PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION OR PROFESSIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR?

MENTORING IN THE UK VETERINARY SECTOR

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements if the award of Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring.

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring has received prominence as having the potential to address several of the key challenges currently faced by the UK veterinary profession and it has long played a central role in the educational architecture of the profession. By providing better support for young vets, as they transition from higher education into the workplace, and support for an increasingly diverse workforce, mentoring has gained credence as the answer to recruitment and retention difficulties and the prevailing mental health crisis. Yet mentoring practice remains inconsistent across the sector; it is broadly ad hoc and voluntary, with several mature mentoring schemes within larger organisations and an increasing number of mentoring arrangements organised by professional bodies. An overlooked dimension of mentoring is the underpinning force of professional obligation that compels mentors to engage in mentoring. The project presented here responds to calls for more focus on conceptual gaps in understanding mentoring by investigating this little explored facet of professional obligation in the UK veterinary sector, where mentoring has become critical to the profession.

The study adopts a social constructivist case study design, underpinned by a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm. The case study brings together data captured through semi-structured interviews with four mentor scheme convenors; in-depth phenomenological interviews with ten vet mentors and documentary data, both from participating organisations and publicly available websites. The transcripts and documents were imported into NVivo and analysed thematically.

The study contributes to understanding the veterinary profession and mentoring within it by providing first hand accounts of how the key themes explored in the veterinary literature impact professional lives and mentoring. Vet mentors are required to define their profession ahead of translating and diffusing it as Carrier Professionals. In doing so they weave together notions of institutional pillars with their professional obligations and the ongoing impacts of significant forces of change. This study elucidates how concepts of profession and professional obligation underpin

the impetus to mentor and offers a form of professional citizenship behaviour, discretionary behaviour, felt as obligation to the profession, which drives the mentors to engage with mentoring.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

What is mentoring in the profession , mentor perspectives	**4**	**4**
Blended reasons	6	8
Gradual letting go - linguistic	7	10
Lasting	3	5
Network of support	5	11
Not reinforce weakness	1	2
Official deficit	1	1
Official offline blended areas	4	7
Peer mentoring	3	3
Professional longevity contribution	3	6
Building leadership and confidence	10	23
Security of professional standards	9	19
Roles connected to current status of profession		
Developing self-regulation	2	3
Increased diversity	3	9
Mental health support	9	18
To become a more confident decision maker	7	15
Roles covered by the mentor		
Friend	4	6
Support for personal growth	3	16
Unofficial, deficit	3	5
Work functions covered		
Business mentoring	7	10
Client communications	8	18
Clinical mentoring	10	35
Practising procedures	6	19
Ethical dilemmas	3	6
The craft being a vet	10	19
Work principles and behaviours		

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM CONTEXT AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER STUDIES

This study sets out to explore mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation through mentors' lived experiences of mentoring in the UK veterinary profession. In order to do so, the study draws on theoretical ideas that are rarely used in mentoring research; Organisational Citizenship and Commitment Behaviour, emanating from Social Learning Theory (2000, p. 4) and the professions as institutions literature (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b). These theoretical perspectives offer insights due to their focus on how professionals connect with and influence their profession. They enable learning from the experiences of vet mentors as they execute their professional obligations in a sector where mentoring is deemed critical to the continued health of the profession (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures Action Group, 2016). A tension exists within the study between consideration of its challenging and dynamic empirical context, the UK veterinary profession, and the main focus of the study; to better understand mentoring and professional obligation through the experiences of the vet mentors. Inevitably, as mentors explore their lived experience of mentoring within this profession, they consider what it is like to be part of the profession and provide deep insight into the lived experience of a UK vet in a rapidly changing profession. These insights have been included in the study, where they enhance the study's main focus; the development of understanding mentoring through the lens of professional obligation. This approach is in line with this study being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements if the award of Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring,

Mentoring research arguably lacks an integrated, unifying, theoretical framework (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007); it focuses too often on quantitative outcomes for the mentees, their organisations (Allen *et al.*, 2008) and on various and

disproportionately positive (Colley, 2001a) aspects of the nature of the mentoring relationship (Haggard *et al.*, 2010), rather than addressing the conceptual gaps in understanding mentoring itself. An overlooked dimension of mentoring is the underpinning force of professional obligation, which has been identified as an influencer for mentors to engage in mentoring (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). The project presented here responds to calls for a more comprehensive understanding of mentoring (Allen *et al.*, 2008) by investigating this little explored facet of professional obligation.

Mentoring has been described in a number of ways. It is a collaborative, reciprocal learning relationship (Zachary, 2005). It provides career and psychosocial support (Kram, 1988; Eby, 1997; Bokeno, 2008). It has been conceived as a series of sequential stages which incorporate predictable activities (Kram, 1983). It is typically a one-to-one relationship where a more experienced colleague works with one less experienced and often younger (Kram, 1983; Kram, 1988; Eby *et al.*, 2013; Jones, Woods and Guillaume, 2016), with the experience and trustworthiness of the mentor emphasised (Roberts, 1999; Colley, 2003). Despite well-documented undesired outcomes (Colley, 2001a; Eby *et al.*, 2004; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Ivey and Dupré, 2020) and limitations (Fowler, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2021; House *et al.*, 2021), mentoring is generally presented as having beneficial outcomes for organisations (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Gut *et al.*, 2014; Rollins, Rutherford and Nickell, 2014), mentees (Gut *et al.*, 2014) and mentors (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Feehily, 2018). Organisations benefit from employees who feel they are being invested in (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010), who might belong to previously under-represented groups (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018) and who are more productive (Rollins, Rutherford and Nickell, 2014), better skilled and therefore easier to retain (Gut *et al.*, 2014). Mentors again feel invested in and more interested

in their work and development (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010) and more fulfilled in the workplace (Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Feehily, 2018).

Attempts to define professional obligation often resort to listing features considered to be obligations within particular professions, rather than explaining professional obligation as a concept. Definitions can help conceptualise this type of motivation. Professions have been defined as groups of individuals possessing a unique range of characteristics; skills and knowledge, which differentiates them from other occupations (Wilensky, 1964; Saks, 2012). Professions have been accused of over-mystifying their skills and knowledge to perpetuate their exclusive jurisdiction (Haug, 1975) and thereby achieve state-sanctioned, legal and social closure in the marketplace for specific occupational groupings (Saks, 2012). Attempts to achieve such closure, place certain obligations on the members (Wilensky, 1964; Saks, 2012). An “obligation” is “a feeling of inner compulsion to act in a certain way” (Garmonsway, 1979, p. 506). A paucity of literature exists which attempts to understand professional obligation, therefore this study draws on research which uncovers how professional obligation manifests and is discussed in professional settings. Professional obligation has been associated with acting altruistically (Granfield, 2007; Ryan, 2021) and exhibiting pro-social behaviour (Ryan, 2021), having social responsibility beyond expectations of day to day practice (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007), to nurturing inclusion and future talent in the profession (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016) and making appositive contributions to the profession (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Ryan, 2021) or service (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) by giving something back. Amongst lawyers, for example, the workplace environment appears to play a role in how they experience professional obligation when volunteering their services (Granfield, 2007; Ryan, 2021). It transpires that pro bono behaviour emerges not only due to personal characteristics but due to workplace structuring of motives and incentives for such behaviour (Granfield, 2007).

Professional obligation amongst dentists has been experienced as social responsibility for making dental care accessible for the economically underprivileged (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007). Consideration of how this professional compulsion functions is important for understanding mentoring in professions where there are expectations to support other professional members.

Different theoretical lenses, such as Social Exchange Theory (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013) and Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), offer specific insight into the cycle of obligation and commitment observed in mentoring and their discussion is incorporated into the literature review as professional obligation is explored. They perform the role of sense-making devices within this study, used later to help interpret findings. Social Exchange Theory observes that as benefits are received in human transactions, reciprocation is required to maintain balance (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013). In the context of mentoring, such benefits, in the form of professional development mentoring are often first received early in a career and reciprocated much later as a mentor (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). Reciprocation, in part, can be explained by intrinsic satisfaction (Fiske, 1992) and because of bonds to a particular group. Through the lens of Social Learning Theory, mentoring has also been described as a manifestation of organisational citizenship behaviour, which together with organisational commitment behaviour, represent outcomes of value for organisations, which are posited as being affected by the quality of mentoring relationships (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000; Fowler, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2021). Organisational commitment behaviour has been linked with antecedents of positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and with opportunities to interact with socialising agents such as mentors who offer critical feedback. Organisational Citizenship Behaviour is of particular relevance for this

study (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) due to apparent similarities with professional obligation. OCB is defined as:

> *Behaviour which is neither mandatory nor compensated by formal reward systems, is discretionary and goes beyond what is formally prescribed for a particular organizational role* (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000, p. 236)

There is potential to explore the interplay between Social Learning Theory and Social Exchange Theory in professional occupational settings in the support for the learning and development of future generations of a profession and an occupational group.

1.2 THE UK VETERINARY CONTEXT

The UK veterinary sector provides an effective empirical context within which to explore mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation as mentoring is perceived as critical (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). The UK veterinary profession is experiencing severe recruitment, retention and mental wellbeing challenges (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). However, research in this context has tended to focus on the clinical and technical, and peculiarities of human-animal interactions, with an important focus on the mental health challenges and their causes, being experienced by the profession (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008; Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Little research has focused on the day to day experiences of veterinary professionals (Clarke and Knights, 2018) other than to focus on characteristics of professional life which might contribute to the ongoing mental health crisis. Professional bodies recommend structured mentoring programmes to better support newly qualified vets, vets new to the UK, and to generally deliver more supportive working environments (Adam *et al.*, 2013; BVA *et al.*, 2015; BSAVA, 2018; BEVA, 2019). Mentoring has

become a professional necessity for progression and a key tool in addressing the challenges of the sector (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; BSAVA, 2018). With mentoring deemed critical to the profession, the expectation that experienced vets will provide mentoring support has become pervasive (BVA *et al.*, 2015; RCVS, 2021b). However, typically, mentors are unrewarded and are, conceivably, employed in the face of sector challenges that would appear to require more systemic intervention (Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Platt *et al.*, 2012; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Despite a number of positive outcomes, which encourage experienced professionals, across a range of contexts, to engage in helping relationships (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Feehily, 2018), professional obligation appears to be a key motivation for community-based veterinary mentors (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). The veterinary preceptors (in situ clinical educators) in Hashizume and colleagues' (2016) study, cited the maintenance of competency standards, promotion of the sector, and contribution to recruitment as reasons to mentor (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016); a reciprocation of benefits that appears to be driven by obligations to the profession, rather than to individuals (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). A key challenge for the profession, in addressing current difficulties, is securing sufficient, suitably qualified and willing mentors (Murray and Sischo, 2007; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). This means that developing a deeper understanding of vets' experiences as mentors is crucial. Investigating vets' mentoring experiences in relation to their professional obligations also contributes to the broader conceptual understanding of mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation.

1.3 PERSONAL RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I came to this research study as an academic of 20 + years' experience. My career in the last 15 years has been in academic management in higher education and has

included the management of academic teams, with my teaching focusing on professional development. Six years ago, I took the decision to focus my research in the area of coaching and mentoring as it presented profound connections with my working life, where coaching and mentoring features significantly in my interactions with both students and colleagues. Mentoring within my professional context requires the input, often unrewarded, of a suitable mentor. I find myself relying on the goodwill of more experienced staff when attempting to arrange for mentoring of a colleague or student. It interests me how better we can support mentors and understand their motivations and their challenges.

My MA in Coaching and Mentoring dissertation was an investigation into the experiences and sense-making of internal coaches in a UK higher education institution. The project noted that that voluntary internal coaches cited a series of positive development outcomes, expressed as different types of sense-making, resulting from training to be and engaging with coaching (Feehily, 2018). The study took place within a non-hierarchical internal coaching programme and, as with Kennett and Lomas' (2015) study of mentors, the coaches were volunteers and both authors (Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Feehily, 2018) felt their participants were predisposed to feeling positive about their experiences, due to their motivations for mentoring and coaching. Prior to the commencement of this study, I had spent time reflecting on this issue and on the parallels that I experienced in my working life. As new academics are recruited, they are frequently buddied with a more experienced member of staff to help them to orient themselves within the organisation and meet certain performance objectives. In many cases buddies are simply nominated as a trustworthy or experienced colleague who already "knows the ropes". It seemed however, rather a haphazard process, mentoring had yet to become an integral part of the induction of an employee. I personally feel a sense of guilt when asking colleagues to mentor others, as I acknowledge the extra workload that this will entail.

I rely on some sense of professional duty in colleagues to engage in mentoring. I began to question why such colleagues agreed to enter into these relationships, which were often time-consuming and in many cases mentors received no support and little recognition. I questioned what their experience would be like compared to coaches and mentors who volunteered for such duties and received training. I determined to explore experiences of coaches and mentors in different organisational settings and sought contexts in which to investigate whether similar findings are evident in settings where engaging in coaching or mentoring is a professional expectation.

In my search for a context in which mentoring was more of an expectation, certainly a context where the receipt of mentoring is seen as an essential part of professional development, I began to explore within my personal networks. I am married to a veterinary surgeon of 30+ years' experience. A regular part of his role is to welcome new residents into his organisation and I noticed similarities and some significant differences between the on-boarding of new academics and newly qualified veterinary surgeons. Parallels between the lived experience of academics and vets has also been noted in previous research (Knights and Clarke, 2018). My family life meant that I was familiar with some of the training, recruitment and retention challenges of the sector, and the threats posed by the commercial environment such as the impacts of Brexit and reformed immigration policies on the availability and retention of suitably qualified practitioners. My husband's supervision of new graduates, as part of his organisation's scheme, had given me an insight into the experience of vet mentors and the challenges and obligations he experiences. A study in this area clearly had value in helping to address some of the challenges of the sector.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to investigate mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the experiences of UK veterinary mentors with a view to contributing to a conceptual understanding of mentoring by exploring this little researched concept and context, and to make recommendations for practice based on this understanding. The objectives are:

1. To critically review literature relating to the themes of this study; explanatory theories of mentoring, professions and professional obligation and mentors' experiences of professional development mentoring across related sectors.
2. To explore, empirically, mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the context, experiences and practices of UK veterinary mentors.
3. To present a multi-faceted analysis of UK veterinary mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in this context.
4. To contribute to existing knowledge and understanding concerning mentoring and professional practice, specifically in relation to mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation within the UK veterinary sector.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

Although mentoring research historically was initially largely quantitative in design (Allen *et al.*, 2008), more recently the field has embraced more qualitative approaches (Haggard *et al.*, 2010). This study adopts a social constructivist case study design, underpinned by a qualitative interpretivist paradigm, which is able to emphasise detailed description and appreciation of context (Allen *et al.*, 2008; Haggard *et al.*, 2010). It aims to understand mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in the UK veterinary context through the experiences and interpretations of this specific profession. It is mentoring in the UK veterinary sector that forms the boundary for the case study. The study embraces a position that

reality is multiple and socially constructed (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009), acknowledging that the experiences of individuals are likely to be different and closely connected to their relationship with their profession. The case study constitutes

> "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon [mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation] in depth, within a real-life context [UK veterinary practice]" (Yin, 2014, p. 15).

Case study design is pivotal as appreciation is sought of the uniqueness and complexity of interactions within this particular context (Stake, 1995) and by integrating multiple perspectives (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). This study draws on accounts from a range of sources; mentoring scheme convenors and their documentary sources, publicly available material concerning veterinary mentoring in organisations, and veterinary mentors themselves from a variety of veterinary settings. These accounts are brought together to contribute to a rich holistic account of mentoring in this complex context (Gray, 2014) and professional obligation as a means to explore and explain mentoring.

Contextual data was collected from the organisers of veterinary mentoring schemes (convenors) through semi-structured interviews and documentary material relating to their mentoring schemes. This data was used to develop a rich picture of the nature of the mentoring taking place in a range of organisations that capture the variety of practice types and sizes evident in the sector, and to incorporate the intentions of convenors and their methods of recruiting and supporting mentors. Contextual data concerning mentoring was also gathered from the public facing websites of leading veterinary organisations. The main focus of the study is data retrieved from experienced vets who have engaged in mentoring, through in-depth phenomenological interviews, which explore these mentors' experiences of

mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation. Participants were purposively sampled, using selection criteria reflecting features or characteristics which allow for detailed exploration and understanding of the theme of professional obligation central to this research (Stake, 1995). Convenors were identified through engaging with organisations and professional associations and educators, such as the British Veterinary Association and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and by using snowball sampling (Gray, 2014). Access to mentors was gained through convenors of mentoring schemes, directly through professional association directories and from publications by practitioners. The sample of participants included four mentor scheme convenors and 10 mentors. This is a sufficient sample size for qualitative interview based studies (Bryman, 2016). As the aim is to understand the complexity of the context and interactions within it (Stake, 1995) and mentoring as a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2014), perspectives were drawn from a variety of practice types and size.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed before thematic analysis was undertaken. Firstly individual transcripts were interpreted followed by a process of aggregation to identify learning from across the range of data about the context (Stake, 1995). The thematic analysis was conducted inductively, within a constructionist framework and thus enabled consideration of sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions from which the participant accounts have been delivered (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis of the mentor interviews further drew from processes used within phenomenology, directing attention to how participants, individually and collectively, made sense of their experiences of mentoring as professional obligation (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). The analysis and synthesis of the different data sources contributed to building a detailed case study that provides a rich holistic account of the specific contextual features, experiences and practices of UK veterinary mentoring (Merriam and

Tisdell, 2016). The study contributes to knowledge by deepening understanding of mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation.

1.6 DEFINITIONS

Definitions which frame the investigation are included here and they are then deliberated on in further detail in the literature review.

1.6.1 Mentoring

The definition of mentoring being used to underpin the study was discussed with participants within the interviews and in the participant information sheet. It was one which encapsulated common understandings of mentoring in education settings, providing the participants with clarity that we were considering vet rather than nurse mentoring. Specifically, mentoring was defined as; a process whereby a more experienced mentor provides support for the development of a less experienced mentee (Kutsyuruba, 2012; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; D'Souza, 2014; Garza, L. Duchaine and Reynosa, 2014; Godden, Tregunna and Kutsyuruba, 2014; Stephens *et al.*, 2014).

It is acknowledged that the range of mentoring forms has expanded to include variations such as peer, e-, co- collaborative, group and reverse mentoring (Fowler, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2021), which offer alternatives to traditional conceptions of mentoring. Two distinct categories of mentoring are informal, where the relationship develops spontaneously (Allen, Eby and Lentz, 2006), typically believed to have better outcomes (Underhill, 2006; Fowler, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2021) and formal mentoring, whereby the organisation becomes involved in assigning mentoring relationships (Allen, Eby and Lentz, 2006). Despite formal mentoring schemes being considered less effective, increasingly organisations choose to establish them, acknowledging that employees may not have the necessary resources or opportunity to develop informal relationships (Weinberg and Lankau, 2011; Ghosh and Reio Jr, 2013).

1.6.2 Professional obligation

In conceptualising the phenomenon of professional obligation, the study intially adopts dictionary definitions of obligation; “a feeling of inner compulsion to act in a certain way” (Garmonsway, 1979, p. 506), and “profession” - an occupation requiring training and intellectual abilities ” (Garmonsway, 1979, p. 577). These concepts are discussed in detail in chapter 2 where further conceptualisations are introduced; professions as groups of individuals possessing unique ranges of skills and knowledge, which differentiate them from other occupations (Wilensky, 1964; Saks, 2012) and which they use to perpetuate exclusive, state-sanctioned jurisdiction (Haug, 1975) for specific occupational groupings (Saks, 2012). Limitations are acknowledged as to the extent of understanding of professional obligation currently evident in the literature. Studies are evaluated which consider professional obligation as it arises across a series of professions and occupations (Vance, 2002; Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Janzen and Phelan, 2019; Ryan, 2021) and in particular, where it has been raised in connection with mentoring (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019).

1.7 THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic invitably had an impact on the concluding stages of the research. Prior to the virus arriving in the UK, data collection for the study was almost complete, with remaining interviews scheduled. The virus brought severe disruptions to the UK veterinary sector, which was required to accommodate new and shifting guidelines to make practice safe. At times it was uncertain how quickly the sector would be able to resume near normal practice, which had an impact on participant willingess and on snowball sampling. I found it necessary to suspend the project for a year between April 2020 and February 2021, restarting to complete the

remaining data collection, which required sourcing new participants and the shifting of all interviews to an online format.

1.8 STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter has provided the context and rationale for this study and its relationship to other studies. It presents the underpinning research aim of this study and the research objectives which outline how this research question will be answered. It outlines my personal motivation for being involved in this study and gives an overview of the relevant literature and the methodology employed.

The second chapter explores the literature pertinent to this study, providing a framework which centres upon explanatory theories of and perspectives for exploring mentoring; conceptions of professions and professional obligation and the experiences of mentors, particularly the experiences of veterinary mentors.

The third chapter presents the methodological approach employed in this study together with the underpinning philosophical position and rationale for the methods chosen to execute this research.

Chapters four and five present the results of the analysis of the three types of data; documentary data, semi structured interviews with mentor scheme convenors and in-depth interviews with vet mentors. Chapter four focuses on the context of study, the UK veterinary profession and gives voice to the experiences of the vet mentors and convenors working with it, their challenges and their obligations, their truths about their own experience (Finlay and Evans, 2009). Having gained insight into how vets relate to their profession and express obligations to their profession, Chapter 5 then turns to presenting data connected more specifically to mentoring within this context. Data related to mentoring is presented from the public facing websites of leading veterinary organisations, from mentor scheme documents provided by scheme

convenors and from semi-structured interviews with scheme convenors and in-depth interviews with vet mentors. Motivations to mentor as well as the practical realities are presented and detailed first person accounts give insight into mentoring realities in this context, providing material which allows for exploration of mentoring and professional obligation.

The sixth chapter discusses the findings presented in chapters four and five in relation to the literature presented in chapter 2, and considers the interplay between the developments within the profession discussed in Chapter 2, the professions literature, the realities of practising vet mentors and understandings of professional obligation and mentoring.

The final chapter revisits the aims and objectives of the study and identifies the contributions of the research in relation to these objectives and offers recommendations to practitioners. It considers the contribution the research makes to theoretical explanations of mentoring by considering new understandings of professional obligation in mentoring and it closes by exploring implications for mentoring practice.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an appraisal of relevant sectors of the mentoring literature and thus addresses the first objective of this study. The review commences with an exploration of conceptual discussions of mentoring. This includes reviewing the evolution of understandings of mentoring, conceptual frameworks used to explain mentoring and identifies where understanding is incomplete. This review considers a number of lenses which have been employed to investigate and attempt to explain mentoring relationships and the interactions which take place, in an array of differing contexts. This exploration introduces a number of sense-making concepts which might contribute to understanding professional obligation and mentoring. Consideration is given to the current position of research in mentoring and how the focus of studies has shifted over time, highlighting the contextual nature of mentoring research. As the objectives of this study focus on an area of mentoring predominantly used in the early phases of veterinary careers and in workplace educational settings, weight is given to research in organisational and educational settings. The spread and development of formal versus informal mentoring schemes is deliberated upon as this has emerged as an important distinction in the way that mentoring has been discussed.

“Professional obligation” is a key theme in this review as it is its role in mentoring is at the centre of this study. Little discussion of this concept was found in the mentoring literature and therefore further professional contexts and their obligations were explored. Theoretical discussion of the professions provides a framework for understanding of professional obligation. Literature which explores professions, particularly professions as institutions, is given prominence as it provides insights into professionals, and literature which focuses specifically on the veterinary profession and its current challenges is consulted to understand the context within which veterinary mentors engage as agents of change for their profession.

Mentoring studies are considered to develop better insight into how mentoring is experienced by mentors and why they are drawn to it and therefore to understand the role of professional

obligation in explaining mentoring. Some studies are drawn on from coaching literature where studies explore the experience of coaching. Mentoring in related contexts ("mentoring+medical") is discussed and specifically studies of mentoring in the veterinary context (search term "mentoring+veterinary").

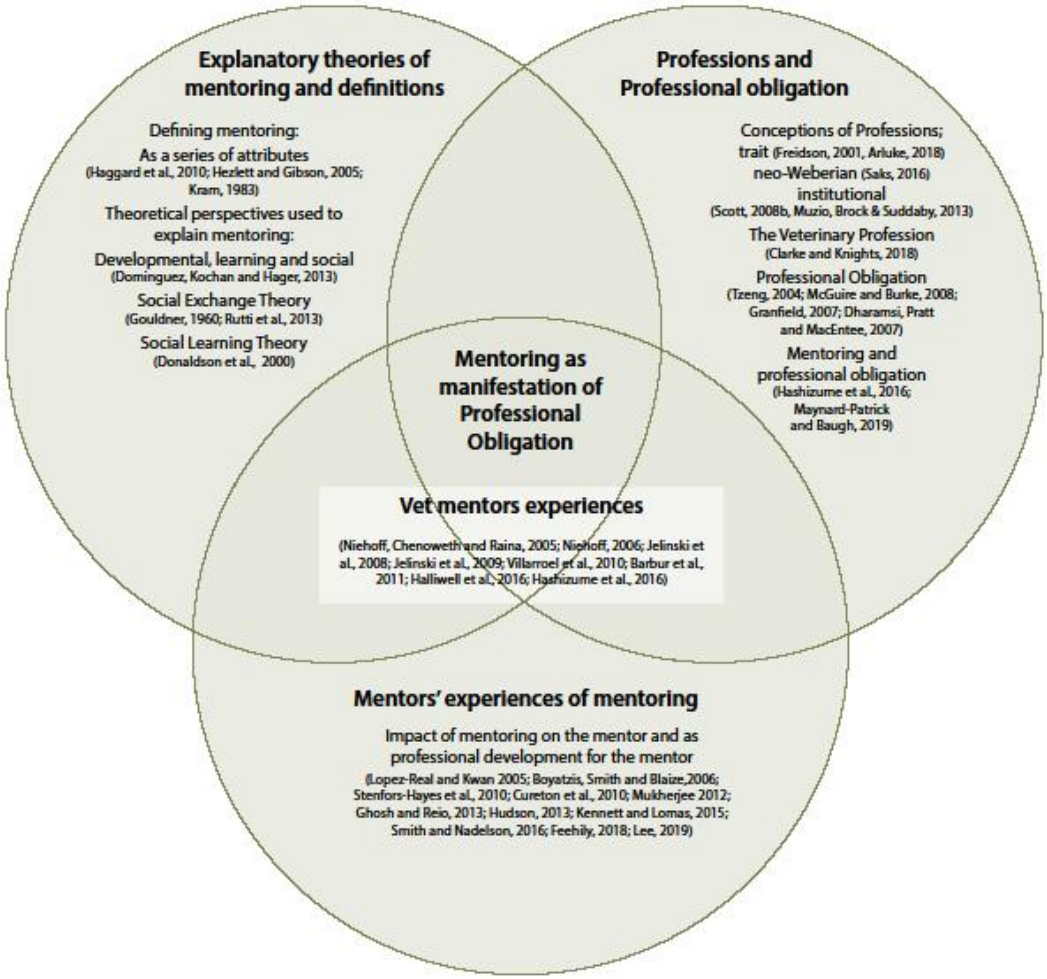

Figure 1 Literature review map

2.2 EXPLANATORY THEORIES OF MENTORING AND DEFINITIONS

Despite concerns about the lack of a unifying definition of mentoring (Allen, 2007; Castanheira, 2016) and the proliferation of ways that mentoring that can be defined (Haggard *et al.*, 2010), within educational settings there is a degree of consensus about what mentoring is (Castanheira, 2016). Traditionally it is viewed as a process whereby a more experienced mentor provides support for the development of a less experienced mentee (Kutsyuruba, 2012; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; D'Souza, 2014; Garza, L. Duchaine and Reynosa, 2014; Godden, Tregunna and Kutsyuruba, 2014; Stephens *et al.*, 2014). In such relationships the role of the mentor is to help the mentee with their development and can be viewed as arising from a deficit model. Although some debate remains surrounding how far mentoring should be viewed as a more developmental relationship, (Dominguez, 2013) with the mentee more actively engaged in their own development.

Haggard et al. (2010) track changes in notable topics and developments in a broader range of mentoring research (Figure 2). Over time, the focus of research has shifted from interest in the functions and dimensions which define mentoring and outcomes for protégés (Kram, 1988; Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005), through to concern for the perspective of the mentor (Weinberg and Lankau, 2011) on to the significance of formal versus less formal mentoring schemes and the nature of the mentoring relationship (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Haggard *et al.*, 2010; Gannon and Washington, 2019). It has been identified as a weakness in the mentoring research that the type of mentorship being studied is not always mentioned (Allen *et al.*, 2008) in a context where types of mentoring have evolved with peer mentoring, reverse mentoring, reciprocal mentoring. The lack of a standard definition across the field of mentoring has been noted as a reason why it has proved difficult to analyse it (Castanheira, 2016). The changing definitions of mentoring, particularly those constructs offered to research participants over time, plus the lack of specificity to reflect on a single mentor required by researchers (Allen *et al.*, 2004), may also

have had an impact on participant perceptions of beneficial outcomes (Haggard *et al.*, 2010) as studies may not have been measuring the same thing. Haggard et al. (2010) track the development of the definitions of mentoring used in studies and note an increasing level of detail about mentor behaviours or functions, clearer distinctions between supervisors and mentors, distinguishing between formal and informal mentoring, whether the relationships exist within or outside the organisation and the inclusion of goals of the mentoring within definitions. They also note that it is rare in mentoring studies for researchers to make the distinction between participants who are in a mentoring relationship and those who have received mentoring functions (Haggard *et al.*, 2010) such as career and psychosocial support from other sources, despite being in a mentoring relationship proving to be the more beneficial where it has been measured specifically (Allen *et al.*, 2004). Significant for the study is that there is broad definitional agreement concerning mentoring in educational settings and although there are some notable reservations (Colley, 2001a; Colley, 2002; Eby *et al.*, 2004; Dashper, 2019; Ivey and Dupré, 2020; Fowler, Fowler and O'Gorman, 2021; House *et al.*, 2021; Sandager, 2021), mentoring is generally believed to have beneficial outcomes. Additionally, within mentoring research, context is significant and varied and contributes to researchers using a variety of conceptual frameworks in their explorations of mentoring, which reflect these contextual variations.

Current research appears to centre around three key areas. Firstly, the psychological aspects of mentoring; attributes and functions of mentoring and traits of mentors for example (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Haggard *et al.*, 2010). Secondly, the contextual features of mentoring (Haggard *et al.*, 2010), for example the occupational settings in which mentoring takes place; higher education, medicine, nursing. The influences of context on the mentoring relationship, for example of culture (Kochan *et al.*, 2015) and the career related outcomes for those that engage with mentoring, such as career progression and salary development. Lastly, there is a focus on descriptions of mentoring, exploring different aspects of the mentoring relationship, such as relational networks, (Allen *et al.*, 2004), dynamics within

relationships (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005) extending to the dark side of mentoring (Colley, 2001a; Colley, 2001b; Colley, 2002; Eby *et al.*, 2004; Dashper, 2019; Ivey and Dupré, 2020). Burke (1997) recommends caution when suggesting mentoring relationships due to the lack of evidence of their benefit. Colley (2001a) and others (Ivey and Dupré, 2020) argue that the bulk of literature is biased, exhibiting an unwarranted favourable view of mentoring, with little evidence of the value of mentoring being offered by proponents. Mulcahey et al. (2018), despite recommending that experienced orthopaedic surgeons consider mentoring an obligation, identifies a number of flawed mentoring roles that can project negative experiences onto mentees. These include the "perfectionist-turned-tyrant" who presents themselves as an exemplar of perfection and subjects the mentee to criticism if they fall short of their expected standards (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018, p. 469). Concerns have also been raised concerning the effectiveness of mentoring in achieving gender equality (Dashper, 2019; House *et al.*, 2021; Sandager, 2021). Significant for the veterinary sector, with its rapid feminisation (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016) is Dashper's study (2019), within the events sector, of women-only formal mentoring schemes. She finds that such schemes can reinforce masculine narratives which characterise women as inferior in relation to dominant male narratives. Mentoring can perpetuate workspaces dominated by masculine norms (Sandager, 2021), which propagate stereotypes of females as carers (Colley, 2002) and maintain masculine discourses within organisation life (Dashper, 2019). In an important review of the mentoring research for medical professions, House and colleagues (2021) determined that there is no robust evidence that mentoring initiatives to promote gender equality, actually work.

A further recent focus also ventures into innovative mentoring processes and how technology is changing the way that mentoring is delivered (Butler, Whiteman and Crow, 2013). These areas of focus explore what mentoring looks like, what outcomes flow and how to do it well in a variety of contexts, but they rarely attempt to contribute to a theoretical understanding of what mentoring is and how it works (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). Hezlett

and Gibson (2005, p. 450) urge deeper understanding of the interpersonal processes in mentoring relationships as this will “help to clarify the conditions under which mentoring relationships are maximally supportive and satisfying”.

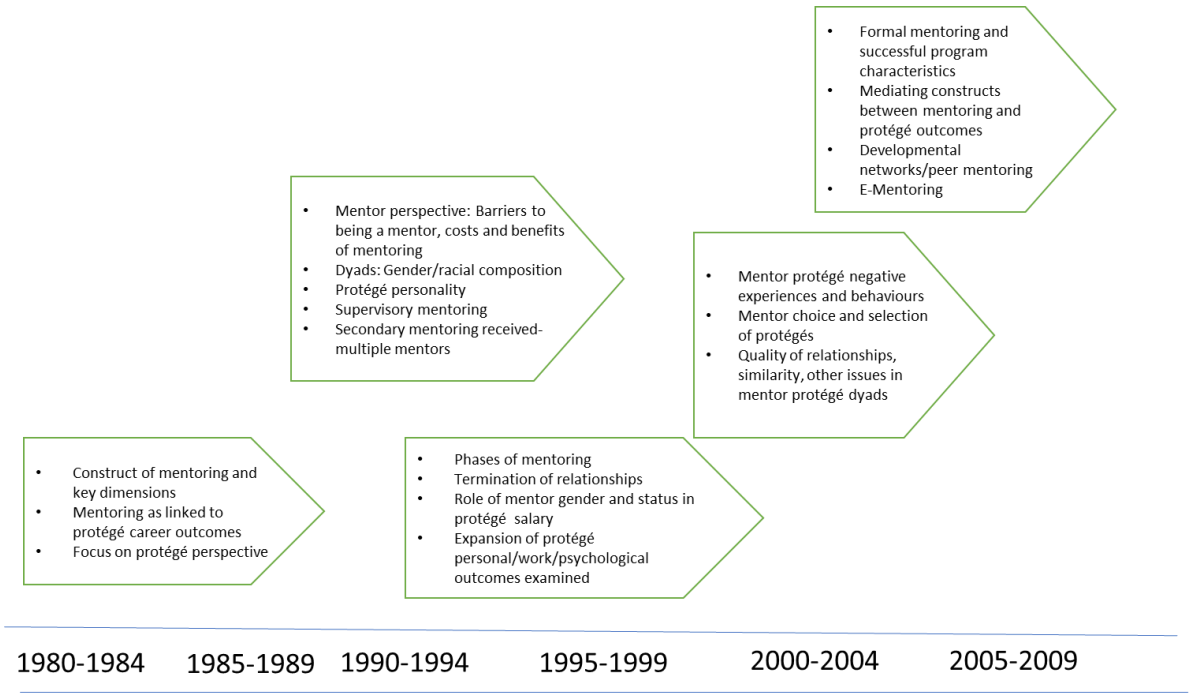

Figure 2 Notable topics and developments in mentoring research across time (Haggard et al. 2010)

2.2.1 Mentoring as a series of attributes

Attempts to define mentoring have often taken the form of compiling identifying features and attributes of mentoring rather than providing theories of the concept itself (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). There has also been a lack of attention paid to conceptual gaps in understanding mentoring which have been presented as a reason for the field of mentoring study being tied to early conceptualisations. Frequently cited is Kram’s (1983) conceptualisation of mentoring as having two overarching roles; the support of career development, and psychosocial support, and as having four distinct phases. The career development function involves behaviours by the mentor, which are beneficial to the mentee’s career success; helping the mentee to learn the ropes of the organisation and get exposure and visibility. There is little mention of the support provided by mentoring for

developing core skills for a role. Some argue that role-modelling should be considered a third function and viewed separately from other psychosocial facets of mentoring (Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Ragins, 1993) although Mulcahey and colleagues. (2018) raise a convincing argument that role modelling ought not be conflated with mentoring. Role modelling, they argue (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018) is a passive process of setting a positive example, which risks segueing into one of their flawed mentoring archetypes "Perfectionist-turned-tyrant" (2018, p. 469) whereby the mentor considers themselves an exemplar of perfection. Mentoring, on the other hand, requires dynamic, active involvement from both the mentor and the mentee.

Over time, certain features of conceptions of the mentoring relationship have remained stable, summarised by Zachary (2005, p. 27)

> "a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals."

Mentoring is preferred as "off-line" (Clutterbuck, 2013) meaning outside of normal reporting lines, it is aimed at intervention and mutuality, sometimes called reciprocity. Wanberg and colleagues (2003) stress the importance of other, content variables in understanding mentoring. Adding to the previously outlined functions; career, psychosocial support (Kram, 1983) and role modelling (Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Ragins, 1993), they propose that the number of subjects covered and frequency of interactions also help in understanding mentoring beyond the acknowledged core functions (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003). This focus of agreement is helpful for the current study providing areas of agreement concerning mentoring to underpin research design and to signpost areas where data collection might provide detail in the veterinary context of for example aspects of career and psychosocial support, the hierarchical detail in context and how mentoring occurs in practice concerning functional and frequency variables.

2.2.2 Theoretical explanations of mentoring

A plethora of theoretical frameworks has been employed to explain mentoring conceptually and to investigate mentoring across various perspectives and contexts (Kegan, 1982; Kram, 1983; Chao, Walz and Gardner, 1992; Kittrell, 1998; Driscoll, 2000; Baker and Lattuca, 2010; Dominguez, 2013; Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013). Rather than providing a unifying theory of mentoring, these frameworks provide a series of theoretical lenses, which offer different perspectives through which mentoring can be viewed and explored. Below, key conceptual frameworks are evaluated for their potential as sense-making devices, however, ultimately Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) is chosen as the main conceptual framework as it more closely aligns with the central focus of this study, professional obligation.

Attempts to explain the conceptual underpinnings of mentoring as facets of education have drawn upon three theoretical perspectives; developmental, learning and social (Dominguez, 2013). These function as blueprints or pathways of knowledge upon which mentoring researchers can build. Rather than explaining mentoring, these perspectives provide frameworks of understanding within which the work of the mentor can be conceived. They shape how mentoring is conceptualised and implemented by approaching conceptions of the mentor, mentee and the developmental relationships in ways which ensue from very different positions.

Mentoring viewed from the perspective of developmental theories, for example, with its emphasis on life and career stages (Kegan, 1982; Kram, 1983; Kittrell, 1998), incorporates the significance of stages or transitional phases into conceptions of the mentor, with programmes developed around career and development phases (Dominguez, 2013). The mentee is presented as a recipient of learning. However, when mentoring is considered from a learning perspective, the nature of the particular learning theory espoused influences perceptions of the role of the mentor and indeed the defining characteristics of the mentor (Dominguez, 2013). For example, within a behaviourist learning tradition, learning is

perceived as observable changes in behaviours (Driscoll, 2000) and the mentor becomes a coach to help the mentee develop desirable behaviours. In contrast, mentoring based on constructivist theory encourages mentees to reflect on and learn from past experiences (Baker and Lattuca, 2010). The mentee is also depicted as the junior partner in the relationship but one that reflects critically and actively on past experiences (Baker and Lattuca, 2010). Learning theories provide a theoretical context with which to understand and plan for the learning that may take place within particular learning partnerships and they provide different perspectives on the nature of this learning (Dominguez, 2013). Rather than attempt to explain or understand mentoring itself, these frameworks provide perspectives within which mentoring can be considered.

Social perspectives have been adopted to explain mentoring activity (Dominguez, 2013). From this perspective the function of a mentor as role-model is accepted, despite the potential issues with role-modelling as a basis for mentoring (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018). Through role modelling, it is argued, mentors provide information, model successful behaviours to aid mentees in adjusting to their environment (Dominguez, 2013). Socialisation theory (Chao, 2007), Human and Social Capital Theory (Dominguez, 2013), Social Exchange Theory (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013) and Developmental Network Theory contribute to understanding how mentees are socialised into organisations and give some insight into the motivations of both mentor and mentee for engaging in these relationships. Social theories also overlap with developmental and learning theories, for example, positive socialisation outcomes have been noted from engaging in mentoring relationships (Johnson, 2002). Within the veterinary context, in the face of high levels of anxiety, Allister (2015) stresses the importance of socialisation for the development of professional identity (Hotho, 2008) and the accompanying sense of stability and belonging within an organisation and engagement with organisational rules and established goals. However such outcomes have potential to perpetuate entrenched and in the case of the veterinary profession, masculine norms (Clarke and Knights, 2019; Dashper, 2019; Sandager, 2021).

Far from providing a unifying theory of mentoring, these developmental, learning and social perspectives provide contrasting and sometimes subtly overlapping orientations around which to organise our understanding of mentoring (Dominguez, 2013). They also represent very different schools of thinking as to how mentoring can be explained, by focusing on different theoretical aspects and explanations of features of the mentoring relationship and its outcomes. The developmental theories affect particularly how mentees are viewed, as more passive recipients of learning; while learning theories allow for the construction of a learning relationship between the mentor and mentee. Finally, social theories allow for an appreciation of the contribution to an individual's growth of developmental networks (Dominguez, 2013). Dominguez (2013) takes a position that no one model of mentoring applies to all cases of mentoring, rather they reflect perspectives ranging from personal learning to social learning. Organisers of schemes may integrate applications underpinned by a range of theoretical positions, to develop programmes which work in a particular context and with particular participants, and which support different types of learning and outcomes.

The functions of mentoring have been linked with mentor-mentee reciprocity (Ensher, Thomas and Murphy, 2001), with benefits flowing between the participants. However, in a traditional hierarchical mentoring relationship the benefits exchanged between mentor and mentee would be of different types. Although the mentor can benefit from the mentoring relationship in terms of intrinsic satisfaction (Clutterbuck, 2008; Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016), improved skills and confidence and opportunities to learn (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Hale, 2000), definitions of mentoring largely focus on improvement for the mentee (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005). With mentoring, the relationship is not usually one of equals. Both Colley (2003) and Roberts (1999) remind us of the dictionary definition of mentor with its emphasis on experience and trustworthiness, harking back to its origin as the name of the adviser to Homer's Telemachus. Rogers (2012), Jones and colleagues. (2016) and Eby and colleagues. (2013) also see the mentor as an advisor, tutor or teacher with more experience than the person being mentored. Colley (2003) explains that mentoring

fulfils many functions some of which offer an alternative to the (Clutterbuck, 2008) performance distinction.

Due to the nature of this relationship, with benefit argued as flowing predominantly in one direction (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005), the central act of reciprocation may not actually occur between the members of the mentoring dyad, but may occur after a period of time in another dyad where mentee feels obliged to become mentor (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). Developing a deeper understanding of these relationships will help to elucidate conditions which allow mentoring relationships to reach their full potential in terms of providing support and satisfaction for both parties (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005). Currently little is known about situational and relationship factors that affect the mentee's outcomes from a mentoring relationship (Allen *et al.*, 2004).

Rutti *et al*. (2013) review mentoring and the notion of reciprocity using the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET). The authors adopt Kram's (1988) characterisation of mentoring as fulfilling two core purposes; career development and psychosocial support, within mutually beneficial relationships. Particularly with career development, the mentee is exposed to specific behaviours from the mentor which will lead to greater success in the mentee's career development. The mentee has therefore received something to be regarded as a benefit. Rutti *et al*. (2013) describe human exchanges as cycles of obligation which can be observed and which explain the exchanges that occur in mentoring. They argue that human interactions are underpinned by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), reciprocation is required to maintain balance in human transactions. Social Exchange Theory suggests that it is the cost-benefit calculation which motivates participants in a mentoring relationship to engage; it is anticipated that both participants will receive benefits which outweigh the costs of participation (Dominguez, 2013). Mentoring may have negative costs associated with it, particularly for the mentor (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) who has to give up time and who may experience an impact on their reputation if the mentoring relationship does not go well, although some studies suggest that mentors who have been mentees view these costs

more optimistically (Allen *et al.*, 1997). Whether benefits can be obtained by either participant of the relationship also depends on the quality of that relationship (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). It would also appear that the mentoring relationship is of greater benefit to the mentee as mentoring dyads are typically formed so that a mentor with desirable characteristics (knowledge, social network, access to resources) (Allen, 2007) works with a mentee who will benefit from access to those resources. This leaves open the question of what benefit the mentor receives from this arrangement. Perhaps mentoring constitutes the balancing of reciprocation from an earlier receipt of support and mentoring. Mentors may feel reassured that the norms of their profession will ensure that reciprocation for their sharing of social assets will occur at a later date in a later context (Coleman, 1988). There is some evidence to suggest that past experiences in a mentoring relationship as a mentee is key to preparing an individual for mentoring (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). It is possible that mentors see benefit for the organisation or profession through this flow of benefits to the mentee. It is of interest to explore what influences a mentor to invest in their mentee (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) and it appears that the experience of having been mentored is a key motivator as it engenders felt obligation to reciprocate.

2.2.3 Mentoring explained by Social Learning Theory

Another lens through which to consider both mentoring and professional obligation is Social Learning Theory, which Donaldson and colleagues (2000) apply to the mentoring context. Mentees, they assert, learn from mentors through two main mechanisms of instrumental support and psychosocial support, akin to Kram's (1988) core mentoring functions. Donaldson and colleagues (2000) conducted a longitudinal study examining mentoring relationships and organisational commitment, the strength with which an individual identifies with and is involved with an organisation (Porter *et al.*, 1974) and citizenship behaviour (OCB), discretionary behaviour that goes beyond the expectations of and role and which is neither mandated nor rewarded (Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997).

They used pre-existing data from an earlier study, Project WORKWELL, to examine the effects of lifestyle on workplace wellbeing. Whilst arguing that having quality mentoring relationships engenders mentee OCB, they note that mentoring itself is a manifestation of OCB. By being 'good mentors', mentors are modelling OCB for their mentees (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000). Organisational commitment behaviour, on the other hand, has been linked with antecedents of positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and with opportunities to interact with socialising agents such as mentors who offer critical feedback (Scandura, 1992; Mitchell, Eby and Ragins, 2015). More recently, studies have connected the antecedents of OCB, defined more specifically as proactive behaviour, with organisation based self-esteem (OBSE) (Ghosh, 2014; Wu *et al.*, 2019) adding an important dimension to understanding how mentoring might ultimately impact proactive, citizen-like behaviour by supporting protégé OBSE.

In summary, research in the field of mentoring has been observed to lack an integrated theoretical framework (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007), and to focus on the evaluation of outcomes for mentees and their organisations (Allen *et al.*, 2008). It has meant there is little focus on investigating conceptual gaps in understanding of mentoring itself (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007) and on developing an understanding of mentoring as workplaces evolve. Allen and colleagues. (2008) note the opportunity for a contribution from qualitative studies which can emphasise detailed description and appreciation of context and help to understand mentoring in contemporary careers. A qualitative study which explores the contemporary voice of the mentor in the UK veterinary sector, in order to contribute to conceptual understandings of mentoring, is timely. Previously employed conceptual frameworks have potential to contribute to understanding mentoring, within the context of this study, SLT in particular has potential to shed light on the phenomenon of professional obligation and mentoring, within this professional setting.

2.3 PROFESSIONS AND PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

2.3.1 Evolving conceptions of professions

Exploration of the notion of professions is useful as a starting point in understanding professional obligation. Early conceptualisations of professions drew upon functionalist and trait theories (Freidson, 1994) describing them as “key occupations [which] claim to possess competence over a body of knowledge and a collection of techniques” (Arluke, 2018, p. 107). These predominantly deferential approaches (Saks, 2012; Saks, 2016) to defining profession, which emphasised claims to knowledge and techniques (Wilensky, 1964), explain to participants of the profession, and to those who interact with it, what can be expected from members of the profession. These claims thus contribute to defining the essence (Freidson, 1994) or story of the profession, its boundaries and levels of trust in it. In elaborating expectations of professions and the source of their authority, Wilensky (1964) couples jurisdiction over certain knowledge areas with the service ideal, the expectation that professionals will act in the interest of their clients above personal self-interest. Members of the profession are able to police the quality and consistency of contributions from members of the profession (Arluke, 2018) due to a distinctive institutional logic (Freidson, 2001). Discourse surrounding professions shifted to viewing such jurisdiction as part of a range of techniques used to “gain, legitimise and maintain control over work, political and economic autonomy” (Hotho, 2008, p. 722). A neo-Weberian approach would argue that this professional distinctiveness achieves the societal, state sanctioned status (Saks, 2016) of a legal boundary around a particular grouping to control particular services (Saks, 2016) and keep them sheltered in the marketplace (Freidson, 1994). Such boundaries confer improved life chances for members of a profession as well as certain expectations. The neo-Weberian position, at times, focuses on the process of professionalisation rather than a description of a profession. As Saks (2012) identifies:

> “explanations for which [professionalisation] are sought less in concrete knowledge and expertise and more in a profession’s tactics of competition and the prevailing socio-economic conditions” (Saks, 2012, p. 5).

Neo-Weberianism considers it relevant to chart how certain occupations have sought to control market conditions in their favour (Saks, 2016), thereby controlling entrants to an occupation in pursuit of market value. One approach has been to exert and maintain control over access to education and training and the professional labour market (Hotho, 2008) evident with the veterinary profession's validation of qualifications delivered through a limited number of universities (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016). To a certain degree, professional values and interests help to cushion groups from the challenges to professional autonomy and discretion which emerge from changes to society such as globalisation, technology and competition (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008). Saks exemplifies:

> "Professional service firms often link their own interest-based professional projects with the aims of multi-national corporations that stretch far beyond their jurisdiction within the nation state" (Saks, 2016, p. 12).

This is evident with large law and accounting firms and is becoming apparent in the veterinary profession as it moves towards greater corporatisation (Knights and Clarke, 2018) and connectedness with major multinational pharmaceutical organisations. The profession itself has noted parallels between the veterinary profession and its shifting identity and the professions of dentistry and pharmacy as they all respond to increased marketisation (Williams and Jordan, 2015). This range of strategies and techniques employed by professions represent the power and knowledge base from which they draw their legitimacy and jurisdiction (Freidson, 1994) and thereby control the behaviour and identity of professionals (Hotho, 2008), who from this perspective are recipients of their professional structure. Such debates are indicative of key themes within discussion of professions as being dichotomised between discussions of macro-level change which impact the structures of institutions and micro-level research which focuses in the impacts on individuals of those changes (Hotho, 2008).

In contrast, Scott (2008b) describes professionals as those that orchestrate the choreography “for the broad transformations reconfiguring contemporary political economic systems” (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013, p. 700) through processes of institutional change. Individual professionals, he argues, are able to impact their institutions through a series of agency roles. He proposes a new model of the professions, which both accommodates and moves beyond the early functionalist interpretation (Marshall, 1939; Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Goss, 1961) and conflict model (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Derber, 1982; Freidson, 2001) of professions. The functionalist interpretation sees professions defined as a series of distinguishing functions that meet the needs of society (Saks, 2016). Conflict models narrate the struggles between competing occupational groups for economic privilege (Saks, 2016). As a proponent of the institutional model of professions, Scott allows (Scott, 2008b; Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013) for the knowledge claims of professionals to be both sincere and contestable, and that the conflict involved with the advancement of professional interests is not always inconsistent with providing a good service to clients. Together with Hotho (2008), Scott (2008b) allows for individual professionals to move beyond being recipients of professional structures of control to having agency over the development of their professions.

2.3.2 Implications of evolving concepts of profession for the veterinary profession

Traditional articulations of professions and professionalism (Wilensky, 1964) and challenges to those articulations (Haug, 1975) are evident in current discussions of the veterinary profession and its identity (Mossop, 2012; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018). Wilensky’s (1964) conception is frequently drawn upon, of professional authority emanating from exclusive jurisdiction over particular technical expertise, accompanied by adherence to the service ideal, a social contract, it is argued that exists between medicine and society (Allister, 2015). Such jurisdiction is made convincing to the public through lengthy specialist training and by a concern for the client’s interest above personal profit. Modern authors (Mossop, 2012; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016;

Clarke and Knights, 2018) are perhaps drawn to the prophetic nature of Wilensky's pronouncements which forewarned current outcomes of the shifts in veterinary business models;

> "if he [the client] did *not* believe that the service ideal were operative, if he thought that the income of the professional were a commanding motive, he would be forced to approach the professional as he does a car dealer – demanding a specific result in a specific time frame and a guarantee of restitution should mistakes be made" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 140).

Contemporary authors (Mossop, 2012; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018) perhaps find convincing Haug's (1975) warnings that increased sophistication of the public, inroads from technological trends such as computerisation and division of labour would lead to designated professions losing control of their specified knowledge domains. Current discussions of veterinary professional identity identify it as being challenged by these predicted developments (Allister, 2015; 2016) and suggest it exists in a state of constant flux as a result of the impact of societal changes on the profession (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). Notable changes include the move from single vet practices and small groups to larger veterinary corporates, a shift from farm work to companion animal (Henry and Treanor, 2015), increased specialisation and use of referrals and colleague collaboration, as well as the increasing use of vet insurance (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016).

