

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	22 nd September 2021
Title:	An overview of Public Protection's Community Warden and Pest Control Services
Purpose of the report:	To update Scrutiny on the issues facing the Public Protection's Community Warden Service, in particular the pest control service.
For:	Scrutiny
Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gareth Lloyd – Public Protection

Background

The Community Warden team is part of the Council's Public Protection service and the team's remit as well as perform certain statutory duties also provide a cost effective pest control service.

For the past nine years, the Community Warden Team has operated with only two wardens and these officers were required to prioritise income-generating tasks and duties.

However, since March 2020, the community warden service has been operating with just one Community Warden, as a result of periods of long term staff sickness/absence and staff departures, with complaints/requests relating to pests now having to be prioritised based on their public health risk.

Staffing/Resources concerns

It was previously agreed that the Service would operate with 1.6 full time equivalent (FTE) staff. Following an ongoing financial review, a newly appointed Community Warden is due to start in early September to fill a vacant post, bringing the Community Warden Team back to two full time officers (2.0 full time equivalent). To keep 2.0FTE officers within the Service, the Service will need to explore opportunities to generate additional income.

Before the new officer can undertake any pest control duties, he must achieve the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) Level 2 Award in Pest Management which involves a 5-day residential course and exam followed by a 6-week online learning package with the British Pest Control Association (BPCA).

Demands on the Service

The below data shows the number of requests logged in each year since 2016:

Table 1

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/21
Rats	189	187	163	220	265
Mice	41	72	41	45	36
Flies	11	9	17	7	10
Wasps/Bees	147	132	201	184	190
Bedbugs	2	4	4	3	1
Garden ants	14	11	16	11	12
Fleas	41	21	21	21	8
Other pests	8	18	12	7	17
Stray Dogs	57	1	4	5	5
Dog Fouling	52	37	44	28	20
Total	562	492	523	531	564

It appears that numbers of rats are increasing, although there is no absolute measure of rat numbers available. The apparent increase may be attributable to a whole range of factors, including takeaway foods become more popular resulting in more food waste, rubbish being collected less frequently, poor housing conditions, low income/vulnerable households unable to afford pest control services, and milder winters.

Provision of Pest Control Service

Under The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 there is a statutory duty on the Authority to keep its district free from rats and mice.

Specifically, it is the duty of the local authority to:

1. Destroy rats and mice on land which they occupy, and to keep such land so far as practicable free from rats and mice.
2. To enforce the duties of owners and occupiers of land, to carry out such operations to rid their land of potential hazard causing pests.

However, there is no legal duty for a local authority to provide discretionary pest control services and many authorities in Wales no longer provide it.

Rodent Control in Public Sewers

The lack of sewer baiting is a matter of concern to the Service and the Authority. With the number of reported rat problems increasing, there is a need to reconsider how the public can be best served and how this pest problem can be tackled.

In recent years, in response to the growing concerns of rodents in towns across the County, the Service has tried to resume the joint sewer baiting work with Dŵr Cymru (DC). DC are open to this idea, however they now only work with organisations/partners that can demonstrate that they are accredited under the Safety Scheme in Procurement (SSIP) certification scheme. In order to resume this work the Authority must be accredited under the SSIP scheme.

Other local authorities have found themselves in the same position and have made the decision to advise DC to make their own alternative arrangements for sewer baiting.

Farm Pest Control Services

It appears that Ceredigion County Council is the only Authority left in Wales that continues to offer a dedicated farm pest control service.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Service had approximately 100 active pest control contracts with local farms. Since April 2021, the number of active farm contracts has reduced to less than 10 with the majority of previous clients choosing not to renew their contracts.

The drop in farm contracts may be attributed to a number of factors/reasons, including:

1. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, many farms did not receive the correct/full level of service due to a lack of resources within the Service; this resulted in several customers being refunded or having visits carried by officers when they were available to do so;
2. During the Covid-19 lockdowns, officers were required to shield, etc., and so it became necessary to temporarily suspend our pest control service due to lack of available staff, with the Service only able to deal with exceptional cases of pest infestation that posed significant harm to public health and well-being;
3. As a consequence of us having to suspend our pest control service at various times during the Covid-19 pandemic, many of our previous customers have turned to alternative providers in the private sector for their pest control services;
4. In 2020, it was necessary for the Service to review the fees and charges associated with farm contracts due to legislative changes which affected the way in which rodenticide must be administered. The fees and charges needed to reflect the legislative changes and new working practices, otherwise the pest control service on farms would have been carried out at a financial loss to the Authority. The cost of the new contracts were calculated on a cost recovery basis taking into account the additional officer time, extra travel costs, extra materials, required to carry out the work in accordance with the new regulations. Some of our previous customers may therefore have decided not to renew their contracts with us for cost reasons.

Provision of Dog Wardening Service

The Council has a statutory duty under sections 149 and 150 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Environmental Protection (Stray Dogs) Regulations 1992 to seize stray dogs in public places, and if they cannot be returned to the owner, are taken to contract kennels. Any unclaimed dogs are offered for re-homing. Unfortunately, but very rarely, dogs may be euthanised due to behaviour issues or ill health. Owners are charged both officer time and associated kennelling and veterinary fees for the return of their stray dogs.

The Local Authority has sole responsibility for discharging all stray dog functions. The Police maintain involvement in dog matters where livestock is harmed or people are in fear or harmed. They also have a role in the identification and control of listed breeds in the Dangerous Dogs Act.

The number of stray dog reports received by the Service has remained consistently low in recent years and has reduced significantly when compared to the number of reports back in 2016. This is comparable with other local authorities.

With existing resources, this function has been unaffected. However, the Authority depends on a single boarding kennel to act as a contract kennel to support the Service with this function.

Provision of Dog Fouling Enforcement

The council has a statutory duty to safeguard public health from harm due to dog fouling; dangerous and stray dogs in public places and on council and certain other land.

In addition, the Council has adopted byelaws relating to dogs prohibited from beaches and dogs on the promenades, and these remain in force. Similarly, a dog-related Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has also been adopted by the Council and is in force on a section of beach and promenade at Borth.

Due to lack of resources, any formal action including prosecution requires good evidence which unfortunately is rarely available. Based on previous experiences, patrolling had limited success in identifying offenders as most fouling often occurred during the hours of darkness and when no witnesses are present and no ability to identify offenders. However, the presence of officers conducting these patrols did act as an effective deterrent.

There are a number of ways in which the Council can support and encourage appropriate behaviour which is led by Highways and Environmental Services as part of the Council's Caru Ceredigion campaign.

Welsh Government Hardship Funding

To contribute to the delivery of a county-wide Destination Management Plan in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to ensure that visitors visit Ceredigion safely and responsibly this summer, four temporary officers have been recruited, using Welsh Government hardship funding.

They are employed until the end of October to assist Public Protection and Coast & Countryside to carry out proactive beach, nature reserve, coastal, cycle path and street patrols, across the county, responding to issues of wildlife and enviro-crime e.g. dog fouling/littering, disturbing wildlife, etc. As part of their duties, they will engage, educate and encourage members of the public to comply with various wildlife/public health laws and assist existing officers from the Public Protection and Coast & Countryside teams with enforcement of wildlife/enviro-crime related matters.

Summary

In order to meet public expectation, undertake statutory duties, and provide a comprehensive pest control service, the Service proposes to do the following:

1. Acquire the SSIP accreditation in order to resume the sewer baiting work;

2. Create a new Pest Control Policy which would introduce a new system that would set out who and how the Authority would charge for various pest control services, in particular, introducing a new safeguard for low income/vulnerable households to access these services by offering a free or discounted rate for the treatment of rat infestations especially where a case is referred to Public Protection via the Council's Social Services Safeguarding Team;
3. Consider ways to increase dog fouling patrols/enforcement work by exploring opportunities to delegate dog fouling/littering enforcement to other appropriate officers of the Council or to seek financial contributions from community councils to increase capacity and visibility across the county.

