 months. I also would like to personally thank Lyndsay for her tireless work before, during and after her two terms as President. For me, and others she has been a very supportive mentor both within and outside BVNA. I am honoured she agreed to join our advisory committee alongside Wendy and Sam.

I would also like to acknowledge some of the external partners and initiatives we have collaborated with in the last 12 months, which you can see on the slide.

In my first act as President and in the spirit of Unity, we'd like to take the opportunity now to refresh our Memorandum of Understanding with BVA.

We have collaborated extensively across several key projects affecting the entire veterinary sector, including the CMA investigation and the work towards VSA reform.

We each remain distinct organisations representing the interests of our members. However, this period particularly has underlined the importance of a collaborative approach and the influence of a joined-up voice in bringing about positive change for our professions, alongside animal welfare and public health.

I'd therefore like to invite Gwen Rees, BVA President, up to join me to sign this MoU, in a commitment to continue our strong working relationship for another 3 year period.

Finally, I would like to bring this meeting to a close and thank you all for attending the AGM today. Please enjoy the rest of BVNA Congress and I look forward to seeing you all again in October 2027.

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