Authority within the profession in the UK is held by the RCVS, the governing body (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016), who are able to ensure market closure is secured, by right of the 1881 Act, as only those registered with the RCVS may practise and they must adhere to a professional code (RCVS, 2021a). The RCVS validates qualifications delivered by a limited number of universities, which act as gatekeepers for the profession, access to which is highly competitive and ultimately open only to students who achieve highly across a range of

aptitudes (Tötemeyer, 2013). Despite these controlling aspects of the profession, Mossop (2012) and Allister (2015) highlight the lack of an agreed definition of veterinary professionalism beyond a combination of academic knowledge, compliance with norms and values held by other vets, with little detail available as to what those are, alongside a social contract with clients. Certain commentators (Mossop, 2012; Allister, 2015; 2016) agree that a definition is needed, which goes beyond competent diagnostic skills. An agreed definition for the profession would inform curricula so that new vets would know both what professionalism looks like and what poor professional practice looks like (Mossop, 2012). Allister (2015) concedes that more recently, the increasing significance of identity for the profession can be seen in shifting curricula, which often include the teaching of ethics, communication and advice on professional behaviour.

The veterinary profession rarely appears as an exemplar in the above literature discussing the evolving debates concerning professions more generally. Where veterinary related literature does engage with these issues, it has focused on exploring the relatively unregulated nature of the profession (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016) where occupational closure exists to a greater degree than other professions. It also highlights particular power issues within the profession such as its masculine nature (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2019) and the implications of this for female progression (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Treanor and Marlow, 2021) amidst rapid feminisation of the profession (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010). Recent discourse has focused on particular facets of professional reality (Clarke and Knights, 2018) for example, aspects of human-animal interactions (Hjorth and Roed-Petersen, 1980; Samadi, Wouters and Heederik, 2013) and to a greater extent on the mental health crisis that defines and threatens to engulf the profession (BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). These facets have consequences in terms of increased suicide risk (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008; Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018) and suspected causes of the mental health crisis (2008; Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Tomlin,

Brodbelt and May, 2010; Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012; Batchelor, Creed and McKeegan, 2015; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Duijn *et al.*, 2020)

The increased likelihood of vets committing suicide, compared to other occupations (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008) has fuelled increasing studies on poor mental health within the profession (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008; 2010; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures, 2016; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018). Bartram and Baldwin (2008; 2010) have produced a convincing explanation for the high rates resulting from a combination of particular features including; stresses related to the job, professional isolation and some ensuing cases of substance misuse, access to the means to commit suicide and suicide contagion, from the closeness to the poor mental health of colleagues. Fink-Miller and Nestler (2018) add personality traits to the list of risk factors. Allister (2014) encapsulates this discussion describing a unique yet unachievable professional culture which combines perfectionism (Clarke and Knights, 2018), self-sacrifice and independence with an expectation of omni-competence.

Authors have attempted to further unpick these sources of stress associated within the profession. Several commentators (Allister, 2015; 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018) agree that empirical changes experienced by a range of professions (Scott, 2008b) contribute to high levels of anxiety and poor mental wellbeing. These changes manifest as a rise in managerialism with its valuing of efficiency and performance targets (Allister, 2016) over public service alongside ensuing work intensification (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018) and enhance a sense of the precariousness of professional identity (Clarke and Knights, 2018).The specifics of the veterinary context and how it contributes to anxiety are complex. The dualistic nature of clinical education contributes to stress by indicating that there is a right and wrong way of doing things (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) and encouraging perfectionism (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) with vets becoming distressed and confused when best practice cannot be followed (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). This happens, for example, when clients cannot afford to pay and where

scientific certainty is the exception (Clarke and Knights, 2018). The expectation that vets can become infallible experts places unreasonable demands on them and encourages individuals to become judgemental when mistakes are made (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016), which feels unreasonable given the ambiguous nature of veterinary work and the frequency with which vets face ethical dilemmas (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012; Batchelor, Creed and McKeegan, 2015). Batchelor, Creed and McKeegan (2015) conclude that vets possess moral reasoning skills insufficient to the demands of typical veterinary roles. This leaves the wellbeing of vets compromised, particularly in the UK context where the professional code of conduct devolves responsibility for an individual's mental health to the individuals themselves who are expected to "take steps to protect their own physical and mental health" (Magalhães-Sant'Ana *et al.*, 2015, p. 5). The sorts of ethical conflicts vets find themselves experiencing link to, and exacerbate, the challenges to professional identity identified earlier. Vets arbitrate the conflicting needs of their human clients, the wider community and legal requirements and the needs of the animals in their care (Arbe Montoya *et al.*, 2019) and sometimes those interests conflict with the professional and personal morals of the vets.

Some studies (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010; Duijn *et al.*, 2020) have considered the transition from student to practising vet in terms of how this period impacts on mental health and how well students are prepared for the realities of veterinary life. Tomlin, Brodbelt and May (2010) have investigated claims that new graduates lack clear perceptions of the realities of a career in veterinary medicine and that this could make them dissatisfied with the profession and less committed to it. Tomlin, Brodbelt and May (2010) compared the understandings of student and new vets, with the reality of the working conditions of practising vets; their working hours, on call duties and pay. They compared the concerns of the newer vets with the real concerns of practising vets collected by an RCVS study (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010) and they concluded that there was not a mismatch of expectations. However, how far their method could establish preparedness, or lack of, for the frequency of

challenging ethical decision-making is unclear. A commonly held belief is that vets are not competent when recently qualified and this compounds their lack of confidence (Duijn *et al.*, 2020). Duijn et al (2020) have identified the first 12 months of practice as being a particularly stressful period where new vets lack confidence with typical procedures and require support. Rather than focusing on the broader complexities of veterinary life, Duijn's study (2020) focuses on clinical procedure, prioritising the dualistic nature of medical professions with their right and wrong methods (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) and the study is unlikely to illuminate understanding of a new vets' abilities to cope with the wider complexities of the role.

The emphasis within the discourse on exploring and explaining poor mental wellbeing appears to foreground the shift of veterinary professional identity from being defined by technical expertise towards being skilled in resolving complex professional dilemmas often in the face of considerable environmental and emotional challenges (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016, p. 318). However, to date little connection has been made between vets and the emotional labour they undertake that is clearly a feature of professional life. Emotional labour, defined as the act of "expressing organizationally desired emotions during service transactions" (Morris and Feldman, 1996, p. 987) is more usually discussed in relation to service workers, often working in the hospitality sector, where emotional labour is also a significant feature of their work life. There are clear parallels with service workers, which suggests that vets might also feel closely aware of the changing nature of clients (Korczynski, 2003). Service workers are likely to have been recruited because they have pro-customer attitudes (Korczynski, 2003); they consider the pleasurable aspects of emotional labour to be what is most satisfying about their jobs (Korczynski, 2003) and have been found to experience a sense of bewilderment and sadness at complaining customers. It is argued that the pain of irate customers, for service workers, is all the more sharply felt because of the professional service worker's very nature (Korczynski, 2003). It might be anticipated that connectedness with owners and their animals, families and community is an

important expectation for potential vets given their intrinsic animal orientation (Cake *et al.*, 2019) and that they may feel similarly bewildered. A recent small scale study (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022) has explored the impact of uncivil clients within the veterinary sector and concludes that rude clients can have a detrimental effect on the mental wellbeing of vets.

2.3.3 Vets as change agents

Scott (2008a) initially proposed a framework for studying institutions which described institutions as "comprised of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life" (Scott, 2008a, p. 48). These diverse elements manifest as institutions being inhabited by people and resting on three different

> "'pillars'- that depend on different bases of compliance, employ varying mechanisms, evoke differing logics of action, are signalled by different indicators, and offer multiple bases for determining legitimacy" (Scott, 2008b, p. 222).

Scott (2008a; 2008b) summarises these pillars as regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive (see Table 1), each significant as they provide a precise arena within which each member of a profession can interact with their institution.

Table 1 A pillars framework, adapted from (Scott, 2008b, p. 222)

Institutional Pillar	Role	Equivalence in veterinary profession
The regulative pillar	Stresses rule-setting, monitoring and sanctioning activities, both formal and informal	DEFRA Professional bodies, RCVS, pandemic response
The normative pillar	Prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension in social life, stressing 'appropriate' behaviour – given the demands of the situation and the actor's role within it, vs 'instrumental behaviour, in which attention is focused on the actor's preference and pursuit of self-interest	Professional bodies, RCVS, BVA, BSAVA, BEVA in their influence over codes of behaviour and ethics, through professional support for colleagues and using mechanisms such as the Code of Conduct.
The cultural-cognitive pillar	Emphasizes the centrality of symbolic systems: the use of common schemas, frames and other shared symbolic representations that guide behaviour	Research led shared clinical understandings

The authority of professionals to have an impact on their institutions (their professions) and society is described through three agency roles that each have relevance for the corresponding pillars (Scott, 2008b) and can be mapped against institutions within the veterinary profession. These roles share similarities with the means identified by Hotho (2008) by which individual professionals influence professional identity as it responds to change by championing professional expertise in the face of managerialism, by challenging the established scripts of the profession, offering new discourse. As *cultural cognitive agents* (Scott, 2008b) some professionals influence the shared conceptions, ways of problem solving and evolving knowledge base. In the sciences such agents may well work in universities or in research (Scott, 2008b). In the veterinary profession this type of role would be seen in universities, research institutions and leading referral hospitals

Normative agents, however, influence the collectively held principles and standards relevant for their profession, often using regulatory bodies. In the case of the UK veterinary profession this would be institutions such as the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Associations and specialist professional bodies such as the British Equine Association and the British Small Animal Veterinary Associations, in their influence over professional standards and accepted norms.

Some professions, or parts of professions, have access to particular regulatory powers; the military, the police, for example. In the veterinary world this would include the ability to enforce rules when for example a pandemic within farm animals is being experienced.

In the veterinary profession an overlap exists between regulatory, cultural cognitive and normative pillars as accepted standards are codified in the Veterinarian's Oath and Code of Professional Conduct, acceptance of which is a requirement for attaining the right to practice, policed by the RCVS .

> *" I PROMISE AND SOLEMNLY DECLARE that I will pursue the work of my profession with integrity and accept my responsibilities to the public, my clients, the*

> *profession and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, and that, ABOVE ALL, my constant endeavour will be to ensure the health and welfare of animals committed to my care."* (RCVS, 2021a)

Scott (2008b) elaborates on professions, identifying three core roles; Creative Professional, typically those that work in the cognitive cultural arena; Carrier Professionals who teach others or advocate for the profession and lastly, Clinical Professionals, who work directly with clients and thus influence institutions through a creative process of incremental feedback. There appears an immediate fit between veterinary mentors acting as institutional change agents via the Carrier Professional role (Scott, 2008b), with its focus on teaching others, not only acting as image bearers of the profession, maintaining its heritage (Erikson, 1971) but with potential to offer new scripts to respond to change (Hotho, 2008) and thereby influencing the establishment of evolving shared frames, norms and regulatory environment which will influence how future generations of the profession are inculcated.

At each level of agency, the role of the veterinary professional is significant in influencing the institution (the profession itself) and institutional change. Through the role of a mentor the veterinary professional has a direct role in influencing the next generation of the profession. This study chooses the boundary for the case study at the institutional level of the UK profession.

Scott (2008b) also elucidates empirical changes in the professions which resonate with the changes that the UK veterinary profession is currently experiencing. Knowledge has become more fragmented, specialised and compartmentalised which breaks down the cohesion of the professions (Scott, 2008b). This is seen in the veterinary profession with specialists from outside the profession offering, for example, food animal health consultancy services, which directly compete with vets (Adam *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, as with dentistry (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Williams and Jordan, 2015), pharmacy (Williams and Jordan, 2015) and academia (Knights and Clarke, 2018), traditional norms of the value and morality

of public service orientation have been displaced by market-based, narrower conceptions of service (Suddaby, Gendron and Lam, 2009), aligned to private gain in part due to the ascendance of neo-liberalism in 20th and early 21st Century. In such a context the work of professionals has become increasingly commodified (Saks, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018).

2.3.4 Conceptions of professional obligation

Theoretical debates surrounding professions have shifted over time and call to mind professional obligations that might derive from membership of professions, when viewed from a particular theoretical perspective of profession. From the, now challenged (Saks, 2016) deferential approach, which saw professions as a series of defining characteristics such as possession of a knowledge base and formal training (Saks, 2012; Saks, 2016; Arluke, 2018), vets' professional obligations might include the obligation to be educated to an appropriate level, to maintain currency with scientific knowledge and acknowledged methods for responding to particular problems. From a functionalist interpretation (Marshall, 1951; Goode, 1957; Goss, 1961), obligations might include maintaining certain levels of expected service and adhering to the norms of the profession. Accepting neo-Weberian assumptions (Saks, 2016), obligations to the profession might be noted as maintaining the exclusivity of the profession, support for regulatory bodies and membership groups. From an institutionalist perspective, obligations include contributions to institutional growth and change as defined areas of agency (Scott, 2008b), where acting as a mentor is akin to being a Carrier Professional.

Professional obligation definitions tend to be ostensive (Tzeng, 2004; McGuire and Burke, 2008); pointing to exemplars of professional obligation within particular professions. The concept is often used synonymously with professionalism, although they are very different in meaning. For example, the acts of caring and controlling infection are examples of professional obligations of nurses (Tzeng, 2004) and interpreting test results for patients is a professional obligation of doctors (McGuire and Burke, 2008). Nurses and doctors exhibit

professionalism when they do these things. Studies have yet to explore mentoring as a professional obligation, despite professional obligation being cited as a reason for mentoring (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) or how the obligation to mentor is sensed and experienced either generally or within the veterinary profession specifically.

Dictionary definitions can help conceptualise the phenomenon of professional obligation. A "profession" is an occupation requiring training and intellectual abilities" (Garmonsway, 1979, p. 577) and "obligation" is "a feeling of inner compulsion to act in a certain way" (Garmonsway, 1979, p. 506); it is a feeling experienced by the professional. Professionalism is the competence or skill expected of a professional and as such it is observed by the viewer of the professional and experienced as a quality by the professional. Consideration of how this compulsion of professional obligation functions is important to understanding mentoring, and can add to conceptual understandings of mentoring.

Professional obligation to engage in activity which is not prescribed can manifest in different professional settings and despite there being no attempts to define what is meant by professional obligation, the language used in association with the term provides illumination as to how professional obligation is interpreted in occupational settings. Some key themes emerge; it is described as acting altruistically (Granfield, 2007; Ryan, 2021), as making a positive contribution to the profession (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019; Ryan, 2021); as being closely connected to personal morality (Janzen and Phelan, 2019; Ryan, 2021) and as having social responsibility or a sense of duty beyond their day to day practice (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Ryan, 2021). Significantly, when raised in relation to mentoring, professional obligation includes a compulsion to inspire (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018) and nurture inclusion and future talent in professions (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). These are qualities which feel inherent to decisions to mentor. Studies have considered how the compulsion is felt and how it is shaped in a range of professions. Dharamsi et al. (2007) through a qualitative study based on interviews with

dentists, explored the professional obligation to make dental care accessible for the economically underprivileged. The obligation emerged as an example of social responsibility for the dentists, competing with other themes of social responsibility and obligation, such as the economic performance of the practice. For lawyers, the obligation to offer *pro bono* services is deemed fundamentally part of being a legal professional, showing a commitment to the rule of law and concern for equal access to justice (Ryan, 2021) but the workplace environment, such as how behaviour is rewarded in a particular organisation, appears to play a role in how they experience professional obligation when volunteering their services through pro bono work (Granfield, 2007). There are environments where a personal and social sense of altruism seems to be in conflict with business priorities (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Ryan, 2021) but can be nurtured as social obligations that arise from being part of the profession within a supportive work environment (Granfield, 2007). Somech and Bogler (2004), in educational settings, explore concepts of professional commitment; which describes the link between a person's self-esteem and their work performance (Somech and Bogler, 2002). Rather than describing an obligation to a profession, they describe how important working life is to a professional.

2.5 MENTORS' EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING

There is value in understanding the research concerning benefits of mentoring for the mentor. In understanding these impacts and how they might influence a mentor to engage in mentoring relationships, scheme organisers can be better positioned to recruit mentors and to facilitate optimal relationships. By understanding what mentors experience when they mentor, deeper insight is acquired as to how mentoring can be explained. This section explores the contribution of studies that focus on the benefits observed by mentors, which have accrued as a result of mentoring. Particular focus is given to those studies that have been undertaken in educational settings, from which there may be more of relevance for the veterinary learning setting of this study. Due to the similarities between coaching and mentoring (Roberts, 2000; Western, 2012; Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, 2014;

Clutterbuck, Megginson and Bajer, 2016), with, in some cases, the terms used interchangeably (Gannon and Washington, 2019), some texts related to coaching impacts have been consulted, as these enrich the body of knowledge concerning the impacts of engaging in learning relationships for the coach or mentor. These studies either contribute directly through the findings of empirical studies or analyse collections of such studies, providing overarching insights into the lived experiences of coaches and mentors.

Table 2 provides a summary of the studies, the methodologies adopted to illustrate how this topic has been researched previously and how the understandings of the outcomes experienced by the coaches and mentors have been arrived at.

The body of knowledge comprises studies drawn from across the globe, with examples from Asia (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Mukherjee, 2012), Australia (Hudson, 2013), the US (Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Lee, 2019), Scandinavia (Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010) and the UK (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Feehily, 2018), thus bringing reflections from a range of coaching and mentoring traditions. Mixed methods approaches are favoured and where in-depth information is sought regarding mentor experiences and meaning making, in-depth interviews are utilised (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Hudson, 2013; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Feehily, 2017; Feehily, 2018; Lee, 2019).

Mentors note a series of impacts related to their relationships with their organisations, citing rekindled interest in work and feelings of being invested in by the organisation, of having access to developmental opportunities (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010) and experiencing better work-life balance (Mukherjee, 2012). They report feeling less stress generally (Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize, 2006), noting improved career development, job performance and job satisfaction (Ghosh and Reio Jr, 2013). Some of these improvements are exemplified as increased confidence, improved interpersonal skills, listening ability and

Table 2 Impact of coaching or mentoring on the coach or mentor – adapted from Feehily (2017)

Research study	Methodology/context	Personal impact on coach/mentor
Lopez-Real and Kwan (2005)	Hong Kong education environment. Mixed methods study, questionnaires and interviews. 259 mentors responded to the questionnaire, 18 interviews.	• Reflections on own teaching and values • Learning from the student teachers
Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize (2006)	Synthesis of leadership and stress and neuroscience literature (scientific experiments re stress hormones). Leaders as coaches	• Reduced stress
Stenfors-Hayes et al., (2010)	Swedish teaching hospital. Mixed methods, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. 85 mentors responded to the questionnaire, 10 interviews.	• Improved relations with students. • Increased interest in teaching • Increased reflections on own values and work practices
Cureton et al., (2010)	Hierarchical mentoring scheme. Semi-structured open-ended survey. UK Higher Education. 25 respondents.	• Rekindled interest in work • Feelings of being invested in by the organisation • Developmental opportunities
Mukherjee (2012)	Hierarchical coaching scheme, a survey-based study with some interviewing. Focuses on impact of coaching on the coach. India. Manufacturing. 19 certified coach managers.	• Increased confidence, improved interpersonal skills, listening ability and visioning • Improved work-life balance
Ghosh and Reio (2013)	Meta-analysis of quantitative studies	• Career development, job performance, job satisfaction
Hudson (2013)	Australian education environment. Mixed methods study involving questionnaires and interviews. 103 mentors responded to the survey, 10 interviews.	• Better communication and decision-making skills. Enhanced pedagogical knowledge.
Kennett and Lomas,(2015)	Volunteer mentors IPA study, focus on meaning making of the mentors. UK, 4 in-depth interviews	• Enhanced work-related fulfilment, derived from meaning making engendered through self-determination reflection
Smith and Nadelson (2016)	US teacher training setting Free response, exploratory questionnaire. 34 respondents.	• New ideas • Increased reflection on practice • Increased engagement of students • Shifts in practice
Feehily (2018)	Internal coaching scheme, volunteer coaches Large UK HE institution, 4 mentor interviews. IPA study focusing on the meaning making of coaches	• Enhanced listening skills, more connected with colleagues, more comfortable with emotion, comfortable with difference and autonomy of others. • Enhanced self-efficacy
Lee (2019)	New York, global retailer. Qualitative study 19 former mentors.	• Increased visibility

visioning (Mukherjee, 2012), better communication and decision-making skills and enhanced pedagogical knowledge (Hudson, 2013). Some coaches experience what can be described as a personal development process, a sense of being more connected with colleagues, more comfortable with emotion, with difference and autonomy of others and enhanced self-efficacy (Feehily, 2018). Kennett and Lomas's (2015) mentors report enhanced work-related fulfilment, derived from meaning making engendered through self-determination reflection. In general, these are features that improve management capability and are of value to organisations (Mukherjee, 2012). Some authors suggest that these findings are transferable to other large dynamic organisational settings (Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010).

A cluster of mentor benefits are related to improvements from and to learning relationships. Mentoring promotes reflection on the mentor's own teaching and values (Hudson, 2013; Smith and Nadelson, 2016) and mentors report learning from their students and changing their practice as a result (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Smith and Nadelson, 2016). Mentors note improved relationships with their students (Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010) and increased student engagement (Smith and Nadelson, 2016).

The improved emotional wellbeing of mentors is noticed as a consequence of mentoring. Boyatzis *et al*. (2006) bring together the learning from scientific studies in neuroscience and studies related to leadership and stress, for example Dickerson and Kemeny (2004) and Schultheiss and Rohde (2002). In helping managers lessen the negative health effects of position power, coaching enhances the sustainability of senior managers. Boyatzis and colleagues (2006) also raise awareness of one of the costs associated with helping professions, compassion fatigue. Ghosh and Reio (2013) confirm the positive findings in a meta-analysis of 18 studies that explored mentor benefits from mentoring. They concluded that those who mentor are generally more satisfied and committed than those who do not, that career mentoring is associated with career success and better job performance; those who provide career mentoring and psychosocial support generally experience greater job

satisfaction themselves. Potentially mentoring, on balance, is offsetting some of the negative health effects of positions of power and helping relationships.

Mentoring potentially brings further benefits through expressing generativity (Erikson, 1993; McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan, 1993; McAdams and Logan, 2004), “the motive and behaviour to support and guide younger people and benefit “future generations”” (Doerwald *et al.*, 2021, p. 1). Generativity can be seen manifested in the workplace through behaviours valuable for organisations such as coaching and mentoring (McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan, 1993; Lucas, 2000). Possession of generativity motives and attitudes have been associated with further positive work and life related outcomes for the mentors themselves such as life satisfaction (McAdams, de St Aubin and Logan, 1993), wellbeing and career satisfaction (Doerwald *et al.*, 2021). Although engaging in generative activities more generally has not always been found to deliver positive life satisfaction (Lucas, 2000).

In summary, there are costs associated with mentoring but clearly also significant benefits for the mentor from mentoring in terms of their own job satisfaction and performance and for their work relationships. Organisations too can benefit from improved management capability flowing from mentoring. An understanding of these impacts can improve understanding of mentor motivation and how mentors can best be supported in their work, and help to explain mentoring relationships and the flow of benefits which exchange when successful mentoring happens.

2.6 MENTORING AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE MENTOR

Turning to mentoring in educational contexts, where the experience of such mentors will have particular relevance for the veterinary mentoring, where it is often linked to continuing learning shortly after completing higher education. Such mentoring has been observed to contribute to the professional development of the mentor in several studies (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Hudson, 2013; Smith and Nadelson, 2016). Development occurs in the form of improved skills (Hudson, 2013; Smith and Nadelson, 2016) and through increased reflection (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Hudson, 2013; Smith and Nadelson, 2016). Reflection develops in a number of areas; in order to be able to articulate ideas to others (Hudson, 2013) and prepare demonstration classes (Smith and Nadelson, 2016) teachers must reflect on their own practice.

Mentors also report learning by observing other, less experienced, teachers (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Smith and Nadelson, 2016). Both Stenfors-Hayes et al. (2010) in a medical teaching setting, and Smith and Nadelson (2016), in a teacher training setting, observed that mentors felt their teaching and relations with students developed as a result of mentoring. Renewed interest in teaching was observed and “increased reflections regarding their own values and work practices” (Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010, p. 148). Ghosh and Reio (2013) with their meta-analysis, concluded that mentoring has positive consequences for career development of the mentor.

Kennett and Lomas’ (2015) study investigated the lived experience of mentors, using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. They posit that mentoring acts as a mechanism to enhance staff engagement by making work meaningful (Kennett and Lomas, 2015). The mentors described mentoring as a fulfilling, rewarding experience which contributed to personal growth. Theirs were, however, all volunteer mentors, who might be expected to feel positive about the experience (Kennett and Lomas, 2015) due to their reasons for mentoring in the first place. Both Feehily (2018) and Kennett and Lomas, (2015) recommend further

research in a context where there is more of an obligation or compulsion to engage in mentoring.

2.7 THE VETERINARY MENTORING LANDSCAPE

2.7.1 Mentoring as central to the profession

The veterinary profession provides a context for exploring mentoring in an environment of professional obligation and key literature is tabulated in Table 3 and is explored and evaluated within this section. The lived experience of vets and vet mentors is relatively under-researched (Clarke and Knights, 2018) despite mentoring relationships being seen as essential for career development in the veterinary profession and medical careers generally (Garmel, 2004; Morzinski, 2005; Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Jelinski *et al.*, 2009; Villarroel *et al.*, 2010; Barbur *et al.*, 2011). For example, mentoring relationships are perceived as a key tool in addressing the education, recruitment and retention challenges of the sector in a number of contexts (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018), such as attracting new vets to the rural sector, mixed animal and food sectors (Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Villarroel *et al.*, 2010) and to academic roles (Morzinski, 2005). The presence of good mentoring, or lack of it are given prominence as reasons for staying in or leaving a role in rural practice (Villarroel *et al.*, 2010).

2.7.2 Who is doing the mentoring?

Much of what is known about the level and quality of mentoring has been discovered as a result of surveying vets on the receiving end of mentoring, about factors concerning their wellbeing, career choice and job retention, particularly where there are shortages, such as rural vets and food-animal related vets (Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Jelinski *et al.*, 2009; Villarroel *et al.*, 2010; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). From the few studies available, what little is known about mentoring in this context suggests it is being undertaken (in the US at least) by white, conscientious men, who are open to new experiences (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Niehoff, 2006) and who are motivated by a sense of professional obligation

(Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). Whilst there are calls within the profession for better mentoring of students (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016), little data has been gathered as to how much or what type of mentoring is currently going on (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005) and no standard operating guidelines are in place for mentoring for example, new graduates (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016) although the RCVS's (2021b) new graduate development scheme represents a significant step towards achieving consistency.

Studies concerning veterinary mentoring have largely been conducted outside the UK and mirror some of the general mentoring foci identified earlier; traits that lead to mentoring, context, relationships and outcomes for mentees (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Niehoff, 2006; Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Jelinski *et al.*, 2009). Unlike the broader research which considers mentors' experiences of mentoring, very little in terms of qualitative investigation has been undertaken with veterinary mentors. Although the veterinary mentoring research has been conducted mostly overseas, many trends are shared internationally by the profession, such as rapid feminisation (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016), recruitment, retention and mental wellbeing challenges (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019) and therefore insights from overseas research are valuable.

Niehoff et al. (2005) through a quantitative study explore, in the US, experienced veterinarians' experiences of having been mentored and from this identify the factors that they have been found useful for effective mentoring. Niehoff (2006), in a later survey, identifies predictor personality characteristics for mentors, "conscientiousness, and openness to experience". From these studies a picture emerges as to the typical mentoring happening in the industry, in the US at least, with most mentors being white conscientious males, open to experience. This profile raises the issue of a potential lack of diversity within the mentoring pool. There is a danger that potentially good mentors do not come forward to mentor because they do not have the personality types, or are not male.

Other studies (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Niehoff, 2006; Barbur *et al.*, 2011), which focus on the outcomes for mentees and qualities associated with successful mentoring relationships, give more detail on the emerging picture of veterinary mentoring and mentors. Mentored participants experience more career success than those who are not mentored, are more likely to be involved in community leadership and mentoring themselves and they describe the support they received as psychosocial and for career development (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005). Mentors were seen, by those respondents who experienced a mentoring relationship, as positive role-models and encouraging. There is therefore potential for a virtuous mentoring circle to be developed if a sufficient pool of well-mentored mentees continues within the profession.

The picture for graduates who receive poor or insufficient support is one plagued by uncertainty and stress and in many cases severe mental health issues (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). Halliwell and colleagues (2016) conducted a quantitative study of new UK veterinary graduates to investigate poor mental health and well-being in recent graduates and to consider the workplace factors associated with poor mental well-being. They also investigated the current support available including the support received from colleagues. They did identify some excellent mentoring practice, such as scrubbing in with a new graduate when they were performing a surgery for the first time and making regular and scheduled time for case discussion (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). But they also noted that there was no common guideline for mentoring new graduates and some vets are receiving poor levels of support. Lack of management support was cited as the second highest cause of disillusionment in young vets in a House of Lords discussion forum (Vet Futures, 2016).

2.7.3 The importance of diversity and similarity for positive mentoring relationships

Similarities in values and beliefs between mentor and mentee contribute to the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring relationship (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005) and research suggests that mentees who perceive their mentors as being similar to themselves report more positive outcomes from their mentoring relationship than those who do not share

these perceptions (Eby *et al.*, 2013). Mitchell and colleagues (2015) concur, stressing the importance of cultivating perceived similarity in mentoring relationships. Although as previously identified, mentoring, particularly when associated with role modelling has potential to perpetuate masculine norms (Dashper, 2019; Sandager, 2021) and could potentially contribute to homogeneity and homosociality. As Niehoff (2006) identifies that most mentoring is being undertaken by white males, an issue emerges that with a diversifying veterinary population, with an increasing proportion of women and non-native vets in the profession, not all mentees may experience mentoring from a mentor with perceived similarity. Jelinski *et al.* (2009), in a survey of recent Canadian veterinary graduates, also noted that the extent of mentoring received is linked with job satisfaction and retention, and Barbur *et al.* (2011) in a US based study of new veterinary graduates, found that students that engaged with a clinical mentor were 6.3 times more likely to pursue a medical internship. Thus, in the veterinary context also, mentoring is connected with positive career outcomes. Not being able to find a mentor like oneself has potential to have detrimental career outcomes and exclude one from the benefits of positive mentoring (Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Barbur *et al.*, 2011).

In summary, being mentored early in a veterinary career clearly brings benefits for the mentee, receiving insufficient support reduces career success (Morzinski, 2005; Barbur *et al.*, 2011) and satisfaction (Vet Futures, 2016) and contributes to poor mental well-being (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). There is evidence to suggest that there is insufficient quality mentoring available in the profession, both in the UK (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016) and further afield (Barbur *et al.*, 2011). Consideration therefore, of the experiences of vet mentors is important in exploring this industry challenge. Vet mentors cite several of the benefits to mentors detailed in Table 2 as consequences of and motivations to mentor. They also cite professional obligation as a key motivator to engage in mentoring (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016).

Hashizume, *et al*. (2016) also in a Canadian study, suggest a motivator for mentoring to be professional obligation, supported by Niehoff's (2006) observation that conscientious

personality types are drawn to the helping relationships. Hashizume *et al*. (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with veterinary preceptors (community-based educators/mentors) in Canada, where a distinction is made between voluntary “mentorship” and formal “preceptorship” in community based veterinary education. Preceptors reported challenges and joys derived from the experience and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation linked to an obligation to the veterinary profession. They took pride in educating the next generation and in maintaining quality standards, but also saw mentoring as a *quid pro quo* for the mentoring that they had received earlier in their careers (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). This profession therefore provides a context for exploring the concept of professional obligation in mentoring.

Table 3 Veterinary mentoring

Research Study	Methodology	Contribution for this study
(Morzinski, 2005)	Literature review of mentoring and medical contexts, plus review of Medical College of Wisconsin mentor programme	Lessons for organisations, mentors and mentees
(Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005)	Questionnaire to practicing vets, Midwestern USA, 194 responses	How much and what sort of mentoring has been experienced at any stage of education, what behaviours lead to mentee satisfaction
(Niehoff, 2006)	Questionnaire to practicing vets, Midwestern USA, 194 responses	Personality predictors for mentors
(Jelinski *et al.*, 2008)	Online survey, to a graduating cohort of students Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Canada, 70 responses.	The 3 most influential factors associated with choosing a 1st employer were, in order of importance, the type of practice, the level of mentorship/support provided by the practice, and family/spousal considerations.
(Jelinski *et al.*, 2009)	On-line survey to recent graduates of Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Canada, to determine factors affecting career path choices (switching). 192 responses.	Level of mentorship and support by practice was one of 3 key factors that contribute to retention, and mentorship also a key reason for leaving.
(Villarroel et al., 2010)	Cross-sectional descriptive study of vets and vet students USA, online survey, 1.318 responses. Survey of reasons why vets enter rural vet practice (RVP)	Having an RVP mentor second highest factor for choosing a career in RVP, particularly high in men.
(Barbur *et al.*, 2011)	Survey of vet students participating in a university mentoring programme	Clinical faculty mentors important in internship decisions/career choice. Important to establish the scheme early
(Halliwell *et al.*, 2016)	Cross sectional study of UK vet graduates, to establish incidence of poor mental health 649 responses.	1/5 report poor support in first roles, no standard operating procedures for the mentoring of new grads, some excellent mentoring.
(Hashizume *et al.*, 2016)	Questionnaires (97) and semi-structured interviews (17) with Vet Preceptors (in situ teachers) exploring teaching motivations, satisfaction and challenges	Obligation to the profession and quid pro quo for mentoring received.

2.8 CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

Hashizume and colleagues' (2016) veterinary participants deconstruct their interpretations of the professional obligations that motivate them to engage in mentoring. Firstly, they cite an intrinsic motivator, a personal pride in contributing to the profession, suggesting a strong connection with the profession and in ensuring its ongoing success. Not only do they demonstrate a concern for maintaining competence within the profession but also for positively contributing to promoting the profession and continued recruitment to it. They also cite a feature of reciprocation; giving something back in exchange for support received earlier in their careers.

Mentoring in the veterinary context, like many mentoring contexts, appears to provide an example of social exchange. It is particularly interesting as the intended predominant benefit which exchanges in the professional development mentoring relationship (mentor to mentee), is first received early in a career and reciprocated much later as an experienced vet mentor (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016), the balance for the mentor is difficult to identify. The reciprocation appears to be driven by obligation to profession rather than to the individual mentee, exemplified by concern for standards and desire to promote the profession (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). Social Exchange Theory posits that people naturally engage in behaviours of sharing to maintain equality and balance and do so because of the intrinsic satisfaction experienced (Fiske, 1992) and because of bonds to a particular group. Both personal and social motivators appear to be present. Social Exchange Theory assumes that humans are rational and self-interested and they base their interactions on exchanges of perceived costs and benefits, (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013). In the context of mentoring that is motivated by professional obligation, the balancing of costs and benefits resulting from social exchanges (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013), takes place across long time periods and is therefore more difficult to explain. Allegiance to profession appears to provide a bridge across time for reciprocation.

A recent study with firefighters in South-western USA aimed to study the role of felt obligation and the perceived quality of mentor performance (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). The authors suggest that it is the influence of having been a recipient of mentoring earlier in their career that generates a generalised reciprocity (felt obligation) which motivates mentors to mentor. This sense of obligation, they determine, enhances the perceived quality of the mentoring and how well it meets the needs of the mentee, and they also confirm that the sense of obligation will mitigate the perceived costs of engaging in the mentoring relationship (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). The study worked only with individuals who had experienced mentoring as mentees, earlier in their careers, and who had then gone on to become mentors. It therefore remains unclear whether the source of felt obligation is only the drive to give back what has been received. Maynard-Patrick and Baugh (2019) recommend that this sense of obligation is explored more deeply.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has addressed the first objective of this study in providing a critical review of the literature pertinent to the topic of research. Literature from the fields of mentoring, professions and professional obligation has been explored. First, literature which seeks to define mentoring and explain it as a series of functions and attributes has been considered and found to be lacking, in terms of a single unifying theory of mentoring (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007, p. 283). The body of literature reviewed covers, in some depth, what constitutes mentoring and how to do it well in various contexts, but rarely attempts to contribute to a theoretical understanding of what mentoring is and how it works (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). This research study responds to Hezlett and Gibson's (2005, p. 450) call for a deeper understanding of the interpersonal processes in mentoring relationships in order to contribute to understanding how to bring about maximally satisfying mentoring relationships.

Second, theoretical perspectives are reviewed which attempt to provide theoretical explanations of what happens when mentoring occurs. Learning theories, Social Exchange Theory and Social Learning Theory are contemplated as lenses which can provide a deeper understanding of the exchanges that occur in the mentoring relationship. However, rather than explaining or understanding mentoring itself, these frameworks provide perspectives within which mentoring can be perceived. These lenses are incorporated to generate a sense of what is already known or understood about how mentoring can be explained.

The concept of professional obligation is explored, the central focus of this study. This follows an examination of the development of literature surrounding concepts of profession, which provide a framework for understanding the professions, professionals (Scott, 2008b) and their obligations. The review posits a series of professional agency roles related to institutional pillars, by which professionals can impact their institution through a variety of dimensions, and for which they can sense obligation. One such obligation includes the nurturing of the next generation of professionals as a mentor.

The experiences of mentors themselves are reviewed, as by developing a landscape of mentor experience, we see the symptoms of the mentoring process in the meaning-making of the mentor, giving further insight into what is happening when mentoring relationships happen. Literature concerning veterinary mentor experiences in particular is reviewed, although existing studies are in the main concerned with veterinary mentoring outside the UK. The significance of mentoring to professional development in the sector is demonstrated and a picture emerges as to who is mentoring, how they are motivated and challenges for mentoring are identified, particularly with concerns about the lack of diversity of the pool of mentors (Niehoff, 2006). The review establishes that the UK veterinary sector is one in which mentoring is deeply valued, in that it is widely advocated and proclaimed as a solution to challenges (Adam *et al.*, 2013; BVA *et al.*, 2015; BSAVA, 2018; BEVA, 2019), but seldom studied (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016) to substantiate these claims of advocacy and problem-soliving.

Returning to Figure 1, the literature review map, the study which follows inhabits the overlapping space between existing explanations of mentoring, professional obligation as contributing to understanding mentoring, and the experiences of veterinary mentors as they seek to explain their mentoring work. By exploring this space this study aims to contribute to conceptual understandings of mentoring and bring literature associated with professions and institutions to the understanding of mentoring within professional contexts.

The next chapter explains the methodological choices for the study. It explores and justifies the methods used to build the case study of professional obligation in UK veterinary mentoring.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study is to investigate mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the experiences of UK veterinary mentors, with a view to contributing to a conceptual understanding of mentoring by exploring this little researched concept and to make recommendations for practice based on this understanding. This chapter explains and justifies the approach taken to explore, empirically, mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the context, experiences and practices of UK veterinary mentors. It outlines how a case study is used to present a multi-faceted analysis of UK veterinary mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation and how the study is thus able to contribute to existing theoretical knowledge and understanding and professional practice.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY

This section considers the research philosophy which underpins this study and considers the underlying ontological and epistemological positions. This study seeks to explore the complex interrelationships that exist (Stake, 1995) within mentoring in the UK veterinary profession, and gain a deeper understanding of the concept of professional obligation and its role in mentoring more widely. This contrasts with a quantitative study which would seek an explanation about some aspect of mentoring in the sector.

The decision to undertake a qualitative study rests on a constructivist ontological position, the position concerning the nature of reality, the world and what there is to know about it (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). The study accepts the proposition that there is no one reality but that realities are multiple and for a study to explore reality, it must attempt to explore and report the different realities embraced by the participants (Creswell, 1998). Realities constitute interpretations of experience (Bryman, 2016), rather than objective realities that exist to be discovered beyond human conceptions. Within this study the assumption is made that reality

only becomes known through the interpretations of human minds, who essentially create their own worlds (Ormston *et al.*, 2014) and within this study, the interpretations of the participants are then filtered through my own observations and interpretations (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). This contrasts with objectivism, which asserts that there is a reality that is separate from the actors in a context. A constructivist ontological position, therefore, underpins the study, which accepts that realities, phenomena and how we interpret them are constantly being constructed and revised (Bryman, 2016).

The study adopts a social constructivist case study design, underpinned by a qualitative interpretivist paradigm. It aims to present and learn from the interpretations of the separate actors within the case; the veterinary organisations, the mentor scheme convenors and veterinary mentors and by doing so to understand mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in the UK veterinary context through the experiences and interpretations of this specific profession. An important strength of case study design is its ability to cope with this variety of evidence (Yin, 2014) from differing directions (Thomas, 2021). The design embraces a position that reality is multiple and socially constructed (Creswell, 1998; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009), it acknowledges and expects that the experiences of the participants are likely to be different and closely connected to their relationship with their profession; and that the participants will have constructed their realities separately and differently.

Epistemology determines what constitutes relevant knowledge in a given subject area (Bryman, 2016). This study is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemological position that accepts that ‘knowledge is known through the subjective experiences of people’ (Creswell, 1998, p. 20). The mentoring scheme convenors are likely to experience the mentoring process differently to the mentors as it forms a different part of their lived experience, often at a distance from their day to day working lives, particularly if they are part of a large organisation. They may be more concerned with, and able to relate more effectively to, the goals and outcomes for the mentee and for the business, and how they intend the

organisation of the scheme to unfold. Mentors, on the other hand, may be more concerned with, and better able to relate to, the impact that the mentoring relationship has on their own daily working lives, or their relationships with the rest of the team and their clients. Vet mentors have very different working lives depending on their area of specialism, and their experiences and interpretations of mentoring may be different as a result. Some spend long hours travelling between rural locations, some are clinic or hospital based.

This interpretivist position is scaffolded by the philosophy of phenomenology, which supports and infuses that part of this research study that is most interested in the mentors and close consideration of 'how [these] individuals make sense of the world' (Bryman, 2016, p. 30), what the lived experience of mentoring is like for them (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009; Finlay, 2011) and, in particular, how they have experienced the common phenomena (Creswell, 1998; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009) of mentoring and professional obligation. Central to this study are the words of the vet mentors, which explore and explain their experiences, interpretations and reflections on experience (Finlay, 2011). This kind of data cannot be captured through measurement or testing but through careful listening and interpretation. In order to be able to understand deeply and capture each participant's experience, it was necessary to get very close to those experiences, using in-depth conversations, which were attuned to an interpretivist epistemological position (Creswell, 1998), and which allowed for adequate exploration of the shared phenomenon. The intentions and motivations of organisations in their use of mentoring schemes were also explored through the reviewing of organisational documentation involved in the explanation and implementation of their mentoring schemes and by interviewing the mentor scheme conveners. Bound up in this type of data is the organisational and convenor, and thus institutional, conceptions of how mentoring works, perhaps even an institutional sense of a professional obligation that they are relying on from their mentors.

Lastly, setting this study in the context of broader mentoring research, which has historically been largely quantitative in design (Allen *et al.*, 2008) and focused on the impacts of the

mentoring process particularly for the mentee, this study responds to calls for qualitative studies which can emphasise detailed description and appreciation of context (Allen *et al.*, 2008). These calls are aligned to the aims and objectives being addressed here.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The social constructivist case study design is pivotal as appreciation is sought of the uniqueness and complexity of interactions within this particular context (Stake, 1995; Garvey and Alred, 2008), mentoring in the UK veterinary sector and this "complex social phenomena" of professional obligation (Yin, 2014) by integrating multiple perspectives (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014, p. 4); organisational priorities expressed through documents and mentor scheme convenors and the experiences of veterinary mentors. Accounts from a range of sources in this project aim to contribute to a rich holistic account of mentoring and professional obligation in the complex context (Gray, 2014) of UK vets. Tight (2010) elaborates that case study research investigates a small sample of interest and often from a particular perspective, in this case the study investigates mentoring in the UK veterinary profession from the perspective of understanding professional obligation and mentoring. In adopting an approach congruent with the research aim and context, the study demonstrates commitment, rigour and transparency and coherence of design (Yardley, 2000; Tracy, 2010).

Appleton (2002) labels case study a research *strategy*, but one which can be employed in studies underpinned by very different approaches to research. She contrasts the approach to key research parameters of two leading proponents of case study; Yin (2014), who favours a more positivistic approach and Stake (1995), who favours interpretivism. Her comparison is provided in Appendix 1 and it is Stake's approach to case study that more comprehensively underpins this study. There is little in how Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) *define* a case to differentiate between the suitability of their approaches for this study. Both include in their definition an object of study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014); Stake (1995, p. 2) elaborates that this object is "a specific, a complex, functioning thing [which] is an integrated system [with] a boundary and working parts". Reflecting back to Scott's (2008b)

representation of professions as institutions with professionals acting as change agents on a series of levels within institutions, Stake's (1995) definition of case most suitably fits with the UK veterinary profession, which appears to function in this way. This case study also aligns with Yin's (2014) conception of a case study as it constitutes "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon [mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation] in depth, within a real-life context [UK veterinary practice]" (Yin, 2014, p. 15).

Stake's (1995) definition of *types* of case study design, strengthens the reasoning that his conception of case study underpins this study. Stake (1995) makes a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental study and about the conceptual structure of a case. In qualitative case studies, he argues, the researcher is interested in the complexities and uniqueness of the case. If we are interested in that particular case because we want to learn about that case, not because we want to learn about or generalise to other cases or some general problem, then the case study can be termed "intrinsic case study" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Other case studies may ensue from the need to answer some wider question; study of a particular case may provide insight for that question, and this type of case study he terms "instrumental" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). Rather than being a method of researching, case studies can be viewed as a choice about what to study (Stake, 2005). It is this latter use of case study, "instrumental", which is employed within this research project. The study does not seek to learn about the institution of UK veterinary professionals for their own sake, although deeper understandings of veterinary mentors and their experiences is of value for the sector. Rather, it is the issue of professional obligation and its role in understanding mentoring which concerns this study. Investigation of the case of UK veterinary mentoring, where mentoring is deemed an essential part of veterinary development and where some quality in vets to participate as mentors is relied upon, anticipates insights are to be gained about the central issue of professional obligation. These insights may provide value for understanding professional obligation and mentoring in other professions, beyond the scope of the study.

In their rationales for using case studies, Yin (2014) and Stake (1995) share a number of criteria that are significant for this study; both emphasise that case studies facilitate exploration of contemporary issues in real world, uncontrolled settings; both see the value of multiple sources of data and focusing on gaining an in-depth understanding of the essence of their case, Stake with a qualitative emphasis (Stake, 1995).

> "Case study researchers use the method of specimens as their primary method to come to know extensively and intensively about the single case" (Stake, 1995, p. 36).

A significant difference between the two proponents of case study research is their paradigmatic orientation, Yin, within the scientific framework (Yin, 2014), for positivism and post-positivism, whereby knowledge of the world is produced through testing propositions (Willis, Jost and Nilakanta, 2007), and Stake for interpretivism and constructivism (Appleton, 2002). Stake (1995) encourages researchers to seek out case studies which provide the greatest opportunity for learning and he uses language, such as knowledge being constructed and not discovered, which sits comfortably with a constructivist epistemology (Stake, 1995; Appleton, 2002) and feels better aligned to the aims of this veterinary mentoring study.

Stake (1995) does not provide a formulaic approach to what must be included in a case study, but is supportive of using multiple data types and affirms that "the allocation of attention to contexts will be based partly on the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental purposes" (Stake, 1995, p. 64). As the focus of this study is instrumental, there will be aspects of the UK veterinary sector context, which will be important for the purposes of the study and aspects that will have less importance. This provides useful guidance for prioritising themes in data and within contextual descriptions. These distinctions are detailed in Chapter 4.

Alternative qualitative approaches to case study were considered for the overarching research design, in particular phenomenology. Creswell (1998) contrasts five qualitative

approaches and details the characteristics of research methods suited to particular contexts and questions. Her comparison between case study and phenomenology are reproduced in Table 4. Phenomenology, a philosophical approach concerned with understanding what the human experience is like (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009), was given particular attention as a possible alternative approach for this study for a number of reasons. The experiences of the vet mentors are central to the *focus* of the study, in particular their experience of professional obligation and mentoring, and the descriptions of a lived phenomenon, mentoring, would form part of the framing of the research problem. The personal meaning and sense-making of the mentors, "how people *make sense* of what happens" and "what the meaning of that happening is" (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009, p. 45) is also important for this study, aligning with Smith and colleagues'., (2009) focus on these features. However, in its focus, this study goes beyond the lived experiences of vet mentors and their interpretations of the essence of mentoring. The study also includes contextual features of the case, the expectations of mentoring expressed through institutional public facing websites, the internal mentoring scheme documents and convenor expectations. These combine to develop an in-depth description and understanding of the case (Creswell, 1998). Case study and phenomenology, however, share a number of key features; both draw from psychology as disciplinary backgrounds (Creswell, 1998) with phenomenology, typically used in education research contexts, which aligns with the disciplinary background of the study, where mentoring is considered an extension to education and to learning theory.

Ultimately, case study was adopted as the overall research strategy and design. It aims to develop in-depth understanding of the essence of mentoring and professional obligation within this particular case (Stake, 1995), but the study also seeks to contribute insight for wider understanding of mentoring and professional obligation, and thus aligns with the type of case study that Stake terms "instrumental" (Stake, 1995, p. 3). In acknowledgement of the close alignment of phenomenology with elements of the study, phenomenology has influenced the design, execution and analysis of the vet mentor interviews, with questions

devised to help give voice to the vet mentors' experiences, meaning and sense-making and with analysis aiming to interpret those concerns.

Table 4 Contrasting characteristics of qualitative approaches adapted from Creswell (1998, pp. 104-5)

Characteristics	Phenomenology	Case study
Focus	understanding the essence of the experience	developing an in-depth description and analysis of the case or multiple cases
Type of problem best suited for design	needing to describe the experience of a lived phenomenon	providing an in-depth understanding of the case or cases
Discipline background	Drawing from philosophy, psychology and education	Drawing from psychology, law, political science and medicine
Unit of analysis	studying several individuals who have shared the experience	studying an event, a programme, an activity, more than one individual
Data collection forms	using primarily interviews with individuals, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered	using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents and artefacts
Data analysis strategies	analysing data for significant statements, meaning units, textual and structural description, and description of the "essence"	Analysing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross case themes
Written report	Describing the essence of the experience	developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases
What is traditionally studied? (Sites or individuals)	multiple individuals who have experienced the phenomenon	abounded system, such as the process and activity in event programme or multiple individuals
How does one select a site or individuals to study? (Purposeful sampling strategies)	finding individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, a criterion sample	finding a "case" or "cases," and "atypical" case, or a "maximum variation" or "extreme" case
What type of information typically is collected? (Form of data)	interviews with small number of participants	extensive forms, such as documents and records, interviews, observation, and physical artefacts for one to 4 cases
How is information recorded? (Recording information)	Interviews, often multiple interviews with the same individuals	field notes, interview and observational protocols
What are common data collection issues? (Field issues)	bracketing one's experiences, logistics of interviewing	interviewing and observing

3.4 SOURCES OF DATA

The UK veterinary profession is relatively small, in the region of 25,500 veterinary surgeons practise in the UK, working across the economy in a range of strategically important sectors including; animal health and welfare and food safety. They work with companion and exotic animals, large and farm animals (Migration Advisory Committee, 2019). The RCVS, the UK veterinary profession's governing body and national regulator, holds authority within the profession (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016), managing the registration of veterinary surgeons and nurses, responsible for ethical and clinical standards (RCVS, 2019) and validating qualifications which are delivered by 11 veterinary colleges (BVA, 2022a) who act as gatekeepers to the profession, selecting highly achieving students (Allister, 2014) for admission to the profession. The national representative body for the veterinary profession in the UK is The British Veterinary Association (BVA), with over 18,000 members (BVA, 2022b). The BVA provides professional body championing, representation and knowledge dissemination for the profession as a whole (BVA, 2022b), and a number of smaller professional bodies support specialist groupings of vets; the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) (BSAVA, 2022), the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) (BEVA, 2022) and The British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) (BCVA, 2022). Section 2.3.2 has discussed notable changes and challenges to the profession of recent years. Demographic and generational changes see the profession increasingly feminised (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016) with more in the profession working part time (28% of the workforce in 2018) and, as with human medicine, pursuing portfolio careers (14% in 2018) (RCVS, 2019). Prior to Brexit, nearly half of the veterinary surgeons who register in the UK qualified in the European Union, rather than the UK (Migration Advisory Committee, 2019). The sector struggles to retain veterinary surgeons and veterinary recruitment struggles to match demand (Migration Advisory Committee, 2019). The profession is experiencing average workforce shortages of 11.5% plus erosion of the existing workforce (Migration Advisory Committee, 2019) in the face of changing structures to the sector and disillusionment of current and young vets as the profession continues to

experience a mental health crisis (Clarke, Knights and Finch, 2016; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures, 2016). Increasing corporatisation of veterinary practices has brought about a number of dilemmas for the profession, such as non-veterinary owners having business and management input (Veterinary Practice, 2019) and neo-liberal demands for productivity challenging professional identity (Allister, 2015; 2016; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Mentoring has received attention as having potential to address these difficulties (Vet Futures Action Group, 2016), by providing better support for young vets as they transition from higher education into the workplace. Mentoring features centrally in the new RCVS graduate support initiative Vet GDP (RCVS, 2021b)

In order to develop a rich picture of profession, professional obligation and mentoring occurring in such a varied setting, several data sources contributed to the case study which aimed to capture the nature of the mentoring taking place in a range of organisations illustrative of the variety of practice types and sizes evident in the sector and the experiences of a range of vet mentors as they engage with mentoring in this challenging and changing environment. These decisions contribute to the commitment and rigour, and transparency and coherence of the use of data (Yardley, 2000; Tracy, 2010).