Has an integrated impact assessment been completed? If not, please state why Not applicable

Wellbeing of Future Generations: *Summary*
Long-term:
Collaboration:
Involvement:
Prevention
Integration

Recommendation(s): That Scrutiny consider the content of the report and take account of the issues described.

Reason(s) for decision: To deliver a fit for purpose pest control service.

Overview and Scrutiny: Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Policy Framework: Corporate Strategy 2017-2022

Corporate Priorities • Promoting Environmental and Community Resilience

Finance and procurement implications: The Service aims to operate within budget.

Legal implications:

Staffing implications:

Property/asset implications: None

Risk(s):	Legal challenge / Reputational damage – legislation has placed a duty on the Authority to keep its district free from rats and mice and to collect and detain stray dogs.
Statutory Powers:	The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 includes duties on the Local Authority; Environmental Protection Act 1990; The Environmental Protection (Stray Dogs) Regulations 1992; Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
Background Papers	Further information on national trends and initiatives in relation to dog fouling can be found within the Association of Public Service Excellence – Dog Fouling report (Dec 2019) DEFRA – Dog Control and Welfare (January 2018) Dogs Trust Stray Dog Survey report 2019/20
Corporate Lead Officer:	Alun Williams (Policy & Performance)
Reporting Officer:	Anne-Louise Davies (Trading Standards & Licensing Manager)
Date:	2 nd September 2021



Dog Fouling – Why it is difficult to tackle and potential solutions

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Key Points

In 3 years since the original APSE [briefing](#), dog fouling remains one of the most prevalent issues for local authority environmental services.

This briefing covers why this issue is so difficult to tackle, and offers some additional solutions for local authorities.

1.0 Background

As shown in the recent APSE State of the Market report for Parks and Green Spaces, dog fouling remains the second priority environmental issue for that service (83%) behind only litter (89%), and the figure is up by 5% since last year's survey. 66% have dog control orders in parks and green spaces, which is also up by 4% since last year. According to respondents from the APSE State of the Market for Street Cleansing, 80% are planning dog fouling education campaigns in the next 2 years, which is also up by 12.4% since last year.

This shows that dog fouling is a prevailing problem for many local authorities, and with shrinking staff levels and diminishing budgets, it will become more difficult for local authorities to deal with in the way that they do currently.

2.0 Why dog fouling is a challenging issue to tackle

Dog fouling seems particularly difficult to tackle for a number of reasons:

People are aware they could be fined, but many don't think they will ever be caught

Research by [Encams](#) showed that roughly 60% of dog owners who justify their behaviour largely on the idea that "everyone else is doing it" would clean up after their pets if they were either shaken or shocked into it, and if the dangers of toxocariasis was better articulated.

Fouling can happen at any time of day or night, so patrolling often won't catch the offenders

Research by [Keep Britain Tidy](#) showed that people are more likely to not pick up after their dogs when they feel like they aren't being watched (either by the public or by enforcement officers/contractors); fouling also has been shown to increase at night.

Residents are (rightfully) hesitant to confront residents who persistently dog foul

Offenders can react in a myriad of ways to being confronted, ranging from excuses about not having bags to collect the waste all the way up to violent altercations. Recent news stories suggest that an elderly man in [North Ayrshire](#) was punched for confronting a man, and another in [Huddersfield](#) was subjected to racial abuse and threats of violence.

It is important to let residents know about the potential dangers of confronting or recording offenders.

Prosecution requires good evidence

Residents often only report where the dog fouling is, rather than giving a date, time, name and address of the dog owner (if known), a description of the dog and owner, vehicle registration number, and any other identifying details that could lead to a successful prosecution. A [Chorley Council councillor](#) also suggested that residents with doorstep CCTV cameras could provide footage of someone not picking up after their pet to officers.

It can be a long and time-consuming process to pursue and successfully prosecute offenders.

As a result of residents only reporting where dog fouling has taken place and the way that local authorities record incident reporting, many Freedom of Information requests that have been reported in the news media comparing number of reports to number of prosecutions have unfairly made local authorities look very ineffective at tackling dog fouling.

Attempts to introduce new dog controls to combat dog fouling can lead to a public backlash

[Wirral Council](#) recently proposed introducing a Public Spaces Protection order that would require dog owners to carry bags as well as banning dog walking between May and September at tourist hotspots, as well as bans from marked sports pitches and children's play areas, and requiring dogs to be on a lead at all times in other areas. This approach was met by a considerable public backlash, with a [petition](#) reaching nearly 20,000 signatures; many of the comments saw the proposals as an attack on responsible dog ownership.

The same story is also true of many other local authorities, and shows how difficult it can be to try and introduce effective controls on irresponsible owners that do not negatively impact responsible owners.

The public is still largely unaware that (in many areas) you can dispose of dog waste in any available local authority litter bin

Many residents are still under the impression that you must use the dog waste bins only, but guidance on this has since been updated and the majority of councils now encourage owners that they can use any general litter bin. More work should be done to educate the public on this in areas where dog fouling issues exist where there are few bins specifically for dog waste.

Many people don't consider leaving dog waste bags on the ground fouling

The littering of bagged dog waste is a growing problem. Research by the [Dog's Trust and Keep Britain Tidy](#) showed that many dog walkers leave bagged dog waste in public places with the intention of collecting it later but forget, and that this may be suggesting to others that it is a "socially acceptable practice". Some councils are now including messages about bagged waste into their education and enforcement campaigns, with some like [Cornwall Council](#) offering a £150 fixed penalty or prosecution for those caught throwing it.

3.0 Good ideas from local authorities

Local authorities are implementing many good ideas related to dog fouling that could be easily implemented by others. The [2016 APSE briefing](#) covered ideas such as:

- The Green Dog Walkers Scheme
- Rewards for residents reporting fouling
- Chalk stencils with messages being painted onto pavements
- Highlighting fouling with bright coloured sprays
- Hanging bags of soil to represent fouling in the area
- Glow-in-the-dark posters to target night-time fouling
- Dog watch schemes – inspired by neighbourhood watch schemes
- A Council reporting app that allows you to identify the location of fouling

Dog bag dispensers

Dog bag dispensers - Getting primary schools involved - West Lothian Council [\[link\]](#)

West Lothian Council's Cleaner communities team engaged with local primary schools to create dog bag dispensers from empty two litre plastic bottles. Parkhead Primary in West Calder took part, and the bag dispensers were placed at key points in the local area.

Dog bag dispensers – Provided free of charge through sponsorship - Fife Council [\[link\]](#)

Fife installed free dog bag dispensers across parks, recreation areas and walking routes in the authority. Fife teamed up with an organisation called Tikspac UK who provide the dispensers and unlimited bags, with the costs covered through sponsorship and advertising on the dispensers; therefore, all the council have to do is re-fill the dispensers.

A survey of council areas where these stations have been installed has shown an average 56.8% reduction in dog fouling complaints and 49.4% average reduction in littering.

Dog walking routes intervention in 15 local parks – Dogs Trust and Keep Britain Tidy [\[link\]](#)

The Dogs Trust and Keep Britain Tidy's 'Walk This Way' campaign uses signage, colour-coded route markers and bin stickers to create dog walking routes with bins for waste disposal. Route markers are shown at 200 metre intervals, with stickered bins placed at 1-kilometre intervals. Maps of the routes were also displayed. The use of these dog walking routes reduced bagged and unbagged dog fouling by an average of 40% across all sites.

The full report is available [here](#).

Dog DNA identification

Dog DNA scheme - London Borough of Barking and Dagenham [\[link\]](#)

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham introduced a voluntary dog DNA registration scheme that allows dog owners to access their pet's DNA profile, breed overviews, a place to store medical records, kennel information, etc) through PooPrints UK. This also allowed the council to match any dog fouling found to an owner. During the scheme pilot they found around 50% less fouling than they usually would on their streets, with reductions up to 90% reported.

Public Spaces Protection Orders

Some local authorities have introduced [Public Spaces Protection Orders](#) (previously called Dog Control Orders) in public areas that require residents to do things such as:

- Keep your dog on a lead
- Limit the number of dogs you can have with you
- Clean up after your dog
- Put your dog on a lead if told to by someone from the council or police
- Stop your dog going to certain places – like parts of a park
- Carry disposable bags or a poop scoop

Ignoring Public Spaces Protection Orders can lead to a £100 on the spot fine (also known as a Fixed Penalty Notice), or up to £1,000 if this leads to court action.

