



day is spent re-learning where everything 'lives' and updating myself on their policies and procedures. The majority of my shifts are theatre shifts, although I will also be involved with plenty of diagnostic imaging – such as radiography, ultrasonography, endoscopy and CT scanning. The team have been really welcoming and I quickly feel that I am able to help and become involved.

On my first day, I am also given my shift pattern for the next few weeks. As a locum, it can be commonplace not to know the true shift pattern until you start working at a practice, which can be tricky when trying to plan anything in advance. The shifts here are really good, so I shall achieve a good work/life balance for a few weeks.

The Saturday is slightly different, as I am helping one

of my regular bookings with some Saturday morning cover. This is a small independent practice and the team really feels like a family. My duties are mainly reception cover with some nurse consultations as well. The morning soon flies by with many appointments seen, but because the practice is so organised it is a calm and productive morning. We even manage to fit in an operation at the end of the consulting period, which goes well and the patient recovers quickly. By lunch time my shift is over and I can enjoy the rest of the weekend.

Week 4

I am back at the same practices again this week. I feel I have started to settle back in and know everyone at the hospital practice again. On a quieter day this week, I hear about the changes for the

Nursing Progress Log (NPL) and discuss clinical coaching techniques with one of the other nurses. I have been a clinical coach in the past and like to try to keep up to date with any alterations to the NPL. This discussion counts towards our CPD allowance, which is important because, as a locum, CPD can be difficult to organise.

Although there are many free webinars available, they may not always be the most relevant to what you are hoping to learn or refresh your knowledge of. Courses and CPD days can be expensive – some are several hundred pounds each – and I would also lose a day's pay to attend a course or exam. I try to, where possible, learn from and record professional conversations and also look into cost-effective – but job relevant – online CPD.

During the week, I am also trying to organise when I want to work and what days I would like to have off in the coming months. I have worked a significant number

of weekends recently and feel that a break may be in order in the next few months. I also have the administration task of chasing unpaid invoices and keeping my financial records up to date. I work the Saturday morning again this week and then get to enjoy the remainder of the weekend.

Summary

Being a locum nurse has permitted me the opportunity to work in a number of different types of veterinary practice, which has, in turn, allowed me to use and develop a number of different nursing skills. Each week can be very varied, and it is wonderful to meet so many different people.

Locum work, however, can be lonely at times, especially when working away from home. You also need to have a determination and passion for the profession because, ultimately, the focus of the practices in which you work is not invested in your career and progression, only in having a reliable nurse to fill the gap in their staffing levels. ■

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