3.4.1 Phenomenological interviews

Central to the focus of the study are the experiences of mentoring and how veterinary mentors experience professional obligation connected to mentoring. Therefore, in-depth interviews were chosen as the central method of data collection to explore the essence of their experience of this phenomenon (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Such interviews 'invite participants to offer a rich, first-person account of their experiences' and are considered optimal for this type of study (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009, p. 56). Within case study research, not all of the participants will see the case in the same way and therefore the researcher must uncover and relate the multiple realities; in-depth interviews are a good way to achieve this (Stake, 1995). The study aimed to examine experience from across a range of veterinary specialisms and organisational sizes and types. Underpinning

assumptions of the study included acknowledging that vets can work in very different contexts and may have undergone very different educational and early career experiences. Such interviews allow the participants to be “witnessed in their experience and […]”give voice” to what they are going through” (Finlay, 2011, p. 10), both in terms with their interaction with their profession, their obligations and their mentoring. In-depth phenomenological interviews, therefore, align with this interpretivist epistemological position (Creswell, 1998), which is open to different interpretations of mentoring and professional obligation. Qualitative case study research values the unique perspective and story of each participant (Stake, 1995) and, unlike highly structured interviews, in-depth interviews are more likely to allow participants to speak freely and to tell stories in their own words (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Additionally, as they are longer, they offer time for reflection and for achieving greater depth in understanding while allowing the researcher to explore the influences that underpin answers, such as the participants’ past experiences their feelings and beliefs (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). This was achieved by encouraging participants to dig deeply into their memories of mentoring and think carefully about what their experiences mean. The longer time for the interviews also allowed for them to become generative (Ormston *et al.*, 2014) with several of the participants remarking at the end of the interview that they had never had the opportunity to think and speak so much about their experiences as a vet, their challenges and their mentoring and they were experiencing new ways of thinking about those.

The ensuing data allows the researcher to report what the participants experienced and how they experienced it (Creswell, 1998) and to interpret their worlds from their points of view (Bryman, 2016). Rather than using a structured set of questions from which the researcher would not deviate, the interviews were organised to ‘facilitate the discussion of relevant topics’ (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009, p. 58). A set of themes were generated which were to be covered during the interview (Ormston *et al.*, 2014) see Appendix 3. Following the pilot interview, a decision was taken to give the interviews some further structure which was

outlined to participants at the start of the interview. The first part of the interview focused on the participant as a vet and their professional obligations and the second part of the interview on their mentoring experiences. In part, this was due to the pilot vet choosing to reflect on mentoring at all parts of the interview, as they knew the study related to mentoring. This made it difficult to determine their more general sense of what it was like to be part of the profession. It was made clear to each participant that the shape of the interview could change and that we were free to explore any issues that they raised (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). In phenomenological in-depth interviews, Smith and colleagues (2009) advise that the research question is explored obliquely, with the interviews consisting of exploration of a range of topics that allow the research question to be considered later during analysis. See Appendix 3 for further detail of how the interview schedule evolved following the pilot.

An interview schedule was prepared in advance (Appendix 4) providing a rough agenda for issue based topics (Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize, 2006), emanating from the literature review but very open in nature, allowing for new topics to emerge and allowing the researcher to enter the life world of the participant (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009).

Question 2 and its follow up; *Describe the veterinary profession* and *What's it like to be part of this profession?* allowed the participants to reflect on their own feelings about their profession and provide material for the analysis to explore their sense of profession (Scott, 2008b; Saks, 2012; Arluke, 2018). Question 3 and its follow up; *Tell me about the obligations you have as part of this profession* and *What challenges do you experience in fulfilling professional obligations?* allowed both the participant and the researcher to establish a wider sense of professional obligation and the language used to describe obligation and allowed for a developing picture of some of the inherent challenges working in the current UK veterinary sector (Tzeng, 2004; Granfield, 2007; McGuire and Burke, 2008).

Question 4; *Tell me about your mentoring experiences so far* allowed the participants to reflect on their own mentoring experiences. There was both an opportunity to reflect on

mentoring and having been mentored. This question allowed the researcher to develop a picture of the mentoring that is taking place in the sector, the variety of experience and the sense-making of the vet mentors as to what mentoring means to them (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Haggard *et al.*, 2010; Kutsyuruba, 2012; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; D'Souza, 2014; Garza, L. Duchaine and Reynosa, 2014; Godden, Tregunna and Kutsyuruba, 2014; Stephens *et al.*, 2014; Gannon and Washington, 2019). Question 5 *What are you trying to achieve through mentoring?* allowed the participants to reflect on what mentoring is for and allows the researcher to consider a particular theoretical framework that best explains their understanding of mentoring (Kegan, 1982; Kram, 1983; Kittrell, 1998; Allen, Cobb and Danger, 2003; Dominguez, 2013). It also allows the researcher to consider how the participants' views of mentoring align with their previous interpretations of professional obligation (Tzeng, 2004; Granfield, 2007; McGuire and Burke, 2008).

Question 6, *What brought you to mentoring?* allowed participants to reflect on their motivations for mentoring (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Ghosh and Reio Jr, 2013; Hudson, 2013; Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Lee, 2019; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019), and allows the researcher to consider how these motivations align with conceptions of professional obligation.

Probing questions were prepared for use if necessary, but the interviews were sufficiently flexible to explore reflections as they arose (Bryman, 2016). A pilot interview was conducted with a vet mentor and the questions were refined (Creswell, 1998) to enhance the effectiveness of the interviews in exploring the relevant topics, making sure that the interviews were prompting information that was relevant to the study (Jones, Torres and Arminio, 2013). Changes to questions made as a result of the pilot, together with links to the literature review are detailed in Appendix 3 and demonstrate both sensitivity to the context of the research and its transparency and coherence (Yardley, 2000; Tracy, 2010).

Careful attention was given to what format the in-depth and semi-structured (see later 3.4.3) interviews would be offered in; face-to-face, telephone or online using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) mediated technologies, such as Skype and Zoom. Physical face-to-face has typically been proposed as the preferred mode of conducting in-depth interviews (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014) as they are considered to provide a better environment for building rapport, with the researcher able to acknowledge non-verbal cues. Typically, where the comparison has been researched, face-to-face interviews are compared with telephone interviews, and it has been suggested that telephone interviews require more of the researcher to maintain the naturalness of conversation (Irvine, 2011), and that participants only tolerate shorter interviews when conducted by phone, as they are harder work (Holt, 2010). The requirement was to gain an in-depth understanding of the vet mentors' experience, therefore longer interviews were preferred, where trust and the opportunity for the participants to open up were enabled (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2018). Telephone interviews were therefore not offered. Internet methods of communication are becoming increasingly important as a tool for researchers (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016), and they were initially offered as an alternative to physical face-to-face interviews in the initial phases of the project and then as the only option for interview, post-pandemic. VoIPs can democratise research by allowing participants to be included who might not normally be reachable (Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016). In this study participants could be considered whose distant location might otherwise exclude them from the study, particularly post-pandemic, when physical face-to-face interviews became impossible. It has been argued that it is harder to build rapport in an on-line environment (Cater, 2011), although in some on-line interviews rapport is reported to develop more quickly than in some face-to-face interviews (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014), particularly where rapport is established prior to the interview by exchanging emails with the participants several times (Seitz, 2016). Prior to the interviews in this study, the researcher and participants exchanged several friendly emails to set up the interviews, exchanged information about the research project and establish informed consent. Of particular importance in this research project was accommodating the interviews within the busy lives

of the vet mentors and the mentor scheme conveners, several of whom were busy vets too. The small number of face-to-face interviews that were selected by participants occurred because participants felt that being ensconced in a room with a visitor was the best way to ensure they were not interrupted. An online interview might not have provided the same level of deterrence.

3.4.2 Contextual data - documentary data

Contextual documentary data which informed this study took two forms. First, publicly available documentary data, which was retrieved from public-facing websites of six leading veterinary organisations (Vet Times, 2018) and second, organisational data provided by convenors. Documents were used within this study as they contribute to understanding the research setting and are therefore appropriate for qualitative research (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). These documents contributed to understanding mentoring in the UK veterinary context, by providing evidence of assumptions, expectations and priorities for mentoring at both the professional and organisational level. The publicly available documentation from the websites was scrutinised for statements concerning mentoring, for example, job advertisements offering mentoring for new recruits through graduate support programmes. These largest organisations were selected as they have the greatest reach in terms of employment of vets (Vet Times, 2018); their assumptions and expectations of mentoring are likely to impact the largest group of vets. Table 7 (3.6.1) collates the publicly available websites from which data was captured and Table 12 (4.1.1) summarises the output of the analysis of these sources.

Secondly, documentary contextual data, collected from participating organisations, where available, was included to provide data to help understand the research setting (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) at the level of the organisation. Access was requested from each participating organisation, usually via the scheme convenor, where a recognisable mentoring scheme was in place, which was accompanied by documentary information. Permission was recorded in writing. Such data is collated in Table 8 (3.6.1) and included; policy information

about mentoring, publicity material about schemes and training or support processes that the organisations produced for mentors or mentees. Specific examples include: recruitment emails for mentors, guidance for mentors and mentees about the mentoring schemes and templates provided for participants of the schemes. Table 14 (5.1.2) summarises the priorities for mentoring identified from analysis of convenor documentation. Capturing such data at professional and organisation levels allowed for later comparison with the perspectives of the practising vet mentors and thus derive deeper insight into tensions within the setting. The study did not include records of mentoring. Documentary data was relevant for the study as it helped to clarify the nature of the schemes in place and how the schemes are publicised to potential mentors and mentees. This type of data helps to understand organisational policy relating to mentoring schemes and how mentoring is characterised to those involved. It contributes to understanding the support mechanisms that are in place for mentors within veterinary practices and can contribute to an understanding of an organisation's expectations of its own employees and therefore of professional obligation in mentoring, providing insight (Yin, 2014) into an organisation's assumptions about the expectations of new recruits and new vet mentors.

As a package of information, this kind of data contributed to developing a picture of the contexts in which veterinary mentoring takes place, typically who is involved, what organisations expect from the participants and what support is provided. It was collected to add richness to the understanding of the research setting (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) and to contribute to the credibility of the findings (Bowen, 2009) by helping to avoid the situation where the research is based purely on one investigator's interpretations of one data source. The data complements other methods being used to develop the case study (Bowen, 2009). The process of collection did require a degree of selection by the researcher as to what was most relevant and quick and easy to access (Bowen, 2009) and insights from professional literature (Vet Times, 2018) helped to identify organisations whose mentoring approach was likely to be having impact on the largest range of veterinary professionals. The publicly

available material has the advantage of allowing the researcher access to a broader range of organisational types, particularly as the effects of the pandemic made access to organisations more difficult. Potential drawbacks included; documents being chosen by the participating organisations and convenors, therefore there could have been potential for bias in selection (Yin, 2014) although convenors assured me they had given me all their documentation. In some cases there could have been an incomplete or overly positively selection provided (Bowen, 2009). Not all organisations had supporting documents to share at all. However, both Stake (1995) and Yin (2014) assert the value of document analysis as a research method in producing rich descriptions of a particular phenomenon.

3.4.3 Contextual data - semi-structured interviews

Further contextual data was sought from convenors of mentoring schemes to gain insight as to what they are trying to achieve through mentoring and how they recruit and support mentors, further contributing to gaining a richer understanding of the case (Stake, 2005; Bowen, 2009) and a more holistic account (Gray, 2014). The sample of participants aimed to include four to six mentor scheme convenors and as the aim is to understand the complexity of the participants' contexts, the intention was to draw convenors from a range of organisation types and sizes. Convenors were evaluated for fit as being the person within an organisation with most responsibility for organising mentoring. This might incorporate a range of roles as mentoring is organised in different ways in different types and sizes of organisations; such as a partner in a large organisation, a practising veterinary surgeon with special responsibility for organising a mentoring scheme, a practice manager, owner or a designated member of the team. Data was collected from this group using semi-structured interviews, which were audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this group of participants for a number of reasons. The ground to be covered in the interviews was known in advance. Interviews were used to gather general background about the detail and organisation of the mentor schemes being used. A schedule of topics could be prepared in advance but the opportunity to ask open

questions and probe more deeply was important (Drever, 1995; Adams, 2015) as part of the purpose of the interviews was to determine underlying assumptions about mentoring and obligation at the level of the scheme organisers. It also felt important to employ an approach to interviewing that allowed the participants "a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about" (Drever, 1995, p. 98) as these participants had been instrumental in developing schemes and had interesting insights to share about scheme organisation and assumptions. There were a relatively small number of participants and therefore the time that such interviews take to prepare and execute was unlikely to become an issue (Drever, 1995; Adams, 2015). In comparison to the in-depth interviews employed with vet mentors, where understanding the essence of their lived experience was the focus, the semi-structured interviews were shorter in duration, typically 30 mins, more structured in terms of the consistent information to be gathered, yet with scope to allow participants to elaborate on topics in their own words (Drever, 1995).

The semi-structured interviews were organised as follows. Firstly, mentor scheme convenors were asked about their role in the organisation. As well as being a rapport building question, this question would contribute to building a deeper understanding of the research setting (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Question 2; *Please describe for me the veterinary mentoring that happens in your organisation* and the follow up sub-questions; *Who is mentored? Who does the mentoring? How do you make mentoring happen?* and *What challenges have you experienced?* allowed the convenors to reflect on the detail of the mentoring that is taking place, thus contributing to the developing rich picture. This question also allows the researcher to understand how convenors prioritise certain aspects of the mentoring and what expectations they have of mentors and mentees, which contributes to an understanding of how convenors think that mentors are motivated and how professional obligation is perceived within organisations (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003; Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Ghosh and Reio Jr, 2013; Hudson, 2013; Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013; Kennett and

Lomas, 2015; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Lee, 2019; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019).

Question 3; *What are you trying to achieve through mentoring in your organisation?* is a question that is also asked of the vet mentors. In the semi-structured interviews, this question allowed the convenors to reflect on what mentoring is for and how it is conceived. It also allows the researcher to compare vet mentors' views of mentoring with the views of convenors and to consider this comparison alongside interpretations of professional obligation (Tzeng, 2004; Granfield, 2007; McGuire and Burke, 2008).

3.5 FIELD WORK

Field work took place between February 2019 and May 2021. It was paused for a year from March 2020 until February 2021, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The veterinary profession was severely disrupted during this time, moving through phases of emergency-only service and then acclimatising to socially distanced operations and measures to protect the sector economically such as furloughing.

3.5.1 Sampling of participants and access

Participants, participating organisations, convenors and veterinary mentors were purposively sampled, using selection criteria reflecting features or characteristics which allow for detailed exploration and understanding of the theme of professional obligation central to this research (Stake, 1995). Such ambitions point to the research having impact and being of practical relevance for practitioners (Yardley, 2000; Tracy, 2010), an important consideration for demonstrating quality of qualitative research (see Table 10).

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) maintains a publicly accessible database of veterinary surgeons registered to practise in the UK. The British Veterinary Association (BVA) is the sector's professional body and offers new graduate support schemes, mentoring and CPD opportunities. I first approached these organisations and consulted the

RCVS database, to identify organisations and vets to contact. Geographical location was an initial way to identify potential organisations, as those nearest the researcher's home would be the easiest in terms of cost and time to organise interviews with, should physical face-to-face interviews be chosen for interview. During the initial phases of participant recruitment, interviewees were offered the option of an on-line interview or a face-to-face interview. Following the advent of the pandemic, interview protocols were revised to allow for on-line only. Most of this stage of the research was done independently using publicly available information. A professional body letter was produced in the event that guidance from the professional bodies was required; this was used with a contact at the RCVS, the BVA, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA), the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) and the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA). A gatekeeper letter of invitation (see Appendix 6) was also prepared as an introduction to veterinary organisations. This was used with all organisations that were approached.

Convenors were chosen purposively (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2016) due to their roles within organisations as those principally responsible for overseeing mentoring schemes. They were identified through engaging with professional associations and educators, such as the BVA and the RCVS and by using snowball sampling (Gray, 2014), whereby participants were asked to identify further potential participants (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2016), and through direct contact with organisations where information had been retrieved from the publicly accessible RCVS databases. Access to mentors was, largely, gained through these convenors and directly through professional associations. Four mentor scheme convenors were interviewed and ten vet mentors. Table 6 introduces the vet mentors interviewed for the study, providing summary details of their vet and mentoring experience, and Table 5 introduces the mentor scheme convenors interviewed for the study, providing summary details of their role and organisation type and the type of mentoring scheme they are engaged with.

Bryman (2016) indicates that twelve participants could be sufficient in qualitative interview based studies. Phenomenology, which underpinned this part of data collection, is an idiographic approach which advocates exploring detailed accounts of the experiences of individual participants of a phenomenon within a particular context and thus typically uses even smaller sample sizes (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009) that are homogenous in nature. However, as the aim in this study is to understand the complexity of the context and interactions within it (Stake, 1995) and a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2014), perspectives were drawn from a variety of practice types and size. Mentors were evaluated for fit against certain inclusion criteria; they needed to have been a practising veterinary surgeon for a minimum of 3 years and to have mentored at least one colleague for professional development. Participants were selected as part of a gradual rolling process extending over 18 months (including the break for the COVID-19 pandemic). Note was taken as to the organisation type that the mentors have experience of mentoring within, and participants were selected to achieve perspectives from a range of organisational types and sizes.

3.5.2 The participants

Table 5 Mentor scheme convenors

Participant Code	Role	Organisation type	Mentor scheme type
C1 David	Clinical, senior learning and development role for organisation, sole responsibility for scheme	Large corporate	Embedded, new grads and new employees
C2 Martin	Clinical, sole responsibility for scheme	Large Corporate	Embedded, new grad
C3 Helen	Mentor trainer, responsible for setting up professional body scheme, large animal	Professional body, large animal	Formal, new grad, early career
C4 Richard	Clinical, responsible for setting up and running the scheme	Multi-practice group, farm	Formal, new grad, early career

Table 6 Vet mentors

Participant Code and pseudonym	Biography	Clinical experience	Mentoring Experience
V1 Andy	Companion animal, orthopaedic surgeon, 20+ years qualified, owner	Small multi practice group, mixed, hospital and university settings	Being mentored, new grads, colleagues, informal
V2 Anna	GP companion animal, 10 years qualified	Small group and large corporate companion animal	New grads, previously informal, now part of formal scheme
V3 Helena	GP companion animal, 10 years + qualified, qualified overseas	Large corporate, companion animal,	New grads as part of formal scheme
V4 Erin	GP companion animal, 15 years qualified, qualified overseas, owner	Mixed practice and large corporate companion animal	New grads as part of formal scheme
V5 Janika	GP companion animal and exotics, 8 years qualified, qualified overseas	Several corporates	New grads as part of a formal scheme
V5.1 Steve	GP companion animal, 9 years qualified, owner	Medium group and corporate	For leadership, informal
V7 James	Military animals, dogs, horses, other leadership roles e.g. pandemic response, and leadership roles with professional bodies and charitable organisations, 30+ years qualified	Military and university settings	New grads for vet work and military leadership
V8 Tisha	Companion animal, 40 years qualified, qualified overseas	University setting, charity, small group and corporate	University setting, charity special surgery events, new grads as part of formal scheme
V9 Richard	Farm, 18 years qualified	University setting, research, large group, mixed corporate	University setting, new grads, formal scheme
V10 Alex	Companion animal, 30+ years qualified, owner	Mixed practice, small multi-vet single practice, large companion animal corporate	Informal and part of formal scheme

3.5.3 Recruiting participants

Three routes were used to recruit participants. Firstly, potential participatory organisations were identified using publicly available information collected from professional association public databases. The first step with such organisations was to gain gatekeeper approval. A letter (Appendix 6) was prepared for organisational gatekeepers which included sufficient detail of the research project to allow them to give written permission for participation in the research project and to identify the most suitable individual to be contacted as mentor scheme convenor and suitably experienced vet mentors to invite to participate. Separate Participant Information Sheets (PIS) (Appendix 2) were produced for scheme convenors and mentors. These provided details of the research project and made clear that participation was voluntary. In order to avoid participants feeling pressure to participate by receiving the invitation through a too senior colleague, the Participant Information Sheets were sent to potential participants by somebody within organisations from whom the participants would not feel compulsion (Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014; Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2016) or by the researcher. Where there was not such a role within a practice, the organisational gatekeeper was asked that a recruitment flyer (Appendix 7) was distributed within the organisation, for example, by being left in reception and in staff rooms, the flyer enabled potential participants to contact the researcher directly who then sent the full Participant Information Sheet and thus they could decide whether to join the research study. Some organisations did not have a mentor scheme convenor, in which cases, the recruitment flyer and Participant Information Sheet were shared with potential participant vet mentors. Both convenors and mentors had the opportunity to recommend acquaintances, as potential participants, sharing the flyer and PIS with their recommendations, contributing to snowball sampling (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2016), the second route to recruiting participants.

Finally, some participants were recruited via direct contact using publicly available information about veterinary practitioners collected from professional association public databases and from trade journals. Invitations were staged gradually across an 18-month

period to achieve participants from the range of practice type and size whilst removing the need to decline offers to participate.

3.5.4 Arranging and undertaking interviews

Ten vet mentors and four convenors were interviewed. Using this range of participants, the study aimed to capture examples of mentoring within a variety of organisational type and size, single and multi-practice organisations, large and small animal, farm etc. and with mentees of varying levels of experience. The range of participants was not meant to be exhaustive in its coverage of the profession but to contribute to the development of a rich picture of mentoring in the profession and multiple contexts in which vet mentors might experience mentoring and be able to discuss the phenomena of professional obligation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

The researcher arranged the interviews personally with each vet and convenor, following the exchange of a Participant Information Sheet and the receipt of a signed Consent Form (Appendix 8). Two chose to have their interviews in their workplace, primarily to ensure they would remain uninterrupted and others used VoIP mediated technologies such as Skype and Zoom. Each vet mentor interview lasted between 1 hour and 90 minutes and each convenor interview approximately 30-45 minutes. The majority of interviews took place on-line; this was felt to be more convenient by the majority of vets and indeed was more convenient for the researcher in terms of time and cost. Interviews using VoIP mediated technologies became a necessity post-pandemic and the improvement of the technologies and the participants' and researcher's confidence in using them enhanced the smooth running of the final interviews. However, those interviews conducted face-to-face within the workspace of the vet and with one convenor, did allow for more submersion of the researcher into the life world of the participant (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). I was able to meet colleagues and experience what their workplaces were like. In some cases, the vet mentors joined on-line interviews from their workplace and despite efforts to ensure that interviews would not be interrupted or overlooked, requests from colleagues for quick pieces of advice plus the

accompanying animal noises contributed to understanding the realities of the workplace for busy vet mentors. Several of the mentors asked for the interviews to be held on their day off for this reason.

Each interview began with an explanation of the proposed structure and flexibility of the interview and, for the comfort of the interviewee, made clear that the expectation was that most of the talking was expected from the participants and that the researcher would be making only brief notes of questions or issues to return to later. This meant that the researcher had little need to interrupt the participants (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009) other than to use paraphrasing to check understanding or to probe for deeper answers. This allowed for the researcher to become absorbed in the discussion and attentive to the participants as they spoke, contributing to commitment and rigour in the research (Yardley, 2000).

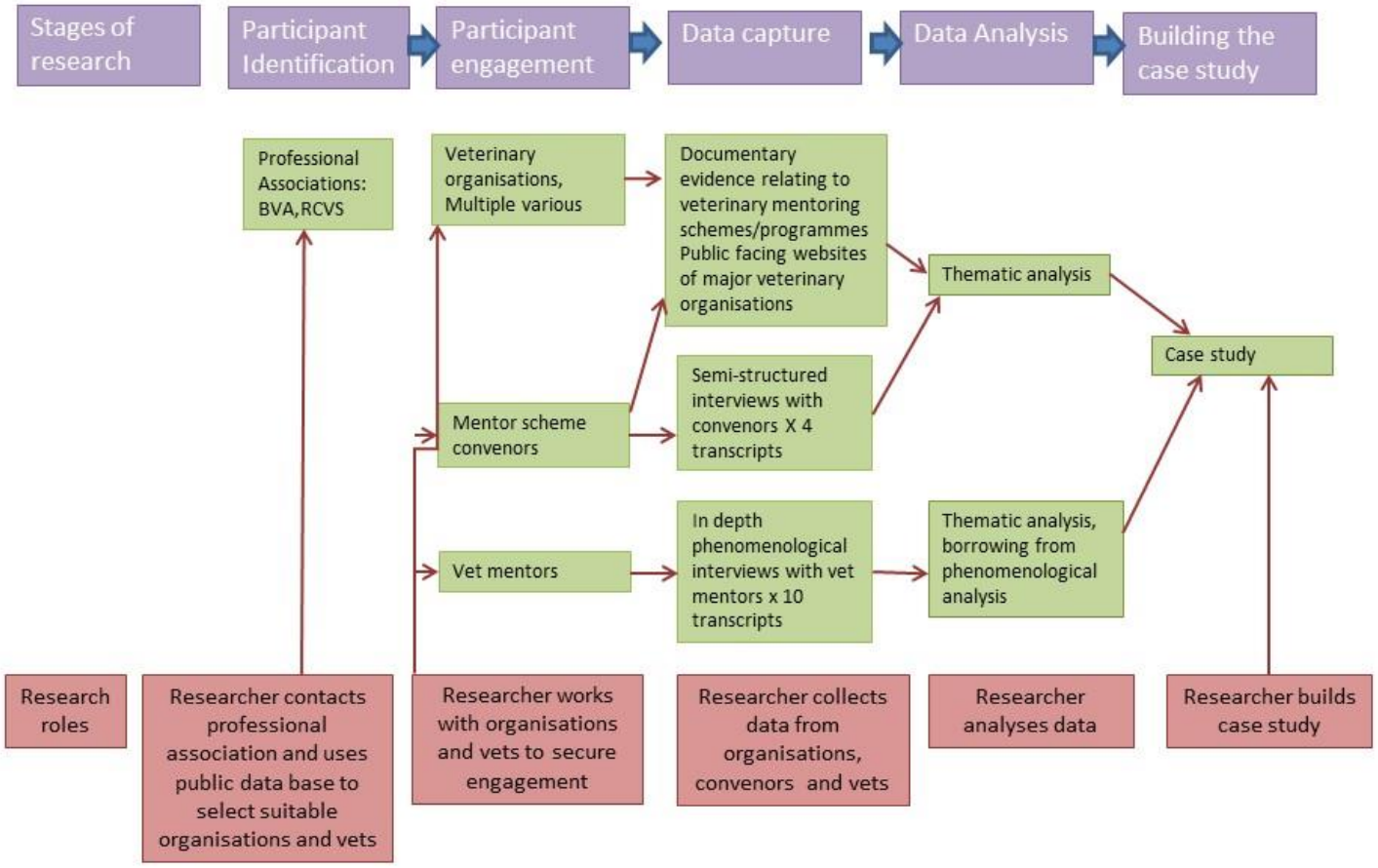

Figure 3 Research design, case study

3.5.5 Reflections from the data collection process.

A key challenge in gaining access to participants was getting past the gatekeepers at a practice. Often this was the receptionist, briefed to keep unwanted calls away from busy vets. Access to vet mentors was easier where the information regarding a senior person in training and development was available, or somebody involved in the setting up and running of mentoring schemes, as this allowed for bypassing the local gatekeepers and getting the Participant Information Sheets in front of potential participants. Vet mentors, when given the opportunity, were enthusiastic to discuss their mentoring, exuding a sense of pride in their mentoring. Access was eased if there was a senior clinical, or learning and development specialist who was also connected with a professional body. People in these roles seemed very engaged with discussions concerning mental health issues in the profession and profession-wide recruitment and retention challenges, and were therefore generally more interested in research connected to these issues.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis and synthesis of the different data sources set out to build a detailed case study that provides a rich holistic account of the specific contextual features, experiences and practices of UK veterinary mentoring (Stake, 2005; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) and the study contributes to knowledge by enriching understanding of mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation (Yardley, 2000; Tracy, 2010) thereby demonstrating a core characteristic of quality in qualitative research (Table 10). NVivo software was used to record and organise the analysis of the three core types of data; transcripts of in-depth phenomenological interviews with vet mentors, transcripts of semi-structured interviews with mentor scheme convenors and documentary data, both data provided by convenors relating to organisation veterinary mentoring schemes and documentary data retrieved from public facing websites of veterinary organisations.

3.6.1 Data analysis method and process

Vet mentor interviews (ten interviews, 76,000 words) were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher, as Stake (1995) recommends, as soon as possible following the interview, so that essential meanings were not lost. Appendix 10 provides an example of part of a transcribed recording. Transcribing aimed to capture verbatim accounts of the interviews, as with phenomenological data analysis, the aim is to analyse the content of the discussion (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009) and therefore detailed notes of non-verbal aspects of the interviews were therefore not made, unless they were relevant for interpreting the transcript.

Inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), informed by phenomenology (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009) was employed to analyse the interviews and gain an understanding of participants' experiences. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis provided a useful guide to the analysis process, beginning with familiarisation with the data through immersion which involved close reading. Individual transcripts were annotated initially, using first level descriptive codes, utilising NVivo software to record codes and assist in managing the large amounts of data of differing types (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). These were later interpreted and refined following a process of aggregation across the transcripts of all the participants to identify learning from across the range of data about the context (Stake, 1995) to develop themes, which captured important aspects about the data which connected to the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis was conducted within a constructionist framework and was therefore able to give consideration to sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions from which the participant accounts have been delivered (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006), such as the role of the participant, employed vet, owner, how they were recruited to be a mentor. Analysis focused on how participants, individually and collectively, made sense of their profession, their professional obligations and their experiences of mentoring as professional obligation (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Drawing

from phenomenology, this involved a sequence of processes which moved from analysis of individual experiences to shared or common experience “and from the descriptive to the interpretative” (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009, p. 79). Initial detailed readings of the transcripts were tasked with understanding and giving voice to the experiences of the individual participants, known as the ‘the phenomenological requirement’. Secondly, the interpretive process derived meaning from those understandings “the interpretative requirement to contextualize and ‘make sense’” of these experiences (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006, p. 102). Three levels of analysis of the transcripts shaped the process; firstly, analysis at the individual semantic level; secondly, annotation for descriptive and linguistic content, and lastly, for conceptual content. Appendix 11 provides an example of a section of transcript from Anna’s interview which was coded both for several semantic understandings of obligation and also for linguistic devices used to identify obligation, in this case “moral duty”. The process of semantic analysis at the individual and aggregated level allowed the development of the full range of professional obligations and then for condensing into three final groupings; obligation to patient, client and colleagues. Analysis at the linguistic level allowed for identification of language used to describe obligation, which is presented and explored in Table 16.

At the final conceptual phase, interpretations of the material were considered at an interrogative and conceptual level, identifying connections between the data and the underpinning literature and research questions (Bryman, 2016). A series of conceptual themes were identified and explored in Chapter 6. Each level of analysis is conducted first at an individual level and the transcripts were then analysed across the participants to identify themes and patterns commonly experienced, or identified as recurring threads. Themes were then organised into a framework to demonstrate relationships between them (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Discussion of the themes in relation to the relevant literature takes place in chapter 6, NVivo codebook themes are summarised in Tables 9-14 in this chapter for reference.

Analysis of the semi-structured interviews with veterinary scheme convenors followed similar steps of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006); interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher, soon after the interview and following close reading for familiarisation, the individual transcripts were annotated and interpreted followed by a process of aggregation across the transcripts of all the convenors to identify learning from across the transcripts (Stake, 1995). NVivo software was again used to record and organise the thematic analysis, again, conducted within a constructionist framework (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This provided detail of the environments within which mentor schemes have been organised, expectations of convenors of their vet mentors and mentees and any sense of professional obligation that is conveyed through their characterisations of their schemes and how they are organised. Analysis of the semi-structured interviews differed from the analysis of transcripts from the in-depth vet mentors. Less emphasis was placed on interpreting experiences of the essence of mentoring and professional obligation, due to the different focus of the interviews. Convenors had not all been mentors themselves, and the focus of the interviews was more concerned with their experiences and expectations in managing their schemes. Linguistic and conceptual markers were noted, where they illuminated expectations concerning mentoring and professional obligation.

Analysis of the documentary data involved a first stage of selecting which data had most relevance for the study (see 3.4.2), and annotating source, date and author of the document (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2014), summarised in Table 7 and Table 8. Documents were separated into publicly available documents and documents provided by participating organisations. This was so that outward facing conceptions of mentoring could be considered separately from inward facing portrayals. The public websites of the six leading corporations were explored as part of this analysis (Vet Times, 2018), detailed in Table 7. There followed a superficial skimming of the documents to aid initial categorisation and then a more careful reading of the documents, combining elements of content analysis, whereby the context of the web material as emanating from leading corporate entities and the frequency and type of

reference to mentoring was noted (Robson and McCartan, 2016) and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Bowen, 2009). Appendix 12 provides an example of a section of annotated web based material. Web based documents were converted to PDFs before loading into NVivo and those documents provided by organisations were loaded directly into NVivo as Word files. Thematic analysis involved close reading of the texts to construct categories that were relevant to professional obligation and mentoring (Bowen, 2009). This process also drew on coding suggestions from phenomenology; looking for descriptive, linguistic and conceptual markers within the texts (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). The documents used in this study and their significance is summarised in Tables 7 and 8.

Ultimately some of the same codes identified with the two types of interview were applied to the documentary data through a process of aggregation and consolidation and this allowed for a synthesis and integration of themes to underpin the development of the case study (Bowen, 2009) (see Table 9-14 for summarized NVivo themes) .

Table 7 Summary of publicly available websites consulted

Vet Corporation	**Relative size, employed vet profs**
Independent Vetcare, (IVC Evidensia, 2021)	2,800
CVS (CVS Group plc., 2021)	3,250
Vets4Pets (Vets4Pets, 2021)	2,450,
Medivet (Medivet, 2021)	1,850
VetPartners	1,250

(VetPartners, 2021)	
Linnaeus (Linnaeus, 2021)	325

Table 8 Summary of material provided by participating organistions

David's organisation	**Martin's organisation**
Buddy Vet Training Strategy Buddy System Guide for Buddy Vet Buddy System Assessment Form Trainee Monitoring Sheet	New Graduate Programme Handbook • The buddy/mentor relationship, roles explained • Schedule of meetings • Review forms

Appendix 9 presents the complete NVivo codebooks summarising the themes which emerged from analysis. The appendix provides detail firstly of the number of participants an documents who raised a theme and also how many chunks of text were coded to each theme. This allowed priorities for the participants and recurring themes to be identified. For example, initially ten items were identified as professional obligations of a vet, (see Appendix 9). These were later grouped as three key sets of obligations; to patient, to client and to colleagues. Intially a fourth obligation, to practise honestly and ethically was retained as a separate theme, but this was later absorbed into each of the three obligations as it had specific relevance for each. The key themes are presented here, with some amalgamation, grouped into the following areas; the veterinary profession (Table 9), motivations for mentoring (Table 10), veterinary mentoring terrain (Tables 11 and 12), conceptual themes (Table 13) and finally consensus on good mentoring (Table 14).

Table 9 Summarised Nvivo theme, the veterinary profession

The Veterinary Profession, descriptions
Academic
Characterised by change
Collegiality
Preoccupation with how the profession is perceived
Vocational
Specialisms different
Being in the vet profession
Brilliant, strong connection
Characterised by change
Collegiate - relying on mentoring
Difficult
Emotionally challenging
Physically demanding resulting in retention difficulties
Intellectually challenging
More than a job/vocation
Professional obligations of a vet
Honesty/ethical
Patient care
To client
To colleagues
Challenges to professional obligations
Client expectations
Ethics
Money

Table 10 Summarised Nvivo themes, motivations for mentoring

How do mentors come to mentoring?
Expressions of professional obligation
Selected for aptitude
Volunteer
Personality
Influencers for mentoring
Being passionate about the profession
Business reasons
Compassion or empathy
A better start than us
Acknowledging that the 1st year is tough
Personal satisfaction
Feel good
Fits with my PD
Previous good mentoring
Previous poor mentoring or lack of
Prior Teaching experience
Professional obligation, terms for

Table 11 Summarised Nvivo themes, the mentoring terrain

What is mentoring in the profession , mentor perspectives	**4**	**4**
Blended reasons	6	8
Gradual letting go - linguistic	7	10
Lasting	3	5
Network of support	5	11
Not reinforce weakness	1	2
Official deficit	1	1
Official offline blended areas	4	7
Peer mentoring	3	3
Professional longevity contribution	3	6
Building leadership and confidence	10	23
Security of professional standards	9	19
Roles connected to current status of profession		
Developing self-regulation	2	3
Increased diversity	3	9
Mental health support	9	18
To become a more confident decision maker	7	15
Roles covered by the mentor		
Friend	4	6
Support for personal growth	3	16
Unofficial, deficit	3	5
Work functions covered		
Business mentoring	7	10
Client communications	8	18
Clinical mentoring	10	35
Practising procedures	6	19
Ethical dilemmas	3	6
The craft being a vet	10	19
Work principles and behaviours		

Table 12 Summarised Nvivo themes, the mentoring terrain, convenor documents

Mentoring in the profession, convenor documents
Organisational fit/Enculturation/behaviour development
Part of wider PDP programme
Pastoral
Performance oriented
Retention
Support for first year/confidence/clinical back up/situational learning
Trust

Table 13 Summarised Nvivo themes, conceptual themes

Conceptual examples
Exchange, cycle
Professions
Change agent egs
Power of knowledge
Professional identity

Table 14 Summarised Nvivo themes, consensus on good mentoring

Recommendations for good mentoring practice
Addressing environment of change
Environment which supports mentoring
Mentor training & exchange with universities
Monitored, regular
Not line manager
Web of support
Gradually increasing confidence

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

This study has been designed and delivered in accordance with the guidelines and approval process managed by the University research ethics committee at Oxford Brookes University. A series of ethical considerations were at the forefront of thinking and shaped the development of the research design and interactions with participating organisations and individuals. A number of these issues have been previously discussed in the section entitled recruiting participants. The selection of participants happened across a range of organisations, most of which the researcher had no prior contact with and therefore access to participants was through organisers within organisations.

First, it was important that participating organisations and participants became involved with the project feeling fully informed about the nature of the project and what involvement in it would mean (Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, a series of documents were produced to provide such information, outlining different levels of participation. A gatekeeper letter was produced for approaching organisations on spec

having identified their contact details using professional body databases. A professional body introduction letter was also produced. Second, Participant Information Sheets (PIS) were developed for mentor scheme convenors and vet mentors (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Consent forms were also produced which participants were required to sign prior to interviews taking place. The details of these documents have been discussed in 3.5.3 and 3.5.4. Together, these documents allowed participants and participating organisations to give informed consent to be involved in the study (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

An important consideration was that individual participants gave consent free from any form of pressure (Webster, Lewis and Brown, 2014) and methods employed to avoid this sense of compulsion have also been discussed in section 3.5.3 and 3.5.4.

To preserve participant anonymity and confidentiality of a participant's identity (Robson and McCartan, 2016), transcripts are stored with a code rather than an identifying name and where data is used within the thesis and will be used within subsequent publications, the participants are referred to either by codes or by pseudonyms and neutral pronouns are used where not to do so would risk recognition of participants. The profession is small and specialisms within, smaller still, therefore identifying detail in the Participant section (3.5.2) has been kept to a minimum and limited for some participants, who are more easily identifiable due to their career histories.

In planning, it was anticipated that participants might wish to complain about the mentoring scheme within which they operate. It was not the purpose of the research project to action complaints, however, it was determined that appropriate means would be identified to enable the signposting of participants to directions to raise legitimate complaints. This would be different within each organisation, given the different mentor schemes to which the mentors belonged. In practice, convenors were very open to hearing what their mentors thought of their schemes, albeit confidentially, through the thesis or any subsequent publications and

no mentors actively complained about their own scheme; some mentioned features that could be improved but the researcher did not encounter any serious complaints.

3.8 ASSESSING QUALITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Working within qualitative health research, Yardley (2000, p. 219), offers four key characteristics which denote good qualitative research; “sensitivity to context”, “commitment and rigour”, “transparency and coherence” and “impact and importance.” Tracy (2010, p. 840) offers eight overlapping criteria for a similar purpose; “worthy topic”, “rich rigor”, “sincerity”, “credibility”, “resonance”, “significant contribution”, “ethics”, and “meaningful coherence”. The explorations and explications undertaken in this chapter demonstrate how each of these characteristics and criteria have been addressed in the design and delivery of this research, focusing in particular on the first three characteristics. The fourth characteristic will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

Table 15 outlines the characteristics for assessing the quality of qualitative research as proposed by Yardley (2000) and Tracy (2010), and Table 16 summarises how the research methodology is worthy of these characteristics.

Table 15 Characteristics for assessing the quality of qualitative research. Adapted from Yardley (2000) and Tracy (2010)

(Yardley, 2000)	(Tracy, 2010)
Sensitivity to context Theoretical: relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues.	Sincerity, resonance, ethics
Commitment and rigour In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill: thorough data collection: depth/breadth of analysis.	Rich rigour, sincerity
Transparency and coherence Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method: reflexivity	Credibility, resonance, meaningful coherence
Impact and importance Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers).	Worthy topic, significant contribution

The study firstly demonstrates sensitivity to context by being grounded in understanding of the relevant research contexts; namely theoretical discussions of mentoring, professions and professional obligation and published research in the context of veterinary mentoring and related contexts. Data collection has been carried out using documentary data collection and in-depth phenomenological and semi-structured interviews. These have been arranged in a way that demonstrate sensitivity to the working environments of the participants and, through inclusion of participants from across the sector, demonstrate a commitment to ethical research practice and to in-depth engagement with the topic. This chapter charts the methodological choices and ethical processes in the execution of this study in a spirit of transparency and openness and makes clear the fit between theory and method.

The introduction and literature review chapters have outlined the aims and objectives of this study and why it is important to investigate mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in the veterinary context.

Table 16 How the study achieves characteristics of quality

(Yardley, 2000)	Achievement within the study
Sensitivity to context Theoretical: relevant literature; empirical data; sociocultural setting; participants' perspectives; ethical issues.	The study is underpinned by and informed by relevant theoretical context explored in chapter 2. In depth phenomenological interviews allow for deep consideration of participant perspectives, triangulated with documentary data and convenor perspectives. Ethical considerations are considered.
Commitment and rigour In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill: thorough data collection: depth/breadth of analysis.	In depth engagement with the topic is demonstrated through chapter 2 and with methodological choices and justifications, plus endeavours to include a range of perspectives.
Transparency and coherence Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method: reflexivity	Chapter 3 charts methodological choices and process and chapter 4 presents data.
Impact and importance Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers).	Worthy topic, significant contribution. Introduction charts significance of this issue.

3.9 REFLECTIONS AS A RESEARCHER

As the research project unfolded, in some senses, I identified with being an insider researcher (Unluer, 2012); but only an *almost* insider researcher. My husband's working environment is not my own, although inevitably I have personal connections in the sector and the experiences of the working vet often drives conversation in my home and social life. The changing nature of the profession is familiar territory for me; the corporatisation of the sector and its feminisation, the impact of Brexit on recruitment and retention and the mental health crisis. In many ways, the veterinary profession mirrors some of the experiences of academics (Knights and Clarke, 2018). I have familiarity with veterinary terminology and have quite an unusual vocabulary for somebody not directly connected with the profession,

which proved useful with the interviews. I had familiarity with some of the themes that the participants raised (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). These shared understandings often meant that conversation could flow quite freely and I did not need to ask participants to explain terminology very often. However, in some senses I felt like I was trespassing on familiar, but not well-known ground, and I could use this to my advantage in the interviews. My lack of familiarity with some specifics of the territory meant that I felt alert and not in danger of missing significant information that I wanted to explore more deeply in the interview (Gerrish, 1997 cited in Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002).

It was however, with a sense of trepidation that I entered the world of scientists from an interpretivist perspective and I expected some caution, or discomfort, with engaging with qualitative interviews; this concern proved unfounded. Veterinary surgeons engaged proactively with the in-depth interviews and convenors with the semi-structured interviews. They seemed to experience no cognitive dissonance between the underpinning philosophical stance of a scientist and my qualitative research method, although some noted with amusement the openness of the questions.

The interviews and subsequent transcription and analysis allowed for multiple levels of reflexivity from both myself as a researcher and the participants (Fishman, 1999). The interviews themselves required participants to engage with the notion of mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation. They did so through a series of oblique questions which allowed them to explore their experience and make sense of those experiences with the researcher. As the researcher, in Chapter 1 I have explored the journey that brought me to this research project and in Chapter 2 of this thesis explored the journey to reaching professional obligation as a mechanism of interest within the mentoring process. As the numbers of interviews accumulated, an interplay began between myself and the participants as common themes emerged even before analysis had taken place and I was able to explore with each participant their own interpretations of these common themes, which in some cases, were very different. There then followed the interpretative process which I

engaged with following each interview. There was an immediate sense of the data captured after each interview, which then evolved through each level of data analysis, from transcription, through analysis of individual scripts at a semantic level, to searching for common themes and new insights (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). This process demonstrates Yardley's (2000) second principle for quality qualitative research, that of commitment and rigour (Table 15). It was important in each interview for me not to prejudge the data and not to prejudge which themes would emerge, as participants were very different and their stories unique. I had to be mindful of my own preconceptions brought from my prior research experience but also from earlier participants (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009).

3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

By engaging in a social constructivist case study design, adopting an instrumental utilisation of case study (Stake, 1995), investigation of this particular case aims to help understand a particular issue of more general interest. By exploring mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation in the UK veterinary sector, it is the intention that we learn about professional obligation and mentoring generally. It is not the intention of the research that generalisation from the case to all vet mentors is possible but deeper insight into a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1995), mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation. Because this study draws upon phenomenology and elicits data from a relatively small number of participants, claims can only be made based on this small number of participants within the study (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009), but their individual stories and deep insights are of interest in understanding the phenomenon being investigated. It is for other researchers to determine the value of the findings presented for other professional environments, but a number of relevant parallels are introduced between vets and other professions; academics (Knights and Clarke, 2018) and dentists (Williams and Jordan, 2015) for example, which suggest potential.

The collection of data provide a snapshot of the phenomenon within a particular context at a particular time, including participants' sense-making of their experience. It is acknowledged

that the picture developed will change with time and different circumstances or a different researcher, particularly relevant in the context of mentoring as a mentor's experiences and reflections can be expected to change with each new assignment. Using documentary data and semi-structured interviews to generate more depth to context, coupled with in-depth interviews, which allowed sufficient opportunity for in-depth exploration of the phenomena, has allowed for a detailed exploration of the phenomena in context. The study worked with varied participants so that as much detail and richness as achievable were included and the case study remains as true to the experiences and interpretations of the participants as possible (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Central to this study were phenomenological interpretations, which are not intended to be generalisable to a broader population (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009)

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and justified the research approach, design and methodology adopted in order to execute the research aim and objectives of this study. This chapter revisited the research objectives and outlined the employment of a social constructivist case study design, underpinned by a qualitative interpretivist paradigm. A blend of phenomenological interviews with vet mentors, semi-structured interviews with scheme convenors and further contextual documentary data was collected and analysed to develop a rich and in-depth case study, investigating mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in the UK veterinary sector. This chapter explains and justifies how participants and documents were both selected and data collected and analysed. It explores how ethical issues were addressed during the research and the limitations of the method. This chapter therefore demonstrates how the research has been carried out within a congruent research framework (Creswell, 1998).

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS 1 - THE CASE STUDY CONTEXT - THE UK VETERINARY PROFESSION AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS.

Chapters 4 and 5 present an analysis of the findings of the fieldwork of the study, comprising the in-depth phenomenological interviews with vet mentors, semi-structured interviews with scheme convenors and documentary data. Having briefly introduced the UK veterinary context, Chapter 4 depicts interpretations of the UK veterinary profession and its professional obligations, from the perspective of the vet mentors. The key rewards and challenges of the profession are considered, together with what it is like to be part of the profession. The chapter aims to present the truths, as expressed by the of mentors (Finlay, 2011) of everyday experience practising in the veterinary environment, a context subject to challenge and change, introduced in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 is able to begin linking mentor perceptions with professional identity with implications for mentoring for supporting mentees in linking environment with personal values and professional practice (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019). The chapter reviews mentor perceptions of professional obligations, highlighting how mentors experience obligations felt at the professional level and briefly, their initial reflections on mentoring and professional obligation. Chapter 5 then introduces the mentoring landscape within the veterinary profession, the way mentoring is referred to and conceived in the public facing documentation of leading veterinary organisations and mentor scheme documents. These sections are followed by an account of the coverage of mentoring from the perspective of the vet mentors and convenors. Lastly, the chapter looks closely at the mentors and what has brought them to mentoring and at the connections between professional obligation and mentoring. The chapters will be presenting, primarily, the experiences of vets and will use extended extracts in order to demonstrate themes, whilst capturing the realities as expressed by the participants (Finlay, 2011).

Section 3.4 has introduced the relatively small, but economically strategically important profession and its representative body the BVA and statutory regulator, the RCVS. As identified in Chapters 1 - 3, the UK veterinary profession is undergoing profound change and experiencing significant resulting challenges. Notable diversification of the profession is evident; feminisation, more part time working, with a significant proportion of practising vets qualifying overseas (Migration Advisory Committee, 2019). The profession is experiencing recruitment and retention challenges and a mental health crisis (Clarke, Knights and Finch, 2016; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures, 2016) Shifts in the ownership structures within the UK sector are apparent with large corporations owning multiple practices replacing the smaller privately owned practices, buying out those practices as they develop in size and reach (Vet Times, 2018), which impacts professional identity (Allister, 2015; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Against this backdrop, section 4.1 will now present how the participants characterise the UK veterinary profession, what it is like to be part of the profession and how they sense their connection to it. Understanding the participants' sense of profession is important later in understanding how they perceive and explain their personal role as a mentor, which is explored in Chapter 5. The participants describe a profession that is emotionally and physically demanding, requiring strong intellectual capacity and experiencing profound change and they explore what it is like to practise in this context, elucidating the challenges for the profession which have been explored in chapter 2. They express concerns that the profession is often widely misunderstood by the public and, despite what they perceive to be its collegiate ethos and rich rewards as a career, the profession is ravaged by mental health crises and uncertainty about its changing identity.

4.1 HOW THE VET MENTORS EXPERIENCE THE UK VETERINARY PROFESSION

4.1.1 A self –aware profession, conscious of being misunderstood

Challenges to professional identity explored in Chapter 2 (Allister, 2015; 2016; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) manifest in the participant accounts as a self consciousness and concern for how they are perceived. A picture is presented of a profession that is very self-aware and conscious of misperceptions held by both the public and those entering the profession as to its nature. When seeking to express professional identity, the participants tended to first look outwards from the profession to consider how outsiders define it. They felt that outsiders misunderstand the profession in a number of ways and that these misperceptions underpin several of the current challenges faced by those in and those entering the veterinary profession.

Helena provides an account which incorporates a number of misconceptions raised by the participants. She condenses the concern that some users of veterinary medicine do not hold vets in as high esteem as human doctors. These users do not appreciate the complexity of the role, the requirement for a high degree of intellect and training for the profession and the consequent costs of such medical services. Rather, vets sometimes feel from clients that they should feel grateful for being able to work with pets and therefore not charge as much as they do. These commonly held misperceptions of the day-to-day life of a vet impacts how clients interact with them and contributes to the emotional challenge of the role.

> **Helena:** I suppose it does impact because we do have a high rate of suicides in our profession and we don't really seem to be respected for what it actually is and really understood for what it is.

Several of the vets relay, as if expecting surprise, that there is more to the role than treating animals.

> **Erin:** I would say, more than 50% of our job is psychology and working with the owners and you know if you can't gain their confidence, then you know, you're constantly going to be fighting them,

Outsiders to the profession assume, they feel, that those entering the profession do so because they love animals and expect to be treating puppies and kittens all the time, without acknowledging that these are complex scientific problem-solving roles requiring sophisticated people management and business skills. The general lack of respect from clients contributes to a stressful workspace where jurisdiction over certain knowledge and skills combined with a public service motive has historically provided the scaffolding for veterinary professional identity. Contributing to the debate concerning preparedness of new recruits (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010), Richard expresses concern that this misperception has consequences for those entering the profession, who share some of these misperceptions, entering the profession without a clear idea of what the job is likely to be. There seems little comprehension amongst outsiders, for example that some vets enter the profession for reasons other than a love of animals. Steve expresses guilt that he did not join the profession because of a love of animals

> **Steve:** I think now retrospectively, a lot of the things that attracted me to the profession were born out of growing up with my dad, so business ownership, developing staff, developing relationships with clients that sort of thing that has always been what had interested more than perhaps the minutiae of clinical medicine.

The vets' reflections can be considered as misunderstanding by those outside the profession, but could also be interpreted as confirmation that the veterinary profession's identity is in a state of flux and therefore difficult to comprehend.