Councils have a duty to let the public know where Public Spaces Protection Orders are in place, for example 'no dogs' signs if dogs are not allowed in a specific park.

Public spaces protection order – Caerphilly County Borough Council [\[link\]](#)

Caerphilly County Borough Council introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order to:

- Continue to exclude dogs from all enclosed children's play areas within the county borough
- Require dog owners to put their dogs on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer on any public land where the dog is considered to be out of control or causing alarm or distress or to prevent a nuisance
- Requires dog owners to remove dog faeces on any land. You must clean up after your dog in all public places in Caerphilly County Borough.
- Requires dogs to be kept on leads in enclosed memorial gardens situated in the county borough
- Requires dog walkers to carry an appropriate receptacle for dealing with the waste that dog dog(s) produce. This requirement aims to ensure that dog walkers always have the means (i.e. a receptacle) to pick up their dog's faeces

This enhanced the council's ability to deal with irresponsible dog owners.

Plain clothed enforcement officers

Plain clothed enforcement officers - Plymouth City Council [\[link\]](#)

Plymouth City Council have started using plain clothed environmental enforcement officers in areas where fouling has been reported. They noted that when people decide they're not going to pick up after their dogs, they have a look around and check there isn't an enforcement officer around and then continue walking, and that plain clothed enforcement officers add an additional deterrent to this type of offender.

The officers carry Plymouth City Council identification that will be produced at the start of any conversation with the public.

CCTV

CCTV at dog fouling hot spots – Craven District Council [\[link\]](#)

Craven District Council's Policy Committee approved plans to tackle dog fouling hot spots with CCTV cameras in order to obtain the necessary evidence to fine/prosecute those responsible. There are plans to install CCTV in key areas where intelligence and evidence confirm that persistent offending is occurring.

The Council also plans to increase the numbers of patrols, and to continue their education programme in schools.

Events

Family and Dog Fun Day event – Scottish Borders Council [\[link\]](#)

Scottish Borders Council run a Family and Dog Fun Day as part of their responsible dog ownership strategy, with a range of activities and stalls for all ages and their dogs. This year's event (their third so far) included activities such as:

- Les Amis D'Onno dog display team
- Dryburgh Abbey Training Group with 'have a go' dog agility
- Dog training demonstrations by Braw Puppy
- A fun dog show

This was alongside activities for the whole family including: face-painting, a bouncy castle, a scavenger hunt and a colouring competition for children.

The event also allows families to engage with the council and to get information on the Green Dog Walker scheme, get free pet health checks and microchipping was available for a small fee. More than 300 people turned up to the previous year's show.

The Council recognise that having as many responsible dog owners as possible will help to reduce issues around out of control dogs, fouling, stray dogs and anti-social behaviour.

3.0 APSE Comment

APSE encourages our member councils to keep sharing their failures and successes in approaches to tackling dog fouling. Judging by news media stories since our last briefing on this topic and discussions at advisory group meetings, it does not seem like anyone has completely eradicated dog fouling in their local area.

Dog fouling can be a difficult thing to tackle without punishing responsible dog owners in the process. Pet ownership, according to the [Mental Health Foundation](#), can help us to live mentally healthier lives with research showing benefits for those suffering depression, loneliness, later life stresses, ADHD, autism and walking dogs helps people stay more socially connected. It is important that council actions to reduce fouling does not negatively impact those that are reaping other benefits from pet ownership.

Public Spaces Protection Orders need to be reasonable and taken in conjunction with the public. Dog fouling alone may not be enough for the public to accept their necessity. It is important that dogs get enough exercise, so this needs to be considered when designating no-dog areas. The [PDSA](#) recommends that breeds of dogs such as golden retrievers and labrador retrievers may require 2+ hours of exercise per day, and that they should be able to spend time off-lead in a secure area to run around. Owners with limited mobility or lack of access to appropriate transport need to be able to access public spaces that allow them to properly exercise their pets.

Education approaches and campaigns undertaken should try to target all ages and communicate the dangers of toxocariasis (a disease that can cause blindness), especially to young children. Owners should be made aware that bagged dog waste can be disposed of in normal bins and not just in dog bins (where applicable), and authorities carry out audits of the locations and use of bins to make sure the provision is appropriate across areas with a high prevalence of fouling.

Where possible, councils should be trying to make allies out of responsible dog owners, improving mechanisms for public reporting (e.g. through social media) and utilising their insights to help identify the individuals who are the source of the issue, and publicising successful prosecutions.

Garry Lee
Research & Coordination Officer

Louise Melville
Principal Advisor (Scotland)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Guidance on Dog Control and Welfare for Police and Local Authorities

January 2018

Contents

Introduction/ context	1
Survey results	1
Roles & Responsibilities	1
Dog microchipping.....	2
Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs – LEAD ©.....	2
Acceptable Behaviour Contract.....	3
Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)	4
Table 1: Summary of Responsibilities & Powers for Dog Control and Welfare	5
Further guidance.....	6

Introduction/ context

1. In 2017 Defra surveyed police and local authorities in England and Wales on their approaches to dog control and welfare and in particular measures and policies to reduce dog attacks. This document brings together the results of the survey, sets out and makes recommendations on examples of good practice and gives a steer on respective responsibilities for police forces and local authorities to work up in partnership.

Survey results

2. There were a number of positive comments about the new anti-social behaviour powers, stating that these had been very helpful as they provided more wide-ranging and flexible powers. Use by both police and local authorities of such statutory measures as the Community Protection Notice to tackle dog control was generally low. Even so, many enforcers noted they use non-statutory intervention measures, such as warning letters, “come to notice” letters or acceptable behaviour contracts to tackle incidents, especially of a minor variety, before resorting to statutory interventions, which were often not then needed.
3. Several respondents commented on the importance of agencies - principally police and local authorities, but also social housing providers - working together and the success of the **LEAD** initiative (Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs – see below). It was felt that improved partnership working has helped and that there had been an improvement in the guidance available.
4. Reference was made to a lack of certainty in some areas over the split of responsibility between police and local authorities with respect to dog control issues. Varying degrees of enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 or engagement on dog control between local authorities was highlighted as an issue. Resourcing was identified as a challenge against a background of a high number of cases.
5. Half of the police forces that responded to Defra had a policy in place for dealing with dog attacks or dog bites. As noted in existing guidance, Defra advises all police forces to have a clear policy in place in relation to dangerous dogs.

Roles & Responsibilities

6. The overriding message from the survey is that **partnership working** between authorities can be beneficial and initiatives such as Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs (LEAD) provide a helpful structure to encourage cooperative approaches while helping in the management of ‘Risk’ and with Safeguarding.

7. Within that framework **police are the lead enforcer where an incident concerns a suspected criminal offence** such as under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 involving a suspected prohibited dog (e.g. pit-bull terrier) or a dog dangerously out of control. At the other end of the scale, **local authorities** are solely responsible under the law for providing a **stray dog service**. This includes the requirement to provide for an acceptance point where finders can take stray dogs outside of normal office hours.
8. Within that range of examples there are a host of dog related incidents such as nuisance dogs, excessive barking, and dogs running loose where increased partnership working can help. In general local authorities may wish to lead on dealing with and following up on such incidents as they relate more to stray dogs and statutory nuisance controls. To help them tackle these issues, the full range of measures to combat anti-social behaviour are available and which are detailed below.
9. Where a dog attack has occurred or an offence suspected under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or where a dog is worrying livestock then, as noted above, that will be a police matter given the possibility of criminal offences having been committed under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 and the seriousness of the incident.
10. **Table 1** summarises the split of responsibilities between police and local authorities. This information is based on intelligence gathered in the survey but responsibility may vary from one area to another.

