

REPORT TO PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

14 September 2026

Scrutiny Review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets

Summary

The third evidence session for the Committee's review of Animal Welfare, Kennelling, and Protection of Pets will consider evidence from the PDSA.

Detail

1. As part of the scoping process, the Committee identified a the PDSA as a key contributor to the review. The local branch of PDSA have therefore been invited to give evidence regarding their experience of delivering veterinary support, and have provided the attached report ahead of the meeting.
2. In addition, the PDSA were asked a number of questions relating to their views on animal welfare and current service pressures. The response they provided is outlined below:

- **What support do you offer to those who are on low incomes and/or homeless pet owners?**

As per attached.

- **What are the main pressures currently affecting your practice?**

Recruitment/retention of veterinary staff - Intermittently there are recruitment issues however staff tend to stay as PDSA

There will always be a constant demand for PDSA along with rising costs across the estate be that medicine or business Caseload is increasing however we now have tools to maintain treatment with restrictions in registration be that capacity, mix of work or staffing constraints.

- **Have you noticed any significant changes in dog-related caseloads over the past 3-5 years?**

As per document - post Covid there were issues with viruses due to lack of service provision across the sector - There may be more indifferent reasons for euthanasia

regarding cost of care - the bigger picture of the family unit and helping manage personal debt is a moral obligation as well as one of pet welfare.

- **What are the most common welfare concerns you are currently seeing in dogs?**

All of the below are welfare concerns that will be seen across the veterinary sector: Obesity, behavioural issues (pandemic paralysis), poor breeding practices, chronic health conditions, lack of preventative care, or neglect linked to financial hardship

- **Are you seeing any emerging trends in dog ownership or dog health?**

In order of observation:

Breed popularity

Behavioural problems

Delayed treatment due to costs, uninsured pets, affordability concerns

Imported dogs

- **What support or interventions would help improve dog welfare and reduce pressures on veterinary services?**

All of the below:

Public education campaigns

Affordable neutering and vaccination schemes

Responsible ownership initiatives - Previously worked with councils over the years

Better breeder regulation

Partnership working

3. The Committee also identified other local authorities as key contributors to determine if there was any best practice in providing animal welfare services, the demand for services, and training provided for staff. All North East Local Authorities were therefore contacted, and a summary of responses received is also attached for noting.
4. In addition, Members of the Committee attended site visits in August and September to kennels used by the Council, and notes from the visits are to follow.

5. A copy of the agreed scope and project plan for the review is attached for information.

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