When the participants turn their attention inwards to defining their profession, they characterise a profession with a strong, albeit changing, identity to which they hold an intense connection. They describe a profession defined by the academic strength of those that join it and maintain its standards of excellence, and by a sense of collegiality which they feel pervades various aspects of the profession, not least the integral role of mentoring. They are able to describe the rich rewards of the profession from a number of different perspectives, from the privileged position of the institution to the pride in being connected to the community. However, they also describe a beleaguered profession that is facing a critical

moment in its history, a time of intense challenge and change; plagued by a long-standing mental health crisis, recruitment and retention difficulties and experiencing profound shifts in identity as the sector undergoes radical changes in structure.

4.1.2 An academic profession, both a blessing and a curse.

That the profession draws recruits from highest achieving school leavers (Tötemeyer, 2013), who meet the high entrance requirements and are retained in high numbers progressing seamlessly to employment in the majority of cases (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010) is well-discussed. Recruits, it is argued, subject to an education system which encourages a dualistic approach to medicine (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) with right and wrong ways of doing things, are encouraged into a profession wedded to a culture of perfectionism and omni-competence (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) The participants provide details of the consequences of such an approach, what such a misperception of the veterinary profession looks like within their realities, with highs of complex clinical problem-solving alongside the more mundane aspects of the role. Andy describes the profession as a "collection of people who… were…academically very gifted," and Anna elaborates that the intellectual challenge required in the roles brings rewards:

> **Anna:** What you're doing every day is puzzle solving and you can definitely get an awful lot of satisfaction if you solve that puzzle correctly… Especially...so if it's a very, very complicated case, do it well or if it's an unusual disease and is something different and you get to that point, or if you just manage your case effectively, which means …you've communicated well and your owner is very grateful, those are all very… Those all, they give you rewards, you've done your job well

However, attracting such academic high achievers to the profession may contribute to some of the retention challenges experienced by the profession, because the high achievers recruited are not prepared for the less interesting aspects of the role, creating a mismatch, which results in challenges for mentors who are required to work with the disillusioned mentees who are not used to failure.

> **Richard:** you're bringing in a group of very intelligent people, some high achievers into and then actually a lot of the job we do on a day-to-day basis can be quite mundane and sort of routine, and so I think that's where people can get bored or

> disillusioned with it…we are faced with a lot of people that have never failed before [..] …they take failure very hard, because they've almost never, never dealt with it, it's very personal.

This has implications for the mental health crisis, with Helena describing how distressing this can be in reality as practising vets witness new colleagues failing early in their careers.

> **Helena:** I just thought…. the complete crumbling down of a young person in front of… in front of a career that hadn't even started, in such a sad way, he had to leave the profession altogether he had a complete breakdown, he just um…it was a complete mess and I just sat there and thought how sad is it, you know you get into vet school with so many hopes and dreams, University alone is not an easy path in the first place, you already give so much of yourself and then it all stops.

The complex technical demands of the role require the profession to attract some of the brightest young people to train as vets. When faced with situations in the workplace where perhaps a procedure does not go well, they encounter something new and unfamiliar, client communications are difficult or aspects of the role are simply very mundane, such people can struggle. The participants are familiar with the consequences of this mismatch.

A profession peopled with high achievers brings opportunities and drawbacks for mentoring within the profession. Helen has a unique perspective among the participants as the only vet mentor trainer,she explains these opportunities and drawbacks in the context of her training:

> **Helen:** they (vet mentors in training) are so quick to learn and so insightful, so really the speed… they pick things up so quickly and they are insightful, they're self-aware, they know when they're telling people (their mentees) what to do and they know when they're getting in the way and they can talk about it

However, the capacity for becoming expert in their fields and in problem-solving, the tendency towards right wrong expectations (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) can bring drawbacks in learning situations, with vets often keen to demonstrate problem-solving *for* their learners rather than to develop the self-reliance of their learners and the can become very directional in their approach.

> **Helen:** they (new graduates) get put on a clinic and get told get on with it and they don't feel good and their clinician says… "No you didn't do that right, let me tell you again how to do this," …so they're kicked back to direction again and then the clinicians says… "Off you go and do as I told you" and somehow don't feel they got it right or they didn't get it right, so they're sort of are kicked between direction and delegation.

Mentors who have been educated within a profession that has a perfectionist, dualistic attitude to medical education and practice, and grown up within a profession with such ingrained norms, may have a tendency to perpetuate such norms in an altruistic attempt to support new members to the profession to cope.

4.1.3 The significance of connectedness and collegiality to these professionals

Despite the well-documented challenges to identity that the profession is experiencing (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016), the participants continue to feel a strong sense of connection with it, each alluding to a variety of rewards associated with being part of it. They also convey a profession that is connected, both internally amongst the members of the profession, and also externally, with strong connections to family, community and the economy, reminiscent of a traditional service ideal (Wilensky, 1964). That they retain their sense of belonging feels surprising with a profession that struggles to retain vets and which struggles with a mental health crisis (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). Helena and Janika capture this enthusiasm.

> **Helena:** it's exciting, I'm very proud, I'm very proud of being part of a group of people who are absolutely amazing human beings, amazing human beings, with great heart and a great mind and yeah I'm very proud of it.
>
> **Janika:** It's pretty awesome I think, I think it's a…, I love my job, I love, I'm happy to go to work, I am happy to, you know, do the surgeries and see quick results, I like consulting, I like to solve those puzzles and figure it out what's going on with the animal.

A sense of pride feels important and a valuing of the colleagues with whom they work, for their abilities, emotional input and personal sacrifice. James and Alex capture elements of the profession that generate a sense of pride to be part of it:

> **James:** it's an honour I think the fact that we have the [..] right and the responsibility [..] for the health and welfare of animals is very, it's very important
>
> **Alex:** It means that you're in a fairly privileged position of caring for and looking after people's pets that they regard… [..] as part of their family and feel are an important part of their family and they want to have the best health care possible for them. So in that sense it's quite a privileged position [...] serves an important public role, so I think we're in a profession that is, for the most part respected by the public.

For the participants, being in the profession feels much more than the interactions with individual cases that they work on, the connections with the people involved and with communities are also very important. Andy describes “putting families back together” and in one account explores how those broader connections to families and communities can offset some of the challenging aspects of the profession. A balancing of emotional reward and personal sacrifice seem evident (Allister, 2014) through weighing bedtimes and weddings against joy received from work.

> **Andy:** work life balance does exist, it’s important and you can’t put back the missed weddings and you can’t put back the missed bedtimes but it does exist but what it neglects to recognise is the joy that you can have in your work. So it’s not just work versus life […] I have just had clients, come in - mum and dad and granny with a Daschund who used to have to walk at… I did a spinal surgery […] to them the impact is marvellous they’re back going out and walking, you know granny is gonna go back to her walks down to the post box and to the corner shop to take the dog for a walk so she’s still gonna..still be meeting up with people and you put that back into their life […] It’s brilliant.

Farm work, in particular, presents contexts where the vets feel very strong community and economic connections, going beyond the individual animals to be part of wider relationships between farms, economy and society. Richard puts this in context as he describes how he works with farms and supermarkets to improve welfare standards and this helps him feel connected.

> **Richard:** it's a very proactive discussion and you're very privileged that you're part of that team and we're all working together to one aim [..] it's much more satisfying because I can see the progress over the years, as we develop as a relationship and we see the productivity, rather than me just dropping in and seeing an animal occasionally.

Similarly, Helena identifies that when the intellectual and the practical come together the result is a rewarding environment to be part of.

> **Helena:** But if you see us together, it seems like it’s almost like a play - it seems that everybody’s has its part and everybody swirls around and it feels almost like a synchronised dance but we all have like our own microcosm around it or at least that’s how I feel.

James acknowledges the protected status of the profession. “It is effectively a monopoly and […] we're a self-regulating profession”. As the profession changes and the service ideal is

replaced with managerial efficiencies (Hotho, 2008; Williams and Jordan, 2015; Allister, 2016), the vets still find solace in the status of their profession and the bonds to the service ideal that remain.

Through exploring these facets of connectedness, either to other members of the profession to deliver this complex synchronised dance or connectedness to families, communities and parts of the economy, vets convey a sense that their professional identity encompasses being at the heart of community and, for several, feelings of strong emotional connections to those that they work with. The participants feel that to be or become a vet one must learn to occupy this position and develop these multiple threads of connection, which on the one hand can bring a sense of belonging within this environment, but underlying this perception could be a tendency to see self-sacrifice as central to professional identity.

The sense of connection within the profession identified by the participants, extends to a sense of collegiality demonstrated directly as participants sought to identify the defining characteristics of their profession, but also emerged through interpretation, from language used which signalled the lived behaviour of these vets. Perhaps this evidence of collegiality is not surprising in a group of individuals who have engaged in pro-social behaviour (Ryan, 2021) either by establishing mentoring schemes, which have benefitted others, or by contributing to mentoring themselves .The profession has historically based its educational structures, which include extra mural studies supported by in situ vets, on assumptions of collegiality and this has important implications for how mentoring is conceived within this wider educational framework. This section will explore collegiality both in terms of what the participants say and what they do. Collegiality emerged as collective concern *from* those in the profession *for* those in the profession over shared experiences within the profession and a collective determination to address them.

> **Helen:** We were really aware of the stresses and strains of their profession and they (vet mentors in training) were really aware that the new cohort was struggling and they wanted to somehow help them with this transition

Some participants described what collegiality looks like within the profession and how it influences connections and how professionals interact with each other. The participants' realities point to experiencing networks that demonstrate a genuine desire to help and support each other, despite and in many cases because of the challenges the profession faces.

> **Erin:** what I do like about a group, is that there's always people to ask for help, there's always people who know more than you do or that you can ask advice from or can help you with something and it's within a click of an email and you can get answers back from 10 different people.
>
> **James:** you think about the number of webinars that are out there and [..] conferences, where people, yeah they may do it because it sort of gives them a bit of status but actually there's a real desire to share your enthusiasm and experience to help others. And I think that's very strong in the profession actually.

Practising from a place of collegiality is exhibited in how participants elucidate the ethos of providing a network of support for colleagues.

> **Richard**: so our new graduate knows that actually, if she's got queries, yeah, you can try me but there would be someone else that she can have a chat to…it's that kind of thing.

Richard shares an example which is illustrative of the collegiate professional behaviour identified. He describes how he and the other vet mentors in his group share how they handle developing a new graduate's out-of-hours confidence. The reflection demonstrates collegiality both in terms of supporting the new graduate with a web of support and a collegiate organisational culture in sharing mentoring practice ideas. The way that the vet mentors in his organisation work together, acknowledges the uncertainties that new vets have been found to have (Duijn *et al.*, 2020) and collectively builds ways to slowly develop their confidence, without however, challenging the nature of professional life.

> **Richard:** we've always been very open about sharing ideas between the different mentors and the practices, about how we approach it, so how do you approach supporting someone out of hours? [..] for the first couple of months your new grad may actually not take the phones and […] I'll take the phones and I'll just phone them as and when I've got a call and I'll meet you there.
>
> It then gets to, okay, […] now you're a bit more confident you take the phones triage it and chat about, I'll still come along and then it develops into - you take the phones, phone me, we'll chat about it, if you're happy, off you go, if you're not happy […] I'll

> finish my dinner or have a cup of coffee, I'll follow behind, but I'm coming and then, and then if you don't need me, don't worry, […] just phone me and let me know. But if you do […], you know that I'm on my way

With some participants the current structural changes to the profession (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) mean that their relationship with their organisation is strained. However, for these participants, collegiality within the profession and for the profession remains strong despite these tensions. Another interpretation could be that good will of experienced vets, towards their colleagues, is being exploited within unreasonable working environments.

> **Erin:** I might be having a rocky road with Org X at the moment, that doesn't mean that I don't care about […] Am I going to punish the new grads, by saying, because […] we have a disagreement with Org X, am I going to punish the new grad because I don't want to do anything extra for Org X? No, I'm not, because I've been in that situation myself […] we need to try and keep these people in the profession.

This defining feature of the profession for the participants, collegiality, extends not only to existing and new colleagues but also to those seeking to join the profession, playing a significant role in making mentoring happen in a number of different contexts. The expectation that colleagues will help each other has become enshrined in the education processes of the profession. Vet mentors support school children wishing to "see practice" for work experience, they support university students through Extra Mural Study (EMS) schemes and support newly qualified vets within graduate development programmes.

> **Anna:** In terms of the structure of the profession, […] the profession has historically relied on us all helping each other… There's a code of respect which means that you don't slag off other vets behind… you know in front of members of the public… And generally the only way we learn once you come out of universities is from learning from our peers and our elders…

It might be expected that support so central to the successful education of vets would be a more integrated and rewarded part of the development process, right across the profession. This collegiality both to those already within the profession and those seeking to join pervades the entire formal educational journey.

> **James:** I think it's really important, [..], an awful lot of clinical training of vets, students is provided by the veterinary profession, the whole issue of EMS. […], but it is a fundamental part of how we train vets in the clinical and cultural and

> organisational issues about the profession, about what it means to be a vet and not just what it means to be able to diagnose a condition.

Collegiality also underpins the informal education journey as well, with participants pointing to dealing with mistakes with the use of non-judgement meetings, where colleagues can discuss how to improve. The participants acknowledge that there are some exceptions to the collegiality ethos. That the UK veterinary profession is not a uniformly collegiate, is evident from the numbers leaving clinical practice (Nelson-Pratt, 2018), but when the vet mentors raise exceptions, they do so with humour.

> **James:** Yeah, and actually once you're MRCVS, and we're all MRCVses, you know we are colleagues and [..] should be treated as such and that's a very difficult concept for orthopaedic surgeons to understand, but um, he says, putting together a very….stereotype there (laughs).

Where exceptions to collegiality are introduced in the accounts, it is often in the context of the role of the mentor not being for everyone. The vet mentors excuse the need for everyone to be involved in mentoring. This could be interpreted as them demonstrating collegiality themselves and compassion for those in their profession, as they voice concerns that a busy practitioner may not have the time or capacity to mentor effectively. Participants may also implicitly recognise that mentoring may not be suitable where vets are suffering from mental health issues or lack resources or support to mentor others.

> **Andy**: So, I don't think we should be going to every vet and saying hey Johnny not much mentoring happened last month because maybe they're not in the place to be able to do so
>
> **Erin:** It's not good if you don't have the mentors who wants to do it, because if you enforce it on people and they're not naturally good teachers, um, , or they're very, very busy in a very, very busy clinic, or in a 24-hour centre, you're not going to end up with good vets at the end of it.

These two extracts demonstrate that the vet mentors have concern that the quality of mentoring should be high and that to deliver good quality mentoring, mentors must want to do it and have the time and spare mental capacity to do it well. They do not wish to shoulder unwilling or over-burdened colleagues with this responsibility, or to see those who feel they are not suited to mentoring engaging in it.

The participants note a series of sub-cultures within the profession aligned to particular veterinary specialisms. Sub-cultures have shared norms and shared specialist personalities. An important element of a vet's identity and of being, and becoming a vet, is their fit with and allegiance to their specialist tribe and the particular environmental complexity associated with these subcultures (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019). Helen and Andy offer particular characteristics of the equine and surgical tribes.

> **Helen:** I think equine has always been its own little microcosm and culture […] everything that is traditional about the veterinary profession has been concentrated in equine medicine […] the culture is so deeply embedded.
>
> **Andy:** if you're going to have a stereotype for an orthopaedic surgeon it's an arrogant grey-haired man showing off with a sports car being the sort of dominant figure, if you are going to have a caricature for a veterinary anaesthetists or a medic or a dermatologist it's very much different.

Part of what mentors are developing in their mentoring is this sense of position, belonging and connectedness within a specialist grouping and environmental context, even if the norms within that grouping seem out-dated, unreasonable or even comical.

Collegiality emerged as a defining feature of the profession for the mentors and the convenors. It characterises how professionals interact, usually within specialist groupings and is an underpinning assumption of the education frameworks of the profession, from secondary education, through higher education and onto early career professional development. This sense of to be a vet is to be collegiate has strong connections with obligations to mentor and for helping individuals to use workplace learning to inform their professional identity development (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019).

4.1.4 How the participants experience the challenges of the profession

Despite the rewards, being a practising veterinary professional is also profoundly difficult, evidenced by poor levels of mental health (BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). A general sense was expressed by the participants that one has to give more of oneself in this profession than in other job roles, with the role being more of a vocation than a job. This is the practical implication of the

profession's unique culture combining perfectionism with self-sacrifice and expectation of omni-competence (Allister, 2014). This section will explore two key sub-themes used by the participants to describe the unique challenges of their context, which they separate into the emotional demands of the profession and how these are experienced and explained and the physical demands of the profession.

The day to day experience of veterinary surgeons is clearly one of intense emotional highs and lows, which the vets in this study struggle to manage and remain professional.

> **Anna:** And it has an emotional toll as well because there are huge highs and that obviously comes with huge lows as well and […], you've got to try and cut yourself off from the emotions to carry on with the job. [..] You can definitely get an awful lot of satisfaction if you solve that puzzle correctly […]… The lows are a bit more complicated because if you fail, obviously if you fail to problem solve […] correctly and you just beat yourself up a little bit but also with medicine things always can go wrong so it's always with procedures they can give you a low even if it's an expected complication [….] sometimes it is, it just comes from the fact that you are dealing with people, people get angry or sad (seems a little choked)

Emotional tensions arise from being required to communicate with clients in sad and stressful situations, maintaining professional distance and clarity. Clients can, understandably, be very emotional, unpredictable and sometimes rude (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022). The participants explained that vets spend their days switching between highly charged emotional situations and behaving in ways which their clients expect, they attempt to shield themselves from the emotional roller-coaster which is part of everyday life.

> **Helena:** . that, almost immediate expectation to change from one mood to the other. For instance, you have a very emotional PTS (put to sleep) and then you have a vaccination of a completely healthy pet and switch from complete utter grief into "Oh hello how are you today?" (Happy voice) it almost seems bipolar…

A central facet of veterinary professional life appears to be emotional labour (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2021), evidenced by how personal relationships with clients can feel and how emotionally tiring this experience is for the vets. The mentors are conscious that there is a professional expectation attached to expressing emotions and that means managing their natural emotions.

> **Janika:** with many clients you build relationships and it's becoming …personal, I could say, we are not just someone who offers them a service, […] many of my clients, I know a lot about their life, I know a lot about their problems, so it's not only me being there for their animals, sometimes I just feel almost like a counselling. […]

The vet mentors witness newly qualified vets experiencing a range of emotions leading to acute anxiety. They explain this as new vets not feeling confident themselves (Duijn *et al.*, 2020), clients not having confidence in them when they are young alongside the impact of learning, on the job, that a university education was only the starting point in their journey of becoming a vet. The pervasiveness of the view that vets are not ready when they leave university ready feels endemic, but the source of the issue is less clear from the vet accounts. Richard's account suggests that a period of supported acclimatisation to the realities of professional life is to be expected and that it is not the result of some failure of the education system. Janika's perspective can be interpreted differently. Underlying her view appears to be a sense that the new graduates are over-confident and then surprised that their education journey is far from complete when they enter employment. This suggests that there is a disconnect between universities and practice which is not being addressed by the profession. It has become the challenge for the mentors to manage the confidence of newly qualified vets, which is easily undermined by colleagues, clients and the challenges of professional life.

> **Janika:** when you are young vet and clients see your young face, they assume you don't know anything and very often you would hear, Oh can I see someone else? […], you think you know everything when you are finishing the University but actually you don't. And it's really like a bucket of cold water

In farm work, the emotional pressures can be of a different type, related to the connectedness of the professions. For example, a vet can feel directly linked to the economic wellbeing of an entire family or business. The tensions between civic duty and personal relationships can generate particular types of emotional strain.

> **Richard:** we're doing a TB test and we find a reactor […] I'm suddenly finding reactor on a farm that potentially I've known or worked with for the last 10-15 years. […] the emotional impact that has on the family, […] the economic impact it has [..] can take its toll.[…] In farm animal we're saved some of the emotional stuff, […] we're less involved on the sort of the PTS and that sort of put to sleep and stuff […] but we're

> much more tied into the [..] overall family dynamics, the economics of life and things like that

A further dimension to the emotional challenge is concern for the mental health of colleagues, with an acceptance that for some time the profession has been experiencing a serious mental health crisis (BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). There is a belief amongst the participants that the profession is frailer than it used to be. This raises particular fears with veterinary educators and mentors where fear and loneliness are experienced and compassion fatigue can set in.

Helen, a vet mentor trainer, discusses fear for students and fear felt by mentors about taking responsibility for support in such a difficult crisis.

> **Helen:** this real fear about being responsible for other people's mental health issues and so wanting to push that away and not tackle it at all is preferable because then it's not your responsibility […] the day-to-day job is quite high-stakes. If those people are then going to be working with new graduates or students or staff, the tendency is to…is to feel responsible, more so than perhaps you need to

In the busy practice environments of the participants, it is often difficult to find the time to discuss the emotional wear and tear of the job and support colleagues adequately and there is a sense that to do so might open a subject that is too large to handle. Helena wonders whether she is alone in feeling the way she does and describes loneliness within the profession and a fear of entering the world of those around her in case this would be like opening a "Pandora's box". Steve identifies compassion fatigue setting in as mental health issues are now foregrounded in the profession and colleagues more adept at communicating their mental health needs and do so between each of his consultations.

> **Steve:** it's increasingly tough to have the emotional wherewithal […] to have 19 different emotional relationships with 19 members of staff.

On the one hand the participants share very detailed accounts of supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of their colleagues. However, underlying this position is a profession which could be viewed, perhaps as the result of its own impotence, as devolving responsibility for managing this crisis to those who are already leading very stressful professional lives.

A change contributing to anxiety across professional life (Knights and Clarke, 2018), the prevalence of social media and the trend towards clients complaining more readily, leaves vets feeling exposed, in the spotlight and alone, particularly inexperienced vets. Erin has familiarity with this, having experienced a traumatic and unjustified complaint to the RCVS early in her career and having supported a mentee through an unfair and racist Google review. Most vet mentors raised this as an issue of concern for the profession

Erin's accounts suggest a strong connection between a vet's confidence and their identity, which could be interpreted as expertise over certain skills and procedures and perhaps a perfectionist mindset remaining core to professional identity. The accounts highlight the impact of the aforementioned misconceptions of the profession by outsiders and how this manifests in a social media dominated workspace. Erin also touches on the significance of mentors as supports for colleagues through such encounters which threaten their professional identity and confidence.

> **Erin:** it was extremely traumatic for me, I still have all the letters now, she wrote the most awful characterisation of me and I was a new vet with no experience, it's yeah, it's a big thing to have to deal with alone if you don't have anyone who's like your buddy or your mentor who you can turn to and ask for advice

The previously explored connectedness of the profession at times provides a valuable web of support for vet professionals as they acclimatise to the context of veterinary practice. It also appears to intensify some of the emotional challenges of the profession. Connectedness to clients, their families, their issues and their pets' significance or their farm herd significance cause genuine human emotional responses from vets, which they work hard to control and manage in their professional role. Vets appear to be engaging in emotional labour, managing their emotional responses in line with expectations in their professional capacity (Morris and Feldman, 1996) alongside the very technical aspects of their roles. Connectedness to colleagues, compassion for their experience and their mental well-being have been foregrounded by the participants and seem to be integral to their

professional identity engendering within them a sense of obligation to support colleagues which seems to have nfluenced participants to mentor.

As well as being emotionally demanding, the profession is characterised as physically demanding with often long and unsociable hours, which impact on one's personal life, requiring personal self-sacrifice.

> **Anna:** It's definitely a profession rather than a job, in that you have to be prepared to give more of yourself than you would normally expect to give of yourself in a job in that you will be required to work long hours, required to be flexible with how they're structured, [..] so you have either evenings or whole weeks of your life when you might not be able to do anything that you want for a week.

Most of the participants recognise that this has changed for the better in that many young vets will not be required to undertake on-call work and the working week is now typically shorter but they give a sense that the profession remains demanding and that there is more that can be done to improve the working experience of vets.

> **Alex:** it needs to be managed… I think the actual influx of more female orientated profession has probably helped in that sense, [..] a lot of practices are finally sort of coming round to the fact that you need to actually try and modify your rotas and things to […]… improve that work-life balance […] there's still a long way to go with improving it […] it will be challenging because [..] we need to be there 24-hour's a day or somebody needs to be, so it's always gonna be challenging to get that work-life balance right.

In the UK, vets have responsibility to be available for 24-hour support for animals under their care and this impacts the nature of the profession and how physically demanding it can be.

It can be interpreted from their accounts that the participants feel the challenges faced by the profession are having observable impacts on recruitment into the profession and retention of qualified vets. They see mentoring programmes as an attempt to address the underlying causes and consequences of those staffing difficulties.

> **Alex:** they started this residency programme identifying the need for, [..], the need to be supportive of vets and then the knock-on effect from a business point of view of ..hopefully then causing better retention of veterinary surgeons, because there is a very high percentage of people that give up veterinary […] it's a very significant issue, the loss of veterinary surgeons and a lot of it is down to lack of support.

The participants convey that vets are leaving the profession for a number of reasons connected with its emotional and physical challenges. In particular, participants identify young vets are leaving early in their careers because of a lack of support, difficult and demanding working circumstances and the profession not living up to expectations. Others are leaving due to the inflexible nature of the role and incompatibility with work-life balance. These issues appear to be important in the participants' connections with mentoring. They express concern that the profession is suffering due to these challenges. Their emphasis seems to be about supporting colleagues to cope within these very demanding workplace environments. Although some acknowledge that there has been change in working practices, they feel that helping colleagues to stay and thrive is their role and emphasise less their potential role in changing the unhealthy environment.

4.1.5 A profession at a moment of profound change

Overwhelmingly, the participants of the study, both vet mentors and convenors, agreed that the veterinary profession is at a moment of intense and profound change and it felt important for each of the participants to unpack these changes and their impact on professional identity, both for those whose veterinary careers are underway, those nearing the end and for those joining the profession. The changes appear to colour the professional context which the mentor schemes respond to, within which mentors practice and into which they socialise their mentees. Some note that the changes are bringing about some positives in that there is now greater variety of opportunity in veterinary careers with more opportunity for specialisation. Corporatisation, the buying up of smaller practices to join larger groups, means that the punishing work schedules experienced by older vets when they began their careers are becoming less common for younger vets, as out of hours provision can be shared across wider groups.

Anna gives an overarching account of the key structural changes which are having an impact on the identity of the profession. Each of the participants gave their own account of these changes as they described the profession, each with their own emphasis on the

significance of these changes and on whether they were broadly positive or detrimental. These changes appear to be an important constituent of current professional identity, and they have deep impacts on the participants' mentoring as they colour professional life and career expectations so profoundly. Underlying their emphasising of these changes seems to be a sense of disorientation, that the mentors are all still finding their way in this evolving environment.

> **Anna:** That is tied into the, essentially the collapse of private practice […] practices are now so expensive to buy that it's now very, very difficult for anyone to set up practice on their own or even as a private entity and most veterinary practices are being sold to corporates, so the market is consolidating so the vast majority of vets now will expect to be employed and employed for the rest of their life so then it becomes a question…so you know 20-30 years ago if you put in your 10-20 years of really hard work, you then got rewarded by the ability to buy… Take the practice on, own it and run it and you got your reward and then your life became easier because you employed other people […] Whereas now, if your expectation is to be an employee for the rest of your life, there is no reason why you would work yourself as hard when the wealth is all got transferred upwards and the power is all transferred upwards and you're not going to see any of it back again.

Given the apparent influence of the changing structure of the profession, it is worth noting each of the structural connections that the participants have with the profession. Of the convenors, David has a share in ownership of a large group, both Richard and Martin are employees of large groups. Helen works in a university setting and freelance as a trainer. Of the vet mentors, 5 are current partners Andy, Anna, Erin, Steve and Alex. Helena has owned and sold a share in a practice. Janika, Tisha and Richard are employed vets, Richard having previously worked in university teaching and research settings and James has worked predominantly in the military or in non-clinical practice roles also holding roles with professional bodies and charities. Of note, within this group of mentors and scheme convenors there is a significant group that has experienced a career path of practice ownership, which is now all but unavailable for current graduates, which creates a challenge for them as mentors as they guide their mentees through career choices.. One of the positives cited of the changing profession is an increased opportunity for specialisation, however, James discusses lack of te formal career structure that is evident in human medicine, despite the increased specialisation, so a lack of clarity exists concerning career

routes, which is confusing for new graduates and requires mentors to guide them through choices which are, as yet, unclear for the profession as a whole.

The profession is becoming less protected with the introduction of para-professionals working within territory previously covered by vets.

> **James:** in the farm animal world it has been going on a long time because we never stopped it so things like scanning, transdermal scanning of sheep for pregnancy. Because diagnosis is an act of veterinary surgery, legally, diagnosis of a disease is an act of veterinary surgery and yet more and more people seem to feel that they, they can, you know, get their oar into it.

Such erosion could act as a challenge to veterinary jurisdiction and associated identity.

Looking more closely at the areas where this period of change impacts mentoring in the profession; first, the lived experience of young vets is very different from those likely to be mentoring them. More senior vets had very different expectations as young vets in terms of work-life balance and the demands of the role and sometimes find it hard to empathise with younger vets, whose experience they perceive as easier. It is also acknowledged amongst the participants that changes to financing arrangements for higher education mean that young vets incur a higher level of debt in the course of pursuing their education and this creates additional stresses and expectations of their employers to support them and provide more acceptable working conditions.

> **Andy:** I think it's hard for us, of my generation, 20 years out, it's hard for us to look at the guys coming through now and empathise […] because what we knew as the biggest stressors of the practice are fading. On-call is now optional, […] a four-day week is common

However, the financial pressures created by changes to the funding of university education are contributing to a different culture amongst graduates, a culture infused with fear about making the wrong choice of first job and a culture that is more articulate about drawing boundaries concerning work-life balance.

> **Andy:** there's almost a paranoia created amongst vet students that having done all of this, five years and 80k in debt if I don't pick the right first job it's all going to go and I'll be destroyed and no one else will want to employ me, if I leave that job if I'm

> unsupported then I'll sink, I suppose that's informed by there being some stinking first jobs out there

Janika is herself an example of a younger vet who was able to act on this differing set of expectations. She changed jobs earlier in her career because a previous employer could not offer a better work-life balance, and she has now returned to this employer because they can, she sees the work-life balance situation as much improved.

> **Steve:** so I think now we're seeing a massive change in terms of work-life balance. There are fewer vets now prepared to do what was done when you owned the clinics in terms of out-of-hours and staying late or full working weeks. So now we are working four days a week we do one in three weekends we do no on-call, we don't do any out of hours, we're not… that sort of thing

Financial concerns for young vets are different, with high levels of student debt and the prevalence of unpaid internships. Together with the structural changes to practice ownership within the UK profession, these concerns have impacts on what constitutes success within a professional environment.

> **James:** I think it's having a big impact because, your success 30 years ago would have been becoming a partner in a practice, that would be how you've measured your professional success, um, you didn't have the same career development postgraduate training that you will be maybe expected to do.

Younger generations of vets are perceived as having different conceptions of what being part of the profession involves. At the early phases of career, some of the mentors perceive them to exhibit less of the connectedness of the profession and public service functions and focus more on opportunities for specialism. This has potential consequences for workforce shortfalls in the more public service-oriented elements of the profession.

> **James:** I think one of the problems we have is people come in […] having to do farm animal practice or equine practice as part of EMS and turning up and saying I'm only doing this because I have to, because I only want to do small animals. […] They also have to realize that the reason why veterinary training is subsidised by the government, is to produce vets who can deal with veterinary public health and the national herd. And, not because they can deal with Fido and um Cuddles.

On the one hand, James is foregrounding his connection with the public service imperative that is critical to his own sense of professional identity. However, underlying this view seems to be a hierarchy of specialisms within the profession, which might lead new graduates

wishing to pursue a career in companion animal care, for example, to feel inferior if they are exposed to this prioritising of some specialisms over others.

The profession is also becoming more culturally diverse; Anna explores the class and gender changes to the profession with there now being “more of a mix pot of people” and several of the participants refer to the internationalisation of the UK profession with many new vets having been trained oversees with varying levels of practical experience featuring in their education. Such vets are also faced with having to adapt to a different style of living and to being away from family. Helping such vets to settle in to the UK way of doing things seems to be the emphasis of the participants, however these vets may bring with them very different attitudes towards for example the hierarchy of specialisms which James has exposed, raising the question of how far the role of a mentor is to enculturate new members of the profession to a culture as it currently is, or whether mentors have a role in shaping and changing professional cultures.

Younger vets have different expectations of the role than those individuals that are likely to be mentoring them. The expectation of practice ownership as a measure of professional success is waning and this has implications for the work conditions that younger vets are prepared to accept from employers. In essence, the participants interpret this as the younger vets not being prepared to work as hard as the older generations of vets as they will never experience the same career and financial rewards, suggesting a breakdown in the intergenerational contract in the profession, which chime with wider societal issues. Alternatively, this can be interpreted as younger generations not being prepared to accept working conditions, which have, for a long time, been deemed unacceptable (Allister, 2014; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016).

The changes to the ownership models in the profession, with the move towards more corporate ownership is accompanied by a greater emphasis on a profit motive. This is

sensed by some participants as a shift from the collegiate, connected basis for professional identity and is creating tension for professional identity.

> **Erin:** It's gone from individual clinics, individually owned, or maybe two or three clinics owned by the same person, to the majority of the clinics being owned by a big corporate company so Medivet, Vets4Pets, CVC, [..] and then now there's been a little bit of a shift into investment, so investment people who don't have any background in the veterinary world are trying to find places where they can invest money and get a return […] I've found that the side-effect of that is that there is a certain expectation of investors that the company they've invested in hits the targets that they've been promised

There is a feeling amongst some vet mentors that the profit motive has become too strong and the new corporate structures are confusing priorities. This feels particularly evident with the participants who felt so strongly that collegiality and connectedness are central to their profession and they sense an incompatibility with new structures. One of the ways that this has become evident for vets is that they see expertise throughout the profession as being undervalued, Janika's example discusses the value of qualified nurses.

> **Janika:** One of the reasons why I left my previous practice was my boss felt that a kennel assistant is as valuable as an RVN (Registered Veterinary Nurse) [..] I hospitalise my patients a lot because I am interested in internal medicine so as you can imagine I have all cases with like diabetes and things like that, pancreatitis, things that need to be hospitalised and stay on meds and so on. […] I felt that my patient's safety was compromised because it didn't have adequate care.

The shift in ownership structures sees many older, more experienced vets leaving the profession as they are bought out by larger corporates and not required to remain working for the new owners for more than a short period. As a consequence of this, the vet mentors and convenors express concern that the profession is undergoing a loss of tacit knowledge and experience.

> **Steve:** I think the challenge that the profession has now is that there seems to have been this huge… juncture where there seems to be this exodus of old, senior, experienced vets of my dad's generation, [..] I think there is no substitute for having done the job for 30 years and there's nothing that you haven't seen, haven't experienced or challenging client that you haven't won over or difficult case that you can't see a mile off [..] I think that's a question that the veterinary profession has to answer in terms of where do we, because of the loss of experience just walking out the door and retiring and that experience needs to be harnessed in some fashion.

Some vet mentors contemplate the positives associated with the changes in the profession, in that there are a greater variety of career opportunities and scope for specialisation without necessarily moving away from first opinion practice (Steve) and the changing structures bring some benefits, in terms of being able to cope with out-of-hours care and thus reduce the demand for unsociable working.

> **James:** If an animal is designated as under your care, then you have a real obligation for it. Which is something actually the corporates have, have a positive on because they're big organisations with a large number of practices they can have a hub and spoke model, they can all easily provide you know the 24/7 care.

It would seem that underlying this change appears to be an opportunity for new generations to reshape some of the outdated and unacceptable norms and working practices of the past (Hotho, 2008). Other vet mentors point to a sense of disillusionment in the profession caused by the challenges and the change.

> **Erin:** I think if I could just be an employed vet and focus on doing the vet bit without having the financial pressures and constraints of being an [owner], I would definitely enjoy my job much more than what I do now

An appreciation of the UK veterinary profession and how the participants define it, exist within it, sense and experience its connectedness and collegiality, feels critical to understanding how their sense of obligation to this profession connects with their mentoring. The participants do not share a completely uniform view of the profession and their perceptions are influenced by their own specialism and experiences. They express different levels of enthusiasm for the very particular circumstances that the profession is currently experiencing. However, there are some clear unifying themes. They describe a small, close-knit, profession, characterised by collegiality, albeit with some quirky specialist niches with their own particular personality and characteristics. They describe a profession that is closely connected with community and with economies. There is agreement over the physical and emotional demands of the profession and acknowledgement of an ensuing mental health crisis. The participants describe a profession that is experiencing a period of intense change. It is diversifying; becoming more feminised and more culturally diverse, with greater

opportunity for clinical specialism. This change brings with it a disconnect between older and younger generations of vets whose experiences of the profession are considerably different. The ownership structures of the profession are radically changing leading to both a crisis in experience loss and in identity. This moment in time seems to open up challenges to existing norms and ways of working within the profession, with the role of the mentor providing a means of either facilitating and contributing to that challenge or perpetuating a professional identity which has proved so unhealthy and potentially unsustainable. The next section will consider the role of professional obligation in the UK veterinary profession and will begin the exploration of how mentoring is connected to professional obligation.

4.2 PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

This section explores the obligations that the vet mentors feel they have as veterinary professionals. Participants were asked about their wider obligations both to understand the content and challenges of what they attempt to capture in their mentoring (explored in Chapter 5) and to understand how they perceive and feel obligation more generally, so that mentoring and how the requirement to mentor is felt, can be explored later in relation to other obligations. When participants call to mind their professional obligations, typically, in the first instance they attempt to recall the requirements of their Code of Conduct, introduced in section 2.3.2, often referred to as an oath. In order to practise, vets are required to solemnly declare acceptance of responsibilities to the public, their clients, the Royal College and above all, to their patients (RCVS, 2021a). The Code of Conduct is a lengthy document, setting out the rights and responsibilities of UK vets, firstly, listing a series of underpinning principles for practice; Professional Competence, Honesty and Integrity, Independence and Impartiality, Client Confidentiality and Trust and lastly, Professional Accountability. It then goes on to detail the rights and responsibilities of vets in a series of professional dimensions; Veterinary surgeons and animals, Veterinary surgeons and clients, Veterinary surgeons and the profession, Veterinary surgeons and the veterinary team, Veterinary surgeons and the RCVS and Veterinary surgeons and the public.

Nowhere within the Code of Conduct is there a specific requirement to mentor less experienced vets, which a number of participants sought to draw attention to. Although item 17.16 of the code declares that:

> "where the senior veterinary surgeon works at an RCVS-Approved Graduate Development Practice/Workplace, the senior veterinary surgeon must:
>
> a. Sign a declaration agreeing that the practice will provide any graduate employed at the practice with regular support as defined by the VetGDP guidance.
>
> b. Engage positively with feedback on the delivery of the programme and any quality assurance activity."

The addition of this item would suggest that engagement in the education of the next generation of the profession is becoming a more codified expectation of professionals. When participants attempt to define their professional obligations, they tend to blend principles with rights and responsibilities, and they do so in a way which draws attention to the need to balance the various elements of the code of practice.

> **Steve:** the three main plates that I spin in my head every day, [..]; obligations to my patients first and foremost making sure that I'm providing the very best care that I can to them. Obligations to clients, because obviously it's impossible to provide that care to the patient without the proxy of the client and also making them feel comfortable and confident with the care we are providing, […] then obviously my obligation to my staff as well in terms of making sure that they are professionally, sort of engaged, that they feel as if they're listened to that they've got the opportunity to grow that there is a career path for them.

There are clear groupings in the obligations that the vet mentors choose to foreground; patient care, obligations to colleagues and obligations to clients. Steve expands on the core requirements of the Code when he elaborates on how he feels about his staff, it would seem he feels the need to go beyond the code to take care of his staff.

4.2.1 Patient Care

Typically, patient care was one of the first obligations mentioned. What is right for the patient, the animal, is not always what the client wants and in the case of public health related medicine, not always what the law requires. There are therefore tensions in balancing the needs of the animal with the expectations of other stakeholders, nuances that mentors feel they must help new members of the profession to handle. Their Code of

Conduct is helpful to vets in foregrounding the needs of the animal, and the participants return to the wording or similar phrasing to the Code of Conduct in demonstrating that their patients come first.

Andy provides an illustration of how the guiding principles and expected modes of behaviour of the profession are intertwined with professional obligation and commercialisation and also demonstrates how the connectedness of the profession adds a layer of complexity to these interactions with families.

> **Andy:** you could in some ways become a more financially successful ..and possibly more size of business and power successful if you lost sight of that (obligation to patient)… clients […] often they have preconceived ideas of what they want and if you give them what [..] they want, they will love you for it, […] those clients with the elbow dog (Olly the Labrador), I could have done an elbow CT and we could have trousered the best part of £1000 and I could have seen them back with the reports next week I could have given them stem cell and PRP and we could have trousered the best part of £2000 and we could have limped and lumbered our way on through the next month or two of angst and torture and I could have said: you know what at the end of it we've tried everything haven't we? […], they may even have been more happy to know that we did absolutely everything […] but it's your professional obligation and consciousness, that and your obligation to your pet, it's a service profession, we've got to give a service but we've got to be professional to that pet and we've got to say – no.. you don't, I've got to know that I can say and that I will say no, you shouldn't have surgery, you don't need surgery.

Underpinning this account is the importance of how complex professional practice is and the dualistic, right-wrong approach to medical education appears inadequate in preparing students for the balancing of these competing priorities, highlighting the importance of an experienced mentor to work through such complexities with less experienced vets. The way in which Andy conveys this account of obligation is that it is something that is difficult and runs counter to the obligation for the practice to be profitable, he has to rely on an inner strength to say no to, in this case, unnecessary surgery. Associated with the obligation to patient care is an obligation to keep professional skills current so that the best possible care can be delivered. Participants make mention of engaging with a range of CPD opportunities offered by their organisations, professional bodies and pharmaceutical organisations.

> **Janika:** […] I have to make sure that whatever I am doing I am, I have enough skills and knowledge to attempt that, I have to do everything with my best knowledge and intentions, but I also have to know my limitations.

First, and foremost, the vet mentors cite their obligations to patients as being their priority. Through their relationships with their mentees they are addressing this obligation by preparing the next generation of vets to deliver the best patient care. Helping mentees to understand and work in ways where obligations weave together with patient care predominating seems central to the mentoring process.

4.2.2 Obligation to colleagues

A felt obligation to colleagues was cited by most of the participants. The Code of Conduct emphasises the obligation of a vet to raise concerns about the health or fitness to practice of a colleague should they become aware of them (RCVS, 2021a) but the participants' emphases were more connected with being a good colleague. A key felt obligation is therefore something not obligated by the Code of Conduct but which seems to stem from felt collegiality, expressed as solidarity, arising from membership of the profession and a sense of connectedness with it.

> **Anna:** solidarity so… Being respectful towards them even if we disagree in our opinions, giving them the space to practise the way they want to and giving them the respect that their qualification earns them to.

The participants share their sense of what being a good colleague is and how this differs from what is codified in their Code of Conduct, which is more concerned with identifying poor practice rather than supporting colleagues towards good practice and creating welcoming working environments. This feels as if it stems from their situated-ness within the collegiality and connectedness of the profession and their empathy concerning the challenges of the profession. The felt obligation to colleagues appears to make a discretionary behaviour feel like a requirement and spills into motivations for mentoring.

> **Erin:** I think people who have more experience definitely have an obligation to look after the new grads because it is freaking scary, to come out

As the vet mentors articulate their professional obligations, they blend concern for quality service provision for their patients and clients with compassion and empathy for their fellow professionals.

4.2.3 Obligation to clients

Obligation to clients is cited as key. For the participants this comprises keeping clients informed and counselling them honestly and appropriately, using language they can understand, so that they can make informed decisions, keeping one's own skills and knowledge current to be able to give appropriate treatment and interacting with clients with compassion and understanding. Participants frequently discuss obligation to clients in ways which are very much interwoven with the professional principles of honesty and integrity, articulated in the Code of Conduct and which influence professional practice and how vets interact with clients. The participants express a number of priorities that they must weave together when communicating with clients. Firstly, it is important to educate clients sufficiently so that they can give informed consent.

> **Alex:** always give the owner of the animal all the options so that they can decide what is the best course of action that they wish to take or are able to take for the benefit of their pet and to advise them accordingly and guide them with what said best course of action would be.

The participants see this as complex to achieve as clients have different levels of knowledge and understanding of the treatments being discussed and the vet has to strike a good balance in terms of how much and what sort of information to share, being at the same time mindful of the emotional aspects of the communication and the needs of the animal versus the needs of the owner. The subtleties of the connectedness described earlier can be very complex. It is through these interactions with clients that vets establish their community connectedness, and they create complex ties.

> **Janika:** as a vet, we are an advocate for their animals and […] we have to […] be good to explain to the owners why are we doing certain things, so we have to be good with explaining stuff without medical terms so that they understand […] we, you know, deal with people that are coming with puppies, the best of times and then

> when they are coming for euthanasia, so you have this big spectrum of emotions that you have to deal with.

The vets describe balancing their emotions and their professionalism, sometimes describing shedding a tear “out back” (Andy) where the client cannot see. Their connections with some of their patients and clients are clearly genuinely felt. The significance of working with emotion is important to these participants and appears in most accounts. James’ military experience of emotion connected to veterinary practice is of a different kind, but also pervasive. He discusses public emotional reactions to military veterinary policy such as end of working life euthanasia of military dogs, relayed through the media, and public pressure on decision-making.

Three core themes predominate when the vet mentors describe their professional obligations; patient care, obligation to colleagues and obligation to clients. These provide insight as to key obligations that shape the content of mentoring, explored in Chapter 5 and introduce that the mentors draw some obligations from their code as key requirements of the job and others are more personally felt, expectations of their role. Their accounts suggest that every interaction in the workplace involves an, often complex, interweaving of these priorities, overlaid with engagement with emotional labour. Chapter 5 explores in more detail how mentoring has implications for each of these areas of obligation. Concern for patient care, for appropriate supportive interactions with colleagues and helping mentees to find their place within their profession plus concern for good client communication and therefore good business practice, appear to contribute to decisions to mentor.

This section has also surfaced how mentors experience and discuss obligation. They describe an *inner strength* to prioritise the interests of the animals above clients and profit; they describe *discretionary behaviour which feels like a requirement* to support colleagues. They describe *acting honestly and with integrity* in the context of working with clients and they describe a *balancing of priorities* within a context that is *mindful and respectful of emotion*. The obligations and behaviours are couched in very honourable terminology which

is likely to underpin the pressures that vets as professionals are placed under, compounding the mental health dilemmas.

4.3 MENTORING AND PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

When asked directly to reflect on mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation, some participants embraced mentoring explained as a profession obligation, some struggled with the notion. Mentoring is not required as part of the Code of Conduct (RCVS, 2021a) and they feel that when an activity is acknowledged as a professional obligation, then it must be so for all members of the profession and for a number of reasons they believe, not everyone is suited to mentoring. On one level therefore the participants consider mentoring to be discretionary behaviour, but which for them feels like a requirement. Reasons for not mentoring are provided by the participants such as aptitude, being in the right place mentally and professionally to do it, not having sufficient time or experience or the right sort of personality. However, some of the obligations they have previously cited, for example obligation to colleagues, also do not appear in the Code of Conduct and yet they are strongly felt. Discretionary behaviour seems, for these participants, to spill over into activities that they feel obliged to do. When the accounts are reviewed for points of linguistic interest (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009), the language used by the participants, both convenors and vet mentors, to describe the driving forces for mentoring, suggests a sense of professional obligation. This obligation is often individually felt and can be interpreted as an obligation to behave in a certain way towards their fellow professionals.

Some participants, particularly convenors and business owners, express an obligation felt at the organisational level to provide mentoring. Mentoring at the organisational level acknowledges that new graduates are not the finished article and that supporting them with mentoring supports business priorities. Despite this acknowledged significance for the profession, mentoring typically is unrewarded

> **Richard:** we have a role in terms of making sure we're developing vets for the future, so we're investing in them, because we need to have that team coming through to maintain the service, […], the new graduate isn't capable of going out and doing

> everything that we need, so I can't just send them, stick them in a car and send them out so, we have to provide that kind of support

Mentoring is also explained as an expression of the connectedness of the profession, in the sense that if you are employing a team of professionals, as an employer there is an obligation to ensure that those people are properly supported and have adequate opportunities for progression and this obligation appears to fall more heavily on the more experienced members of the profession, exemplified here by Alex:

> **Alex:** you have an obligation to them (employed staff), to support them and…um yes to support them and guide them and make sure they have a fulfilling profession as well and also your fellow veterinary surgeons as well, I suppose being…. The more experienced you are is to guide the younger less experienced vets as well is all part of the role as well.

The vet mentors who are also business owners mentored before owning a business out of a concern for the health of the profession and the success of their colleagues. Owning a business for them brings further impetus for mentoring as business benefits also flow from good mentoring, such as improved staff recruitment and retention, and staff better able to meet the business needs of the practice, but there remains the personal empathy for individuals and the generative requirement to support the profession in its development.

> **Alex:** once you own the business it's obviously makes sense for you to do it from a business point of view as well […] I think we are obliged to do it for the survival of our business […] we are obliged to do it on a more human level for the sake of our colleagues and our patients really… so that the profession improves and is fit for purpose.

This sense of being concerned for the professional wellbeing of colleagues and for professional standards more generally extends to employed vet mentors. Janika is at pains to explain that she does not feel mentoring to be an obligation but uses language similar to that used to describe her wider obligations, she is mindful of the ongoing success and responsibility for the profession "I don't want them to fail our patients" and feels she has a role within this process. For her, obligations are defined by your job role and yet she senses her impetus to mentor in the same way.

> **Janika:** It was never an obligation for me, I never felt that way, that it's an obligation, I felt it's more, I think it's coming from the inside, rather, then it's something my job

> requires me to do and it was I think, it's always very personal, [..] maybe it's because I'm very focused on building up the team, I really want everyone to be the best version of themselves and I want them to… not to fail as, as vets, I don't want them to fail our patients, I don't want them to fail as part of the team,

A number of the participants raise the notion of professional legacy or generativity and look to influence the future of the profession, conceiving of a time when they will no longer be part of it. This suggests that they have a concern for the profession in the abstract, not simply with the colleagues, clients and animals that they currently have a relationship with. Andy expresses here a concern for the future of the profession.

> **Andy:** So there will always be patients there will always be clients there will always be colleagues and there will always be businesses. If our professional obligation is not just to the waggy tail that is in front of me in my room here but we view that as wider, the more that we can help our profession progress, the person who sees practice with me, […] they're going to live longer than I am, […], just as you foster and help your children, there are generations that go on ahead after you and if our professional obligation is to our, particularly if we view it is to our colleagues, because without our colleagues there will be no care for those patients and clients who come after us, or after our time

Richard's reaction to the word obligation, related to mentoring, typifies the response of several participants, they struggle with the word because of the implication that it becomes a requirement for everyone and there are clearly colleagues they would consider unsuitable to be mentors. Richard acknowledges that he does feel it as imperative in his professional life. He wants to retain the discretionary nature of mentoring even though he feels personally compelled.

> **Richard:** Am I.. obligated to do it? I think. […] it's weird when you're faced with the word, you go you instantly query it, but I don't see how I could do my job, without it being part of my job, […] I don't see how you would be able to do what we do without the mentoring aspect to it.

Anna claims it is not a real professional obligation and yet feels a very strong moral duty to mentor because she was helped by somebody earlier in her career and she feels she needs to give back. She further elaborates on the fundamental role of mentoring within the ongoing education of new members of the profession, despite there being no formal system in place requiring vets and veterinary organisations to participate in that role, or reward systems and her felt obligation to be part of the process seems to acknowledge an urge to be involved.

> **Anna:** I do feel there is a moral obligation if you have employed someone you are aware that they are that new and so […] Partly that moral obligation of - I was helped when I went through so it's my duty to give back now that I am more qualified and more experienced and can do so.

The participants are in agreement that mentoring is not suited to all vets, citing reasons such as some vets being "grumpy gits" (Erin), not being in the right place professionally, either being too stressed or too busy, or not having the right sort of practice for learning. It feels a sign of their connectedness and collegiality that although they acknowledge that the obligation to mentor exists, it should not be forced on everyone.

> **Helena:** it's not everyone's cup of tea and again I believe it doesn't have to be, it doesn't have to be you have to be comfortable with that and not everyone is

Mentoring feels of fundamental importance for the profession, particularly at this moment of change. As Steve explains, the profession is experiencing "a loss of experience just walking out the door and retiring and that experience needs to be harnessed in some fashion." However, the participants share a feeling that:

> **Steve:** for mentorship to be effective and meaningful, […] it has to be organic, I don't think you can put it in a job spec and say to, [..] vet B you have 10 years of qualifications, so as part of your job title you are going to be a mentor.

The changing nature of the profession outlined in 4.1.9, the inherent challenges for the profession outlined in 4.1.8, emotional and physical challenges, and how newer generations of vets are responding to those challenges in their expectations of employers, are all impacting upon how felt obligations of the profession are experienced. This has potential to impact significantly on the future supply of mentors.