Dog microchipping

11. The successful implementation of compulsory **dog microchipping** (estimated 90-94% compliance in Britain) has led to a reduction in stray dogs, because dogs can now be more quickly reunited with their owners and do not spend time in local authority kennels.
12. **Local authorities** have powers under the Microchipping of Dogs regulations to take enforcement action against keepers of unchipped dogs and have powers to seize and chip dogs at the owner's expense. We would not expect police to routinely use these powers although they can do so where unchipped dogs come to their notice for other reasons.

Local Environmental Awareness on Dogs – LEAD ©

13. LEAD is a police-led initiative adopted by a number of forces and local authorities to encourage responsible dog ownership of all breeds of dog and to nip issues in the bud before they escalate. It seeks to provide advice to the public on dog issues, improve dog safety and dog welfare. LEAD also helps with the management of 'Risk' and through early engagement and intervention helps in with Safeguarding.

How does LEAD work in practice?

14. Police assume the role as lead of the partnership. In all cases where an irresponsible dog owner or keeper comes to the attention of the police or the local authority, contact is made, regardless of whether a statutory offence has been committed. The police will send a tailored “Coming to Notice” letter addressing the issue often on joint local authority/ police headed paper. Where the owner/keeper lives in social housing, a copy is also sent to the housing provider who, through quality standards, will follow up within 7 working days. The letter is accompanied by a LEAD pack, which includes, the Good Citizen Guide from the Kennel Club, literature with information on the breed of their dog from Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, the RSPCA dealing with care, training and welfare and information on socialisation, and park etiquette local bye-laws, the Dangerous Dogs Act etc.
15. Should the dog’s behaviour or irresponsible owner/keeper come to notice again, a second letter is hand-delivered. If the dog owner is a social housing resident, then a joint visit is made with police and the housing provider. Preventative measures are put in place by way of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. The Housing Provider may remind them of, or enforce, their tenancy agreement and continued anti-social behaviour could result in permission to have a dog/pet on the property being withdrawn or even repossess the property.

Acceptable Behaviour Contract

16. As the second letter is sent, an **Acceptable Behaviour Contract** – a voluntary agreement between the police and the individual – can be sought. If this is declined, the police (often the ASB unit) will normally monitor the dog’s behaviour for at least six months.
17. Continued anti-social behaviour could result in a formal statutory notice being sought: either a **Community Protection Notice (CPN)**, a **Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO)**, a Contingent Destruction Order on conviction under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 or an appropriate Order under **Section 2 of the Dogs Act 1871**. Further detailed guidance and information on these measures is available (see Practitioner’s Manual on dealing with Irresponsible Dog Ownership linked below.) CPNs and CBOs can also be issued in their own right and not always as part of a LEAD initiative or as a follow on from an ABC.
18. In summary, police forces and local authorities adopting the LEAD initiative:
 - record all incidents involving undesired dog behaviour including dog attacks on people and animals; dog welfare and dog fouling. This is important to create a documented history should enforcement be necessary
 - share report of incidents with the local authority/ local police/ registered social landlords and vice versa

- encourage owners (if a social housing resident) to register their dog with their housing provider
- arrange dog roadshows and/or community outreach often in liaison with national or local charities that offer dog advice and free or discounted dog micro-chipping – many police forces, particularly those with a high proportion of dog related incidents, already undertake such outreach.

19. Eastleigh BC and Hampshire Constabulary have taken ABCs one step further with the introduction of specific **Dog Behaviour Contracts**. These are simple voluntary agreements that could be offered to owners of dogs causing issues, rather than taking formal enforcement action. Dog behaviour contracts are used to remedy the immediate concerns of local residents and secure longer-term improvements in dog ownership that could prevent issues from recurring.

20. Each contract is tailored, but can include conditions relating to muzzles, fencing, microchipping, neutering and training. All contracts include timescales for meeting conditions and a formal end date.

21. Dog behaviour contracts appeal to dog owners because they remove the threat of more formal court action. The contract provides the opportunity to engage with the owner in a less confrontational manner, making them more open to changing their behaviour. See: <https://www.local.gov.uk/eastleigh-borough-council-tackling-fear-created-dangerous-dogs>

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs)

22. Local authorities also have powers to issue PSPOs to restrict persistent anti-social behaviour in a public place. These can help reduce incidents by placing restrictions on dogs in certain areas. The powers replaced local authority powers to issue Dog Control Orders. PSPOs are used to tackle lower level anti-social behaviour and can include provisions to restrict dogs or require dogs to be on leads in certain areas, and for owners to pick up after their dog. Comprehensive guidance is available to local authorities on PSPOs, including by the LGA: https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/10.4%20-%20PSPO%20guidance_03_1.pdf

Table 1: Summary of Responsibilities & Powers for Dog Control and Welfare

Situation/ measure	Police	Local authority	Shared/Joint working
Offences under the DDA91: prohibited dogs and dogs dangerously out of control	Yes	No	
Dog worrying livestock: criminal offence under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953	Yes	No	
LEAD initiative	Yes	Yes	Yes
ASB controls (except PSPOs) – CPN, CBO	Yes	Yes	Yes
Orders under the Dogs Act 1871 with respect to a dog not kept under control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nuisance dogs, excessive barking and dogs running loose	Not normally / under local agreement & LEAD	Yes	
PSPOs	No	Yes	
Dog microchipping	No	Yes	
Providing a stray dog service	No	Yes	

Further guidance

As noted above previous guidance issued by Defra on dog control and welfare is still relevant – namely: Dangerous Dogs Law “Guidance for Enforcers” in 2009:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69263/dogs-guide-enforcers.pdf

and the Practitioner’s Manual on Dealing with Irresponsible Dog Ownership in 2014:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-irresponsible-dog-ownership-practitioners-manual>

These give further detailed advice on the principle statutory interventions – the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, the Dogs Act 1871, anti-social behaviour measures and the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

Defra has proposed revisions to the licensing system for dog breeding and pet vending, which should lead to more focused enforcement of these activities by local authorities and better controls on the supply of dogs, as well as more focus on enforcement of pet travel and puppy imports.

Further information on the **LEAD initiative** is available from:

**PC Heath Keogh 567ZT - LEAD Initiative SPOC and Dog Legislation Officer,
Community Intelligence, Wildlife Officer**

Safer Sutton Partnership – Metropolitan Police Service

MetPhone 730660 | Telephone 020-8649-0660

1st Floor, Room 1.046

Sutton Police Station

Carshalton Road West

SM1 4RF



© Crown copyright 2018

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. To view this licence visit

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/ or email

PSI@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Animal.welfare@defra.gsi.gov.uk

