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Samantha gained her veterinary nursing qualification in 2005 and has, subsequently, gained the Veterinary Nursing Certificate of Emergency and Critical Care in 2013 and the Veterinary Nursing Certificate of Exotic Species in 2015. Samantha is a West Midlands-based locum nurse; but she has, however, travelled the country providing cover for first-opinion, charity and referral practices.



**Suggested Personal & Professional Development (PPD)*

NURSING

A month in the life of a locum RVN

As a locum registered veterinary nurse (RVN), I am often asked what it is like to do my job. The following short, four-week diary hopefully provides the answer by presenting an overview, together with the positives and negatives of this type of work.

Week 1

This week actually starts on the Sunday before, because the practice I am working for this week is a few hours away from home. So I spend Sunday getting my rucksack together with everything I will need for the week's work, plus a couple of home comforts, and my ice box filled with my grocery essentials.

The practice has organised for me to stay in a shared flat. Locum accommodation can vary from a hotel or B&B to a shared flat or rented room in someone's house. Often I do not know what facilities I will have prior to my arrival; however, I have been here before, so I know what to expect this time. It is a referral centre.

I enjoy coming here and have the opportunity to utilise my nursing skills, whilst still learning a great deal from the complex caseload. My duties this week are to provide in-patient care, make sure medications are given in a timely manner and to update the senior clinicians on the progress of their patients. I really enjoy in-patient care, so this is an excellent week's placement for me.

My shift pattern is seven, 12-hour shifts in a row, so there will be little opportunity to become homesick. When I am away from home, I prefer to be at work as much as I can. Contacting home, and checking my work emails, is difficult; but I make sure I get to telephone home for 10 minutes each day before work. The flat I am staying in is a

flat share with three other people, which I know would not be to everyone's liking. I try to be as considerate as I can to my flatmates by keeping all my possessions in my room, but with so many people, the flat can quickly get cluttered or messy.

Week 2

I get up early – 5am to be exact – on the Monday morning, so I can miss the worst of the traffic and make the long drive home. Today is a recovery day after my 77-hour week, so I have nothing else planned. This week I am working Tuesday and Wednesday only at a practice local to home. I have done some work for them recently, so it will be familiar territory.

The Tuesday is spent at their branch surgery. It is lovely to catch up with the other nurses there and it is a relaxed day with a couple of surgeries and cleaning afterwards. This is a big change from the work I was doing the previous week. I spend my shift on Wednesday at their main hospital. I am on theatre duties today and help with some routine surgeries, followed by performing some radiography and, finally, assisting with an endoscopy case. In the afternoon, I am asked to help the student nurses with some revision for their upcoming anatomy and physiology exams.

I now have a long weekend ahead of me. Up until now I have been working away from home a great deal, so I allocated this time to see friends and family. Unfortunately, as a locum, I am not paid for time off, so it can be a difficult balancing act – between work and holidays.

I make use of the Thursday morning for sorting out my expenses and invoices for my accountant. Recently, I have made the change from using an 'umbrella' company to setting up my own limited company. So far it is going OK, but even with an accountant's help, it takes a little time each week to make sure I have everything up to date and correct.

I also use Thursday as an opportunity to contact my recruitment agencies to inform them of my next availability. Although, I have a few practices that like to book me for work directly, I still use agencies for the majority of my engagements.

Week 3

After a long weekend, it is back to work on Monday and to another different practice. It has been many years since I last worked at this hospital and much has changed. Now, as part of a corporate organisation, there have been significant equipment changes and many new faces. My first

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