> **Steve:**, now, there just doesn't seem to be that natural sense of, well actually, I need to give of myself above and beyond because that, because the profession needs that and those vets need that and actually if I don't do that, it's gonna affect me, whereas now I think perhaps the wider body of vets think well if I don't do that it's not my problem it's Org X's problem or Org Z's problem

The vet mentors are able to convey a sense that mentoring should be discretionary even though they feel a strong obligation to do it, alongside serious concerns that there will not be a guaranteed supply of vets who feel this way in the future. Their concerns about the continued supply of mentors seems to be tied to a consensus that newer vets appear, to the

participants, less professionally connected due to the structural changes and less inclined, they feel, to work as hard as previous generations. However, this could be interpreted as younger generations challenging unreasonable expectations to engage in discretionary activities and self-sacrifice without recognition or reward.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented a depiction of the UK veterinary profession and its professional obligations, interpreted from the perspectives of the vet mentors and mentor scheme convenors. The chapter has illustrated what the participants perceive to be core characteristics of the profession, which emerged as themes from the analysis; in particular its academic, connected and collegiate nature. The emotional and physical challenges of the profession and the impact of profound change on professional identity have been explored and connections to the mentoring context introduced. Key professional obligations have been explored in terms of how they inform our understanding of the mentoring landscape and how they inform understanding of obligation and how it is experienced. Mentoring and professional obligation has been considered. What is key from the participants' accounts is that when they conceive of profession, they not only include key areas of responsibility and ways of behaving codified in their Code of Conduct, but they also include further features; the shared normative expectations, negotiated by and between members of the profession which determine how members interact with each other and their communities. These areas encompass the strong defining features of connectedness and collegiality. Although participants feel mentoring is and ought to be discretionary behaviour, they feel an obligation to mentor, which they describe using a variety of terms. Although sufficient for most, professional obligation as a term does not quite capture, for all of the mentors, the motivation that compels them to mentor. Chapter 5 will now present the mentoring landscape within the UK veterinary profession, followed by an account of the coverage of mentoring from the perspective of the vet mentors and convenors. The chapter considers closely what has

brought mentors to mentoring and how their approach to conceiving their profession and obligations underpin their impulse to mentor.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS 2 - MENTORING AND THE UK VETERINARY SECTOR

Mentoring has received recognition in the UK veterinary sector as a practice with potential to further the profession and tackle some of the recruitment, retention and mental health challenges being experienced. Mentoring received 24 mentions in the Vet Futures Action Plan (Vet Futures Action Group, 2016) which encourages the use of mentoring in a variety of settings; in higher education institutions and early career settings, for leadership with underrepresented groups; in research communities and the report also championed mentoring online. Various professional bodies have advocated mentoring; the British Equine Veterinary Association (BEVA) introduced its own Leg Up scheme for career mentoring (BEVA, 2019), the British Small Animal Veterinary Association (BSAVA) has introduced its own Mentorship Programme (BSAVA, 2021) and the British Veterinary Association (BVA) has introduced a support scheme for new vets involving mentors (BVA, 2018). The revised RCVS graduate development programme VetGDP asks practices wishing to employ new graduates to become an RCVS Approved Graduate Development Practice, with in situ trained advisors to offer support in the workplace for new graduates in their first year (RCVS, 2021b).

Many of the larger corporate institutions have adopted, and in some cases run for several decades, mentoring programmes to support their newly qualified vets and sometimes new appointees at more senior levels or colleagues wishing to specialise or move into leadership positions. Mentoring is used as a core element of employment offerings for new graduates. Publicly available documentary data, in the form of the company websites for leading UK veterinary groups (Vet Times, 2018), were consulted for this study and results tabulated in Table 17, illustrating how such messaging is used in outwardly facing websites. The details that these sites provide in terms of the expected content and contact associated with mentoring will be explored later in the chapter.

Table 17 Leading veterinary organisations and their use of mentoring in recruitment messaging (Vet Times, 2018)

Vet Corporation	Relative size, employed vet profs	Mentor scheme	Use within recruitment messaging
Independent Vetcare, (IVC Evidensia, 2021)	2,800	Integrated in Graduate Academy, clinical mentor	"Clinical coach and mentor You'll be assigned a dedicated clinical coach who'll always be on hand to help."
CVS (CVS Group plc., 2021)	3,250	Integrated in graduate programme	"It provides mentoring at practice level with a national support network,"
Vets4Pets (Vets4Pets, 2021)	2,450	Integrated in graduate programme, in practice mentor and graduate buddy and a talent ambassador for holistic clinical support	"Our Graduate Team will work with you and support you, in matching you with one of our practices. You will have support from day 1 from your dedicated mentor in practice who will guide you through each step of your professional development, you will train on the job with a phased induction, at a pace that works for you, with regular reviews." "You will be paired with a graduate buddy, a graduate 1 or 2 years ahead of you on the programme, and a talent ambassador, a number of those being JVP's from other practices, offering additional clinical or holistic support."
Medivet (Medivet, 2021)	1,850	Integrated in graduate development programme, mentor and buddy	"one-to-one training, mentoring and support: you'll be off the rota for the first three months, allowing you to focus on learning every aspect of practice with full support" "Our Buddy system Our Buddy system matches you with a dedicated clinician who'll be on hand to help you settle in. Your first point of contact for advice, both clinical and nonclinical, their job is to help you integrate into the profession and Medivet, making sure you're confident and happy. You'll have regular Buddy meetings for a whole year to make sure everything is going smoothly for you."
VetPartners (VetPartners, 2021)	1,250	Integrated in new graduate programme, features particularly in farm, equine and mixed	"Small group mentor sessions and one to one mentor contact both in-practice and associated with your programme are included for further support."
Linnaeus (Linnaeus, 2021)	325	Integrated in graduate development programme, in-practice mentor	"Mentoring and support Mentoring is at the root of our programme and underpins your overall experience with us. From your first day with us you will be assigned a mentor who will be there to guide you through every step of your professional development." "You will have an in-practice mentor to ensure you are getting the support you need."

All of the top six organisations employ mentoring as part of their integrated graduate development programmes and include this information within their recruitment messaging giving differing levels of detail about the type and frequency of support that can be expected from their schemes. By implication, the inclusion of this information in their recruitment messaging indicates that leading organisations believe support from a mentor to be an expectation of new graduates of a first employer. These take the form of a “dedicated clinical coach” IVC, in-practice mentors CVS, Vets4Pets, VetPartners and Linneus with an additional “graduate buddy” at Vets4Pets.

5.1 MENTORING CONTENT

As a reminder, the aim of this study is to investigate mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the experiences of UK veterinary mentors with a view to contributing to a conceptual understanding of mentoring by exploring this concept and context. Rather than attempt to generate an audit of mentoring in the UK veterinary profession, this chapter returns to the vet mentors interviewed and the convenors of schemes in order to more deeply explore their experiences of mentoring, to better understand mentoring and professional obligation. In Chapter 3, Table 6 outlines, very briefly, the type of mentoring that the participants have been involved with. Some, such as Andy and Janika, have been involved in informal mentoring of colleagues, largely related to assisting them with clinical procedures, enquiries or professional development and specialism. Several of the mentors (Anna, Helena, Erin, Janika, Richard and Alex) are involved with formal mentoring schemes, either in smaller group or corporate settings, engaging in the mentoring of new graduates and in some cases of more experienced vets joining a new organisation and mentoring for leadership (Steve). In relation to convenors, David’s scheme already includes provision for mentoring more experienced vets entering his organisation. Richard and Martin see this sort of career mentoring as one of the next steps in their schemes. Table 6 from Chapter 3 has been revised here (Table 18) to add contextual

detail of their experiences of having previously been mentored and specifics of how mentoring plays a role in their current professional life.

Table 18 Expanded Table 6, experience as a mentee, current mentoring detail

Vet	Experiences as a mentee	Mentoring Experience	Current mentoring
Andy	Positive experience as a mentee when a schoolboy and student from practice owners, then later business mentoring from partner in a group.	Being mentored, new grads, colleagues, informal	Ad hoc and in situ; scrubbing in with less experienced colleagues, support with complex cases
Anna	Poor experience of mentoring from a senior colleague, dissonance with personal code. Positive experience of mentoring from senior partner in large group.	New grads, previously informal, now part of formal scheme	Regular mentoring within a formal scheme. One at a time, not in situ as single vet practice, meets mentor physically according to scheme schedule. Telephone support.
Helena	Not mentioned	New grads formal scheme	Regular mentoring within a formal scheme. One at a time
Erin	Poor experience of lack of support in early career.	New grads as part of formal scheme	Regular mentoring within a formal scheme. One at a time, in situ as well as supporting at a distance as mentee gains experience across a group, meets mentor physically according to scheme schedule. Telephone support.
Janika	Complicated politics of finding a mentor in European universities, having to fight for a mentor	New grads as part of a formal scheme	In situ mentor with new graduates, 12 week block in companion animal practice as part of graduate development programme. Acts as buddy after this period, when mentee moves on to hospital environment.
Steve	Positive experiences, mentored by father.	For leadership, informal	Ad hoc, one colleague, for leadership. Ad hoc, clinical, support across group. Corporate setting
James	Not mentioned	New grads for vet work and military leadership	Not currently mentoring.

Tisha	Not mentioned	University setting, charity surgery events, new grads formal scheme, junior colleagues, ad hoc	Special surgery events, e.g charity neutering overseas trips. Groups of early career vets. Informal support for range of colleagues.
Richard	Not mentioned	University setting, new grads, formal scheme	New grads formal scheme in farm setting
Alex	Positive mention of vets who supported him in early career	Informal and part of formal scheme	In situ as part of formal residency scheme, one at a time, at a distance as mentee gains experience across a group.

Convenors and vet mentors were asked what they are trying to achieve through their mentoring, which provoked discussion of the range of mentoring content covered and provided deeper insight into the obligations they were attempting to fulfil through mentoring. Table 19 provides a detailed account of the scope of mentoring engaged with. The table is organised to display the output of the analysis in one place. The names of participants raising each area of mentoring and the number of items coded to each mentoring type are provided to give a sense of the emphasis of mentoring within this group of mentoring schemes and vet mentors. An illustrative quotation for each of the mentoring areas gives a sense of what this sort of mentoring looks like in the veterinary context. Some mentoring, such as practising procedures and learning how to communicate with clients, focuses very much on the craft of veterinary practice. Other elements of mentoring are more concerned with the very essence of the veterinary profession; becoming enculturated with its shared norms and understandings, thus enabling mentees to work effectively within teams. These two areas of craft and essence of the profession are explored and evaluated in more detail following the table in 5.1.1. Some aspects of mentoring seem to be directly responding to some of the core challenges of the profession; such as mentoring for leadership which can help vets transition into the new structures of the sector, and mentoring as mental health support.

Table 19 Mentoring content in the UK veterinary profession

Mentoring type/content	No items	Convenor expectation	Vet mentor engagement	Illustrative quotation
The craft of the veterinary profession				
Work functions – Business	10	Martin, Richard	Andy (mostly in receipt of), Alex, Anna, Steve, Richard	**Alex:** younger vets struggle with [..] being confident enough to charge what is fair for what you're actually doing because you are at the face-to-face with people […] and you learn very quickly that you need to have that conversation and have them again fully informed about it before actually doing any procedures. […] some mentees [..] avoid that conversation […] you do get a lot of that from younger less experienced vets not having the courage, or finding the easier option perhaps not to talk about it, or thinking it's the easier option, not talk about it initially, not realising that it's gonna be a much harder option leaving it and then talking about it at the end
Work functions – Client Communications	18	Martin	Alex, Helena, Erin, Janika, Steve, James, Richard	**Steve:** it's a vicious cycle, I find that when vets aren't confident, then they appear sheepish in front of clients, clients pick up on that and then the clients don't have any faith in the vets and so then the vets feel more insecure and then the communication begins to get a bit defensive and clients begin to get a bit sort of ar.. […] I find no one ever seems to complain about me and I think that's because I stand there and I'm confident and I give the client something to believe in
Work functions – clinical mentoring Including the opportunity to practice procedures	35 19	David, Martin	Andy, Alex, Anna, Helena, Erin, Janika, James, Tisha, Richard	**Erin:** my vet school was basically go to a lecture learn the theory, go and do the exam, spew out the theory and that was it. We hardly had any practical experience at all, I'd never done consults when I started working I'd never done a cat castrate I'd never placed a catheter, I'd never taken bloods,

Work functions – practising ethically	6	Richard	Anna, James, Richard	**Anna:** A really common one that comes up as an example is pain relief… We are required, in the code of conduct […] we have a duty to the welfare of animals to provide first-aid, to provide pain relief and to provide euthanasia free of charge because those are the things that will prevent suffering of animals. But obviously as a business, the business don't want us to tell people that because they are procedures that they normally charge money for, so it's my job to tell them (the mentee) that it is the right thing to do is to give that pain relief injection and if your boss questions why you didn't get them to pay for it …. that doesn't matter, they've got to stick to, that code and their principles and their morals and that's the line they have to walk.[…] how to make that decision, do you go and give them a month's worth of meta-cam for free? No, but do you give them one shot that gives them either 12 or 24 hours in order to get that animal to a charity where they.. care can then be continued? - Yes that's appropriate.
The craft of the profession				**Andy**: …supervising (a female surgeon), mentoring, advising, one of the nurses knocked on the door and had a question about another patient, so she's doing this first time […], she had to think about a dose rates or something to answer the question and nurses are quite used to opening the door and asking such and such. So I had a quiet word with her afterwards […] and said think back …at that time, when you are doing something for the first time, it's a lot harder and it would have been fine for you to say or have an understanding in that situation that when you're operating, the door stays closed, […] to mentally put your wheelbarrow down turn and refocus on something else and then come back and try and pick your wheelbarrow up in precisely the same place is really difficult, so just have a nice pleasant phrase of saying, I'm sorry I'm fully focused here, I'll have to come back to that later.
The essence of the veterinary profession				
Work principles and behaviours – enculturation	16	David, Martin, Richard	James, Tish, Richard	**James:**, I also think you're trying to mould them into the culture and methods of the organization, , […] I think organizational culture is an important part of mentoring.[…] also the impact of any directions or things that they make is important, [..], is what they're expecting the handler to do reasonable? Does it fit within the [..] rhythm of the kennels? You know, like giving a dog's medicines at 10 o'clock at night, you know wouldn't be that appropriate, because the dogs are all asleep,

Work principles and behaviours – pastoral support, including support for personal growth	6 16	Helen, David, Martin, Richard	Anna, Steve, Richard	**Richard:** it does drift into the personal, so like how well are they coping with the challenges of being on call, […], how are they dealing with being called out in the middle of the night, how are they dealing with the tiredness, how are they dealing with sort of looking after themselves during that kind of thing?
Teamwork	6		Alex, Helena, Janika, James, Richard	**Alex:** a qualified veterinary nurse is extremely useful for a newly qualified vet which I tend to try and tell them, which most of them take on board. Some unfortunately feel they're a bit too superior to take advice from that but it's rarish, […] experienced nurses see most things and have seen other inexperienced vets struggle and can be very helpful in giving them tips and things on how to get through things.
The essence of the profession	18	Helen, Richard	Anna, Helena, Erin, Jamika, Steve, James, Tisha, Richard	**Janika:** it's hard to know how to talk to clients at the beginning and it takes years, years to kind of master it but I also want her to speak in a way that clients will trust her, that they will be able to feel that she is reliable and sometimes just changing the language she is using might […] change the whole perception, so instead of […] just saying "your dog has a cancer and this is what we can do" she can always say, […] We've got Bobby's blood results and unfortunately this is it and, I know it's a horrible thing to hear but, you know there are some things we can do for him at this point, I would like to discuss with you what we could do for Bobby to make sure that he will still enjoy his life. […], it's just a building relationship with a client.
Mentoring connected to current and shifting status of the profession				
Building leadership and confidence	15	Helen	Alex, Helena, Erin, James, Tisha	**James**: I do think there needs to be, [..] a behaviours element to mentoring in that people learn about how to make decisions and how to discuss them with other people, without feeling that they're doing defensive veterinary medicine the whole time. And referring everything the whole time.

Mental health support	18	Martin, Helen, Richard	Andy, Alex, Anna, Helena, Erin, Janika, Steve, James, Richard	**Helena:** I also want them to find a friend in me or someone they can talk to, simply because I've got this sort of mental health and emotional well-being very much at heart, so I want to provide them with the best start possible.
Increased diversity	9	Richard	Helena, Erin, Richard	**Helena**: Because you have to consider that most people have come from a different country so they are already having to adapt to a different style of living to be away from family, […], I know how that feels, so I try and sort of share my, my experience with them

5.1.1 Mentoring to learn the craft of the profession and the essence of being a vet

Underlying the mentor and convenor accounts of their mentoring, captured in Table 19, “The craft of the veterinary profession”, appears to be an understanding that, with inexperienced vets, some aspects of a vet’s clinical role require practice and some of the non-clinical aspects of the role require further development in the workplace. With the internationalisation of the profession, prior educational experience is also less homogenous, meaning that uncertainty about graduate competence is further complicated. Erin is an example, see her account of her vet school experience in Table 19, “Work functions- clinical mentoring.

The vet mentors’ implicit understanding of the need for this further development is evidenced by the significant proportion of mentoring which relates to the craft of the profession, the bringing together of the technical and personal skills required to be a competent vet. Mentors claim to not only help mentees develop their confidence in clinical diagnoses and procedures in first opinion practice, for example Tisha’s “tips and tricks”, they also claim to support the development of more nuanced skills such as creating the right environment in which to do one’s best work, illustrated by Andy’s points on focus during surgery. Andy attempts to give a colleague, learning a new procedure, permission to exert control over her environment (Table 19, the craft of the profession). As convenors both David and Martin raised in their interviews the significance of clinical mentoring within their schemes, and Richard as both convenor and mentor also describes the developing of clinical confidence with his mentees.

The mentors help their mentees bring together practising profitably, see Alex’s account of supporting young vets to feel confident in charging a fair price for their work (Table 19, Work functions – Business) and ethically. Sometimes in the face of more senior business colleagues pushing business priorities, younger vets can feel impotent, see Anna’s account of encouraging mentees to remember their Code of Conduct in the face of such pressure (Table 19, Work functions – practising ethically). Martin and Richard as convenors raise the significance of developing business awareness with new vets. Mentors also claim to support

their mentees to practice their craft with confidence in the face of typical public reactions to younger vets. See Steve's account concerning the significance of the appearance of confidence in front of clients (Table 19, Work functions – Client communications). Martin, as a convenor raises the importance of mentoring for developing client communication skills.

The mentors help the mentees to balance the body of knowledge related to the profession, with the codified elements of professional responsibility and underlying principles, with more nuanced decision-making, as mentees put learning into practice with live clients. This sort of mentoring seems to be part of an educational journey of developing skilled craftsmen of the profession who are able to diagnose and undertake procedures with confidence, maintain good communication with clients and colleagues whilst also practise profitably. The participant accounts suggest that mentors and convenors see this type of work as expected of the role of mentor. Underlying this would seem to be an acceptance that veterinary courses either cannot or simply do not develop these skills within graduates to a point where graduates can practise confidently. The accounts accept that graduates require a period of time at the start of their employment where they are closely supervised and supported by a mentor and yet all of the mentors within this study mentor voluntarily. What seems to underpin several accounts is a prioritising of expertise over managerialism, that by bringing together these different facets of professional performance. They do this on several levels; by supporting their mentees to deliver their skills honestly and ethically, with competence and confidence and a respect for the value of their expertise and their Code of Conduct, often in the face of business pressures which the participants acknowledge are becoming more apparent.

A second focus for mentoring seems to be mentoring which addresses the essence of the veterinary profession (Table 19), how to function in the challenging environment of the profession, how to survive emotionally and aligned with personal values, what might be thought of as psychosocial support. This is mentoring, which comes from a place of knowing what it is like to be a vet professional and is underpinned by an understanding of the

challenges. For example, mentors acknowledge that clients have become more questioning, perhaps unreasonably so, and new graduates must work at gaining their respect and trust. Janika's account (Table 19, essence of the profession) explains how she supports her mentee with developing these nuanced skills that are responsive to changing clients.

With this type of mentoring, mentors help new professionals to become enculturated to their profession, their organisation and their specialism. David, Martin and Richard as convenors agree that mentoring provides an important enculturation function. The mentors support mentees as they develop skills which are intended to enable them to exist healthily within these contexts. For example, James discusses mentoring a military equine vet, he suggested she did not specialise in horse surgery as there are so few procedures undertaken within the military context and he also helps vets to practise in ways which fit with the rhythms of this specialist workplace for example not prescribing medicine to be administered at a time when military dogs would be sleeping (Table 19, The essence of the veterinary profession, Work principles and behaviours, Enculturation.)

Alex advises young vets to work closely with experienced vet nurses sharing with them where they are likely to find support, despite some feeling too superior to take such advice (Table 19,The essence of the veterinary profession, Teamwork)

A subset of this type of mentoring is that which addresses specifically some of the key challenges faced by the profession. A key focus of the mentors and convenors is mentoring to support the mental wellbeing of, particularly, newly qualified vets and which addresses some of their perceived deficits from the education system; new vets' confidence and decision-making skills for example. James discusses this type of mentoring when he describes mentoring for behaviour; helping vets to make decisions collaboratively and not defensively (Table 19, Mentoring connected to current and shifting status of the profession - Building leadership and confidence.) Richard's account, discussed in 4.1.3 of building

mentee confidence over time and checking in regarding experiences of on call work, indicate a concern to use mentoring for mental wellbeing support.

Mentoring also helps to support an increasingly diverse profession, supporting vets from overseas who may have experienced a very different university and early career experience to that of UK graduates.

The individual mentors, from the contents of their transcripts, sit on a spectrum of mentoring typology, with some concerning themselves with predominantly, but not exclusively, mentoring for proficiency in the craft of the profession (Tisha), engaging in role-modelling of clinical procedures and client communication. Others engaged less with clinical mentoring and more concerned with some of the psychosocial and career development issues at the heart of the profession (James and Helen). Several balance both dimensions of the mentoring, (see Figure 4). Typically, but not exclusively, mentoring happens with newly qualified vets and in the larger schemes, alongside a CPD programme, which supports, predominantly, the clinical development of new graduates in their first years post graduation in line with professional body expectations.

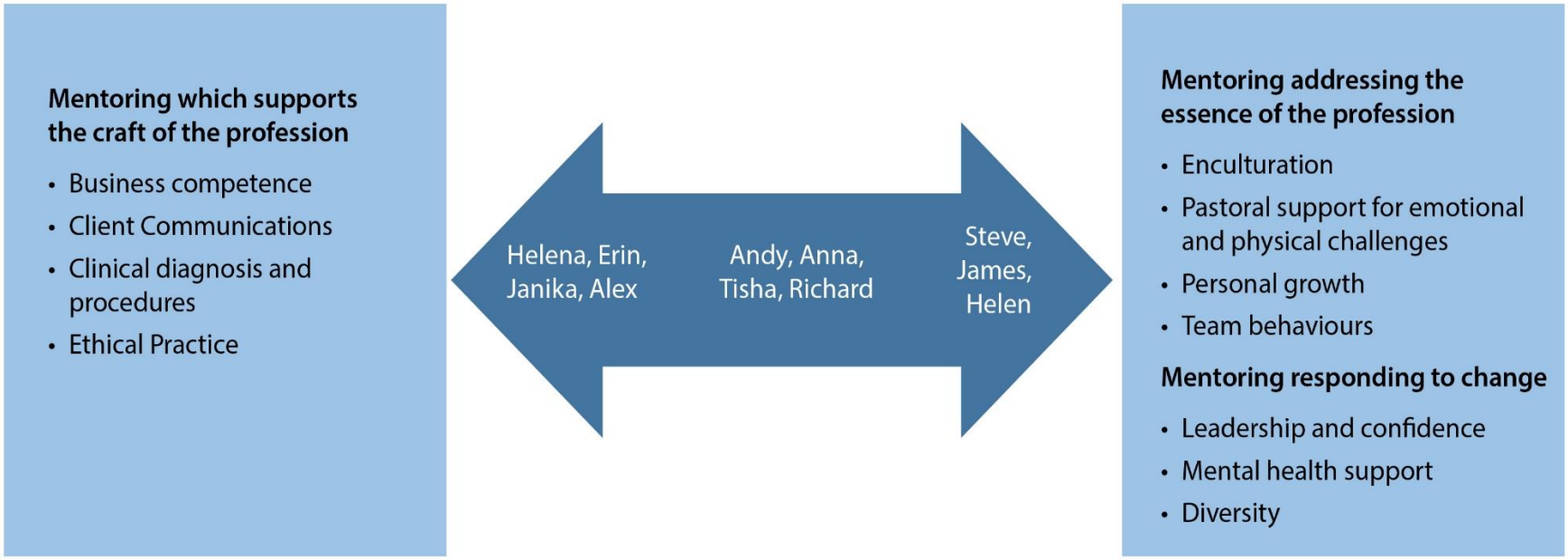

Figure 4 Spectrum of mentoring typology

At both ends of this spectrum, mentors make a contribution to helping mentees to survive and do good work within the very difficult circumstances of the profession. Underlying these emphases in the mentors' work, is a lack of agency in being able to change the difficult environment that practising vets find themselves working within, but a willingness to support mentees to develop ways of coping

5.1.2 The convenor perspective of mentoring content and convenor documentation

Documentation (listed in Table 8, 3.6.1) was provided by two scheme convenors, David and Martin and both were interviewed, using semi structured interviews. Two further convenors were interviewed; Richard, who is responsible for the mentoring scheme in a multi-practice farm veterinary organisation and Helen who helped to establish a professional body, equine mentoring scheme and trained the vet mentors (coaches). A summary of the analysis of the scheme documentation is provided in Table 20, with illustrative quotations provided for the priorities identified.

Table 20 Priorities for mentoring - convenor documentation

Mentoring priority	Number of coded items	Illustrative quotation
Develop professional Competence	20	Martin: The advantages of documenting graduate and buddy meetings are that it enables the mentors and Graduate Programme Manager to review the progress of the graduates and help investigate any issues raised so that appropriate solutions can be found. David: How, in your opinion, is the trainee progressing regarding client communication? 1---2---3--4---5 clinical abilities? 1---2---3--4---5 pricing up? 1---2---3--4---5 partnership potential? 1----2--3--4---5 (NOTE: 1 = poor to 5 = outstanding) Do you think he/she is ready to progress into a different role within Org X? YES NO
Provide early career support	10	Martin: to ensure that you receive the best possible support as you transition from student to fully-fledged veterinary surgeon. David: The aim is to make trainees feel looked after during their initial time as an employee.
Supplements GDP programme	8	Martin: As veterinary professionals, we are responsible for our own personal development so, with the support of mentors and practice leaders, the onus is on the graduate to create a training plan, organise mentoring sessions and submit requested documentation as and when required. The more you put in the more you get out. David: Please also encourage and oversee the PDP programme (Professional Development Phase) for new graduates. This is a programme required by the RCVS, in which new grads (whether qualified in the UK or not) log the procedures (ie their progress) online. This also can help you to monitor their clinical progress.
Pastoral	7	Martin: Sole charge & working out-of-hours David: Practical and organisational topics (i.e. van, flat, employment issues) can also be discussed, but referred to the relevant Support Centre staff if you are unable to help.
Support retention	7	Martin: Quarterly Review Plus: Review & discuss training attended during year 1. Discuss training requirements for year 2 & complete planner. Discuss medium to long term career aspirations. David: Encourage enthusiasm for the job which should lead to happier employees and fewer resignations.

David's scheme has been running for approximately 20 years and incorporates both career related objectives and psychosocial functions. It is integrated into the graduate development programme and documents provided included a buddy training strategy, and evaluation forms, of the recruit by the buddy, and of the buddy by the recruit. These a feedback forms allow action to be taken if a mentoring relationship is not going well. The buddy training strategy outlines the buddy role and approach in two phases of training. In phase 1, the focus of the buddy scheme is very much on support for new graduates in terms of enculturation to the organisation, and development of professional skills including clinical, client and team related ones. The buddies are also identifying good organisational fit and potential for partnership. The strategy includes guidance on structuring meetings, adopting a behaviour change approach to working with the buddy and on the use of goalsetting. In phase 2, the buddying emphasis is more on business performance as a vet, helping the mentee to understand the organisation's performance tracking model and its relationship with good clinical practice.

Martin's scheme is younger. It is also integrated into a wider graduate development programme, and information about the scheme, for both buddies and their mentees, is presented within a broader programme handbook. Roles are outlined and a series of structured meetings, with accompanying tracking documents, are recommended that run alongside the elements of the graduate development programme. As buddies and their mentees progress through the programme, business performance is introduced together with opportunities to discuss career objectives.

Richard's scheme shares many of the career and psychosocial functions of David and Martin's schemes and is also incorporated into a wider graduate development programme. It aims to enculturate new vets into the organisation, support them as they develop confidence in clinical decision-making and provide career scaffolding and mental health support. Helen's professional body scheme differs in that it focuses on psychosocial support, career development and socialisation of new vets into their specialism, rather than clinical support.

This is likely a product of the scheme being offered at the level of the profession and mentors supporting mentees at a distance.

The convenors raised a range of functions that they intend mentoring to fulfil. Where they share expectations with mentors, these are tabulated in Table 19 and incorporated into the discussion in 5.1.1. Specific issues raised within the documentation for schemes are tabulated in Table 20 above, with quotations from scheme documentation included as illustrations. For the convenors, mentoring performs an important role in supporting new graduates in their first year of practice. As with mentors, this time is acknowledged to be demanding and stressful with new graduates recognised as not yet ready for professional practice when they leave university. Although, legally, new graduates are qualified to practise, alongside completing RCVS PDP expectations, Martin's documentation is very explicit that the first period of employment is considered transitional and the role of mentoring is important at this time.

> "to ensure that you receive the best possible support as you transition from student to fully fledged veterinary surgeon"

Mentoring supports the maintenance of professional standards offered by their organisations. For example, in David's scheme mentors are required to comment on the proficiency of their mentees at the end of specified periods of mentoring, contributing to the tracking of progress of individuals in areas of priority for David's organisation: "Client communication, clinical abilities, pricing up, partnership material". Also evident, as with the mentors, is an emphasis on bringing together the craft and essence of the profession in complex situations but with an emphasis on developing a longer term business relationship with the organisation. There is an undercurrent with both sets of documentation that the schemes are trying to avert situations where things go wrong, either in terms of the new employee being unhappy, or where mistakes are made which have implications for the patients and the business. The requirement for David's mentors to score their mentees' performance suggests this, as does the emphasis on a behaviour change approach. Some

of the wording in the documentation suggests that the organisations are reacting to negative situations which they have already experienced:

> **Martin:** documenting graduate and buddy meetings [..] enables [us] to review the progress of the graduates and help investigate any issues raised so that appropriate solutions can be found

Mentoring aims to address some of the recruitment and retention shortfall experienced by the sector by building relationships with new employees; if new recruits feel supported and developed, the convenors feel, they are more likely to remain with, and be productive contributors to, the organisation.

> **David:** Encourage enthusiasm for the job which should lead to happier employees and fewer resignations.

Again, the undercurrent is present here, it would appear that employees have resigned in the past and avoiding recurrence has become a feature of the mentoring scheme.

All of the convenors see their schemes as part of developing an ongoing relationship with new recruits; David through the identification of opportunities to progress to more senior levels and partner potential, Martin and Richard through opportunities for career development and Helen through developing a positive, supportive relationship with the specialism. Different approaches are influenced by the ownership models prevalent in organisations and the level at which the mentoring scheme intervention operates. David, Martin and Richard supervise schemes in larger groups. Helen is involved with a scheme initiated by a professional body. Working alongside the RCVS PDP expectations, the organisational mentor schemes support students through a transitional period that the profession feels is necessary for new graduates to become fully functioning professionals. The accounts and documents would suggest that this is a period when mistakes and resignations have been witnessed and that developing supportive and enduring relationships with new recruits is intended to manage this transitional time productively. David, Martin and Richard's mentoring schemes are well-integrated within the on-boarding arrangements for their organisations and are seen to have an important role to play for their recruitment,

retention and business development initiatives. However all three organisational schemes, and indeed Helen's professional body scheme, follow the pattern experienced across the mentor participants, of mentors being volunteers, who support mentees alongside their busy roles.

5.1.3 Secondary documentary data, from the public-facing websites of veterinary organisations

Table 17 has earlier summarised the language used to discuss mentoring with new recruits on the public facing websites of the six leading veterinary organisations (Vet Times, 2018); IVC, CVS, Vets4Pets, Medivet, VetPartners and Linneus and establishes that emphasising this information in their recruitment messaging indicates that leading organisations believe receipt of mentoring to be an expectation of new graduates of a first employer. This documentary data is revisited here (reproduced as Table 21) for the insights it offers as to leading organisations' expectations of the nature and content of mentoring. Each of the schemes emphasises the ever-presence of mentoring support in the early phases of employment; it is described either as "one to one" (Medivet and VetPartners) or "dedicated" (IVC, Vets4Pets and Medivet) and emphasis is placed on the support being available from day one, being always available (IVC, Vets4Pets and Linnaeus) and frequently available in-practice. This language suggests that the organisations feel new recruits expect this support as standard in their first roles, and that organisations anticipate a lot of fear in new recruits that they are not ready to practise, with Medivet not even putting them on a rota in the first three months of employment.

Table 21 Leading veterinary organisations and their use of mentoring in recruitment messaging (Vet Times, 2018) reproduced from Table 17

Vet Corporation	Relative size, employed vet profs	Mentor scheme	Use within recruitment messaging
Independent Vetcare, (IVC Evidensia, 2021)	2,800	Integrated in Graduate Academy, clinical mentor	"Clinical coach and mentor You'll be assigned a dedicated clinical coach who'll always be on hand to help."
CVS (CVS Group plc., 2021)	3,250	Integrated in graduate programme	"It provides mentoring at practice level with a national support network,"
Vets4Pets (Vets4Pets, 2021)	2,450	Integrated in graduate programme, in practice mentor and graduate buddy and a talent ambassador for holistic clinical support	"Our Graduate Team will work with you and support you, in matching you with one of our practices. You will have support from day 1 from your dedicated mentor in practice who will guide you through each step of your professional development, you will train on the job with a phased induction, at a pace that works for you, with regular reviews." "You will be paired with a graduate buddy, a graduate 1 or 2 years ahead of you on the programme, and a talent ambassador, a number of those being JVP's from other practices, offering additional clinical or holistic support."
Medivet (Medivet, 2021)	1,850	Integrated in graduate development programme, mentor and buddy	"one-to-one training, mentoring and support: you'll be off the rota for the first three months, allowing you to focus on learning every aspect of practice with full support" "Our Buddy system Our Buddy system matches you with a dedicated clinician who'll be on hand to help you settle in. Your first point of contact for advice, both clinical and nonclinical, their job is to help you integrate into the profession and Medivet, making sure you're confident and happy. You'll have regular Buddy meetings for a whole year to make sure everything is going smoothly for you."
VetPartners (VetPartners, 2021)	1,250	Integrated in new graduate programme, features particularly in farm, equine and mixed	"Small group mentor sessions and one to one mentor contact both in-practice and associated with your programme are included for further support."
Linnaeus (Linnaeus, 2021)	325	Integrated in graduate development programme, in-practice mentor	"Mentoring and support Mentoring is at the root of our programme and underpins your overall experience with us. From your first day with us you will be assigned a mentor who will be there to guide you through every step of your professional development." "You will have an in-practice mentor to ensure you are getting the support you need."

5.2 WHO IS MENTORING AND WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO MENTOR

The convenors, David, Martin, Helen and Richard all rely on volunteers for their mentors, and they seek experienced vets, by which they usually mean three years plus qualified. Consideration is given to aptitude for mentoring. In David and Martin's schemes recommendations for suitable mentors are made by managers at local level when the geographic location of a new recruit is known. Access to training for mentors is variable. David verbally briefs new mentors and provides supporting documentation to manage the mentoring relationship. These documents include a buddy training strategy, which outlines the buddy's role and guidance on managing meetings, and evaluation forms. Martin and Richard's schemes provide mentors with access to university mentoring training offered as part of EMS programmes, to support them in their role. Helen's professional body scheme made a call for experienced vet volunteers, who felt they had time to commit to mentoring, and then selected for aptitude and provided coaching training.

A series of themes were evident in the vet mentor accounts of what drew them to mentoring. Many experienced trigger events; some positive, some negative, early in their careers which have left them feeling an obligation to mentor. These events are captured in Table 22 and are explored here.Their motives have been interpreted as a strong connection to the profession and an urge to see the profession be successful. Some of the mentors derive personal satisfaction from mentoring on a number of levels; some feel driven by their connection with the profession and their personality type. Several mentors have had prior teaching experience, in university settings, and this seems to have contributed to a journey towards becoming a mentor.

5.2.1 Reactive mentoring, trigger events

Several of the mentors recounted trigger events early in their career which influenced their decision to mentor. How they mentor feels like a direct response to those trigger events.

Their connection to and care for their profession and the individuals within it urge them to either seek to break negative cycles or attempt to reproduce positive cycles. Helen explains;

> **Helen:** the vet members […] who applied to be part of the scheme, […] they all want to give something back, they all said that […] their main driver was that they, it was either that they had had really good mentoring in their time and they wanted to provide that to somebody else or they hadn't had it and they wish they had, so they'd like to provide it for somebody else.

The events are deeply personal and have left both emotional warmth, scars and feelings of obligation that remain deeply felt many years after the event or the experience. In some cases the trigger event relates to the vet mentor themselves, in others to an experience of another vet that they have witnessed. Some of these trigger events will now be recounted in full, so as not to dilute the impact of the phenomenological experiences, see Table 22. Key phrases are highlighted in bold. Anna's first account is illustrative of a number of participant accounts which concern the long-remembered fear and frustration of being left without support in unfamiliar situations, which could have been learning opportunities, early in their careers.

> **Anna:** it was being thrown into a job kind of working on my own in practices from day one, being on call on my own from day one… I had the mobile in my hand went home with it and there was no nurse on call either so it was just me

Erin's uterine prolapse account (Table 22) no doubt provokes a visceral response from the reader. She not only experienced a lack of support at a time when she was feeling lacking in confidence, in a new job, facing a new procedure, but also the impact of another's ego and complex client relationship being put above her wellbeing as a new vet and the wellbeing of the animal.

> **Erin:** it meant that my confidence and my, the potential for me to learn from the situation was kicked out the door, because of someone else's ego.

Although accounts of ego in professional life feel common, there is an expectation that from those in the veterinary profession the obligation to consider the welfare of the animal, above all else, will prevail. Anna's second account (Table 22) describes mentoring that she did not like; she recounts a situation where her professional ethics and what she felt to be the right

ethical way to proceed, were challenged by someone who held power over her in her early career.

> **Anna:** I was standing there thinking - the dog's already in the practice, it's closing time, […], a lot of the places that you're trying to get to can be closing or are closed, you can make the estimate smaller you can sedate this dog instead of GA-ing it, you can staple the wound instead of exploring it, and you can get that bill down for this man

Anna's current mentoring seems to provide a release for the frustration at her powerlessness to challenge in this situation.

Helena and Janika both recount experiences from their past where they witnessed a young vet fail in the early stages of their career and leave the profession (Table 22). They convey, very powerfully, their deep sadness and despair at these experiences, which Helena describes as:

> the complete crumbling down of a young person in front of… in front of a career that hadn't even started, in such a sad way.

They remember feeling at the time that the vets were not getting enough support. They helped as best they could at the time and acknowledge that this help was not sufficient. Frustration and powerlessness again, emerge as reactions to these experiences.

James was similarly left unsupported in the early phases in his career, although he feels that it helped him to become a decision-maker and to apply his training without support. On the contrary, Andy and Steve both recount positive mentoring early in their careers. Andy's account relates to practice owners who supported him initially as a school child and whom he revisited during his university education. These vet mentors showed interest in a budding young vet and nurtured his passion for the profession; they also role-modelled good mentoring for him, which has been influential for his own mentoring and instilled in him the generative notion of passing on his experience, which he verbalises as the passing on of a "baton" as in a relay race. They:

> **Andy:** taught me by watching them in consultations [..] showed me examples of how to communicate with clients and how to look after clients […] you know took a real interest in me

Steve's account relates to his father and about enjoying an environment where he was able to absorb what it means to be a vet, how to handle the business, staff, clients and also what it means to mentor, through interacting with his father, who was clearly a role-model for him.

> **Steve:** when I worked, started working, I was working for my dad and then we had two years of me just being sort of a sponge in the practice every day watching my dad and how he dealt with me, how he dealt with staff how we dealt with clients

Central to these positive trigger events is the positive role-modelling of both veterinary practice and of mentoring behaviour.

What seems striking about these trigger events is how clearly the mentors can remember them. With the negative events, the memory of the fear felt as inexperienced vets and the empathy this engenders for their mentees is powerfully evident. A clear warmth is evident with those that received positive mentoring. From another perspective these trigger events appear to have ignited a sense of duty or felt obligation to ensure that where possible the mentors would ensure positive experiences for those they work with:

> **Erin:** I've been put through so many things that I would never want a new grad to be put through again.
>
> **Janika**: seeing that happen to someone, I really wanted to, I really kind of, I don't want to see that again basically.

Table 22 Trigger events

Trigger Events Negative Personal	
Anna:	So… I remember… that not getting the support (clearly emotional) So it's, it was being thrown into a job kind of working on my own in practices from day one, being on call on my own from day one… I had the mobile in my hand went home with it and there was no nurse on call either so **it was just me** and… […], there were just a couple of occasions when I phoned my boss and said, one was when I was trying to unblock a Dalmatian, this dog was under anaesthetic and I was trying to put a urine catheter in, I'd done it about 10 times and I couldn't do it I phoned the boss and he just said "aaarh can't really hurt the animal so just keep trying". Aaarg I've tried about 10 times and I can't do it, I'm doing something wrong, I haven't just tried once and called you, I've tried 10 times and then he just said…[nothing] so I just had to phone somebody else, a friend who happened to be around who is also a vet who was not on shift. And said (in child's voice) **can you come and help me?** And they came and helped me.
Anna:	The person I got assigned to mentor me, I didn't really like the way that he practised, I felt that he was very business minded and not very animal minded […] but I remember very vividly there was a German Shepherd who came in at the very end of the day, 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening, a huge gash in his neck and the vet did an estimate for a GA, an explore and stitch up, and it came to £700 and the owner understandably said - I don't have £700 today and so the vet then organised for them to go to a charity practice and **I was standing there thinking - the dog's already in the practice, it's closing time, a lot of these referrals, a lot of the places that you're trying to get to can be closing or are closed, you can make the estimate smaller you can sedate this dog instead of GA-ing it, you can staple the wound instead of exploring it, and you can get that bill down for this man,** you can do it for £100 or £200 and at least you've closed it before the dog leaves the practice
Erin	My boss sent me out to a uterine prolapse in a cow and I said - well I have never done one before and he said, "no you'll go out, you'll try, you won't be able to do it, you will call me and I'll come and do it" so that's exactly what happens and the end result is the farmer never wanted me on the farm again and my boss was shown to be a superhero. But what consequences did that have, it meant that **my confidence and my, the potential for me to learn from the situation was kicked out the door, because of someone else's ego**. And ultimately, **I've been put through so many things that I would never want a new grad to be put through again.**
James	Experienced as positive by James When I first joined was actually very little [mentoring]. And I was left in sole charge and I shot a horse on my first weekend on duty, which was four weeks after graduating, was also my birthday [..] it wasn't a horrific experience but yeah, but the principle […]….In some ways, though **the sort of getting on with it with the first principles and what you've been trained to do is a good thing** and a downside of over-mentoring, is that people…it reinforces a lack of confidence.

Trigger Events Negative Witnessed	
Helena	It was a distinct experience I had of, I was working, I was floating at that time and, […] But I just thought…. **the complete crumbling down of a young person in front of… in front of a career that hadn't even started, in such a sad way,** he had to leave the profession altogether he had a complete breakdown, he just um…it was a complete mess and I just sat there and thought how sad is it, you know you get into vet school with so many hopes and dreams, University alone is not an easy path in the first place, you already give so much of yourself and then it all stops. The race stops after you've just done your training. You don't even wait for everybody to gather for the start of the marathon, you just say no I can't do it and … so I thought (sounds quite emotional here) I thought I want to help to minimise these instances,
Janika:	One of the things I've.. possibly pushed me towards mentoring was when, when I used to work for Org Y, we had this new grad and … I felt that she didn't have enough support. The head vet was just asked to be her mentor and she wasn't doing anything, she wasn't really trying to help her out and we saw her, um, she was struggling, she was struggling as a vet and she was struggling mentally and emotionally because of that and she felt that she was not good enough, she would cry, she would be really upset and people instead of you know giving her enough support they would be like… oh she's a vet she should know how to do that and after I believe, two years, she decided to leave the profession and she is doing something else now and I think although we…me and my friend were always trying to help her as much as we could. I think that we, you know, as a practice as an organisation **we failed her** […], I think it had a massive impact on her entire life and entire career, something, seeing that happen to someone, I really wanted to, I really kind of, I don't want to see that again basically.
Trigger Events Positive	
Andy	So I was mentored, before I was a vet student, when I was a schoolboy and A-level student by someone who took the time to show me practical things and to teach me earliest forms of surgery, by someone who taught me by watching them in consultations but who showed me examples of how to communicate with clients and how to look after clients […] you know took a real interest in me and he and his partners bought me a veterinary anatomy book when I was still at school and I didn't have, it wasn't time to apply to vet school yet, I've still got that book and inscribed on the front {from name of practice owners) for help in your future career, which is a hell of a thing, this big old chunky book, you're gonna need this mate, which is, which is a truly, truly lovely thing to do and I think **that's probably set in me the very, very much the concept of it's a circle, or a relay race if you like and the baton is passed to you… And then you pass a baton on…**
Steve	I mean the big one, huge advantage that was dealt to me was my dad, […] I've been exceptionally lucky in that pretty much from the age of 14 or 15, every time we'd sit around the dinner table, I'd be talking to my dad about how a veterinary practice runs, how we manage staff, the minute I was in doing work experience in school, you just like a sponge and because it's my dad I was so, it was so much easier for me to just ask questions or probe and say - well how would you deal with that etc. etc. and then obviously through vet school that progressed and then when I worked, started working, I was working for my dad and then we had two years of me just being sort of a sponge in the practice every day watching my dad and how he dealt with me, how he dealt with staff how we dealt with clients. Then when he sold the clinic and I became a [..] partner, I was basically running

	the clinic that with my dad in the consult room next door**, so any time I had a challenge of how to, a decision to make as a leader or that sort of stuff I would just go and knock on my dad's door** and so then, when dad finally stepped away and retired, I was probably, I'd been a [..] partner for three years but I'd sort of had 10 years of sort of just milking my dad, absorbing everything that he had learned over 30 years, so that put me at a huge advantage of me being the mentee and dad being the mentor […] I think that has allowed me to sort of adopt the role that I have adopted now, as someone who massively values the opportunity to help and nurture, sort of less experienced members of the team

These accounts, in Table 22, call to mind a sequence of events underpinning decisions to mentor, which appear very personal in nature. The negative events frequently involve a deep tension between what the vet mentor knows to be part of the Code of Conduct, their felt obligations and their lived experiences of practice, and the implications for patient care. Where the experience has been negative, they seek to put that right or compensate through their mentoring, where positive, they seek to emulate. There appears to be a clear reaction to early experience which generates in vets a sense that they feel obliged to behave in a certain way as a result of their experiences.

> **Erin:** If you look at the oath that we take when we become vets, there's nothing in there about mentoring, so it's all about your obligations to animal welfare and to practice in an ethical way, […] you don't graduate from vet school with an idea that […] your obligation is to mentor the younger vets, no, and I think maybe I wouldn't be a mentor if I hadn't had a shit start and wanted to leave,

5.2.2 Passion for profession, engaging in exchange

The participants demonstrate their deep connection with their profession and compassion for less experienced colleagues, as they explain what brings them to mentoring. They mentor from the perspective of understanding its complex challenges and convey a strong sense, a felt obligation, that they wish to contribute to its success by giving something back, engaging in generative behaviour. Here Helen describes how mentoring provides opportunities to share that passion with mentees.

> **Helen**: veterinary medicine is a complex profession, so what we want to say is, you are choosing for very good reasons to go into a fabulous complex challenging profession, you will be fabulous complex challenging people in this profession. You're choosing that, a positive choice. You're gonna need some skills to manage yourself while you're in that profession.

Andy explores the deep sense of value he attributes to his career and to his mentoring, because of his strong connection to the profession. When he improves how another professional performs, even in a small way, he feels that to be an important positive contribution made to his profession.

> **Andy:** I chose being a vet because I wanted to do something that was worthwhile for itself, I didn't want to just make money […]. And so when I mentor someone, I feel good because I've created a positive, and whether that is saying to someone, if you

> hold that scissors round the other way then you're less likely to cut the spleen when you enter the abdomen or when you come to this stage, just watch out because there's a blood vessel that runs across there but you can miss that by going that way. Ultimately, I've created a positive, I've improved…[…] You've shuffled the world up a level, […] but to think that you've got something that you can pass on…

Alex explains how the cycle of wanting to give back to the next generation stems from a sense of wanting to repay the profession for his early support, combined with understanding the current challenges of the profession.

> **Alex:** I think, it [my motivation] probably comes from the people that, the people that helped me, when I was younger so, because we …. and it comes from us knowing what, what it's like to be a vet and how you need a lot of support and a lot of help because outside the profession people don't really have a clue, for the most part.

Noticeably, the mentors have concern for the profession as a collective and for professional standards. Supporting improved professional standards begins, for them, with building up teams so that everyone succeeds and this drives mentoring.

> **Janika:** maybe it's because I'm very focused on building up the team, I really want everyone to be the best version of themselves and I want them to… not to fail as, as vets, I don't want them to fail our patients, I don't want them to fail as part of the team,

Compassion for other members of the profession manifests in the mentor accounts as they express wanting new vets to have better starts than they themselves experienced. The trigger events, remembered so long after the event, denote strongly felt reactions to positive and negative early career experiences, and this can be thought of as providing an incentive to mentor, experienced as a felt obligation. Additionally, the participants are strongly connected to the positive emotions experienced when mentoring goes well and they offer that better start, and this contributes to personal satisfaction.

> **Janika:** I don't do it for my company, I just do it hoping that someone else will have easier in life than I did, […] Personally I'm really happy when she gets better, like when she spayed her first dog, I was like, oooh happiness in the practice and I was super proud of her and I felt… oh my god, it's just like my child or something. So it's personally rewarding.

What seems to be linking these accounts and the impetus to support less experienced vets through mentoring, is concern not just for the specific vet with whom they are working, but,

that one vet at a time, through their mentoring support, the mentors ensure that the profession does not fail collectively.

5.2.3 Further motivations for mentoring

Several of the vet mentors clearly derived great personal satisfaction from mentoring; these feelings are experienced as having done good on multiple levels, giving them a sense of pride and a positive emotional response. The impact is perceived as having done good for the mentee, for patients and for the profession more generally, suggestive that mentors are conscious of contributing not just to the individual being mentored but also to their patients and to the profession more generally.

> **Helena:** For me personally it enriches me, it enriches me a lot. It gives me the feeling to do good, to be of help, […], in your day-to-day you are helpful to animals and now you are almost as helpful to another human being in their development within the profession that you like and it's just something that brings great joy to me.

Several of the vet mentors had prior teaching experience in university settings (Andy, Tisha, Richard). These teaching experiences were not always positive but allowed the mentors to work through some of the difficulties and discover their interest in teaching and this seems to have raised their awareness that they enjoy being involved in educating other vets, which has influenced their decision to mentor.

> **Tisha:** Well I suppose it was sort of accidental, incidental thing because when I was at Institution X it was part of my role to teach students, neutering and things and so I discovered that I really liked it, it wasn't on purpose is what I'm saying, it happened

In relating their accounts the mentors point to sensing an obligation to give something back in return for their own earlier experience or support. They also showcase a connection to and compassion for their profession, described as a desire for the profession to succeed, which can be interpreted as transcending a particular organisation or individual mentee.

5.2.4 Motivated by professional obligation

Section 4.3 has explored vet mentors' reflections on the notion of mentoring as a professional obligation. Andy, Alex, Steve, James and Richard as mentors and Martin, David and Helen as convenors are all clear that in their opinion, mentoring the next generation of

vets is a professional obligation, either at organisational level or as a personal responsibility. There appears to be a consensus that mentoring is not determined by their Code of Conduct or a requirement of every vet role, but they feel obligated, personally, to mentor. Some vet mentors struggle with the notion that mentoring is a manifestation of professional obligation; if it were they argue, everyone would have to mentor even if reluctantly, however, they choose language to describe why they are motivated to mentor which feels very much like a felt obligation and which seems very similar to the language that they use to describe their other obligations (see Table 23).

Table 23 Mentoring and professional obligation

Vet Mentor	Language suggestive of felt obligation
Anna	In terms of, teaching and mentoring that only comes from **a moral duty** […] I don't think it comes from a real professional obligation. I think the way the system works is that someone helped me back then therefore **I should help** someone else now but it's very easy to say no I'm not gonna do it.
Helena	It almost feels like that **all of us have a responsibility of mentoring,** I'm not too sure if that's going to be able to be translated to actual reality because mentoring **I feel it's more vocational** that […] so I'm not too sure if it can be a responsibility that's gonna be cast upon all of us.
Janika:	It was never an obligation for me, I never felt that way, that it's an obligation, I felt it's more, **I think it's coming from the inside, rather, then it's something my job requires me to do** and it was I think, it's always very personal, I don't, I know that some other vets would do, would do that just because they were asked to and they don't have kind of, they don't take anything from it, it doesn't give them any fun or enjoyment
Steve:	in order for mentorship to be effective and meaningful, I think it has to be **organic,** I don't think you can put it in a job spec … Well for someone to get the most out of mentoring**, it has to be a voluntary organic process and it has to be a sort of mutual understanding that both parties want to engage at that interface** and I think, it's difficult to legislate for mentorship.