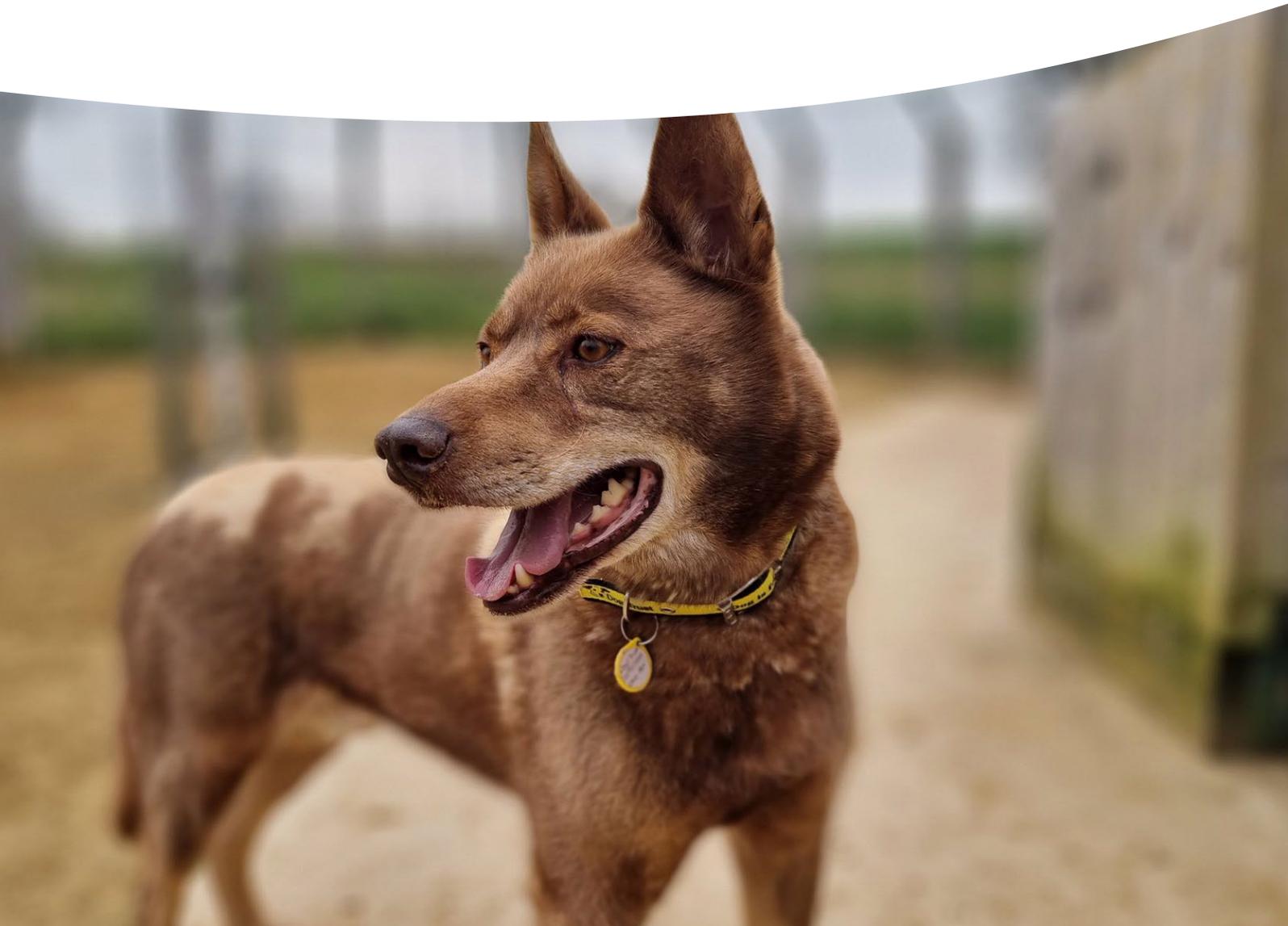


Stray Dog Survey report 2019-20



Contents

1. Introduction	1
Background and Objectives	1
Methodology	1
2. Summary of findings	2
Response Rate	2
The number of dogs handled	2
How do dogs arrive at local authorities?	4
What happens to the dogs handled by local authorities?	5
Microchipping	7
How were dogs reunited with their owners?	7
Dog warden services	8
Predominant breed types	8
Impact of COVID-19	9
3. Conclusions	10



1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Objectives

The Dogs Trust Stray Dog Survey (SDS) is administered to all local authorities (LAs) in the UK, and has been undertaken since 1997. The survey collects information about dog related services provided by LAs, and the dogs that they interact with.

The SDS is used to determine the following (not an exhaustive list):

- **The estimated number of stray/unwanted dogs that are handled by UK LAs each year.**
- **How these dogs enter LA care (e.g. handed in by a member of the public, seized as a stray, handed over by the police)**
- **The outcomes for these dogs (e.g. returned to owner, rehomed, passed on to welfare organisations, put to sleep)**
- **Numbers of dogs microchipped**
- **Factors relating to reuniting dogs with their owners (e.g. up to date microchips, collar and tag with owner contact details etc.)**

This information is used by Dogs Trust to examine trends over time, and to help determine where to allocate resources for campaigns.

From 1997-2019 the SDS was managed by an external market research company, on Dogs Trust's behalf. The company distributed the survey to LAs, analysed the data, and produced a report. In 2020 all aspects of the SDS were managed internally by Dogs Trust staff.

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1 Data collection

The 2019/2020 Stray Dog Survey was administered to all LAs via the online survey platform SmartSurvey. The survey link was emailed to contacts in each LA on 21 August 2020 and the survey was closed 21 October 2020, giving LAs 2 months to complete the survey. Reminder emails were sent twice a week after the first week of the survey going live. Local authorities that did not respond to the email reminders were attempted to be contacted by phone; at least one attempt to contact by phone was made for each LA who had not completed the survey a week before it was due to close. For stray dog figures, LAs were specifically asked to give figures for the time period between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020.

1.2.2 Analysis

Summary statistics are provided for both the LAs that responded to the current survey and estimated for the whole UK. As not all LAs complete the survey, national totals are extrapolated from the figures provided by responding LAs. This was done by calculating the mean for each LA that responded and multiplying it by the number of LAs in the UK. This year's figures are also plotted alongside previous years to show changes over time. The number of "people per dog" (PPD) was also calculated by dividing the human population of each LA by the total number of dogs handled. Human population figures were obtained from publicly available data from the Office of National Statistics. Lower PPD numbers imply more dogs in relation to the human population in each area. This helps account for inevitable differences in total numbers of dogs between heavily and sparsely populated areas.

Previous surveys have reported regional differences by dividing the UK into TV regions. These regional areas have become less widely used over time, so this report uses the administrative geographical regions used by the Office of National Statistics¹. England is therefore the only country broken down into regions; Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland figures are reported at the country level (see Table 1 in the next section).

The SDS has previously referred to the total number of dogs handled by LAs as the total number of stray dogs. However, the term "stray" covers a range of meanings. For example, one of the categories for dogs entering LA care is "brought in/surrendered by general public". This category covers both relinquishment (i.e. an owner handing over their own dog to the LA as they are no longer able or willing to care for them) and a member of the public coming across a stray dog and bringing them in. There is currently no way of differentiating between these two possibilities, but in future surveys we hope to change the wording of the categories so that LAs can make this distinction. In this survey report we refer to the "total dogs handled" rather than strays, to reflect that not all dogs handled by LAs are truly stray.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/administrativegeography>

2. Summary of findings

2.1 Response Rate

Overall, 214 LAs responded to the 2020 Stray Dog Survey (SDS). This is an average response rate of 56% of the 379 LAs in the UK when the survey was administered, with a range from 40% to 83% across regions (Table 1). The response rate for the 2018-19 survey was 49%; indicating an improved response in 2019-20. Nevertheless, previous years have had higher response rates (surveys from 2015-2018 had response rates between 70-92%). **There are factors we believe may have contributed to the relatively low response rate this year compared to 2015-2018:**

1. **2020 has been an extraordinary year, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing major disruption across all sectors. The survey was distributed in October, when many organisations had staff furloughed. We know from those who did respond to the survey that staffing was affected by the pandemic, so it is reasonable to assume that other LAs had similar issues.**
2. **As this was the first time we have brought the SDS in-house, the LAs may not be used to hearing directly from us about the survey.**

However, neither of these explain the lower response rate in 2018-19, so there may be unknown factors contributing to the declining response rate.