Participants describe a "moral duty" to mentor and that they "should help" others, feeling a "responsibility" to mentor, a feeling coming from inside which makes them want to help others be the best versions of themselves. These descriptions feel very much like a felt obligation, an inner urge to behave in a certain way towards others in the profession. There is an acknowledgement among the mentors that mentoring should be voluntary and organic and this can be thought of as coming from a belief that there are some vets that they feel are

wholly unsuited to mentoring. Therefore mentoring for them is considered discretionary behaviour for the profession as a whole. However, it is something they choose to do because somebody role-modelled positively for them, because it makes them feel good, because it is absolutely necessary due to the educational outcomes and contextual challenges of the profession. The consequences of not mentoring feel too awful for them and they therefore feel an obligation to be involved.

5.3 HOW MENTORING IS HAPPENING

An analysis of the language that the participants use when describing their mentoring and what they are trying to achieve provides some themes of agreement in terms of how mentoring has developed amongst the participants and what they feel constitutes best practice. This is sometimes mirrored in the supporting documentation of mentoring schemes. These features of good mentoring practice are explored in detail in Appendix 13, with illustrative quotations provided for identified features. Mentoring should, they feel, be a gradual process of letting go, which provides a supportive environment as vets develop their confidence, but which also challenges them to move on to the next stage when they are ready, and at the same time proves a locus of support that they can rely on in the future.

> **Richard:** you have done this number of C sections with me, I think it's now time that you go and start this one on your own and it's providing that kind of support.

This forward momentum of development within the mentoring is supported in the documentation of both schemes reviewed here. Martin's scheme includes a series of structured meetings and requirements to document those meetings. David's documentation includes advice concerning the regularity, structuring and recording of meetings. Both schemes offer their mentors advice on how to come to agreement on goalsetting and planning to achieve goals.

The participants agreed that mentoring dyads need to find their own way of working together. Janika's scheme differentiates between mentors and buddies, with mentors being more formal and goal-setting, and therefore could be line managers, and buddies, who are

more personal and informal, ideally not the line manager, so that the mentee can speak freely. The mentors want to be able to deal with issues and questions that a mentee would find hard to discuss with a line manager, who might be more focused on business priorities. Therefore the mentor should be separate from line management. Whereas David's convenor documentation emphasises a mentee's business contribution, Anna is just one mentor whose mentoring involves helping mentees balance business priorities with the underpinning principles of the profession, revealing a tension between convenor expectations and the lived experience of mentors. However, the documentation for both schemes acknowledges the importance of gaining the loyalty and trust of mentees and offered guidance for mentors on how to do this. The strong potential bond between mentor and mentee and its significance in the development of vets appears to be acknowledged by these convenors.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an analysis of the findings of the fieldwork of the study as they relate specifically to mentoring in the UK veterinary profession. Analysis is presented which flows from the scheme documentation provided by convenors and semi-structured interviews with convenors. At the heart of the presentation are the voices of the vet mentors, accessed through in-depth phenomenological interviews. Using their language, perspectives and interpretations a depiction of mentoring within the UK veterinary profession is detailed. The mentoring landscape within the UK veterinary profession has been drawn, with the vet mentors and convenors providing detail and context. Consideration has been given to what has brought mentors to mentoring and their perceptions of professional obligation and mentoring.

The chapter draws together the sense that although mentoring is believed to be a discretionary activity, the participants consider it to be critical for their profession and they feel a strong obligation to their fellow professionals to engage in mentoring. There is a widely held view, expressed through all forms of data, that the current education system does not produce vets sufficiently competent or confident to enter practice unsupported, and that newly graduated vets require considerable clinical and psychosocial support when they first begin to practice, mentors are critical in this role and engage in mentoring often with little interaction with the universities educating students. However, all of the mentors involved in the study, engaged in mentoring on a voluntary basis and all convenors expected voluntary participation.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores and develops the themes presented in chapters 4 and 5 in relation to existing literature on professions, the veterinary profession, professional obligation and theoretical explanations of mentoring. The explanatory lens of Social Learning Theory is particularly important in linking professional obligation with Organisational Commitment and Citizenship Behaviour (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) as devices for explaining mentoring. The UK veterinary sector has provided a complex empirical and professional context within which to investigate professional obligation and mentoring. This study has been undertaken in completion of a Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring and therefore the emphasis of the research and this discussion is on understanding mentoring and professional obligation based within a (veterinary) context. Although some insights into this particular moment in the profession's development have also surfaced, the study does not attempt to generate a comprehensive audit of the mentoring that is taking place in the profession. Importantly, this study employs literature connected to professions, particularly institutional conceptions of professions (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) and professional obligation linked to a wider range of professions, (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007) in its explorations and explications of mentoring. These deliberations suggest potential value from the study for those considering other professional contexts. A variety of perspectives and associated theoretical frameworks have been explored in Chapter 2 for the understanding they bring to mentoring in contextually driven settings. These are considered here for their potential resonance with this mentoring context.

The chapter explores the learning from the case moving through a series of steps. Firstly, to facilitate learning about how professional obligation helps to understand mentoring, an initial step is required to consider how professional obligation informs concepts of profession. For mentors to translate professional identity for their mentees, they first must develop their own

conception of the profession.The professions' literature is consulted to help reflect on the vet mentors conceptualisation of their profession and how they interweave professional obligation into this conceptualisation. This study shows some alignment with jurisdictional (Wilensky, 1964) or taxonomic conceptions of professions (Saks, 2012) and extends previous institutional conceptions of professions (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) as it provides rich contextual detail of how the institutional pillars are interwoven in conceptions of profession; conceptions which are translated and diffused through mentoring. The mentors also shed light on how they experience key challenges of the profession (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008; Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Allister, 2015; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Henry and Treanor, 2015; Allister, 2016; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019; Armitage-Chan and May, 2019), introduced and discussed in 2.3.2 and 4.1.5 and how these impact their mentoring work. The second step is to consider mentoring in this context and the role of mentors as interpreters and diffusers of the profession and its obligations, essentially mentors acting as institutional change agents through their mentoring in this profession (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b). In this context, features of the veterinary profession can be seen to impede mentors' abilities to act as change agents and in some cases see them unable to do other than perpetuate the unhealthy work climates in their efforts to support others to cope within them. Consideration is then given to how and why mentors come to mentoring and the role of obligation in a seeming spiral of professional continuation and renewal (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). The study draws together two key explanatory mechanisms for mentoring. First, Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), in particular its potential, through Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, one facet of Organisational Commitment and Citizenship Behaviour, to contribute to discussions of professional obligation (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) and mentoring. Second, institutional conceptions of professions (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) are employed, which connect professional

obligation with the role of mentors as institutional change agents and how a professional context can influence the effectiveness of mentors as change agents. Lastly, the chapter concludes by drawing together how this helps to understand mentoring and offers key contributions to mentoring practice within the veterinary profession and beyond.

6.2 DEFINING PROFESSIONS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

In attempting to convey a sense of their profession, the participants draw on a rich tapestry of organisational life. The findings of this study thereby extend discussions of profession and allow for elaboration of existing institutional explanations of the professions (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b). Their descriptions include, sometimes dimly, remembered requirements of their professional Code of Conduct (RCVS, 2021a); the participants use their obligations to define their profession. They also draw from their daily interactions with colleagues, clients and animals; conveying a shared sense of appropriate behaviour in those contexts and what being in this context is like and who is in it with them. They also turn for inspiration, when describing their profession, to the great waves of change that the sector is experiencing, indicating a sense that the current profession is, in part, a product of that change. Invariably when asked what is the veterinary profession like, the participants say, well - it is experiencing or at a moment of considerable change. Several changes focused on by the participants have been widely discussed within the profession (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Allister, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Armitage-Chan and May, 2019) and are common to a range of professions (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018), therefore the experiences of the vet mentors can illuminate wider discussions. In this section professional obligation will be considered as it contributes to describing profession; it will be returned to later in terms of how it informs mentoring and in how mentoring interacts with conceptualisations of profession.

Examination, at the collective level of participant accounts of profession, both the accounts of vet mentors and scheme convenors, reveals that the participants draw on conceptions of

professions which inhabit different spaces in the evolving debates surrounding profession. The participants present a complex picture of the constituents of profession; focusing on three core areas. First, *what* one is expected to do as part of the profession, core areas of expertise and overarching obligations, the professional craft. Second, *how* one is expected to carry out those functions of the profession, in terms of underpinning principles, values and normative behaviour, and last, what being in the profession is *like,* as if the profession's core essence is defined by the circumstances within which it practises. The participant accounts of profession, which are underpinned by notions of professional obligation, on one level align with jurisdictional and taxonomic conceptions of profession (Saks, 2016), but more significantly, extend institutional conceptualisation of profession (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b).

6.3 THE CRAFT OF THE PROFESSION

When reflecting on profession and professional obligation, the participants identify the boundaries of the profession in terms of areas of responsibility, often drawing on their Code of Conduct (RCVS, 2021a) to set out what is expected of them. The signalling by the RCVS, through the Code, of claims to certain knowledge and expertise, aligns with a taxonomic or what is referred to within the professions literature as the trait approach (Saks 2012, Saks 2016) and to earlier conceptions of profession linked to jurisdictional claims (Wilensky, 1964) often alluded to in the veterinary profession research discourse (Mossop, 2012; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018). The boundaries of the profession and the understanding of what can be expected from the profession are codified as acknowledged areas of expertise. In this, the participants are alluding to the veterinary profession being a key occupation, possessing "competence over a body of knowledge and a collection of techniques" (Arluke, 2018, p. 107). Emphasis on the academic nature of the members of profession, requiring a particular type and level of exacting intellectual capability, plus emphasis on a range of sophisticated relational skills, further adds to the sense of exclusivity of the profession and its rights and responsibilities over certain methods, procedures and societal position. Thus the mentors' sense of the profession aligns with

Hobson-West and Timmons' (2016) characterisation of the profession as being relatively unregulated and enjoying occupational closure. However, although the boundaries for areas of expertise are codified, the professional knowledge base for veterinary surgeons is not specified within the Code of Conduct, or within an overarching institution such as the NHS's NICE. Instead it is a growing and evolving body of understanding, with which the participants acknowledge they must keep current and contribute to, through a network of CPD opportunities. A tension therefore exists between the dualistic nature of veterinary education (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016), with its emphasis on a right and wrong way of doing things (Clarke and Knights, 2018) and the impacts of that approach on the mental health and wellbeing as members of the profession negotiate the reality of working with an uncodified body of knowledge in practice, a tension which the mentors repeatedly portray and negotiate with their mentees.

Core knowledge evolves through educational institutions, research institutions and their publications, through a plethora of CPD opportunities organised by a network of professional bodies and private companies, who link specialists with the wider clinical population in the development of new knowledge and through collegiality and peer learning. These are alluded to by the participants when they discuss engaging with new knowledge and attending lectures to keep up to date. This is evident in the documentation provided by Martin for his organisation's graduate development programme, which details CPD opportunities and expectations. James explores how in one charitable organisation a bottom up process contributed to developing clinical guidelines in the absence of a body such as NICE in the human medicine field. Their enculturation into a profession underpinned by a dualistic education process (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) which encourages perfectionism (Clarke and Knights, 2018) is evident in the accounts of the mentors and even more so with the convenors, with their emphasis on clinical support and development aligned to graduate development programmes. The mentor accounts of their mentoring work are however, more nuanced in how they balance the competing priorities of clinical

diagnosis and treatment with, for example, managing communications, emotions, business considerations and ethical decision-making. At the point where the dualistic education process is challenged by the realities of professional practice, the mentors appear to be playing a fundamental role in helping their mentees to cope with the reality of managing competing priorities.

In terms of Scott's (2008b; Scott, 2008a) three institutional pillars typology, the participants' accounts of profession, with an emphasis on specific areas of responsibility and a requirement to be educated to a high standard and to keep up to date with shared understandings, would point to the veterinary professional culture as occupying the cultural cognitive definition, which, as epistemic cultures,

> "rely principally on shared conception of the problems to be solved and the approaches to be employed, and indeed what constitutes a solution " (Scott, 2008b, p. 225).

Scott emphasises that individual professions typically occupy predominantly one of the three typologies; cultural cognitive, normative or regulatory. However, the participant accounts suggest that the boundaries of *what* is expected of a veterinary professional in terms of scope of responsibility, represents only one dimension of their profession. *How* to behave, the normative cultural features, the obligatory dimension to social aspects of professional life, which stress what is 'appropriate' behaviour in particular situations, is also important in understanding the profession. The participants often draw on the Principles codified in the Code of Conduct for their explanations; honest and ethical practice for example (RCVS, 2021a), but they also draw on a deeper well of experience in the balancing of role responsibilities and underpinning principles in the practising of the craft of the profession. Participants provided accounts of using their judgement to measure the obligations of the profession with its underpinning principles and the context of the situations they face. The accounts of the participants provide details of the sense of challenge they and their mentees

encounter (Batchelor, Creed and McKeegan, 2015) as they face the frequent moral and ethical dilemmas of daily practice (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012). They seem to be drawing on their own sense of what is right, aligned to their own sense of professional identity, with decisions infused with the obligations they associate with their role. However, the professional norms that they are drawing upon to address complex situations, and support mentees, not only include the altruistic, colleague supporting expectations raised in their accounts, but also a series of more problematic norms. The mentors' prioritising of clinical competence, although unsurprising, could be engendered by the dualistic education system (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012), with its emphasis on rightness of approach and perfectionism (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) and risks perpetuating this focus and its negative consequences. The mentors have grown up in a highly masculine profession (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Clarke and Knights, 2019) and one associated with self-sacrifice and perceptions of omni-competence (Allister, 2014). They have learned to survive in what could be described as an unhealthy, even toxic, professional environment. In supporting their mentees to cope in this environment, they and the profession potentially miss the opportunity to change the unhealthy environment. Alternatively, their championing of professional expertise within a more commodified service offers the opportunity for mentors to challenge the evolving scripts of the profession, offering new discourse (Hotho, 2008).

At times participants are able to draw for guidance on the codified principles in their Code of Conduct (Scott, 2008a; 2008b). For example when they stress the importance of giving clients the full range of information to be able to make decisions. This suggests that the participants' conceptualisations of profession broadly align with Scott's (2008a; Scott, 2008b) cultural cognitive definition, with the expected evidence of attempts by regulatory and professional bodies being present, in the codified principles included in the Code of Conduct, to exert influence over normative behaviour. However, there are examples where the participants draw on shared normative behaviour, which is not set out in their Code of Conduct. Particularly in their descriptions of mentoring, participants portray discretionary

behaviours to support colleagues as additional obligations. It is here that this study extends institutional conceptualisations of profession.

6.4 THE ESSENCE OF THE PROFESSION

When describing their profession, the participants give central importance to its connectedness and collegiality and to practising in a way that is responsive to the period of intense change underway in the profession, which embodies connectedness to others in the profession. These features seem critical for the participants for operating in professional life and they are not explained by their Code of Conduct. With a few noted exceptions raised by the mentors, collegiality seems to be an accepted behavioural norm across the profession, evidenced by in situ work experience in the form of Extra Mural Study (EMS), supported voluntarily, being embedded in veterinary courses (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures Action Group, 2016; RCVS, 2021b). It arises from what practising professionals have tacitly understood to be acceptable and necessary behaviour, resting on a normative cultural pillar (Scott, 2008). In parallel with other professionals, dentists (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Williams and Jordan, 2015) and academics (Knights and Clarke, 2018), for example, responsiveness to change seems to be something that veterinary professionals continue to be grappling with as the landscape develops so rapidly. This leaves the profession with constituents who have multiple and different conceptions of what it means to be a veterinary professional, very much in tune with Allister's (2015; 2016) sense of a challenged professional identity, in a state of continual flux (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Armitage-Chan and May, 2019). This fluidity of identity has particular relevance for mentors attempting to enculturate new and progressing members into a profession, when that profession is uncertain of its own identity. The mentors at times draw on the codified, cultural congnitive (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) obligations of their profession to translate expectations, but there are elements of professional life that engage more with the essence of what *being* in the veterinary profession is like. How this normative behaviour, arrived at by members of the profession through their practice, rather than from codified expectations,

influences mentoring decisions, will be considered later in this chapter. First, how these norms inform conceptualisations of profession will be considered.

6.4.1 Collegiality

The mentors' emphasis on collegiality as a defining feature of their profession and the duty to support colleagues which they express as a felt obligation, sits in contrast to the picture of the profession which emerges from the literature, explored in 2.3.2 and also in contrast to the negative trigger events which they describe. The profession has been characteristed as perfectionist (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018), sharing a view of infallibility, with potential to become omniscient experts (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) and inclined to judgementalism when mistakes are made. The mentors' sense of collegiality presents as them being more forgiving, in relation to the commonly held belief (Duijn *et al.*, 2020), of the lack of readiness of new graduates, demonstrated by their willingness to support them at a time when they are developing confidence and competence (Duijn *et al.*, 2020). The mentors do seem to be influenced by the, not necessarily jusitified (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010) but pervasive, opinion that younger vets have unrealistic expecations of the profession. This view has potential to impact their mentoring, as there could be concerns around sterotyping of new vets. But the mentors appear to approach this believed lack of realism with compassion rather than judgement. As mentioned in 4.2, the Code of Conduct does include sections which outline a veterinary surgeon's responsibilities to the profession and the team. However, the emphases of these sections are on the maintenance of professional standards; having a suitably qualified and equipped team available for each circumstance and reporting poor practice where it is observed (RCVS, 2021a). The participants' characterisation however, is quite different; they appear to identify with a lived code of conduct rather than a codified one. Elements of a normative cultural pillar (Scott, 2008b), appear to have evolved which are not implemented by the controlling forces within the profession, but seem to be coping mechanisms to respond to the context of the profession, which itself is in part a product of the controlling forces of the profession. The

mentors apply this perception of collegiality to the profession as a whole, which they feel has become more supportive, despite some of the mentors providing, through their negative trigger events, powerful evidence of an absence of collegiality, perhaps rationalising their poor experiences as vestiges of a masculine profession (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Clarke and Knights, 2019) which they believe is now changing.

Although there appear to be many features of the current professional environment that feel driven by business expectations, these vet mentors see a shared culture amongst practising professionals to support each other.

6.4.2 A profession defined by change

In line with the veterinary profession literature, outlined in 2.3.2, change and its impact on professional life features significantly in both the vet mentor and convenor accounts of profession and appears to be a key element in defining profession for those within it. Significant areas that the participants note are; changes in ownership structures, and encroaching commercialisation and managerialism and the impacts those changes have on what constitutes professional success, career opportunities and expectations and mental health. These issues have been rigorously discussed within the profession (Allister, 2015; 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018). The impacts have been noted on the increasing precarity of processional identity and ensuing levels of anxiety (Knights and Clarke, 2018) of the shift in emphasis towards a greater valuing of efficiency and performance targets (Allister, 2016) over public service, alongside ensuing work intensification (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018). The mentors in this study extend understanding of these impacts by providing first hand detail of how they play out in practice and particularly when mentoring. What emerges as new insight from this study, is detail of the nature of the state of flux of veterinary professional identity (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016), particularly as it is experienced when mentoring. For example, mentors and mentees are experiencing the profession very differently. Career paths for mentors and their mentees are likely to be very different, expectations surrounding what constitutes career success are also

likely to be different, due to opportunities to specialise (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) and shifting corporate structures (Henry and Treanor, 2015). Mentors note changes in clients and their expectations and these changes contribute to anxiety experienced by vets (Knights and Clarke, 2018). Clients have changed in their reactions to costs and in their readiness to complain and use social media to comment about services they received. Mentors detail the impact this has on day-to-day practice and the support for new vets. They note changes in the composition of the profession in terms of gender, socio-economic groupings and cultural make-up (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Hobson and Malderez, 2013). However, with their acceptance of certain stereotypical positions, such as high-achieving, self sacrificing perfectionism (Allister, 2014), mentors appear to be mentoring at entry point to a predominantly masculinised profession (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2019) whose norms threaten to hinder the progression of newer and different members of the profession (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Treanor and Marlow, 2021). This multiplicity and the shifting nature of professional identity, poses particular challenges for mentors as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b) as they seek to understand and translate professional identity for their mentees. It is argued that a formed professional identity will aid the competence of new professionals in decision-making (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019). The development of *self-environment-behaviour connections* (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019, p. 153), which allow mentees, in workplace contexts that challenge their values and behaviours, to use workplace experience to inform identity development becomes difficult to achieve where professional identity can be so variable, particularly between the professional generations.

This study makes contributions to understanding a wider range of professions as both endogenous and exogenous change is a feature of the empirical world of professionals more generally (Scott, 2008b). Thus the findings of this study, initially, align with the significance afforded to change by institutional conceptualisations of profession. The UK veterinary sector shares several of the noted endogenous changes (Scott, 2008b) experienced by and fuelling anxieties (Knights and Clarke, 2018) within wider professional contexts. The

tendency to increased complexity, internal differentiation and division of labour as specialised and expert knowledge grows and expands (Scott, 2008b) has become a feature of the UK profession (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). We see the participants confirming this tendency, in relation to specialisation, which Steve sees as an opportunity, and Richard sees as significant for mentoring, as mentees require support to navigate the choices and James identifies as a challenge as career structures are as yet unclear.

Fragmentation of professions has been a consequence of specialisation (Scott, 2008) and the participants note different cultures and normative behaviours in different groupings. Helen details the shared culture of equine specialists and Andy of orthopaedic surgeons. There are one or two accounts of para professionals featuring in veterinary life (James), the participants noting the profession becoming less secure than is normally assumed (Hobson-West and Timmons, 2016). Some of the participants are examples of what Scott (2008b) describes as hyphenated professionals, i.e. those not engaged in direct practice. James spent much of his military life engaged with non-veterinary related assignments, Richard has spent periods of his professional life in university settings and David and Martin now no longer practise medicine directly, but are predominantly engaged in managing recruitment, training, development and mentoring.

The most significant changes raised by the participants that are impacting the profession are exogenous, emanating from broader societal changes (Scott, 2008b). As Scott (2008b, p. 230) notes, since the early 19th Century

> "we witness the emergence of a large range of collective actors, both private, corporate and public forms, who play increasingly central roles in virtually every sector of modern society".

The UK veterinary sector has not been immune to the rise in size and social power of organisations within the sector (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Vet Times, 2018) and the participants explore the impact that this change in structure has for the profession and their

mentoring. They note a shift in expectations of different generations and in how success is defined, which is perhaps contributing to confused conceptions of professional identity (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). Vets can no longer anticipate the rewards of practice ownership, are more likely to be employed and to see power and wealth “transferred upwards” (Anna).

Scott (2008b) details the phenomenon of change in the nature of clients for professions, with a shift to corporate and collective clients. Knights and Clarke (2018) cite the increasing power of clients in competitive consumerist environments, leading to an erosion of respect for vets. This study, however, emphasises a further level of change in clients, which exposes the emotional labour central to the role of vets (Morris and Feldman, 1996). Rather than the nature of clients changing in their type (Scott, 2008b), vets continue to interact with the same sorts of clients, families and pet and farm owners and managers, but those clients are experiencing a series of societal changes which is altering the way that they interact with vets. The participants detail the common misperceptions held by the public, fed by the media; for example, that being a vet is an easier job than being a doctor. They report changing attitudes to money and the cost of medical services, the feeling that vets charge too much and earn more than they really do. Participants also point to the readiness of clients to complain and use social media to do so in a very exposing way, and, similar to the experiences of academics, (Knights and Clarke, 2018) they feel constantly scrutinised either by clients, practice owners or business stakeholders. For participants, these changes seem to signal a lack of awareness or reducing respect for the intellectual, relational, emotional and physical demands of the profession akin to the erosion of autonomy and respect described by Knights and Clarke (2018), flowing from the range of managerialist and market controls now a central part of professional life. Disrespectful clients negatively impact the mental wellbeing of vets (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022) and the emerging insight from this study is that clients do this by challenging vets’ sense of connectedness with clients, community and society, which seems so central to vets’, earlier explored, professional identity. The

essence of a vet's working life appears to be characterised by practising in an environment of shifting and unpredictable behaviour and expectations, requiring perpetual professional reinvention. Knights and Clarke (2018) explore these shared changes from the perspective of the anxiety they generate in professional environments, whereas this study considers how they impact conceptions of profession, professional obligation and mentoring.

Vets share characteristics with some service workers where emotional labour is a significant feature of their work life. Emotional labour, the act of "expressing organizationally desired emotions during service transactions" (Morris and Feldman, 1996, p. 987), is evident in the veterinary context, where expectations of emotion are shaped by profession rather than simply organisation. As with physicians, it seems reasonable that a warm, friendly, empathetic manner is likely to be more effective (Blasi *et al.*, 2001; Larson and Yao, 2005), although the impact of behaviour is to be seen in the quality of the relationship with the client rather than the patient. There are clear parallels with service workers, and vets clearly feel keenly the changing nature of clients (Korczynski, 2003; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022). Service workers are likely to have been recruited because they have pro-customer attitudes (Korczynski, 2003); the vet mentors feel very warmly towards clients and their animals (Cake *et al.*, 2019). Service workers consider the pleasurable aspects of emotional labour to be what is most satisfying about their jobs (Korczynski, 2003) and for most of the participants their connectedness with owners, families and community is intensely felt. The sense of bewilderment and sadness at complaining customers aligns with Korczynski's (2003) assessment that the pain of irate customers, for service workers, is all the more sharply felt because of the professional service worker's very nature. Within the veterinary context, rude and complaining clients (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022) seem to exacerbate the erosion of respect for the profession (Knights and Clarke, 2018). Their behaviour seems to weaken the profession's sense of identity (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) by mounting a dispiriting challenge to the championing of expertise in the face of managerialism (Hotho, 2008) which seem fundamental to professional identity.

Although Scott's Three Pillars Institutional Typology (Scott, 2008b) acknowledges the impact of a series of common changes for professions, the framework fails to capture adequately how existential change can be a defining feature of profession. These wider exogenous changes (2008b) combine to be bringing about significant shifts in "institutional logic", the widely accepted practices and symbolic constructions and principles which can be said to govern institutions (Friedland and Alford, 1991). Several of the participants voice discomfort when relaying stories which are at the juncture between codified professional obligations, which, above all, have animal welfare in the central position, and newer and emerging institutional logics which are giving increased importance to business priorities (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). Tisha expresses this through instilling in her mentees that they must use the best quality suture materials and conveys her dismay at vet students being "elbowed" out of the way in a teaching hospital to increase throughput. Indeed, her dismay at this practice caused her to leave a particular employer.

Anna discusses this in her account of the German Shepherd, where business priorities won over what felt ethical and true to her sense of profession. These tensions seem to provide detail of Scott's (2008b, p. 232) perceived changes in society's beliefs about the value of public service versus private gain, enhanced by the ascendance of the neoliberal doctrine in recent decades whereby the market determines social value, rather than previous concepts such as civic duty, social trusteeship, the service ideal or social contract (Wilensky, 1964). Anna's example exemplifies the tension felt at this shift. A further example of where this is happening within the UK veterinary profession, is in a shift in ownership models towards larger corporate structures (Henry and Treanor, 2015). The participants describe this as a shift from the community-oriented practice of the past, based on the highest values to treat and care for others, to one less civic-minded in its endeavours and more concerned with the value of technical expertise and for-profit enterprise. However, these shifts in logic are not reflected in codified expectations of the RCVS. Time and again the participants relay accounts which illustrate that the shift in institutional logics is impacting practice at the

coalface, requiring them as practitioners, to exist in a state of perpetual professional discomfort and reinvention, a state of flux (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). Andy cites a shift from treating the family and the patient to treating the condition. His account concerning Olly the Labrador illustrates professional norms evolving in practice. The vet mentors are attempting to enculturate new vets into this shifting landscape where their own logics and sense of identity are being tested and challenged (Armitage-Chan and May, 2019). Vets share anxieties with other professions as they adapt to changing paradigms, for example both vets and academics exist in workplaces where personal attacks on social media have become commonplace (Knights and Clarke, 2018).

By acknowledging the significant contributions that these changes are visiting on the profession, and acknowledging how UK veterinary professionals see change and their responsiveness to it as fundamental to their professional identity at this time, this study not only adds previously unexplored detail of the impact of well-documented change (Allister, 2015; Henry and Treanor, 2015; Allister, 2016; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018) on the role of the mentor, it also extends Scott's (2008a; 2008b) conceptualisation of professions. This profession, for these participants, rests not only predominantly on a single defining institutional pillar, which characterises the nature of the profession, albeit subject to attempts by their profession to codify normative behaviour. The profession has developed uncodified normative behaviour, which differs from codified expectations, and which is shaped by the endogenous and exogenous change to which the profession is subject. The context within which a profession exists is powerful in shaping professional identity at this time. The identified impact of widely experienced changes on professional identity may resonate with a wider range of professions, some common experiences are already being explored (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018).

In summary, Figure 5 provides an illustration of the UK veterinary profession as interpreted from the accounts of the participants. Their conception includes what can be interpreted as

cultural cognitive elements (Scott, 2008b) in their accounts. When they refer to practising procedures, picking up tips and tricks, keeping knowledge current, the participants allude to acknowledged understandings of what constitute relevant areas of expertise for their profession, their jurisdictional claims (Wilensky, 1964; Clarke and Knights, 2015). Clarification for these areas is provided by the areas of responsibility outlined in the Code of Conduct, shown as an overlaying feature of the illustration.

Their interpretation of profession also includes what can be interpreted as codified areas of normative behaviour, (Scott, 2008b) akin to Scott's normative pillar. When the participants discuss practising honestly, ethically and maintaining high professional standards, they allude to acknowledged normative behaviour which is also codified in their Code of Conduct. This is prescriptive behaviour, defined by the profession as appropriate because of the role of the professional and not behaviour which is focused on the self-interest of individual professionals (Scott, 2008b). These elements are identified in the diagram as elements of professional identity concerned with the craft of being a veterinary professional. Figure 5 presents additional dimensions to conceptions of profession to those offered by Scott (2008b). Participants describe normative behaviour which is not codified; the shared sense of connectedness with each other and community and the shared sense of collegiality. The sense of understanding what it is like to be buffeted by the waves of change and the sense of being there to support each other are presented as fundamental to their professional identity.

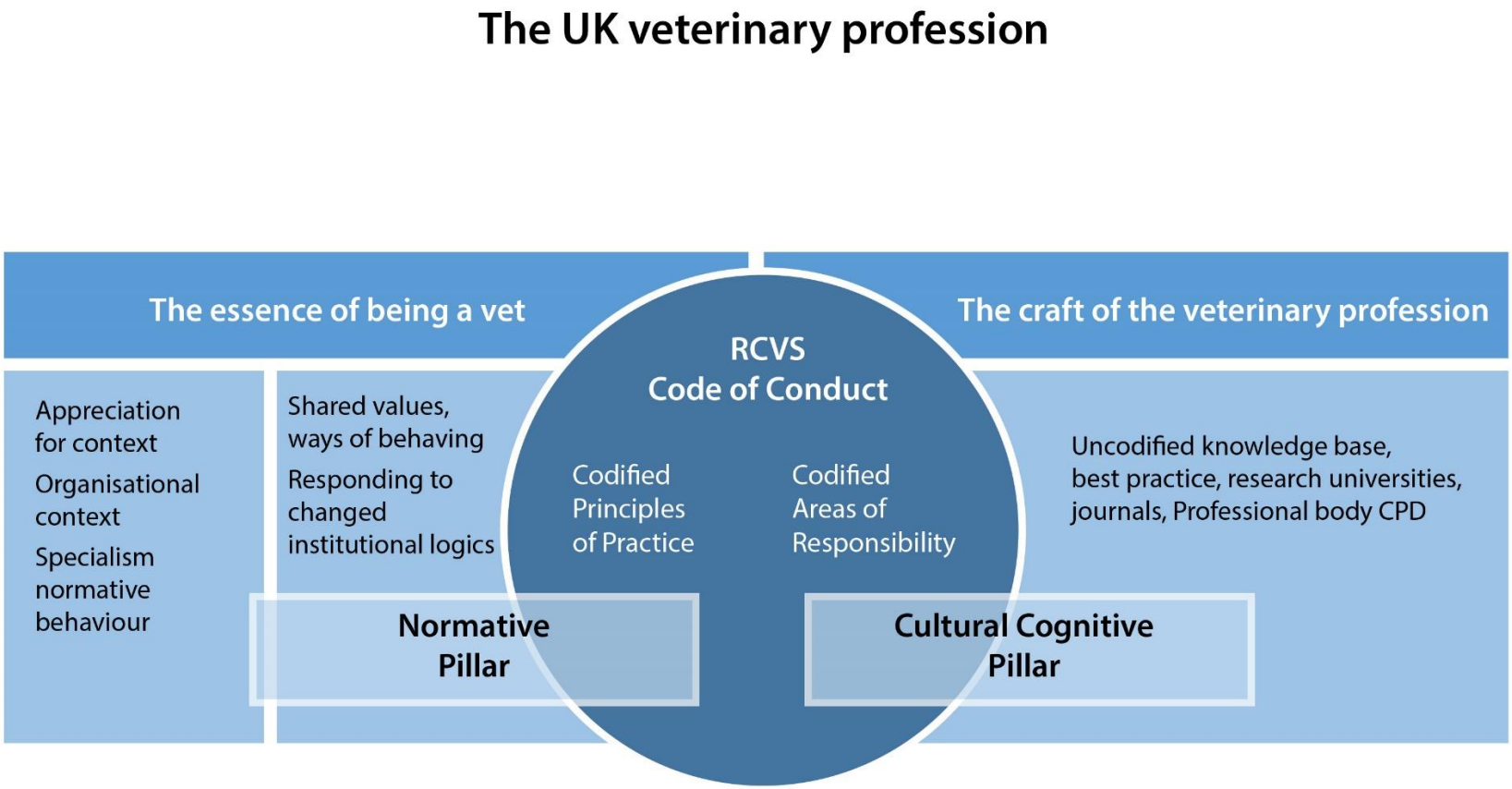

Figure 5 Participant conceptualisation of the UK veterinary profession

The next section will explore how vets act as change agents (Scott, 2008b) within their profession and how characteristics of the profession can hamper them in this role, and in particular why this complex conception of profession is important for vet mentors as Carrier Professional change agents (Scott, 2008b). The different roles of change agents and how they interact with dimensions of profession are illustrated on Figure 6.

6.4.3 Professionals as institutional change agents

Within this complex patchwork of ingredients which constitute the UK veterinary profession; cultural cognitive pillar, normative pillar (Scott, 2008b) and collectively constructed normative behaviour developed as responses to a rapidly changing environment, individual vets can exercise the ability to influence their profession. Vets influence their profession in different ways, connected with their differing roles of engagement with profession, aligning with Scott's (2008b) institutional change agents, their influences are charted on Figure 6. Clinical Professions, the vets on the ground, working in a variety of settings, can contribute to the evolving knowledge base by interacting with Creative Professionals, those who work in research, in Universities and pharmaceutical companies, regarding their experiences of day to day problem solving and interactions with individual clients. The participants discuss this engagement as they recount their obligations to participate in CPD. By attending workshops and lectures to keep their practice current Clinical Professionals can also help to shape the broader body of knowledge which informs the profession. Andy suggests doing of more of this as a quid pro quo for mentoring, which he sees as a fundamental part of the scaffolding of veterinary education. Participant accounts suggest that Clinical Professionals (Scott, 2008b) are developing their own shared understandings about normative behaviour in the face of overwhelming change and substantial shifts in institutional logic..

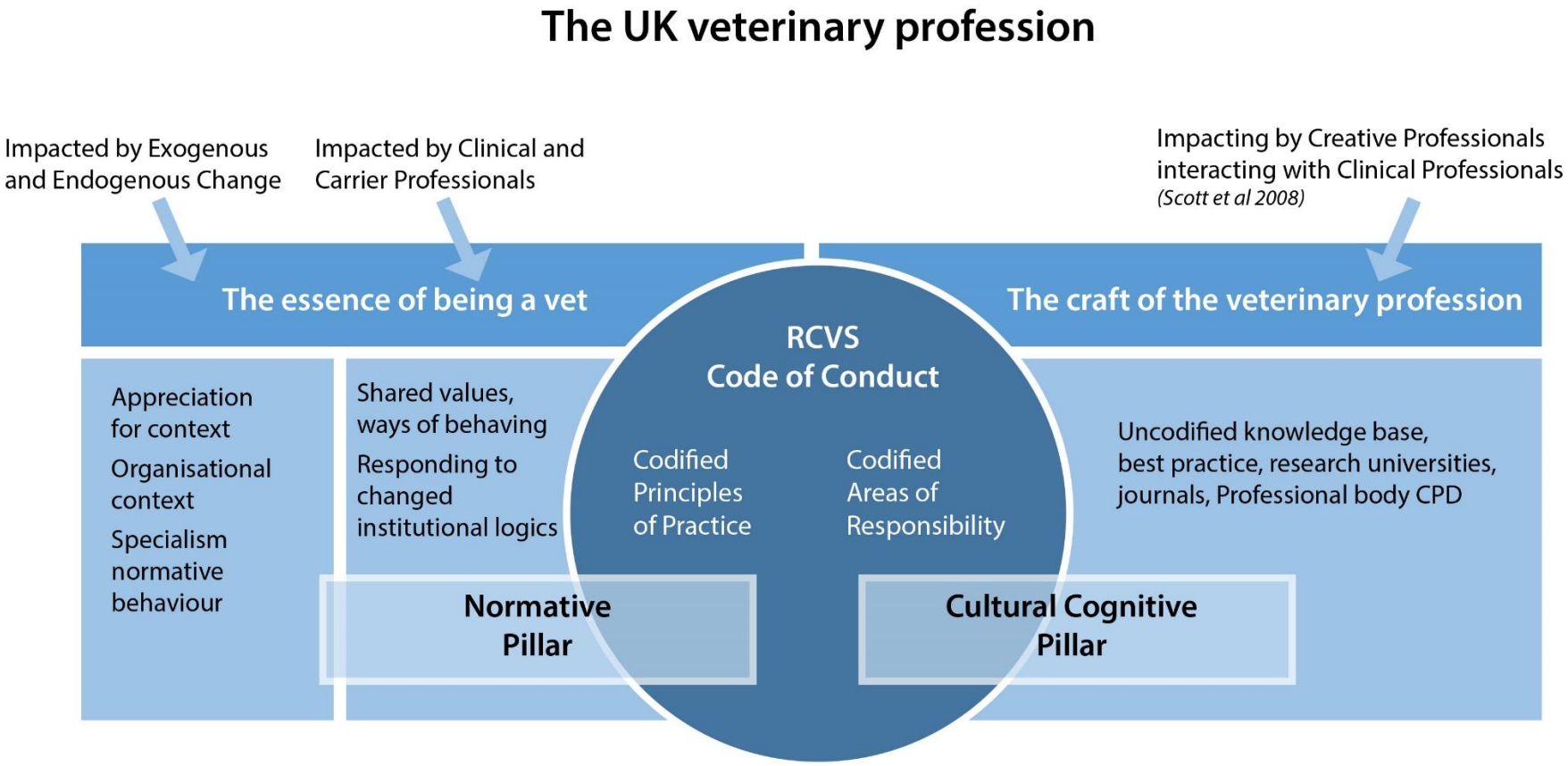

Figure 6 The UK veterinary profession and its change agents

However, there is little in the accounts of the mentors which indicates that they are able to feed back to universities their experience of working with newly qualified vets and thus impact the profession and its educational institutions more directly as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b). Richard's scheme works in partnership with a University which provides mentor training for those supervising EMS, but a dialogic relationship is not described. Most of the vet mentors work in devolved organisational schemes that are separated from the higher education process. Some convenor and mentor accounts imply acceptance of some of the dominant, somewhat masculinised narratives of the profession; that new graduates are not confident or competent (Duijn *et al.*, 2020), that they have unrealistic expectations of the profession (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010) and are somehow deficient if they do not wish for example to pursue a career in farm or food security work. Rather than impact the development of new institutional logics, this suggests that mentors are developing and sharing the means to survive within current logics.

The collectively constructed normative behaviour evolving in response to a rapidly changing environment has particular significance for vet mentors acting as Carrier Professional institutional change agents (Scott, 2008) in their mentorship of those entering and moving through the profession. Scott (2008b) defines Carrier Professionals as being the educators within a profession who are tasked with interpreting the profession and diffusing it. There are apparent parallels in the roles of the vet mentors and Scott's Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b), but the findings of this study extend understanding of Carrier Professionals by providing detail of how the mentors first conceptualise their profession, giving weight to how it is shaped by context and by obligation, before interpreting and translating it for new members of the profession. This study also provides evidence that prevailing norms of a profession and priorities of coping in a challenging environment may hamper Carrier Professionals' (Scott, 2008b) ability to influence change and offer new scripts for the profession (Hotho, 2008).

In the next section the findings extend the notion of a Carrier Professional further to consider how and why mentors mentor, and the links to what they feel are defining obligations of their profession, which influence their sense of obligation to behave as an institutional change agent within the veterinary profession.

6.5 PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATION

Chapter 2 considered some expectations regarding professional obligation in the UK veterinary sector that might emerge when adopting certain perspectives of profession in the consideration of professional obligation. From a more jurisdictional perspective (Wilensky, 1964; Arluke, 2018), professional obligations associated with the veterinary profession were predicted to include the obligation to be educated to an appropriate level, to maintain currency with scientific knowledge, and acknowledged methods for responding to particular problems. The participants, indeed, touched on the need to maintain currency of knowledge (Anna, James) and elaborated on the academic attainment required of members of the profession (James, Janika, Richard). They also elaborated upon the complex series of relational skills expected of veterinary professionals, thus aligning with traditional views of professional authority emanating from jurisdictional claims over certain knowledge and procedures (Wilensky, 1964).

From a functionalist interpretation, (Marshall, 1951; Goode, 1957; Goss, 1961), obligations were predicted to include maintaining certain levels of expected service and adhering to the norms of the profession. The participants, as previously discussed, did characterise their obligations as codified expectations in the form of the underpinning principles and guidance provided by the RCVS (2021a). However, their conception of norms, for example, collegiality, appear to be constructed at ground level and often in response to change and were sometimes additional or contrary to codified norms. The participant accounts of profession and professional obligation interweave obligation for areas of expertise (Wilensky, 1964) and responsibility, akin to a service ideal (Wilensky, 1964) with mutually constructed understandings of appropriate behaviour. In doing so, they transform discretionary behaviour

that can be likened to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) into felt professional obligations. From this it seems that professional obligation is learned and can be comprised not only of codified elements of a role but also discretionary behaviour for which they feel a compulsion, and these self-determined obligations are important for participants in understanding and defining profession and their role within it. They use their professional obligations to describe and define what their profession is and what it means to be part of the profession (Scott, 2008b). These participants see profession as a blend of what they are required to do and how they are required to behave, illustrated in Figure 7. On the one hand, literature which investigates the profession suggests it does not appear to be supportive. It has been described as perfectionist (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) and prone to judgementalism (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). The severe recruitment, retention and mental wellbeing challenges (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019) being experienced by the profession and ensuing high rates of suicide (Bartram and Baldwin, 2008; Bartram and Baldwin, 2010; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018) would suggest a professional environment that does not support effectively. However, the participants define the profession as being collegiate and connected; and link their mentoring to this felt obligation to support. For them, to be a vet means you support each other and you look out for each other. In this way notions of professional obligation inform notions of profession and for this group, being a professional is being somebody that helps others within the profession.

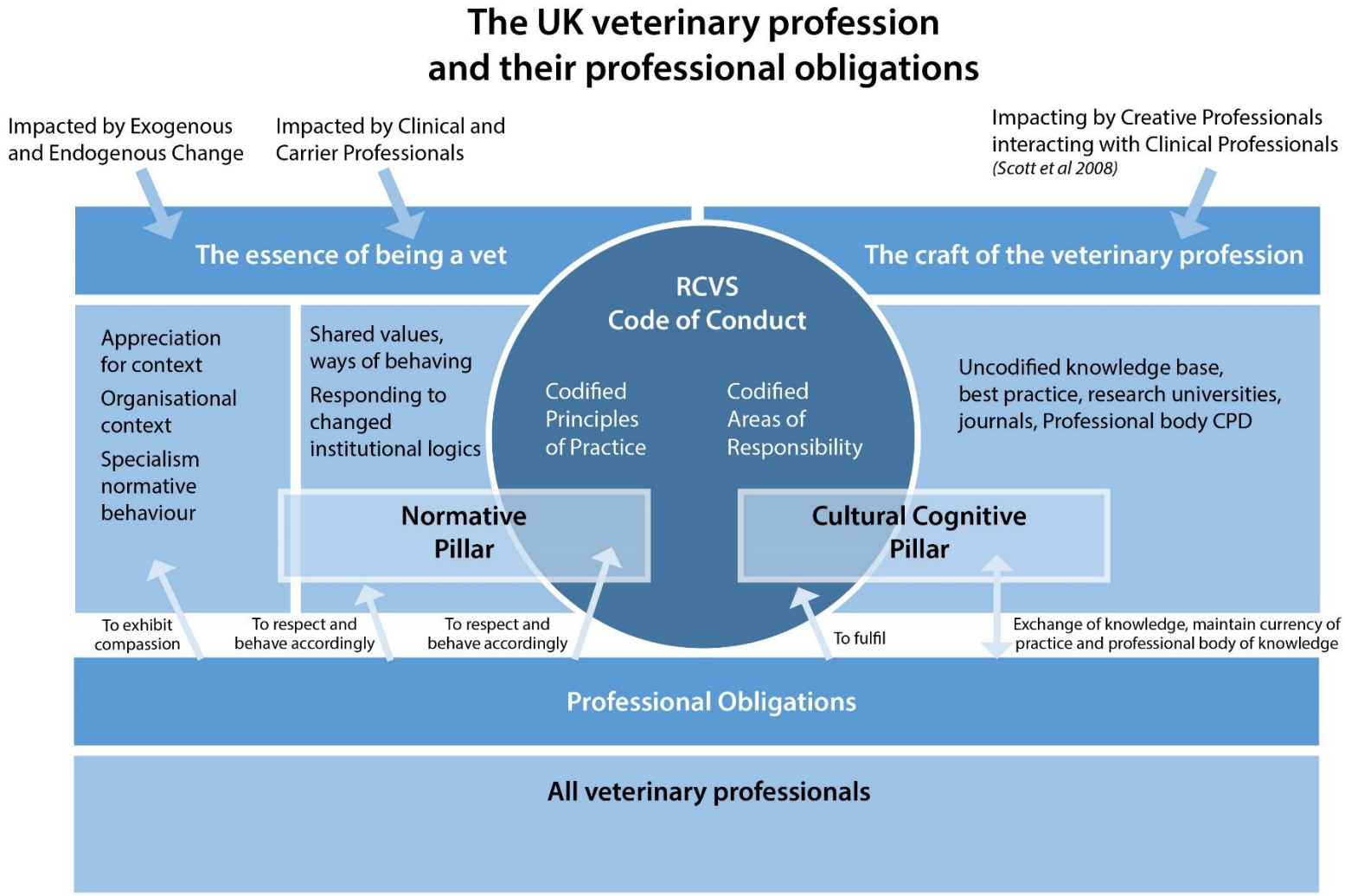

Figure 7 The UK veterinary profession and their professional obligations

From an institutionalist perspective, obligations might also include contributions to institutional growth and change as defined by areas of agency (Scott, 2008b). Creative Professionals, it is argued (Scott, 2008b), will contribute to the development of the profession through their research and publications and by engaging with Clinical Professionals who can share how new learning is experienced in practice. Clinical Professionals, of which mentors are a subset, engage with profession in a number of ways. They contribute to the evolving knowledge base by interacting with Creative Professionals; they contribute to normative behaviours in their interactions with colleagues and clients; and in the case of the UK Veterinary profession, contribute to the perpetual reinvention of normative behaviour, negotiated in response to change and shared through role modelling and the sharing of expertise. The mentoring role most closely aligns with being a Carrier Professional, however, that task, is challenging in an environment where institutional logic (Scott, 2008b) is undergoing profound and constant change and within a profession that is bound by unhealthy norms (Allister, 2014; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Knights and Clarke, 2018). The role of the mentor is both challenging and incredibly important for instituting change, and yet likely hampered in bringing about change by the very identity that mentors as Carrier Professionals seek to interpret, translate and diffuse (Scott, 2008b). The mentor as a Carrier Professional is tasked with interpreting and transmitting notions of profession, understanding its identity and obligations (Scott, 2008b), acting as an image bearer for the profession (Erikson, 1971), but there appear to be different versions of profession existing simultaneously here, with conceptions constantly shifting and being renegotiated. The state of flux of veterinary professional identity (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) therefore has particular relevance for vet mentors as Carrier Professionals. Central to participant conceptions of the profession are connectedness and collegiality. Earlier in this chapter, their drive to mentor was linked to these defining characteristics of profession. They see the profession as connected and collegiate, despite accounts to the contrary, therefore they feel compelled to mentor. Collegiality and connectedness are also likely to be central to their interpretation and

translation of profession to new vets, thereby these Carrier Professionals have an important role to play in contributing to a profession which continues to value mentoring. Section 6.6.2 will return to further consider mentoring as a professional obligation.

This enhanced understanding of mentors as Carrier Professionals and their central role within professions which have been found to be evolving in response to profound and shared change (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018) may be of value to others engaged with the understanding and development of professions.

6.6 EXPLANATORY THEORIES OF MENTORING

6.6.1 Mentoring as a series of attributes

Section 4.4.1 illustrated the range of mentoring functions that the vet mentors become engaged in. Their accounts illustrate extensive coverage of both roles identified in Kram's broadly accepted conceptualisation of mentoring (1983); support for career development and psychosocial roles. In terms of career development support, we see vets, for example, engaging in organisational enculturation. James is keen that vets understand the culture of veterinary practice in the military and both Richard, Helen and Martin emphasise the support required to make career choices within the profession. The mentors report extensive engagement with psychosocial support, particularly in the face of the mental health challenges in the profession, but also in the face of so much change. A key focus for most of the vet mentors was support for developing core skills of the role, a function which is broadly absent from Kram's (1983) conceptualising of mentoring roles. It has been argued that role-modelling should be considered a third function of mentoring and viewed separately from other psychosocial facets of mentoring (Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Ragins, 1993), and the UK veterinary sector provides an interesting context to consider this. In a context where a tendency to perfectionism (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) has been identified as problematic, an emphasis on role-modelling could exacerbate that tendency (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018) and encourage a belief in the potential to become omniscient experts and yet some participants describe their mentoring to focus specifically in this area. Proficiency in

the core skills of the veterinary role goes beyond diagnostic and treatment competence (Allister, 2016), it involves mastery of both technical knowledge and putting that knowledge and technical skill to use in practical and often stressful situations, alongside proficiency in a series of complex psychosocial competencies. These competencies involve, for example, ethical decision-making in complex situations (Batchelor, Creed and McKeegan, 2015), client communication skills, which must hold up in situations fraught with emotional tensions (Batchelor and McKeegan, 2012), and behaving in a manner appropriate to shared norms of the profession. Thus, core skills include incorporating the elements of emotional labour discussed earlier (Morris and Feldman, 1996), adopting acceptable emotional behaviour in complex medical transactions. Mastery of the craft of the profession brings all of these elements together as vets address complex situations, and are expected to bounce, good naturedly, from one complex situation to the next.

This complex and far-reaching web of mentoring content maps onto the mentors' conceptions of profession, which are comprised of three core elements. Firstly, *what* one is expected to do as part of the profession, the core areas of expertise and overarching obligations, the cultural cognitive pillar (Scott, 2008b). Secondly, *how* one is expected to carry out those functions of the profession, in terms of underpinning principles, values and behavioural norms, the normative pillar (Scott, 2008b) and lastly, what being in the profession is *like,* with profession defined, in part, by the circumstances within which it practises.

In the case of what being in the UK veterinary profession is like, this is characterised by waves of endogenous and exogenous change (Scott, 2008b), detailed in 2.3.2 to which professionals collectively and perpetually decide how to respond. Mentors, as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b), find themselves responsible for holding this multidimensional and shifting conception of profession in their consciousness as they seek to interpret, translate and diffuse it, one bitch spay at a time. Mentors work alongside other professionals in their endeavours to support colleagues, although little opportunity is evident for them to

feed back their experiences to influence the education system. For example, professional development initiatives and industry schemes such as VetGDP, an industry-wide voluntary graduate development initiative (RCVS, 2021b), provide much of the development of core practical skills; however mentors, from their accounts of what they try to achieve through mentoring, find themselves in the position of engaging with mentees across the many dimensions of professional life. They are able to do so, it can be determined from their accounts, because they have an acute awareness of what being in the profession is like. Figure 8 illustrates how the mentors, through their mentoring, are engaged in mentoring which encompasses all aspects of what they have previously defined as the profession and its obligations. Through each procedure, they are mindful not only of the technical techniques that they may be role-modelling, but how one interacts and supports colleagues (Andy's plate spinning surgery account) and how one interacts with clients (Bobby's cancer diagnosis) and supports a colleague through a complaint that shatters their confidence (Erin's social media anecdote). This small subset of veterinary professionals are therefore tasked with holding in their consciousness the completeness of what it means to be a vet, and translating and diffusing this consciousness as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b) to and for the rest of the profession.

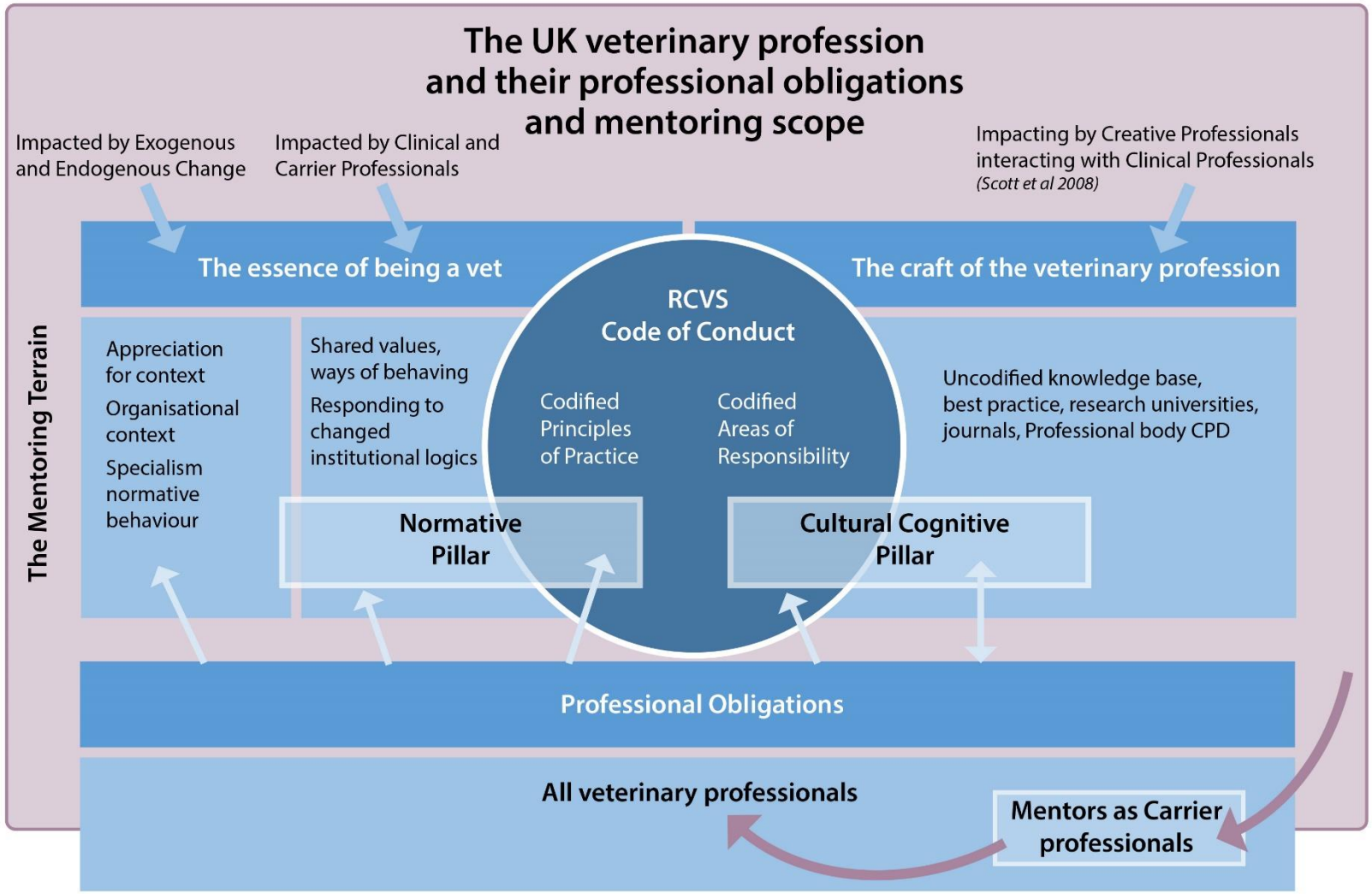

Figure 8 The mentoring terrain

6.6.2 Mentoring and professional obligation

Faced with such a complex task, an immediate question arises, why are mentors drawn to mentoring? Section 5.2.4 has presented and Table 23 (p.171) has collated examples from the data where participants consider mentoring and professional obligation.

Through their mentoring, the mentors seem to be engaging in activity which in other professional contexts has been described as professional obligation (Vance, 2002; Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Ryan, 2021). Despite some participants rejecting the label obligation, their alternative language (Table 23) has parallels with descriptions of professional obligation in other professional settings. Given that all of these mentors volunteer their services as mentors at the expectation of convenors, they can be seen to be acting altruistically (Granfield, 2007; Ryan, 2021). They attempt to make positive contributions to the profession (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019; Ryan, 2021) by helping newer colleagues to become enculturated within the profession and to progress, albeit subject to the limitations that result from the unhealthy norms evidenced in the veterinary profession (Allister, 2014; Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016; Clarke and Knights, 2018).

The trigger events findings evidence mentoring as being closely connected to personal morality (Janzen and Phelan, 2019; Ryan, 2021) and the language used in describing motivations to mentor suggests that vet mentors experience social responsibility or a sense of duty beyond their day to day practice (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Ryan, 2021). Where vet mentors present a desire to be involved in generative activities, they suggest a compulsion to inspire (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018), sustain and nurture inclusion and future talent in the profession (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019).

Further lenses which have been previously brought to the analysis of mentoring in context, explored in Chapter 2, provide some insight into what may be explaining the engagement of

mentors in the veterinary context and the strongest themes to emerge from the participant accounts of what brought them to mentoring will now be considered in the light of these theoretical frameworks. The themes included, firstly, mentors reacting to trigger events both positive and negative, early in their careers which has left them feeling an obligation to mentor. Secondly, a strong connection with the profession, including a compassion for those within it, derived from understanding the challenges of what it is like to be part of the profession has been interpreted as a driver for mentoring, as has personal satisfaction derived from engaging in generative behaviour. Sometimes this has been sparked by prior teaching experience. Table 24 captures examples of how explanatory theories of mentoring can illuminate examples from the data and demonstrates that the emphasis within the accounts is for mentoring being explained as a felt obligation to engage in discretionary behaviour, which transcends a particular organisation and is connect with the profession and those practising within it.

Table 24 Mentor motivation linked to explanatory theories of mentoring

Mentor Motivation	Alignment with Social Exchange Theory, cycle of reciprocity evident	Social Learning Theory, OCB modelling evident	Professional Obligation - Professional Citizenship Behaviour
Reactive mentoring – trigger events Negative		**Janika** "we failed her […] I don't want to see that again basically."	**Erin** "I've been put through so many things that I would never want a new grad to be put through again" **Helena** "I thought I want to help to minimise these instances"
Reactive mentoring – trigger events - Positive	**Andy** "very much the concept of it's a circle,"	**Andy** "or a relay race if you like and the baton is passed to you… And then you pass a baton on… **Steve** positive mentoring "that has allowed me to […] adopt the role that I have adopted now"	
(Com) passion for profession	**Alex** "You want to help your colleagues, to be as good as they can be, in order to pass on,.... you want to give something back for the people, […] especially the students, I had some very good vet mentors myself and you feel you want to repay that for the next generation."	**Andy** "I've improved… one infinitesimal part of the world, I have improved by making that vet more comfortable doing their next op, which will be more safe and more successful,"	**Alex's** "we are obliged to do it on a more human level for the sake of our colleagues and our patients really… so that the profession improves and is fit for purpose." **Janika's** "I want everyone to, not fail. Not fail, us, I don't want us to fail animals and I don't want to fail our owners and I don't want us to fail that we make a mistake"
Personal satisfaction			**Helena** "you are almost as helpful to another human being in their development within the profession that you like and it's just something that brings great joy to me."
Prior teaching experience		**Tisha:** "it was part of my role to teach students, neutering and things and so I discovered that I really liked it"	

Discussung Table 24 further, some mentors make mention of a cycle of obligation; Anna discusses those professionals that helped her during EMS, Andy and Steve both had important relationships with early career mentors and Alex makes, albeit brief, mention of good mentors in his early career. Mentor-mentee reciprocity (Ensher, Thomas and Murphy, 2001) has been cited as an exchange which is at the heart of the mentoring relationship, with benefits flowing between the participants. The mentor might benefit from the relationship in terms of intrinsic satisfaction (Clutterbuck, 2008; Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016), and several of the participants point to deriving intense personal satisfaction from mentoring, using words such as “enriching” and “pleasure” to describe how they feel at their mentees’ success, a feeling of pleasure and well-being seemingly derived from generativity (McAdams and Logan, 2004; Doerwald *et al.*, 2021). It feels, through their descriptions of what they intend to achieve through mentoring, that convenors and mentors intend the benefit in these mentoring relationships to flow towards the mentee (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005), which is to be expected. The exchange in the relationship between mentor and mentee, as benefits are reciprocated, which is anticipated by Social Exchange Theory (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013), and the associated cost benefit calculations of the participants of mentoring (Dominguez, 2013), do not feature strongly in the accounts of the vet mentors although some mention the sense of feeling good.

Alex, Erin, Anna and Richard all mention the longer-term business benefits of mentoring and several mentors make mention of the costs incurred through mentoring and the difficulties of juggling mentoring with running a business (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). As anticipated (Allen *et al.*, 1997), their accounts are modulated by the overriding significance of the human requirement to mentor. Illustrated in Table 16 in Chapter 4, the language of the participants as they recount their mentoring trigger events focuses less on the notion of balance being restored by their mentoring, and more on the effects of modelling, either of positive behaviour experienced earlier in their careers, or as a reaction to a lack of support or negative mentoring. The accounts of Andy and Steve cite the modelling of what can be

likened to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) by their early career mentors as engendering in them a sense of obligation to behave in the same way. A sense that transcends organisation. As mentees, earlier in their careers, and as mentors in their current professional lives, the mentors appear to be contributing to a relay of passing on of social capital associated with being a veterinary professional (Portes, 1998), making assets available without any immediate requests for a return on that investment. Coleman (1988) might argue that historically mentors have shared these assets in the certainty that the norms of the profession will ensure that others will share similarly in future. However, the participants have expressed sincere doubts that future generations of vets will have the same understandings of their professional obligation to support future generations, much as mentors are trying to share a consistent concept of a collegiate and connected profession. This position could in part be due to the powerful influence of pervasive and not always justified views of new graduates to the profession (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010; Duijn *et al.*, 2020) and yet they continue to mentor, despite this clack of certainty.

This study provides insights as to why prior mentoring has an impact on readiness and felt obligation to mentor (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). The prior good mentoring experiences of Andy and Steve for example, appear to have influenced their conception of what being a good veterinary professional is, as anticipated from Social Learning Theory via the influencing effects of OCB observed by Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone (2000) and therefore part of their professional identity appears to be bound up in mentoring. Conversely, the negative episodes shape for mentors their conception of what being a good professional is not.

This study also extends understanding brought to mentoring from Social Learning Theory (SLT) (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000). Donaldson et al. (2000) described mentoring as a manifestation of citizenship behaviour (OCB), defined as discretionary employee behaviour, not prescribed or rewarded, which goes beyond what would normally

be required for the role (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) with its antecedents of organisational commitment behaviour (Porter *et al.*, 1974). Good mentors, they argue, model OCB for their mentees (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), who then go on to exhibit OCB. Several of the participants cite good mentors in their earlier career as role-models, not only for their veterinary practice but also for their mentoring**.** More common among participant accounts are the negative prior experiences as influencers to mentor. Some other connection to profession and professional identity seems to drive them. Although the vet mentors are keen to describe mentoring as discretionary behaviour and they are all unrewarded (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), in this study they articulate their discretionary urge to mentor as an obligation. They exhibit a positive behaviour, which they feel as an obligation and an example of commitment to profession, but their accounts differ from what is understood to be professional commitment (Somech and Bogler, 2002; Bogler and Somech, 2004), in that they demonstrate concern for other members of the profession, rather than how their work in the profession impacts their own self-esteem. Their accounts in some cases seem to draw on the positive relationships that appear to be a prerequisite for strengthening identity with their organisation, engendering organisational commitment behaviour (Porter *et al.*, 1974). However, their accounts demonstrate an outward facing allegiance to their profession and those that inhabit it, rather than an allegiance to their organisation or inward concern with what the profession can do for them as individuals (Somech and Bogler, 2002; Bogler and Somech, 2004). Although Steve has stayed with the same organisation for his entire career, there is no sense in his account that his feeling of obligation is limited to his own organisation. His concerns for an exodus of experienced staff is concern expressed at the professional level. Mentors motivated in reaction to negative trigger events, take their concerns beyond organisational boundaries. Their sense of obligation for mentoring connects to their fellow professionals rather than to individual organisations. In the accounts of Alex, Richard and Steve, mentoring is closely concerned with successful operation of their businesses, but the abstract connection to profession is also evident. The mentors appear to exhibit a form of

Professional Citizenship Behaviour (PCB). This is similar to OCB, (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), but PCB, as posited here, is discretionary positive behaviour, which transcends a particular organisation and is clearly of value to the profession, it is felt as an obligation, by these individuals, to their profession.

This study therefore proposes that Professional Citizenship Behaviour (PCB) is what characterises mentoring in the UK Veterinary sector. The participants of this study, appear to experience a felt obligation to mentor, which some of them describe as professional obligation. Their sense of obligation to mentor leads them to engage in positive discretionary activity, not formally prescribed by their role or rewarded, but which is of value to their profession and which transcends obligation to any one organisation. It appears, typically, to be the product of passion and or compassion for the profession resulting from cognisance of what it is like to exist within it. PCB has been triggered, with these participants, by both negative and positive experiences and sometimes emanates from a sense of wanting to reciprocate prior good mentoring experiences.

It is for other researchers to determine whether and how positive discretionary behaviour, at the professional rather than organisational level, manifests in a wider range of professions or within specific professional mentoring communities. Given the shared nature of many of the changes that are impacting the veterinary profession; for example increased subjectivity to market forces and consumerist values (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018), growing client power and changed expectations as well as ensuing mental health and identity crises for the profession (Knights and Clarke, 2018), it seems likely that there will be interesting parallels to explore.

6.6.3 Insights for practice

This study set out to explore mentoring as manifestion of professional obligation in the context of the UK veterinary profession. Figure 9 summarises the insights from the investigation which have particular relevance for practice.

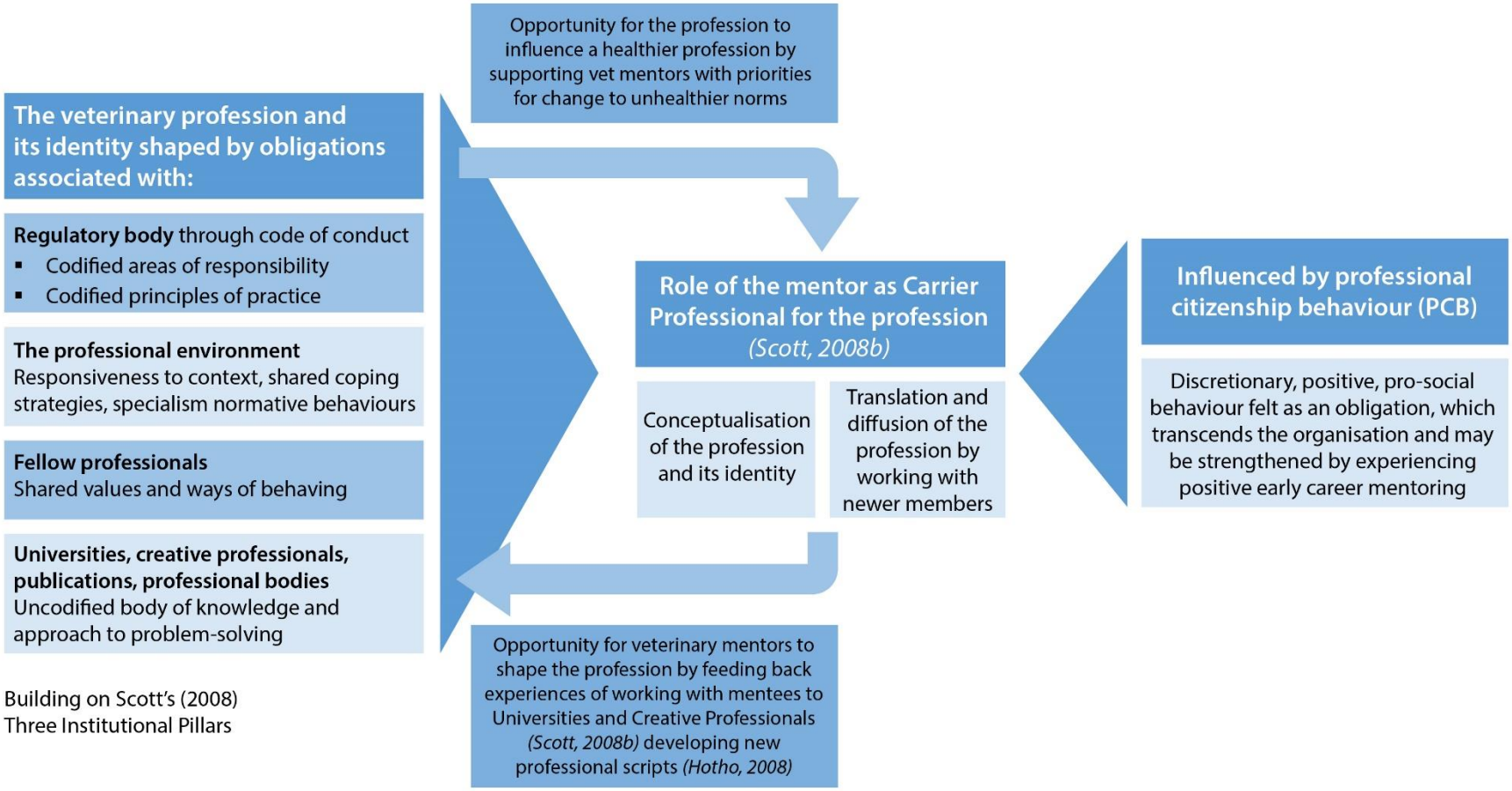

Figure 9 The role of veterinary mentors as Institutional Change Agents (Scott, 2008b) influenced by the professional citizenship behaviour (PCB) and their potential for contributing to further positive change

The study offers for practice the role of Carrier Professional (Scott, 2008b) to illuminate understandings of the mentoring role. This role has a focus within professions on teaching others, acting as image bearers of the profession and maintaining the profession's heritage (Erikson, 1971). In a professional environment faced with so many challenges (BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019), mentors would appear to play a significant role and their sustenance and support seem important. However, Carrier Professionals are conceived as institutional change agents, able to influence the development of their profession (Scott, 2008b). The structure and practice of mentoring as currently described would appear to hamper this potential agency. Despite rewarding experiences of mentoring being shared, the mentoring of the participants is entirely voluntary, undertaken alongside busy roles and often without training or very much guidance. Section 5.1 has explored the content of mentoring within the profession with the foci of learning the craft of the profession alongside understanding its essence. There are facets of the current profession which create very challenging environments for young people to be working in. The education system seems to encourage a belief in scientific certainty (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) which is eroded, alongside their confidence, when vets begin to practice. The profession's masculine culture (Clarke and Knights, 2019; Treanor and Marlow, 2021) with a tendency to perfectionism (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) and ensuing judgementalism, alongside associations of self-sacrifice and perceptions of omni-competence (Allister, 2014) contribute to a stressful and unforgiving working environment. Such environments potentially hamper the progression of women in a rapidly feminising profession (Irvine and Vermilya, 2010; Treanor and Marlow, 2021). Without support, guidance and a clear plan for change from professional institutions with the necessary influence to initiate change, mentors may miss opportunities to offer new scripts in response the unhealthy norms of a changing profession (Hotho, 2008), as they prioritise supporting new vets to survive within the profession as it currently is.

Their mentoring work provides mentors with detailed insights into the challenging transition period between higher education and becoming a fully fledged vet (Duijn *et al.*, 2020). However, none of the mentors detail active dialogue with educational institutions about those experiences. Richard and Martin's schemes benefit from relationships with universities who offer support for mentors that work with EMS students. The opportunity to share experiences more systematically, would allow for exploration of apparent mismatches between the education system and professional practice (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016).

The concept of professional obligation has been found to be important for mentors and their work in two key areas. First, professional obligations are important in shaping how mentors conceive of their profession. Certain obligations are determined by the Code of Conduct, others seem to be negotiated with colleagues as the profession responds to change. This package of defining professional obligations forms the basis for how the Carrier Professional mentors (Scott, 2008b) conceptualise the profession before they translate and diffuse it in their mentoring work. For these mentors the obligation to be collegiate formed part of their conceptualisation, both encouraging them to mentor and influencing their perception of their profession. These mentors are image bearers for a profession (Erikson, 1971) which they perceive as collegiate and therefore have potential to influence the future collegiality of the profession.

Professional obligation is also important in understanding what influences mentors to mentor, particularly in a profession where mentoring is largely unrewarded. This study offers for practice the concept of Professional Citizenship Behaviour (PCB) as underpinning and characterising mentoring within the profession. PCB is similar to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), which is positive, pro-social, discretionary behaviour, which deemed to be of value to an organisation. The felt obligation which the participants describe seems to transcend a particular veterinary organisation and appears to be of value to the profession collectively. Veterinary organisations have a role in

strengthening this feeling by offering positive mentoring experiences early in careers, potentially contributing to PCB in future generations.

6.6.4 Secondary contributions

The study makes a number of additional significant contributions to previous discussions; they are not the main focus of the thesis but are worthy of record. The study contributes to and extends discussions relating to what sort of mentoring is happening within the veterinary profession, who is mentoring and what motivates them (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; Niehoff, 2006; Barbur *et al.*, 2011; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016). The study also extends understanding of the connection between mentoring and recruitment and retention within the profession.(Jelinski *et al.*, 2008; Jelinski *et al.*, 2009; Villarroel *et al.*, 2010; Barbur *et al.*, 2011; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). Lastly, the study begins a discussion which links the veterinary and other medical professions (Larson and Yao, 2005) with emotional labour and service industries (Morris and Feldman, 1996).

6.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter has discussed the learning from the case in relation to the extant literature concerning professions, professional obligation and mentoring. Moving through a series of steps, the chapter has considered how professional obligation contributes to understanding conceptions of profession and its identity, and how the participants of the study conceive of connectedness and collegiality as defining features of their profession, which they translate and diffuse as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b). How the underpinning conception of profession impacts mentors feelings of obligation to mentor is explored, together with how exchange relationships provide limited explanation for mentoring. Rather, Professional Citizenship Behaviour is offered as an explanation for mentoring as a discretionary behaviour felt by the mentors as an obligation to their profession, as part of their responsibility as a member of their profession. Important to these participants for their mentoring was either the presence of prior good mentoring or its absence. A reaction to good or poor mentoring experiences for these participants manifests as Professional Citizenship Behaviour, a felt obligation to mentor which explains their decisions to engage in mentoring.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter returns to the aim and objectives of the study and explores how these have been achieved. The contributions that the study makes to knowledge and practice are presented and recommendations are made for practice and for future research. The limitations of the research are considered and my reflections as a researcher are explored.

7.2 RETURNING TO THE RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching aim of this study has been to investigate mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation through the experiences of UK veterinary mentors, with a view to contributing to a conceptual understanding of mentoring by exploring this little researched concept and to make recommendations for practice based on this understanding. It was important to do this firstly, to make a contribution which responded to concerns that mentoring lacks an integrated, unifying, theoretical framework (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007, p. 283) and to respond to calls for more comprehensive understandings of mentoring (Allen *et al.*, 2008). In contributing to those conceptual gaps, this project has investigated the underpinning force of professional obligation which compels mentors to engage in mentoring (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) and found it to be influential in a number of ways. The concept of professional obligation is influential in terms of how mentors interpret their roles as professionals, specifically as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b) and in how vet mentors experience the compulsion to mentor amidst in the expectations of the sector and scheme convenors. Professional obligation to mentor manifests as what is posited by this study as Professional Citizenship Behaviour; discretionary positive behaviour which, unlike OCB (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) transcends individual organisations and which encapsulates the views of those mentors comfortable with mentoring expressed as a professional obligation and those who feel the term obligation would compel mentoring from those not suited to it. The UK veterinary sector provided an

important empirical context within which to explore this topic as mentoring is perceived as critical to the profession (Adam *et al.*, 2013; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures Action Group, 2016; BSAVA, 2018), which is experiencing severe recruitment, retention and mental wellbeing challenges (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; BSAVA, 2018). Mentoring appears to be a professional necessity for the ongoing development of the profession and a deeper understanding of the underpinning forces of professional obligation could be a key tool in addressing the challenges of the sector (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; BSAVA, 2018). The societal shifts, which impact the sector and contribute to challenges of wellbeing and identity, such as neoliberal demands for greater productivity, corporatisation, increasing managerialism and commodification of the service (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018) plus the changing nature and expectations of clients (Knights and Clarke, 2018; Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2021), also shape the lived experiences of other professions, and therefore this study has potential to inform research in broader contexts.

The first objective of the study was addressed in Chapter 2 where literature relating to the themes of this study was critically reviewed. The chapter concluded that research in this field lacks an integrated theoretical framework (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). The rationale for a qualitative study which emphasises detailed description and appreciation of context (Allen *et al.*, 2008) was presented. Such a study helps to understand mentoring in contemporary settings and to address conceptual gaps in understanding mentoring itself (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007) by exploring professional obligation and mentoring from the perspective of Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000). In particular the literature review considers Organisational Citizenship Behaviour as useful in exploring professional obligation and mentoring (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019).

By reviewing literature which details mentors' experiences of mentoring, certain underpinning understandings surfaced. Knowledge relating to mentor motivation and the

benefits which are exchanged when successful mentoring happens is improved (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Cureton, Green and Meakin, 2010; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Hudson, 2013; Kennett and Lomas, 2015; Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Lee, 2019). Armed with such knowledge, mentors can be better selected and supported. Conceptions of professional obligation were also explored, particularly where they have been considered as influencing mentoring (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019). How professional obligation manifests in different professional settings was examined (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007). By exploring research themes within the veterinary professions literature, a landscape of the context within which veterinary mentors operate is developed. The profession is defined by a masculine culture (Clarke and Knights, 2018; Clarke and Knights, 2019), with the implications this brings for female progression in a profession with increasing female participation (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Treanor and Marlow, 2021). The profession is defined by changes to its structure, to clients and its professional environment (Henry and Treanor, 2015; Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018; Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022), by professional characteristics of perfectionism (Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018) a tendency to judgementalism and expectations of omniscient expertise (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). Such a context shapes and places constraints on the role of mentors.

Chapter 2 also reviewed the evolving conceptualisations of profession, alighting on Scott's (Scott, 2008b) three institutional pillars framework for studying professions and identified mentors as Carrier Professionals for professional identity. Carrier Professionals are typically educators who interpret, translate and diffuse conceptions of profession (Scott, 2008b).

The second objective of this study was to explore, empirically, mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation through the context, experiences and practices of UK veterinary mentors. The rationale for the research approach was presented and justified in chapter 3, together with an account of how the empirical study was undertaken. In the development of a case study of the UK veterinary profession, ten vet mentors and four mentor scheme

convenors were interviewed, supporting documentation from two mentor schemes was reviewed. The websites of eight major veterinary groups were also examined.

The third objective was to present a multi-faceted analysis of UK veterinary mentoring as a manifestation of professional obligation in this context. Chapters 4 and 5 presented the analysis of the evidence from the interviews and the documentation. Following thematic analysis, the findings were presented as key dimensions of the case study: in Chapter 4, the UK Veterinary Profession, Professional Obligation and Mentoring and Professional Obligation are presented. Chapter 5 presents the Mentoring Landscape in the UK Veterinary Profession, Mentoring Content and the Mentors Motivations. Chapter 6 presents an analysis and discussion of the key dimensions of the case in relation to the existing literature, focusing in particular on three key areas. First, how mentors conceptualised their profession and professional obligations, using Scott's (Scott, 2008b; Scott, 2008a) three institutional pillars framework to develop a concept of profession and how professionals act as institutional change agents. As institutional change agents, in particular, Carrier Professionals, it is significant to understand how mentors conceptualise their profession as formed of cultural cognitive and normative elements, both codified and uncodified (Scott, 2008b). Connections between mentoring and professional obligation are considered alongside conceptions of profession. Second the findings are discussed in relation to explanatory perspectives of mentoring. Lenses which have previously been used in an attempt to explain mentoring in context, were consulted for their potential to provide clarity. In particular, the interplay between exchange relationships (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013), sometimes thought to be at the heart of mentoring relationships, professional obligation (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Granfield, 2007) and citizenship behaviour (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000) is considered. Evidence for mentors acting altruistically is presented (Granfield, 2007; Ryan, 2021), intending positive contributions to the profession (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019; Ryan, 2021) in ways connected to their personal moralities

(Janzen and Phelan, 2019; Ryan, 2021) and as having social responsibility or a sense of duty beyond day to day practice (Dharamsi, Pratt and MacEntee, 2007; Ryan, 2021). Examples of mentoring to inspire (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018) and nurture inclusion and future talent in professions (Vance, 2002; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016; Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018; Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) are provided, also associated with professional obligation in other contexts. The professional obligation exhibited by the participants shares charateristics with OCB (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), however in this study *Professional* Citizenship Behaviour emerges from this consideration, obligation which extends beyond the limits of the organisation. This obligation to profession emerges as more important as a driver to mentor than the achievement of reciprocation.

The final objective committed to contribute to existing theoretical knowledge and understanding and professional practice, specifically in relation to mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation. The following sections of this chapter will present contributions and recommendations.

7.3 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

7.3.1 The spaces for contribution identified

Chapter 2 established that research in the field of mentoring lacks an integrated theoretical framework (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007), and the attention placed on the evaluation of outcomes for mentees and their organisations (Allen *et al.*, 2008) has meant a lack of focus on investigating conceptual gaps in understanding mentoring itself (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007) and on understanding of mentoring in evolving workplaces. This study grasped the opportunity (Allen *et al.*, 2008) to make a contribution through a qualitative investigation, encompassing detailed descriptions and appreciations of context (Allen *et al.*, 2008) to understand mentoring in a contemporary profession. This qualitative study therefore, which explores the contemporary voice of the mentor in the UK veterinary sector, in order to contribute to conceptual understandings of mentoring, addresses these apparent deficiencies.

Previous research suggests being mentored early in a veterinary career brings benefits for the mentee, whereas a lack of suitable support reduces career success (Morzinski, 2005; Barbur *et al.*, 2011) and contributes to poor mental well-being (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016). It has been argued that there is insufficient high quality mentoring available in the veterinary profession, in the UK (Halliwell *et al.*, 2016), and therefore a better understanding of mentor experiences is important in addressing the industry challenges. Overseas studies suggest that veterinary mentors are motivated by professional obligation (Hashizume *et al.*, 2016), therefore this profession provided a context for exploring the concept of professional obligation in mentoring. Given the shared experiences of vets and other professions (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018), learning from this context has potential to inform discussions in wider contexts.

The study provided an opportunity to bring to the study of mentoring, both the concept of professional obligation, and a series of professional agency roles posited by Scott (2008b). These roles are related to institutional pillars, by which professionals can impact their institution through a variety of dimensions, and for which they can sense obligation. In particular, the study focuses on mentors as Carrier Professionals contributing to the development of the next generation of professionals. This study explored both professional obligation in this context and how professional obligation informs conceptions of profession and how this helps us to understand mentoring in this context.

7.3.2 Contributions to knowledge identified

Responding to these potential areas for contribution, this study firstly contributes to understandings of mentoring by bringing the discussion of professionals as institutional change agents (Scott, 2008b) to mentoring, in particular the role of mentors as Carrier Professionals. By providing the contextual detail of what this role entails in practice, this study helps an understanding of mentoring in professional settings, offering new ways of thinking about mentors as Carrier Professionals and institutional change agents (Scott, 2008b), attaching increased significance to the mentor in the perpetuation of professions.

However, the study cautions that the conception of profession which mentors translate, can include unhealthy norms, which the wider profession might seek to change. As Carrier Professionals, mentors undertake the interpretation, translation and diffusion to new generations of professionals their entire concept of profession, one procedure, one interaction at a time. In order to do so, their concept of profession is important, weaving together the core areas of expertise and overarching obligations, the cultural cognitive pillar (Scott, 2008b), underpinning principles, values and behavioural norms, the normative pillar (Scott, 2008b) and lastly, experience of the circumstances within which they practice. The focus of mentors on helping mentees to survive in a difficult context, might miss opportunities to change that context.

This study extends our understanding of the mentoring role in relation to professionals, determining that as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b), they have significance for the profession's continuance and development. In furtherance of this role they have potential, with support of key institutions of the profession, to address some of its unhealthier norms.

The study provides insights as to the relationship between professional obligation and mentoring and in doing so, adds to the discussion of mentors as they operate within professions. Professional obligation is found to be important in how the mentors in this study conceive of their profession. Whilst exploring this issue, this study provides a detailed account of the UK veterinary profession, from the perspectives of the vets working within it. The vets give first hand accounts of how the key themes explored in the veterinary literature impact their professional lives and their mentoring. In defining their profession, ahead of translating and diffusing it as mentors. At times the participants exhibit an acknowledgement and partial acceptance of some of the unhealthier narratives evident in the profession (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010; Allister, 2014; Clarke and Knights, 2018; Duijn *et al.*, 2020). In order to support new professionals with their mentoring, they first conceive of the profession as it currently is. Their conceptualisations of the normative pillar (Scott, 2008a) interweave the codified behavioural expectations of their Code of Conduct (RCVS, 2021a)

with collectively agreed norms of behaviour, norms which evolve as members of the profession engage with each other, their clients and their environment. The vet mentors add to this conception of profession their repeatedly reconstructed responses to a rapidly changing environment, creating a concept of profession which is bounded not only by what a profession does, and how it meets those expectations, but by the perpetual forces of change which it is required to respond to.

Central to the conceptions of profession, for the participants, are characteristics of collegiality and connectedness and these qualities, for them, are fundamental to their professional identity and compel them to mentor. For the participants, being a vet means to support other vets. The way in which these professionals conceive their profession is a powerful influencer for their decision to mentor. The rapidly changing environment to which vets are subject is not unique to this profession, it remains to be determined whether collective responses in other professions generate discretionary behaviour to support colleagues which is felt as an obligation (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019).

This study adds weight to calls that role-modelling be considered a third function of mentoring and be viewed separately from other psychosocial facets of mentoring (Scandura, 1992; Scandura and Ragins, 1993). However, it also cautions that an emphasis on role-modelling could exacerbate the profession's tendency to perfectionism (Mulcahey *et al.*, 2018). Developing the core skills of the role of the veterinary surgeon is only one important focus for vet mentors. It is noted that proficiency in core skills involves grasping both technical knowledge, application of that knowledge in practical and often stressful situations, together with associated complex psychosocial competencies and managing the costs associated with emotional labour (Morris and Feldman, 1996).

The concept of professional obligation also adds insights to our understanding of how mentors are motivated. This study challenges the view that there must be a balancing of reciprocity at the heart of mentoring (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013). Response to positive

role modelling and reaction to negative experiences can also drive a sense of obligation to mentor. By reviewing the mentors' experiences of what draws them to mentoring, using the theoretical lenses, in particular from the theories of Social Learning and Professional Obligation, new insights are gained into how the cycles of exchange, reciprocity and obligation interact when mentoring happens and a new explanation is offered for engagement with mentoring; Professional Citizenship Behaviour. Positive encounters, where early career mentors have modelled behaviour similar to organisational citizenship behaviour, (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), and negative events have shaped mentors conceptions of how not to behave, have engendered in the mentors a sense of obligation to support their fellow professionals. The urge to restore balance seems less important.

Although considered discretionary behaviour by the mentors, and usually unrewarded (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), the requirement to mentor is sensed as an obligation and signalled as an obligation by convenors and organisations, who present it as an expectation. This felt obligation compels them to engage in discretionary positive behaviour at the level of the profession rather than organisation. As anticipated by Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), positive early career mentoring seems to have impacted how young vets go on to understand what it is to be a good vet professional, negative events contribute and shape understandings of how not to behave. That understanding includes an obligation to mentor.

The vet mentors appear to be engaging in the donation of social capital, with unspecified time horizons for reciprocation (Bourdieu, 1979) and they might historically have trusted to the norms of the profession (Coleman, 1988) to ensure that future generations of young vets receive the same support. However, these participants make very clear, perhaps informed by current, sometimes unjustified conceptions of newer professionals (Tomlin, Brodbelt and May, 2010), that their certainty in the norms of the profession are weakened by what they witness in terms of the changes to the profession and the changes in expectations of new

generations of vets. Reciprocation can no longer be guaranteed for future generations, and yet they continue to mentor, something deeper than a belief that the professional norms will provide reciprocation is happening and this study offers Professional Citizenship Behaviour as an explanation for both positively and negatively triggered mentoring.

This study posits that Professional Citizenship Behaviour is what characterises mentoring in the UK Veterinary sector. PCB being a felt obligation to profession which transcends obligation to any one organisation and is typically the product of passion and or compassion for the profession resulting from cognisance of what it is like to exist within it. Negative trigger events seem to influence mentors to ensure this absence of mentoring is not experienced by future new professionals. Further themes which draw mentors to mentoring include a strong connection with profession, including a compassion for those within it, derived from understanding what it is like to be part of the profession. Personal satisfaction gained from mentoring and prior teaching experience also seem to influence mentors. The study has identified a sense of obligation experienced by mentors which connects to their fellow professionals rather than to individual organisations.

7.4 CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Chapters 4 and 5 evidence how mentoring has achieved prominence in the UK veterinary sector, promoted as an intervention that will address some of the recruitment, retention and mental health challenges of the sector. Mentoring is promoted by professional bodies (Vet Futures Action Group, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; BVA, 2018; RCVS, 2021b) and several large corporates have well established mentoring schemes as part of their graduate development programmes with mentoring featuring prominently in their recruitment messages. The training of mentors is patchy across the sector with some training provided by professional bodies, university training where partnerships exist and in other cases knowledgeable champions brief their mentoring teams. Prior to this study, very little appears to have been known about the lived experience of UK veterinary mentors; what motivates them, the range of subjects they cover in their mentoring, how they juggle their competing commitments and

the challenges they experience. The challenges faced by the profession are well documented (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; Vet Futures, 2016; Knights and Clarke, 2018) although comparatively under-explored (Clarke and Knights, 2018). This study offers detailed insight into this world, providing a rich account of what constitutes mentoring for mentors, what challenges mentors experience and what brings mentors to mentoring within a professional context.

This study helps practitioners in a variety of professional settings and in the veterinary sector in particular, to understand the complexity of the role of mentors. Mentors first have a role in conceptualising and interpreting profession. This is particularly difficult when professional identity is in a state of flux (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016) as it changes and adapts to shifting contexts and then they translate and diffuse that conception of profession as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b) to support and sustain future generations.

Mentoring emerges as a complex web of activities, aligning with mentor conceptualisations of their profession. These conceptualisations and associated areas of mentoring incorporate elements associated with the Cultural Cognitive and Normative institutional pillars (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) alongside a complex web of behaviours and collective understandings being continually renegotiated as the profession is impacted by extreme change. Significant in the mentor accounts is that they see the profession as connected and collegiate and are therefore well-placed to take forward that sense of profession to new generations. However it is noted that mentors and mentees have, and will experience, different career journeys due to the changing structures of the profession. The mentors have learned to survive in an unhealthy professional context, marked by a number of difficult features that contribute to severe recruitment, retention and mental wellbeing challenges (Niehoff, Chenoweth and Raina, 2005; BVA *et al.*, 2015; Halliwell *et al.*, 2016; BSAVA, 2018; Fink-Miller and Nestler, 2018; Allister, 2019). Encroaching managerialism (Hotho, 2008), work intensification (Knights and Clarke, 2018) and a change in the nature of clients (Irwin, Hall and Ellis, 2022) also contribute to an erosion of respect for the profession (Knights and Clarke, 2018) and

hence there is a sense of confusion around vets' professional identity (Armitage-Chan, Maddison and May, 2016). In attempting to conceptualise, translate and diffuse the professional culture as it currently exists, there is a risk that opportunities to change the culture for the better are overlooked. This is particularly so as mentors appear to practise in contexts where little opportunity is evident to feed back their experiences of working with mentees to insitutions with more influence to initiate broader changes.

Figure 9 has offered to practioners a conceptualisation of the role of mentors as Carrier Professionals of professional identity, tasked to act as image bearers for the profession to support its successful continuance. Opportunities are noted to enhance mentors' opportunities to work more closely with insitutions that have influence to change some of the unhealthier features of the profession

The study offers for the profession, and convenors of mentor schemes within it, an understanding of influencers for mentoring. The power of trigger events, both positive and negative early in career, to influence Professional Citizenship Behaviour and engagement with mentoring later is explored. This leaves choices for practitioners as to which sort of trigger events they choose to allow to predominate as the profession moves forward. This study offers for practitioners insights into the relationship between the modelling of organisational citizenship-like behaviour (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000), in the form of early career mentoring, and the generation of Professional Citizenship Behaviour later in career and the potential for mentors to perpetuate a profession that embraces a supportive culture.

A willingness emerged from the mentors in the later stages of their careers to mentor full-time (Andy, Alex and Tisha). These mentors indicated that post retirement, or in the last years of their careers, they would find mentoring full-time rewarding, without the stresses of running a business at the same time, which offers a solution for the loss of tacit knowledge as practices are bought and principal vets retire.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The study offers recommendations at the level of the UK veterinary profession, at the level of the organisation, and for working with individual vet mentors.

First this investigation presents a window onto the impacts of the considerable changes that the UK veterinary profession is undergoing and onto the significant challenges those working within the profession experience, particularly the recruitment and retention challenges and the mental health crisis. The view through that window has been filtered through the experiences of veterinary mentors who were able to offer first-hand accounts of how those changes are impacting the important extension of education of new vets and their induction into the profession, through mentoring. These societal and industry changes are being experienced across a range of professions (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018), therefore the voices of the mentors have value for wider discussions. The mentors highlighted particular elements of change that impact their mentoring experience. They describe mentoring young vets who have very different lived experiences of veterinary practice and education from their mentors; and young vets experiencing different financial priorities and concerns. They describe structural changes, particularly to ownership models, which are having profound impacts on the identity of the profession and what constitutes career success. Neoliberal demands for productivity, increasing managerialism and commodification of the service (Hotho, 2008; Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018), manifesting as the move towards corporate ownership and the new corporate structures, are confusing priorities and undermining respect for the profession. The profession is undergoing a severe loss of tacit knowledge and experience with corporatisation. A lack of formal career structure is recognised, despite the increased potential for specialisation, and the profession is becoming more culturally diverse. Mentors also acknowledge that fitting in mentoring within a busy practice can be a challenge. This study draws attention to the serious moment that the sector is facing. For the time-being, these mentors continue to donate social capital for new generations of vets, whilst at the

same time expressing concern that the changes to the profession mean that a continued supply of mentors willing to do this is no longer guaranteed. This study offers the profession an opportunity to discuss meaningfully the impact of these various changes on the role of mentors and to discuss mechanisms to support mentors in their work and feed their insights of working with new graduates back to educational and professional institutions where they have value. It also provides opportunity for a deeper level of direction in terms of countering some of the unhealthier norms of the profession. Currently the mentors do not report opportunities to feed their experiences back to the institutions, educational and professional, that possess the necessary influence to initiate change. Engagement in such dialogue could provide sustenance for the identified discretionary behaviour demonstrated by mentors.

Mentors are identified in this study as playing two critical roles in the development of the profession. Firstly, as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008b) mentors engage in conceptualising profession and shaping its identity for future generations. They also engage with translating and diffusing that conception as they mentor new and developing professionals. They therefore contribute centrally to the ongoing identity and success of the profession in the face of great change for society, their profession and wider professions.

With greater clarity surrounding the significance of the mentoring role and the challenges experienced by vet mentors, the sector has an opportunity to determine how best they should be supported and acknowledged and mobilised for the required broader changes to the profession. The continued introduction of training at professional body level and partnering with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for mentor training is encouraged. The vet mentors themselves offer some suggestions. Greater access to training is sought, for example training in the use of coaching style conversations, structuring meetings with mentees, and university provided training where organisations work in partnership with universities to provide EMS. To acknowledge the mentors partnering with HEIs in the support of EMS, mentors could receive access to HEI research events to enhance their clinical practice in an exchange relationship, feeding back their experiences of mentoring to

inform development of university programmes. There is appetite from vet mentors in the later stages of their veterinary careers to switch to mentor only roles. Mentoring would be less challenging, they feel, if vets were not trying to run businesses at the same time. Research in other contexts suggests paying mentors might help increase the pool by helping them to find the time for mentoring (Terrion and Leonard, 2010) but potentially at the expense of altruism. A key insight of this study, in terms of mentor motivation, is that their conception of profession as collegiate and connected contributes to them feeling the impetus to mentor as an obligation, and as they interpret, translate and diffuse this conception, they help to perpetuate a profession that feels positively towards mentoring.

Professional bodies and veterinary organisations have a role in enhancing the visibility of their mentors and in providing opportunities for them to share their experiences and good practice and interact with institutions tasked with educating new professionals.

At the organisational level, advice is to value mentors, acknowledge what a complex set of tasks they are trying to do, often against a very busy backdrop. Vet mentors are the custodians of the wider profession and very important for addressing recruitment and retention challenges and in transferring coping strategies to mentees as they develop responses to the waves of change. Some organisations are already utilising buddy recognition schemes. These offer opportunities for organisation-wide recognition and celebration. Within contexts where mentors of the future are unlikely to be practice owners but rather be employed vets, such recognition may become of increased value and may help to perpetuate norms of collegiality and connectedness.

For organisations seeking to recruit a broader range of effective mentors, section 5.2.1 offered insight into the power of trigger events to influence engagement with mentoring later in career. It is anticipated that organisations will prefer positive role-modelling of mentoring. A wider range of well-informed vet mentors, supported, recognised and able to communicate with their fellow mentors plays an important part in this role-modelling of Professional

Citizenship Behaviour in similar ways that mentors at organisational level role-model OCB (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000).

The mentors appear to be positive actors for the future of the profession bringing a passion for the profession and a compassion for fellow professionals in supportive roles, their insights can help the profession to address its challenges, as they do in their mentoring interactions. With adequate support, there is potential for mentors to work in partnership with professional institutions to address some of the more pervasive and concerning norms that perpetuate.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The impact of change on this profession is examined in some detail in this study, in particular in terms of how change impacts conception of profession and the lived experience of mentors within it. This learning could be employed in the analysis of further professions, where studies have revealed wider groups experiencing the impacts of similar societal changes (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018). Studies to identify the impact of change on shifting perceptions of profession from those within it, and how mentors manage this shifting of conception within their mentoring would flow from the study.

An emerging theme from this study is of emotional labour being central to the lived experience of vet professionals and the mentors feel more help is needed for vets in this area as they learn to practise. Management literature related to collective emotional labour and communities of coping (Korczynski, 2003) could be employed to inform practice. Explorations of the employment of empathy in clinical practice (Larson and Yao, 2005) could be fruitful in providing insights for practice.

7.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE THESIS

The project draws together the case study through the lived experiences of vet mentors and mentor scheme convenors using a selection of supporting documentary data. What emerges

is a complex representation of the UK veterinary profession and mentoring within it. The sample of participants included representation from a variety of veterinary settings, small animal, farm work, equine, military, large corporates and smaller groups. The sample included vets with 30 plus years' experience and those much earlier in their careers. Even with such a diversity of representation the case study cannot and did not intend to capture every detail of the sector which is complex and dynamic, but this should not detract from the significance of the themes which emerged, which are important when considering the development of the profession and the role of mentoring in translating and diffusing it (Scott, 2008b).

In working with the UK veterinary sector, I was seeking a research context where mentoring was an obligation. The vet mentors in this study used language to convey a sense of felt obligation, derived from a variety of drivers. They were of one view that mentoring should not be obligatory for all. Particular personality characteristics are important and vets need to be managing their own professional life effectively before mentoring is advisable. Apart from James, the military vet for whom mentoring was associated with his senior position, all of the mentors were volunteers and unpaid. All, however, felt that mentoring was a central and critical part of veterinary education. This shifting nuance of the obligatory nature of mentoring is accommodated within this study.

7.8 REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The journey in completing this thesis has been a most unexpected and extraordinary one. I was drawn to the sector as I am married to a small animal vet who works within a large corporation, as a branch partner. I was aware of some of the key challenges and change that the sector was experiencing from the perspective of its impact on our family life, income and financial arrangements. I felt I would have access to a sounding board in my husband in terms of understanding the structure of the sector, its quirks and technical language. As a programme lead in a higher education institution, who line manages academic staff and is engaged on a continual basis with the induction of new staff, I am interested in the use of

buddies to support new colleagues. I had hoped that findings from this study might help me in my day job, in understanding and supporting buddies in their roles.

At the outset, I quickly engaged several participating organisations and individual vets. I experienced some anticipated challenges in gaining access to relevant individuals in organisations and I developed strategies for surmounting those challenges and began interviewing my participants and reviewing the documentary data. I approached the interviews with some trepidation. This research was markedly phenomenological in nature, aiming to explore experience and the detail of context. I was concerned at how well scientists, operating within a different ontological paradigm, would engage with such an approach. I also gave some consideration to positionality as a researcher (Chavez, 2008). I felt I shared some characteristics of being an insider researcher (Unluer, 2012) because of my prior connection with the profession. But I was also conscious that my knowledge of the sector was bounded, I am not a professional working in the sector, my experience of it is of a non-specialist looking in. Should information about my marital status be shared with participants? Would it influence the nature of the interviews? Although this information was not included within Participant Information documentation, I undertook to share this information with participants should they ask about my connection with the profession. Very few participants were curious about my interest in the sector, most felt it was good timing for somebody to begin investigating veterinary mentoring. My consciousness of positionality called to mind Chavez's (2008) discussions of Banks' (1998 cited in Chavez, 2008), cross-cultural researchers typology. The insider/outsiderness positionality of researchers is conceptualised on a linear continuum based on intellectual, cultural, and social distance to indigenous community (Chavez, 2008). In discussing her own insider/outsiderness when researching her own family, Chavez prefers a more complex view of position, which spoke to me. I felt more like an insider researcher with small animal vets as their world was much more familiar to me but an outsider in the equine and farm world which was unfamiliar to me.

There was an assumption made by the participants that my knowledge of veterinary terminology was greater than a lay person (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002) and in some cases I needed to ask participants to explain technical terms. The topic of the study lead participants to believe that I had a pre-existing connection with the sector and indeed, I did feel like I was exploring territory that I was familiar with, albeit filling in details of everyday experiences for which previously I had little insight. My concerns regarding the discomfort of participants with a qualitative approach were unfounded, and I think this assumption of insider-ness from the participants, with me, could explain the more direct route to discussing some of the emotional challenges of the sector, which surprised me.

By March 2020 my fieldwork was well underway and I was approaching a point of saturation, with some very clear themes emerging from my interviews and then the world changed. The advent of the global pandemic saw my own day job and workload rise enormously as we dealt with the challenges of delivering higher education courses in a blended learning environment. My normal workplace became home, alongside my two children, who were required to home-school for the first lockdown of the pandemic and part of the second. Of more relevance for this study, because of my position as the wife of a principal vet, I was able to witness first-hand the impact of the global pandemic on the veterinary sector. Professional bodies, working with Public Health England, grappled with the development of safe-working guidelines. Initially, practices were closed to normal day-to-day business and could only deal with emergency medicine. Gradually, guidelines eased, allowing veterinary practices to undertake work of a more preventative nature. Daily working life was considerably different, difficult decisions had been taken to furlough staff, placing remaining teams under greater pressure, social distancing practices were put in place such that pet owners no longer entered veterinary practices but exchanged their animals in car parks, some mentoring and all CPD moved online. Enhanced PPE became a requirement. When working in the 24-hour centre, scrubs were worn home and washed immediately, our utility room becoming a virus decontamination zone. To continue with attempts to recruit

participants and interview them at such a difficult time would have been inappropriate and I decided to pause the research in the spring of 2020. I identified very closely with the participants' difficulties, I knew they were having a hard time and this may have constrained the research process (Chavez, 2008), and to have tried to continue with the research at this time would, I believe, have been insensitive.

In March 2021, I resumed the research and completed three further interviews. The pandemic impacted my ability to recruit participants and final numbers of participants were at the lower end of what I had originally planned. Two large corporates, one predominantly a small animal group, the other mixed practice, withdrew from the study, having previously expressed interest. One convenor cited workload issues, the other did not feel comfortable asking vets to consider doing more following the challenges of the pandemic.

I was curious as to how the global collective trauma we had all experienced, would surface in my remaining interviews. There was some discussion of this, particularly in how mentoring and veterinary practice had adapted. However, the main themes that had been emerging pre-pandemic remained evident.