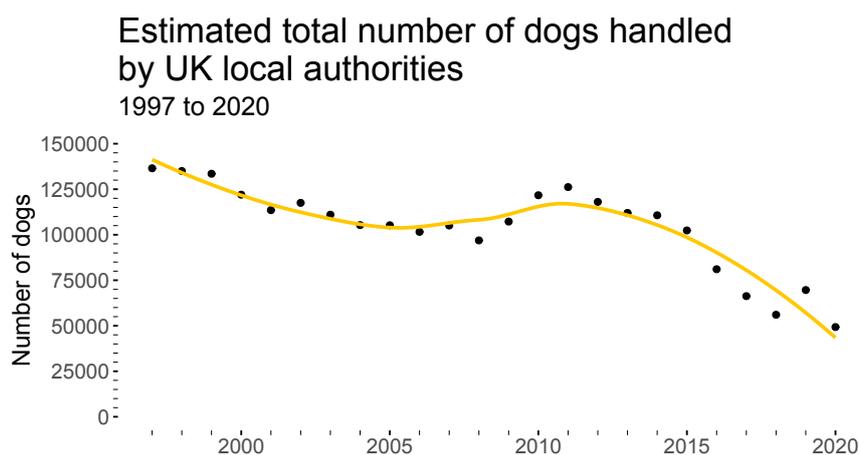
Table 1. Breakdown of response rate by country and region

Region	Number of LAs that responded to SDS	Total LAs in region	Response rate
North East England	10	12	83.3%
N. Ireland	9	11	81.8%
North West England	31	39	79.5%
Yorkshire and the Humber	16	21	76.2%
Wales	14	22	63.6%
South East England	39	64	60.9%
England (All Regions)	178	314	56.7%
South West England	17	30	56.7%
East Midlands	19	40	47.5%
London	15	33	45.5%
West Midlands	13	30	43.3%
Scotland	13	32	40.6%
East England	18	45	40.0%

2.2 Number of dogs handled

The 214 LAs that responded to the survey reported handling a total of 28,565 dogs in the period between 1 April 2019- 31 March 2020. On average each LA handled around 139 dogs, however there was a wide variation from 0 to 723. Based on these findings it was estimated that approximately 49,292 dogs were handled by LAs across the UK. This figure is the lowest estimated number since the survey began in 1997. Figure 1 demonstrates the decline in estimated numbers of dogs handled by LAs over the years.

Figure 1

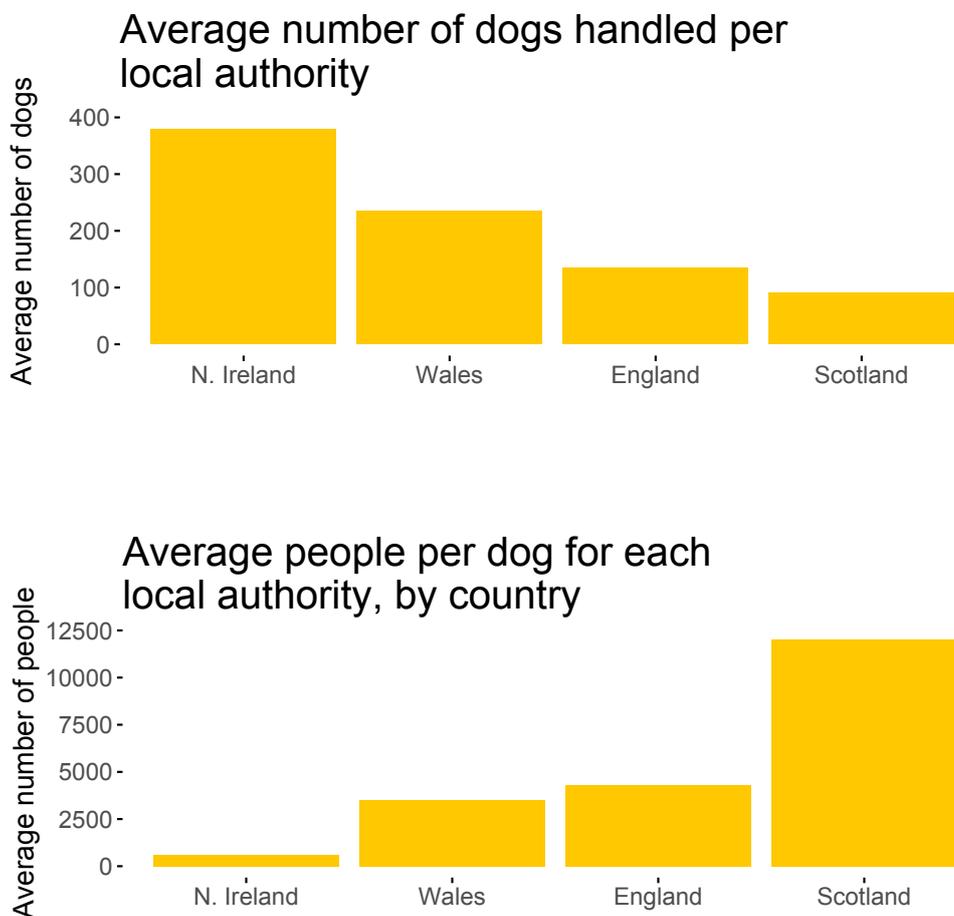


There were regional differences in the numbers of dogs handled (Table 2). Northern Ireland had the highest average number of dogs per LA, and the lowest number of PPD. As mentioned previously, England is divided by regions, but is also shown collectively in Table 2. Figure 2 shows the differences in average number of dogs handled per LA between the 4 UK countries (top), and the differences in PPD (bottom).

Table 2: Regional breakdown of average total new dogs handled and people per dog (PPD) per local authority (in ascending order of PPD)

Region	Number of LAs in region (that completed survey)	Average total new dogs handled per LA	Average PPD per LA
Northern Ireland	9	379	601
North East England	10	248	1052
East England	18	92	2098
South West England	17	99	2561
East Midlands	19	97	2568
Wales	14	234	3507
North West England	31	145	3524
West Midlands	13	212	3614
South East England	39	83	3677
England (All Regions)	178	122	4291
Yorkshire And The Humber	16	149	6117
Scotland	13	90	12028
London	15	81	13676

Figure 2



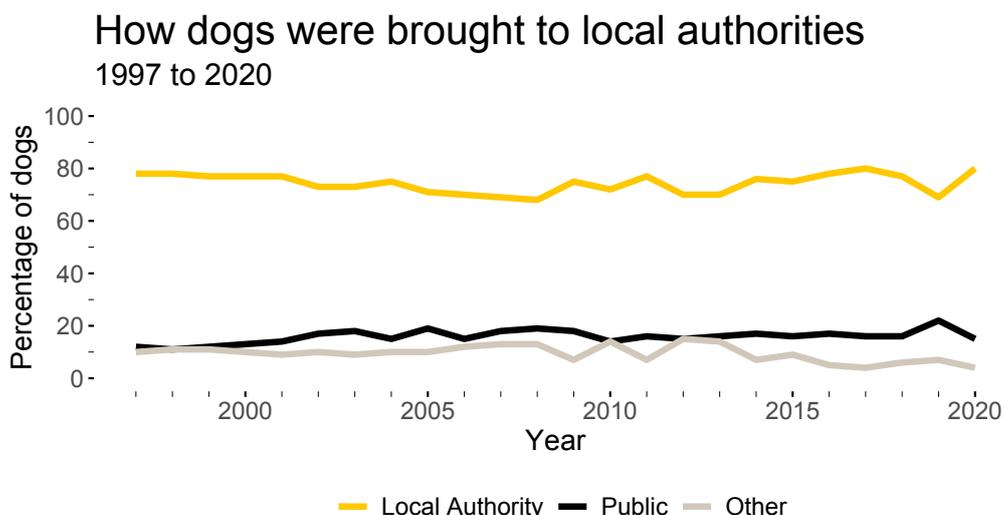
2.3 How do dogs arrive at local authorities?

Dogs come into the care of LAs via different routes. Table 3 summarises how many dogs were reported by LAs to have arrived in their care via these routes between 2019-2020. Consistent with previous years, the majority of dogs arrive at LAs after being seized as strays by the LAs. Figure 3 shows the proportions of dogs brought in by different routes across time.

Table 3: How did dogs arrive at local authorities between 2019-2020?