7.9 CONCLUSIONS

This study has contributed to understandings of mentoring by bringing the lens of professional obligation to mentoring in the context of the UK veterinary sector. It has identified how these professionals conceive of their profession and use professional obligation to do so, weaving cultural cognitive, normative (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b) elements with dynamic responses to change in their conceptualising of profession. They have a conception of profession that is collegiate and connected, and this is important for why and how they mentor. This study thus employs the literature of professions to understand mentoring and in doing so has extended understandings of mentors as Carrier Professionals (Scott, 2008a; Scott, 2008b), a change agent role which emerges from discussions of professions as institutions. This study identifies constraints to mentors' agency existing within some of the unhealthier norms of the profession. Carrier

Professionals are engaged in conceptualising profession then translating and diffusing it, allowing conceptions of profession to persist. The study offers choices for the profession as to which conceptions of the profession it wishes to persist amidst the dilemmas currently faced. This study provides fresh detail on the complexities of this role and contributes insight as to how mentors are influenced to engage in mentoring, offering the concept of Professional Citizenship Behaviour, which is akin to Organisational Citizenship behaviour which is underpinned by Social Learning Theory (Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone, 2000). Mentoring is presented as a positive discretionary behaviour, felt as an obligation to profession, rather than organisation, which has capacity to influence a continuing cycle of obligation to mentor.

Returning to the words of Steve, so powerfully influenced by the role-modelling of his vet father:

> **Steve:** I think the challenge that the profession has now is that there seems to have been this huge… juncture where there seems to be this exodus of old, senior, experienced vets of my dad's generation, who all, who would have all fulfilled that role of, you know my colleague Peter, who's 62, he just describes it as grey hairs, people of grey hairs, you know, I think there is no substitute for having done the job for 30 years and there's nothing that you haven't seen, haven't experienced or challenging client that you haven't won over or difficult case that you can't see a mile off….I think that's a question that the veterinary profession has to answer in terms of where do we, because of the loss of experience just walking out the door and retiring and that experience needs to be harnessed in some fashion.

Each profession encompasses a unique range of cultural elements which combine to define it at a given moment in time. The UK veterinary profession may well share certain characteristics with other professions, particularly medical professions, which are similarly subject to changing relationships with clients and encroaching managerialism and commodification of their service (Williams and Jordan, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2018). This study may well therefore hold value for contexts beyond the scope of the UK veterinary profession.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 APPLETON'S COMPARISON OF YIN AND STAKE

Table 1: Case study: A comparison of the perspectives of Robert Yin and Robert Stake

Comparative elements of case study	Yin	Stake
Definition of a case	A case is a contemporary single unit, phenomena or issue of study. An object of study, sometimes referred to as a unit of analysis (Yin, 1993, p. 10).	A case is an object of study. "The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing" ... each case "is an integrated system" and "has a boundary and working parts" (Stake, 1995, p. 2).
Types of case study design	The case study design can be single (either holistic or embedded) or multiple, as well as descriptive, exploratory or explanatory (Yin, 1993).	Three types of case study design: intrinsic, instrumental or collective case study (Stake, 1994; 1995).
Rationale for method	Suitable for the study of: • "how" and "why" questions • focus is contemporary issue(s) or unit(s) • in real-life settings • where no researcher control • using multiple sources of data • for qualitative and quantitative approaches.	Suitable for the study of: • contemporary issue(s) or unit(s) • in real-life settings • where no researcher control • using multiple sources of data • focusing on qualitative inquiry • to construct an in-depth understanding of a single case/issue or multiple cases.
Paradigmatic orientation	Positivism and postpositivism.	Interpretivism – constructivism.
Sampling approach	Replication logic. Potential for literal replication or theoretical replication.	Purposive sampling.
Use/location of theory	1 Case study should ideally be guided by theoretical propositions. 2 Through the use of "analytic generalisation" case study results may be generalised to an existing theory.	Theory may emerge through the case study, but there is no insistence on theory development.
Time	A great deal of time needed for the intensive and detailed study of the case.	A great deal of time needed for the intensive and detailed study of the case.

(Summarised from: Yin, 1993, 1994; Stake, 1994, 1995)

APPENDIX 2 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEETS

The participant information sheet - Mentor

Study title
Mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation: an exploration of mentoring for professional development in the veterinary sector

Invitation paragraph
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?
The researcher in this study is a Professional Doctorate student and also a member of staff at Oxford Brookes University with an interest in how mentoring is experienced by mentors particularly in contexts where mentoring is a professional obligation. This study is the subject of a thesis for the Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring Practice at Oxford Brookes University. The study aims to work with veterinary mentors and the organisers of mentoring schemes in a variety of veterinary practice types. The study will investigate with these mentors their experiences of mentoring and the role of professional obligation in their mentoring experiences. Mentors will not be asked for any confidential or identifying information about mentees.
Between June 2019 and August 2021 participants will take part in an in-depth interview with the researcher to explore this theme. Interviews will last between 60 and 90 minutes. Participants may be invited to a follow-up interview to explore themes further. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually convenient time using technology such as Skype, Zoom or Google Meet.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate in this study as you have been a practising veterinary surgeon for a minimum of 3 years and you have engaged in mentoring at least one colleague. The study aims to work with approximately 20 veterinary mentors from a range of veterinary settings.

Do I have to take part?
Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used, and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Each participant will take part in an in-depth interview with the researcher to explore their experiences of the research themes. It is expected that the interviews will last between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews are to be audio recorded.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? (where appropriate)
It is not anticipated that there will be any risks or disadvantages in taking part other than the time involved in participation. You may decide to withdraw from the research project at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
It is anticipated that the study will contribute to our understanding of veterinary mentor experiences and specifically the role of professional obligation. In turn this will contribute more generally to our understanding of professional mentoring practice.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about participants will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Participant information will be anonymised both in stored files, filenames, when used in the dissertation

and any subsequent publications. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project

Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices will be password protected and data files encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you wish to take part in the study, please contact Jo Feehily at the following email address jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk and you will be sent a consent form to sign indicating your agreement to participate. The researcher will then contact you to set up a suitable appointment time. The deadline for opting in to the research is x

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used in a Doctoral Thesis for the Doctor in Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University, it is possible that the data will subsequently form the basis of conference presentations and publications in academic journals. Participants will be contacted on completion of the thesis or in the event of a publication and will be given information about how they may read the thesis and obtain a copy of any published research. A summary of the findings will be made available to participants as soon as these are complete.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The researcher is conducting the research as a student of the Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring run by the Business and Management Department in the Business School at Oxford Brookes University.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

Your contact point further information is Jo Feehily jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, they should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

Lead Researcher: Jo Feehily, jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk 01865 485907

Director of Studies: Judie Gannon jmgannon@brookes.ac.uk 01865483837

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Version Number 3, 05.03.21

The participant information sheet – mentor scheme convenor

Study title
Mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation: an exploration of mentoring for professional development in the veterinary sector

Invitation paragraph
You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?
The researcher in this study is a Professional Doctorate student and also a member of staff at Oxford Brookes University with an interest in how mentoring is experienced by mentors particularly in contexts where mentoring is a professional obligation. This study is the subject of a thesis for the Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring Practice at Oxford Brookes University. The study aims to work with veterinary mentors and the organisers of mentoring schemes in a variety of veterinary practice types. The study will investigate with mentors their experiences of mentoring and the role of professional obligation in their mentoring experiences. The study will investigate mentor schemes with their convenors, how mentoring is organised in their organisation and will explore with the convenors documentation relating to mentoring in their organisation. You will not be asked for any confidential or identifying information about mentees Between April 2019 and August 2021 participants will take part in an in a semi-structured interview with the researcher to explore this theme. Interviews will last between 45 minutes to one hour. Participants may be invited to a follow-up interview to explore themes further. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually convenient time using technology such as Skype, Zoom or Google Meet.

Why have I been invited to participate?
You have been invited to participate in this study as you are responsible for organising mentoring within your organisation. The study aims to work with approximately 5-7 mentor scheme convenors from a range of veterinary settings.

Do I have to take part?
Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet along with a privacy notice that will explain how your data will be collected and used, and be asked to give your consent. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?
Each participant will take part in a semi-structured interview with the researcher to explore their experiences of the research themes. It is expected that the interviews will last between 45 and 60 minutes. Interviews are to be audio recorded. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually convenient time and location using technology such as Skype, Zoom or Google Meet.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
It is not anticipated that there will be any risks or disadvantages in taking part other than the time involved in participation. You may decide to withdraw from the research project at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
It is anticipated that the study will contribute to our understanding of veterinary mentor experiences and specifically the role of professional obligation. In turn this will contribute more generally to our understanding of professional mentoring practice.
Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?
All information collected about participants will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Participant information will be anonymised both in stored files, filenames, when used in the dissertation and any subsequent publications. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project
Research data will be kept securely at all times, especially when collected in the field before being transferred back to Oxford Brookes University. Laptops and other devices will be password protected and data files encrypted. Data may be stored in Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement.
What should I do if I want to take part?
If you wish to take part in the study, please contact Jo Feehily at the following email address jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk and you will be sent a consent form to sign indicating your agreement to participate. The researcher will then contact you to set up a suitable appointment time. The deadline for opting in to the research is May 2021.
What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results of the research will be used in a Doctoral Thesis for the Doctor in Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University, it is possible that the data will subsequently form the basis of conference presentations and publications in academic journals. Participants will be contacted on completion of the thesis or in the event of a publication and will be given information about how they may read the thesis and obtain a copy of any published research. A summary of the findings will be made available to participants as soon as these are complete.
Who is organising and funding the research?
The researcher is conducting the research as a student of the Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring run by the Business and Management Department in the Business School at Oxford Brookes University.
Who has reviewed the study?
The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.
Contact for Further Information
Your contact point further information is Jo Feehily jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, they should contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee on ethics@brookes.ac.uk.
Lead Researcher: Jo Feehily, jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk 01865 485907
Director of Studies: Judie Gannon jmgannon@brookes.ac.uk 01865483837
Thank you
Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.
Version Number 2, 05.03.21

APPENDIX 3 DRAFT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – VETERINARY MENTORS WITH PILOT NOTES.

Question	Original schedule question	Notes from Pilot	New Question	Connection to the study and literature review
1.	Tell me about your clinical practice background	During the pilot this brought about a snapshot of current position and it took a lot of probing to get a detailed picture of the career journey of the vet.	Summarise your career as a vet for me	Relevance for context (Stake, 1995)
2.	Please describe for me what your profession means to you.	The pilot interviewee found this a very difficult thing to do and resorted to a few short ideas, such as small. We discussed this after the interview and it seems to stem from the profession being in a period of intense change. From once being male dominated, with some fairly crusty behaviours and ways of treating for e.g nurses, the pilot interviewee did not want to be associated with that. There are now many more women in the profession, probably the majority and there are many foreign vets that bring very different cultures. So we thought about some different ways of getting at this information . The pilot interviewee also started bringing mentoring into everything being discussed, unable to separate profession from mentoring, presumably because they now that the study is about mentoring. I think an intro which includes an explanation of the structure will help with this: In the first part of this interview we will be discussing the veterinary profession and what it is like to be part of the veterinary profession and in the second part of the interview we will be talking about your experiences of veterinary mentoring A pre-interview preparation question could be to think about your relationship with the veterinary procession.	Describe the veterinary profession Followed by, what's it like to be part of this profession	Develops sense of profession (Scott, 2008b; Saks, 2012; Arluke, 2018)

3.	Tell me about the obligations you have as part of the veterinary profession • Sub themes to explore, what other professional obligations do you have, what challenges do you experience in fulfilling professional obligation	This worked well, got a lot of interesting info here, did some simple follow ups, like is there anything else?		Links to establishing wider context of professional obligation (Tzeng, 2004; Granfield, 2007; McGuire and Burke, 2008)
4.	Tell me about your mentor experiences so far	There needs to be a clear break in the interview here between talking about profession and talking about mentoring. At one point the pilot interviewee said, it depends what you mean by mentoring. I think it would be useful to explain what I mean by mentoring and use a definition but also explain that mentoring beyond formal mentoring may also be discussed. Also a pre-interview preparation question could be to recall your mentor experience.		What is mentoring? (Kutsyuruba, 2012; Hobson and Malderez, 2013; D'Souza, 2014; Garza, L. Duchaine and Reynosa, 2014; Godden, Tregunna and Kutsyuruba, 2014; Stephens *et al.*, 2014). (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Haggard *et al.*, 2010; Gannon and Washington, 2019).
5.	What are you trying to achieve through mentoring in your organisation?	This worked well, although a lot of this had come up with the earlier question. I think the discussion about different kinds of capital and learning could better happen here, by prompting with what else?		Links to learning theories (Levinson, 1978; Kegan, 1982; Kram, 1983), (Allen, Cobb and Danger, 2003). (Dominguez, 2013)

6.	What brought you to mentoring?	This needed quite a lot of unpicking to get the pilot interviewee to understand and we got into more specific questions like when and do you remember feeling ready, how did it happen?		Why mentor? (Rutti, Helms and Rose, 2013; Hashizume *et al.*, 2016) (Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett, 2003). (Maynard-Patrick and Baugh, 2019) (Kennett and Lomas, 2015) (Hudson, 2013) (Lopez-Real and Kwan, 2005; Stenfors-Hayes *et al.*, 2010; Ghosh and Reio Jr, 2013; Smith and Nadelson, 2016; Lee, 2019)
7.	How do you/have you experienced mentoring in your current organisation and in previous organisations? • Sub themes different kinds of capital	A lot of this had been covered earlier with what were you trying to achieve, but we got into the area of what else, which could be asked earlier.		Further clarifies what it is and what is has been for.
8.	When you saw the title of my study, what did you make of that?	This worked well, it helped to contextualise earlier answers so there was some repetition.		Connection between professional obligation and mentoring

APPENDIX 4 FINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - MENTOR

1. Tell me about your clinical practice background

2. Please describe for me what your profession means to you.

3. Tell me about the obligations you have as part of the veterinary profession

Sub themes to explore, what other professional obligations do you have, what challenges do you experience in fulfilling professional obligation

4. Tell me about your mentor experiences so far

5. What are you trying to achieve through mentoring in your organisation?

6. What brought you to mentoring?

7. How do you/have you experienced mentoring in your current organisation and in previous organisations?

Sub themes different kinds of capital

8. When you saw the title of my study, what did you make of that?

APPENDIX 5 FINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – MENTOR SCHEME CONVENOR

1. Tell me about your role in the organisation

2. Please describe for me the veterinary mentoring that happens in your organisation
   - Who is mentored?
   - Who does the mentoring?
   - How do you make mentoring happen?
   - What challenges have you experienced?

3. What are you trying to achieve through mentoring in your organisation?

4. When you saw the title of my study, what did you make of that?

APPENDIX 6 GATEKEEPER LETTER OF INVITATION

Formal invitation to the organisational “gatekeeper”

Formal invitation letter

My name is Jo Feehily, I am undertaking a research study as part of my Doctoral programme of Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University. My DCM research focuses on veterinary mentoring and the significance of professional obligation in mentoring. I am studying veterinary mentoring across a range of organisational sizes and types. I believe that developing a deeper understanding of vets’ experiences as mentors can make a contribution to addressing the recruitment and retention challenges of the sector. The study is investigating, with veterinary mentors, their experiences of mentoring and the role of professional obligation in their mentoring experiences. I am contacting you because I feel that XXXX would be an ideal organisation for my research project. The research outcomes will provide data to support my DCM research and will also allow me to provide recommendations for mentoring practice.

In order to conduct my research, I would like to collect data from a range of veterinary organisational types; single and multi-practice organisations, and a range of specialisms; large and small animal, farm etc. I would like to request access to the member of your team who organises mentoring and mentors who deliver mentoring. I would also like access to documents about mentoring in your organisation. These may include policy information about mentoring, publicity material about schemes or any training or support processes that you have for mentors. I do not require records of mentoring. You may feel that mentoring occurs in your organisation, but not as the result of a specific process and that there is no accompanying documentation, in which case, it would be useful for me to interview the principal vet and any others who mentor within your organisation.

Once I have received and analysed documentation relating to mentoring in your organisation, I would like to interview the member of your team who you feel has the most responsibility for the organisation of your mentoring scheme [this may be the practice manager, practice owner, designated member of team]. Each interview is likely to take 45 mins to an hour.
I would also like to interview vets who mentor other vets in your organisation. This might include those who mentor newly graduated vets, or mentor vets for professional development at other stages of their career, for example mentoring for leadership roles. Each interview is likely to take between one hour and 90 minutes. Examples of the interview questions can be found in the appendix. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually convenient time, using technology such as Skype, Zoom or Google Meet.

I would personally arrange the interviews and would seek to recruit participants using a Participant Information Sheet which can be emailed to potential participants. With your permission I would ask that this Participant Information Sheet is emailed to relevant staff. Participation is entirely voluntary. In order that participants do not feel compelled to participate in the study, I would request that the information sheet is emailed to them from someone in a role from within your organisation from whom they would not feel compulsion to participate. If your organisation is small and there is no such role, could you please make available in a shared space, such as reception or staff room, the enclosed participant recruitment flyer. The Participant information Sheet will make clear that I am happy to answer any questions that participants may have.

Any information collected will be managed using Oxford Brookes University formal ethics procedures to ensure that participants understand the purpose of the study; that all the interviews will be treated with the utmost confidentiality; responses will be de-identified in any reports or analysis and organisations will not be named. Data collected will be stored in accordance with the University's guidelines. The data gathered through the document analysis and interviews will be de-identified. The results of the research will be used in a Doctoral Thesis for the Doctor in Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University, it is possible that the data will subsequently form the basis of conference presentations and publications in academic journals.

Participants and participating organisations will be contacted on completion of the thesis or in the event of a publication and will given information about how they may read the thesis and obtain a copy of any published research. I will provide you with a summary report concerning my findings. I do hope that you feel that you can support this study, which I am sure will provide useful findings to support mentoring within your own organisation. If you have any concerns about the topics discussed, please let me know.

I look forward to receiving your response.

APPENDIX 7 RECRUITMENT FLYER

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

VETERINARY MENTORING
THE MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE
Participants needed

Are you a vet of 3+ years experience? | Have you mentored a vet colleague?

THE STUDY
As part of my Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring research at Oxford Brookes University I am conducting a study about mentoring and the role of professional obligation in UK veterinary mentoring, particularly the experiences of mentors.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?
An interview, in person or Skype. This interview may last up to 90 mins and will explore your experiences of mentoring. This could be at your workplace, at Oxford Brookes or by Skype.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?
Experienced practising vets (3+ years experience) who have mentored at least one veterinary colleague for professional development (newly qualified vets, mentoring for leadership etc.)

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING? For more information please contact:
Jo Feehily MA, MBA, BSc Econ (Hons) DCM Candidate ***jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk***

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Mentoring as manifestation of professional obligation: an exploration of mentoring for professional development in UK the veterinary sector

Jo Feehily, Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring Student

jfeehily@brookes.ac.uk

		Please initial box
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	☐
3.	I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

		Please initial box	
		Yes	No
4.	I agree to the interview being audio recorded	☐	☐
6.	I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	☐	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

APPENDIX 9 NVIVO CODEBOOK, SIMPLIFIED AND REORDERED FROM INITIAL ALPHABETICAL FOR SENSE-MAKING

The Veterinary Profession, descriptions		
Academic	6	13
Interconnected roles	3	4
Multidisciplinary	4	9
Characterised by change	9	44
Disillusionment	1	3
Greater diversity	1	1
Collegiality	6	9
Close	1	1
Financial motive move important	3	3
Self-aware and misunderstood	1	1
Preoccupation with how the profession is perceived	6	12
Regulation of standards	1	6
Vocational	8	16
Small, close	3	3
Specialisms different	8	13
Stressful	1	3
Mental health challenges	9	24
The rewards	0	0
Privileged	1	1
Respected	2	2
Rewarding	2	3
Strong	1	3
Working with animals	6	6
Being in the vet profession		
Brilliant, strong connection	7	13
Characterised by change	1	1
Challenging due to new structure	2	4
Different for younger vets	8	33
New opportunities	4	7
Collegiate - relying on mentoring	6	14
Competitive	2	2
Difficult	8	24
Emotionally challenging	7	25
Held to a higher standard	1	3
In the spotlight-social media	1	3
Lonely	2	2
Physically demanding	2	3
Resulting retention difficulties	3	6
Rewarding	2	3
Connected to community	2	2
Intellectually challenging	6	12
More than a job	5	7
Practical	2	3
Vocation	8	16
Professional obligations of a vet		
Balance in relationships with clients	1	1
Business	2	2
Ethical	2	4
Evidence based	1	1
Honesty	5	9
Keep current	3	3
Legal	2	4
Patient care	10	14
To client	8	12
To colleagues	8	19
Challenges to professional obligations		
Business relationships with clients	1	1
Client expectations	9	21
Client wellbeing	1	2
Colleague difficulty	1	1
Emotional availability - compassion fatigue	1	3
Ethical	6	13
Money	10	33
No challenge	1	1
Time	1	3
Work-life balance	1	4

How do mentors come to mentoring?		
Asked	1	1
Expressions of professional obligation	5	7
Mutually beneficial	1	1
Professional development	2	2
Selected for aptitude	5	10
Volunteer	5	10
Personality	5	9
Influencers for mentoring		
Being passionate about the profession	10	35
Business reasons	7	11
Compassion or empathy	6	21
A better start than us	4	11
Acknowledging that the 1st year is tough	8	18
If not me..	1	1
I'm good at it	4	5
Shortage of mentors	1	1
Keep up to date	1	1
Personal satisfaction	7	18
Feel good	8	18
Fits with my PD	5	11
Gives me energy	2	6
Positive impact on me	1	2
Previous good mentoring	4	11
Previous poor mentoring or lack of	6	22
Prior Teaching experience	4	13
Professional obligation, terms for	12	39
Moral duty	3	6
Organisational responsibility	2	5
Part of role	2	4
The right organisational environment	5	7
Understanding of particular issues	2	4
Influencers to not mentor	2	2
Not for everyone	4	9
Not every mentee eg	1	1
Not every mentor eg	3	7

What is mentoring in the profession , mentor perspectives	**4**	**4**
Blended reasons	6	8
Gradual letting go - linguistic	7	10
Lasting	3	5
Network of support	5	11
Not reinforce weakness	1	2
Official deficit	1	1
Official offline blended areas	4	7
Peer mentoring	3	3
Professional longevity contribution	3	6
Building leadership and confidence	10	23
Security of professional standards	9	19
Roles connected to current status of profession		
Developing self-regulation	2	3
Increased diversity	3	9
Mental health support	9	18
To become a more confident decision maker	7	15
Roles covered by the mentor		
Friend	4	6
Support for personal growth	3	16
Unofficial, deficit	3	5
Work functions covered		
Business mentoring	7	10
Client communications	8	18
Clinical mentoring	10	35
Practising procedures	6	19
Ethical dilemmas	3	6
The craft being a vet	10	19
Work principles and behaviours		

Mentoring in the profession, convenor documents		
Behaviour development	2	2
Business support	1	1
Clinical back up	2	2
Confidence	1	3
Enculturation	2	2
Goal setting	2	5
Not line manager	1	1
Organisational fit	4	6
Part of wider PDP programme	4	8
Pastoral	3	7
Performance oriented	4	20
Retention	3	7
Situational learning	2	3
Support for first year	5	9
Teamwork	1	1
Trust	4	5

Challenges for mentors		
Client relationships	1	2
Compassion fatigue	1	3
Convenor perspective	0	0
Communication	2	2
Consistency	1	1
Fear	1	2
Ethics	1	2
Mentors knowing what mentoring is	1	1
Resourcing	1	5
Shortage of mentors	2	9
Time	8	16
Mental energy	4	7
Tension with business owners or ownership	4	7
The mentee	3	3
Coping with choice	2	3
Coping with failure	2	2
Mentee expectations	2	2
The mentees are qualified colleagues	3	4
Grads struggling with career management choice	1	3
Grads thinking it is networking	1	1
Mentee disillusionment at job	1	4

Conceptual examples	1	1
Exchange, cycle	6	17
Professions	3	3
Change agent egs	4	7
Power of knowledge	3	5
Professional identity	1	4

Recommendations for good mentoring practice		
Significance of balance between decisiveness and weakness	1	4
Addressing environment of change	4	14
Environment which supports mentoring	4	6
Exchange with universities	2	2
Flexibility	2	3
Heart of the profession in change	7	9
Mentor specialists	4	4
Mentor training	6	20
Monitored	3	5
Not line manager	4	6
Regular meetings	3	3
Safe time and space	1	1
Web of support	4	14
Location important	3	5
The heart of mentoring	0	0
Compassion	3	4
Gradually increasing confidence	5	10
Multi-channel comms	4	4

APPENDIX 10 SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT SEGMENT

Well yeah my title was resident, in terms of what people do now, it was nothing like a residency now. There were two surgery lecturers, three surgery lecturers, two of which were at daggers drawn and having bust ups in corridors and stuff like that. And it was really cobbling together an experience for the students, we would drive from Liverpool to Manchester to do some spays so they could do some spays at Manchester RSPCA and I would take three or four students with me back to the practice that I used to work at to do an orthopaedic op a week something I would do that for free just so that they could see something. But when we did procedures like that, again there was a low bar of competition, but, you could either, the students could either have me ....helping them with their spay and guiding them or whatever or one of the lecturers who if that suture wasn't perfectly tied then they all had to come out and another one who always used to do it with his hands underneath the drapes and help and muddle in and whatever. So, there probably wasn't a high bar of competition but I found it very rewarding being able to help people as I had been helped when I had been seeing practice. When I qualified and this virtually never happens now I qualified having done 20 bitch spays in a couple of Pios I did my first cat spay when I was in second year so I'd done a similar number of those just because I kept going back to this practice and by the time I qualified they had known me for seven or eight years. Then I do that, my mentor there, that was Norfolk, he is coming to see us next, no weekend after next, is coming to see us down in Cornwall. So really enjoyed that time in Liverpool but it wasn't something, it wasn't an atmosphere to carry on with in that hospital. And as it turned out in the Nadir of things, I was there at rock bottom and as I left possessive Prof John Ines walked in the door virtually and it soared on afterwards and these things tend to cycle.

So, I went back into practice, I'd registered for my certificate by then, I'd registered for my certificate in surgery, just, I think it was just over a year from qualifying, so having gone from being an academic wastrel at university, suddenly I had something that I was really passionate about, I can remember we moved house one weekend when I lived there, but it clashed with going on a spinal course that I'd booked, you know how house moves can suddenly be put back or whatever, so I was off doing a spinal surgery course a year and a half post qualified whilst my girlfriend and her brothers were moving house for us. That felt quite like natural, I was off on this course and that course, and whatever at weekends, all CPD courses were at weekends then and I just really, really enjoyed it, did loads of surgery in my first job before going back to, Liverpool, came out of Liverpool and took a job where it was very much with a focus on developing surgery. And also, it was a mixed practice but all the practice owners were farm animal-based. So, there was about 10 or 11 vets, 4 owners, whittled down to 3 owners, 4 owners all on the farm side and then a couple of us leading the small animal side and I was really bad at leading the small animal side because I had no concept or business training or understanding of how much money we were supposed to make and things like that and there was nothing to be learned from the farm animal guys because it's a totally different business so we bumbled along. I suspect our figures were probably pretty atrocious, I got my certificate in surgery from practice in 2003 and then started seeing some referral work as well and then after we got married in 2003, the surgery certificate, getting married, the honeymoon and then having to move house all sort of fitted together in that rather busy year, I went on some interviews for surgery positions in referral centres dotted around mainly down south and then my wife fell pregnant and not really now the time to move but through a link, one interview I'd gone to there, I said no, I'm not going to move, not that everyone was tripping over themselves to offer me a job. I'd progressed with some of them, it wasn't as though I was breaking their hearts although I had progressed with

some of them. The owner of one of those chains, then made an offer to buy the practice I was working at and he was a very corporate minded vet. Desperately unpopular with his staff that he worked at in this chain of practices, he's moved out of that now but he knew business, even if he didn't really know – get your team on your side. So he arrived, we had some forthright conversations about business and performance and stuff like that and I learnt a hell of a lot from him although it was fairly uncomfortable at the time. I we subsequently, in fact I met him at BSAVA Congress before last and we had a good old chat and I thanked him from what I learnt at the time it wasn't really a thank you situation but in hindsight in retrospect I thank you for what I've learnt and that was nice.

So, I was learning stuff, he then sold all of his chain to CVS and so CVS took over and for about nine months I work for CVS as the clinical director at the practice and again there's more business feedback stuff, but I'm not really so much of the.... let's all sit in a room and be fed what our percentage point should be here, there and whatever and I wanted to do it much more for myself, so another chance meeting at BSAVA Congress again. I've had this experience of looking at the map of Britain, where all the orthopaedic surgeons are dotted around, I was up in Cheshire, which in that sort of great area there are 27 orthopaedic surgeons and if you ranked them in order of qualification, specialism then certificate holders, then how long it had the certificate, I managed to scrape in at number 27 out of 27. Cornwall by contrast didn't have anyone. And referral work down in Cornwall was largely done by a chap called Peter Attenborough who was in Exeter, he's a really nice chap but it was definitely a gap on the market and then I met up with someone that I'd known at uni who said that they had built a hospital in Cornwall but didn't have a surgeon to work in it.

JO

Sounds like a good fit

ANDY

2007, down I came, then we came Lizzie was pregnant again at the time in fact she was six weeks of having Phil, but we came down, so I was, again it was a similar situation where the practice was largely farm animal and equine but had had this grant to build a small animal and equine hospital but didn't have any solely small animal people to work in it. So I arrived, set up a surgery referral business and then that grew, I joined the partnership after a couple of years and with a fairly turbulent sort of, it's a bit difficult when one part of the business is absolutely flying and two others, farm and equine are stagnating and so we have progressed on, the small animal grew massively and massively, we became a five partner, fluctuating between 6 and 5 as someone joined and someone retired, two retired and up to last November, October sorry end of September, with the corporate bubble in valuations, there was a feeling amongst the partnership that they wanted to sell, I wasn't particularly keen, the accountant finally swung it for me, well partly...there are five of us, four wanted to sell and there was me, the accountant said this bubble of the valuation means. I had one focal with him and he said this bubble in the valuation knows what will happen tomorrow you could drop dead in which case your family have the valuation of the buyout that is in the contract which is a small, I was properly insured and everything but it was a comparatively small sum of money, if you do this you will secure the financial security of your family not just for your generation but for the next one and he said: Col, I cannot advise you not to do this. So we did it. And so subsequently, that was last September, now we have a ridiculous amount of cash, I have I actually resigned as of three months ago, six month notice period, and I'm working through that at the moment, but the so yeah,

.....

with the aim of making myself redundant from your business, basically. That's one idea anyway there's lots of daft ideas at the moment, I'll have a bit of time off with the kids and then we'll see which idea comes cycling,

JO

Fascinating thank you, that's quite a story with quite a crescendo as well. (We all laugh) okay so thank you for that this is more generally about the profession could you describe the veterinary profession for me?

ANDY

(Long pause) Um..that's a purposefully open question isn't it? Today's veterinary profession? There's a million ways to answer that isn't there? It's a collection of people who, were, academically very gifted, and chose a career path that involved working with animals. So that's the simplest answer isn't it? It's probably not.. anymore... a collection of people who chose a career path that involved working with people in the company of animals and it's... not ...it's not, any more, it's not any more the vocation ...for... helping, I suppose it's a bit harder for me to speak about farm and equine because I really know little of it but on the small animals side its move from being a vocation for people wanting to build a practice, a business, a unity, a community, um... and it has I think moved, possibly lessons from the NHS, although GPs build their own businesses, but it's possibly moved to a more narrowly focused animal care, it's probably moved to a more focused in animal care side and the purists sort of treatment of the individual condition, as opposed to care of the patient and certainly as opposed to care of the owner or the family entity. And I think ...it is possibly lazy or dangerous to say that we are frailer now than we used to be.

JO

By frail what do you mean?

ANDY

Emotionally frail.

JO

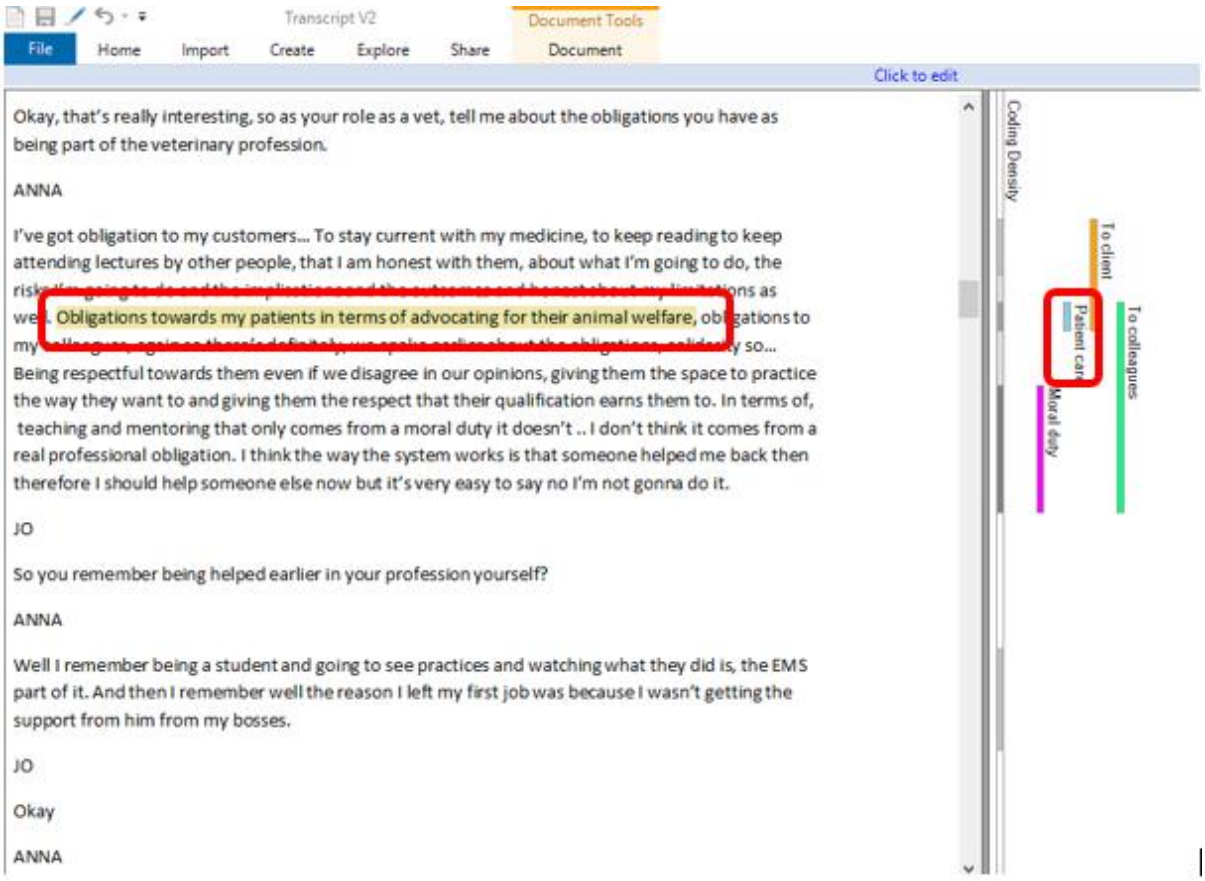
Individual vets or the profession?

ANDY

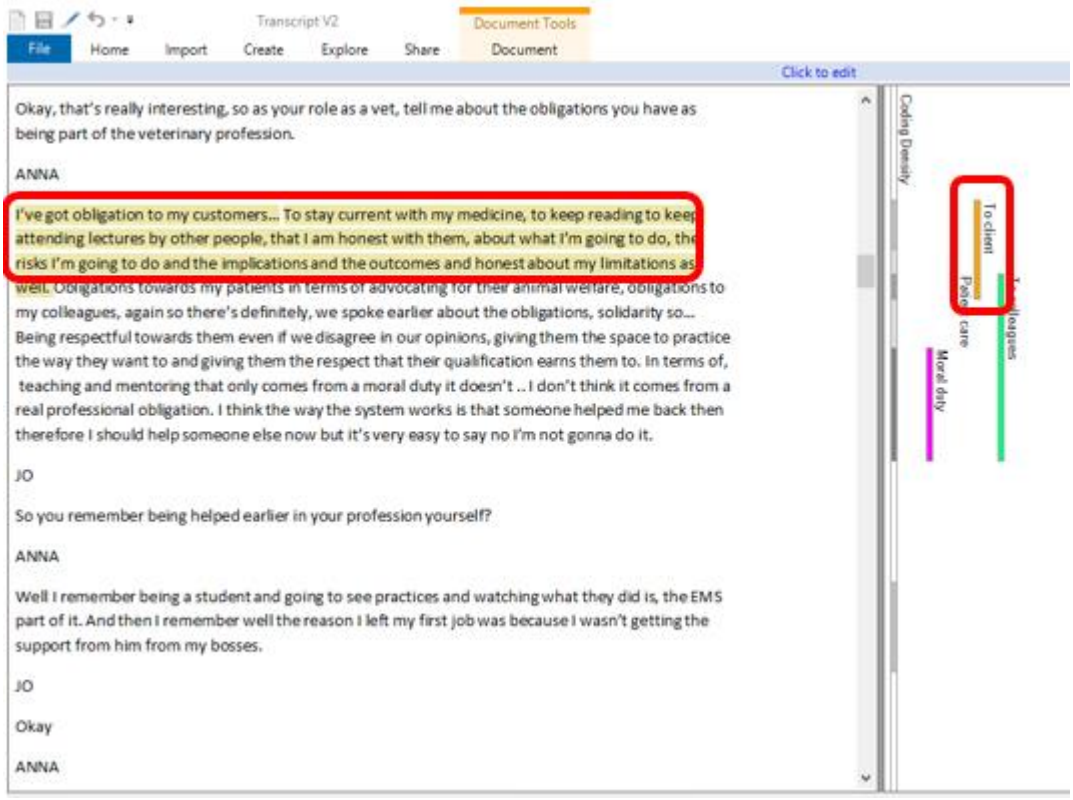
Yeah the snowflake, I think it's dangerous to say that because I think, um, James Herriot wrote his books whilst he was often recovering from depression my old mentor, he had a period of time off with depression, I think it's hard for us, of my generation, 20 years out, it's hard for us to look at the guys coming through now and empathise and ladies coming through now and empathise because what we knew as the biggest stressors of the practice are fading. On-call is now optional, you can get a job without on-call, working hours are vastly more comfortable, people used to look at jobs with a

APPENDIX 11 EXAMPLE OF TRANSCRIPT CODED FOR BOTH SEMANTIC AND LINGUISTIC CONTENT

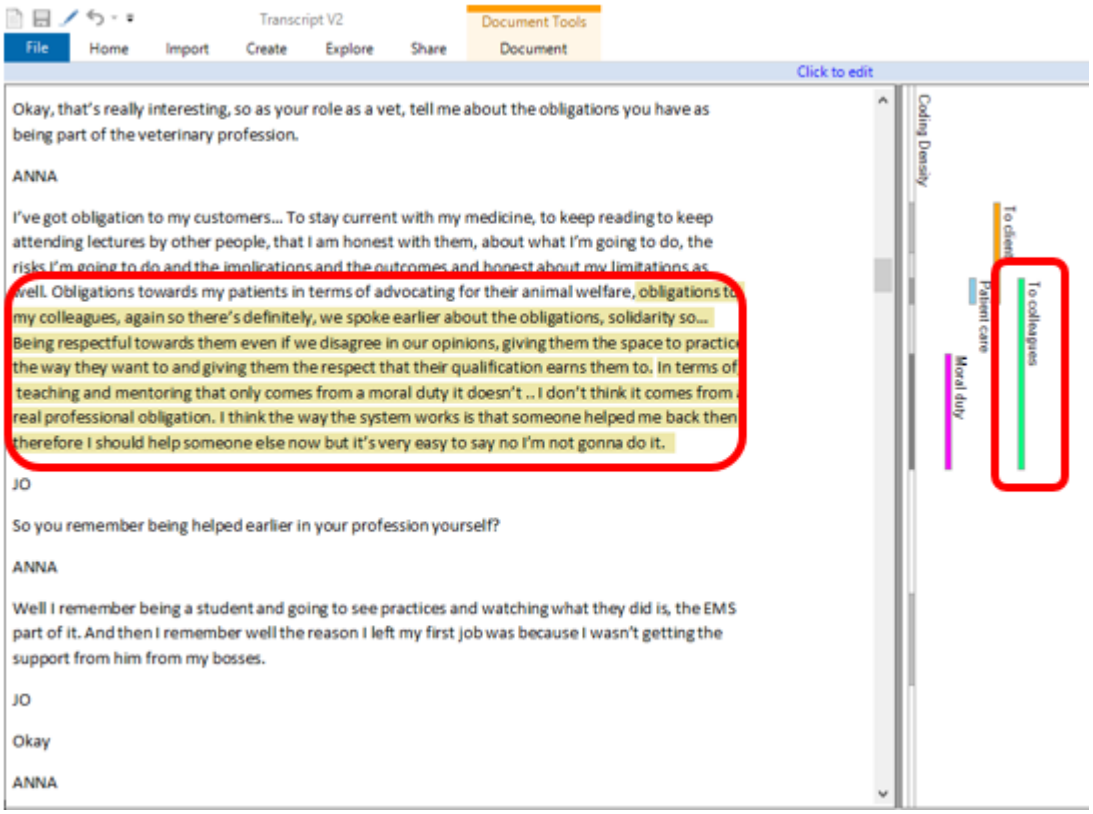
Coded for item identified as professional obligation – patient care, semantic



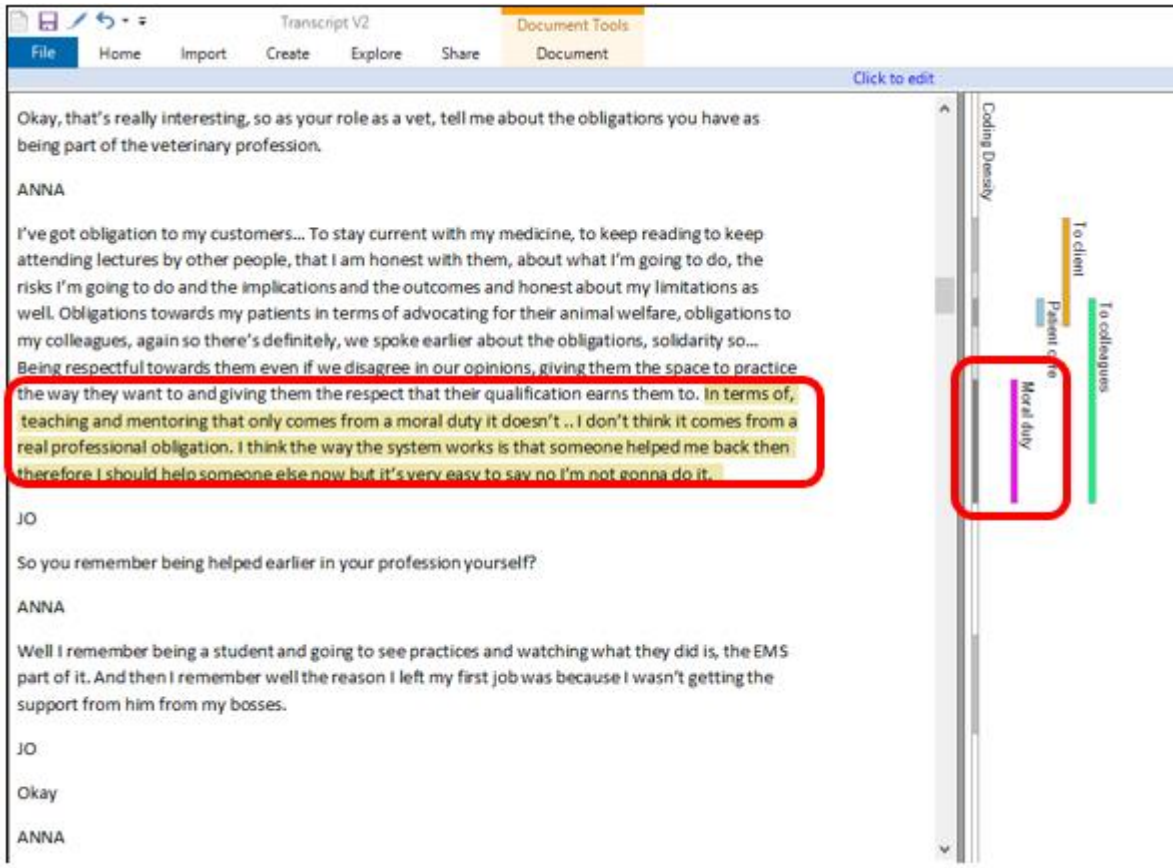
Coded for item identified as professional obligation - to client, semantic



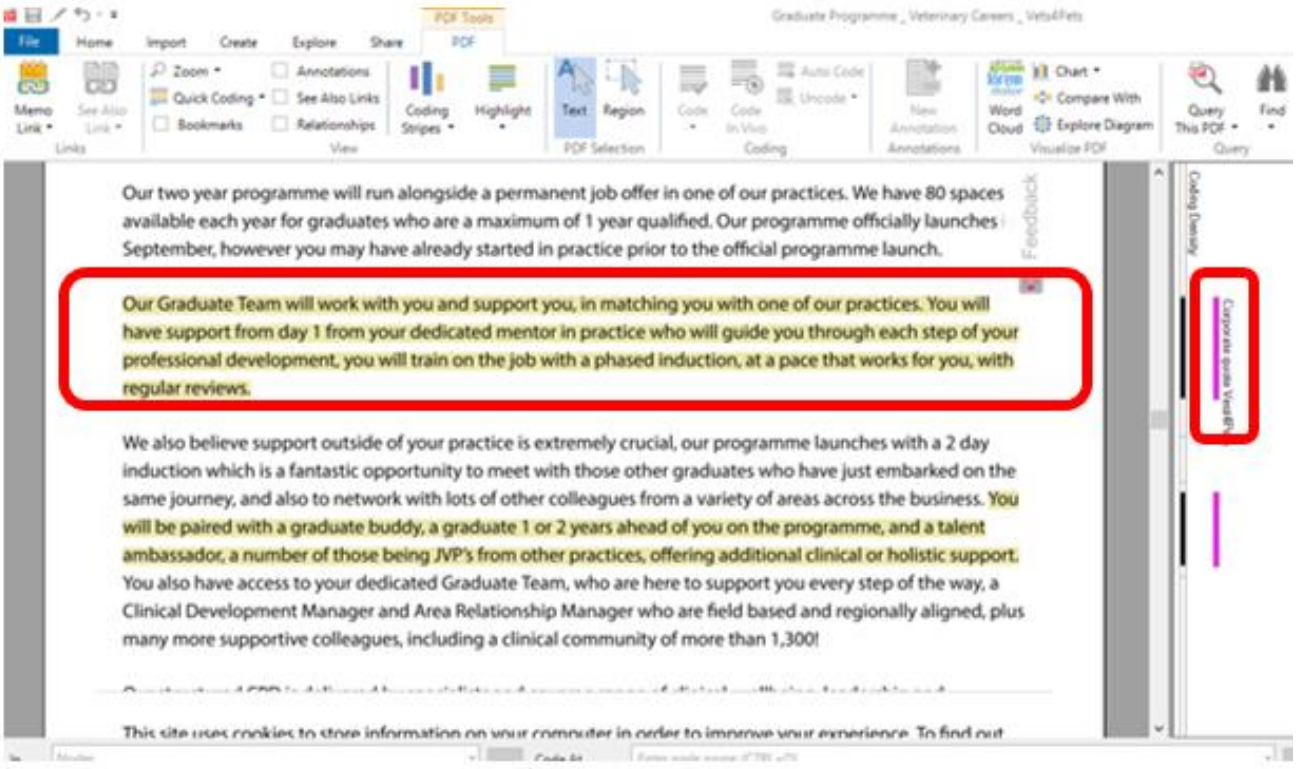
Coded for item identified as professional obligation - to colleagues, semantic


Transcript V2
Document Tools
File
Home
Import
Create
Explore
Share
Document
Click to edit
Okay, that's really interesting, so as your role as a vet, tell me about the obligations you have as being part of the veterinary profession.
ANNA
I've got obligation to my customers... To stay current with my medicine, to keep reading to keep attending lectures by other people, that I am honest with them, about what I'm going to do, the risks I'm going to do and the implications and the outcomes and honest about my limitations as well. Obligations towards my patients in terms of advocating for their animal welfare, obligations to my colleagues, again so there's definitely, we spoke earlier about the obligations, solidarity so... Being respectful towards them even if we disagree in our opinions, giving them the space to practice the way they want to and giving them the respect that their qualification earns them to. In terms of teaching and mentoring that only comes from a moral duty it doesn't .. I don't think it comes from a real professional obligation. I think the way the system works is that someone helped me back then therefore I should help someone else now but it's very easy to say no I'm not gonna do it.
JO
So you remember being helped earlier in your profession yourself?
ANNA
Well I remember being a student and going to see practices and watching what they did is, the EMS part of it. And then I remember well the reason I left my first job was because I wasn't getting the support from him from my bosses.
JO
Okay
ANNA
Coding Density
To clients
To colleagues
Patient care
Moral duty

Coded for item identified as language used to describe sense of obligation – moral duty, linguistic



APPENDIX 12 EXAMPLE OF WEB-BASED MATERIAL CODED FOR MENTORING CONTENT



Our two year programme will run alongside a permanent job offer in one of our practices. We have 80 spaces available each year for graduates who are a maximum of 1 year qualified. Our programme officially launches September, however you may have already started in practice prior to the official programme launch.

Our Graduate Team will work with you and support you, in matching you with one of our practices. You will have support from day 1 from your dedicated mentor in practice who will guide you through each step of your professional development, you will train on the job with a phased induction, at a pace that works for you, with regular reviews.

We also believe support outside of your practice is extremely crucial, our programme launches with a 2 day induction which is a fantastic opportunity to meet with those other graduates who have just embarked on the same journey, and also to network with lots of other colleagues from a variety of areas across the business. You will be paired with a graduate buddy, a graduate 1 or 2 years ahead of you on the programme, and a talent ambassador, a number of those being JVP's from other practices, offering additional clinical or holistic support. You also have access to your dedicated Graduate Team, who are here to support you every step of the way, a Clinical Development Manager and Area Relationship Manager who are field based and regionally aligned, plus many more supportive colleagues, including a clinical community of more than 1,300!

APPENDIX 13 FEATURES OF GOOD MENTORING PRACTICE

Feature of mentoring	Illustrative quotation
Mentoring should be a process of gradually letting go	**Alex:** obviously when the residency finishes, they aren't immediately flick a switch you're an experienced vet and they'll still come back to me and asked me different things and actually also vets that aren't my residents that obviously if they've got a problem they'll think, who were the old gits in Org X? Let's give them a ring and see. And I'm happy to try and give some advice for that. **Janika**:, she started with only doing vaccinations, so before that, we discussed all the protocols to make sure we are on the same page, now we are slowly adding her other appointments, so she started with like ear problems and diarrhoea and things like that, but every time before I kind of expanded her circle of things she sees, I always had a chat with her, what do you do, why, what would you prescribe, on top of that I am trying to have, like, you know, an unofficial chat with her every day in the practice, like have you seen something interesting, or do you have any questions? **Richard:** I'm here to support you, but I'm also here to challenge you a little bit.
The mentoring dyad needs to develop their own way of working	**Janika:** as a buddy I feel I am, I just need to look after her and that it's more like [...] when you go to the gym it will train you and make sure you are achieving certain things and getting fitter and buddy is like a therapist. I feel that as a buddy I have to be, I have to know her, I have to be her not just a colleague I try to be her friend, that if she has a bad day, I will just support her and it's more I think about like a mental support if that makes sense. **James:** a key role for a mentor to be to, be accessible to be not ...not overly critical not overly judgmental you know actually not telling them what to do, but asking them what they would do and then sort of getting to the point where they they realize what it is they should be doing.
Mentors should not be line managers if possible	**Janika**:]on top of that if I would have my boss asking me how am I doing, you know, it's my *boss*, I have to put a brave face and say yeah, brilliant, thank you **Richard:** the more I look at it, I don't know how you can really say that you truly mentor someone that you're involved in the line management [...] without losing any objectivity because it's... I have conversations with people now that I'm ...and it it drifts into alright well, this is going wrong or this is going on and you're sat there going right, do I address this from the business point of view or do I address it from their point of view and it's it's a very difficult situation you're poacher and gamekeeper at the same time

Feature of mentoring	Illustrative quotation from convenor documentation
Structure meetings, to keep track of development	**Martin:** While you will be working alongside your buddy in practice on a daily basis, we suggest that you meet at least once a month for a one to one meeting lasting 30 to 60mins. **David:** Instead of phone calls, arrange a meeting with your vet on a weekly or at least fortnightly basis. Ask the vet to prepare 2-3 cases that went well and 2-3 cases that didn't go well (for whatever reason – communication breakdown, incorrect estimate, poor clinical result, etc.) over the last period. If you find the trainee is not feeling confident enough yet to discuss unsuccessful cases with you, pick randomly some cases from the particular branch they worked at recently […]
Encourage goal-setting	**Martin:** Summarise & discuss a key professional or clinical success and a key professional or clinical learning opportunity over the last month. Set one clinical and one professional SMART action to review the next month. **David:** Arrive at a conclusion - Set a plan for the future and schedule a further meeting to review progress. Focus on no more than two or three things to improve on, picking the most achievable and crucial to the job.
Work on establishing trust	**David**: Relationship (Gain loyalty & trust) Develop a strong (personal) relationship of mutual trust. Learn about potential difficulties and problems the trainee might have; encourage trainee to tell them early, before developing into major issues. Apply yourself to help solve problems PROACTIVELY. Gain loyalty. **Martin:** The content and formality of these meetings will very much depend on the needs of the graduate at that time, the growing relationship forming between the graduate and buddy, and the rate of progression of the graduate through the programme.