Arrival type	Number	Percent
Seized as stray	22904	80%
Brought in by public	4354	15%
Brought in by police	334	1%
Other	973	3%
Total dogs handled	28565	100%

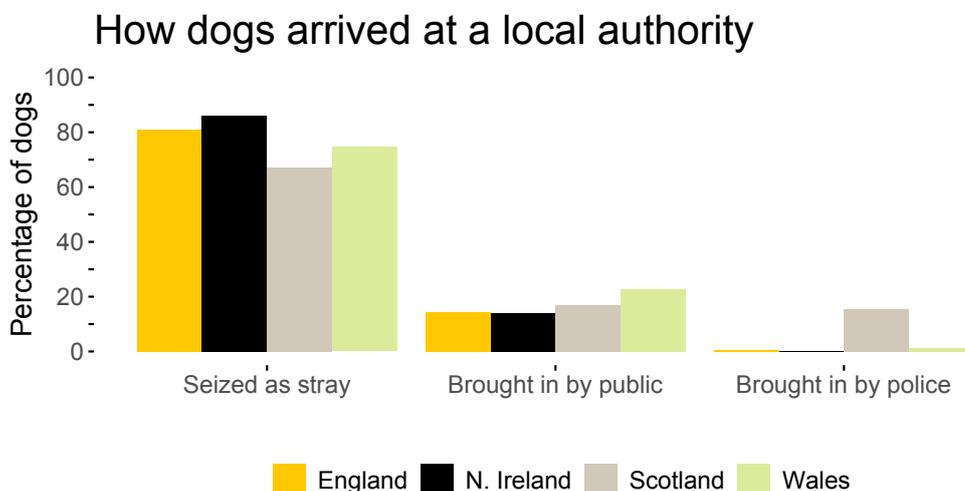
Figure 3



Only 18 councils reported any dogs being seized in response to the Dangerous Dogs Act/Order, with 118 dogs in total seized in this way. Of these, eight councils reported 1 case and eight councils reported between 2 and 5 cases. The remaining two councils reported 28 and 55 cases.

There was some regional variation in arrival routes of dogs handled by LAs (see Figure 4). For example, LAs in Scotland reported a higher proportion of dogs being brought in by the police.

Figure 4



2.4 What happens to the dogs handled by local authorities?

In total, approximately 59% of dogs taken in by LAs were returned to their owners (either reclaimed during the kennelling period or returned without kennelling). Approximately 2% of dogs were reported to have been put to sleep (PTS); it is estimated that this translates to around 1165 dogs being PTS across the UK by LAs during the study period. Table 4 summarises the number of dogs for each outcome. However, the data are incomplete as not all LAs recorded outcomes. The estimated total numbers for the UK provided in Table 4 should be treated with caution due to the incomplete nature of the data (n.b. these figures do not add up to the estimated total number of dogs handled by LAs in the UK described in Section 2.2 of this report due to the amount of missing data). Figure 5 shows the proportions of dogs brought in that met the four most common outcomes across time. Tables 5.a-5.e shows each outcome broken down by country.

Table 4: What were the outcomes for dogs handled by local authorities in 2019-2020?

Outcome	Total number recorded in this survey	Percentage of dogs recorded in this survey	Mean number per LA	Estimated UK numbers
Dogs reunited with their owners (includes 'a' and 'b' below)	16960	59%	86.1	32629
a) Dogs reclaimed during kennelling period	10900	38%	56.8	21516
b) Dogs returned without kennelling	6060	21%	35.6	13510
Passed to welfare organisation	7067	25%	39.9	15132
Rehomed by LA	2114	7%	13.0	4915
PTS	638	2%	3.1	1165
Other	346	1%	1.6	613
Total	27108	95%		

Figure 5

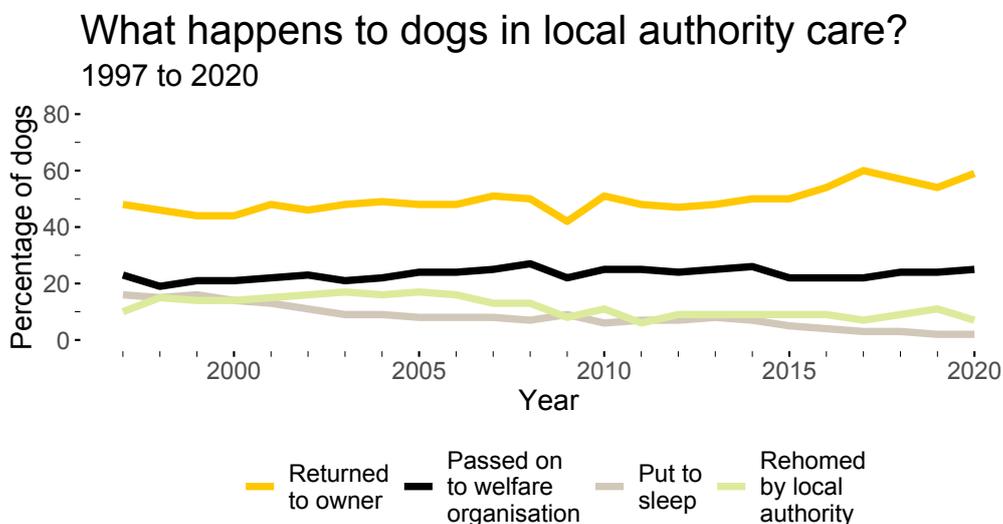


Table 5: Outcomes for dogs handled by local authorities broken down by country

5. a) Reclaimed during kennelling period

Country	Count	Percentage of dogs handled
England	8857	42.8%
Northern Ireland	849	24.9%
Scotland	539	45.8%
Wales	655	20.0%
Whole UK	10900	

5. b) Returned without Kennelling

Country	Count	Percentage of dogs handled
England	4368	21.1%
Northern Ireland	581	17.1%
Scotland	283	24.1%
Wales	828	25.2%
Whole UK	6060	

5. c) Passed on to Welfare organisation

Country	Count	Percentage of dogs handled
England	5420	26.2%
Northern Ireland	531	15.6%
Scotland	114	9.7%
Wales	1002	30.5%
Whole UK	7067	

5. d) Rehomed by local authority

Country	Count	Percentage of dogs handled
England	1278	6.2%
Northern Ireland	619	18.2%
Scotland	103	8.8%
Wales	114	3.5%
Whole UK	2114	

5. e) Put to Sleep (PTS)

Country	Count	Percentage of dogs handled
England	499	2.4%
N. Ireland	89	2.6%
Scotland	22	1.9%
Wales	28	0.9%
Whole UK	638	

2.5 Microchipping

Among the LAs that provided information about the microchip status of the dogs they handled, 55% of dogs (10,632) were already microchipped before being handled by the LA. However, many LAs (77) did not give any figure for number of dogs microchipped. Table 6 summarises the proportion of LAs who offer microchipping service, and how this is funded.

Table 6: Responses to “Do you offer a microchipping service?”

Response	Count	Percentage
No	101	47%
Free to owner using Dogs Trust chips	63	29%
Fee passed on to owner	33	15%
Free to owner at a cost to the local authority	9	4%
No response	8	4%
Total	214	100%

2.6 How were dogs reunited with their owners?

Local authorities were asked to report the number of dogs reunited with their owners as a result of the factors listed in Table 7. This information was collected to determine whether some responsible dog ownership messages, such as the importance of microchipping and ID tags on collars, may contribute to dogs being reunited with their owners. As many LAs did not have this information, the number of LAs able to report these figures is included as an indication of how representative these data are likely to be.

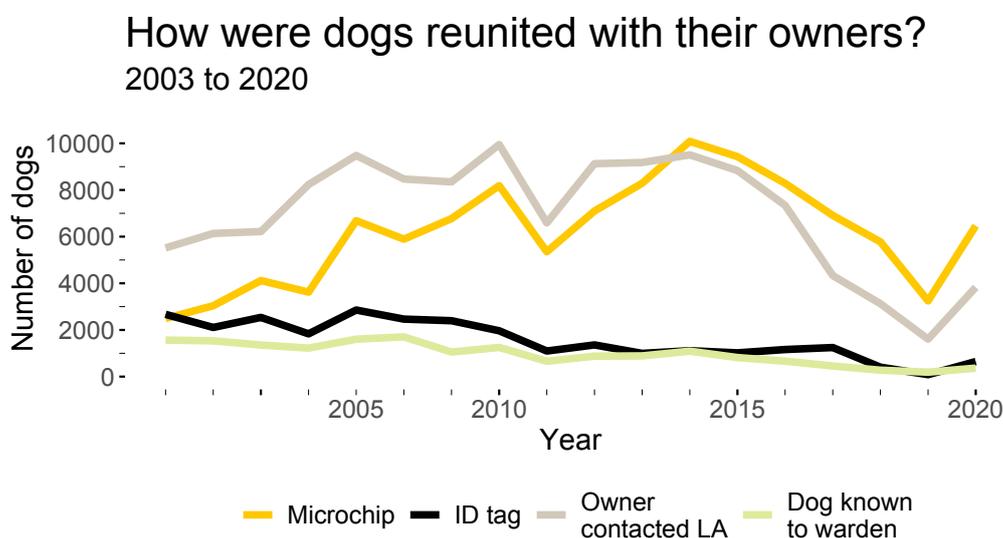
Table 7: What factors contribute to dogs being reunited with their owners?

Factor	Number of LAs that responded	Total number of dogs	Average number of dogs per LA
Dog had up to date microchip	142	6464	40.4
Dog had an ID tag	114	696	4.7
Owner contacting pound directly	105	3827	28.3
Dog known to dog warden	92	363	2.5
Other	28	129	0.6

Local authorities reported a total of 1678 dogs who could not be reunited with their owners due to incorrect microchip details. The true figure is likely to be higher, as only 91 LAs were able to provide this information. Of those LAs who did provide a figure, the average was 10.6 dogs per LA, so it could be estimated that around 4000 dogs across the UK were unable to be reunited with their owners due to incorrect microchip details.

Figure 6 shows how the methods of dogs being reunited with their owners has changed from 2003 to 2020 (this question was not asked prior to 2003). In line with previous reports the raw numbers have been reported rather than percentages.

Figure 6



2.7 Dog warden services

This year, 137 LAs (64%) said their dog warden was employed directly by them, compared to 52 LAs (24%) who contracted the service out. Both proportions are consistent with results in 2019. 70% of LAs reported that dogs were handled by private boarding kennels; whereas 13% LAs used a council-owned pound and 33% used welfare charity kennels to house their dogs – also consistent with 2019 findings.

2.8 Predominant breed types

LAs were asked to report the top 3 breeds that are seized/brought in. Table 8 shows the number of LAs that listed each breed as one of their top three (e.g. 160 (75%) of the LAs listed Staffordshire Bull Terriers (SBT) or their crosses among their top 3 breeds).

Table 8: Predominant breed types seen by local authorities

Breed	England	% of England LAs	NI	% of NI LAs	Scotland	% of Scotland LAs	Wales	% of Wales LAs	Whole UK	% of UK LAs
SBT*	135	75.8%	6	66.7%	9	69.2%	10	71.4%	160	74.8%
Crossbreed	83	46.6%	6	66.7%	5	38.5%	7	50.0%	101	47.2%
JRT*	80	44.9%	2	22.2%	3	23.1%	7	50.0%	92	43.0%
Lurcher	73	41.0%	3	33.3%	6	46.2%	8	57.1%	90	42.1%
Border Collie	17	9.6%	6	66.7%	6	46.2%	3	21.4%	32	15.0%
American Bulldog	17	9.6%	1	11.1%	2	15.4%	1	7.1%	21	9.8%
Labrador	12	6.7%	1	11.1%	3	23.1%	2	14.3%	18	8.4%
Greyhound	17	9.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	17	7.9%
German Shepherd	11	6.2%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	5.6%
Husky	7	3.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	14.3%	9	4.2%
Terrier (not specific)	8	4.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	3.7%
Yorkshire terrier	3	1.7%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	1.9%
Akita	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.4%
Chihuahua	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.4%
Rottweiler	2	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Patterdale	2	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.9%
Mastiff	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.5%
Whippet	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.5%
Boxer	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.5%
Retriever	1	0.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.5%

* JRT (Jack Russell Terrier) and SBT (Staffordshire Bull Terrier)

2.9 Impacts of COVID-19

We predicted that the COVID-19 pandemic would have an impact on the activities of LAs. Therefore, in this survey we included questions to assess these effects. Previous questions in the survey referred specifically to the period between 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020, but the COVID-19 section asked LAs to think about their experiences “since the start of COVID-19 restrictions in the UK (from around mid-March 2020 until now)” (the survey was distributed in August 2020). Overall, most LAs reported that the number of dogs they were handling had decreased or remained the same since implementation of the COVID-19 restrictions, only 7 (3%) reported that the numbers of dogs increased (Table 9).

Table 9: Impact of COVID-19 on numbers of dogs seen by local authorities

Response	Number	Percent
Decrease in number of dogs	133	62%
Number of dogs has remained about the same	42	20%
The number of dogs has fluctuated during this time	13	6%
Unknown	10	5%
Other	9	4%
Increase in number of dogs	7	3%
Total	214	100%

Furthermore, 78% of LAs reported that demand for their services decreased during the first UK COVID-19 lockdown, and just under half (43%) said that it increased again once lockdown was eased, suggesting that the return to “normality” was slower for some.



3. Conclusions

The number of dogs handled by LAs in the UK, as estimated by the annual Stray Dog Survey, has showed an overall decline since the survey began in 1997. The rate of decline was steady up until the period between 2008-2010, when then was a brief period of increasing numbers. We do not know what caused this increase, but the timing coincides with the global financial crisis of 2008, which caused severe economic downturn in the UK. It could be hypothesised that people may have been unable to care for their pets due to financial difficulties, which may have led to relinquishment or abandonment. The steep decline in numbers between 2015-2018 coincides with the introduction in 2016 of legislation making microchipping mandatory for dog owners in the UK. An increase in microchipping during this period may have made it easier for dogs to be reunited with their owners without being handed over to LAs. These UK-wide figures are estimates based on the numbers of LAs who responded to the survey. As discussed earlier in this report, relatively low response rates in recent years may mean that the UK-wide estimates are less accurate, since they are based on a smaller sample which may not be representative of the UK at large.

Regional comparisons between numbers of dogs handled indicated that LAs in Northern Ireland tended to handle more dogs on average, and have a lower number of “people per dog”, compared to LAs elsewhere in the UK. These findings are consistent with operational experience, and suggest the need for interventions to address the specific causes for higher numbers of dogs entering LA care within Northern Ireland.

The methods by which dogs come into the care of LAs has remained consistent over the years, with the majority being seized directly by LAs as strays. The only substantial regional difference reported was a greater proportion of dogs coming to LAs via the police, and slightly less dogs are seized directly by LAs, in Scotland compared to other regions. This may reflect differences in the ways that LAs work with the police, and perhaps other institutions, between different countries.

In recent years there has been a gradual increase in the proportions of dogs reunited with their owners by LAs. There has also been a gradual decrease in the numbers of dogs put to sleep (PTS) by LAs. Although these trends are very good news, it is still the case that around 41% of dogs handled by LAs are not returned to their owners; either because they are unwanted or because the owners are not able to be found. Furthermore, we estimated that although only 2% of dogs in our sample were PTS, this could reflect a UK wide total of over 1000 dogs being PTS by LAs. Based on these facts it is clear that activities to encourage microchipping, updating microchip data, and the use of collar and ID tags for all dogs are still very much necessary.

Responses to the COVID-19 questions indicated that many LAs experienced a decline in the demand for their dog related services and handled less dogs during the period of lockdown restrictions. The period covered by this survey in terms numbers of dogs handled (1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020) only included a small period of lockdown; therefore we are unlikely to see the impacts of the pandemic reflected in the total numbers of dogs reported. It is hoped that the 2020-2021 report will provide a clearer picture of the impact of longer-term COVID-19 throughout 2020 and into 2021 on stray dogs and LA dog services.

Next year, 2020-2021, will be the 25th anniversary of the Stray Dog Survey.

To mark this occasion, we will be reviewing the survey in the following ways:

- **Assessing how we can maximise the relevance and usefulness of the data we collect to stakeholders within and external to Dogs Trust**
- **Refining the survey to ensure only essential data is collected**
- **Updating the way questions are asked to ensure data are returned in the most useful format for analysis**
- **Updating methods of analysis to improve the quality of results; for example, using more advanced statistical techniques when calculating estimates.**

A dog is for life®

W: dogstrust.org.uk

E: research@dogstrust.org.uk

Registered charity numbers: 227523 & SC037843

Copyright: Dogs Trust 2021